

The Exmoor Society

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

Spring 2013 Newsletter

No. 60



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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS 2013

2012 proved to be a dampener because of the relentless rain that Exmoor like many other parts of the country experienced through the summer and autumn, and which affected farming, tourism, many local businesses and events, particularly in the lead - up to the Christmas period. Many other people suffered from flooded houses, damaged bridges and flooded rural roads, with the iconic Tarr Steps being washed away. But one of the amazing things about Exmoor is its serendipity – the chance pleasures that help restore the spirit such as the rare days of sunlight, a walk on the moorland, a sighting of a majestic stag, a traditional Exmoor event like the Exford Show, tea in one of the delightful teashops, and so many volunteers putting in hours of unpaid work to help people enjoy many different aspects of this special area.

2013 will be different for the Society for two main reasons: first, it is launching an appeal to find new premises; and second, it is putting on a major exhibition at the Dulverton Heritage Centre from the end of March to November and at the same time launching a commissioned DVD celebrating Exmoor through the eyes of Hope Bourne. [See News Roundup on page 4]

For over half a century the Exmoor Society has recorded important changes, run campaigns, increased awards and grant giving, organised events, and published people's memories and encouraged understanding and enjoyment of Exmoor through its flagship journal the *Exmoor Review*. Parish Rooms, our headquarters for more than thirty years, tucked away in Rosemary Lane, with difficult access by steep outside steps, is now overflowing with valuable material that is of local and national importance. This material charts the role the Society has played in influencing conservation and the development of the national park movement. We are desperate to find a more suitable property in a central location in Dulverton that will house our collection of books, archival material, maps, photographs, reports, correspondence, memorabilia and indeed anything pertaining to Exmoor. Further, the opportunity has arisen to purchase such a property but it is beyond the Society's financial resources. We are appealing to a variety of bodies and people to see whether funds can be raised to either purchase or rent this property or another that might come up in the foreseeable future. The

Society, therefore, wants to open a fund designated solely for the purpose of purchasing or renting, and refurbishing, a property. We are asking all our members to help, or to suggest ways by which an appropriate permanent base for the Exmoor Society can be funded.

Meanwhile the Society is preparing a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for an educational outreach officer and archivist to drive forward the cataloguing, preservation of some of the fragile contents, as well as establishing the significance of the collection, thereby opening up access opportunities, not only for education and research, but for the public generally.

Rachel Thomas

NEWS ROUNDUP

Celebrating Exmoor through the life and work of Hope Bourne 25th March to 2nd November 2013 The Guildhall Heritage and Arts Centre in Dulverton

Author and painter Hope Lilian Bourne bequeathed her entire estate to the Exmoor Society when she died in 2010. This important legacy contains a wealth of her own drawings, paintings, letters, manuscripts and memorabilia. Last year, in order to keep Hope's memory alive, the Society displayed a selection of her paintings and drawings at the Porlock Visitor Centre. This small and intimate collection showed how Hope captured the essence of Exmoor and demonstrated her extraordinary skill as a draughtswoman. The display was seen by many visitors, both local and national, and provided a foretaste of the Society's main Hope Bourne exhibition to be held this year.

The Society's major exhibition, which will run at the Dulverton Heritage Centre from 25th March to 2nd November 2013, will celebrate Exmoor's special qualities through Hope's life and work. A rich and varied selection of paintings, drawings, writings and memorabilia from Hope's bequest will be exhibited. Because of the fragility of the original material, reproductions mainly will be shown. Part of the exhibition will include Hope's recorded voice, speaking about her home in her caravan at Ferny Ball. These recorded extracts are included with kind permission from Halsgrove Publishing and will be compiled and installed by John Burgess. A film celebrating Exmoor

through the eyes of Hope Bourne, specially commissioned by the Exmoor Society and made by film maker Chris Chapman, will also be shown.

Hope's connection to Exmoor was both physical and spiritual. For over two decades, she lived a life of self-sufficiency in a small caravan at Ferny Ball, a deserted farmstead near Withypool. It was here that some of her finest work was produced. Hope cared enormously about Exmoor's farming traditions, and her knowledge of hill farming ways was considerable. The Society's large collection of Hope's watercolours and drawings reveal her deep understanding of Exmoor's scenery and wildlife. She firmly believed that living in the wildness of Exmoor engendered a sense of adventure and encouraged independence. As she wrote in *Wild Harvest*, "I love the wilderness (or what is left of it in this day and age). I love its space, its defiant freedom, its proud unconquered spirit, its wild and primal beauty, its challenge to the human soul."

Hope Bourne became associated with the Exmoor Society soon after it was founded in 1958, and she was an early member of the Executive Committee. Over the years, she contributed a number of articles and several drawings to the *Exmoor Review*. Through the generosity of her legacy, the Society will continue to focus on safeguarding the many special qualities of Exmoor.

Hill Farming

The Dartmoor Preservation Association (DPA) hosted the South West Uplands Conference on the theme of Commons in October 2012 and attracted a large audience and high quality speakers. Julia Aglionby, Chairman of the Foundation for Common Land, raised the problems of farming on the commons with grazing being in decline, which has led to the loss of skills, and lack of appreciation of the many benefits that stem from active pastoral grazing. She called for commoners to have a voice through the Foundation, so that all from government downwards can understand the need for farmers to manage common land. Professor Janet Dwyer from the University of Gloucestershire, in a wide ranging keynote speech, outlined the challenging background against which the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is now being reviewed. She explained how single farm payment subsidies have been critically important in underpinning farm incomes in the livestock sector, but

this support had declined steadily since 2005. She argued that there have been too many disconnected schemes involving environmental management, which actually worked against each other, for example, since 2005 the Single Farm Payment scheme versus Environmental Stewardship schemes. She believed that the overall CAP budget would be frozen, meaning a cut in real terms of 7%, there would also be a direct Single Farm Payment but with more greening conditions, and under rural development measures there would be fewer schemes and greater flexibility with a new emphasis on innovative partnerships at the local level, which would be helpful to the South West where there are strong local groups. The DPA is to be congratulated for putting on such an excellent conference.

Pinnacle Award 2012

The Society was delighted to make its first Pinnacle Youth Award of £3,000 to encourage young people to set up or develop a rural business based on Exmoor. Twin brothers, Adam and Oliver Hill, who live on Exmoor are the first recipients. In the past year they have established themselves as a hardworking business by setting up an agricultural contracting service designed to use smaller machinery in order to target the needs of farms and holdings. The Society believes they will be good ambassadors for the award and hope that the publicity generated will stimulate entries in 2013.

Swaling Review

The Society for a long time has been increasingly concerned that the character of Exmoor's moorlands is changing, which was highlighted in our report *Moorlands at a Crossroads*, 2004, and the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment 2007. There are fears that moorland is being managed less intensively, with less burning and grazing taking place than occurred ten or twenty years ago, and this has led to increased scrub and gorse, loss of heather, loss of important views, difficult access and increasing wild fires. The 2011/12 swaling season was discussed in a seminar in September. The seminar produced statistics on the amount of burnable heather and compared this with the actual area burnt. The data showed that 49% of all heather burnt had been by accident or illegal. There had been a 40% increase in legal swaling during the 2011/12 season with plot sizes still quite

small, of 4 hectares on average. This means that there is still an enormous backlog and not enough controlled burning taking place.

These problems were compounded by an increasing spread of the heather beetle running south to north, which appeared to have a greater impact on young plants and flowers. However, on areas that had been heavily infested last year, there were some signs of regrowth but no flowers.

The Exmoor National Park Ranger, Tim Parish, summarised the condition of Exmoor's moorlands as follows:

- Scrub and bracken continue to spread rapidly, particularly on North Hill, Dunkery, Black Hill, Winsford Hill and Haddon Hill.
- Grabbist and Alcombe Ridge are all but woodland. Molinia seems to be out-competing heather on Molland Moor, Anstey Commons and Withypool.
- Rhododendron is spreading from Badgworthy Valley onto Desolate land.
- There are large areas of over-mature/declining heather on Porlock Common/Allotment, Dunkery, Black Hill and Winsford Hill.
- There is very little stock grazing the moorland.
- It is difficult to find a piece of recently burnt moorland that has healthy, vigorous heather regeneration.

The Society continues to put pressure on Natural England for greater flexibility in many areas of moorland management as the condition of the moorlands are such a crucial element of the special qualities of Exmoor.

Mires Project

The Society continues to monitor the delivery of this project and to raise more general concerns, particularly in relation to the impact on farming practices, legal implications, and long term irreversible changes. It is especially pleased that South West Water has appointed Charles Cowap to report on some of these issues and to develop the concept of payments for the eco-systems services provided.

Spring Conference 2013

The Society is delighted that Charles Cowap has agreed to be the keynote speaker on valuing eco-systems services provided by farmers and landowners in relation to water. Rivers will be the theme of this year's Spring Conference as there are a surprising number of issues and people involved in their management. Demands for their use range from water companies, conservation bodies, and recreational interests and additionally there are the rights and obligations of landowners. It is a theme that rouses strong passions and makes compromises difficult and so therefore the conference should be very interesting.

Planning

The Society very rarely objects to planning proposals that come to the Exmoor National Park Planning Committee. Occasionally, it will raise matters of concern in the hope that these can be reflected in the final decision. However, at the January 2013 Planning meeting the Society raised objections to two applications. The first was a proposal for the erection of a cattle shed at Quarne Combe, Wheddon Cross, which would have had a detrimental impact on the landscape of this area of the park. The recommendation from the officers was for refusal and this was supported by the members. The second application was for a temporary erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling near Timberscombe. Again the officers' recommendation to refuse this was accepted by the members on the grounds that building isolated new houses in the open countryside is contrary to local planning policies and the National Planning Framework.

Woodlands

Woodlands are very high up the political agenda as witnessed from last year's furore over government proposals to sell off part of the public estate. It revealed that people are passionate about woodlands and, as a result, the government set up an independent panel to report on the future of England's woodlands. Exmoor's woodlands play a very important role within the park, covering about 12% of the land area, from the luxuriant oak woods of the deep rivers to the extensive plantations of east Exmoor, or from the ancient

trees of Nettlecombe to rare endemic white beams. Exmoor boasts an unrivalled history and diversity of trees and woodlands, the coastal woodlands are unique in the region and we also have a significant proportion of the UK and world total of the remaining western oak woods. All these points were raised at last year's spring conference on the theme of 'Unlocking the Potential of Exmoor's Woodlands'. The Society is aware that there are many good projects taking place on Exmoor, but also that there is no overall framework or coherence in which these woodland projects sit. Therefore the Society is taking the lead with other partners in commissioning an independent report that will give the opportunity to take forward new government proposals for forestry and establish an agenda for Exmoor's woodlands.

The Society continues to run a woodland conservation fund for donations that will be used solely for new planting and related woodland projects.

Hoar Oak

The ENPA has consulted with several bodies on options for consolidating Hoar Oak cottage. It has been found that part of the building probably dated from the eighteenth century and as such is an unusual survival. However, its significance consists of its landscape setting as a small farmstead on the edge of the Forest. The rest of the building relates to the nineteenth century and became linked to the reclamation of the Forest. Unfortunately, advice from structural engineers is that the building cannot be retained unless it is completely restored and any rebuilding would lead to an artificial relic in one of the wildest and most remote areas of Exmoor. The Society has recommended that the building is taken down to ground level with the rubble from the nineteenth-century section being contained within it and a small wall is retained and stabilized round the eighteenth-century section so that people overall can have access to, and walk through, the footprint of the cottage. At the same time, detailed interpretation of the site should be via websites and carried out at Simonsbath if possible. Because of the very sensitive nature of the very wild area, the Society argues that no onsite interpretation should be included and that any large-scale events should only be encouraged when interpreting the cottage and its history.

National Park Authority

Over the last twelve months the authority has had to wrestle with deciding on its priorities because of the government spending review and focus on reducing the national budget, which has led to a reduction of 30% in real terms in the authority's annual grant. Their recent grant settlement for 2013/14 is in line with what was expected. As a result, the Authority has reduced its full-time core posts and decided on five priorities:

- To maintain the core services that they provide.
- To support delivery of the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan.
- To secure more resources for Exmoor.
- To communicate what they do more effectively and to better engage with local communities.
- To get best value from their resources and improve their performance.

Exmoor National Park Management (Partnership) Plan

The Authority has consulted widely on the new management plan for Exmoor and has set a series of action plans for the next five years. Many of the actions will be undertaken by local organisations and the Authority will continue to coordinate and support these local actions. The Society is pleased that all the comments that it contributed to setting the actions in the plan were included, and now has a full agenda for the next few years.

Spring Conference Friday, 22th April 2013

Town Hall, Dulverton, 10am to 3.30pm approx

Exmoor's Rivers

'Water, water everywhere'

Guest Speaker: Charles Cowap

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

IN BRIEF

From the Parish Rooms

Walks Programme – Following the very successful walks programme last year, members may be interested in a few statistics. The Society held 23 walks in total last year with 304 walkers including 56 non-members. Over 44 people joined in the Hope Bourne Celebration walk in August led by Tony Piper. Special thanks to the wonderful and enthusiastic walk leaders who make these walks so informative and fun.

Corporate Directory – You will find brief details of Corporate Members in the Newsletter. To cut Society's printing costs, the Corporate Directory may be viewed on the website only. If any member not able to access the internet and would like a copy in the post, please contact Parish Rooms.

Christmas Lunch – Once again held in December at the White Horse in Exford, and grateful thanks to our guest speaker, Hugh Thomas, Land Agent and Chairman of the Exmoor & District Deer Management Society, who gave an interesting and enlightening talk about Exmoor's thriving red deer population. By popular demand we will be returning to the White Horse for our Christmas Lunch on Friday, 6th December 2013.

Dulverton Middle School – The Society was delighted to present the school with a cheque for £2000 towards their Exmoor Curriculum. The Exmoor Curriculum was launched over a decade ago with the aim of teaching youngsters about the area's ecology and its special qualities. Outdoor experiences on the timetable include orienteering, kayaking, sailing and walking, and pupils are given the chance to develop self-confidence and skills such as first aid and leadership abilities. The Society is one of the Exmoor Curriculum's biggest supporters having donated £24,850 to date.

Correction – In the current issue of the Review Volume 54 we have been asked to point out an error in Adrian Tierney-Jones' article "The River Barle". On page 96 of his article, the Castle referred to is 'Mounsey' and not Mousey

and the bridge the writer refers to is Thornton's Bridge, so named after a Mr Thornton who built the bridge in his capacity as Secretary of the Devon & Somerset Staghounds for the purpose of riders being able to safely cross the River Barle when the water levels were too high to use the adjoining ford. The bridge was also used to kennel the pack of hounds. The Castle Bridge to which Mr Tierney-Jones refers is a much older bridge constructed completely of stone and crosses the adjoining Danesbrook River, not the Barle. The Barle and Danesbrook join together just below the two bridges.

Volunteers – We are once again indebted to the volunteers who come in and help us with 'stuffing' and distributing the newsletter and Review in three mailings to members each year. Latterly we have also packed the Christmas cards from Parish Rooms which requires serious concentration when counting 10 cards and 10 envelopes for each pack – not too much gossiping at this time.

Simonsbath Festival – This year the Festival will run from 4th May to 2nd June and the organisers are delighted to announce that Oscar winning Director, Phyllida Lloyd, will be its Patron. Please see enclosed leaflet with further details of the Festival.

The Lucy Perry Children's Literary Competition – At the time of writing judging had not taken place, and we hope to invite the winners to the Society's Annual Spring Conference at the end of April. Over 100 entries have been received from children attending Dulverton Middle, West Buckland, North Molton and Great Torrington and Kingsmead Schools so the judges will have a difficult task in selecting the winners from such a huge selection of submissions.

The Hope Bourne Adult Poetry Competition – Again at the time of writing judging had not taken place.

Legacies – A number of legacies have been received by the Society in 2012 including those from Miss Jay Carter - £2000 and Mr Desmond Day - £5,900.

Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition – entries are invited for the 2014 photographic competition – entry forms may be found on the Society's website or picked up from Parish Rooms - entries close 31st December 2013.

Farm Visit - Members of the Exmoor Society were made very welcome by the Dart Family at Great Champson Farm, Molland on 6th July with true hospitality. On a rare sunny day, members were greeted with glasses of Pimms to accompany their picnics, then taken on a tractor and trailer tour of the farm to see the Dart's splendid herd of Ruby Red Devon cattle and flocks of Exmoor Horn sheep. Along the way, daughter-in-law, Kim and her wonderful champion working sheepdog Sarah, gave a splendid display. To round off the afternoon, members were taken up onto the moor to see the family's Exmoor Pony herd, as well as several red deer. Back at the farm everyone was treated to an incredible tea of home-made flans, sausage rolls, scones, tarts and cakes. Truly, a day not to be forgotten.

Poetry Competition Controversy - It has been drawn to our attention that there is a remarkable resemblance between the poem that won the first prize in the Hope Bourne Adult Poetry Competition 2011, and that of another prize winning poet. The Society is making further enquiries.

Visiting Parish Rooms – Members and the public are always very welcome to visit Parish Rooms, whether it is to carry out some research, look at a book, buy merchandise, discuss membership or just call in for a chat. It is though always a good idea to telephone first as the office isn't always open or available due to meetings.

Notelets – We are producing new notelets this year taken from a collection of Hope Bourne's drawings of the moorland and wildlife. It is planned that these will be available for sale in March.

Life Story Recordings – We are pleased to let you know of a new and exciting project by John Burgess who is the South-West representative of the Oral History Society. John is producing audio recordings of well-known Exmoor characters and to date his Exmoor Voices Archive includes those of Victor Bonham-Carter (with Cynthia), Norma Huxtable, Tom Lock and Dudley Down. To obtain a copy please log onto the Society website at www.exmoorsociety.com/shop.

The Natural Dye Studio – Amanda, Phil and Daisy Perkins who live in Lynton and run their own yarn dyeing business have recently run a prize draw in aid

of the Exmoor Society. Customers who visited the Natural Dye Studio's website and spent over £10 were automatically entered into the draw to win a lovely bundle of local yarns dyed in autumnal Exmoor colours. We are delighted to say that the Society has benefited by a generous donation from them as a result of the prize draw – thank you.

WORDS

Second Hazel Eardley-Wilmot Celebration Day

**At The Old School in North Molton 10.30 am
April 13th 2013**



After our very successful day last year when we celebrated Hazel Eardley-Wilmot with a guided Exmoor walk following one described by Hazel herself, and our inaugural meeting the year before, with its series of talks and sharing of anecdotes and articles of interest, we're pleased to announce this year's event.

The theme is to be Words – in the sense of local dialect and place names, their derivation and etymology, with particular reference to Hazel Eardley-Wilmot's own fascination with the subject. Our programme has not yet been finalised, but will start with a brief talk by Frances Presley on Hazel Eardley-Wilmot's wider interest in etymology, and 'the vagaries of language', as evidenced in her fiction (unpublished) and non-fiction works, such as 'Ancient Exmoor' and 'Yesterday's Exmoor'. We'll take a historical perspective by looking at a nineteenth century dialect dictionary, hear from Giles Goodland, who has transcribed her dialect dictionary for the Transactions of the Devonshire Association, and other experts, both local and national. Hazel's own Word List will of course take pride of place. The atmosphere will be informal – we look forward to much participation and some light hearted moments. As before, please bring your own memories, stories and memorabilia. The meeting will be finished by lunch time. Refreshments (tea, coffee and biscuits) will be available, and we suggest you might like to bring a picnic lunch.

Thanks to the Templetons, and hoping for a fine day, we may take the opportunity to visit the plaque on Hazel's old house, Wilsons. After lunch we're hoping to go for a walk to some site of interest and relevance.

Free to members. Please contact the Society's office nearer the day for details – 01398 323335.

Hope Bourne's Exmoor

A celebration of Exmoor through the life and work of Hope Bourne
25th March to 2nd November 2013

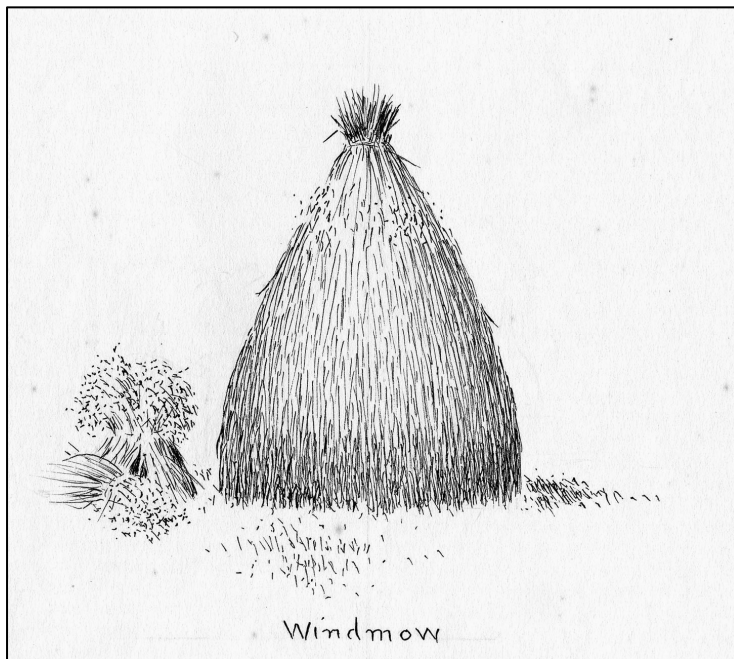
The Guildhall Heritage and Arts Centre in Dulverton
Fore Street, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9EX

Free Admission

The Exmoor Society is mounting a major exhibition to celebrate Exmoor's special qualities through the life and work of Hope Bourne. The paintings, drawings, writings and memorabilia on display will be based on the bequest Hope made to the Society when she died in 2010. The Society wishes to share this rich legacy by celebrating Hope's life, and by making her bequest widely accessible to the public. The Exmoor Society has a long tradition of protecting and promoting Exmoor's cultural heritage. Through Hope's legacy, the Exmoor Society will continue to safeguard Exmoor's special qualities.

www.exmoorsociety.com

www.dulvertonheritagecentre.org.uk



Windmow © The Exmoor Society/Estate of Hope Lilian Bourne

Joint Walks with the Exmoor Society & Dartmoor Preservation Association

Saturday 11th May 2013 – Spring Walk ‘The Dart Valley and Higher Uppacott’

Led by the Dartmoor Preservation Association – Meet 11am, Bel Tor Corner car park (SX 694 731) From Sharp Tor, enjoy views of the Double Dart Valley, visit Bronze Age roundhouses, the spiral cairn of Yar Tor and pass Cave Penney on this 3 ml walk packed with archaeological interest. Some climbs but not strenuous. Followed by guided tour of Grade 1 listed Dartmoor Longhouse (small charge). Please bring picnic. Numbers not limited but please advise DPA in advance (fsenior@dartmoorpreservation.com). This and the reciprocal autumn walk open to Society and DPA members only.

Saturday 14th September 2013 – Autumn Walk “Where Exmoor meets the sea”

Led by the Exmoor Society - Meet 11am Selworthy overflow car park - TA24 8TR (SS 920 467). Leave A39 at Selworthy and drive up past the church and the main car park, then turn left into overflow car park. Please bring a picnic and binoculars and wear suitable clothing. Reasonable ground but some steepish hills. Dogs with well-behaved owners welcome. Toilets and tea rooms at Selworthy and Bossington.

Enjoy the very best of Exmoor on a circular walk of about 6½ miles (5½ hours), that will include ancient oak woods, heather clad moorland, spectacular views, chocolate box villages, a pack horse bridge and quite a lot of historical interest. The route will take us from Selworthy up to Bury Castle iron age fort, past the Wind and Weather Hut, to Selworthy Beacon (308 m), with 360° panoramic views (weather permitting!) and on via Lynch Combe to Hurlstone Point with its ruined coastguard station. We shall return via the picturesque villages of Bossington, West Lynch and Allerford, with lots more to see along the way. Possibility - but no promise - of seeing ponies or red deer.

Walk open to members of the Exmoor Society and Dartmoor Preservation Association only. Numbers not limited, but please advise the Exmoor Society (info@exmoorsociety.com) if you are planning to attend.

The Exmoor Society's Major Exhibition

Hope Bourne's Exmoor

A celebration of Exmoor through the life and work of Hope Bourne

25th March to 2nd November 2013

The Guildhall Heritage and Arts Centre in Dulverton

Fore Street, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9EX



Volunteers Needed

The Heritage Centre is asking for volunteers to staff the Hope Bourne Exhibition on some Saturdays and Sundays

If you are able to help in any way please contact Jan Ross at the Heritage Centre Tel: 01398 323818 Email: janaross2003@yahoo.co.uk

STOP PRESS Following the huge success of last year's Children's Workshops, we are delighted to announce that children's author, Roselle Angwin, well known for her workshops in Devon and wider afield, has agreed to hosting one for the Society on 24th May at the start of the summer half-term. The workshop will be Exmoor themed and it is hoped to not only encourage children from schools around Exmoor but also schools in North Devon.

Alfred Vowles

Exmoor Photographer Lives On Today

BBC Countryfile aired in January focussed on Alfred Vowles, a photographer at the turn of the 20th century who took numerous photographs that provide important records of rural life on Exmoor at the time. He developed the camera as an art form with the photographs interpreting the richness of life on the moor seen through the camera. The Exmoor Society, with permission from his son who lives in New Zealand, runs a bi-annual Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition for amateurs in order to draw attention to his early work and to encourage people to interpret life on Exmoor today.

The three categories for entry in the competition are landscape, people at work and heritage with the overall winner receiving the Alfred Vowles trophy. The competition is now open for photographs taken this year up until the closing date of 31st December 2013.

Alfred Vowles' connections with the Lorna Doone story were also mentioned on Countryfile with the books he wrote about where the Doone Valley is to be found. Exmoor Society member Jenny Gibson was filmed riding in an open Landau with presenter Matt Baker along the Oare Valley. Not only did Jenny provide the researchers for the programme with much detail about the Lorna Doone novel but also about Alfred Vowles as well. Amazingly, she was the last winner of the photographic competition with her winning image appearing on the 2013 Exmoor Review. The Society had hoped the Alfred Vowles story would have been brought up to date by mentioning the competition named after him. However, the Society is delighted that the two stories 'Lorna Doone, Fact and Fiction' and 'Alfred Vowles, a Pioneer of Art Photography' were highlighted in the BBC programme and hopes that many amateur photographers will enter this year's competition inspired by Alfred Vowles and Exmoor's unique beauty.

Details and an application form for this year's Alfred Vowles photographic competition may be downloaded from the Society's website at www.exmoorsociety.com, or by post with an s.a.e. from the Society's offices.

The small village with big ideas

The village of Simonsbath in the heart of Exmoor is to hold its spring festival from May 4 to June 22. **Simonsbath Festival 2013** will offer an exciting variety of classical, folk, jazz, opera and world music, fascinating talks, workshops, bracing outdoor activities, attractive works of art and fabulous food.

One of the focal points will be the newly and beautifully restored church of St Luke's where the festival will open with a gala concert by the internationally acclaimed pianist Helen Yorke. This will be followed on bank holiday Monday by May Day celebrations with traditional music and songs from Exmoor. During the six week period of the festival, top musicians from this country and abroad have been invited to celebrate music from other cultures.

The programme of events at St Luke's includes an evening of opera from students of the Italian academy founded by Sir Georg Solti, an all-female trumpet quartet, African, Indian and Spanish Flamenco concerts and the festival ends with a concert featuring the traditional music and songs from Exmoor to celebrate Midsummer's Day on June 22. There will also be a presentation about farming life in the area from the 1920s to 1970s with archive film and traditional music and song, and a preview of the new film ***Hope Bourne – a celebration of Exmoor*** by photographer and documentary film maker Chris Chapman. Exmoor resident Sir Andrew Burns will reflect on his distinguished 45-year career in the Diplomatic Service and his current role as UK envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues in a talk entitled Still Coping with the Consequences of World War Two. A variety of events at other venues in Simonsbath include an art exhibition, jazz concert and poetry afternoon at the Exmoor Forest Inn, as well as talks and walks on the history of the Simonsbath area and lots more.

Tickets may be booked by telephoning Marian Lloyd on 01643 831451 or by sending an email to simonsbathfestival@mail.com. Season tickets for events at St Luke's are available, and optional snacks may be booked in advance for the interval.

Full details of the programme are available on the website <http://www.simonsbathfestival.co.uk> and on Facebook www.facebook.com/pages/Simonsbath-Festival/449357101741358?ref=hl. You can also follow the festival on Twitter <https://twitter.com/simonsbath>. If you would like to receive a printed programme, please contact Victoria Thomas on 01643 831343.

Tarr Steps

You will have read in the national press in January about the flood damage to Tarr Steps, the longest clapper bridge in the country. Early estimates show that repairs to the rights of way network around the bridge and across Exmoor National Park are likely to cost thousands of pounds, and National Park Rangers are currently busy assessing the damage in more detail.



Tarr Steps is an ancient 'clapper' bridge across the River Barle set amongst woodland designated a National Nature Reserve. It is one of the most visited spots on Exmoor attracting thousands of visitors every year. The bridge is of primitive construction, with large un-mortared slabs of stone resting on one another, and is the largest example of its type. The exact age is unknown. Some claim it is prehistoric, others believe it to be medieval, whilst some think it is a more recent folly. The river and the valley woodlands are Sites of Special Scientific Interest and abound with wildlife. There is a popular circular footpath that allows visitors to explore this gem of a location, and many of these paths have been badly damaged as a result of both flooding and landslips in the area, along with approximately two-thirds of the bridge itself. Each of the stone slabs is numbered making restoration an easier task once the water levels have dropped and the stones retrieved. This work will be conducted by Somerset County Council in collaboration with the National Park Authority and English Heritage. Repairs to the Rights of Way network in the area are likely to be a much longer job.

Birthplace of the Exmoor Pony Society

Representatives from the Exmoor Society were invited by the Exmoor Pony Society on Monday, 30th July 2012 when a presentation was made to the owners of the Lion Hotel in Dulverton, Ian and Angela Johnson. A slate plaque commemorating the founding of the Society there in March 1921, was unveiled by Miss Ann Le Bas of Winsford, the grand-daughter of the founding secretary, Reginald Le Bas.

Mr & Mrs Johnson were also presented with two specially designed information boards for permanent display inside the hotel.

NEWS from around the GROUPS

Bristol Group:

Our annual programme varies only slightly each year, following a pattern of dates satisfactory for our 70 or so members. Early in January we had our Winter walk, this time on the Quantock Hills, with a lunch at The Pines Cafe part way round. Later in the month we had our annual post-Christmas supper - a super 5 course meal prepared by some of our lady members. It is a great success both as a social event and a fund-raising event - a full house. The speaker was ill at the last minute for our March meeting, but Peter Herman (Somerset Venison at Fitzhead) came to the rescue with an amusing, colourful and varied film show of his own making. April saw us walking in wind and rain from Simonsbath, a picnic lunch near Cow Castle and the thought of the cream tea at the end kept spirits high and resolve strong. Early on this walk a lady almost lost the sole of a boot, but the supply of multi coloured baler twine always carried by our Chairman saved the day.

In May a trouble-free and succinct AGM preceded an enthusiastic talk by Dr. Atkinson about mining in/on the Brendon Hills which was extremely interesting and with great detail. In June we had the usual BBQ. and this year in the garden of our Secretary as our hopeless Chairman had forgotten to book the usual site at Glenny Wood. In July, another short walk on the Quantock Hills, a picnic lunch then a drive down to Cothelstone Manor for a guided tour of the House and Church followed by tea and a brief history of the Estate. The Holnicate Estate hosted the September meeting (Nigel Garnsworthy and Nigel Hester) with (father and son) tenant farmers joining us for a wide ranging discussion. Later we were shown an unoccupied Estate cottage at Bossington prior to updating and being put on the rental market. Early in October we had a walk from Webbers Post - the ford, Cloutsham, Prickslade, Stoke Pero and return through the Horner valley. November was on home ground with a photographic quiz followed by a buffet supper, catering for the hungry. Members reading this will also have the composite list of activities for 2013 and those wishing to join the Bristol Group for events will be very welcome, but please telephone me just prior to the event in case of last minute alterations.

Chris Norrish, Chairman

The Lorna Doone Statue, Dulverton, Somerset

The heroine of R D Blackmore's novel set in Exmoor. The statue was created by George Stephenson and given to the town in 1990 by an American, Dr Whitman Pearson. She stands by the headquarters of the Exmoor National Park.

Barnstaple Group:

The Barnstaple Group runs along with six talks each year over the winter months when few are out and about on the moor. We find that this seems to keep the interest of our supporters. We covered a variety of topics last year ranging from coastal landscape to tales of five ships all named Exmoor, Jonathan Marshall flying with his golden eagle to the dark skies of Exmoor among others. All very interesting in their different ways.

Sally Jack/Julia Holtom, Acting Chairmen

Porlock Group:

When planning future programmes, the committee always try to find subjects of local interest, and to start the year, Rev Ivan Selman presented an illustrated talk on the recent Lottery funded restoration of Doverly Manor, thought to be the oldest secular building in Porlock. In February, local historian Harriet Bridle gave an account of the history of the ill-fated development of Woody Bay. Our winter series of talks were rounded off with talks from the Countryside Manager of the Dunster Estate and from one of our local Exmoor Rangers.

Our regular spring field trip led by Rob Wilson-North, concentrated on West Ilkerton Farm, where Victoria and Chris Eveleigh showed us around their farm enterprise and after a picnic lunch in their farm kitchen, Rob led us on an archeological exploration of West Ilkerton ridge. In November the Group celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a dinner at Reeves Restaurant in Dunster. The meal was followed by an address from Exmoor Society Chairman, Rachel Thomas. At our last meeting of the year we were treated to a fascinating account of the history of the West Somerset Free Press from Jeff Cox, a descendent of the paper's founder.

Our membership has remained steady throughout the year and 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 to take part in our activities.

Peter Leather, Secretary

South Molton Group:

In February we held our annual dinner attended by 20 members and friends. In April we visited the Exmoor Search & Rescue HQ followed by a question and answer session back in our meeting room. The summer's activities were curtailed due to bad weather but we managed to visit a member's beach hut on Dunster Beach where we had fish and chips while it poured with rain

outside. We are grateful to Society Trustee, Elizabeth McLaughlin, for her interesting talk at our AGM about the Hope Bourne Bequest.

Jo Griffin, Secretary

Dulverton Group:

2012, has once again been a very successful year, with good attendances at all our various meetings, both indoors and away. We have regular reports on the health and well-being of the Exmoor pony, Rama, which we sponsored after our visit to the Pony Centre in May. He is currently away from the Centre and out grazing for the winter. He'll return in the spring and will then be available for visitors to see and also for people to ride on occasions.

The visit to Orchard Windham was greatly enjoyed by those who went, sadly, it was probably our least well-attended event. The talk by Geoff Cox about the West Somerset Free Press, which had been first created by his own ancestors, was most interesting. To hear passages from some of the earlier editions, both amusing and dramatic, was a fascinating experience. Our final talk of the season was about the history of the Royal British Legion given by Col Paddy King-Fretts. It was most interesting and illuminating, especially to members who had no service background. It was a few days before Remembrance Sunday, so the story of the origins of the Poppy Appeal was most appropriate. We had a particularly large attendance to this talk and the audience was very generous in its donations towards the poppy appeal.

We look forward to our AGM on 7 March, where we hope to recruit new committee members. This will be followed by a talk on shelter box. As for the rest of the programme, I cannot select potential highlights because there are no low lights! All I can suggest is that anybody able to get to any of them should get in touch with either the secretary or with me (for the two visits) or else, come along to Dulverton Congregational Church Hall, by 7:30 PM on the dates publicised in the newsletter.

Peter Donnelly, Chairman

WOODLAND FIELD VISIT 2013

Friday, 27th September – 10.30am Meet at Hawkcombe Head to visit the ENPA woodlands. Walk to the bottom to be met by Graeme McVittie ENPA Woodlands Officer who will lead the visit.



The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No 245761



2013

President:

Sir Antony Acland KG

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

Hon. Treasurer: Mrs Karen Trigger, FCA

Hon. Solicitor: Tim Howells, Pardoes

The Society Secretary: Mrs Pat Bawden

Executive Committee:

Mrs Arabella Amory, Tiverton

Mr Chris Binnie, Wootton Courtenay

Mr Michael Hankin, Minehead

Dr Duncan Jeffray, Minehead

Mrs Toni Jones, Dulverton

Mr Christopher Norrish, Clevedon

Miss Jackie Smith, Brompton Regis

Mr Mike Taylor, OBE, Alcester, Warwick

Ms Caroline Tonson-Rye, Dulverton

Mr David Trueman, Barnstaple

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

Acting Chairmen, Barnstaple Group: Mrs Julia Holtom/Mrs Sally Jack

Chairman, Dulverton Group: Mr Peter Donnelly

Chairman, Porlock Group: Dr Duncan Jeffray

Chairman, South Molton Group: Mr George Jones

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