

# The Exmoor Society

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

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## *Spring 2011 Newsletter*

No. 58



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### **STOP PRESS !!**

#### **2010 Literary Competition Winners**

**Judging has taken place for the 2010 Literary Competition, and from a huge entry, we are pleased to announce the following winners:**

**Seniors:**           1<sup>st</sup>     Edward Taylor, West Buckland School  
                          2<sup>nd</sup>     Clover May, West Buckland School  
                          3<sup>rd</sup>     Ellen McNeill, Dulverton Middle School  
                          Highly Commended – Kate Ansell, Dulverton Middle School

**Juniors:**           1<sup>st</sup>     Hattie Harley, North Molton Primary School  
                          2<sup>nd</sup>     Yasmina Bache, Dulverton Middle School  
                          3<sup>rd</sup>     Nell Hemansbrook, West Buckland School

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS 2011**

Hope Bourne died on August 26<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the age of 91. She was a remarkable person in many ways. St Andrews Church, Withypool was full to overflowing for her funeral on the 10<sup>th</sup> September and was attended by both Exmoor people and those from around the country as she had an enormous following. Her books, writings and drawings, as well as two documentaries on her life, remain as a concrete legacy. They are the result of her having been inspired by Exmoor's landscape, and the way of life of local people. What made her an inspiration to others was not only these remarkable literary skills about Exmoor, but the way she lived off the land in a remote spot at Ferny Ball in a caravan for over 20 years and, even when moving into sheltered housing at Withypool, making few concessions to modern comforts.

Hope's life in many ways symbolises an important aspect of Exmoor that is often overlooked and neglected, and that is its unique heritage. So it is a happy coincidence that the Society had already decided this year to draw attention to two aspects of our landscape culture. First, is the inspiration Exmoor provides to so many people because of the beauty, wildness, wildlife and open spaces of its landscapes resulting in renowned literature and visual arts and a calendar of events, attracting many people to visit Exmoor annually. The second aspect of cultural heritage is how people have used the landscape leaving behind an important archaeological record onwards starting as early as 8,000 years ago. People earning their living from the land through centuries of adapting hill farming practices are as important today, with lessons to be learned from them and skills to be passed on by them to the next generation, on how to manage this complex landscape in the future.

The Spring Conference this year is to be held on Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> May and will be focussed on Exmoor's Heritage. The Conference will be looking at how people have managed the landscape in the past so that we can understand how to manage it in the future. We can also learn from the way the landscape has and continues to inspire great artistic and literary works.

Hope Bourne has left all her estate, including books, writings, drawings, memorabilia and unpublished manuscripts to the Exmoor Society. Through the year we will be making reference to this important contribution to our archives and library and hope to culminate with a special exhibition celebrating her life and work and developing a Hope Bourne Bequest section at Parish Rooms.

In this year of austerity, Exmoor provides such a welcome contrast to normal day living. Look at some of the things it offers – stunning scenery, tranquillity, silence, dark skies, majestic stags and Exmoor ponies, physical challenges in the wild, quiet reflections of memories and associations with Exmoor and a traditional way of life that still remains.

Please come to Exmoor, bring friends, search out and enjoy its special treasures and support local businesses and in particular those connected with providing produce from the land for it is to our hill farmers that we must be so grateful for maintaining this unique place and culture.



Hope at Ferny Ball in the 1970s

# NEWS ROUNDUP

## **Defra's Priorities & Review of Governance Arrangements of National Parks**

Defra, the government department responsible for farming, environment and rural affairs, has set out its new priorities for 2011-2015. They include support for British farming and food production, enhancing the environment, helping communities and wildlife adapt to climate change and supporting a strong, green economy.

Of particular interest is the commitment to review the governance arrangements for national parks in order to increase their accountability.

The review will look at ways in which the governance of National Park Authorities (NPAs) can be made more effective, more responsive to concerns of local communities and to consider the extent to which different arrangements are appropriate for different NPAs. It requires responses on the following:

- Whether the membership, size and composition of NPAs should be changed?
- Whether the selection process for all members of NPAs can be improved and a time limit on how long they can serve?
- What additional measures can be taken to strengthen links with local communities?
- Whether NPAs can improve their effectiveness and accountability generally.

The Exmoor Society has responded to the consultation, which can be seen on our website.



## **National Park Authority Cash Funding Settlement**

Defra announced just before Christmas that the cash funding settlement for the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) is to be reduced by over 5% in 2011/2012 and indicated that in future years a similar cash reduction in the Defra grant will continue. The ENPA has responded by saying that it has already made some savings by not refilling posts of staff who have left or taken voluntary redundancy or retired and so will be able to balance the

budget next year. The ENPA also indicated that this gives a chance to review all their services and activities and refocus the work of the Authority on working more closely with people who care for the National Park. Future delivery of services will concentrate on three primary communities; owners and managers of land and heritage assets in the National Park, the wider resident community and people who live and work in the National Park and finally people who use the National Park, including local residents and visitors. Certain important partnership projects will not be impacted on, such as the Moorland Landscape project, the Mires on the Moors project and a new Information Centre at Lynmouth.



### **The Society's Response to the ENPA's Future Priorities**

The ENPA consulted with the Exmoor Society over future priorities and the Society has responded by emphasising that there is now an opportunity to refocus the services provided by the Authority around its core purposes. It argues that the conservation assets provide the foundation stone of why a separate authority is needed to manage Exmoor. Particularly important in managing the land and hill farming practices is the need to reconcile the requirements of farming with those of the environment. The Society strongly believes that the ENPA could become the government agent for delivering agri-environment schemes rather than Natural England because it has a greater understanding of local conditions, farm businesses and a more holistic approach to landscape management. The Forestry Commission and English Heritage already delegate decision making to the Authority and Natural England now needs to follow.

Promotion of enjoyment and understanding of the National Park purposes and the education, interpretation and information services are vital. However, some of these activities carried out by the Authority could be achieved in other ways through using the private sector, voluntary bodies and volunteers.

Local planning decisions are the most contentious area of the ENPA's work and the Society believes that the Authority could be more effective through delegating some of the decision making on planning applications. The table below shows that most planning applications are decided by delegation to officers, and that very few come before the planning committee. Some of these could be decided by Parish Councils as is

suggested in the Government's Localism Bill that is at the present moment going through Parliament.

### **Planning Statistics for the Exmoor National Park 2010**

#### **Planning applications**

How many were received throughout the year?	315
How many delegated?	239
How many decision?	273
How many determined by Committee?	34
How many approved by Committee?	30
How many went against officers' recommendations?	4

#### **Affordable Housing**

How many affordable houses were granted planning permission?	35
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#### **Wind Turbines**

How many wind turbine applications determined?	7
How many were passed?	6
How many went against officers' recommendations?	2

Strategic planning by the ENPA is crucial but there needs to be a better understanding of the relationship between the national park management plan and the local development framework.

The Society summed up its responses by saying that the ENPA should become a more enabling body, setting standards, supporting excellence, coordinating activities and more customer focussed. It should be less involved in the direct delivery of services that can be carried out by other sectors and communities. It should have more direct powers in decision-making and delivery of those services that directly affect the National Park purposes.



### **National Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012**

The annual meeting with partners had to be cancelled in the autumn because of low attendance. The Society has constantly supported the Authority in the importance of this plan for Exmoor. Through 2011 the Authority will be consulting on the new plan for 2012 – 2017.

## **Mires Project**

The Mires Restoration Project funded by South West Water has just completed its first phase and, although important as a concept and pilot project, it has faced complexities when delivered on the ground. Consequently the Society welcomed the decision by South West Water to commission a report on what has happened so far and what changes should occur before the next stage was started. The independent report made over 49 recommendations and indicated the substantial changes are needed if the pilot project is to be successful in rewetting up to 2,500 hectares of Exmoor's peatland. The Society welcomed these findings and argued that all the recommendations should be followed. It is pleased that the governing structure of the project is to be widened to include both the farming and voluntary sector voices so that the public bodies can discuss the complexities and differences more openly. The Society has accepted a request to serve on this Delivery Group.



## **Moorland Management**

A recent seminar hosted by the ENPA on moorland management attracted a large turnout of farmers, key public bodies and the voluntary sector. Speakers included Simon Thorpe from The Heather Trust who emphasised the importance of active management through swaling, grazing and in some cases cutting the heather. He warned of the dangers of heather becoming scrubby and of even age, and the need for a more dynamic approach to moorland management issues. Local farmer Alan Collins, a member of ENPA, gave an interesting account of his farming practices on a traditional Exmoor hill farm over the last forty years and the changes he has seen. He said that farmers had lost trust in the prescriptive approach required by Natural England. A speaker from Natural England's national office gave the national perspective on the heather and grass burning codes and regulations. He said that his organisation wished to see a more diverse moor with patches of vegetation at different heights to maximise wildlife benefits.

Discussions from delegates concentrated on swaling practices but also emphasised other factors, such as the importance of stocking rates at different times of the year. The overriding view was that the national guidelines on swaling were not sensitive enough to local conditions and as a result some farmers have withdrawn stocks, particularly cattle, from the moorland part of their farms. The Exmoor Society argued that unless there



was a closer understanding of traditional hill farming practices and the outcomes required from Exmoor, then neither sectors will be satisfied. Environmentalists will not achieve their desired outcomes with the moor becoming scrub and woodland and farmers will be forced to turn their farm businesses away from the moorlands and intensifying production on other parts of their farm. The Society hopes to continue to play a challenging role in moorland management and to seek more consensus over conservation outcomes and farming practices. It sees moorland management as part of the Big Society approach of more local decision-making.

**AGM 2011 – The new innovation held at last year’s AGM of a Head-to-Head Debate proved such a success, that we hope to do the same again for this year’s AGM. So now is the time to start thinking of those important and lively questions.**



AGM 2010: From L to R – Paul Cottington (and Dorothy), Andrew Cooper, Rachel Thomas, Sir Antony Acland, Jackie Smith, Steve Ford with Robin Ashburner behind

**Hope Bourne** - Hope died in August of last year and we were very sad to lose an old friend, member of the Society and passionate supporter of Exmoor. Hope has bequeathed all her books, drawings and manuscripts to the Society and it is our intention exhibit some of her work in due course.

**Corporate Directory** - You will see a new look to the cover of the Society's Corporate Business Directory included with this newsletter and we would recommend that you use these businesses and support the organisations whenever possible, and to encourage new Corporate Members. The benefits of becoming a Corporate Member are many: Distribution to 2000 plus members, the Directory is on our website at [www.exmoorsociety.com](http://www.exmoorsociety.com) and you will be supporting the principles of the Exmoor Society and our passion for Exmoor. On top of this you will receive our flagship publication "The Exmoor Review" (currently retailing at £5.99) each year, as well as two other mailings. All this for £25 per annum.

**Calendar of Events** - In the centre pages you will find a packed Calendar of Events, including a range of Society walks, in particular, two walks in conjunction with the Dartmoor Preservation Association for members of both Societies. One walk held on Dartmoor on 9<sup>th</sup> April and a reciprocal walk on Exmoor on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. All the Groups have a packed calendar this year also.

**Exmoor Calvert Trust** - We are delighted to accept an invitation by the Centre Director to have a guided tour of the Exmoor Calvert Trust on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2011, followed by a light supper. Meeting at 6pm at the Calvert Trust, Wistlandpound, Kentisbury, near Barnstaple EX31 4SJ. Tickets are very limited and will be sold on a first come basis at £10 per person. Please make cheques payable to "The Exmoor Society" and send to Parish Rooms, together with a s.a.e if an acknowledgement and directions are required. There will also be an opportunity for those athletic members to try their hand at the zip wire and abseiling !

The Calvert Trust provides all year round, challenging outdoor activity breaks for disabled people of all ages and abilities together with their families, friends and carers. Set within a stunning location, overlooking the Wistlandpound Reservoir on the edge of the Exmoor National Park.

**Annual Christmas Lunch:** Having just had a very successful Christmas lunch in Winsford it seems a long way off to be thinking about the next one. Please make a note in your diaries that the Exmoor White Horse in Exford will host this year's lunch on Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Tickets will remain at £20 per person to include a traditional Christmas lunch with all the trimmings. Booking forms will be sent in the August mailing.

## GETTING INVOLVED

**Gift Idea:** Why not give Society membership as a present?

A gift of membership to a friend or relative for a year allows a real taste of what the Society can offer. Subscription rates and application forms are available by post from the Society offices, or they can be downloaded from the Society's website at [www.exmoorsociety.com](http://www.exmoorsociety.com).

**Making a Legacy:** The Society continues to need money to fund campaigns, to lobby and to influence, and you can make a difference with a legacy, however small, to help the Society continue to campaign on your behalf. If you would like the funds to go to a specific cause, such as woodlands, education, then the Society will treat this as a restricted fund, and you know that nothing will be spent on administration.

Alternatively, you could leave a Life Membership to your children or younger friends.

Another means of giving on death can be to request that mourners give donations to the Exmoor Society in lieu of flowers or in memoriam. We ask that you consider the Society when reviewing your Will.

**Volunteers Wanted:**

- To help develop and maintain the Society's website and IT work.
- To help out at Society events, including guided walks and helping at summer shows.

- To help us in the office with various administration task.

Send us an email (or write) in the first instance to: [info@exmoorsociety.com](mailto:info@exmoorsociety.com). Tell us a bit about yourself and which areas you would be interested in getting involved in as an Exmoor Society volunteer. We will then get in touch with you and hopefully see how best we can work together.

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## Membership News:

Like you, our members, the Exmoor Society is suffering from steady increases in expenses as postage, fuel, electricity, all inexorably creep up. This, and the realisation that it costs the Society £8.50 a year to send out information to each member, led to an appeal to members currently paying a concessionary subscription rate, a rate that is no longer available for new members.

Since September 2010 I have been writing monthly to **concessionary members** on behalf of the Society asking if it is at all possible for them to increase their subscription from £8 to the £15 individual membership rate, or £12 to £20 family membership. Thank you all for responding as generously as your individual circumstances permit; and for those who will receive a letter in the future can I please stress that whether or not you feel able to respond positively to our appeal, your concessionary status is still valued, we do not wish you to feel in any way slighted by our request and we do not wish to lose you as a member. In the four months from September to December this appeal has raised some £500 in extra subscription revenue which will make a real contribution to the ongoing work of the Society.

On the membership side we have two appeals also!

- We have a member in **Taunton**, living in TA2, who has no transport but would very much like to attend Society events. If there is anyone in that area who could offer a lift please contact the office here in Dulverton.
- And for those members living in or around **South Molton** – you may not know that there is a thriving local Group in your area. A programme of talks, Exmoor visits, the annual Dinner, and AGM are all available for a yearly membership of £5. The next event is on Tuesday 26 April and Mr Jones, Group Chairman, can be contacted on 01769 572276 to give you further details.

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**Gina Rawle, Membership Secretary**

**Sermon given at the  
Exmoor Society's Annual Service at St  
Luke's Parish Church, Simonsbath,  
Exmoor on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2010 by  
Rev'd David Weir, Rector**



Yesterday I attended the AGM of the Exmoor Society and it gave me a great insight into the working and aims of the society.

It was great to see Robin Ashburner acknowledged for the exceptional work he accomplished here in restoring St Luke's, the Exmoor Society's adopted church. Robin is always ready to say that he was part of a team effort here; and the rest of the team and all those who contributed and supported the work are equally ready to acknowledge his special and crucial role in the renaissance at St Luke's, Exmoor.

Today's Gospel tells of Jesus overturning the tables of the money-changers and driving them out, in an attempt to restore the Temple in Jerusalem; and there has been a restoration here, not involving such dramatic action – different times and conditions require different approaches; but the key message of this morning's Gospel is to be true to your core aims and not to be distracted. This is a useful message for all institutions and a useful focus as we pause for reflection this morning on the core aims of the Exmoor Society.

Yesterday the chairman Rachel Thomas said the foundation stone of the Exmoor Society is that the essence of Exmoor is maintained while at the same time allowing life to flourish for people who live on Exmoor; and in your banners you declare that you are for landscape, people and wildlife. This immediately establishes a dynamic tension, illustrated yesterday in a discussion about hydroelectric units, canoeists and salmon sharing vulnerable river-beds. Yesterday's AGM provided a wonderful space for dialogue and for airing different points of view and emphases in a peaceful and structured way.

Perhaps if there had been an AGM at the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus' actions would not have been so dramatic!

I was reminded of Jesus removing what he believed to be distracting clutter from the Temple when Rachel spoke about Hope Bourne's view that the clutter of sign posts distracted people from a proper appreciation of the special quality of Exmoor's wilderness; and she wanted to remove them! But, I was reassured by

the Society's continued commitment to gathering evidence from a wide range of sources and attempting to influence policy – rather than engage in more direct action. The most passionate exchanges in the discussions argued for a commitment to negotiation and dialogue.

In a wonderful talk about his wildlife programmes Andrew Cooper said 'It is when wildlife starts writing the script for you that things start lighting up!' It makes sense to put wildlife at the heart of a wildlife documentary and might seem to be rather obvious. However, we also heard yesterday that it sometimes takes courage to do what is obvious: both the philosophical courage to believe in what you are doing and also the actual courage to commit yourself and your resources in pursuit of your goal. In Andrew Cooper's case this involved the courage to bury thousands of pounds worth of BBC film equipment underground in the hope of catching sight of badgers' never-before-seen subterranean activity. His ground-breaking results captured on film spoke for themselves.

Putting Exmoor at the heart of the Exmoor Society takes courage too: philosophical and practical, as you have been doing in addressing appeals and supporting the Exmoor curriculum for example.

This morning we are invited to see all our efforts in the wider perspective of God's love for us and all that he has made. In the Church our aim is to put God's love at the heart of our life together. In the Temple and in the Church, it is when God writes the script that things light up – it is in God's script that the true value of each of us is appreciated; the full extent of God's love for us and our value to him, in all our richness and complexity; in all the dynamic tensions and pragmatic compromises which make up our lives. We are invited to hold our thoughts and hopes and concerns in that wider light and perspective and to open ourselves to new inspiration and renewed courage.

In any time and any context the words of St Paul in his letter to the Philippians are a useful and open framework as we reflect on our essential, core values:

*Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things...and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4: 4-9)*

**BEQUEST:**

**Mr Geoffrey Howard**

**£9919**

## Education & Outreach

### **The Society continues to support the unique Exmoor Curriculum:**

The Exmoor Society continues to be a great advocate of Dulverton Middle School and supports its unique Exmoor Curriculum since its original conception over ten years ago, which received a special mention in their recent Offstet Report by the HM Inspectors. This year, once again, the Society donated a cheque for £2000 to allow this unique Curriculum experience to develop even further. Through the Exmoor Curriculum children at the Middle School develop many important life skills and a deep understanding of the Exmoor environment around them.

**At the Society's AGM in September, the retiring Head Teacher, Steve Ford, was presented with the Exmoor Society's annual Samuel Foss Conservation Award, to acknowledge his invaluable contribution to the Curriculum and to the environmental education of Exmoor's children. The new head, Jerry Weedon, will rule over a federation of three schools: Dulverton Middle, Exford Primary and Dulverton First, and has indicated a strong desire to continue this association with us. As an added bonus the Executive has invited Jackie Smith to join them. Jackie is chairman of the Governors for this new Federation. We welcome her and her considerable talents, whilst recognising that this also consolidates our ties with local schools.**

We are delighted to report that the Exmoor Society's Literary Award held each year for children writing about Exmoor now has a new sponsor. This Award will now be known as the "Lucy Perry Literary Award" in memory of Mrs Carol Bailey's mother Mrs Lucy Perry who died last year. Mrs Perry had been a member of the Society for many years and because of her great passion for all things Exmoor, her daughter felt it most appropriate that the bequest to the Society is in the form of a legacy to fund the award, so that the Society can continue with this way of awakening the magic of Exmoor in young people. Thank you Lucy Perry ! **Chris Whinney**

## **Alfred Vowles 2012 Photographic Competition:**

This bi-annual competition will take place again in 2012. Closing date for entries is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010, and judging will take place in early 2012. 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".



Pictured with 8 pupils from left to right is Chris Whinney (Vice-Chairman of the Society), Jackie Smith (Chairman of Governors) and Jerry Weedon (Federation Head Teacher).



## Hazel Eardley-Wilmot's name is familiar to many Exmoor Society members

Her book *Yesterday's Exmoor* (many of the original subscribers were Exmoor Society members, with the Society itself contributing) stands as the definitive history of Exmoor – beautifully written, scholarly but eminently readable. Through this, as with all her writings, her passion for caring for the real Exmoor burns.

*'It is such a small and intimate moor, very vulnerable and perpetually encroached upon. Ugly new buildings may become outmoded and collapse, in a century or two, but piecemeal destruction is insidious and irreparable. Even the herring-bone earthen banks, the coigns beside field gates, or small slate culverts taking flood water away, were made by hand with loving care. Like the old stone houses and cob cottages, they carry steadiness from the past towards an uncertain future:*

*Tread softly, softly,  
Oh men coming in.'*

She wrote many academic papers and was highly respected as an archaeologist, but her varied and fascinating contributions to *The Review* over the years is probably how her writings will be best known to Exmoor Society members. Some may know *Ancient Exmoor*, her authoritative monograph published by the Exmoor Press in 1983.

Hazel lived on the edge of the moor in North Molton, where many people still recall her characteristic presence. In fact, much still remains – both in good-natured anecdote and humorous memory. We recently acquired some of her working drawings, personal papers, and archaeological field notes which offer intriguing insight not only into the mind of an incisive and determined observer, but also demonstrate a real archaeologist at work.

While a few of us have drawn inspiration from the example of her own fine writing and the specific conclusions of her field work, many more of us are resonating to that distinctive vehement concern for Exmoor. So, although her work as an amateur (in the best sense of the word) archaeologist and gifted writer continues to stimulate, inform, guide and delight (as the latest *Review* once more shows), her role as an intrepid defender of Exmoor sets an admirable example to us today.

Therefore a group has come together with the intention of raising her profile. We are arranging a Hazel Eardley-Wilmot celebratory day on April 30<sup>th</sup> in The Old School at North Molton, which will feature an exhibition of artefacts, pictures and other memorabilia, accompanied by short talks from various experts, including Robert Wilson North, to whom we are very grateful.

Details of the day are still being worked out – we may for example arrange a walk on the moor – but the day is definitely going ahead, and a specially commissioned plaque (in the style of the blue London plaques) will be formally unveiled on the house where she lived, thanks to the present owners.

It should all add up to an entertaining and instructive day for anyone interested in the history of Exmoor. Entry will be free to members of the Society, to which we are very grateful for generous sponsorship of the plaque.

Please keep in touch with the Society nearer the time for further details. We look forward to meeting up on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

**Richard Westcott**

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## **Spring Conference 2011**

**~ Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> May ~**

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

### **Exmoor's Heritage**

*"Inspiring the future; understanding the past"*

Guest Speaker:

**Peter Beacham,**

**Heritage Protection Director at English Heritage**

£12 per person to include refreshments  
Booking essential – Please use Booking Form

## Dulverton's Recycling Centre

***The recent threat to local services resulting from the Government's cut-backs has provoked a lot of resentment locally, in particular the threat to the closure of the Recycling Centre between Brushford and Dulverton. Leslie Silverlock, Town Councillor, gives the following report:***

There are more imaginative approaches to reform than just closing the Dulverton Recycling Centre. Over 100 people marched through the town one Saturday morning with banners and unrecycled rubbish to raise awareness of the misguided futility of closing this recycling centre, which serves the whole of the south-east corner and villages of Exmoor. The proposed cut can be easily substituted with a healthy vision for the future. The march was organised and led by Dulverton's young people from the youth club, which is also being threatened with closure.

Dulverton people already manage and own 24 public facilities in the town: the playing fields, the sports centre, the recreation ground, the children's playground, the churchyard, the town hall, the heritage centre, the community centre. The local retained fire crew are inspirational in their management and delivery of rescue services. The Community School and its governors are a centre for local life and learning. These two facilities, the recycling centre and the youth club, can be saved if we work on this together.

Some ideas already proposed by local people include:

- being open different or less hours;
- being staffed by the present operators to run as a business enterprise;
- charging for industrial, builders', gardeners' and environmental waste;
- becoming a genuine recycling centre swapping furniture, white goods etc in return for financial contributions, including for charities like the youth club. This would also prevent the fly tipping which used to plague two beauty spots and will again if you close this centre.

Many local people have said that they would be willing to pay a very small charge to recycle waste at the centre.

Local people are experts in where they live – Dulverton can solve some of the problems if the powers that be are willing to decentralise and involve the real experts in the solutions.

## **NEWS from around the GROUPS**

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### **Bristol Group:**

The Bristol Group had an Autumn walk early in October. From County Gate across country and down the Lyn valley, in fact all down hill to Lynton with a pub lunch on the way. Getting back to County Gate presented no problems either as we let the bus take the strain and travelled uphill on an open-top vehicle using our bus passes. Some 25 of us enjoyed a relaxing day in lovely weather and beautifully varied scenery.

At the end of November we had our final meeting of the year in Clevedon with a quiz organised by our previous chairman and his wife (Chris and Hazel Stone). This was mainly Exmoor based and followed by refreshments. It is interesting that some members expressed unease about a quiz and stayed away for that reason; others thought the same but turned up and I think it true that we all (34 of us) enjoyed the light-hearted evening.

On 6<sup>th</sup> January we had our New Year amble. This time from near Holford and 21 of us had a social walk up over the Quantocks and down, for a pub lunch at The Plough - enjoyed by all and recommended. We had mixed weather with rain at times but lovely to be out again and to travel without the problems of ice and snow either walking or driving.

A welcome awaits any members of the main Society who would care to join the Bristol Group members at meetings, which are detailed on the composite Society Programme, but please telephone me before hand in case of last minute changes on 01275-876242.

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*Chris Norrish, Chairman*

### **Porlock Group:**

Our AGM was held in October, and it was stated that the Group has 83 members. It was proposed that we should obtain Public Liability Insurance for our meetings and events because should any claim be made and upheld against the Group for any mishap, the committee would be liable. The Treasurer said this would mean an increase in subscriptions by £2 per member, to cover the premium. These proposals were carried by the meeting. It was agreed to give annual donations to the Porlock Visitors Centre, and to Friends of St Dubricius First School for their Forest School. The Acting Chairman, Lesley Evans, was formally elected Chairman, and the rest of the Committee were re-elected. The meeting was followed by a most interesting talk by Nigel Hester on the conservation for the future of the Holnicote Estate.

We had an excellent year of talks and trips in 2010, including a visit to Lundy Island. In September Dr Mick Atkinson gave us a fascinating and engaging account of the history of mining on Exmoor, and a field trip to the upper Barle is planned in the summer, to look at the remains of the mining there. Exmoor was a far busier place in former times! In November we enjoyed a superbly illustrated talk by ENP Ranger Richard Eales on the Red Deer of Exmoor, and we all learned a lot and enjoyed Richard's knowledgeable and enthusiastic presentation. We had an excellent dinner at the Lorna Doone in November, with a very good choice of menu.

We are now looking forward to our first meeting of 2011, which is to be on "The Valley of the Rocks", by Kester Webb of Exmoor Coast Traverse fame. Kes is a very accomplished climber and artist, and his slides are always so good. In February Chris Chanter is returning to show us more of his wonderful old lantern slides of Exmoor in times gone by, then in March we shall be having a controversial talk by broadcaster and wildlife expert Chris Sperring MBE, a director of the Hawk and Owl Trust, on "The Real Wild?" In April, Peter Ferguson, an architect from Barnstaple, whose hobby is maritime history, will speak about "The Maritime History of Porlock Weir". There are many other trips, walks and talks to look forward to, including a June Tea Party, following a talk by a former member of the Royal Household, which is appropriate in a year when there will be a Royal Wedding!

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*Lesley Evans, Chairman*

### **Dulverton Group:**

The 2010 Programme completed its 'Conservation' theme with an interesting talk on 'Conserving Exmoor's Ancient Woodland' by David Boyce. Visits were well attended throughout the year including the community bus outing in July to Cadhay House and Gardens, near Ottery St. Mary, being a welcome suggestion from our members, Mr. & Mrs. Matthews.

3rd March 2011 at 7.00 p.m. is the date of our AGM followed at 7.30 p.m. by a talk by The Exmoor Search and Rescue Group to be held at Dulverton Congregational Church Hall, Chapel Street. We much look forward to a talk entitled 'Exmoor's Hidden Gems' by Rachel Thomas, Chairman Exmoor Society at 7.30 p.m. there on 14th April. Our visits this year are to Hinkley Point Site 'B', and to NT Knightshayes, while we have talks arranged on various subjects such as ceramics, herbal medicine, being a BBC cameraman and Exmoor ponies.

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*Ginny Fox, Events Organiser*

## The Society's Inaugural Poetry Competition

The inaugural Exmoor Society Poetry Competition generated great interest, with the judges very impressed at the quantity and quality of poems submitted. They covered all aspects of Exmoor, from the landscape itself – the wild moor, gentle domestic spots, tourist honey pots and unknown corners – to people of every sort: real like Wordsworth, along with the imagined, such as Saxons, Danes and even a few ghosts. Wildlife figured strongly, especially birds – ravens, buzzards, dippers, larks, plover – and naturally, deer. Exmoor names – their intrinsic music, and rhythm – were enjoyed, and a range of activities from farming through to black berrying celebrated. Above all, the blessed peace and quiet of the high hills and big skies was valued. Interestingly, the three judges working independently (the poems were of course anonymised) produced almost the same short list. But it was difficult to arrive at agreement on the first prize-winner. Two poems jostled for this first place, and it turned out, both poets are established and experienced writers:

- David Beanland's 'Artistic Freedom', exploring the frustrations of a painter trying to capture Exmoor in paint is a beautifully crafted poem, subtly rhymed which all found moving.
- Sarah James wrote about a mermaid in a freer style that was unconventional, strange, startling – and memorable.
- After long discussions, it was decided to award a joint first prize, with third given to Catherine Nicholls for her poem on the Chains, which also took an unexpected view of a familiar part of Exmoor.

There were powerful, illuminating – even wonderful – moments in many of the poems. In an attempt to demonstrate this, I read one of the poems to the AGM. This simple rumination on the Exmoor Pony clearly hit its mark.

Winning poems will be published in the Review, and the competition run again next year. The Society is pleased to see writing of such skill and sincerity, hoping that this competition has encouraged both visitors and local people to put thoughts and emotions into words. The competition will continue to be funded by the Society for the time being, but it offers an opportunity for sponsorship – perhaps to commemorate someone who loved Exmoor.

We thank the Society for providing the prize money, congratulate the winners, and especially thank all the poets who sent in their work inspired by Exmoor.

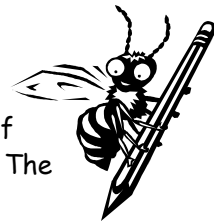
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**Richard Westcott**

## 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 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010.**



# The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No 245761



**2011-2012**

**President:**

Sir Antony Acland KG GCMG GCVO

**Vice- Presidents:**

Mr Rodney Coyne  
Mr Nicholas Harvey, MP  
Mr Michael Hawkins, OBE  
Lord King of Bridgwater, CH PC  
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP

The Rt Rev'd Peter Price  
[Bishop of Bath and Wells]  
Mr Michael Ryle  
The Rt. Hon. J. J. Thorpe

**Chairman:** Mrs Rachel Thomas, CBE,DL

**Vice-Chairman:** Mr Christopher Whinney

**Honorary Treasurer:** Mrs Carole Bament

**The Society Secretary:** Mrs Pat Bawden

## Executive Committee

Mrs Arabella Amory, Tiverton  
Mr Chris Binnie, Wootton Courtenay  
Mr Michael Hankin, Minehead  
[Retired & Co-opted Oct 2010]  
Dr Duncan Jeffray, Minehead  
[Co-opted Oct 2010]  
Mrs Toni Jones, Dulverton

Mrs Elizabeth McLaughlin, Brendon  
Mr Christopher Norrish, Clevedon  
Mrs Valerie Roberts, Dulverton  
Miss Jackie Smith, Brompton Regis  
Mr Mike Taylor, OBE, Alcester, Warwicks  
Dr Richard Westcott, South Molton  
Mrs Christina Williams, Molland

**Editor of the Exmoor Review:** Dr Richard Westcott

**Editor of the Spring Newsletter:** Mrs Pat Bawden

Chairman, Bristol Group: Mr Christopher Norrish  
Chairman, Barnstaple Group: Mrs Mary Chugg  
Chairman, Dulverton Group: Mr Peter Donnelly  
Chairman, Porlock Group: Dr Lesley Evans  
Chairman, South Molton Group: Mr George Jones

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