

The Exmoor Society

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

Spring 2010 Newsletter

No. 57



Withypool in the Snow

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Writing in this Newsletter surrounded by deep snow, in a supposedly mild winter, brings home acutely the difference between weather and climate and the importance of searching for the right responses to global warming. The topic of climate change and its likely impact on Exmoor and the measures that can be taken to adjust and help mitigate it, will be increasingly aired in the coming years. Indeed, items in this Newsletter – vision for the uplands; a new national park circular; valuing natural and cultural services from the landscape – show the present thinking of public bodies. The emphasis is on peat restoration and carbon sequestration, improving water quality, reducing flooding downstream, providing energy from natural resources and working towards a low carbon economy. While recognition of the contribution of Exmoor's wetlands is to be welcomed, it is important that the Society looks carefully at the measures being suggested, and that the solutions are proportionate, cost effective, appropriate to the location and achieve the desired outcomes.

The Society's Spring Conference this year will explore the different sources of renewable energy that can be provided from Exmoor's landscape – solar, hydro, ground source heat, wind and bio-mass. All these can make a contribution but some are more appropriate than others. The challenge is to find the right ones in the right places and at the right scale and still retain the quality of the landscape and the variety of services it provides.

Whatever other changes occur in this election year, there remains the underlying problem of retaining livelihoods in the hills. More needs to be done to find innovative ways to pay for the products and services derived from the high quality landscape, and to increase the value of the brand name **Exmoor**. This is because in these ways the intrinsic values that the Exmoor Society was formed to protect and still recognise can be interpreted to new generations.

To mark a very special surprise celebratory occasion, on Sunday, 6th June Society members are invited to meet at Webber's Post car park at 3pm (GR904440). Following an unveiling at the nearby Jubilee Hut, members will then drive the short distance for tea at Piles Mill (GR906466) by kind permission of the National Trust.

All members are welcome

Please advise the office of numbers on Tel: 01398 323335

NEWS ROUNDUP

2060 Vision for the Uplands:

After consulting widely, on a proposed vision for the uplands, Natural England (NE) has now brought out its final version. It recognises the importance of the many public benefits provided by the English uplands, 75% of which are designated as national parks or AONBs. It makes a strong case for the changes that are needed, particularly in land management practices if its vision is to be realised by 2060. Emphasis is put on helping to adapt to and mitigate where possible the impacts of climate change, including the following:

- Re-wetting of blanket bogs and eroding peat soils to stop carbon loss, increase carbon stores and help flooding and water quality.
- Developing a range of grazing regimes that are matched to each place to provide not only food but much more, such as improved water quality through zero-grazing.
- Allowing greater diversity of vegetation structure and habitat mosaics including scrub and trees; some areas will be un-grazed and un-burnt.
- Producing green energy through the use of natural resources.
- Encouraging low-carbon use through more public transport, etc.

Exmoor, compared with other upland national parks, is a small area of land (264 sq. miles) and careful thought needs to be given to which natural and cultural services it can provide efficiently for the nation. The Society is arguing that many of these measures will directly affect farming on Exmoor, and there is a need for a more open debate on which ones should take priority and at the same time give choices to farmers so that they can integrate them with their farming businesses in a manner appropriate to Exmoor. There remains a vital urgency in retaining farmers in the hills who have the accumulated knowledge and skills in managing a difficult terrain. Changes to CAP and public support mechanisms as well as market conditions, all threaten their livelihoods. A policy that properly rewards farmer's provision of natural and cultural services is crucial.

Therefore, it is pleasing that Natural England also wants to encourage the creation of environmental markets through proper payment for the provision of ecosystem services. Economic evidence of the various ecological services is given. For example, environmental stewardship is estimated to have a value of £1.25 billion a year based on the extended savings of 3.46 million tonnes of CO₂ per year. The 2060 vision states that it intends to undertake several pilot projects aimed at changing the way in which land managers generate wealth and show how a wide range of ecosystem services can be turned into genuine

business opportunities. One of the pilot projects will be based in the South-West and includes Exmoor. The Society hopes to play its role in fashioning this approach. Economic valuation of public benefits is critical as long as it is remembered that there are limits to what can be meaningfully valued. The total ecological, cultural and spiritual values of a landscape such as Exmoor are beyond price and there would be no substitute for the loss of its special qualities. But, where possible, attention on proper payments for public benefits through land management practices is the right way ahead.



A New National Park Circular:

Defra proposes to replace the 12/96 DoE circular on national parks. A draft out for consultation introduces a new vision for national parks, sets out priorities to be pursued outside their statutory duties and updates the statutory duties and functions as a result of primary and secondary legislation. The circular is set in the context of sustainable development and highlights the difference of this approach within the parks and from the wider countryside. “Parks have to reflect the environmental pre-eminence of the designation and their value as an environmental resource for their respective regions and the country as a whole. Conserving and enhancing the landscape, bio-diversity, cultural heritage, natural resource use and promoting public enjoyment and understanding of them should lie at the heart of developing a strong economy and sustain thriving local communities.”



Cultural Services and Experiences of Landscapes:

A new report from NE provides baseline evidence of the cultural services and experiences that landscapes provide to society. It examines eight cultural services such as a sense of place, a sense of history, tranquillity, etc. and uncovers others that have not appeared before, e.g. stress relief, quality time and relationships. Its central finding confirms the long held views of the importance of landscape to people with a greater breadth of individual services possible than had been assumed in the past. The benefits are seen as being delivered by the landscape as an entity, a combination of features within the experience or view. All landscapes matter but people seek out different types of landscapes for different purposes to fulfil their different needs and have a portfolio of places to visit. National parks provide special landscapes with a greater aesthetic quality and more spectacular scenery. These findings will help the Society to take forward its landscape work.

Lottery Funding for Exmoor's Moorlands:

The Society was pleased to hear just before Christmas that an Exmoor bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for over half a million pounds has been successful. The bid was possible as a result of the evidence provided by the report commissioned by the Society in 2004, "*Moorlands at a Crossroads*". A partnership of 12 different bodies has come together under the lead of the Exmoor Society and has worked up 20 projects that will cost £1,355,790. The projects are divided into three headings: reconnecting people to their moorland heritage, reconnecting livelihoods to the moorland and reconditioning the moorland landscape. The Moorland Landscape Partnership project starts in April and lasts for three years and will hopefully lead to a much greater understanding and resourcing of Exmoor's wilder landscapes that are at the heart of its national park status.



Planning:

Armour Lane, Wheddon Cross (GR955350) – A re-submitted planning application to erect two large agricultural buildings on bare land in the open countryside was approved by the Authority planning committee in December. The previous application had been refused on landscape grounds and although the re-submission was largely the same, it involved a different site with more landscaping proposals to help mitigate the overall landscape impact. The Society faced a dilemma in responding to the application. On the one hand it is campaigning to support sustainable livestock farming and these proposed buildings were for a livestock enterprise. On the other hand, it has concerns on the size, shape and bulk of the buildings in a very rural landscape. The Society pressed the Authority to demonstrate sound reasons for approving the application, and that negotiations to reduce the number of buildings in another area belonging to the applicant should have been pursued.

Wind Turbines – The Public Inquiry into 13 industrial wind turbines in the setting of the national park has now finished and the results are expected in the spring (probably before a General Election). There has been an increased number of applications for single turbines in the national park. The Society positively supports single turbines provided that they are well sited, of an appropriate size, and are away from sensitive landscapes and amenities. So far the Society has raised no objections but has commented on such matters as siting, colour and size. However, it has recently objected to a turbine near Exford because of its location and visibility to the village. Planning

Officers recommended refusal as did Exford Parish Council but Authority members asked for a site visit before making a decision.



Canoeing on the River Lyn:

The Society and other interests have raised questions about canoeing on part of the River Lyn. Natural England is undertaking an Environmental Assessment and until this is completed consent cannot be given for this activity. The National Trust has now withdrawn its previous access agreements and at present is not permitting canoeing activity on the River Lyn.



West Anstey Access Project:

The Authority has consulted the Society and others over proposals to improve the moorland landscape on West Anstey Common because of the damage caused by vehicles and overuse. The Society argued that the proposed works were over-restrictive to access and at too high a cost of £75,000. The Authority is now working on another set of proposals that will reduce the amount of work required.



Exmoor Mire Restoration Project:

Since the late 1990's the Authority has been working to re-wet areas of deep peat mainly by blocking drainage ditches. The project started in a small way as a pilot at Exe Plain by using heather bales and wooden dams. The Exmoor Mire Restoration Project was launched in 2006 for three years. So far it has worked at 17 locations and blocked 50 kms of ditch and as a result 326 hectares of peat has been re-wetted. South West Water who have funded the project so far has agreed to fund a further five years of restoration work with £3.8 million being available to continue the restoration on Exmoor and commence a project on Dartmoor. The expectation is to bring 2,700 hectares of peat soil on Exmoor into favourable condition, particularly on areas with deeper peat deposits.

For some time now the Society, although recognising the importance of the aims and objectives of the project, has raised several concerns. It has argued that there is a need to review the successes or failures of the work and to take account of other interests including farming, archaeology, the historic

landscape, access, recreation and the wildness experience. Unless there is more open debate with the public and landowners and users rather than decisions being made just by public bodies, the full-scale benefits of restoration are not likely to be realised.

The Authority with Natural England, English Heritage, the Environment Agency and South West Water has agreed to carry out an external and independent review of the mire restoration to be concluded by March. Future mire restoration work will be widened to include a stronger focus on monitoring and research and a greater capacity for engagement and communication with farmers and land managers and with the local community to address any concerns arising from the project.



Award winners at the Society's 2009 AGM: From L to R- Valerie Sherwin, John Edwards, David Bawden, with President Sir Antony Acland and Chairman Rachel Thomas

Shows:

The Society attended North Devon Show, Dunster Country Fair, Exford Show and Dunster Show last year and we are so very grateful to all those volunteers who looked after the Society's display.

These shows give us the opportunity to meet members, recruit new ones and generally explain what we do, our current projects and campaigns, and listen to any concerns members have. It is good fun and if any of you feel you can give up an hour or two to help with the Society's stand at these shows, then please do not hesitate to put your name forward. Show dates for this year are:

Dunster Country Fair – Wednesday, 28th July

Exford Show – Wednesday, 11th August

Dunster Show – Friday, 20th August

Brian Pearce:

Some of you may know that Brian Pearce, Editor of the Society's Exmoor Review, was admitted to hospital in Exeter last autumn and underwent major surgery. Brian's recovery is long and slow and he is in and out of hospital undergoing further tests and treatment. I am sure you will want us to wish him the very best for a speedy return home to his wife Elaine. If any members would like to write to him, please do so care of Parish Rooms and we will make sure he receives your letters and cards.

Corporate Directory:

The Society's Businesses for Conservation Directory for 2010 is included with this mailing in which you will see there are several new members. Please do support them as much as you can and if possible encourage other businesses to become Corporate Members of the Society. The cost of membership is only £25 per annum and for that an entry is included in the Directory as well as being able to download from our website. We are currently trying to obtain funding to improve this very valuable resource for Exmoor businesses.

The Exmoor Pony Centre:

Members of the Society's Executive were invited to the Moorland Mousie Trust Exmoor Pony Centre at Ashwick, near Dulverton, when they were treated to an extremely interesting demonstration of handling the new and lively foals. We were also introduced to the foal that the Society are sponsoring for 2010, more about this can be found in the Newsletter. Thank you Val Sherwin and team for your generous hospitality – mulled wine and mince pies warmed us up on a cold December afternoon.

Country Life Awards Hawkrigde Revel:

The Hawkrigde Revel (now in its 64th year) was runner-up in the annual Country Life Awards in the category Country Event of the Year, for 'the best-loved and most idiosyncratic rural outing that symbolises all that is best in Britain and pulls the community together'. The Southwell Ploughing Match in Notts beat them to first place. The Judges were Lord Bragg, Sue Lawley (of Desert Island Discs fame), the Duchess of Devonshire, Viscount Linley and Cath Kidston (photographer). They liked the idea of it being a low-key, quirky event which summed up the locality and was special to Exmoor. The Revel was nominated by Baroness Ann Mallalieu (who has a home on Exmoor), who said: "Purple with heather and watched over by herds of wild red deer, the Revel is held on the most perfect site and welcomes a mix of locals and visitors of all ages, from across the social spectrum, to show their dogs, dress their children for the fancy dress, picnic and see friends". Congratulations to all the organisers.

Brigid Somerset:

Members will be sad to learn of the death of Brigid Somerset. With her husband Guy who was a well-loved chairman of the Exmoor Society, serving for nearly 20 years, they originally moved from Warwickshire to live in west Somerset in 1973. Both were keen walkers and loved Exmoor.

Winner at the Weald:

A painting of "The Doone Valley Exmoor" was the best in show at The Weald of Sussex Art Club exhibition held at the Marlets Hall Burgess Hill. Painted by Ann Knowler a member of the Society of Women Artists and also of the Association of Sussex Artists.

Woodland Visit:

This year's woodland visit will be held on Friday, 15th October 2010. All members are welcome to meet at Avill Ball, Dunster (Grid Ref: 977433) 10am where there is ample car parking. Please bring a picnic. We will take a gentle walk uphill to look at the Ball, Giant's Chair and Wootton Ridge. [4WD vehicles are available – please advise if a lift is required.] Then a drive through the Forestry to look at Broadwood. A meeting of the Woodland Advisory Group will follow after lunch in the ENPA Dunster Visitor Centre.

Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition:

A bumper crop of entries has been received for the Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition (held every two years), and the results will be reported in the Autumn Newsletter as judging had not taken place at the time of writing this. It is hoped to display the winning entries at the Porlock Visitor Centre prior to Easter and we must thank Denise Sage for giving us permission to do this.

Hydro-electricity for two rivers:

A public consultation is to be held into plans for mini hydro-electricity plants in North Devon along the East and West Lyn Rivers. North Devon and Devon County Councils have pledged funding for the scheme. Suzette Hibbert from the Lyn Community Development Trust said the project would make a massive difference. She said: "It would allow Lynton and Lynmouth to be independent as far as up to 700 homes are concerned – but also putting electricity into the grid".

New Exmoor Notelets:

We have a selection of new notelets produced by Jennifer Rowlandson on behalf of the Society of various photographic scenes around the moor which may be purchased from Parish Rooms at £1.30 each.

Jennifer moved to Devon some 12 years ago, the youngest daughter of a Naval officer. Travel overseas was very much part of her life and this instilled in her a love of art, architecture and the countryside which led to her never being without a camera. Born in Hampshire, she has lived in the former Yugoslavia, Gibraltar and in her early twenties in Australia. After 40 years as a career headmaster's secretary in three independent schools in Sussex, Surrey and finally Blundells in Tiverton, she has found peace and solitude walking on Exmoor and around the south-west coast. With a collection of over 3000 slides, her arrival in Stoodleigh coincided with a change from slides to prints and then to digital prints. Exmoor is so photogenic that her collection of prints became too many and the idea of photographic greetings cards was born to raise money at Stoodleigh Church Fete a few years ago. Since then this has turned into a cottage industry still raising money for the church and the current project is the restoration of its bells, as she started bell-ringing in time for the millennium. In retirement, life has slowed down a bit but there is still plenty to occupy her time with involvement in the locality playing the organ, bell ringing, accompanying the Oakford Players in their shows and pantomimes and, of course, walking and photographing the coast and moors. Jennifer is also a keen walker and some of you will have joined her on her walks as part of the Society's Walk Programme.



Membership News:

With just over a year in the post of Membership Secretary I at last feel that I am beginning to get a grip on the job! I have had lots of advice and support of course from Pat and Rachel here in the office, initial expert help from Pauline, and on the finance front, invaluable and patient guidance from Carole Bament and Paul in her office. Thank you all very much.

But you, the Members, have also been very good to me. Without full anticipation of the potential pitfalls with the semi-automated computer systems, I have on occasions chased some of you for membership already paid, and sent reminders to Life Members. Thank you for your forbearance and I think, and hope, that these errors are on the decrease.

Society subscriptions seem to be in a pretty healthy state. You are a very loyal membership and obviously have a very strong attachment to this beautiful area, and appreciation of all the ways in which the Society works to preserve it for future generations. Support comes from all over England and Wales, from Greece, Germany, the UAE and the USA. We are more than grateful for your financial support in difficult economic times. At the moment we offer a concessionary rate of membership (which we are hoping to phase out) and people have the option to pay a reduced fee of £8 and £12 (as opposed to £15 and £20) for individual or family membership. Costs continue to rise each year, with another increase in postage coming shortly, and this of course reduces the proportion of the subscription that is available to the Society to spend. Bearing in mind that the Review, (sent to Members annually as part of the subscription), retails at £5.99, and there are also two other mailings with the Spring and Autumn Newsletters and Annual Report, you can see that there is not a lot left over for the Society's work. Could I just ask those of you at present paying a reduced subscription who feel that they could in fact spare a full membership, to consider this option?

We continue to claim the extra 28p in the pound for those of you who are able to Gift Aid your subscription. This bonus brought in an additional £2,624 last year. But could I please remind Members that if your circumstances change and you cease to pay Income Tax then you do need to inform us so that we do not claim erroneously. (Conversely of course, if you should start to pay Income Tax then please do contact us for a form to fill in so that the Society may benefit even more from your subscription.) Another way in which you can save the Society money, and therefore at no cost to yourself make more money available for the Society's work, is to pay your subscription by Bankers' Order. This saves the cost of my time in producing an annual invoice, the cost of the paper and the stamp. (It also saves your time, paper and cost of the stamp!) A Bankers' Order form will come out with your invoice for all Members who at present pay by cheque, so do please consider this option. When entering the membership fees I am struck by the generosity of many of you in contributing more than the requested subscription. It is not possible (for reasons obviously of cost) to individually write and thank each of you, but please know that your extra support is noticed and very much appreciated.

Gina Rawle, Membership Secretary



The Moorland Mousie Trust

“To promote and conserve the Exmoor pony”

Patron: H.R.H. The Duchess Of Cornwall

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I was thrilled to be considered a suitable recipient of the Exmoor Society's Founders Award in 2008/9, and when told that I was to be awarded £100 to spend as I chose, I thought that it would be a nice idea if you could all share it with me. I'm fully aware that £100 divided by several hundred members doesn't seem like a sensible investment, so I decided that we could all have a share in an Exmoor pony (what else would I do with it?). So, the Exmoor Society have now sponsored a foal for twelve months. This is one of our fund-raising activities in which people participate every year when the surplus foals arrive. It's an excellent way for anyone to find out more about our work and to enjoy 'owning' a pony without having to get up early in the morning to look after it!

Having taken the decision that this was what I was going to do, I was thrilled to welcome members of the Executive to the Moorland Mousie Trust's HQ at the Exmoor Pony Centre so that they could choose their foal. It was a bitterly cold afternoon, but I have it on good authority that everyone enjoyed themselves. A colt was duly chosen, and has been christened 'Kickums'; an appropriate name for the Society to have chosen, it being the name of Jan Ridd's horse in the Lorna Doone story; although I do have to admit that the staff were a little concerned that the name may encourage our new inmate to behave inappropriately. Please read below the Exmoor Society's first update for their new foal, and I look forward to keeping in touch with his progress for the next twelve months.

Registered Exmoor Pony No.: H67/123. Born 2009 on Brendon, into Herd H67 belonging to the South Family at Farley Water. Pet name 'Kickums'.

When your foal first arrived at the Exmoor Pony Centre he was an immediate hit with staff and volunteers alike. Although very shy and nervous, his bright colour and big tummy meant that he stood out from the crowd. His handling/ domestication began in December

and he quickly learned that human company was to be enjoyed. He was working towards wearing a headcollar, when Christmas and bad weather struck, so sadly his education has come to a halt for the time being. By the time you read this we hope to be back to normal. He is a lovely natured colt who has teamed up with a smaller foal called Woody. They are thick as thieves and enjoy hurtling around the field when not 'at school'. Once we are happy with Kickums' progress, he will be ready to join the other colts and geldings on a grazing scheme where he can grown on and mature, until he is ready to return to the Centre to be gelded. We look forward to seeing how this chap progresses as many ponies from his herd have matured into excellent riding ponies. **Val Sherwin, Founder**



Kickums and pal Woody watching their inmates in the school

WIMBLEBALL CELEBRATION WOODLAND IN WINTER

Whether enjoying a walk in the woodland, or just getting a bit of crisp, fresh air followed by a well-earned cream tea or hot chocolate, Wimbleball Lake has something for everyone in every season. The Woodland Discovery Trail follows the edge of the lake between the tearoom parking area and the majestic dam and aims to encourage people to leave their cars and go for a short walk, perfect for those chilly winter days.

March 2008 saw the launch of this new woodland at Wimbleball Lake on Exmoor. The 'Celebration Woodland' is jointly supported by South West Water, the Exmoor Society and South West Lakes Trust and provides an area where visitors can contribute to the landscape and environment. Trees have been donated for a variety of reasons; the celebrations of a birth or in memoriam of someone special, and some people have just wanted to contribute to this fantastic scheme. A dedication book is hosted in the Wimbleball Lake tearoom for special messages and remembrance.

Three phases of planting have taken place meaning that a grand total of 1,508 trees have been planted to create this new special woodland which will be there for many years to come and for future generations to enjoy.

Trees can still be donated for a minimum of £20; the donation covers on-going maintenance and a listing in the dedication book. Further details on this joint scheme are available from The Exmoor Society accompanied by a s.a.e. The South West Lakes Trust has recently launched a second Celebration Woodland at Roadford Lake near Okehampton, Devon.

South West Lakes Trust celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2010. The highlight of the celebration at Wimbleball Lake will be the Exmoor Celebration Land to Lake event 16 -18 July. The celebration will offer beginners' sailing, windsurfing and kayaking taster sessions, rural skills demonstrations and burying a time capsule with the involvement of local schools, clubs and volunteers. Live music, entertainment and a firework display will make the celebration more memorable.

Exmoor Enterprise - Tony Nicholson, Press Officer, Lynton & Barnstaple Railway



Exmoor Enterprise is the name that has been given to the project to rebuild the rest of the legendary Lynton & Barnstaple Railway across Exmoor. The famous two-foot gauge line was opened on 11 May 1898 by the wealthy publisher and Lynton benefactor Sir George Newnes – the centenary of whose death falls on 9 June 2010 – and closed on 29 September 1935, nearly seventy-five

years ago. Since 2004, however, one mile of the old railway has once again been running from Woody Bay Station nearly 1000ft up on Exmoor to Killington Lane on the edge of the village of Parracombe proving a very popular tourist attraction, carrying 35,000 people in 2009.

Now the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust is planning Phase 2 of the reconstruction project, to reopen the route from Lynton to Blackmoor Gate and Wistlandpound Reservoir, providing a park-and-ride facility for Lynton from outside the ENP and take up to 50,000 cars a year off that section of the A39. Phase 2 has been costed at about £30 million – the same sum as the Barnstaple Downstream Bridge – and once completed is projected to bring £15 million into the local economy every year with minimal intrusion into the irreplaceable Exmoor landscape. The long-term aim (Phase 3 of the project) is to extend the line right back to Barnstaple. A draft planning application for Phase 2 has been discussed with ENPA officials and the Trust hopes to see the project included in the Local Development Framework for the ENP which the Authority is now consulting upon.

The Trust looks forward to presenting their proposals to the Exmoor Society's AGM on 18 September.

GOLDEN HORSESHOE - Exford - 16 to 18 May 2010

This event sees horses and riders tackling competitive classes, including the ultimate challenge of the 100 mile Golden Horseshoe class itself. First held in 1965 over just 50 miles, the Golden Horseshoe was the first long distance ride to take place in the UK. Held in Exford, riders are provided with an achievable challenge in all classes.

NEWS from around the GROUPS ---

Bristol Group:

The Group's talks are normally held in Clevedon and in a departure from the norm, we visited Brendon in the Doone Valley. Held at the Staghunters Hotel on the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, the morning started with a replay of Chamberlain's chilling announcement (emblazoned in the memories of those who heard it on 3rd September 1939 at 11.15am) and was followed by two separate talks. Hazel and I began with *Exmoor at War 1939-45*, the story liberally sprinkled with anecdotes of how Exmoor coped, which may have revealed a few surprises, and then Richard McLaughlin presented the intriguing story of the *Exmoor Rocket*. I am pleased that both talks were enthusiastically received by over 40 members and guests.

Torrential rain during lunch threatened but did not deter a number of us doing the short walk around Brendon and Rockford before taking cream tea at Brendon House. A different and great day out for us and useful to the local economy too! The pub provided a well subscribed lunch, some delightful teas were enjoyed whilst others visited Len, Rockford's indomitable ice-cream man to select from his variety of flavours.

Andrew Hawkins welcomed us to Warren Farm in July but alas the warmth of his welcome was not matched by the weather. It did not stop us venturing onto a very marshy moor to appreciate the fine views which surround this beautifully located property. The seasons seem to have become increasingly unpredictable, or maybe that should be predictable. On a perfect October day Mike Wilkinson led a delightful 6-mile walk from Exford stopping to picnic on route. A gloriously memorable day.

To bring our year to a close Dr John Travis recounted his *Reminiscences of an Exmoor Hotelier*. Some extraordinary and amusing stories, not short on nostalgia and mixed with some interesting observations on the changes in Exmoor tourism over the last 40 years.

With attendances showing a 15% increase over an already successful 2008 we look forward to next year's programme starting with a January walk in the Quantocks.

In November the Bristol Group sponsored a weekend visit by 20 students, teachers and helpers from Clevedon School and the St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School Bristol to the Pinkery Centre. Under the guidance of the Exmoor national park staff, the students spent a day working on the Mire Restoration Project and the following day helped with footpath clearance. So impressed were they with their visit a number of the party have made arrangements to return to the Centre again in the spring. Bristol Group's Chris Stone says they are delighted with the response: "We had always hoped that the experience might create a lasting appreciation of Exmoor – we are very optimistic".

Chris Stone, Chairman

Barnstaple Group:

We are very sad to report that Muriel Weeks, the wife of our Treasurer, and a most loyal and helpful member of our Group, died suddenly earlier last year. We will miss her very much.

Mary Chugg, Chairman

Porlock Group:

We held our AGM in October when we were pleased to elect Dr Duncan Jeffrey onto our committee. Regrettably, we failed to elect a Chairman following the resignation of John Chiswell who had ably held the position for the last three years. However, after the AGM we had a volunteer and at our subsequent committee meeting we were pleased to co-opt Dr Lesley Evans onto the committee and appoint her as acting Chairman. Following the business of the AGM we were delighted to welcome the Exmoor Society President, Sir Antony Acland, who gave us a fascinating account of some of the past members of the Acland family.

To round off the year we held our Annual Dinner at the Dunster Castle Hotel. This was a very enjoyable occasion attended by over 20 members and everyone appreciated the good food.

Peter Leather, Group Secretary

**The Exmoor Society's
Spring Conference
Friday, 30th April 2010
'Energy Exmoor'
10am to 3.30pm approx.
The Town Hall, Dulverton,
£12 per person to include refreshments
Booking essential – Please use booking form**



Global climate change is said to be one of the greatest issues facing humanity now and in the future. Emphasis is on the urgency of dealing with increasing carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere mainly as a result of dependence on fossil fuels. It is argued that there is a real need to shift to a low-carbon economy based on greater energy efficiency and advanced renewable technology.



At a local level, Exmoor has the potential to use its natural assets to produce sustainable energy and provide opportunities for helping local economies and communities.



The Exmoor Society Spring Conference will explore the challenges to be faced in utilising renewable energy from Exmoor's natural resources and at the same time retaining landscape quality, wildlife and heritage for which the area is famous.



The speakers will set the context of the wider climate change debate, look at the potential for 4 different sources of energy: hydro, wind, bio-mass and solar. Case studies will be given of successful schemes at a community and household level that suit Exmoor and help moving it towards a low-carbon economy.

The Perambulation of the Royal Forest of Exmoor – 19th June 2010

The Exmoor Perambulation is one of the most challenging walks in the Exmoor annual calendar. In 1279 King Edward ordained the Sheriff of Somerset to firmly observe the perambulations of the Forest of Somerset afterwards called the Royal Forest of Exmoor. Some 20 years ago, the Exmoor Youth Association revived the Perambulation which is now an annual event. During the 31 miles of cross country walking you will be taking in breath-taking views and accessing parts of the national park not normally open to the public. You will also be participating in history as the Perambulation dates back over 725 years !

Exmoor bids to become a 'Dark Sky Reserve' – The ENPA has launched a bid to become the first English 'Dark Sky Reserve', an award that would recognise Exmoor as one of the best places for stargazing in the world. Dark Sky Reserves are singled out for lack of 'light pollution' a phenomenon that has been on the increase over the past few centuries, as the night-time illumination of roads and buildings sends light into the sky, obscuring all but the brightest stars.



The Society's 2009 AGM

Friends of St Luke's Church, Simonsbath Update by Robin Ashburner



Everyone is glowing with the success of the first of St Luke's performed concerts – in December a full house was treated to two hours of the most fantastic music by Tamsin Waley-Cohen on the violin, and Roger Ashby on the new organ. This as the first test of all that has been achieved at St Luke's – wonderful music in a wonderful setting. By the time you receive this newsletter a Welsh Male Voice Choir of 60 voices will have performed at the end of January. What has changed in 2009 is that the church can now put on such events. This is the coming together of all the changes and improvements undertaken in the last five years. This year has seen the following:

- ❖ The removal of the majority of the choir stalls to give what amounts to a stage area. One surprise was under these pews a disused badger set was found. Obviously there was a time when there was more life under the pews than in the pews!
- ❖ Next there is the lovely new organ – a generous gift from one of the local parishioners.
- ❖ The pulpit had to be moved into the corner to prevent the view of the altar and stage area being blocked.
- ❖ The last major achievement was the new wash up area at the back of the church. This vital addition took a year of paperwork before the go-ahead was given.

What is next? A new door is much needed on the outside end of the porch, to help keep the draught out of the church. There is also a feeling that a sound system is needed. The more that is achieved with the church means the more people want to use it, and of course the more it is used, the easier it is to get it to pay its way.

Everyone associated with St Luke's are so extremely grateful for all those magnificent benefactors who have enabled the to get the church from the point of closure to what is now a welcoming and joyful place of worship – and a real asset for the whole community to use.

2010 has just got to be the year of completion. Do visit if you can.

EXMOOR SOCIETY POETRY COMPETITION

Entries for this inaugural competition are invited now.

The entries will be anonymously judged by a panel of established poets, who will award three cash prizes. The winning poems will be published in the Exmoor Review.



Conditions of Entry

- The competition is open to anyone aged 16 and over.
- Poems should be in English, unpublished, and own original work.
- Poems must have been inspired by Exmoor in some way, which could be topical, historical, archaeological, contemporary life and work, literary, recreational, or spiritual, for example.
- Entries must have a title (for identification), be typed single-spaced on A4 paper, with a separate sheet for each poem, and must not bear the name of the author or any other form of identification.
- The titles of poems and the poet's name and address (and e-mail if possible) must be attached on a separate sheet of A4
- Poems may be any length up to 40 lines, including spaces. Please, plain fonts only!
- Every poem will be read by at least two judges separately, before shared deliberation takes place.
- Membership of the Society is not obligatory, and entry to this inaugural competition is free.
- Receipt of entry will be acknowledged if a stamped addressed post card marked 'Receipt' is enclosed with the entry.
- Poems will be returned if an appropriate stamped addressed envelope accompanies the entry.
- Copyright will remain with the author, but the organisers reserve the right to publish the winning poems in the Exmoor Review.
- No one connected with organising or judging the competition is eligible to enter.
- The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Entries to be sent to The Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton TA22 9DP.
- **Closing date 30th June 2010.**



The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No 245761



2010-2011

President:

Sir Antony Acland KG GCMG GCVO

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Mr Nicholas Harvey, MP

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