

The Exmoor Society

The Exmoor Society, 34 High Street, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9DJ

Spring 2015 Newsletter

No. 62



Outside the new premises © Tony Gibson

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The Exmoor Society
SPRING CONFERENCE 2015
Friday, 24th April 2015
Dulverton Town Hall ~ 10am
'Visit Exmoor'

£15 per person to include refreshments

Booking Essential: Please complete form included with this Newsletter, and return to 34 High Street, Dulverton, with your cheque payable to "The Exmoor Society".

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS 2015

2015 will be dominated by the General Election and its outcome - the first salvos are being fired as I write this newsletter at the beginning of January. One area of concern for the national park movement is the general standing of national parks in this country, well-loved and appreciated by the public, but not necessarily high on the agenda of politicians having to make difficult decisions on the economy and the delivery of key public services, such as health, education and welfare. Following the example of the Campaign for National Parks, which before Christmas produced a Manifesto for National Parks, the Exmoor Society Executive decided to produce a Manifesto for Exmoor to be sent to and hopefully endorsed by all prospective parliamentary candidates for North Devon, and Bridgwater and West Somerset, the two constituencies covering Exmoor. At the same time, elections are being held for District Councils that appoint six councillors to the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) and for Parish candidates standing for the five seats on the ENPA of 22 members. We include the Manifesto in the Newsletter and hope some of you will support it with similar letters to both parliamentary and local council candidates. At a recent meeting, the Executive set out our priorities for the next few years under the headings of 'Campaign', 'Conserve', and 'Engage' in order to concentrate on putting down deeper roots for our key activities now that we are installed in our new headquarters.

Several of you have visited us in our new premises and have seen the difference they make to our activities and the exciting development of the Archive Project. The formal opening of the Archives is taking place on Thursday 19 March at 2.00pm and we are delighted that Victor Bonham-Carter's son Graeme, who lives in Canada, will be speaking at the event. If any member would like to attend, please inform our Archivist as numbers are limited.

Dr Helen Blackman is expanding her outreach work both in the media and with groups and conferences, illustrating her talks with material drawn from the archives. Please get in touch with her if you would like to find out more about this work.

Following the Archive Opening, the Spring Conference will take place on April 24. The theme 'Visit Exmoor' will provide an opportunity to discuss Exmoor's special qualities and how people can benefit personally in a variety of ways from enjoying them.

Sadly, Pat Bawden, our Secretary, has decided to retire at the end of February. We are extremely grateful for the contribution she has made to the Society over the last eight years. She has run the office most efficiently, and we shall miss her very much. If any of you wish to show your appreciation, please make a cheque payable to the Exmoor Society and send it to our Treasurer, Karen Trigger, Challacombe Bungalow, Manor Road, Landkey, Barnstaple, EX32 0JJ.

Rachel Thomas

NEWS ROUNDUP

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Trustees are responsible for the Charity ensuring that it achieves its charitable aims, and that it is financially prudent. The Society is always looking for Trustees with particular skills that cover the four areas: Knowledge of Exmoor, Protecting Exmoor, Promoting the Society, Running the Society.

A recent audit of Trustees showed that we have gaps in the following areas : Fund-raising, marketing and IT and communications, and of course a working farmer. If anyone would like to apply to become a Trustee with these particular skills, the Chairman would welcome hearing from you.

The most recent Trustee, who joined in September 2014, is **Dr Keith Howe**. Keith is Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Rural Policy Research, Exeter



University. An agricultural economist by background, nowadays he specialises in the economics of animal health and welfare, in which capacity he is also Honorary Research Fellow, Royal Veterinary College, London University. A former President of the Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, he was made a Life Member in 2008. Keith owes his wide rural interests to his New Forest origins. He is a member of both the Exmoor Society and the New Forest Association Council.

There are many other areas where the Society is helped through the active role of volunteers. These include: walk leaders, mailings, talks, archive and conservation, and dealing with public enquiries and the shop.

An Exmoor Manifesto

National Parks are among the most beautiful landscapes in the British Isles, and contain some of our most important scenery. Exmoor was given national park status in 1954 because of its “spectacular coastline, fine heather, bracken and grass moorlands, beautiful wooded valleys, upland farming and antiquities, all in great propinquity”. In the 21st century, with a rising population and an increasing demand for land for a range of different uses, it is more important than ever to have areas like Exmoor that provide green space for nature, for heritage, for upland farming, for all to enjoy and which can contribute to the wealth, health and well-being of everyone.

The Exmoor Society would like you to endorse the following Manifesto for Exmoor:

- 1. Confirm the importance of Exmoor as a national park and the many benefits it provides:**

These include: stunning scenery with the highest coastline in England and 19,000 hectares of internationally important moorland and other important wildlife habitats; evidence of human occupation for over 10,000 years; a source of drinking water for 0.5 million people; peat rich soils, farmland and woodlands that store millions of tonnes of carbon; public access to moorland and over 1,000 kms of public

rights of way; healthy food, timber and wood fuel resources; a major attraction for visitors and direct contribution to the regional economy of more than £180 million per year.

2. Ensure the viability of Exmoor farms:

Upland farming is the foundation of Exmoor's beautiful landscape and the uniquely tranquil environment it provides. Maintaining environmental payments to Exmoor's farmers is essential to sustain the long-term viability of their businesses, not only in the interests of farmers themselves, but equally for visitors to the National Park and society at large. Agricultural and rural policy must be directed towards the protection of Exmoor farming as the main provider of benefits enjoyed by all who use the National Park.

3. Ensure that the extra protection afforded to Exmoor National Park is fully recognised, understood and enforced in all planning and infrastructure delivery decisions:

Changes to the planning system must take into consideration Exmoor's special qualities. Public bodies already have a duty to take into account the potential effect of their decisions and activities in Exmoor National Park, but more needs to be done to guarantee compliance with this duty. Given the changing nature of the bodies involved in delivering publicly funded-infrastructure, all existing and any new bodies that might be established need to be reminded of this legal obligation.

4. Support public funding for public benefits in Exmoor National Park:

Core funding of Exmoor National Park Authority is from Defra. Opportunities for Exmoor to benefit from targeted sources of funding must be increased. Resources should be allocated through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and European sources of funding, such

as LEADER and LIFE (EU's financial instrument). This means, for example, ensuring that LEPs support job creation in high quality food products, landscape enhancement, the visitor economy, green businesses, recreation and wildlife on Exmoor.

5. **Invest in ways to increase wider public access for Exmoor National Park, and improve information to enhance visitors' appreciation and understanding of Exmoor's special qualities:**

Retain high quality information and resource centres such as those at Dulverton, Lynmouth and Porlock, and use all forms of modern communication to spread the message of the importance of Exmoor National Park. Encourage all forms of recreation that will enhance the health and well-being of visitors and local people of all ages.

Endeavour to make it easier for those without their own transport to visit and travel around Exmoor National Park. Invest in research that will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the National Park.

Strategic Priorities

In 2008 the Exmoor Society undertook a strategic development programme with the aim of reviewing and updating its current arrangements for (a) delivering its aims and objectives and (b) running the Society. Six priority work streams were identified:

1. Membership and marketing/Public Relations
2. Website
3. Coordination with partner organisations
4. Finance – legacies, sponsors, fund-raising opportunities
5. Review of the *Exmoor Review* and publications
6. Maintaining an ongoing programme of activities

Some of these work streams were carried forward, e.g. the website was altered, the *Exmoor Review* options were identified and decided upon, public liability in relation to the walks programme and some Health and Safety measures were carried out. Some work streams need further updating particularly in relation to our strategic priorities.

Campaign, Conserve, Engage

At a recent Executive meeting the Trustees identified several key areas which in the short term the Society needed to develop: campaigning to raise the awareness of national park status; conserving the landscape, wildlife, heritage and hill farming, and the land based rural economy; and engaging with government bodies nationally and locally, and the public through outreach work. Five key areas are highlighted below:

1. The standing of national parks and the gradual erosion of support for them nationally, e.g. financing of NPAs, changes to planning policies, eroding the special protection of national parks. It was felt that a manifesto for Exmoor should be publicised in the New Year along the lines of the CNP manifesto which Trustees discussed at the last executive meeting. (See pages 5-7 on Manifesto)
2. The protection of Exmoor's Landscape. The Society will again be leading the Landscape Advisory Group.
3. The promotion of hill farming and woodland, as well as the monitoring of changes to agri-environmental schemes now called Countryside Stewardship.
4. The importance of distinguishing the purposes of national park authorities and those of local authorities.
5. The need to enter the debate on health and well-being.

Current Key on-going Activities

The Archive Project and its possible extension.

Planning

Exmoor Review

Walks Programme

Outreach grants and awards

Other Areas to be Developed to help Campaign, Conserve, and Engage

PR, marketing and membership

IT, website and Social Media

Fundraising, sponsorship and use of premises

Planning

The number of planning applications monitored during 2014 was 376, fifteen more than 2013. There were two applications for wind turbines which caused the Society considerable concern. The first at Yenworthy Farm was refused, but the applicant has appealed that decision. It is the Society's view that this turbine would have a highly damaging landscape impact when seen from rights-of-way within the Park and from offshore. We continue to express our concerns and await the decision of a planning inspector. A large turbine at Slade Farm, just outside the Park, in North Devon, was considered to have a damaging impact on the setting of the National Park and was opposed by the Authority and the Society. A small relocation, lower down the slope, was not considered to improve the situation, but unfortunately the application was approved.

The planning process is complex, so it may be worthwhile pointing out some of the issues that have influenced decisions during the year. The majority of property owners have Permitted Development Rights. This means they can carry out certain activities without needing planning permission. Properties within designated Conservation Areas or those that are 'listed buildings' will have fewer rights. There are different and generally wider rights for farmers who, for example, may allow camping and a number of other activities on their land, for up to 28 days, without planning permission. This right can be

exercised as a single twenty-eight day block or for any combination of days up to the twenty-eight. Theoretically, there is no upper limit to the number of tents permitted, so holding a festival for 1000 people would be within the farmer's rights and could extend over the whole farm.

In July, an application by the new owner of Caffyns Farm, just west of Lynton, sought to extend camping from twenty-eight days to a period from 1 March until 30 October. This application generated a lot of local interest as there have been problems in the past, and we attended a site visit organised by the Authority. It became clear that the application applied only to an area of land behind the farm buildings, with a small adjacent area retaining the twenty-eight day use. The owner was prepared to give up his twenty-eight day rights on the rest of the land. Once, it became clear that the application was for tented camping only and not for caravans, mobile homes or camper vans we, like the Authority's Landscape Officer, concluded that the landscape impact, after some limited additional tree planting, would be acceptable. After discussion in Committee it was agreed that the benefits of approval, with strict conditions, were greater than if we had pressed for and obtained a refusal. Refusal could have allowed the existing situation to continue uncontrolled. The process of requiring a full application and setting out strict conditions should help to bring the situation under control. This will depend upon regular and strong enforcement should there be any breaches of the conditions.

A similar issue of farmers' permitted rights extends to the construction of agricultural buildings for which there have been an increased number of applications. In many cases the Authority's powers are limited to discussions about size, height, exact location and materials to be used rather than whether the building should be permitted at all.

More recently we became concerned by the Government's plan to encourage the erection of mobile phone masts to supply a signal where there was none. It seems that the number of applications within the Park will be limited. The Society supported an application, near Roadwater, where because of careful siting, adjacent to buildings with a few existing trees, we considered that the benefit to the public was greater than the minor landscape impact. There will be situations where the greater benefit argument will not apply and we

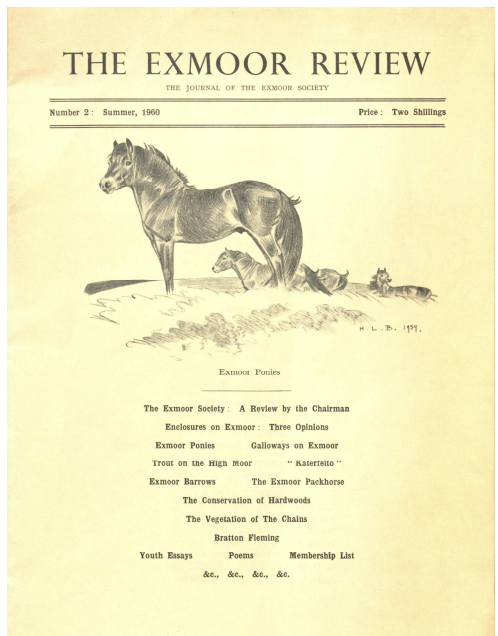
recognise that there will be locations where there can never be a strong signal.

To round off I would wish to express my concern over the quality of some applications. Some of the photographs submitted are poor and do little to enhance one's understanding of the application. Also, too many applications are submitted without having the benefit of the available free, Pre-Application Advice. Whether this advice has been sought or not is clearly indicated on the application and too often it has not been taken up. Inappropriate applications should always be refused, and there must be cases where using this facility would increase the prospects of a satisfactory outcome.

Duncan Jeffray

Message from the Editor of the *Exmoor Review*

When the *Exmoor Review* was started, Victor Bonham-Carter wrote that it should mirror Exmoor life in all its variety. Down the decades this has been its guiding principle – and a very welcome one to me as the new editor. In November an advisory board meeting talked me through some of the opportunities and challenges that putting together next year's edition will bring. It is clear that each edition must include opinion, information and entertainment as well as being a record for and of the Society and its activities.



At the moment I'm busy putting together ideas for the 2016 edition. There should be plenty of variety to match the very varied interests of the journal's readers, for whom it is an important benefit of membership. The interaction between the moor and its landscapes and the way people live their lives and make their livings from and through it, should be reflected in the journal, particularly at a time when the Exmoor population has been slowly dropping, and the average age gets ever older while the number of children grows ever smaller.

I would be grateful to know more of members' views on the material they would enjoy reading and the images they would like reproduced in the 2016 edition. Please email me with your suggestions at frances@allshire.com.

The Exmoor Society Archives: A Year On

It was back in February 2014 that I first visited the Exmoor Society Archives when I came to Dulverton for an interview for the position of outreach archivist. Then, the archives were stored on shelves in the old Parish Rooms and were available to whoever visited. However, paradoxically although open to all, they were not easy to access because no-one was really sure what material was held in the archives or exactly where it was. Finding information meant digging around with no clear idea of whether success would be possible. Nearly a year on from interview, it seems a good time to give the Society's members a brief update on how the archive project is progressing.

The archives have been moved to the new premises on the High Street in Dulverton and now look very different. Instead of being on open-access shelves they are housed in a separate, secure store room with a controlled environment. Humidity and temperature are kept within certain confines and any changes are gradual. Light is kept to a minimum and the only people who access the store are myself as archivist or trained volunteers. All items are kept in archive-standard boxes, thus further protecting them from changes in

temperature and humidity and helping to protect them from dust and other pollutants.

We now have a much better grasp of what material we hold. The archives are catalogued at least to folder level, so we know what material is in each group of papers. Some sections of the collection are catalogued to item level and it is my aim to get most of the material listed in this way. I am aided in this by around ten very dedicated volunteers, all of whom have spent time cleaning Hope Bourne's books, helping me pack up to move, listing slide collections and cataloguing the many maps we have accumulated. This means that now, if someone asks about the Dunster inn sign or a property at Winsford we know whether or not we hold items of interest to them. Even if we don't, often I can direct them to another place which might be able to offer more help.

We have unearthed some intriguing and historically valuable material. To help make this more accessible, some of it is being scanned. Thus the *Exmoor Review* from 1959 to 2015 is now available in a digital format and access to it will become part of the Society's membership. This means that all the volumes can be searched using a computer, a much quicker option than scanning all the pages yourself looking for that elusive article on the Barle! We also have slide collections that document the changes to the moor over the last 60 years. As we digitise these, it will be possible to cross the moor, electronic tablet in hand, seeing if you can identify exactly where each photograph was taken and how the landscape has, or hasn't, changed.

Of greatest interest to the media has perhaps been the discovery of a previously unpublished manuscript by Exmoor artist and author Hope Bourne. The work was written in the late 1960s as Hope recovered from a breakdown. It is her salute to Withypool and it describes an Exmoor village of 50 years ago in great detail. Hope takes the reader on a guided tour around the parish boundaries and along the River Barle. She describes the farms in the parish, the people, the animals, scenery and wildlife. It is a detailed

evocation of a time and place that is disappearing from living memory. Hope tried but failed to have the manuscript published in the early 1970s. Fortunately, Halsgrove have taken it on and it will be published in late summer this year, illustrated with some of Hope's drawings.

It's been a hectic year but looking back on the transformation, a worthwhile one. In the future, the Society's archives should remain a valuable resource for anyone wanting to know more about Exmoor and how it has changed over the 60 years since it was designated as a national park. The archive material will be carefully preserved and finding aids – catalogues and lists – will make it far easier for everyone to find what they are looking for.

Helen Blackman



Dunster taken in March 1973 by Roger Miles

EXMOOR NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

In many articles on some form of natural history, there is a mood of doom and gloom, rather like those placards that were seen around London: *The End of the World is Nigh*. Yet as far as I can see and hear, on Exmoor the situation is pretty good. We have watchdogs out and about. The Exmoor Society is always monitoring the threat of wind turbines, buildings that are not compatible with Exmoor's landscape and many other threats that spoil the moors. My own Society, Exmoor Natural History Society, records the fauna and flora, and the weather and also monitors threats to the beauty of the moor. If we do have a problem, who do we run to? Why, the National Park. Even with the depletion of 25% of their staff necessary when their funding was cut, there is always someone to answer questions and, if they can, wield a proverbial stick or have a quiet word with someone.

We must never forget the Exmoor Farmer. He it is who has fashioned the moor that we know and love. How he deals with all the paperwork that falls on his mat is a wonder. Once he has got the hang of one rule submitted by Defra there is a change of minister, and new rules apply. Payments are slow in coming forth. The only constant is a headache. He then gets the National Park telling him what to do. Why all the fuss? Well we want to be able to get out into the countryside, be it walking, riding either on a horse or a bike, or canoeing on protected rivers. There are those with off-road vehicles and motor-bikes that just want to scatter the mud and destroy the land that is so fragile; this fragile land, easily spoiled by the very people that love it or want to play in it. With all that said, Exmoor is rich in a superb diversity of flora and fauna. We have many rare plants. Birds that seem to be failing in other parts of the country have done well here. As far as fauna is concerned, we cannot ignore Bovine TB. The scientists must find an answer to the problem. Farmers who have had to kill the prize herds that they have been breeding for the last 30 years look for a scapegoat. In a small way it might help, but what is needed is the good health of all animals be they wild or tame. It cannot be beyond the wit of man to find a solution. Meanwhile let's get out

on to the moor we love, whether riding or walking, always remembering that the land is a workplace, so respect the farmer who is trying to keep the bank at bay, and does not want more problems with tourists on his land. If you show respect, so will he.

Michael Hankin, Chairman, Exmoor Natural History Society

Walkers at Larkbarrow "Knights through the Ages" led by Chris Binnie (centre) on 3rd September 2014



IN BRIEF

From 34 High Street

Children's Literary Competition - Judging will take place after this newsletter goes to print, and at the time of writing 144 entries have been received from six local schools. The winners will be notified in early spring and then invited to read out their poems at the Society's AGM in September. A selection of winning poems will be published in the Exmoor Review.

Farm Visit – On Thursday, 18th June Peter Stucley has very kindly offered to show members the farming practice and Shoot at North Molton Hill which forms part of the Stucley Estate. Meet at 1pm at The Sportsman's Inn, Sandyway (GR 794 333) for a pub lunch, and then onto North Molton Hill by Longstone Wells (GR 769 332) at 2pm to meet Peter. Finish by 4pm.

Members' Emails – We are always looking at ways we can save costs, especially printing and postage which seems to increase each year. With the improved database it means we can now communicate with you more easily and we would urge members to let us have their email addresses. If any members did not receive the recent email from the Society, can they please let the office know?

Visiting the Society Offices – The opening hours of the office are between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday but if members are making a special journey to visit us, then it is wise to ring or email first. The website will have details of any holiday closures.

Spring Conference – The Society's annual Spring Conference to be held on Friday, 24th April 2015, will open at 10am for coffee with the initial speeches at 10.30am and finishing at 3.30pm. The theme this year is "Visit Exmoor". Interesting speakers will include a Director from Visit England and others from the tourist industry exploring a variety of themes, including what is

meant by sustainable tourism. If you would like to attend then please return the booking form together with the fee of £15. We look forward to welcoming you in April.

Hilary Binding – We were deeply saddened by the news of Hilary Binding's death on 15 December 2014. She had been ill for some time with cancer and spent her last few weeks in a hospice. For over 30 years, she made an impressive contribution to the *Exmoor Review*, being co-editor with Malcolm MacEwen, then Victor Bonham-Carter, and finally Brian Pearce.

Annabel Bain – some of you will remember Annabel Bain who was a Society member and chairman of the now defunct London Group, and it is with great sadness that we learnt she died on 1st January this year.

Jim Bull - Jim Bull won't be a familiar name to most of our members as he worked for the Council for National Parks for 26 years. Jim sadly died last year. Arabella Amory, one of our Trustees, worked with Jim as a CNP volunteer, Council Member and Trustee for many years. She had enormous respect for him and relied on his advice, knowledge and help during that time. "He was, above all, totally committed to the campaigning work for National Parks which made him a very special colleague."

WOODLAND FIELD VISIT 2015 – Friday, 2nd October

10.30am meet at North Hill East End (GR 954 475) to visit the different types of woodland management. Led by Graeme McVittie, ENPA Woodlands Officer.

For more details please contact Graeme on 01398 322276. Bring a picnic.

This will be followed by a meeting of the Woodland Advisory Group and Tim Greenland's kind invitation to visit his Exmoor Nursery in Exford. (Take the track to the right of the church and continue past the cricket pitch on the left.

NEWS from around the GROUPS

South Molton Group

At the moment the South Molton Group are having trouble keeping members. Disappointingly, at their AGM, only 14 members renewed their subscriptions. However, the Group has decided to continue for another year and make a concerted effort to increase numbers and try and encourage younger people to help run the group.

Jo Griffin

Bristol Group

Looking at the Past and to the Future

Our Autumn programme began with a walk from Anstey Gate going South-West and staying on the South side of the ridge road. We saw distant deer, nearby ponies and sheep plus quite a variety of birds. Picnic lunch was taken at the top of Anstey Gully and some had a cream tea on the way home. The October meeting was at Nether Stowey. We had a guided tour of Coleridge Cottage and the attached garden followed by an excellent lunch across the road at the Ancient Mariner, the landlord of which allowed us to use his car park all day as we had a walk around the village in the afternoon. In November John Burgess came up to Clevedon and gave us an interesting talk about some Exmoor characters, some still with us, but all too many have been 'gathered up'. We had appropriate sound recordings to bring the descriptions to life.

Our 2015 programme kicks off with a short walk in early January along a stretch of the Taunton/Bridgwater canal with a pub lunch. Also in January we will have our New Year meal here in Clevedon, but using as much Exmoor produce as possible. In March we have a talk in Clevedon about the work of the Somerset and Dorset Air Ambulance which will be followed by another seven meetings at various venues during the year.

If there are any members of the main Society who live in the Bristol/North-East Somerset area who would like to join the Bristol Group, please contact **Chris Norrish, Chairman, Tel: 01275 - 876242**

Porlock Group

2014 has been another successful year for the Porlock Group. Our membership has remained static in the low sixties though, of course, we would welcome more new members. The programme, as usual, consisted of talks, in the Village Hall, at the beginning and end of the year, with walks and outdoor visits in the summer months. The talks, particularly those with a local interest to Porlock, were well supported by both members and visitors. Exmoor Society's Executive Committee member Chris Binnie's talk on 'The Potential of the Severn Estuary for Electricity Generation' was much appreciated as were the talks by Tony Richards on 'The Challenges of an Exmoor Hill Farmer' and that by David Smith on the 'The Exmoor Mires Project' which preceded the AGM.

Several last-minute changes had to be made to our programme, which is perhaps not surprising when you consider that much of it is planned more than twelve months in advance. However, informing members of these changes is now much easier, as the majority of our members have given us their email addresses.

The Chairman's July walk to the Valley of Rocks to look at the geomorphology fell on one of last year's rare, wet and windy evenings, and was therefore, understandably, poorly attended. The year concluded enjoyably with a splendid, reasonably priced and fully booked meal at the Luttrell Arms in Dunster.

A similar programme is planned for 2015. All our events will be included in the full list provided by the Exmoor Society. Visitors are always welcome to join us!

Duncan Jeffray, Chairman

Dulverton Group

Another successful year has passed, with one of the highlights being a most interesting talk on Owls by Chris Sperring. Our 2015 programme commences on the 5th March with our AGM, followed by a talk on Ancient Woodland Restoration by speakers from the Woodland Trust, another potentially interesting subject. Non-Group members will be very welcome at 7.00 p.m. at The Congregational Church Hall, Chapel Street. Do contact our Events Organiser, Linda Hammond, (01398) 323954 for further details.

Peter Donnelly, Chairman

Barnstaple Group

It has been a good year for the Barnstaple Group, with attendances of over 30 at most meetings. We enjoyed a varied programme of talks, opening the autumn season of 2014 with Exmoor Society Chairman, Rachel Thomas, offering a chance to 'leap into the future' with a fascinating look at the issues facing the Exmoor Society in the coming year. Our local filmmaker, Ken Blakey, told us the epic tale of the Lifeboat Louisa that inspired his documentary film. The boat was carried 'overland' for 13 miles from Lynmouth by villagers and the lifeboat crew, and launched from Porlock to go to the rescue of the Forest Hall in fierce storms in 1889. Trevor Wilson's interesting account of the diversity of our indigenous domestic livestock, and how they have developed over the centuries, highlighted the work of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust in managing the tensions between conservation and ensuring the survival of our rare breeds. Alison Mills, North Devon Museum's Development Manager invited us to 'go back in time' with the North Devon Yeomanry to the Great War. Alison shared stories and artefacts from local men who fought with the regiment. The evening was brought to life by two guards in period costume welcoming us to the meeting, courtesy of D Squadron, Royal Wessex Yeomanry. Captain Woodward and Staff Sergeant Leach of the Royal Devon Yeomanry Squadron of the Royal Wessex Yeomanry also joined us; they informed us the squadron is the last unit in the British Army to retain 'Devon' in its name.

Our winter programme for 2015 promises equally diverse topics, opening with 'a weather forecaster's guide to Exmoor', followed by a 'tour' of the Exmoor Society Archive and finishing (closer to home!) with a talk on the Barnstaple Borough Police. Finally, we would like to thank Peter Weekes for all his hard work over many years as treasurer for our group; Peter 'retires' from his role at the next AGM.

Hilary Pengelly (Member of the Organising Committee, Barnstaple Group)

The Pinnacle Youth Award

Young Exmoor person wins prestigious Pinnacle Award

The Exmoor Society is pleased to announce that this year's Pinnacle Youth Award winner is Jack Croft who lives near North Molton. Jack, aged 20, was born and bred at Twitchen and has always hoped to work and remain in the area. After leaving school 3 years ago he set up a small contracting service for small holdings and with his savings had bought a second-hand tractor and an old trailer which he repaired. Because his business was so limited, in the summer he had to move away to work on farms in the Midlands in order to raise enough money to live on. Now, with the money he has won from the Pinnacle Award, Jack intends to buy a set of chain harrows and a post banger and fertiliser spreader. On receiving the award, he said: "I am thrilled because now I can expand my business to include fencing, hedging, chain-sawing and mowing.". Christopher Whinney, vice-chairman of the Exmoor Society and one of the judges, said: "Jack presented a viable business case to the judges which will enable him to stay on Exmoor all through the year".



The Pinnacle Award was set up by the Society to encourage young people to develop a business related to Exmoor and to give them the means of staying in the area and contributing to the land based economy.

The Heart of Exmoor Scheme

The 'Heart of Exmoor' scheme was set up to help people enjoy and appreciate moorland, and support those who take care of it. The scheme (www.heartofexmoor.org.uk) was inspired and informed by the Exmoor Society's 2004 'Moorlands at a Crossroads' report and now this £1.2 million Heritage Lottery Fund partnership is in its final year. It will have run for 5 years, chaired by Exmoor Society Trustee, Arabella Amory. The scheme is all about people, partnerships and projects – volunteers and project partners made much more happen than the small staff team could have managed on their own. Thousands of volunteer days (adding up to £300,000 value) have been vital to the programmes. Some of the major achievements include community archaeology projects 'Dig Porlock' and 'Longstone Landscapes' with over 100 people involved; the Moorland Classroom' project engaging 6,000 visiting children with free online resources; 500 people benefited from moorland management skills training and hundreds have been out surveying Exmoor's wildlife.

Completed major projects that have made a difference to the landscape thanks to 'Heart of Exmoor' include the conservation of Hoar Oak Cottage, landscape enhancements at the Valley of Rocks at Lynton, undergrounding of power lines across Porlock Common and conservation work at the North Hill Radar Station and on 10 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Also, recently a report on the Exmoor Ponies in the National Park was commissioned in order to recommend future management of the herds and conservation of this rare breed.

Legacy is the main theme of the final year's work, ready for the end of the scheme in December 2015, handing over what has been learnt and ensuring continuity of the vital work.

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The Exmoor Society



Registered Charity No 245761

2015

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