

A close-up photograph of a field of wildflowers. The scene is dominated by numerous white daisies with yellow centers, interspersed with several bright pink flowers. The plants are surrounded by lush green foliage, including long, narrow blades of grass and smaller, fern-like leaves. The overall composition is dense and vibrant, capturing the essence of a spring meadow.

The Exmoor Society
Spring Newsletter 2022

No 69

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The Exmoor Society / ENPA SPRING CONFERENCE 2022

22 April 2022, 9.30am-3.00pm

Porlock Village Hall followed by field visit to Porlock Marsh

The Challenge of Change

*Taking Porlock as a case study, conference asks:
What is the future for this landscape?*

Speakers: Tony Juniper, Chairman, Natural England; Harry Barton, CEO, Devon Wildlife Trust . . . and more

£25 per person to include refreshments

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



What news?

© Nigel Hester

NEWS UPDATE

Chairman's Comments

Transition

Welcome, members and supporters, to the 2022 newsletter setting out our programme in the hope that we can return to near normal in holding events face to face such as the Spring Conference, AGM and the November founder celebration day. There is detail about our popular, diverse walks starting at the beginning of April and ending in October, our Resource Centre activity, nature recovery work and partnership involvement particularly with the Exmoor National Park Authority. Also included is the government's response to the Landscapes Review. It outlines the scale of change required by national parks to meet the national and international obligations now embedded in the 2021 Environment Act and the 2020 Agricultural Act. It is now out for consultation until the 9 April and the Society encourages as many people as possible to respond.

In this period of enormous transition Exmoor is faced with so many challenges particularly for the Exmoor National Park Authority in steering a smooth way forward but also for the Society which will have to adapt to new ways of working as we move to electronic communication, a new website, use of webinars, selection of priorities, and general governance matters such as the urgent need now for a treasurer. Sadly, there are also changes to staff who play a key role in the efficient running of the Society, as our Administrator, Anne, is retiring at the end of February and will be greatly missed, as is Liz who left in November. Thank you for all your continued support, and please keep in touch, visit us in Dulverton, volunteer, join our activities and spread the news of the benefits of being a member.



View from Dunkery

© Madeline Taylor

Landscapes Review

The government announced in January its response to the independent Landscapes Review which looked at whether National Parks and AONBs were still fit for purpose. After two years waiting, the government agrees with many of the review recommendations emphasizing that protected landscapes can deliver more for nature and climate, people and places. It sees the creation of a National Landscapes Partnership to bring the key bodies, locally and nationally responsible for managing them, to collaborate more, share knowledge, and tackle common objectives. Natural England, the government's

statuary landscape advisor, will play a pivotal role. Its chairman, Tony Jupiter said “From the beauty of sandy beaches in the Scillies to the rugged glory of Northumberland our protected landscapes are integral to our national identity, our health and wellbeing and our country’s prosperity.” Julian Glover, chairman of the original review, welcomed the government response saying it was a chance to make England’s Landscapes more beautiful, better for people who visit and live in them, and far more alive for nature: “It will not be enough to conserve what we have inherited - we can change the story of decline to recovery to make them greener, more welcoming and full of hope”. Key Proposals, with thanks to Campaign for National Parks, include:

- **A National landscapes partnership** building on the existing collaboration between National Parks England and the National Association for AONBs, complemented by roles for the National Trails and National Parks Partnerships. The remit for the partnership includes:
 - Income generation and fundraising
 - Championing protected landscapes and running national [marketing] campaigns
 - Developing strategic partnerships, particularly with the commercial sector
 - Creating opportunities for training and development
 - Sharing knowledge and expertise
 - Providing national coordination for engagement activities
- **A new national landscapes strategy** which will set out a clear national framework to guide the development of plans and programmes by the national landscapes partnership and help inform the development of management plans.
- Strengthening the wording of the ‘**duty of regard**’.
- **Support for amending the purposes.** Changes to include:
 - Creating a single set of statutory purposes for NPs and AONBs.
 - Amending the first purpose so that:
 - a core function of protected landscapes should be to drive nature recovery
 - a revised purpose should be more specific with regards to nature outcomes and explicitly mention biodiversity
 - the principle of natural capital should also be included to capture the societal value of nature in our protected landscapes and encompass a broader range of ecosystem services.
 - Amending the second purpose to:

- highlight the need to improve opportunities and remove barriers to access for all parts of society
 - clearly reference public health and wellbeing as an outcome
 - take a more active role in supporting access.
- Do not support Glover proposal to change the socio-economic duty to a third purpose.
 - The effects of any changes to purposes to be considered separately for the Broads, to take account of its third purpose on navigation, and the fact that the Sandford Principle does not apply here. [N.B. This is the only reference to Sandford.]
 - Proposals to **strengthen Management Plans** including:
 - setting out “the national ambition for the expected contribution of protected landscapes towards nature recovery and climate mitigation and adaptation, along with other key goals such as access and community engagement” in the national landscapes strategy
 - New ambitious outcomes “will be agreed for the role of protected landscapes in delivering on the government’s goals for nature recovery and climate” and these must be reflected in the management plans.” The Plans are also expected to set out the local response to climate adaptation
 - Ensuring clear alignment with Local Natural Recovery Strategies
 - Natural capital reporting to be embedded in Management Plans
 - The wording of the duty on other bodies should “be made clearer with regards to the role of public bodies in preparing and implementing management plans”
 - Natural England to update the guidance on management plans.
 - **Other responsibilities for Natural England** include:
 - monitoring progress on delivery of the national landscapes strategy
 - producing an outcomes framework and providing annual reporting to track progress against the outcomes
 - supporting individual protected landscapes to translate national targets into their management plans, including advising on where further action is needed
 - advising all relevant parts of government, at the local and national levels, on the appropriate management and protection of protected landscapes
 - A flexible package of statutory and non-statutory measures **to improve local governance** including:

- measures to improve performance of Board members such as a standard role profile, a shared code of conduct, regular skills audits, improved training and fixed term appointments
 - measures to increase diversity and strengthen local partnerships
 - seeking views on proposal for the Secretary of State to appoint NPA Chairs as this “could provide greater continuity, strategic direction, and accountability”
 - also considering removing the strict legislative requirements for a specific ratio between appointment types. Boards would still need national, parish, and local authority members but they would have more flexibility to balance diversity and expertise with strong democratic oversight in accordance with the needs of their specific area. Another option proposed is to introduce a more merit-based approach to local nominations, encouraging local authorities to put forward their best candidates considering similar desirable criteria as Secretary of State appointees.
- No support for Glover proposals for **separating planning function** as part of governance reforms.

Measures to support local communities including transport, sustainable tourism, and affordable housing.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/future-landscapes-strategy/government-response-to-the-landscapes-review/>



Exmoor heather

© Madeline Taylor

Exmoor's Nature – the road to recovery?

It has been more than 10 years since Professor Sir John Lawton wrote his highly acclaimed 'Making Space for Nature' report, calling for more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for nature. His recommendations to the Government remain just as valid today, but there is an increased urgency to respond. The State of Nature (2019) report showed that 56% of native British species have declined in the last 50 years and of these, 31% showed catastrophic decline.

Julian Glover's Landscape Review (2019) firmly supports the Lawton approach and urges that England's designated landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) step up and deliver more for nature, becoming the backbone of a National Nature Recovery Network. The initial Government response to the Review has been positive but action is urgently required if the biodiversity decline is to be halted and reversed. In Prof Lawton's words "after a decade of procrastination, we now need a decade of action".



Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*)

© Nigel Hester

Exmoor National Park has taken a decisive lead by developing its own Nature Recovery Vision, endorsed by the ENPA Members in 2020. It is not a delivery

plan but it provides a platform for creative ideas to be put forward and debated in consultation with farmers, landowners, businesses and residents. Despite some initial and understandable concerns in its presentation, the Vision has been widely supported both on Exmoor and beyond. The challenge now is to shape and refine proposals into achievable action that will allow nature to recover and flourish at both the local and at a landscape scale.

The Exmoor Society launched its own project 'Nocturnal Exmoor' last year, to assess, understand and promote wildlife that is active during the night and thus often overlooked. The four webinars that replaced the Spring Conference in 2020, explored the theme more widely, including some excellent advice by Professor Fiona Mathews on how we can all help to protect and enhance our nocturnal wildlife. Now that Covid restrictions are thankfully easing, the project can be developed more fully by setting up a monitoring programme of certain species, engaging with local people to provide observations and developing events based on



Southern Hawker © Nigel Hester

nocturnal species. In the 2022 Exmoor Society Walks Programme, a bat walk in Horner Wood, led by bat ecologist Dr Elizabeth Bradshaw, is planned for 15 September. Do join us to see, hear and learn about some of the 15 species that inhabit this magical wood.

This year's Spring Conference, The Challenge of Change, takes Porlock as a case study for the great story of how humans and natural processes have shaped an environment. There's plenty to admire: a village sitting harmoniously in its landscape; woods planted, worked and managed; some fantastic farming; and the rare and precious salt marsh. But there is also plenty to be concerned about, both locally and in the broader environment. Government policy, choices about land management, and the actions of communities will all determine how Porlock evolves - and how it adapts to meet the challenge of inevitable change.

Farming

Monitoring agriculture and environment policy

Exmoor National Park is a farmed landscape. Reflecting concern for the wellbeing of its farming community, the Exmoor Society closely monitors national policies for agriculture and the environment with the purpose of appraisal and comment on their potential or actual effects. Current focus is on introduction of the Government's Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. In addition to their conventional farm production, that is the foundation for farmers and other land managers to enhance provision of 'public goods' such as biodiversity and creating capacities for society to cope with climate change.

The Government recently released details of two ELM elements, the Local Nature Recovery (LNR) and Landscape Recovery (LR) programmes. Details are on the Gov.UK website¹. LNR initially will include management of wildlife and habitats, tree planting and creating woodlands, and restoring rivers and wetlands for improving water quality, availability, and flood risk mitigation. LR is "is for landowners and managers who want to take a more radical and large-scale approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land." Biodiversity, water quality and net zero are targets for funding projects that contribute to these outcomes over a long period and through changes and improvements to land use and habitats.



Devon Red Ruby

© Anne May

The crucial question for Exmoor's upland farmers is "will it pay?" to take part. At present, that is an open question. Early anecdotal responses suggest that often it may not. There is a sense that the Government is feeling its way towards appropriate payment levels, the state of post-Covid national finances requiring that policy objectives must be achieved for minimum financial outlay. But farmers are anyway under considerable pressure to respond favourably because of staged withdrawal of the Basic Payment Scheme, generally acknowledged to be a highly inefficient way to support farmers' incomes.

An important, and typically unremarked, consideration for farmers and their representatives in the National Farmers' Unions is to discourage indiscriminate use of the term 'subsidies' to characterise use of public funds for farmers' benefit. Payment for public goods is no more a subsidy than, say, the price a farmer receives when an animal is sold at an auction market. It is payment for something society values that hitherto it has obtained for free. But those who use resources to produce benefits, farmers in this instance, are entitled to be remunerated accordingly. The fact that they have not is because public goods do not have market prices in the usual way. ELM schemes are intended to correct that omission.

There is also a suspicion in some quarters that a longer-term government objective is a free market for agricultural commodity production and payments for public goods making up total farm business incomes. Whether that is so remains to be seen. Whatever the direction of travel, the Exmoor Society will stay alert to developments and comment as circumstances require.

¹ <https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/06/find-out-more-about-local-nature-recovery-and-landscape-recovery/>

State of the Park Update

Exmoor, a National Landscape, has special qualities to be protected and enhanced for the benefit of all and a 5 year Management Plan sets out how this can be achieved. Called the Exmoor Partnership Plan, the Authority adopted it in 2018 and has recently updated its mid- term progress. The contents are impressive, particularly on the actions of the Authority on which it mainly concentrates, but with examples from many other bodies as well. It is of particular interest to the Exmoor Society as it shows which aspects of our work

have been selected or left out. Divided into three sections, ES is mentioned in all, but with varying degrees of detail.

1. People - where everyone feels welcome with well managed recreation and access, thriving tourism built on sustainability. ES walks programme page 5.
2. Understanding Place - natural beauty, distinct character and diversity, and Exmoor's landscapes are celebrated, conserved and enhanced. Page 18, ES Resource Centre.
3. Prosperity - thriving communities and vibrant local economy to ensure rural communities can flourish both socially and economically and special qualities linked to key industries tourism farming and food. Page 29, ES supporting young entrepreneurs. Page 31 Exmoor's natural capital assets.
4. Where they all come together under moorland. ES page 35, Graze the Moor.

Although these are just a snapshot of ES contributions there are some surprising omissions in relation to our work with the Hill Farming Network, hill farming heritage, wild life, volunteering, game shoot independent study, cultural aspects and ecosystem services, which can be highlighted at the end of the present programme and preparations for the new Partnership Plan to be further strengthened in the government proposals for National Landscapes.

Art in Support of Improved Understanding of the Changing Character of Exmoor National Park

In June 2021 Professor Robin McInnes OBE, Managing Consultant at Coastal & Geotechnical Services, was commissioned by The Exmoor Society, in partnership with the Exmoor National Park Authority, to undertake a study investigating how historical artworks produced since the 1770s can inform understanding of the changing character of the National Park over time; this comprehensive study was completed in November.

About the Study

What lessons can we learn from observations of changes that have affected the landscape and character of Exmoor National Park over the last 250 years? How and to what extent has the National Park been affected by both natural and anthropogenic influences over that time? Alongside technical tools available for monitoring environmental change we can now also take advantage also of a vast additional resource of historical imagery comprising paintings,

watercolours and prints spanning the period from 1770 – 1950 that is becoming increasingly available online, and which allows a much longer-term perspective to be gained of all aspects of change.

Such insight can helpfully inform both future planning and day to day management of environmentally sensitive inland and coastal frontages such as those found within the National Park.



The key study objectives were to inform policy-making and site management by providing an easily accessible art resource tool for use by scientists and practitioners to help inform decisions made by the National Park Authority and partner nature conservation bodies at a range of spatial scales. The findings support nature-based solutions to coastal and countryside management problems by drawing on artistic evidence of historical management practices, and more widely supporting ecosystem services, increased biodiversity and green recovery.



The study also provides a new, non-technical community engagement and educational tool that can easily illustrate processes of landscape change within the National Park and the challenges this can present over time. The results of this study will be of value to a range of organisations and individuals that have an interest in sustainable environmental management, planning, cultural heritage and nature conservation.

The Final Study Report can be viewed and downloaded at:

<https://www.exmoorsociety.com>

<https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk>

<https://www.coastalandgeotechnicalservices.com>

Good News for Exmoor Ponies

A new collaboration between the Moorland Exmoor Pony Breeders Group (MEPBG) and the USA based charity, The Equus Survival Trust (EST), has started work to DNA profile and lineage track some of the moorland herds from Exmoor. This autumn the Molland Herd 99 were gathered and with a vet present the ponies were inspected, microchipped and DNA samples taken.



Ponies on Molland

© Jamie Waters

The Exmoor Pony, iconic on the moors and one of GB's most ancient pony breeds is critically endangered because of the dangerously small genetic pool of registered ponies.



The Molland Herd 99, due to historical anomalies, is excluded from the closed Exmoor Pony Society stud book. The EST is generously providing the funding and the technology to analyse the DNA of the Molland herd so lineage can be established and tracked and the science should prove that these are indeed quality Exmoor Ponies, true to type.

This work runs alongside the Exmoor Pony Genome Project, another collaboration this time between the MEPBG, the ENPA, the EPS and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST), and has been working to sequence the whole genome of the Exmoor Pony from which are found the genetic markers that establish the parameters of the breed. This is nearing completion and once the sample group is known and checked for genuine diversity a huge step forward will have been taken in identifying scientifically, using DNA testing, what is a real pedigree Exmoor Pony. Therefore, in the future these genetic markers can be used to verify whether an individual pony is within the breed parameters for a pedigree Exmoor Pony.

In the autumn the pony herd was gathered, a two day exercise done quietly by five family members and with long learnt expertise. Everyone present at the inspection was impressed by the quality of all the different family groups. No ponies of different breeds were found to be on the moor, a dumped Shetland mare having been removed earlier. What we look for is strong healthy ponies with a good sloping shoulder, strong legs coming square from the shoulder, which move well and freely as well as the well-known toad eye, flaxen colouring on the legs, muzzle, belly and around the eyes. The Molland Herd has lived and bred on the moor and has all the characteristics of a strong free living herd.

Hopefully with the help of the EST the future of these ponies is looking safer and they can contribute to widening the genetic pool of this much loved breed so identifiable with the moors of Exmoor.

Resource Centre Update

The pandemic has had a significant effect on the work of the Archive and Resource Centre since March 2020 but having developed a Covid secure operating procedure in line with advice from the National Archives we have continued to work across all aspects of the resource centre activities.

A small number of volunteers have continued with the work of recording the detail of the material from the estate of Victor Bonham-Carter, entering the information on each item into the archive catalogue. In addition, work has continued on the detailed archive of papers of the business of the Exmoor Society itself.

We are supporting researchers and PhD students in a number of significant projects including work on the History of National Parks, a Creative Practice PhD proposal on Exmoor writers, focusing on the work of Hope Bourne, a research study on Exmoor's Farming Heritage and a joint project with Exmoor National Park Authority on Art in Support of Improved Understanding of the Changing Character of Exmoor.

Dr Sean Beer of Bournemouth University Business School has completed a comprehensive updating of the index of the Exmoor Review which now includes details of all articles and images from the Review from issue 1 to the present day. More work is planned to make the Review even more accessible and useful to researchers in the future, including access to the index online and a scoping exercise to consider digitising the content of the reviews to be available alongside the index.

We have received a number of donations of material for the archive including

- Pamphlets, and landscape photographic slides from the estate of Brian Pearce
- An original artwork by Hope Bourne
- A selection of beautiful old books and maps

Plantlife have now completed their lichen project and we are currently finalising arrangements for the Plantlife section of the resource centre. A number of presentations had been requested and booked for the autumn and winter of 2020 but cancelled due to the pandemic. These included a talk on Hope Bourne for Barnstaple U3A and this has now been delivered in November 2021.

Our plans to create opportunities for people to learn more about the work of the Resource Centre and to encourage more volunteers to join our small team had to be put on hold due to the restrictions of the pandemic. We hope to be able to recruit more volunteers in the future, providing people with opportunities to learn about the work of the archive and help to continue to improve the resource and safeguard materials for the future.



2022 Walks Programme

Walking with the Exmoor Society: Exploring Porlock Bay

Each summer the Exmoor Society delivers a great selection of guided walks, where volunteers share their expertise of the Exmoor landscape, wildlife and history. For members who have yet to attend one of these special events, below is an account by our participating Development Co-ordinator of an excellent walk exploring Porlock Bay delivered by trustee Nigel Hester, who explained how geomorphological events have shaped this area of dynamic coastline.

“We begin the walk at Bossington car park, following a footpath north out of the village and up to Hurlstone Point. During the climb, we are serenaded by Whitethroats, Chiffchaffs and Wheatears, the latter who choose to nest on the scree slopes of Bossington Hill. On our arrival at Hurlstone Point we look west

to take in the stunning view of the rugged Exmoor coastline. The cliffs running from Porlock Bay to Foreland Point are highly unstable and have been eroding since the end of the last Ice Age over 9000 years ago.

This part of the coastline has not always been this way. Previously a shingle ridge backing immediately onto farmland, this site required constant maintenance to prevent coastal erosion. A decision was made in the 1990's to allow natural processes to manage the landscape as the coastal defence policy was proving to be unsustainable and damaging to the surrounding landscape and wildlife. During a storm in 1996, huge waves pummelled the beach triggering a dramatic failure of the ridge causing volumes of salt water to inundate the farmland behind the beach.

Although a devastating occurrence, this event led to the creation of one of the finest examples of saltmarshes in the Bristol Channel and is far more resilient to coastal change and sea level rise than the landscape before it.



View of the bay from Hurlstone Point

© Laura Yiend

To further inspect this saltmarsh, we retrace our steps down a section of Bossington Hill and make a steep descent onto the shingle beach at the base

of Hurlstone Point. We then walk along the ridge before descending onto the saltmarsh – a welcome escape from the whipping wind!

We are immediately greeted with the melody of a skylark hovering nearby. Wheatears criss-cross our path and a heron glides overhead from further inland.

The abundance of wildlife here means it is easy to forget how inhospitable this environment is. Saline conditions caused by tidal inundation and coastal gales makes this a tough environment to thrive in. And yet there is an abundance of plant life here that has happily accepted the challenge. The floor is covered with species such as Sea purslane, Glasswort and Sea aster. Even rare species such as Babbington's leek can be found in the ruins of a 1920's golf clubhouse which sits on the fringe of the saltmarsh.

After circling the saltmarsh, we follow the footpath back towards Bossington car park. This guided walk has been a mixture of great company, stunning views, and a fascinating time listening to the knowledge and expertise of our guide. This is a typical experience when walking with the Exmoor Society. A list of 2022 walks can be found included with the print copy of this newsletter and on our website: www.exmoorsociety.com"

New Look Exmoor Review

This year's Exmoor Review was greeted with great enthusiasm. Members particularly enjoyed nature writer Charles Foster's piece on the microcosm of Brendon Common (worth reading if you missed it) and the beautiful landscape paintings by Clover Godsall. The new layout and design were seen as brighter and more inviting with some comments that the size of the text was small. We will do our best to resolve this while keeping the current layout. We are already working on next year's edition so the editor would welcome any ideas or submissions and these can be made via the Exmoor Society's office.



AWARDS

Pinnacle Award 2021

The winner of the 2021 Pinnacle Award was Oliver Hill from Wheddon Cross. His creatively named business, Hillbilly Haircuts, provides a shearing service across Exmoor for some 15,000 sheep, and showed a clear capacity for future



Oliver Hill, Hillbilly Haircuts

growth. Exmoor Society Trustee, John Wibberley said, “Oliver has already taken on apprentices and the award will enable him to upgrade equipment and strengthen his opportunities to champion the key role of sheep in managing Exmoor’s landscapes for biodiversity net gain (BNG) and in carbon-sequestering grass-fed meat production. Oliver demonstrated to the judges an evident understanding of these issues and suitable skills in communicating their importance. He is also keenly aware of the importance of farm-to-farm services such as his in assisting the mental health and well-being of people in isolated workplaces.”

On receiving the news Oliver said “I am thrilled to be able to invest the Pinnacle Award into my business to make it grow and keep this important and ancient skill alive whilst supplying a service to the farmers of Exmoor and wider area. Exmoor and sheep go hand-in-hand, where there’s sheep they will always need shearing. Wool is also the obvious and best choice to ease and stop plastic pollution and help with climate change whilst keeping traditional skills alive.”

Rachel Thomas, Chairman, commented “In this year’s competition for the Pinnacle Award, Oliver Hill faced a short-list of keen contestants, and it is the hope of the Exmoor Society that we can show-case in various ways the impressive offerings of the young people with most inspiring local businesses from that list. Rural enterprise on Exmoor is in good hands”.

Brian & Mary Chugg Conservation Award

2021 Winner: Linda Blanchard

This was awarded to Linda Blanchard in recognition of her outstanding commitment to the discovery and protection of Exmoor's historic environment and, in particular, the Longstone Landscapes Project. The Society was delighted to present her with a mounted giclée print of Jo Minoprio's *Rain Beyond*.

Founder's Award

2021 Winner: Dr Sean Beer

Kindly sponsored by Halsgrove Publishing, this award is presented in recognition of notable service to the Society. In 2021, it was awarded to Dr Sean Beer to acknowledge his work for the Society over many years and, in particular, for painstakingly updating and improving the index of the complete series of the *Exmoor Review* since 1959, both by theme and author.

COMPETITIONS

MacEwen Essay Competition 2021

Nick Hosegood was the winner of the 2021 competition. Due to limited space, the following is a précis of his essay but the complete version can be found on the Society website.

'Quite often I have found, in my career as an arborist and forester, that the old ways of doing things were often the best. They may not have had the science that we do now, but people who worked on the land had a far greater understanding. Many techniques, skills and a lot of knowledge has been lost, especially that trees must not only be environmentally sustainable but also economically sustainable.

Life on the moor is hard, we need only look at the ponies and livestock for that, and it is not a coincidence that the trees that survive are equally as hardy. Hawthorn and Blackthorn are some of the only trees to withstand the harsh weather on many commons and could be used as a nursery crop to protect other slower growing species from deer and the wind. Nursery trees, by their

nature, are often sacrificial only serving to promote the growth of more favourable trees and this would be the case with thorn by harnessing the mechanical defence with the added benefit of great impacts to nesting birds and a species that naturally does not grow large and overshadowing.



Hawkcombe in Porlock, is a prime example of how a working woodland would have been. The village created a micro-economy around the oak tree ranging from timber to tanning. Sweet chestnut could also be a favourable crop to plant, with the view to coppice and harvest every 15 years. Though not typically local, Exmoor does however yield some good quality chestnut in Yarner Woods, Culbone and Allers Wood, Dulverton.

Another utility species is silver birch. A personal favourite of mine, it may not be native but it does form unarguably very attractive individuals and woodlands. Not only does it yield good quality firewood within 40 years, birch provides an alternative woodland aesthetic and enjoys the positive variation in biodiversity that this brings and, again, coppices well.

With the devastation we are seeing to our ash trees across Exmoor due to the prolific spreading of Ash Die Back, an overwhelming gap can be seen not only in our hedgerows and skylines but also our watercourses. To combat this Alder seems a logical choice as a fast-growing tree requiring little formative care, that is prolific near water and fixes nitrogen better than most other trees. Many consider it a weed but with the startling number of diseases being transmitted globally, perhaps a hardy weed is what we need to weather the storm as our ash trees joins the lost elms.



Most importantly, for me however, when talking about the future of trees on Exmoor is the relationship they have with those of us that live here. A symbiosis

that has been lost in recent times, with the vast reduction in a culture of working woodlands. Let us increase the tree population to encourage the sustainability of the people that live and work here.

THE MACEWEN ESSAY COMPETITION 2022

There is a prize of £500. This year's title is:

**Wildlife-rich Exmoor -
how does grazing livestock restore and support biodiversity?**
Further details at www.exmoorsociety.com

Alfred Vowles Photographic Competition

The judges were amazed with the number and high quality of the photographs entered, the range of subjects chosen and different perspectives explored. Popular subjects included coastal scenic views, moorland and woodland expanses with free living Exmoor ponies, wildlife particularly stags, birds, goats and even a hare. Landmarks, like Dunkery Beacon and Valley of Rocks, were also popular and farmland views particularly with sheep in them. Surprisingly, there were very few photos including people.

“The one photo that stood out as a worthy winner is ‘Nurse Amy (Blagdon Cross, 2020)’ by Robin Howe. The splendid



capture of the night sky and the striking composition of the typical Exmoor signpost plus the silhouette of Nurse Amy is excellent. It is relevant to the current time encompassing Nocturnal Exmoor that the Exmoor Society is highlighting, the Dark Sky Reserve, and the vital role of the NHS,' said Nigel Hester, Trustee, 'The photo symbolizes the hope for a better future.'

Five scenic views that included dramatic weather events - "Sunrise from Dunkery" by Alex Jones; "Approaching Storm at Countisbury" by Stewart Wallis; "Prayway Head near Blackpitts" by Rosemary Barnes; "Rainbow over Porlock Weir" by Helen Bennett; and "Sea Mist Through Trees" by Jane Lovell - were Highly Commended.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Barnstaple and Bristol Groups are no more and, with the sad passing of George Jones, long-term Chair of the South Molton Group, we are not sure if this one will continue. The Dulverton Group had nothing to report due to Covid but the Coastal Group is thriving and Chairman Carol Rawle has sent in the following report.

Coastal Group

Last September saw the first of four events since the Covid 19 lockdowns. These were all local and mostly outdoors, enabling members to travel to each venue in their own cars.

In September, we met at Horner Farm, where Holly Purdy, the tenant farmer, inspired us all with her detailed explanations of successful plans contributing to their recently acquired, carbon neutral score for running the farm. The morning ended with delicious pizzas, enjoyed in the covered barn.

On 3 November, members met at Holnicote House for a guided walk around the Holnicote Estate Yard. Paul Camp, an NT ranger, gave a fascinating talk on the local history followed by an excellent lunch at the Cross Lanes Hotel.

October's Treasure Hunt was postponed but rescheduled for 11 November, on a beautiful sunny autumnal morning. Members met at Dunster Beach Car Park, a couple of hours later finding their way to the secret venue: The Royal Oak Inn at Luxborough. The warm, welcoming pub proved an ideal venue for an enjoyable lunch.

December 2nd The Annual Christmas Dinner was held at Reeves in Dunster. This was a great success and brought the year's rather short, four month programme to a close.

With regard to the programme for 2022, the Committee have been in communication with all speakers from the 2020 programme. As soon as large groups are permitted to meet again, they will be contacted to agree new dates. They have all confirmed they are looking forward to giving their presentations as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Spring is on the way and hopefully, within the next few months, our lives may gradually become a little closer to the previous normal.

NEW TRUSTEES

The Society said a fond farewell to Karen Trigger, a truly excellent Honorary Treasurer, and to two retiring trustees, Chris Binnie and Susan May, with grateful thanks for all their hard work. We are very pleased to welcome two new trustees, who introduce themselves as follows:

Bill Gash

Bill writes: 'I am delighted to have been appointed a Trustee of the Exmoor Society and look forward to playing an active part in the work of this important organisation. My background, in commerce and technology, should be useful as the Society looks to balance a need to protect what makes Exmoor so special, with recognising how, in 2021, technologies are transforming peoples' lives and how they do business, even in some of the most remote rural areas of the United Kingdom. I have a long-standing attachment to the area, from childhood holidays to the present. I live and work in Dulverton, play an active part in its community and enjoy the moorland and valleys, a short walk away.'



Victoria (Tortie) Eveleigh

Tortie writes: My name is Victoria Eveleigh, but most people who know me call me Tortie, which was a childhood nickname and short for tortoise, not Victoria. With my husband Chris, I have been farming at West Ilkerton since 1986. Alongside farming, I enjoy writing and many readers of Exmoor magazine may have spotted my regular contributions. I have also had nine books published, with five of them set on Exmoor following a girl and an Exmoor pony growing up together on a hill farm.



Exmoor is the place I love more than anywhere else and, although I wasn't actually born here, I feel a deep sense of belonging. I have been a life member of the Exmoor Society ever since I moved down here, and I am delighted to have become a trustee. I hope that my knowledge of farming, rural economics, geography and writing will prove useful. Farming has given Exmoor so many of the qualities that make it special, and farmers need our support like never before.



Sunset parley

The Exmoor Society
Registered Charity No1160912
2021-2022

Vice- Presidents:

Mr Rodney Coyne	Mrs Toni Jones
Lady Elizabeth Gass DCVO JP	Lord King of Bridgwater, CH PC
Sir Dieter Helm CBE	Baroness Mallalieu, QC
Mr Stanley Johnson	Sir Stephen Waley-Cohen Bt

Trustees:

Officers: Chairman: Mrs Rachel Thomas, CBE, DL
Vice-Chairman: Dr Keith Howe
Hon. Treasurer: TBC

Executive Committee:

Mrs Arabella Amory, Tiverton	Mrs Anne May, Challacombe
Ms Lisa Eden, Allerford	Ms Catherine O'Sullivan, Wheddon X
Mrs Jill Edwards, Exford	Mr Roger Watts, Dulverton
Hon Mrs Victoria Eveleigh, Lynton	Prof John Wibberley, Shaldon
Mr William Gash, Dulverton (Acting Treasurer)	
Mr Nigel Hester, Allerford	Mrs Christina Williams, Molland

Staff:

Society Administrator: Gill Whitehead
Assistant Administrator: Jane Mathews
Development Co-ordinator: Laura Yiend

Editor of the Exmoor Review: Kate O'Sullivan
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