



The Exmoor Society Spring Newsletter 2020

No. 67

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The Exmoor Society / ENPA SPRING CONFERENCE 2020

**Friday 24 April 2020
Dunster Tithe Barn ~ 10am-3.30pm**

Exmoor's Iconic Coast: the challenges ahead

*What have we here that is iconic?
How can we keep it special in a changing climate?
What opportunities are there for maritime communities
environmentally and economically?*

£20 per person to include buffet lunch, etc

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



Looking north from Dunkery

© Madeline Taylor

Chairman's Report

Looking Ahead

In a period of very fast change when so many crucial issues are being highlighted at the global, national and local level, it is difficult to know where to start on their likely impact on the National Park or how we, a small independent conservation charity, can be effectively involved. Consider the following – the

. . . where and how do we select our priorities and actions?

Glover Review and its ambitious recommendations for protected landscapes; a climate emergency declared on Exmoor; nature in crisis with loss of biodiversity; a new environmental system being trialled called the Environmental Land Management scheme to replace the Common Agricultural Policy; emphasis on the difficult natural capital concept and public payments for public goods; greater encouragement of access to the countryside and coast; concern for the challenges facing remote rural communities. All in the end are inter-related but where and how do we select our priorities and actions?

Trustees in their October meeting when deciding on strategic priorities made several decisions. First, the Society should be more actively involved in climate change and its likely impact on Exmoor. We have, for many years, referred to the climate crisis as the most significant long-term threat facing the natural environment with many Exmoor habitats and species especially vulnerable to change and the need for management adaptation. We need to do more now. Making a start, this year's Spring Conference will include a climate change scientist from the Meteorological Office; similarly, we will be considering our own activities and facing the challenges of carbon reduction.



Male silver-washed fritillary

© ENPA Images

Second, we will engage more in nature and particularly the loss of biodiversity in our landscapes and habitats. Recognising that there are many bodies with expertise in nature conservation we want to raise the issues by supporting the Authority and other key partners such as the National Trust and activities that will help nature recovery. We will include more articles on nature in the Exmoor Review as requested by members in our recent membership survey (see results on p7). We will place a greater emphasis on engagement in citizen science, such as our work with Plantlife on lichens, mosses and ferns.

Third, the Society will respond after reflection and having studied the details of the Glover recommendations in the Landscapes Review final report. We were particularly pleased to see many of our responses to the initial consultation were supported. These included a stronger body to promote protected landscapes at national level which Glover calls a National Landscape Service, changes to the size and direction of the boards at the Park level, emphasis on nature recovery, new agri-environmental schemes reflecting local conditions and access for educational groups. Already bodies such as the Council for National Parks have raised issues over governance, the socio/economic duty becoming a third purpose, diversity in access and the balance between access and conservation.

The Society will continue to support Exmoor farming and its communities

Fourth, the Society will continue to support Exmoor farming and its communities through Exmoor's Ambition, a locally devised agri-environmental scheme within the framework of national priorities. (see further details of this under Test & Trials, p9)

Fifth, the Society will continue to promote Exmoor's Register of Natural Capital, especially after the boost it received in the Glover Review being the only detailed example from Exmoor. The report said: 'In 2017 Professor Dieter Helm, Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee, challenged The Exmoor Society (a group supporting the National Park) to explore how they could use the natural capital concept. The Exmoor Society quickly rose to the challenge starting with a project to trial a particular toolkit that would help identify ecosystem services provided by Exmoor. This work has moved forward the natural capital approach in several ways. It proposes a unifying classification; it describes the relationship between natural capital and cultural considerations; it uses landscape character to ensure descriptions of natural capital are place-based; it shows the importance of involving local knowledge and values.' We are encouraging other bodies to comment on the potential use of the Register. We congratulate Rural Focus Ltd for undertaking the pioneering project and further work in this field.

Sixth, Trustees decided last year to commission a book by Philip Dalling on the history of the Society. We aim to have *Saving the Splendour* published by late Spring. It charts clearly the richness of our legacy from the original founders

over 60 years ago, the big issues raised and how our horizons have widened in the 21st Century. Full of interesting anecdotes, early colourful characters, pictures and photos, we hope that members of the Society will purchase and enjoy the book. It describes the many campaigns, activities, our involvement in Exmoor life, influencing policy nationally, working in partnership and why there is a continued need for an independent charity acting as a champion and watchdog of Exmoor National Park.



An Exmoor gateway

© *Madeline Taylor*

Thank you to all of you who completed the membership survey and for further ideas, keeping us informed about your wishes for the Society. We continue to promote our work on our website and Twitter and look forward to welcoming you at our Dulverton centre. Please email me over any concerns/help/support/advice at info@exmoorsociety.com or telephone Anne who will pass on to me your comments and we will respond as soon as possible. We understand many members cannot take part in our activities through the year and are extremely grateful they recognise that membership keeps them closer to Exmoor through the Spring Newsletter, AGM invitation and Exmoor Review. Please encourage your family and friends to join us and help keep Exmoor special.

The Exmoor Society Members' Survey

A recent survey was sent to all members and we were delighted with the response and the support expressed for the Society. Our members are passionate about Exmoor and, as one member stated, 'I live a long way away now and it keeps me updated about the issues affecting Exmoor'. This was a common theme and 98% of respondents to the survey stated that they particularly enjoyed receiving the annual Exmoor Review. Several people mentioned that they have a full set of the Reviews, published annually since 1959, and that it was a great record to keep. Another member commented that they particularly enjoyed articles about history and Exmoor lives, another advised "people like to read personal contributions from Exmoor people; recollections, observations on wildlife, adversity overcome". Overall members felt that the Review was the Society's flagship journal and we also know that it is appreciated by our partner organisations.

Respondents also felt comforted in the knowledge that, by being a member, they were helping to protect Exmoor for future generations - its wildlife, landscape and history. Useful suggestions for future campaigns were received, including tackling climate change, single-use plastic and carbon capture, topics trustees are currently working on. There was also support for assisting the farming community and other rural businesses in their changing environmental role to ensure a positive future for the National Park. The Society is committed to ensuring campaigns are evidence-based and current examples include reports on natural capital, moorland, woodland, all available on our website, as is our response to the Glover Review.



The archive held at the Exmoor Society shop and office in Dulverton

Mistle thrush

© Keith Hann

was considered of great importance. The Society has amassed an extensive collection of documents of cultural or historical importance to Exmoor which is available to all.

Other concerns raised were the provision of affordable housing on Exmoor and the lack of public transport in rural areas. Public transport is particularly difficult, not helped by Exmoor straddling two counties. The Society isn't able to deal with either of these directly but supports related projects and continues to support and work closely with other organisations better placed to help.

We are always keen to attract more members and would be thrilled if you could encourage others to join. The Society is delighted that some of the area's town and parish councils have joined and the corporate members' directory is also growing, a copy of which is enclosed with this newsletter and also available on the website. If possible, please do support these organisations, some of whom offer discounts to Society members.

All feedback received will be taken into consideration in the near future by the Executive Committee: our thanks go to all members who kindly responded to our survey.



Porlock from Bossington Hill

© ENPA Images

Test & Trials - a new Environmental Land Management System?

The general election removed much uncertainty over future directions for UK national policies. For Exmoor, none is likely to prove more significant than the implications of government implementing its 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) and, central to it, introduction of a new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS).

Published in 2018, the 25 YEP marks a radical departure for environmental policy. Inevitably, agriculture plays a major role. For farmers, it is no exaggeration to assert that the new policy ranks in importance alongside UK adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy in 1973 or the 1947 Agriculture Act. The consequences will be profound. No longer will agriculture be defined in terms of crop and livestock production, but henceforth also as a major provider of 'public goods' acquired in return for public (in other words, taxpayer) expenditure. The concept of 'natural capital' is at its core. Familiarity with a new vocabulary is needed to understand why policy is taking the direction it is.

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Essentially, it means that enhancing the quality of our environment extends beyond farmers' traditional role of producing food and agricultural products to sell for monetary gain. Society as a whole also needs farmers' help to provide clean air and water, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation of adverse climate change effects, protection from threat of flooding and fire, reversal of biodiversity loss, and provision of landscape-scale beauty for people's tranquil enjoyment. Typically, either these cannot be provided on sufficient scale by farmers' individual efforts or, for understandable reasons, they have no personal incentive to do so. Consequently, new ways must be found to incentivise farmers to produce the kind of things society wants, variously described collectively as environmental goods or ecosystem services.

But first these must be defined, measured, and payment methods and levels decided. This is a formidable task. Complementary addressing such issues are the Exmoor Society funded report 'Towards a Register of Exmoor's Natural Capital', and the Exmoor Hill Farming Network and Exmoor National Park

Authority (ENPA) publication 'Exmoor's Ambition'. The Society's study is highlighted in the Glover report ('Landscapes Review: Final Report', page 42), and acknowledged favourably by Professor Dieter Helm in his most recent book, 'Green and Prosperous Land'. Together, the reports are the foundation for work currently in progress on the Exmoor Tests and Trials component of Defra's investigation of how best to operationalise ELMS as the existing Basic Payment Scheme is phased out between 2021 and 2027. Based on the methodology set out, ENPA is leading a detailed investigation of around 25 farms, all carefully selected to represent different farm types and locations across Exmoor. The results will help to inform Defra decisions about ELMS implementation. Dr Keith Howe represents the Exmoor Society on the steering group. Society members will be kept informed as work proceeds.

Nature & Citizen Science

The Society is supporting Plantlife, a charity raising the profile of wild flowers, plants and fungi. It has developed a project to conserve rare lichens, mosses and liverworts in our special Atlantic woodlands. In our Resource Centre, Plantlife has provided lichen specimens, microscopes and books to encourage people to identify and study further these lower plant communities and take part in surveying woodlands on Exmoor. Plantlife is also providing two walks for our Walks Programme.

Rainforests . . . on Exmoor?

Anyone who spends time on Exmoor knows that the upland and coastal woods of western Britain are special places. Think of these woods and images of old trees with twisted branches, dripping in lichens, mosses and ferns come to mind. The luxurious growth of these 'lower plants' is characteristic of these 'Atlantic woodlands' and is brought about by the Gulf Stream and prevailing south-westerly winds, which bring clean air and wet, humid conditions. These woods are classed as temperate rainforests, and are internationally important for their lower plant communities. However, just like their tropical counterparts, they are seriously threatened.

Under threat

Habitat loss and fragmentation have left many woodlands isolated, and their slow-growing lower plant populations are vulnerable to extinction. Changes in woodland management have led to woodlands becoming dense and shady and this loss of woodland structural diversity, alongside air pollution, has been responsible for drastic declines in many species. This is compounded by ash dieback and climate change. Although small, and often overlooked, lower plants make a substantial contribution to forest ecosystems, providing a habitat

and food source for many organisms and acting as bio-indicators of forest health.

The best pockets of Atlantic woodland are classed as Important Plant Areas (IPAs)—sites that are considered amongst the most important in the world for plants and fungi. On Exmoor, Plantlife is working closely with project partners the National Trust, and Exmoor National Park to conserve rare lichens and bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) in these remnant high interest sites. However, for the future resilience of Atlantic woodland lower plant communities, landscape-scale conservation across larger areas is essential. There is a lack of data about the condition of woodlands across the wider landscape, and their potential to support Atlantic woodland flora.

Local communities taking action through citizen science

With the support of local communities, and using an innovative citizen science approach, Plantlife's new Rapid Woodland Assessment tool is helping to gain a



Volunteers' training

Rachel Jones, Plantlife

better understanding of the woodland resource across south-west England and identifying new sites with potential to support Atlantic woodland lower plants.

Enthusiastic volunteers, woodland owners and land managers have begun to investigate woods in their local areas using the RWA. The survey has been designed so it can be carried out by people without experience of lower plant identification during a 1 to 2-hour woodland walk.



Fruticose lichen *Evernia Prunastri*

Nigel Stone

The results

Since its launch in the south-west in March 2019, over 200 people have attended training and 140 surveys have been submitted online. Of the sites surveyed, around 15% have been highlighted as potentially high value based on the abundance of lichens and bryophytes. The most commonly identified threat has been dense holly growth, recorded in over 80% of surveyed sites, and deemed extensive in nearly 40% of sites. Excessive beech and sycamore regeneration were also recorded as widespread threats in almost a quarter of surveyed sites. Where these plants form dense understories they cast heavy shade and prevent lichens and bryophytes from growing.

These survey results will support woodland managers to understand the potential of their site to support Atlantic woodland lichens and bryophytes and identify site-specific threats to inform conservation management. Collectively, results are helping Plantlife to identify new areas to prioritise for more in-depth species surveys, as well as helping target management advice.

Interested in getting involved?

We need more people out on the ground surveying woodland on Exmoor and in the surrounding area. The survey involves:

- Assessing tree species composition and woodland structure, including the tree age profile and how closed the tree canopy is.
- Checking for key habitat features that are important for lichens and bryophytes (including veteran tree features, dead wood, rock features and presence of wet habitats).
- Recording the abundance of lichens and ground cover of mosses and liverworts.
- Recording the presence and severity of key threats to lichens and bryophytes.

If you would like to take part in the RWA you can download the resource and find out more on Plantlife's Building Resilience in South West Woodlands webpage. Alternatively you can request a hard copy by emailing kate.hind@plantlife.org.uk

Rachel Jones, Project Manager, Building Resilience in South West Woodlands



Trumpet lichen

Ben Totterdell

Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition Winners 2019

An excellent range of entries was received for the Society's biennial Alfred Vowles Competition last year. There was an additional category - Heritage Buildings – to recognise the recent and ongoing research highlighting the value and scope of Exmoor's historic built environment.

Jill Edwards, Trustee of The Exmoor Society, said, 'The judges were impressed by the quality and wide range of subject matter in the four categories. They admitted that choosing winners was a difficult task, particularly in the Landscape category, which has a large number of entries. The care and attention which the photographers had given to their work is to be applauded.'

Leanna Coles, whose 'Seat with a View' looking towards Cloutsham and beyond was both the overall winner and winner of the Landscape category, and was praised for capturing a particularly vibrant Exmoor landscape with excellent lighting and detail, and a wonderful sky. She also won the Wildlife category with her 'Tippbarlake Exmoor pony herd gathering on Brendon Common', a spectacular image of this iconic Exmoor event.



Landscape & Overall Winner – A Seat with A View

© Leanna Coles



Wildlife Winner: Tippetbarlake Exmoor Pony Herd Gathering

© Leanna Coles

Also to be congratulated is Madeline Taylor who won both the Exmoor Activities and the Heritage Buildings categories with her photographs of the Allerford Forge and of the gated entrance to the Worthy Combe toll road; two images that capture the spirit and history of the National Park. Her 'Having a "splashing" good time in Horner Water' in the former category was Highly Commended.

In the Landscape category, Madeline Taylor's 'A Walk along the River at Watersmeet' was Highly Commended and Sharon Bailey's 'Looking towards Twitchen' and 'Valley of Rocks' was Commended. All these show



Activities Winner: Allerford Forge © Madeline Taylor

the beauty and variety of Exmoor's landscape. In the Wildlife category Tricia Gibson's 'Exmoor pony, Persica, and her six-day old foal' and 'Tawbits Lorna Doone with her new born filly foal' were Highly Commended for their good composition and sensitivity. Highly Commended also, in the Heritage Buildings category, was Patrick Hoyte's evocative black-and-white photograph of 'The Stables at Dunster Castle'.

Alfred Vowles was a well-known photographer at the beginning of the 20th Century. Rachel Thomas, Chairman of the Society, said, 'The Vowles' family kindly donated the trophy to The Exmoor Society in Alfred's memory, in order to help inspire future generations to capture the essence of Exmoor and its special qualities through photography.'

The winning photographs can be viewed on the Society's website: www.exmoorsociety.com



Worthy Combe Tollgate

© Madeline Taylor

Exmoor's Historic Signpost Project



Before . . . and after!

ENPA Images

In 2017-2018, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) and Somerset County Council (SCC), and help from The Exmoor Society and many volunteers, over 200 signposts were carefully researched, restored, cleaned and painted. Passing through Exmoor now you can't fail to spot how neat and tidy all the historic cast iron signposts look. In fact, when you travel further afield, you may find yourself noticing how signposts in other areas are in desperate need of a similar makeover!

It has been a very satisfying project but it is important to ensure Exmoor's signposts do not fall into a similar state of disrepair in the future. A simple wash will help keep most looking smart although it is likely over the next few years, some will need to be touched up again with paint. Please report any damaged signposts to the local Parish Council and broken fingers should be retained so that they can be re-attached to their original signpost.

Through CareMoor, ENPA has been able to keep a small pot of money aside to help with repairs and the cost of paint and, in partnership with SCC, a health

and safety training session will be organised to ensure volunteers are trained and able to continue with the painting.

A field guide to Exmoor's traditional roadside fingerposts is available at The Exmoor Society in Dulverton or the National Park Visitor Centres in Dulverton, Dunster and Lynmouth. This gives a history of Exmoor's roads and signposts as well as a summary of the project. Volunteers wishing to carry out further research into the history would be welcomed.

If anyone is interested in finding out more or would like to help with monitoring, cleaning and painting the posts, then do get in touch with the ENPA via the website <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/get-involved/exmoor-historic-signpost-project>.

Resource Centre News

The Exmoor Society's Resource Centre is based at the Dulverton Office and includes an environmentally controlled Archive relating to the Society and its collection over 60 years; a library containing books and reports on National Parks and, in particular, Exmoor of course! There are copies of all Exmoor Reviews and Spring Newsletters; a work space with free wifi for browsing, studying etc; a display area for current key material on Exmoor and space for projects encouraging citizen science.

2019 has been a very active year for the Resource Centre. We received new archive material from the estate of Victor Bonham-Carter which has been sorted and stored in the archive while we work on cataloguing it in detail. In addition, work is ongoing to further review and catalogue the archive of Hazel Eardley-Wilmot. Sorting, cleaning and cataloguing the remainder of the archive material from the Hope Bourne estate continues. Small artworks are still being found amongst other material, so we are being very thorough as we sort through.

We are working with Plantlife (see p10, *Nature & Citizen Science*) to create a citizen science space for Exmoor lichens and mosses containing a selection of slides and specimens, reference books and microscopes, all accessible to the public.

The archive itself has been rearranged to make it easier for researchers to find specific items and to maximise space available for future archive materials. We

have also undertaken a reorganisation of the archive area to create a separate public display space.

The Society has received a number of requests to access the archive, including those from historians, authors and researchers. There is also a demand for presentations on the work of the Resource Centre and the Society, including three requests to speak on the writings of Hope Bourne, and one for the history and landscape of Exmoor.

We are planning some events and opportunities for people to learn more about this work and to encourage more volunteers to join our small team and help to improve the resource and safeguard materials for the future.

We are working with Plantlife to create a citizen science space for Exmoor lichens and mosses containing a selection of slides and specimens, reference books and microscopes, all accessible to the public.



© Liz Pile

New Trustees

The Exmoor Society is delighted to welcome two new trustees, voted in at the AGM last year. These are:

Lisa Eden

Lisa has a long connection with Exmoor National Park, having visited several times per year throughout her life and now lives in Allerford following her retirement.



In her professional life, she worked as a physiotherapist in the NHS for 34 years, specialising in neurology and rehabilitation. At the end of her career, she was part of the senior team for the large Community Trust in Birmingham, overseeing patient safety and quality, as well as

providing professional leadership.

During her time as a volunteer with the Society, Lisa has worked with Dr Helen Blackman, the Society Archivist for the years 2014-18, and is the author of *Hope Bourne's Reflections in Words*, one of the successful Exmoor Studies series of publications. Lisa succeeds Caroline Tonson-Rye as lead Trustee for the Resource Centre.

Jill Edwards

Jill, and her husband and youngest son, live and work on the family 600-acre Exmoor hill farm running a herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle and a flock of Cheviot sheep. There is also a 12-acre camping ground and six self-catering cottages. Jill grew up in Essex and graduated as a teacher in West Sussex before taking a gap year in Australia and USA, mostly working on sheep stations or as a nanny.

Since settling on Exmoor in 1981, when she married Oliver, Jill has juggled

family life – she has three children and two grandchildren – with the farm business, her contact teacher role at Exford School and supply teaching across West Somerset schools. She was a governor at the West Somerset College for many years and served on the committee of the Somerset Dyslexia Association, which she continues to



support. Jill is a member of Exford PCC and supports Exmoor Hill Farming Network's Women in Farming events. As a trustee of The Exmoor Society, Jill leads on education, awards and competitions.

A keen horsewoman in her youth, Jill fills what little free time remains tending the garden and walking her dogs. With her family now grown-up and married, she has been able to attend art classes during the quieter winter months, having studied the subject at college. 'Reading a book is still a luxury,' she says, 'A unread pile sits by the side of my bed – a promise of things to come!'

2020 Pinnacle Award

The winner of the 2019 Pinnacle Award for young entrepreneurs is William Bolton, 22. William lives on the edge of the Greater Exmoor area in Somerset, and inherited a passion for bee-keeping from his grandfather who, for many years, produced heather honey from hives on Exmoor. William is committed to continue moving hives on and off the moor by reviving the original sites and finding new ones to build a thriving enterprise call WBee.



William and his grandfather

William Bolton

William attended school in Wiveliscombe and spent some time in New Zealand working on two very different bee farms before returning to Somerset. On receiving the award, he said: "It is an honour to have been chosen by The Exmoor Society for this award and I look forward to growing my business for the benefit of the environment and my community.'

Jackie Smith, Trustee, speaking for the judges, said: 'We felt William's project met all our criteria: a young, local man creating his own business in succession to a family member and making the very best use of the Exmoor environment.'

Walks Programme

Our 2019 walks produced a mixed attendance, ranging from forty-five walkers down to zero! A few stalwarts came on a blistering sally across the high Chains in April; many people were fascinated by experiencing bats on a summer's evening, and the three walks linked to Simonsbath Festival where very well supported, benefiting from the additional publicity.

In 2020, what delights we have! Walks to see and learn about butterflies, bats, free-living pony herds and Exmoor's rich coastal ecology; historical rambles on subjects including the Somerset Herepath - a Saxon military road, Molland church's decorative woodwork, Lynton's history, Iron Age castles, Knights and tank 'knights', 18th century picturesque landscapes, crofts, murder-mysteries, Hope Bourne and Ada Lovelace. There is a wellbeing wander, sun-printing in Exmoor's rainforest, map-and-compass skills hike, and a walk to discover how farming on Exmoor works with tourism and conservation. Guided walks in various locations and landscape types are also available for those who simply wish to enjoy the glorious Exmoor scenery. We hope the weather will be kind and as many as possible will be able to join us and immerse themselves in the richness of Exmoor National Park.

As always, our wonderfully diverse programme of walks is only possible through the generosity of walk leaders in sharing their time, expert knowledge and passion for their subject and for Exmoor. To the extraordinary individuals and organisations who support the programme each year – thank you!



Dunster Deer Park

© Jennifer Rowlandson

News from the Groups

Bristol Group

2019 was the final programme for the Bristol Group, as it has not been possible to find members willing and able to serve on the committee.

Despite that, we continued to enjoy a varied programme. Our two day-walks from Exford and Simonsbath were both spoilt by bad weather, but we enjoyed ourselves all the same. Other events included trips to museums and Sheppey's Cider, and talks about Dulverton criminals, vintage buses and Exmoor place names. Nigel Stone came to our AGM and gave a very interesting presentation about his project to take one photograph in every grid square of the OS map of Exmoor. We ended the year with a home-made buffet supper, which lived up to its usual high standards.

We still have the Winter Supper to come on Jan 18th. After that point, all remaining funds will be donated to appropriate charities and the group will be disbanded.

Coastal Group

I am delighted to report that the Coastal Group have enjoyed a gradual increase of members throughout 2019, ending with a record number of 86. Our talks and events have all been well attended. The experimental Car Treasure Hunt over Exmoor, ending with a very sociable supper, has been requested again.

Donations made this year included £800 to St. Dubricius C. of E. First School, towards activities on Exmoor in preparation for the John Muir Awards, also to The Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance and Cowbridge Sawmills.

The year ended with the committee and members producing a Christmas entertainment to celebrate the 150th anniversary of R.D. Blackmore's novel – "Lorna Doone". The radio play, adapted from the book, plus local songs, carols, mince pies and mulled wine, was well received. The audience were also treated to a fascinating dialogue between Blackmore and a present-day journalist, written and presented by Roger Watts and Heather Hodgson.

We have some exciting talks planned for 2020 and very much look forward to the continued support.

Dulverton Group

The group has had a successful year 59 members, three down on the previous year. We have moved to Dulverton Youth Centre for greater comfort seats, a and a slightly lower cost.

There were six talks including James Horrobin and his life and work as a blacksmith and Sue Baker on R D Blackmore in relation to the 150th anniversary Lorna Doone. Confusion about the date caused the Calvert Trust's May talk to be postponed by a week – the audience was very small!

In September, local gin distillers John and Nicola Smith (Northmoor Gin) told us about their operation and products – including samples! The September talk by Exmoor National Park on Exmoor's trees was cancelled by the Park. Luckily, Tim Charlton stepped into the breach at very short notice and described the operation of the hydroelectric plant on the River Barle just south of Dulverton. Several members took the opportunity for a guided tour in subsequent days. The final talk was by the South West Lakes Trust describing their activities, especially with regard to Wimbleball Lake. All the talks were very well received with good audiences. A trip to the National Trust's Lytes Cary Manor was very enjoyable. The Group looks forward to a series of six talks planned for 2020.

South Molton Group

South Molton Group of The Exmoor Society began 2019 with a very enjoyable dinner for 29 people, catered for by the Methodist Church ladies and with entertainment provided by two members. The Spring meeting was a talk by Jonathon Edmunds on 'The 2nd Lord Fortescue'.

Unfortunately, the two summer outings had to be cancelled due to sudden illness in the chairman's family. The AGM was held in October, after which Richard Lethbridge showed lovely films of summer activities in and around South Molton.

We would very much like to thank Jo Griffin, on her retirement, for all the years she has been our dedicated secretary.

Any enquiries about the South Molton Group, please contact George Jones on 01769 572276.

Saving the Splendour

A history of The Exmoor Society
by
Philip Dalling

Available late Spring 2020
Price tbc

Exmoor Festival Dates

SIMONSBATH FESTIVAL 8 May – 18 June 2020 www.simonsbathfestival.org.uk	DUNSTER MUSIC FESTIVAL 22-24 May 2020 www.dunsterfestival.co.uk
TWO MOORS FESTIVAL 25-27 September 2020 & 2-4 October 2020 inclusive www.thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk	DARK SKIES FESTIVAL - EXMOOR 16 October – 31 October 2020 www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

For information on Exmoor events, please go to www.visit-exmoor.co.uk

The Exmoor Society

Registered Charity No1160912

2019-2020

President:

Sir Antony Acland KG

Vice- Presidents:

Mr Rodney Coyne

Lady Elizabeth Gass DCVO JP

Mr Stanley Johnson

Lord King of Bridgwater, CH PC

Baroness Mallalieu, QC

Sir Stephen Waley-Cohen Bt

Mrs Toni Jones

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Mr Nigel Hester, Allerford

Mrs Anne May, Challacombe

Ms Susan May, Marwood

Ms Catherine O'Sullivan, Wheddon X

Mr Roger Watts, Dulverton

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On a Lane in Spring

A Little Lane, the brook runs close beside
And spangles in the sunshine while the fish
glide swiftly by
And hedges leafing with the green spring tide
From out their greenery the old birds fly
And chirp and whistle in the morning sun
The pilewort glitters 'neath the pale blue sky
The little robin has its nest begun
And grass green linnets round the bushes fly
How Mild the Spring Comes in; the daisy buds
Lift up their golden blossoms to the sky
How lovely are the pingles and the woods
Here a beetle runs; and there a fly
Rests on the Arum leaf in bottle green
And all the Spring in this Sweet lane is seen

John Clare (1793-1864)