

The Exmoor Society

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

Spring 2012 Newsletter

No. 59



Society Walk to the Doone Valley in June 2011
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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS 2012

As we face 2012, our Society, like all other charities and public bodies, has the opportunity in a period of austerity to reaffirm its core purposes. These are to protect Exmoor as a national park and help people to understand and enjoy its special qualities. To achieve these aims the Society plays two crucial roles, namely, as a watchdog and as a champion for this special place.

In its watchdog role the Society is actively involved in policy development at a national and local level. It sits on many working groups and projects and takes the lead on particular themes such as landscape. It follows all planning applications, and occasionally objects to ones that have a detrimental impact on Exmoor (see further details on p. 6). It raises important issues of the day at its annual meeting and through articles and press releases, and particularly at the Spring Conference. The Society campaigns on such vital matters as hill farming, wind-farm proposals, and for a more tailored approach locally to agri-environmental schemes. In order to show the mutual relationship between conservation and the local economy, the Society is launching in 2012 a scheme to encourage entrepreneurial young people to make proposals for business ideas linked to Exmoor's assets (see Pinnacle Award, p. 18).

As a champion for Exmoor, the Society puts on many events such as a themed walks programme, extended this year through increasing popularity and partnerships with other bodies. It organises several competitions and awards in order to help celebrate the unique qualities of Exmoor and has a growing educational agenda. 2012 sees the final preparations for a Hope Bourne exhibition in 2013 and the production of a DVD about her life and work by the photographer and film-maker Chris Chapman.

The Society's Local Groups continue to expand and provide interesting talks and visits, and the Society is frequently asked to give talks to interested parties. By publishing the high quality annual *Exmoor Review* for over fifty years, a knowledge-base of all the activities on Exmoor has been developed and is added to by our interesting library and archival material kept at Parish Rooms and open to the public. The

Spring Newsletter and annual Business Directory complete the picture, and are readily available on our website. All this is provided by a small charity of over 2,000 members, three part-time staff, volunteers and a very active Executive working on a small budget.

But in times of economic difficulty not all activity can continue to grow and may even need to be reduced. The support of our membership is essential, particularly through subscriptions, donations and bequests, as well as voluntary involvement. Therefore the Executive has decided to ask all of you about our priorities and whether further effort can be made to reduce our increasing costs. **Please fill in our membership survey and return it to us before the end of April** so that the results can give guidance to the Executive on our core priorities.

The Newsletter contains details of our activities for 2012 and several articles that explain the Society's policies in key areas. With the enormous public interest in trees, woodlands and forests there is an increasing awareness of the wide range of values they have as a land use. At the Spring Conference this year we want to explore the wide range of goods and services woodlands provide and the potential for new planting within the National Park. Many of you will recognize that ironically this is a return to our roots and the reason why the charity was founded in 1958 to stop new planting, but, quickly to add, we are not suggesting new planting on the Chains or other moorland areas, rather the right trees in the right places.

Rachel Thomas

NEWS ROUNDUP

Exmoor's Moorlands

The management of Exmoor's Moorlands is complex. With the introduction of agri-environmental schemes in the late 1980s, there have been major changes in management practices and growing concern about the impact of these on the moorland landscape character. The Society has recently taken steps to look carefully at three issues. First is the reduced amount of swaling of heather per annum to very small areas of under 5 ha., requiring the cutting of unsightly fire breaks; second is the growth of heather above 30cm, and gorse and bracken that destroys views and perceived open space; and lastly is the low livestock grazing numbers in some moorland areas. Natural

England, responsible for Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), is beginning to consider these concerns and to encourage appropriate flexibility locally. Recent research shows that on Exmoor heather takes typically 6 to 10 years to reach 30cm, the recommended burn height, whereas in the north of England 15 years is typical. Natural England's success will be judged on these three criteria: increased swaling over larger areas; reduction of gorse and bracken; and increased stocking rates, with a return to controlled winter grazing in the right places. All three aspects are interrelated but, with the ground-breaking work on moorland units (a recommendation from the Society's *Moorland's at a Crossroads Report*), there is the potential to develop a better integrated approach to moorland management that is more responsive to local conditions and knowledge.

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

The Society is keeping a close watch on the discussions currently taking place in Brussels on the reform of the CAP, and the detailed proposals for farm grants for the period 2013-2020. Whilst this might seem a million miles away from our day-to-day interests and enjoyment of Exmoor, we should not underestimate the importance of these discussions and their outcome for the long-term future of Exmoor and its farmers. Many Exmoor farmers depend on CAP funding to make their farming financially viable. Without the farmers, who look after the majority of the landscape we treasure, there will be no Exmoor as we know it.

The EU Commission has set out its priorities for the post-2020 CAP, which are:

- Food Security
- Environmental Protection.

The Commission has made a number of detailed proposals, which are designed to meet these objectives, whilst at the same time keeping the overall budget at the current levels. The full proposal can be found at:
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legal-proposals/com625/625_en.pdf

The CAP currently consumes 45% of the total EU budget and some states, UK included, want this reduced. The Commission's proposals, inevitably, fall short of what many environmental bodies in this country feel are needed to achieve the environmental objectives. The UK Government feel they fall short of what is needed, because they maintain the status quo in terms of the balance of funding between farm income support under what is known as Pillar 1 and targeted outcome support known as Pillar 2, which includes the main environmental grant schemes. The UK Government also wants more

rigorous control over the 'public goods' delivered by the CAP, whilst at the same time pressing to reduce the bureaucracy and monitoring associated with Pillar 2 grant schemes.

The Society intends to keep a close eye on the development of these policies so that we have early warning of any proposals which might disadvantage Exmoor farmers. We need to work with other organizations with an interest in the National Park, to press Government hard to make sure our farmers receive appropriate payment for the work they do to maintain and improve our precious landscapes. This will be against a background of reduced public expenditure and other competing demands on the CAP from other members of the EU, as well as other sectors of the UK agricultural industry.

We would welcome comments from members of the Society (email or letters) on the new proposals, which will help inform and give weight to the Society's contribution to the discussions that will take place over the next year or so.

Mike Taylor

Planning Applications

The Society continues to monitor all planning applications that come to the Exmoor National Park Authority. We receive these on a weekly basis, though at this stage all we do is note them and see if there are any that may be contrary to the policies in the Local Plan. This gives us time to have a look at the site, if need be. However, it is our policy not to make any decision until the agenda for the Planning Committee is available, as it is only then that we can see all the evidence, including officers' reports, those from statutory consultees, and letters from objectors and supporters. It is at this early stage that we hope our members will alert us to any concerns they may have.

Several issues have dominated the year: affordable housing in Porlock, wind turbines, photovoltaic panels and, perhaps most contentious of all, proposed hydroelectric schemes on the East Lyn at Lynmouth and the Barle near Dulverton.

At Porlock, after much consideration, we supported a scheme for some full cost housing which provided cross funding for road improvements that opened the way for permission to construct affordable houses there.

Regarding renewable energy generation, we must bear in mind that in the Local Plan there is a policy which states: '*Small-scale proposals for renewable energy generation to serve the needs of individual properties or groups of*

properties will be permitted provided that they are compatible with the conservation of the landscape and wildlife of the National Park". With this in mind, we consider all these applications extremely carefully.

An application for a wind turbine at Highercombe Farm created concern as we considered it was damaging to the conservation of the landscape. We attended a site visit with Authority Members and the application was refused. A second application for a turbine slightly further downhill was eventually approved despite our continued objection. In order to help Society committee members, a guidance document has been produced setting out those criteria that can be used to judge the impact of any application for a turbine.

In recent months there have been many applications for photovoltaic panels on the roofs of buildings. These have undoubtedly been stimulated by the generous 'feed-in tariffs' offered by government. There may be fewer now that the tariff has been halved for new applications after December. In most locations, with the exception of listed buildings and as long as the panels are under a certain size, these are generally approved. However, recently there have been applications for freestanding panels in the grounds and gardens of houses where, because of the location or the listed nature of the building, they will not work or are not permitted on the roof. These have the potential to be damaging to the landscape particularly where they are adjacent to public rights of way and roads. In general terms, if they cannot easily be seen by the general public, they are permitted. The only way to judge these is to make site visits and assess the impact on a site by site basis.

The two proposed hydroelectric schemes, mentioned above, have proved to be particularly difficult for us to assess, as they are complex and involve engineering works which may have short- or long-term impacts on wildlife. At the end of the day, we have to assess whether the risk of long-term, detrimental impact on wildlife outweighs the benefits of producing low carbon electricity. Here we must also remember that there is an objective to become a carbon neutral National Park in the future, and it is schemes such as these that would help to achieve this.

For the present, the East Lyn Hydro scheme will not go ahead, as an evaluation scheme indicated the costs were prohibitive. On the other hand (in December) the Beasley Mill scheme is working its way through the planning system. There has been an interim report to the Planning Committee and members have been made aware of our concerns. For the moment any decision has been deferred and members are to undertake a site visit. They may also visit another completed scheme out of the county for comparison purposes. Clearly this is a contentious scheme with a huge number of

objectors, but we will stick by our policy that we do not make decisions until we have seen all the evidence. Please let us know if you have any concerns about planning applications.

Duncan Jeffray

Consultations

National Park Management Plan: A new management plan is being prepared by the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) for 2012-2017. The Society is actively participating in drawing up the important policies in relation to National Park purposes.

Local Development Framework: The ENPA is preparing a new local plan that will guide future development and land use priorities in the National Park and will last for fifteen years. The Society has set up a working group in order to formulate its response.

National Parks Societies' Conference, 4-6 November 2011

2011 was the Exmoor Society's turn to host this important national conference with delegates from all the other National Parks. It was held at Holnicote House, Selworthy, and was an enormous success. The theme was 'Land, Sea and Water'. Mark Harold of the National Trust opened the Conference with a paper on the importance of outdoor activity where people have contact with nature, and particularly for children to explore the natural environment. Martin Ross, South West Water, discussed the importance of upper catchments for water quality and mitigation of flooding downstream and used the Mires project on Exmoor as an example through such measures as ditch blocking. Nigel Hester, National Trust, explained the Holnicote case study that was looking at the management of the whole catchment in terms of land use in order to reduce flooding between moorland and sea. Profitable livestock farming, crucial if farmers were to continue to protect the upland environment, was the key message from Anthony Gibson, formerly NFU Communications Director. Nigel Stone and others from ENPA showed how working in partnership achieved more for National Park purposes. The final session was on environmental education and included Jerry Weedon, Head of Exmoor Federated Schools, who extolled the Exmoor Curriculum. Delegates went away feeling that this was the friendliest and most stimulating conference that had been held in recent years.

Chris Whinney

IN BRIEF

From the Parish Rooms

Exmoor Calvert Trust: Following our visit to the Calvert Trust Centre in July, everyone was very impressed with the facilities available for disabled people of all ages. One or two brave souls tried their hand at abseiling and we marvelled at the wheelchair and occupant being winched down the rock face to safely land at the bottom - upright!

Christmas Lunch: Following the success of the Society's annual Christmas Lunch at the Exmoor White Horse Hotel in Exford, many of you will be pleased to hear that we have already booked a firm date at the same venue on Friday, 7th December 2012, and once again keeping the cost of the lunch to £20 per person. A booking form will be available in our autumn mailing. Early booking is strongly recommended.

Society Farm Visit: We are delighted to say that William and Paula Dart have invited us to their farm at Great Champson, Molland on Friday, 6th July. Meeting at 1pm with our picnics. If you recall, the Dart Family were the recipients at the AGM of the Society's Samuel Foss Conservation Award, presented to them for their immense contribution to conservation on Exmoor, and the family's work over more than half a century in agriculture with the four native livestock breeds of Exmoor: Devon cattle, Exmoor Horn and Devon Closewool sheep, and the Exmoor ponies on their farms at Great Champson and Kipscott. I am sure you will agree a visit to Great Champson on the Molland Estate is an appropriate venue.

INFORMATION WANTED! - Peter Pay is researching Moles Chamber and the Acland Arms Pub. He would welcome information, especially any knowledge about historic pictures of the place, the pub or the Smyth family who later farmed at Natsley, near Brayford. If you have any information please contact him at: ppay@btinternet.com or telephone 01769 580159.

Simonsbath Festival, 7 May to 23 June 2012.

Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition 2012:

At the closing date on 31st December 2011, over 40 entries had been received covering all four categories. The Landscape category always receives the highest entries. The judging took place in January 2012 and the winners are listed on p. 17.

The presentation to the winners and commended photographers in each category, together with the overall winner who will hold the Alfred Vowles trophy for two years, will take place on Tuesday, 21st February at the Porlock Visitor Centre and will mark the opening of the exhibition. The exhibition will run to 17th April, covering the spring half term and Easter holidays, and will, it is hoped, draw in many visitors and bring the Society and its work to the attention of new members.

Guided Walks with Trampers 2012:

The Society is a proud partner of the lottery-funded Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership Scheme which has supported their programme of events for 2012. This year the

Society is pleased to announce that it has joined forces with the EMLPS and will lead two walks in conjunction with a National Trust Ranger, the Countryside Mobility and Heart of Exmoor. Jenny Gibson is the Society's walk leader on both dates - 3rd May and 19th September, see calendar.

A limited number of 'Tramper' all-terrain mobility scooters is available free of charge. The Trampers provide a wonderful opportunity for people with limited mobility to explore. Booking for scooters is essential on 01392 456522 or visit: www.countrysidemobility.org. Allow half an hour for Tramper training. **Other New Walks for 2012:** with the support of the EMLPS, the Society has arranged for children and families a paddle on the Barle, and a walk for young people and their families.



Lucy Perry Literary Competition: Judges at last year's Exmoor Society Literary Competition praised the exceptionally high standard from a huge entry of poems received. Sir Antony Acland at the Society's Spring Conference presented the winners with their awards. First prize in the senior category went to Edward Taylor, 13 years, from Stoke Rivers and a

pupil at West Buckland School, and first prize in the junior category went to Hattie Harley, 10 years, from Yeo Mill, West Anstey and a pupil at North Molton Primary School, for her poem 'Life on Exmoor'.

Entries are invited again for this year's competition with the closing date on 31st December 2012. Guidelines for the competition are available on the website (<http://www.exmoorsociety.com/>) and from Parish Rooms. All entries should be sent to The Exmoor Society, Parish Rooms, Rosemary Lane, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DP.

Calendar of Events: A bumper calendar has been arranged for 2012 with at least 21 walks, ranging from a visit to the Sawmill at Simonsbath, the Mineral Line at Chargot Woods, Wheal Eliza, Hunters Inn to Woody Bay and including a Hope Bourne Anniversary Walk from Withypool, taking in Hope's favourite walk from her home for many years at Ferny Ball. All are welcome, so please join us for these walks as well as the many other events the Groups and the Society have organised for this year.

The Hope Bourne Poetry Competition: Entries are invited for the 2012 adult poetry competition. Conditions of entry may be obtained by email or post from the Society Offices. Closing date is 1st December 2012.

Please Remember that we are always pleased to receive back issues of Exmoor Reviews, as well as any maps, papers, etc. relating to Exmoor.

Awards: Nominations are wanted for the Founders Award and the Samuel Foss Conservation Award. Please send details of nominees to the secretary at Parish Rooms giving reasons why they should be chosen.

QUOTE:

'Beyond anything else, the one thing that binds people to this place is its landscape. Nowhere else have I heard so many people say so often and quite spontaneously:

"Aren't we lucky!"

Ann Mallalieu

'Deer on Dunkery' Walk

2011 saw the inauguration of a new walking partnership between the Exmoor Society and the Dartmoor Preservation Association. In April the DPA welcomed members of the Exmoor Society on a fascinating walk over Sourton Tors to Black-a-Tor Copse and Meldon Reservoir. The reciprocal walk, entitled 'Deer on Dunkery' took place on 22nd October during the autumn rut.

Because nobody can guarantee that the weather will be fine or that deer will be where they ought to be, the walk was planned to cater for most eventualities and particularly to show Exmoor at its most diverse. We started at Webber's Post and went down through Horner's ancient oak woods, along East Water and up to Cloutsham, then to Stoke Pero Church and back along Dicky's Path on the open moor.

A staggering 40 people took part in the walk, including 15 from the DPA. We were also fortunate in being accompanied by Nigel Hester and Charles Harding from the National Trust, over whose land the walk took place. The weather behaved itself and, despite there being such a huge crowd, we saw a large herd of deer, including several stags, who put on a fine performance for us.

The DPA are planning another walk on Dartmoor for the spring and we shall be staging another deer walk in October.

Jenny Gibson



Spring Conference 2012
~ Friday, 27th April ~
Town Hall, Dulverton, 10am to 3.30pm approx

Exmoor's Woodlands

'Seeing the potential, debunking the jargon!'

A wide range of Guest Speakers

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

Hope Bourne Bequest

'Beyond the holding of hedge and field, ... the moor broods in primeval loneliness, indifferent to man and his cares, concerned only with its own wilderness and the perpetuation of its own kingdom. Out in the night it lies as it has lain for a thousand years and for untold centuries before, holding within itself all the memories of winter and summer, daylight and darkness, sun and moon and stars, of man and beast and strange gods, of all that is past, is present, and is to come.' **Hope Bourne**, *Living on Exmoor*, p. 187.

Hope Bourne, who died in August 2010, left to the Exmoor Society her estate, which includes all her writings, books, drawings and memorabilia as well as a financial contribution. The Exmoor Society intends to share and build on this rich legacy by showing the significance of her life and through this to focus on Exmoor's unique qualities and on the importance of Exmoor as a National Park.

Aims of the Bequest

1 To demonstrate, illustrate and establish the significance of the personality and the lived life of Hope Bourne.

- Her way of life as a hunter-gatherer living in the wild, close to nature and people; as a practising artist and writer (published and not published).
- Her convictions, beliefs and ethos as seen by and through others – articles, reminiscences, recollections and more formal documentaries.

2 To demonstrate and draw out the special qualities of Exmoor through her life and work.

- Exmoor as a wild landscape of great beauty and tranquillity; observations of nature and the seasons; and rural way of life and activities.

3 To raise the profile of the Exmoor Society and to demonstrate its creativity in establishing new partnerships in the pursuit of its aims.

- Exploiting a variety of media in this pursuit, including capturing oral evidence, the use of the written word, the visual arts, and especially modern media congenial to the younger age groups, such as film.
- Informing, stimulating and inspiring the public through presentations, exhibitions, talks, various sharing experiences, and a variety of other events.
- Passing on to the next generation the responsibility and challenge of managing rural resources and developing landscape assets.
- Increasing the membership of the Exmoor Society and demonstrating its achievements as a watchdog and champion of Exmoor.

4 To recognise the importance of National Parks and the challenges they face and how individuals (Hope being a fine example) can inspire others to value their purposes and the contributions they make to their locality and the nation.

The Hope Bourne Poetry Competition

Our adult poetry competition, renamed the Hope Bourne Competition in her memory after the Society received her generous bequest, attracted a record number of entries this year. I was particularly pleased to receive poems from all over the country – and the winners reflect this. Every poem was anonymised, and then read independently by each of the three judges, who are all based in London. They drew up their own shortlists, and then met to deliberate. I understand that although their initial selection overlapped to a great extent, the choice of the winners provoked vigorous discussion. I am hoping the Chairman will write a report describing the process and their impressions for me to publish, along with the winning three poems, in the next *Exmoor Review*.

For my part, as the gatherer of the poems, I had the privilege of reading them all. Many poetic forms were used, with strict rhyming and rhythmic structured pieces alongside looser poems, and some totally free verse. The range of subject matter was equally varied. Sources of inspiration spread from flora (wood anemones to rhododendrons, tiny fungi to gorse) to fauna (from caterpillars to the noble stag), from open moor via archaeological artefacts to settlements, touching on paths, tracks, and bridges. Several places figured strongly, especially Culbone. Many a bird flew past, including buzzards, blackcock, a kingfisher, kittiwakes, swifts and blackbirds, not to mention a dead jay. There was a strong visitation from the supernatural, with fairies, doppelgangers and revenants. And the seasons represented a recurrent theme, Exmoor being beautifully described at different times of the year.

I'd like to thank our judges, who made no charge to us for the hours given over to their careful reading of the poems and getting together, or for the time and effort spent deliberating. I'd especially like to thank everyone who sent in their poems, which brimmed with sincerity, and to ask them please to enter again. Pass the word on to everyone who writes and delights in poetry – we'd love to enjoy even more poems next year!

Also, I'd like to make a comment, with a suggestion. Because competitions stimulate and encourage creativity, and the sharing of those fruits, they're to be applauded. But in that they declare some

offerings to be 'better' than others, by consigning many poems to a lesser category of non-winners, and because there were so many fine and moving moments in nearly every poem, I'm left with regrets. Not least that more sharing can't take place. So I'm wondering how we might do this. Perhaps we might look into publishing an anthology?

But now – as they say – it is my pleasure to announce the winners:

1st
'The Deer at Exmoor' by Christian Ward
2nd
'Of those very many things' by Robert J. Miles
3rd
'Three Times Backwards to Culbone' by Grizel Luttmann-Johnson

Thank you everyone, and read the winning entries, together with the judges' comments, in the next *Exmoor Review*.

Richard Westcott

Hope Bourne Exhibitions

Hope Bourne's legacy to the Exmoor Society includes a rich collection of her drawings, letters and manuscripts. She has also bequeathed an important library of books, which provide some fascinating insights into her interests and knowledge. The Exmoor Society wishes to make Hope's bequest widely accessible, both locally and nationally, to children and adults alike. In the summer of 2012, a small selection of Hope's work will be displayed at the Porlock Visitor Centre. In addition, from Easter to October 2013, we will mount a major exhibition at the Dulverton Heritage Centre. This exciting and diverse exhibition will celebrate Hope's life and work, illustrate Exmoor's special qualities and show how they were reflected in the way she lived.

Elizabeth McLaughlin

Education & Outreach

The Society received well over 100 entries for the annual Lucy Perry Literary Award last year, some of a very high calibre, and prizes of £60 each were presented to the two winners at the Spring Conference by the Society's President. We continue to be grateful to Lucy Perry's daughter, Mrs Bailey, for providing us with the resources to fund this competition, in memory of her mother and her mother's great passion for Exmoor. Details of the 2012 competition can be found on p. 11.

In November a cheque for £2,000 was presented to Dulverton Middle School by Chris Whinney at a school Assembly, to help them in providing the Exmoor Curriculum for their children. This includes learning about cycling, map-reading, canoeing, hill-walking, and an introduction to the National Park. The fruits of this were seen at the Society's National Park Societies' Conference held at Holnicote in November when four girls, now at Minehead Senior School, told delegates of their experiences four years ago, and how much the Curriculum had meant to them and had helped them. They delivered a knockout presentation which clearly impressed the delegates at the Conference.

Without doubt this is all helping to create mature responsible young people for the future, and we shall be looking at how we can make a difference to some of our other young people.

Chris Whinney

Alfred Vowles 2012 Photographic Competition - WINNERS



**Overall winner of Alfred Vowles Trophy
(Heritage category):**

'Sheep's Stell at Three Combes' Foot'
by Jenny Gibson

Landscape:

'Badgworthy Water' by Elizabeth Jessup

People at Work:

'Brendon Fair Sheep Auction' by Johanna Webb

Christmas Card:

'Snow on Porlock Common' by Tony Gibson

THE PINNACLE AWARD

Applications for the first year of the Pinnacle Award close on 30 April 2012. The award is aimed at young people aged 16-25 (individuals or groups) who live, work or are studying in the Greater Exmoor Area to come up with an idea for developing a business based project linked in some way to the land and rural development.

Judging will take place during the summer and the winner/s announced at Exford Show in August. The Trustees are hoping for a good entry to allow for a proper competitive selection process and have deliberately tried to avoid limiting the scope of the award in order to encourage as much take up as possible.

The award has been widely promoted to all relevant young people on Exmoor through schools, colleges, Young Farmers and Youth Clubs. All Society members are encouraged to bring it to the attention of any eligible young people they may know.

CHILDREN'S WRITING WORKSHOP

As part of our commitment to education and in support of our initiative to encourage a younger membership, the Exmoor Society is to sponsor an inaugural Children's Writing Workshop in the Easter Holidays. The aim is for children to explore Exmoor through words; stretch their imaginations; give form to feelings and ideas; and extend their literary horizons.

The Workshop is to be conducted by Ellen Renner, an acclaimed, published children's writer who is experienced in running such workshops. In addition to writing she might also incorporate some artwork into her workshop.

The Workshop will be run over two days, 2nd and 3rd April 2012, at Exford Youth Club Pavilion. It will be open to children between the ages of 9 and 14 drawn from across the Greater Exmoor Area. One day will be for 9 to 11 year olds and the other for 12 to 14. Nominations are to be made through schools with teachers involved in selecting appropriate children.

Jackie Smith

Hazel Eardley-Wilmot

After the great success of our Hazel Eardley-Wilmot Day last Spring, when we unveiled a plaque in her memory on the house in North Molton where she spent her latter years – thanks to the generosity of the present owners of Wilsons – and celebrated some of her achievements with various talks and presentations, the HEW Group is putting on another event.

The feeling last year was that a walk to visit one or more of the artefacts she described, discovered or otherwise became involved in would make an appropriate follow-up. So we are presently working out such a visit, to which all will be most welcome.

Several ideas are being considered, but by the time you receive this newsletter we should have a firmer plan. The date is **9th June** – we'll try to circulate people we know are interested, but please be in touch with the Society, or make sure we have your name on our list, for confirmation of details.

The Society is delighted that we seem to have the makings of a Hazel Celebratory Group here, and look forward to meeting up once again, learning more about and from Hazel, and hearing new ideas as to how we might take this on into the future.

Richard Westcott

NEWS from around the GROUPS

Bristol Group:

Although 'The Bristol Group' with some Bristol residents as members, we hold our home meetings in Clevedon which is more convenient – no parking problems and easier for speakers to reach us. We are happy to welcome members of other groups and/or the main society to our events, but please telephone first in case there are last-minute changes to the programme.

Our 2011 programme followed the usual and well tried timetable, starting with a Winter walk, this year on the Quantock Hills with another splendid lunch at The Plough Inn, Holford. Also in January we had our Winter supper – Exmoor ingredients as much as possible and 54 members attended. Rob Wilson-North came to speak to us in early March, and in April we had a walk from Alderman's Barrow down to Nutscale reservoir and back over a different route, seeing scores of deer at fairly close quarters, and ponies.

At the AGM in May, Michael Hankin gave us an interesting talk and slide show on 'The Fauna and Flora of Exmoor' – 47 folk attended. The annual BBQ was another wet affair; we cooked outside but ate in the dry. In July 33 of us visited Cothay near Wellington – a house and garden with history, and well worth a visit. In September we came down to the Moorland Mousie Centre for a conducted tour and explanation of the aims of the Centre followed by picnic lunch in the renovated Music Room. After that we had a local and fortunately short walk on Winsford Hill centred on Spire Cross; the wind blew, the rain was horizontal, waterproofs were tested and found wanting in some cases, but it was exhilarating and 25 of us enjoyed the day.

A walk from Porlock Weir via Culbone Church was our October activity and our 2011 programme closed with a talk by the Ranger from the National Trust property at Leigh Woods which are seen from the Clifton Suspension Bridge. As is usual at the last meeting of the year, it closed with substantial and plentiful 'nibbles'.

Chris Norrish, Chairman (01275 976242)

Barnstaple Group:

As a group we have meetings once a month over the winter, Julia has been busy arranging a programme of interesting speakers including Jonathan Marshall who is going to bring his golden eagle with him. We would like to encourage as many as possible to come and enjoy some thoughtful talks relevant to Exmoor. **For details contact Julia (01598 763295).**

Sally Jack/Julia Holtom, Acting Chairmen

Porlock Group:

The New Year started off with a well attended and fascinating talk in January by David Kester Webb entitled 'The Valley of Rocks'. David had obtained many of his enthralling photographs by dangling from a rope in precarious positions, so they were quite unique. Another high profile speaker visited us in March when naturalist Chris Sperring MBE gave a thought-provoking talk entitled, 'The Real Wild'. He will be returning next September to speak to us about astronomy – quite a contrast. A local interest subject in the following month on the maritime history of Porlock Weir caused some controversy when a local resident challenged the historic accuracy of some of the things our speaker was telling us!

We always look forward to our meeting in early May when Rob Wilson-North led us on another archaeological discovery walk, this time in the Simonsbath

area. In June by total contrast we had a talk by Deborah Bean on her experiences as a member of the Royal Household. Also in the summer we visited Fitzhead deer farm where we learnt something of the challenges involved in commercial deer farming as well as getting up close to many more red deer than would be seen on Exmoor at any one time.

Sadly, during the year, our Chairman Dr Lesley Evans was forced to resign her post in order to allow herself time to cope with serious health problems. We all wish her a speedy recovery. We were fortunate that one of our committee members, Dr Duncan Jeffray, agreed to act as Chairman up to the AGM, whereupon he was unanimously elected, though we were unable to find a replacement committee member. Also, at the AGM we agreed to make donations to three locally based projects. These were a contribution towards the cost of a roof for a recently acquired historic apple press at the Porlock Visitor Centre, a grant to the Recreation Ground to make some much needed improvements to their facilities, and a grant to Dovere Manor Museum to enable them to meet the cost of a CCTV system.

We rounded off the year with an excellent Annual Dinner at Reeves Restaurant in Dunster which was enjoyed by all. We now look forward to a full programme of events in 2012 when we will celebrate the Group's 10th anniversary. **Contact Duncan Jeffray for details (01643 702788).**

We welcome any members of the Exmoor Society in the Porlock and Minehead area who aren't already members of our group to join us and take part in our activities.

Peter Leather, Secretary

South Molton Group:

In February we held our annual dinner at The Methodist Hall. Our Spring Lecture was about the 'Recollections' of a boy bought up on a farm on the edge of Exmoor just before the second world war. We had two summer outings, one to Woody Bay Station with a ride on the train, the other to the Valley of Rocks, where we had a walk and a cream tea. For our AGM we had a film show of old clips of events in South Molton and district presented by Richard Lethbridge.

HELP! Our group is small and consists of mostly elderly members and we work with a very small committee. We would dearly like to find new younger and more energetic members who could lend a hand. **Contact George Jones for events (01769 572276).**

Jo Griffin, Secretary

Dulverton Group:

Once again it has been a very successful year, thanks to the sterling efforts of Events Organiser Ginny Fox.

Following our AGM in March, Exmoor Search & Rescue Group gave us a most interesting and often amusing talk about their work. Old stagers were much impressed with the plethora of equipment that they could pack into a rucksack. Society Chairman Rachel Thomas gave an inspirational talk on Exmoor's 'Hidden Gems' in April, her first and we hope not her last visit to our Group.

In May we learnt about Hinkley 'B' power station, following this talk with a site visit in July. It was a valuable learning experience about an issue that can raise many emotive concerns. Separating these two events was a delightful day's trip to Colyton and Seaton, the weather was grand and the food, according to experts, outstanding. As this was an almost last-minute substitution for a planned visit to Knightshayes, its success was doubly appreciated. Another successful foray was the visit of a few members to the Met Office in Exeter.

Carole Fahy gave a talk about restoring ceramics, illustrating it with a series of superb 'Before & After' photos. She was followed by Liz Lillicrap who talked about her work as a medical herbalist and reflexologist. Herbalism today is a science backed by considerable professionalism, and we all learned a great deal.

Finally John Walker talked about his time at 'The Beeb' entitled 'Behind the Camera' – a hilarious evening! As Johanna Webb said afterwards, 'I have never heard so much laughter at a Group meeting'.

Unfortunately we are losing two valued Committee members: Major 'Kip' Gilpin retires after some eleven years as Secretary, whilst Ginny Fox has told us that she also must relinquish her role. They will both be sadly missed although Kip has found a replacement in new(ish) member Ken Mills – welcome! – but we are searching for a new Events Organiser, Ginny has completed the 2012 programme and has kindly said that she will remain until June. Thank you both for all you have done for the Group for so long.

Peter Donnelly, Chairman
(01398 323030)

EXMOOR SOCIETY'S WOODLAND CONSERVATION FUND

2011 has been a very quiet year, with few applications for funding coming forward to the Society. However, the ongoing restoration of woodland at Hollerday Hill above Lynton led by Ione Wilcox, ENPA Ranger, and Suzette Hibbert of the Town Council, received a grant of £640 from the Exmoor Society's Woodland Conservation Fund. The annual woodland walk was enjoyed by members, who visited the site on a fine and sunny day in October, at which time the cheque was presented, and very gratefully received.

The annual woodland visit planned for 2012 will be in the Barle Valley led by Ben Williams, a member of our Woodland Advisory Group. As we go to press, the date of Friday, 19th October has been earmarked for this. It would be nice to see more of our members attending as these woodland visits are very interesting. Off-road transport will as usual be available. **Toni Jones, Chairman WAG**



From L to R: Chris Whinney, John Karlake, Toni Jones, Ben Williams, Michael Hankin, Suzette Hibbert, Val Roberts



The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No 245761



2012

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Mr Nicholas Harvey, MP

Mr Michael Hawkins, OBE

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Chairman, Porlock Group: Dr Duncan Jeffray

Chairman, South Molton Group: Mr George Jones

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