

The Exmoor Society

The Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DP

Spring 2009 Newsletter

No. 56



L to R – Chris Whinney, Sir Antony Acland, Bishop of Bath & Wells, Rachel Thomas - Tree Planting at St Luke's Church Sept 2008



The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No 245761



2009-2010

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(Bishop of Bath and Wells)

The Rt. Hon. J. J. Thorpe

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Editor of the Annual Report & Spring Newsletter: Mrs Pat Bawden

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Chairman, Barnstaple Group: Mrs Mary Chugg

Chairman, Dulverton Group: Mr Peter Donnelly

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The Society at fifty has provided opportunities for many people to reflect on its role as a watchdog and champion for Exmoor. Significantly at our September AGM a number of speakers gave examples of their associations with us and the value they put on our work at Parish Rooms. Activities such as our campaigning for upland farming, putting on walking events, raising important issues and helping the local economy were all mentioned. And those of you who came to the Service the following day at St. Luke's, Simonsbath were greatly enthused by the Bishop of Bath & Wells' ringing endorsement of the importance of campaigning for good causes such as ours in protecting and championing Exmoor.

Judging from the many comments we have received, the 50th edition of the Exmoor Review has been greatly appreciated and enjoyed. As the journal of the Society it needs to put on record the important issues of the day, encourage original research and illustrate the variety of life on Exmoor. It should be serious but light-hearted, always serendipitous but never too solemn.

This next year is likely to be as busy as we continue to oppose the proposals for the 24 wind turbines affecting the setting of the national park. Our campaign for upland farming is to be followed up at a national level after our successful parliamentary reception at the House of Lords in November. Further details of both these and our many other forthcoming events can be found within the pages of this newsletter.

Although it is not always easy to find a 'theme' for the year, in 2009 the Society wants to emphasise the importance of visiting and *enjoying* Exmoor. As the encroaching economic recession begins to bite deeply, and austerity faces all of us, now is the time to highlight what Exmoor offers at relatively little cost. It is a chance to reassert the simple pleasures in life, such as walking, enjoying a view, looking for red deer, exploring a woodland, having an all-weather picnic in the great outdoors. Many of you I know take short breaks to Exmoor, visit the pubs and restaurants, stay in B&B's, buy local crafts and local produce and therefore put money into the local economy.

Please come and visit us, continue with this invaluable support and spread the message to friends about Exmoor's glories through the different seasons.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Reflections, Reminiscences & Revelations: Autumn 2008

To a packed and appreciative audience, a variety of guest speakers on the theme of “Reflections, Reminiscences and Revelations” congratulated the Exmoor Society on its 50th anniversary being celebrated at the Autumn Weekend and AGM in September. Lady Gass, the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, paid tribute to its tireless work in protecting Exmoor. Outlining the important role that it plays as a watchdog, Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP said “it is prepared to stand up and say what it feels and its voice is counted at all levels”. Keith Bungay, former Exmoor National Park Officer, stated that the Society had the other important role of being champion for Exmoor so that people are aware of Exmoor’s national importance.

Tributes were paid by public bodies such as the Forestry Commission who said that the Society is a tenacious watchdog and a valuable resource. Dr Graham Wills from the ENPA emphasised the importance of partnership working and gave an account of his family associations with Simonsbath and the Knight family in 19th century. Stephen Mulberry from the National Trust North Devon, outlined the major contributions the Society had made to the Trust in helping to purchase places like Woody Bay and in undertaking many joint activities.

Hilary Binding, editor of the *Exmoor Country Magazine*, reflected on her long associations with the Society as editor for over 30 years of the Exmoor Review. Founder member, Mary Chugg gave a moving account of the formation of the Society and read an extract written by her late husband, Brian Chugg, from his regular Country Diary column in the Guardian.

Exmoor farmer Oliver Edwards in outlining how he had diversified into tourism in a big way said that this now brought in more money than farming. He would prefer to remain as a farmer looking after his livestock and land which was a full-time job, but returns were so low that the family depended on tourism income. He was very supportive of the Society’s campaign for upland farming.

Local author and wit Norma Huxtable rounded off a very happy occasion with stories and anecdotes of her life on Exmoor as a farmer’s wife, in particular she talked about “the Emperor of Exmoor”, Mr Tom Robins who first farmed at Wallover and then moved to South Lydcote. It is worth repeating his profile, first published in the *Exmoor Review* of Autumn 1959. [See page 29].

Campaign for Uplands under Threat

Speaking at a parliamentary reception held in November by the Exmoor Society and the Dartmoor Preservation Association, Baroness Malallieu welcomed representatives from key public bodies, non-governmental organisations, and a large turnout of peers and MPs. She thanked Lord Rooker for keeping the commitment to speak as guest of honour even though he was no longer Minister, to the disappointment of many in the rural world. Lord Rooker emphasised the importance of livestock farming in the uplands and the many public benefits it provided. He recognised that there was a problem with the survival of hill farming, but said that it would not be overcome by just asking for public subsidies. It was not always clear to people living in cities and urban areas that it was hill-farming practices that maintained the very assets that made them visit places like Exmoor and Dartmoor. It was necessary to show the connections between livestock grazing and environmental benefits. These needed to be carefully explained, for example, how grazing livestock kept down the vegetation so that people could walk over open moorland.

He was followed by the new Environment Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies who emphasised that he had only been in post for 4 weeks. He said that income support measures did not fit with the Government's view of the Common Agricultural Policy. Single payments would continue to be redistributed into area payments and modulation for agri-environmental and rural development schemes. He indicated that the various elements of Environmental Stewardship were successful and the proposed Uplands Elementary Scheme would consolidate wider environmental benefits. Government was still refining parts of this but its piloting on 65 farms from the uplands showed that 9 out of 10 farmers would be able to achieve enough points to get into the scheme and three-quarters of farmers would be eligible to apply. He argued that the uplands were the ultimate rural areas – beautiful, rugged and wild with a sparse population and economically vulnerable. But hill farming was not the “be-all and end-all” of the uplands, although they played a vital part in their history and character. There was a wider view that Government had to take into account as custodians of the present and future. The uplands were not a single homogenous region and it was essential to tap into local and regional knowledge. Government was therefore devolving much of the decision making to Regional Development Agencies and into Local Area Agreements as well as supporting environmental benefits nationally. The Minister indicated his willingness to visit Exmoor, and the Society has extended an invitation to him for this year. The Society has also been in touch with the Rt Hon. Michael Jack, MP, Chairman of the Environment Food & Rural Affairs Committee pushing for a Select Committee Inquiry into hill farming.

Speaking at the event and afterwards, Rachel Thomas, Chairman of the Exmoor Society mentioned the following:

- **All recognised now there is a problem with hill farming and evidence shows that there are real concerns over its economic viability. This was not the case two or three years ago.**
- **People generally do not make the connection between hill farming practices and environmental and public benefits. This vindicates the approach of the two Societies to raise awareness of the significance of the uplands nationally, and the role that hill farming plays.**
- **The uplands are not homogenous areas and decision-making needs to be devolved locally.**
- **There remains disagreement over the ability of the nationally devised environmental schemes working successfully including the controversial Upland Elementary Level Scheme. Further adjustments need to be made.**
- **Exmoor and Dartmoor can provide more evidence of the need for the survival of hill farming and the environmental goods and services it provides.**

The Exmoor Society with the DPA will continue to campaign for solutions to the hill farming crisis and have asked the Environment Select Committee to hold an Inquiry into the state of hill farming to ensure its survival and ability to provide the many public goods and services for the nation.

Campaign Against Proposals for 24 Industrial Wind Turbines:

The four proposals for 24 wind turbines off the southern boundary of Exmoor are now at different stages in the planning process. Batsworthy (9 wind turbines), Three Moors (9 turbines), Cross Moor (2 turbines) and Bickham (4 turbines) are likely to be considered this year by public inquiries. The Society has joined with CPRE North Devon and the Two Moors Campaign to form the Rural Exmoor Alliance. So far we have commissioned a report on photo-montages and questioned the developers, photo-montages and approach. We have also raised concerns over the impact the wind turbines will have on national park purposes, both in isolation and cumulatively. An inquiry is to be held over the non-determination of proposals at both Bickham and Three Moors.

The money received from members has been ring-fenced to help pay for expert witnesses who will be appearing on behalf of the Alliance. We are struggling to raise the funds required to fight these damaging proposals. Please continue to donate to this fund.

Cutcombe Market: A major development for Exmoor

At the beginning of January the planning authority, after four years of negotiations, has given permission for the redevelopment of Cutcombe Market, the building of 24 houses and erection of 3 business blocks at Wheddon Cross. The Society has consistently supported the market proposals, the business units and the housing element that provides 12 houses for local affordable needs. The developers have taken into account the Society's concerns over landscape and the many issues affecting the local community.

The remaining difficulty is the inclusion of 12 open-market houses because this is a departure from the local plan that states that all new housing must be for local needs only. However, there is room to depart from the policy if there are exceptional reasons. Planning officers have argued that the open-market housing element is vital because it provides a cross-subsidy for the market. There are no other realistic financial alternatives. The Society argued at the planning meeting that a new market is urgent as it is a vital part of the key infra-structure for farming on Exmoor, and livestock grazing is essential to managing the national park's landscape. The need for the Cutcombe development outweighs the departure from the local plan.

However, the Society is disappointed that the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) did not directly support the rebuilding of the market. All the local authorities including Devon as well as Somerset and the ENPA could have put more pressure collectively on SWRDA to give greater financial assistance to this major development affecting the whole of the upland area of Exmoor and beyond.



Blackpitts:

The controversy over proposals for Blackpitts was brought to an end in December when the ENPA did a U-turn and decided to keep the bungalow for a local person employed in agriculture. Previously, the Authority in September had decided by one vote (11 to 10) to support the option to go for maximum landscape enhancement by clearing the bungalow, barn and plantation on the site and seeking an alternative location in the Exmoor parish for a replacement house. Following the meeting a group of local people organised a petition against the loss of the bungalow at Blackpitts. A special meeting was called to deal only with Blackpitts and the Authority's chief executive recommended retaining the ownership of the land and property and letting the dwelling to a local person in agriculture. Members of the authority accepted this recommendation.

Although the Society supported the previous decision, it is disappointed that there has been so much controversy over the various proposals and that it has taken the Authority over 2½ years to arrive at this final conclusion.

Sustainable Tourism: 'Enjoy Exmoor'

The Society's 2009 Spring Conference will be held on Friday, 24th April in the Town Hall, Dulverton. These annual conferences aim to explore important issues of the day that need to be aired publicly. Last year's theme of raising awareness about the plight of upland farming was particularly successful. This year the theme is 'Enjoy Exmoor' and the role of sustainable tourism. Tourism on Exmoor is part of the life-blood of the local economy. The industry encourages people to visit the area and provides different kinds of accommodation for them, puts on specific events, develops attractions and helps grow diverse businesses supplying the tourists' needs. Exmoor as a national park is a protected landscape for people to enjoy. Part of the Society's work is to promote its special qualities of landscape, wildlife and heritage. It encourages people and its members to experience outdoor activities, tranquillity and refreshment from the pressures of modern living. National parks today provide opportunities for people's well-being and quality of life.

The conference will explore how sustainable tourism can encourage people to come to Exmoor to experience its unique pleasures, and yet at the same time not damage the fragile environment or have a negative impact on some of the local communities. It will include:

- ❖ **Dame Fiona Reynolds, Director-General of the National Trust is the keynote speaker. She will explore why people need wild, open, green spaces.**
- ❖ **A report on the state of tourism on Exmoor.**
- ❖ **Discussion on what tourism promotes and what can be improved.**
- ❖ **Examples of good practice.**

Spring Conference 2009 ~ Friday, 24th April

Town Hall, Dulverton, 10am to 3.30pm approx.

'Enjoy Exmoor'

**Guest Speaker: Dame Fiona Reynolds
Director-General of The National Trust**

£10 per person to include refreshments

Booking essential – Please use booking form

Volunteers:

We are so very grateful to our team of volunteers who come into Parish Rooms three times a year and help with “stuffing” and the distribution of our mailings. In particular a huge thank you to Rod Coyne who oversees this merry band of helpers. A special thank you to him and also his wife, Dot, who spend each Wednesday morning in the office carrying out whatever tasks need doing.

Web Site:

The new web site is still a work in progress. To keep costs down we are inputting this ourselves as and when we have the time. We would like to think that the site will be “live” by the spring. But, if there is anyone out there with website design skills would care to do this for us, then we would welcome this volunteer with open arms.

Office Staff:

Following the departure of our membership secretary, Maggie Rodgers, we are delighted to welcome to the team Gina Rawle, who will look after our accounts and membership, together with Terry Downe who will help with general office administration. Both ladies are locally sourced!

Farewell & Welcome:

We must say farewell to David Clapp who has been our honorary treasurer. Thank you David for all your support and help during the last three years, and we quite understand that due to increasing pressures of work, you feel no longer able to give so much of your time. David will continue until the end of the Society’s financial year, and we are delighted to welcome Carole Bament who has agreed to take on the task of Hon Treasurer, as well as being co-opted onto the Executive. Carole is also locally sourced.

Christmas Cards:

One or two of you were disappointed to learn that by early December we had completely sold out of this year’s Christmas cards depicting “Winter comes to Tarr Steps” from an original by Barry Watkin FRSA. We are pleased to say these were a runaway sellout. Ideas for the 2009 card are being discussed and cards will be ready for sale in late summer.

Alfred Vowles 2010 Photographic Competition:

This bi-annual competition will take place again in 2010. Closing date for entries is 31st December 2009, and judging will take place in early 2010. The results will be announced in the Spring Newsletter, and the winning entries will be exhibited at the Society's AGM in September.

The categories remain the same:

- **Landscape**
- **Heritage**
- **People at Work**

The competition is open to all amateur photographers.

For an entry form and conditions, please send an s.a.e. to the Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, Som TA22 9DP and mark your envelope "Photographic Competition".

Samuel Foss Conservation Award:

Nominations are invited for the 2009 Award. The term 'conservation' covers landscape, wildlife, historic environment and understanding of the national park's special qualities, and anyone furthering these interests can be recommended for the award. Recipients of this award are not restricted to members of the Exmoor Society. Nominations, which may be made by individuals or organisations, should be backed by proposers and should reach the Exmoor Society, address as above, not later than 31st May 2009. In the event of more than one nomination, the Trustees of the Society will decide who is to receive the award.

Exhibition of Exmoor's Red Deer:

An Exhibition of Exmoor's Red Deer will be held at the Heritage Centre, Dulverton from Good Friday, 10th April to 31st October. The Heritage Centre hosts exhibitions from artists plus ongoing displays of local history, both visual and hands on. An international flavour is added through the twinning association, with three countries, Zwierzyniec in Poland, St Laurent de Neste in France and Artea in the Basque country, Northern Spain.

Calendar of Events for 2009:

A packed and varied calendar has been arranged by the Society and the Groups, ranging from walks, talks, farm and field visits, to concerts. Please see centre pages for details of all these events.

Christmas Lunch:

The Society's Annual Christmas Lunch held in the Tithe Barn, Dunster, in November proved to be a resounding success and because of members'

demand, we are once again holding the Lunch again at the Tithe Barn. Because of its great popularity as a venue for all kinds of functions, the only date we could secure for the Tithe Barn in the run-up to Christmas is Friday, 27th November. Booking forms will be sent out as usual with the Autumn Newsletter, but please treat this as an early warning and put the date in your diaries to avoid disappointment as places are limited.

Dulverton Parish Plan Update:

It is a year since the Dulverton Parish Plan Committee was formed, and meetings have been held regularly and frequently, with progress made. Initially a short questionnaire was leafleted in the parish asking for residents to come forward with criticisms and suggestions for the future of the town. From the 320 points raised, the committee are now producing a more in-depth questionnaire, on Highways, Transport, Housing, Local Economy, Environment, People and Community. It is anticipated these questionnaires will be ready for delivery to all homes by the end of February. Once these are collected and analysed there should be sufficient material to move forward to the next phase, the planning and consultation.



Wanted ! Fundraiser!

Continuing with the subject of volunteers, the Society is in dire need of a volunteer fundraiser. Someone with charm, personality, energy and enthusiasm, the skills of a stock-market trader (just kidding!). Combined with the ability to persuade firms/organisations to part with their money !

Quite a tall order perhaps?

There must be someone out there who could help with raising funds for the Society's many projects, such as website design, digitising the archives, sponsorship for our publications, lectures, conferences – the list goes on. If you find you have a bit of time to spare and think that giving up a few hours a month might be fun, please ring Parish Rooms, or come into the office and have an informal chat.

NEWS from around the GROUPS ---

Bristol Group:

The West Somerset Railway gave us star billing for our journey from Bishops Lydeard. “*Reserved Seats for the Exmoor Society*” stated the signs on the carriage window. It is difficult to say whether our fellow passengers were suitably impressed but I thought a certain spring in the step was detected among some members as we alighted at Washford. We were given a tour of the Somerset and Dorset Railway Museum and after a trackside picnic lunch, which seemed to amuse passengers on the passing trains, we set off by foot for Watchet and our return rail journey.

In September we visited Cloggs Farm, Hawkridge where David Bawden and his son Andrew made us most welcome. We were shown around the farm, looked at the Exmoor Horn sheep and were given an insight into the many challenges currently faced by hill farmers. Afterwards we had an extended lunch at the London Inn, Molland where we were joined by Johnny Kingdom. To finish the day some did a short local walk.

For the third year running our main walk was led by David Clark. It was around Selworthy and Bossington and enjoyed in perfect autumn sunshine. Our year concluded with a well-attended talk by Mike Horler on Shire Horses followed by an eagerly awaited seasonal buffet. The horses were not forgotten, Mike went home with a bag of sumptuous carrots!

Chris Stone, Chairman

Barnstaple Group:

Our Autumn meetings were very successful and fortunately, my leg being out of plaster, I was able to attend the December event when Tony Evans gave us an entertaining presentation on Henry Williamson.

We now look forward to the three Spring meetings with our AGM as part of the March meeting. Alun Edwards will be resigning as Vice-Chairman and I am still hoping that someone will offer themselves as a new chairman. However, if this does not occur, I will just carry on!

A few weeks ago I was awoken from an afternoon sleep by a reporter from our local newspaper, asking me about my memories of Exmoor fifty years ago. In retrospect, I feel that my response at the time was rather inadequate. Before 1955 when Brian and I were married, my knowledge of Exmoor was limited. After that date we began to walk there regularly and explored all aspects of this unique place. I think my overall impression of those days is that the moor seemed 'wilder'. There were no waymarks or signposts and only rarely would we meet other walkers! Since then, some places have changed and features disappeared. Such as Larkbarrow Farm and the miner's cottage at Wheel Eliza. But the 'essence' of the moor, which cast its spell over us when we were much younger. remains unchanging.

Mary Chugg, Chairman



At the London Inn, Molland
From L to R: David & Andrew Bawden, Johnny Kingdom, Chris Stone

Exmoor Society Annual Literary Competition 2009

The Society is this year offering two literary awards for a piece of poetry or prose inspired by Exmoor – its landscape, fauna, flora or cultural heritage - and people's enjoyment of it. It is hoped that the poetry or prose can form part of the school curriculum requirements.

The competition is open to young people between the ages of 9 & 14 years.

Group 1: Age 9 to 11 years
Group 2: Age 12 to 14 years

Total prize money of £125 will be awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd places in each group and will be published in the *Exmoor Review*.

Entries may be hand-written or typed, with the name, age of the applicant, name of school, home address and telephone number on the back of the entry.

No entry forms will be issued but all entries must be received by the Exmoor Society no later than 31st December 2009, and should be sent to the Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DP.

Please note that the Society cannot be responsible for damaged or undelivered work. If entries are required to be returned, then an appropriately sized s.a.e. must be enclosed.

STOP PRESS !! See page 28 for the 2008 winners, together with the junior winning entry.

**Society's Farm Visit ~ Sunday, 5th July
at Smallacombe Farm, Molland**

[by kind permission of Fred & Marjorie Pook]

Farm Walk & Talk followed by Cream Tea

Meet at 12 noon. Bring a Picnic Lunch.

We look forward to seeing you all



1100th Anniversary of the Diocese

In 2009 the Diocese of Bath and Wells will celebrate the 1100th anniversary of its founding in 909. The Bishop, the Rt Rev'd Peter Price and Society Vice-President, is planning a 300-mile pilgrimage walk, known as '*Peter's Progress*' around the boundary of the Diocese.

From Wednesday, 3rd June to Saturday, 6th June the Bishop will be walking the stretch from Porlock to Hawkridge over the four days. Why don't you join him and other members of the Society on his stretch from Brendon Two Gates to Kinsford Gate, meeting at 9am on Friday, 5th June. (GR765433) The Bishop will be delighted to see you, but don't feel you have to do the entire walk!

His schedule will also include the following:
Thursday, 4th – Oare to Brendon Two Gates
Saturday, 6th – Kinsford Gate to Hawkridge



**Further information of '*Peter's Progress*' can be found at
www.bw1100.org**

1100 years How it started

The Diocese of Bath and Wells was formed in 909 so this year is its eleven hundredth anniversary. In earlier times, bishops of Sherborne had been the spiritual leaders of all of south-west England. It was too large an area to care for properly, and so the huge diocese was divided. In 909 bishops were appointed to Wells and Crediton. So for 1100 years the people of Somerset have had their own bishop. They took different titles as they moved their headquarters but they had a common aim: to proclaim God to each generation.

Society member and recipient of the 2002 Founder's Award Roger Miles sadly died on 1st August last year. We feel we can do no better than to reprint Victor Bonham-Carter's article about Roger printed in the Exmoor Review issue No. 44, as follows:

Roger Miles, Forester

The fact that Exmoor is not, and in historic times may never has been covered with trees, but was rather an area of open land reserved under the Normans as a royal hunting ground, is familiar to everyone interested in history of the moor. Yet the Forest and other parts of the National Park are by no means devoid of trees; indeed according to a recent estimate, some ten percent of the total area is wooded. Trees therefore, whether publicly or privately owned, have always been an important responsibility of the National Park Authority.

The man primarily concerned with the task, before his retirement in 1977, was Roger Miles. As this essay will show, he was responsible for overseeing operations, drafting policy, and treating with owners at a time when reliance had to be placed almost entirely upon reasoned and tactful negotiation. A difficult job for which Roger was well-fitted by education and training, and by an innate interest in the dual subjects of technical forestry and landscape design.

Roger was a West Countryman, born at Bristol in 1919 and brought up in the village of Portbury in North Somerset, with a wide stretch of fields and spinneys on his doorstep. Add to this a love of plants and trees inherited from his family, it is not surprising that he followed his bent both at school and at Balliol College, Oxford, where he read forestry and graduated in the subject. His tutor was C.S. Orwin, an inspiring teacher who presented him with a copy of *The Reclamation of Exmoor Forest* – his first significant introduction to Exmoor.

Shortly before the Second World War he visited France, Switzerland and Germany to study forest management in those countries and worked for a time in Forestry Commission nurseries in South Wales. After war service he spent a year as woodland manager on the Nettlecombe Estate and then took a job with ICI at Jealotts Hill Research Station in Berkshire where he published various technical studies on plant cultivation and fertilisers. A bout of illness caused him to return to Somerset, to Stamborough in the Brendon Hills, where he acquired a smallholding of 25 acres and added to his income by freelance forestry work.

In 1949 he was appointed Forestry Assistant attached to the planning department of Somerset County Council, where his work included the issue of

fellings licences, replanting and the acquisition of new land for afforestation. He had to deal with both urban and rural problems: for instance, diagnosis of diseased and dangerous trees, advice on tree-preservation orders and design for planting schemes and landscaping for new development of all kinds, always with the emphasis on the importance of amenity and care for the countryside.

In 1958 Roger sold up at Stamborough and concentrated the bulk of this work on Exmoor. That was the year when, following vociferous public protest, the Forestry Commission abandoned a plan to plant The Chains with conifers, an event which led incidentally to the formation of the Exmoor Society. It also resulted in a survey of the whole of the National Park in order to find land suitable for planting softwoods, which would neither do harm to the landscape nor alter the fundamental character of Exmoor as an area of mixed moor and farmland.

This survey was conducted by Roger single-handedly, and was so skilfully done that it received the warm approval of the National Parks Commission, who recommended it to all the National Parks. In 1959-60 he worked on a follow-up survey of existing woods on Exmoor which he completed for the Somerset section of the Park.

It seemed to be that all Roger's work and experience, his membership of professional forestry organisations, including the Advanced Degree he secured at Oxford in 1965, was worthy of a full-length book. This saw the light in the volume published by Faber in 1967 with the title "Forestry in the English Landscape", a classic of its kind, which generated some excellent reviews. It deserved them for Roger's work is a landmark in the literature of forestry and landscape and indicative of the broad range of interests explored, from silvicultural to aesthetic. Above all it is a monument to Roger's personal effort and achievement, despite the fearful shock of losing his right eye - due to an accident at home - which he bore with courage and the devotion of his wife, Sybil.

The Society wishes to offer its deepest sympathy to Roger's wife and his family.

EXFORD SHOW
Wednesday, 12th August 2009

Friends of St Luke's Church, Simonsbath

Update by Robin Ashburner on the continued progress at St. Luke's:

Once again, St Luke's has seen an exciting year on its road to recovery. We are getting there – thanks once again to the generosity of so many of our wonderful supporters.



In 2008 we have moved from renovating and re-roofing the outside to making a real impact upon the inside. What you see now as you go into St. Luke's is a bright welcoming interior that really says we are in business. The church has been repainted using a traditional white-clay based paint – an interesting project, as we needed to see what paints had previously been used. In the end we came to the conclusion that apart from patchwork, the church had not been properly painted inside since it was built 150 years ago. Before painting we had to re-wire the whole church, which meant gouging out channels into the old lime stone plaster – again a learning experience. Old plaster must be replaced with old plaster, and old lime plaster had to be mixed three weeks before it was used.

The next project was the heating – a cold church is an empty one, and on Exmoor it is often cold! We now have electric heating under each pew, and the number of pews can be individually heated according to the number of people in church.

The last major achievement has been the building of a balcony at the rear of the church. This has been a real success. It not only provides the extra seating needed to get us up to 150 seats, it somehow makes the whole church look more hospitable, and will provide the base under which we plan to have our serving/wash-up and socialising area.

We are now looking forward to what we hope will be our last year of improvements:

- ❖ A new organ - which is being donated by a member of the congregation.

- ❖ A new outside door – which will help prevent draughts every time the inside door is open.
- ❖ A serving/wash-up area, together with the necessary plumbing.
- ❖ Taking out some of the choir pews – to give us a stage area to enable us to put on concerts etc.

It is hard to believe how much we have managed to achieve in the last four years – we really are so grateful to the efforts and generosity of so many.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Red Deer Nursery School at Simonsbath

Mike and Sally Bickersteth have been running the Red Deer Nursery School at Simonsbath since 1995, offering a pre-school education for 2 to 5 year olds from all over Exmoor. Over the 13 years they have made it a priority to foster in the children a love of all things Exmoor. They regularly plan topics on Exmoor ponies, red deer, Exmoor banks and hedges and bird life, and are committed to introducing the children to a range of outdoor activities and using the 20 acres at Red Deer Nursery.

It became apparent to Mike and Sally that they needed a permanent all-weather site at Red Deer, but their fields are very exposed and many have stock in them. Having identified a small area of woodland which would be ideal for use all the year round, Mike and Sally approached the Society for financial help in fencing off the area to make a safe play area for the children.

The Society was delighted to help with this project, and a grant of £500 was given to the nursery school. Over the coming years large numbers of children will benefit enormously from this excellent facility, and will begin the exciting learning process of how nature works.

*The Exmoor Golden Horseshoe Ride 2009 will be held in
Exford, Somerset on 10th to 12th May*



SOCIETY'S AGM WEEKEND 2009

Saturday, 19th September
AGM at Dulverton Middle School, 10.30am



Sunday, 20th September
Society's Annual Service at St. Luke's Simonsbath, 9.30am

Murphy's Meander on 5th September

**A Moorland Walk around Larkbarrow
with Frank Murphy**

Meet 10.15am at Alderman's Barrow by the cattle grid.
(GR836426)

Approx. 5 miles, mainly level but some rough parts. Boots necessary. Please bring a picnic. Dogs welcome.

Directions: From Exford take the Porlock Road past the PO. Stay on the road ignoring a turning to the left until you come to Lucott Cross. Turn left here. Approx. one mile along the road is Alderman's Barrow. Limited parking.



THE MOORLAND MOUSIE TRUST

Credit Crunch affects Exmoor Ponies !

The Moorland Mousie Trust welcomes visitors throughout the year, giving them the experience of getting up close and personal with one of our local treasures. The Charity is a much-needed promotional tool for a rare breed pony suffering from lack of sales. Each autumn, we have welcomed a significant number of unsold moor-bred colt foals, all of whom have gone on to be domesticated and re-homed, or in some cases on to grazing schemes up and down the country. The Trust is now a nationally recognised charity, receiving its biggest accolade to date in 2008, when HRH the Duchess of Cornwall became Patron. We hope that this will go some way to help put us on a sound financial footing. For the time being, we continue to live very much hand-to-mouth, relying heavily on goodwill and voluntary help.

How can the credit crunch possibly have an effect on our native ponies?

The past few months have seen a significant downturn in both private donations and grants. Volunteers, some of whom drive several miles to the centre, have had to cut down on fuel consumption. Add to this the fact that we have opened our doors to a record number of unsold ponies in the latter part of 2008 (48 so far - more than double our usual number), and not just the usual colts, but fillies and older unwanted ponies, including pregnant mares!

Now, more than at any time since the Trust's formation, we need everyone's help. If you can volunteer – even if it's only one day a month, we would love to see you. Specific skills are much needed for one-off projects – for instance, this year we really want to make a start on the Music Room Project. If you are considering helping a charity with a donation during these financially-challenging times, remember your small local charities who may not have large reserves in the bank. If you need a gift, we have items from £5 to £499, the most popular being our “Adopt-a-Pony” gift box – a great opportunity to develop a personal association with one of our ponies, whilst supporting the work of the charity. We really need as much help as we can possibly muster to get through these tough times. The Exmoor pony is a very special part of our heritage and landscape. Next time you see them grazing contentedly on the

moor, spare a thought for those who used to be there, and what their fate might have been had it not been for the skills and dedication of a small group of enthusiasts looking for a little more help than usual for the foreseeable future! For more information please contact The Moorland Mousie Trust at **The Exmoor Pony Centre, Ashwick, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9QE.**

Tel: 01309 323093 – Email: vsherwin@moorlandmousietrust.org.uk

Website: www.exmoorponycentre.org.uk.



The Exmoor Horn Sheep Breeders' Society was formed in 1906 and celebrated its centenary year in 2006. On 20th August 1907, the first registered sale and show was held at Winsford, Somerset, when 1200 ewes were sold by auction at an average price per head of 42 shillings. The 1908 Flock Book records 132 members and 25,000 pure Exmoor Horn Sheep inspected and branded. The Flock Book of 2007 shows returns for 80 flocks and there are approximately 19,000 registered ewes. Membership is again growing with several new members establishing pedigree flocks.

DELICIOUS PURE EXMOOR HORN LAMB

Exmoor Horn lamb is produced to the following exacting quality standards:

- Produced only from **purebred** Exmoor Horn sheep.
- Farmed by members of the Exmoor Horn Sheep Breeders' Society.
- Produced from animals born and reared on Exmoor on natural upland forage based-systems.
- Lamb chill matured for a minimum of 7 days.
- High welfare and farming standards maintained by EHSBS members.

You can now experience *the true taste of Exmoor* brought straight to your doorstep by visiting **www.exmoorhornbreeders.co.uk**

Mixed fortunes for Exmoor's Moorland Birds

A major survey of breeding moorland birds on Exmoor undertaken in 2008 has revealed that the moors within Exmoor National Park continue to hold important bird populations, with nationally significant numbers of whinchat, stonechat, grasshopper warbler, Dartford warbler and regionally important numbers of merlin and possibly tree pipit.



The survey was undertaken by the RSPB, supported by Exmoor National Park Authority, Natural England and South West Water. Over 170 square km were covered by the surveyors with each area receiving two visits over the breeding period.

The survey has given a valuable insight into the status of moorland birds on Exmoor allowing a comparison to be made with the results from previous surveys spanning several decades from 1979.

The 2008 survey saw a dramatic increase in numbers of grasshopper warblers, which means that Exmoor now holds over half the South-West population of this species. Dartford warbler, whitethroat, grasshopper warbler, willow warbler, lesser redpoll, linnet and reed bunting have all seen a large expansion in their range over the last 30 years.

Bea Davis, farming and wildlife officer at Exmoor National Park Authority said: "Sadly though it is not all good news as classic upland species which were once very closely associated with Exmoor's moorlands, such as curlew, lapwing, black and red grouse and ring ouzel, have either seen large declines or have totally disappeared from the area. In their place, birds more associated with lowland habitats in the past seem to be replacing them.

"There may be evidence from the survey that climate change is beginning to have an effect on the distribution of species. Both Dartford warbler and stonechat have moved up in altitude since previous surveys, with an altitude gain of 50 metres in just six years in the case of the Dartford warbler."

1st August - Society Walk - Ancient Exmoor

10.30am meet Alderman's Barrow (GR837423). Visit Bronze Age Sites, Larkbarrow House, the Knight railway, as well as looking out for Red Deer (bring binoculars). Approx. 5 miles, no steep hills. Please bring a picnic. Dogs welcome. Ref: CB

A COUNTRY DIARY by Brian Chugg
17th March 1977

EXMOOR: Well-broken, crisp clouds partly obscure the blue sky; against the high outline of Dunkery Hill their brisk movement towards the north-east is clearly perceived. The effect on the hills and their deep, wooded valleys is that moving patches of light and enriched colour are followed up hill and down by dark shadows. An already distinctive landscape is turned into an evanescent spectacle as first one part, then another, is bathed in light or subdued by the absence of it. Overhead sky-larks are singing. Grouse still survive in small numbers on the heaths of this part of the region and, as we progress along the contour, we put some up.

Our route takes us round the swelling slope of the hill and when we rest to look down on the mingled pastures and ploughed red earth of Porlock Vale, a light shower overtakes us. As it moves on, we observe a rainbow. It focuses our attention on Luccombe church near which it fades out. Though it appears real enough, knowledge, indicates that it is but the outcome of rain, sunlight, and human sight. Without the presence of beings at the spot with their backs to the sun, that rainbow would not have been manifest. Just as the rainbow is undoubtedly transient, so qualities that we attribute to landscape are sometimes of ourselves. What is termed beautiful, is projected by us. Yet the assurance that, unlike the rainbow, the landscape exists apart from ourselves is always present, and the mind has a quiet, pleasant habit of representing it as a series of memory images. *[Reproduced by kind permission of Mrs Mary Chugg who read out this piece written by her late husband at the Society's AGM]*

Society Woodland Visit to the Holnicote Estate
Friday, 2nd October 2009

Meet at Webber's Post Car Park (GR 904440), 10 am

The Walk will include Sir Francis Acland's conifers planted in the 1920's, and the ancient oak woods of Horner. Approx. 4km including a climb up an Exmoor combe. Bring a picnic lunch to be eaten at Piles Mill (GR906466). Walking shoes and wet weather gear required.

Details: John Carslake: 01984 639083

THE BRIAN CHUGG ART AWARD 2009

For a painting based on any aspect of the Countryside

Conditions of Entry:

There are two age groups for a prize
Each winner will receive £125.

Group 1 - **Age 9 to 12 years**
Group 2 - **Age 13 to 16 years**

- The work should be two-dimensional and suitable for mounting or framing.
- It can be in any medium and must not exceed 59cms x 41cms.
- Please do not use glitter, edibles or cotton wool!
- The work must be presented unmounted.
- A label on the back of each painting must clearly state the following:
 - Name & Age of Student
 - Name of school or college attended
 - Home address & telephone number

Closing date for Entries by 15th July 2009 to be submitted to
The Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, TA22 9DP.
Tel: 01398 323335.



Judging will be carried out at the end of July by a group of professional artists. Their decision will be final.

The Society cannot accept any responsibility for damaged or undelivered work.

For further information, or for any difficulties with delivering work, please contact Mary Chugg on 01271 375620.

The two prize-winners and a selection of other work will be displayed at the Society's Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 19th September 2009 at Dulverton Middle School.

To all Parents and Grandparents – please note and pass this information on to any offspring whom you think may be interested. Paintings can be submitted by individuals as well as schools.

The Old Mineral Line – West Somerset Mineral Railway

About the project – the West Somerset Mineral Railway Project received a grant of £603,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2007. The grant has been given to the ENPA, which is leading a consortium made up of a group of local and national partners comprising The Exmoor Society, WSDC, the Forestry Commission, Somerset County Council, Watchet Town Council, English Heritage, Watchet Market House Museum, the Exmoor Mines Research Group and the Somerset Rural Youth Project. The funding will enable conservation to take place at three important industrial sites: Langham Engine House, Bearland Ventilation Flue, and the Incline. It will provide better public access to these and other sites, as well as raise awareness and enhance people's knowledge of this fascinating piece of industrial heritage. The entire project will be complete by summer 2009.

Friday, 20th March 10am – 1pm : A circular bus tour of important Mineral Line sites including Langham Engine House, the recently conserved Bearland Ventilation Flue, and the infamous "Incline", with an opportunity to explore them on foot. Meet Raleigh's Cross Inn car park. Booking essential – Please call 01398 323841.

The Exmoor Review

A number of members have written in to congratulate the Society on its bumper 50th issue. Amongst some of the accolades received was one from Stanley Johnson, as follows

Congratulations to all concerned on a magnificent 50th Anniversary Edition of the Exmoor Review. This is a volume which people will hold and treasure for years. What a lot of work you have put in to it.

The Exmoor Society has every reason to be proud of this achievement.

All best wishes,

Stanley

WINNERS of the 2008 Literary Competition

The Exmoor Society is very pleased that this Literary Competition has given children the spur to think about Exmoor and the world around them. Ninety entrants from schools all over the Exmoor area, including for the first time a large contribution from Dulverton Middle School, gave the judges great difficulty in judging the winners of the 2008 Literary Competition. From an entry selection of a very high standard, the awards are as follows:

Junior Winners: 1st Ellen McNeill, 10 (see below), 2nd Kate Ansell, 10, 3rd Charlie Islam – all pupils at Dulverton Middle School.

Senior Winners: Unable to reach a decision between the two, the judges decided to award two equal firsts. Joint winners Courtney Spry, 12 from Great Torrington School and Josef Jarmarkier, 11 from Dulverton Middle School, 3rd Aiden Dyke, 11 from Dulverton Middle School.

CONGRATULATIONS to all the winners, and we reproduce the Junior winning entry, '**Exmoor**' by **Ellen McNeil**.

Early morning and the sun is rising,
Making a pale green light on the beech trees.
In the damp woods the bluebells nod their heads.
Ewe's with woolly lambs snuffle as they feed
on the fresh young grass.

The River Barle flows swiftly as it goes under Landacre Bridge.
Hinds with their calves lie up in the summer shade.
People wave from the steam train as they watch the sea and Dunster Castle
standing proudly on the hill.

Dunkery turning from purple to brown in the afternoon sun.
Herds of Exmoor ponies are gathered into yards.
The bellowing sound of a stag roaring in the distance.
A harvest moon shines down on the darkened farmhouses.

The church windows sparkle ready for Christmas morning.
A sleek red fox leaves his paw prints on the clear white field.
In the valley the first snowdrops peep above
the earth as the evening sun goes down.

The Emperor of Exmoor – A Profile of Tom Robins

The Emperor of Exmoor – Tom Robins - was a Moor man in every way you can think of, and was concerned in Moor doings nearly all his life. At the age of 12 he was helping his father at Grattan Barton in Bratton Fleming. His own first farm was Wallover, next door to Grattan. Then he moved to South Lydcote, where he farmed for the rest of his days.

His was hill farming, and he preferred to rear Devons and Exmoor Horns because they are native to the county and to the Moor. Scotch sheep and Aberdeens he did not favour. Even here you might say he was a Moor man first and last.

Today's hill farmers certainly owe him a lot. About 1941 the Blackmoor Gate branch of the NFU met and discussed national agricultural policy in wartime. The policy discussed was the encouragement of beef cattle rearing instead of selling off the calves for veal. Tom Robins said then, "Cash will encourage the hill farmer, or any farmer", so a resolution to that effect went first to Exeter, then to London, and then to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and from them came the cash encouragement to rear beef. The policy that started with that resolution still continues.

He was hill-farming representative for the NFU in London, and his MBE for services to hill farming, of which he was justly proud, shows that Whitehall as well as Exmoor appreciated his work. But hill farming was only one of his interests, if the most important. He was chapel treasurer when the new Methodist chapel at Brayford was being built, treasurer of Brayford Football Club and of Charles and High Bray Flower Show. He was Charities Trustee of the Charity of High Bray, and paid the school's teacher. And still you have not heard the end of his interests. A life-long sportsman, he used to go shooting with Tudor Rees, sometime Liberal MP for Barnstaple, and hunted regularly with the Devon & Somerset Staghounds – in a car, when he couldn't ride.

He read widely, and wrote a little himself. The Devon County Journal published several of his short stores – on Exmoor, of course. He was extremely anxious that Exmoor history and traditions should be kept alive. It was due to him that the Solely Stone, north of Mole's Chamber on the boundary of the old Forest of Exmoor, was re-erected after it had fallen down. He had a great sense of humour, dry and shrewd, but this never led him into lack of sympathy. Indeed, he was noted for his willingness to go out of his way to help the "underdog".

Ann Westcott

ST MARY LYNCOMBE



St Mary Lyncombe is a centre where young people and families from North Devon and West Somerset can stay and enjoy being in the heart of Exmoor. In a remote, wooded location alongside the Hoarok Water with direct access onto open moorland, inside there is dormitory accommodation for 14 and outside is a camping area to accommodate up to 16 persons.

It also gives its name to a Private Trust set up in 1978, which has the responsibility to manage and conserve the area and to ensure that the centre fulfils its role of promoting the enjoyment and appreciation of Exmoor. Its unique setting allows a wide range of activities and experiences of living together in a wild, isolated situation: a place to discover the natural life of a moorland river, the trees, the birds, the animals in the valley and experience the wilderness of the high moorland.

The centre was built in 1968 and completely refurbished in 2006/7 with grants from the Big Lottery Fund and the National Park Authority's Sustainable Development Fund. These have provided the wherewithal to transform the building, its services and surrounds.

The Trust, with no endowment and no funds of its own, has always needed to attract the support of donors in sympathy with its aims and undertakings who share its concern for Exmoor and who are similarly convinced of the value of experience and knowledge of the natural environment to young people today.

The Exmoor Society has supported the centre from the outset and provided a grant for a time when Ilfracombe College was involved with its management. The Trustees are keen for greater use of the centre and are happy to consider use by many types of groups from the greater Exmoor area. Your assistance in conserving this beautiful site, managing the centre and extending its use in the local community would be greatly appreciated.

For more information ring John Gale on 01271 862553.



THE NATIONAL TRUST

Explore the spectacular Exmoor Coast
Sunday, 7th June 2009
11am to 2.30pm

Cruise the Exmoor coast aboard the MS **Oldenburg**



Refreshments available,
or bring a picnic



Meet at Ilfracombe Harbour
£15 Adult ~ £10 Child

Booking Essential – Tel: 01271 863636

2009 English National Sheepdog Trials

on
Friday 21st, Saturday 22nd & Sunday 23rd August
At
Castle Hill, Filleigh Estate, South Molton, Devon,
EX32 0RH

The English National returns to the South-West England for the first time in ten years. 2009's event will take place in the beautiful grounds of Castle Hill, a grand stately home on the Filleigh Estate, by kind permission of Lord & Lady Arran, and will include a large Country Fair being run by the North Devon Hospice. Entry to the trial will have access to the house and grounds as well.



Speakers at the Society's 2008 AGM: Front Row L to R: Ian Liddell-Grainger MP, Lady Gass, Hilary Binding, Steven Pugsley - Back Row L to R: Stephen Mulberry, Keith Bungay, Rev'd Robin Ray, Pauline Bennett, Oliver Edwards, Graham Wills, Bob Barfoot



Society Walk in October - Viewing Red Deer on the Exmoor Forest