

A photograph of a large field of purple and white crocuses in front of a stone building and a large tree trunk. The crocuses are in full bloom, with some showing yellow centers. The background features a stone wall with a window and a large, textured tree trunk.

The Exmoor Society
Spring Newsletter 2017

No. 64

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**The Exmoor Society / ENPA
SPRING CONFERENCE 2017**

**Friday 7 April 2017
Dulverton Town Hall ~ 10am**

'Valuing Exmoor's Natural Capital'

£20 per person to include refreshments

Booking essential: Please complete form included with this newsletter or book online at www.exmoorsociety.com

Share your views!

Chairman's Comments

2017 heralds a period of great change both nationally and locally that will have a direct impact on Exmoor's landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage and the many benefits they bring to people.

First, of course, is the fallout from Brexit with the chance to start again in relation to the Common Agricultural Policy and where overall the subsidy is likely to be reduced. Many groups are engaged in presenting the kind of countryside they would like to see in the future and how the CAP subsidies could be better used in order to achieve their desired outcomes. Sadly, the debate has become more polarised between farmers and environmentalists, heightened on Exmoor and other upland National Parks, with calls for re-wilding of valued moorland landscapes.



Swaling on North Hill

(ENPA Images)

Much of the work of conservationists through the last three decades in National Parks has been to show the importance of integrating the different interests of landscape beauty, wildlife, culture and leisure pursuits with hill farming practices

and businesses. It could be argued that separating out these interests now is a retrograde step as Exmoor is a cultural landscape with centuries of people working with nature and where the natural and cultural worlds are closely interlinked.

Second, the Government is likely this year to publish its 25-year plan for nature, with the plan's contents being advised by its Natural Capital Committee, set up in 2011. Natural Capital is a new approach to valuing nature. This year's Spring Conference will explore the idea and the Society is pleased that Professor Dieter Helm, Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee will explain the concept and why National Parks have an important role to play. Friday, 7 April is the date and it should be a stimulating day including a workshop to identify Exmoor's natural capital and what are the threats and opportunities to enhance it.



A view from above

© Jennifer Rowlandson

Third, a separate 25-year plan for farming is also being prepared by Government. The Society is involved with others in the South West Uplands Network - Dartmoor, Exmoor and Bodmin Moor - which includes representatives from farming and environmental groups. The network was set up in order that

the value of hill farming is explored and explained and continues to be at the core of new agri-environmental schemes flexible enough to meet the South West conditions. Campaign for National Parks (CNP), led by Dartmoor Preservation Association and with representation from The Exmoor Society, is bringing out a paper on farming futures in the English uplands.



Farming on Exmoor

© Jennifer Rowlandson

Fourth, the next Management (Partnership) Plan 2018-23, a statutory requirement, is being prepared by the Exmoor National Park Authority for consultation this year. The Society has called for an updated landscape character assessment for several years and is pleased that one is now being prepared to help the contents of the Management Plan. We will continue to put pressure on key bodies for further research into maintaining landscape quality and finding solutions to reduce negative impacts arising from different kinds of pressures and developments as well as considering other sections of the Management Plan such as Information and Education.

Fifth, with the retirement of Dr Stone and the appointment as Chief Executive of Sarah Bryan, who has been Head of Exmoor's Conservation and Access for the

last four years, there is likely to be continuity but some change in emphasis as well in these fast-moving times.

The Society is well-placed to face and, hopefully, influence some of these changes: moorland, landscape diversity, bio-diversity, appreciation of wildlife and heritage, access and education are the themes it will concentrate on. Without the help of volunteers and its Trustees, both groups containing much expertise, the Society would not be able to operate at such a level as well as continuing its usual programme for 2017, further details of which are found in the newsletter.



Gathering on Almsworthy Common

© Jenny Gibson

The plea, as ever, is for more people to be involved in helping the Society continue finding evidence for protecting and celebrating Exmoor, one of the most varied and beautiful landscapes in Britain.

Rachel Thomas, Chairman

Planning

The Exmoor Society's Executive makes decisions on planning applications after receiving advice from Duncan Jeffray, Vice Chairman. He writes:

'On behalf of the Society, I have monitored the 352 planning applications submitted to the National Park Authority during 2016. Taking into consideration that just over 40 of these applications were for the broadband masts submitted by Airband, the number of applications was similar to 2015 when there were 310, but lower than in 2014 when there were 376 applications.

The applications for the masts required to supply high speed broadband to isolated locations in the Park were all fundamentally similar in that they proposed a 12-meter-high mast that would receive the signal from other masts and transmit it to customers and on in the network. All of these applications were dealt with by David Wyborn, Head of Planning and Sustainable Development, which ensured continuity; I personally visited many of the sites. It soon became clear that, by the very nature of the network, there was only a limited capacity to move a mast any great distance from its proposed location as communication with the other masts in the network would be lost. However, the mast did not always need to be 12 m high and the height could be reduced in some key locations where a lower mast would perform almost as well. In a number of key locations where there was a potential landscape impact, reductions were possible.

The ENPA is to be congratulated on its negotiations with the applicant as I believe that the network will be installed with minimal damage to the landscape of the National Park.

The Society was most concerned over two applications and formally expressed those concerns. The first of these was for a storage shed in the Community Orchard at Dunster. The application would have seen a shed built close to the ancient Buttercross, a Listed Building and Ancient Monument just outside Dunster. Historic England objected unusually strongly and an amended application, locating the building at the far end of the orchard away from the Buttercross, was approved.

Perhaps the most controversial application in 2016 was for the erection of two long poultry sheds at Higher Wolcott's, Blagdon Lane, north east of Brompton Regis. The site is highly visible from a number of important locations such as Haddon Hill. The National Park Authority's Landscape Officer had grave concerns and the recommendation to the Committee was to refuse the application because of its damaging impact on the landscape. The Society suggested a number of conditions, including planting proposals that could ameliorate the impact should the application be approved. After a site visit Members approved the application with many of the conditions suggested by the Society. It will be interesting to visit the area in the future to see the impact of this development in the landscape.'

Dr Duncan Jeffray, Vice Chairman



England's tallest tree, Dunster Forest

© Jennifer Rowlandson

Archive News

By the end of June 2016 the Exmoor Society had successfully completed the archive project “Unlocking Exmoor’s Heritage”. The project met or exceeded all of its targets and a full report can be accessed via the website or at the headquarters in Dulverton.

Now that the archives are better catalogued and more accessible, we’ve launched a new project “Understanding Exmoor’s Special Qualities Through Using the Archives”. Our aim is to ensure that we make use of the material available to us to better understand and promote Exmoor. We also want to ensure that the Exmoor Society’s policies are firmly based on evidence. Over the course of the next two years, we aim to set up an archive hub, linking together smaller archives and historical societies across Exmoor and give training to individuals and amateur archivists on how to preserve and catalogue historical material. We are also researching communications and boundaries across Exmoor, in particular the postal paths. These paths were used to deliver mail across Exmoor but some are now falling into disuse and we would like to capture more information about them before it is lost for good.

The Society is also launching a series of shorter volumes called Exmoor Studies – you can read more about these on p21. Our main project however is a book-length study of Exmoor which will concentrate on Exmoor as a national park and the Exmoor Society’s role in its protection and promotion. This will be aimed at Society members and we hope to have it published in time for the Society’s 60th anniversary in 2018. It will draw on geography, natural and social history and environmental and agricultural studies to explore Exmoor’s importance as a national park. In structure it will be broadly chronological but each chapter will explore different themes, going from the setting up of the parks as “beautiful and relatively wild” spaces, through the afforestation battles of the 1950s, mapping the moor and battles over ploughing to the present day discussions about changes in moorland, and natural capital.

The book will draw on evidence gained from our Then & Now photographic project in conjunction with maps held in the archives, particularly the 1:25000 Land Use Map of Exmoor prepared by Geoffrey Sinclair in 1965, showing vegetation coverage in great detail across the whole of the moor. We hold

thousands of slides in the archive, having collected them since 1958. Over the past two years we have digitised as many of them as possible. To create a continuing record of the moor, its people, landscape and animals, we are retaking these photographs and noting more precisely when and where they were taken.



Malmsmead 1971 (Tom Troake) and 2016 (Helen Blackman)

They are a valuable record of Exmoor, showing how the landscape has changed gradually (and not so gradually) over the decades. The principle is simple – go to the same spot the old photo was taken and retake it. In practice, as I realised, this can be quite tricky. Changes in the landscape and changes in camera technology mean finding exactly the same spot can be difficult. It also depends on the photographer – Tom Troake seems to have stood at fairly well-known spots. Roger Miles drove around, stopped at recognised parking spots and took photos from there. Malcolm MacEwen on the other hand seems to have wandered off the recognised right of way and whilst it sometimes makes for good photos, it is not something we can recommend today.

Through trying out this exercise, I have found a greater sense of engagement with Exmoor.

Attempting to rediscover the same place hones your observation skills and enables a deeper understanding of landscape quality. The Society hopes to provide evidence for future projects with a substantial bank of varied images. We have started the project and are now finding that we need to narrow down to key sites across the moor. We can then take photos at these points during different seasons as the landscape varies so much during the year.



The Barle near Cornham Brake

Tom Troake, 1971



The same view. Despite seasonal differences, notice the growth of the trees, particularly along the river bank on the right hand side. *Richard Medland, December 2016*

We are seeking people to get involved and help us retake these historical photographs.

So if you fancy doing some detective work and seeing how Exmoor has evolved, please contact me on exmoorsocietyarchivist@gmail.com or 01398 323335 for details of the project.

Dr Helen Blackman, Archivist



Near Brendon Two Gates, c 1959

Richard Harper



Near Brendon Two Gates, January 2017

Richard Medland

An Updated Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment

For several years, The Exmoor Society has asked the ENPA for an updated Landscape Character Assessment. In preparation for the next statutory Management (Partnership) Plan 2018-23, the Authority has now commissioned an update of the 2007 Assessment. The Society, with others, has been involved with preparing the Assessment and has seen the draft. It argues that Exmoor National Park is one of the most varied and beautiful landscapes in Britain, containing a unique combination of spectacular coastlines, expansive moorlands, steep wooded valleys and timeless farmland. As such, the Assessment is both a celebration and an analysis of the Exmoor landscape and provides a planning and management tool to aid its future sustainability. The document is in four parts:

Part I provides a summary of the condition of Exmoor's landscape and landscape changes which have taken place since 2007;

Part II tells the story of Exmoor's landscape from geological times to the present day and includes the various natural and cultural designations;

Part III is at the heart of the document describing the nine landscape types in detail and making landscape management recommendations and specific planning guidelines;

Part IV contains general planning guidelines.

Overall, the condition of Exmoor's landscapes is considered to be good although there are variations across the Park and work needs to be done to keep them in good condition and retain their character in the future. The draft document will go out for general consultation in the Spring and will be adopted by the ENPA and form supplementary planning guidance. The Society considers that this is a comprehensive document containing many photographs, diagrams and maps, clear text and full summary of each landscape type.

It provides the foundation for future management and development of the Park and is also a surprisingly well-presented and attractive document in its own right.

Moorland News

The Society's commissioned 2016 report '*Exmoor's Moorlands – Where next?*' has continued to stimulate debate, workshops and work areas for the Moorland Board to pursue. A short paper was produced by Robert Deane for the ENPA to suggest four future work areas:

- Overall objectives: defining and promoting the benefits of the cared-for moorland, qualifying their value and developing a model for a Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme and lobby for a favourable environmental/agricultural policy post-Brexit.
- Moorland farming: reconnect livestock production with the moorland farming system and encourage innovation such as restoring heather.
- Moorland conservation: understand the causes of vegetation change and deal with the loss of heather replaced by bracken, gorse and trees which is impoverishing the quintessential moorland character; develop an achievable swaling strategy.
- Public appreciation and enjoyment: moorland landscape attracting visitors, Tourism spending of £90m pa is not reinvested in sustaining the moorland and other landscapes. Develop educational use of moorland and challenges for young people.

The Society is still concerned that with so much monitoring and experimental projects taking place some key 'big picture' facts are still not measured.

These include the overall loss of moorland, the amount and rate of the loss of heather from many former healthy areas, the increase of *Molinia* (moor grass), scrub, bracken and trees, the decline in landscape quality in some places and landscape character that needs to be reinforced.

The 1965 Exmoor Land Use Map 1:25000, prepared by Geoffrey Sinclair, was re-discovered recently and at a very opportune time. It provides baseline evidence, in particular, of moorland vegetation in the period before the introduction of ESAs and agri-environmental schemes and restrictions in moorland management practices. It shows the rich diversity of moorland vegetation, identifies former heather areas intermingled with other plants and how *Molinia* was confined to the Royal Forest. With the concern over increasing

moorland bio-diversity today, this mapping of the different vegetation types through walk-over surveys is invaluable for bodies like Natural England and the Environment Agency.

It will help to target future priorities such as increasing bio-diversity, restoring heather and re-wetting peat areas as well as retaining large expanses of open spaces and key views.



Close-up of the 1965 Land Use Map of Exmoor, with the Hoar Oak at the centre

Rachel Thomas, Chairman

Change at the top of Exmoor National Park Authority

Dr Nigel Stone, ENPA Chief Executive, is retiring after 17 years at the helm. He has seen many challenges in this time and had particular successes in conservation and community involvement. He has worked hard to ensure that, on balance, a national park designation is a positive influence for local people and has been a strong advocate for Exmoor farming with Government and its key agencies. Rachel Thomas said on hearing of his retirement: 'His ability to unravel complex matters, and then put together realistic solutions has been an outstanding feature of his leadership. This has ranged from dealing with the Foot & Mouth Crisis in 2001, the hunting debate, through to being a tireless defender of the important role played by hill farming and livestock grazing in maintaining Exmoor's landscapes. He has encouraged local skills and knowledge and shown fine judgement over employing staff and taking the heat out of contentious issues.'



'Underneath his professional exterior there is a passion for the National Park. Exmoor will miss a true friend.'

In his place, Sarah Bryan has been appointed as ENPA's new Chief Executive from 3 January after a rigorous selection process with a national advertising campaign finding 70 applicants.



Sarah has been Head of Conservation and Access at the Authority for four years and brings a wealth of experience of National Parks and a strong background in landscape and its management. The Society has worked closely with her for over a decade on landscape matters, including wildlife and cultural heritage that lie at the core of National Park purposes. It wishes her the greatest success in a period of sudden and exceptional change.

The Society Library

The Society's library houses around 800 volumes and offers one of the best collections of books about Exmoor contained in one place.

The library has been built up over decades, mainly through kind donations from members. In 2014 it was decided to change from a lending library to a reference-only library. This has enabled us to weed out duplicate copies of books. We have sold these second hand and the money has been set aside to buy new books for the library to ensure that it stays up to date and as comprehensive as we can manage. Pictured is a selection of the books we have been able to obtain in this way, including Ann Bermingham's *Landscape and Ideology* and Robert MacFarlane's *Landmarks*.



There are many books on the national park concept and classic Exmoor texts such as those by MacDermot, Orwin and Snell. We hold reports on Park Management by the ENPA and other bodies. We have information on historical events such as the Lynmouth flood; archaeology texts; books on Exmoor's wildlife and guides to Exmoor's towns and villages. In the fiction section we have

over 20 different editions of Blackmore's classic *Lorna Doone* as well as some of his lesser-known works. We have a collection of Henry Williamson novels and Whyte-Melville's swashbuckling *Katerfelto*. *The Exmoor Review* is digitised from 1959 to the present and contains a plethora of articles on many aspects of Exmoor – its wildlife; landscape and history. If you are a member of the Society, we will send you digital back copies on request. We hold some other unusual Exmoor journals such as the *Lyn Valley News*; *Dulverton and Brushford Magazine* and the *Journal of the West Somerset Village History Society*. Come and browse through the Microstudies and find out about churches and chapels; ships and harbours; murder and mystery and the fish of Exmoor.

If you have any books about Exmoor which you no longer need, please consider donating them to the Society. If we don't have them in the library, we will add them to the collection. If we already have a copy, we will sell the donated book and use the funds to buy more library books.

Dr Helen Blackman, Archivist

Walks Programme

The Society 2016 guided walks programme has proved to be another great success, building on and surpassing the figures from 2015. Through the support, commitment and energy of our volunteer walk leaders, the 2016 programme comprised 26 walks.

Running from February to the end of October 2016, the walks covered a wide variety of landscapes and subjects across Exmoor, starting with the springtime theme '*Snowdrop Valley in Full Bloom*' and ending with the autumn scenery of '*Deer on Dunkery*'. To give an indication of the breadth of the programme, the subjects have included:

- Prehistoric sites visited on the walks '*From Withypool to Tarr Steps, a step back in time*' and '*Coast and Common from Barna Barrow*';
- Exmoor landscapes - rivers, moorland, farmland, coast and woods - featured in the walks '*Two Exmoor Rivers and Villages*', '*Anstey Commons and Hawkridge*', '*Selworthy and North Hill*', '*The Woods of Simonsbath*', '*Avill Valley Vistas*' and '*Autumnal Woods around Dulverton*';

- Literature and the Arts have been the focus in *'To Culbone, in Coleridge's Footsteps'*, *'Doone Country'*, *'In the Footsteps of Rachel Reckitt, Sculptor, Engraver & Welder'* and *'Hope Bourne and her Beloved Exmoor'*;
- The history of Exmoor settlements have been explored in *'Discovering Dunster's Hidden History'* and *'Lynton and Valley of Rocks – An Historic Tour'*.

The 26 walks in 2016 were joined by over 370 walkers (353 in 2015) and £515.00 was raised in donations. These figures have steadily increased over the last eight years. The walks are supported by locals and visitors from the UK and abroad, by members and non-members, individuals and families. Some walks include an optional pub lunch or afternoon tea, offering a social opportunity for the group and support for local businesses. In addition to the programme being advertised through our website, it also appears in the Exmoor Visitor and on the ENPA website, in the national and local press and via Twitter. The Society is now the largest provider of guided walks throughout the year on Exmoor.

It is the walk leaders however, with their enthusiasm, dedication and willingness to share their love and knowledge of Exmoor, and who plan, research and prepare the walks, who are at the core of the programme's success.

The 2017 programme

This year the programme expands even further, with 33 walks. Some are new, including a walk around Ashley Combe (home of Countess of Lovelace, daughter of Lord Byron), one along Ilkerton Ridge in search of the first cuckoo, *'A Walk Through Two Iron Ages'* and another to the source of the River Tone. There are new themes, such as *'Wildlife of the Doone Valley and Moorland'* and *'Wildflowers of Watersmeet Woodlands'*, and old favourites, such as historic Lynton, Dulverton's autumnal woods, and the lives of artist Rachel Reckitt and, of course, Hope Bourne.

In addition, we are strengthening our links with other groups. There will be a guided walk *'In Search of John Knight's Lost Mansion'* led by ENPA's Rob Wilson-North and linking with his Simonsbath Festival talk. Also, a member of the partnership project *'Upstream Thinking'*, improving the quality and delivery of the south west's water, will lead a walk around Wimbleball Reservoir.

What is Natural Capital?

A concept now being used more regularly by many environmental economists is 'natural capital'. The Government has promised to leave the environment in a better state than it found it and is about to produce a 25-year plan setting out how it will deliver this commitment. Its Natural Capital Committee has said in its January 2017 report that it is achievable. It states that National Parks have a key role to play and their powers and duties should be extended.

The 2017 Spring Conference will explore in more detail what is meant by natural capital and how this will affect the role of National Parks.

The keynote speakers will be Prof. Dieter Helm who chairs the Natural Capital Committee, and Prof. Ian Bateman who is also a member. It should be a thought-provoking conference with opportunity for delegates to participate in exploring what is Exmoor's natural capital and how it can be enhanced.



From Countisbury towards Lynton & Lynmouth

© Madeline Taylor

2016 Pinnacle Award

The winner of the 2016 Pinnacle Award was a young blacksmith and artistic metalworker. Tom Lile had established a business working in traditional ironwork and wanted to branch out into steel fabrication. On hearing his application was successful, Tom said: 'I am grateful to The Exmoor Society for the opportunity to win the Pinnacle Award this year. The money will allow me to expand and diversify my service to the people of the Exmoor area and venture into new aspects of metalwork.' The £3,000 award will not only assist in buying but also allow him to broaden his skills and services and offer employment to others in the area.



Jackie Smith, trustee of The Exmoor Society, said: 'The purpose of the award is to give someone a leg-up in their business venture. Already in business and with an entrepreneurial understanding, Tom has an eye to the future and had identified opportunity for further expansion.'

The Exmoor Society set up the Pinnacle Youth Award, now in its fifth year, for young people aged between 16 and 25 years, who live, work, or are studying in, the Greater Exmoor Area. The previous winners have all progressed in developing businesses in the area.

'There is a great deal of concern in English uplands like Exmoor that young people have to leave because of a lack of jobs,' said Rachel Thomas, Chairman,

'We are concerned about local livelihoods and as a conservation body, want to show that protecting a beautiful landscape can go together with creating and sustaining employment.'

By providing seed-corn money, the Society hopes that young people will be able to stay in the area and help secure a lasting future for Exmoor's countryside.

Tom's website is www.thomaslile.co.uk

New Publication Series

Trustee Caroline Tonson-Rye writes: In 2017, The Exmoor Society will be launching a series of 'Exmoor Studies' – short books on Exmoor themes of between 64 and 96 pages. In this format, texts that are too long for the Exmoor Review but not long enough for a book-length study will be published. The first three titles will be:

- ***Exmoor Chroniclers*** - an edited collection of articles on eight people who have recorded the region in words and images over the last sixty years: Hilary Binding, Victor Bonham-Carter, S. H. Burton, Brian Chugg, Hazel Eardley-Wilmot, Peter Hesp, Roger Miles, and Brian Pearce. Illustrated with images from the Exmoor Society Archive.
- ***Exmoor Ponies*** - A contested history by Helen Blackman. This study examines the recent debates over the origins and status of Exmoor ponies and seeks to put them within their wider context. Discussions about their purity as a breed need to be considered within the context of the development of modern breeds. When looking back, Dr Blackman argues, we need to be aware that concepts of genetic purity are very recent and thus the term “purebred” has changed substantially in meaning over the last 200 years.
- ***The Minehead Road***, an exploration of the routes around and into Exmoor, by John Greed. John Greed’s widow donated his papers to the archives in 2014. Amongst them is a complete book-length manuscript on the Minehead road which, sadly, was unpublished before his death. Clara Greed has kindly given the Society permission to edit and publish suitable extracts from this.

Wanted! **VOLUNTEERS**

We have pieces missing in our jigsaw – can you help us fill the gaps? We desperately require volunteers to help with a variety of tasks – merchandising, retail, cataloguing, scanning, archiving, etc.

If you have some time to spare and can make our picture complete, please do get in touch.

01398 323335 / info@exmoorsociety.com



Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition

Trustee Caroline Tonson-Rye writes: The deadline for submissions for the next two-yearly Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition is 31 December 2017. The competition is open to all amateur photographers for images taken on Exmoor **that truly capture the essence of the place**. There are three categories: (1) Scenery, (2) Wildlife and (3) Heritage. Entries may be in colour or in black and white and must be mounted. The final size of the mounted photograph should be no more than 12" x 10".

Full terms and conditions and an entry form will be available to download on the website in March 2017 or from The Exmoor Society office in Dulverton.

A panel of judges will judge the entries in January 2018. A prize of £50 is awarded to the winning entry in each category and the overall winner also receives a trophy, donated by Alfred Vowles's family, to hold for two years.

Some tips

- Make sure the image is in focus.
- Consider the composition carefully. Don't include too many elements. It is easier to make a good composition if there is just one focal point.
- Look at where the light is coming from and use it to your advantage. Rather than having it behind you, the image might look better if it came from one side.
- You can lead the viewer to a focal point by framing a scene with, for example, an archway, window, or tree branch.
- A sense of depth can be created by using leading lines (e.g. roads, paths, rivers, fences).
- Don't submit photos with bleached out skies or overly dark foregrounds.
- Perspective: a shot from a low or an unexpected angle can produce an eye-catching image.

If an image impresses you, it will probably impress others – do have a go, we'd love to see the result.

Farming

Exmoor farming and landscape are inseparable. What happens in farming has impacts on the people who determine both the cultural and material fabric of Exmoor National Park and so, inevitably, its visual aspects.

For those reasons, The Exmoor Society is constantly vigilant about all matters relating to developments in farming practice, and alert to the direction and potential consequences of policy change. For instance, last year a confidential analysis of the economic state of Exmoor farms participating in its Farm Business Survey sample was conducted by Duchy College Rural Business School on our behalf. The study was financed by the National Park Authority. It confirmed the high dependence of Exmoor farms for their viability on money received for providing environmental benefits for society. Nowadays, reliance on cattle and sheep production to make a living is insufficient.



Red Ruby Devon cattle

© Jennifer Rowlandson

The Brexit referendum vote inevitably means a period of uncertainty for farmers until a new domestic farm policy replaces the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union. Although subject to significant amendment over the years, this has been the framework for UK farm policy since 1973. It remains to be seen precisely what shape future policy takes but, unlike for many areas of the national economy, the outcome for farming is likely to prove relatively uncontroversial. For a long time, there has been a widespread political consensus in the UK that livestock and crop production should be determined by free market prices. Public spending should be focused instead on paying farmers to provide a wide range of environmental products, including ecosystem services such as carbon capture, cleaner water and flood control and maintaining landscape quality.



Exmoor Horn sheep

© Jennifer Rowlandson

For many years, farmers have received direct income payments, now under the so-called Basic Payments Scheme, which were never intended to last indefinitely. Governments looking to cut budget expenditures are unlikely to maintain these payments unless they can be shown to provide the kind of

environmental products society wants. Attributing financial values to these unconventional products obtained from farm resources is often extremely difficult, but must be attempted wherever possible. Exmoor Society Spring Conference 2017 is devoted to exploring the issues in relation to the idea of 'natural capital'.

Exmoor Hill Farming Network (EHFN) is an exemplar of best practice for knowledge transfer between and on behalf of farmers as they confront the need to adapt to ever-changing business and technological conditions. Professor John Wibberley serves on its steering group. In July 2017 he will explain and discuss EHFN's work at the International Farm Management Association Conference in Edinburgh. Dr Keith Howe was a panel member for EHFN's autumn discussion of Exmoor farmers' hopes and expectations of Brexit. He is also a member of the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) Working Party on Farming in the English Uplands, with particular responsibility to ensure that the interests of Exmoor farming, different in many ways from upland farming elsewhere in England, is not overlooked. Exmoor Society trustees, John and Keith, together with Chairman Rachel Thomas, regularly participate in the South West Uplands Network, further evidence of the great importance the Society attaches to the well-being of Exmoor's farmers.

Trustee, Dr Keith Howe

... and finally,

THANK YOU

for being members, for your generous donations, for volunteering and for supporting Society events.

Helping the Society to conserve and protect Exmoor so that future generations can experience the wonder and joy of its special landscape is your gift and your abiding legacy.

It is important to keep seeking the means to achieve this goal, to listen and learn and to share ideas and viewpoints. Only this will ensure Exmoor's unique qualities continue to be valued, its benefits remain accessible to everyone and it has a vibrant and healthy future in the modern world.



The Exmoor Society
Registered Charity No 1160912



2016 – 2017

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Dulverton Churchyard in Spring

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