



The
Dartmoor
Society

Newsletter

Issue No. 68 • September



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Since the last issue of the Newsletter, I am very pleased to welcome the following new members to our number:

Kathryn Aalto
Mary Alford Guy
Arnold Kate Bell
Tom Bell Susan
Bhogal Jonathan
Briggs Steve
Brimble Timothy
Diss Helen
Duwall Martin
Hampton

Caroline M. Hart Karen
Hodge
Aryanna Japhayel
Deborah Jessop
Mo Keohan
Jess Kermode
Paul Moody
Sam Josh Thomas
Dianne Westoby-Brooks
Nicholas Whitsun-Jones
Joanne Woodward

Introduction

by Alan Endacott | Acting Chairman

Dear friends,

I hope that you are all faring well during these strange and difficult times.

We wanted to keep you up to date with developments in the Dartmoor Society. While it is still too early to organise any events, at least we can bring you a newsletter with some items of interest. We hope to arrange events to re-launch in 2021, as soon as the rules allow and we feel it is safe.

This newsletter has been brought to you by our newly-formed editorial committee, consisting of Annabel Crowley, Chris Chapman and Wilf Hodges, ably assisted by designer Helen Duwall. Together they bring a wealth of experience and creativity and we are most fortunate to have such a team working on our behalf. I hope that you will enjoy it and I look forward to seeing further results of their collaboration in the future.

Like me, I'm sure many of you will have found solace in walking on Dartmoor during lock-down. These have been difficult and worrying times for many, missing our friends and family and life's 'normalities' but we are so fortunate to have the one thing that unites us all, our love of Dartmoor, with its wonderful culture and natural beauty. I look forward to the day when we can enjoy that sense of 'togetherness' at Dartmoor Society events once again.

With all good wishes,

Alan Endacott MA | Acting Chairman



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The Marbled White

Cover story by Annabel Crowley

It seems appropriate in the year of Covid-19 to have on the Newsletter cover an image that represents many relevant themes. The life-cycle of the butterfly has often inspired writing on life, death, change, struggle, renewal and the surprising resilience of things seemingly fragile.

The Marbled White butterfly was described as ‘our half-mourner’ by the seventeenth-century botanist James Petiver; its colouring reminiscent of the period when mourners felt able to introduce paler shades into their otherwise black clothing. We may no longer observe such strict dress proprieties but many of us will be mourning nonetheless this year. And fittingly, it’s often churchyards where we’ll see the Marbled White since its favoured purple-flowered plants, such as

knapweed and field scabious, often grow in the unimproved grassland there.

Increasingly, churchyards are places of not only spiritual but also ecological sanctuary and renewal. In 2018, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) initiated its Devon’s Best Churchyard competition to identify an outstanding ‘peaceful haven for both people and wildlife’ and the winner was St Andrew’s in South Tawton, on the northern

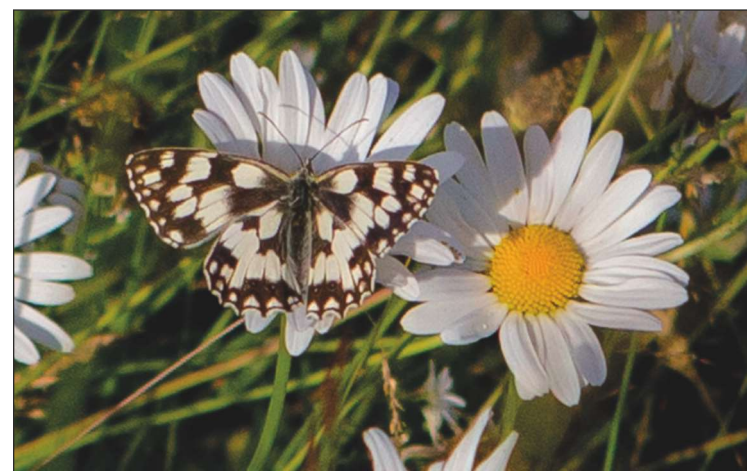


St Andrews, South Tawton with Cosdon Hill (photograph by Chris Chapman)

edge of Dartmoor, where Chris Chapman took this photograph of the Marbled White.

More of Dartmoor’s parish churches – as well as many private individuals – are embracing this concept of

harmony as our understanding of climate change improves and we look for ways we can support and reinvigorate Earth’s eco- system of which we are a part. As the Marbled White flies and the knapweed flowers, let’s hope they and we can flourish together.



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Marbled White butterfly on oxeye daisies (photograph by Paul Moody)

The South Zeal Water System

by Wilf Hodges

One task that the Dartmoor Society executive committee sets itself is to read through the weekly list of planning applications published by the National Park Authority. Late last year our eye fell on an application mentioning a house on the north side of Cosdon Beacon, between South Zeal and Sticklepath. We knew that the garden of this house contained the relics of the old water system that supplied South Zeal between 1910 and the end of the Second World War

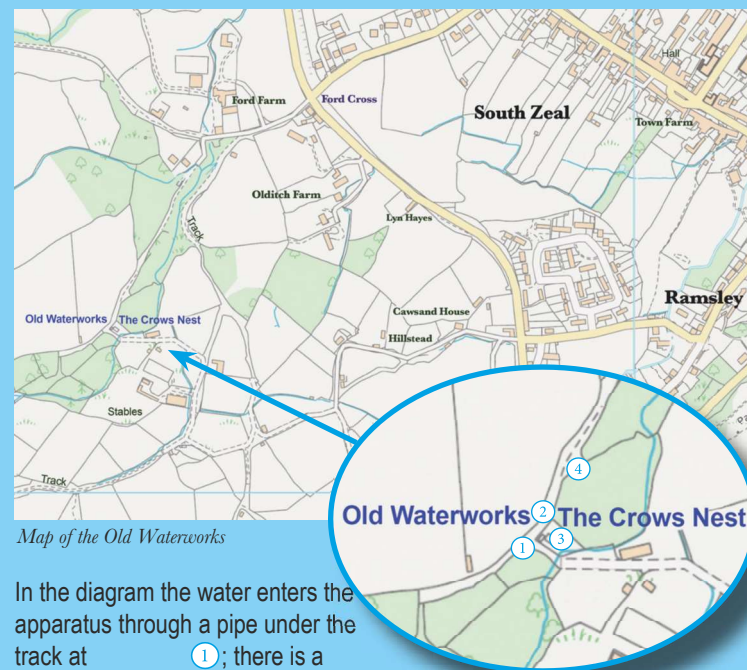


Photo: Alan Endacott

Tanya stands on the closed tank and operates the plane table and alidade.

This system has an interesting history that you can read in the Dartmoor News 121 July/ August 2011, or in Patrick Shaw's write-up of the South Zeal Parish Council Minutes (online under 'South Tawton Parish Council' at <http://southtawtonhistory.org.uk>). But we knew of no survey or photographs of the apparatus itself, and we were afraid that the owners might decide to clear away this overgrown gizmo before it could be properly recorded. So we approached the owners and asked if they would be willing for us to survey and record the apparatus.

The owners responded at once, very positively. As a result a team of us (Tanya and Barry Welch, Alan Endacott, Chris Chapman and Wilf Hodges) visited the site on 12 March 2020 and, with help from the owners, we spent a day clearing and recording the apparatus. Unfortunately fate hit us with a double whammy: Covid-19 descended before we could arrange a second day to complete the task, and our surveyors Tanya and Barry withdrew from the project. We are all set to complete the task when the lockdown allows. But we covered enough ground to justify a report to the Newsletter.



Map of the Old Waterworks

In the diagram the water enters the apparatus through a pipe under the track at ①; there is a drain cover here. We haven't investigated the input to the pipe, which is on other property. The water goes first to a system of open tanks decorated with valves ②. These tanks must have been used for filtration, and also perhaps for chemical purification. Water from peat bogs tends to be acid and to contain DOC (dissolved organic carbon) which may discolour it. Perhaps lime was added to the water, and then the precipitated carbonate was cleared out – a standard method of the time, and lime was plentiful in South Tawton. From the open tanks, pipes take the water into a large covered tank at ③. We discovered a manhole cover at the top of the covered tank, and one task on our list is to see what is inside the tank.

The water apparently runs from the northern end of the closed tank into a pipe heading down the hill. It reappears a little further down the hill at an open stone-lined oval reservoir ④ with a capacity of about 14 cubic metres.



Copyright © Chris Chapman

Revealing the manhole cover.



Copyright © Chris Chapman

A view of the site from the north.

The source of the water is a collection of peat bogs on the flank of Cosdon. The supply used to be augmented by a leat from the Ladybrook, but this leat has long since dried up. Some of the water in this area went down the hill to join the Ramsley Stream at a culvert under the old A30. On its way down it operated a set of stamps at the Ramsley Copper Mine. In 1877 an agent of Charles Fursdon, Lord of the Manor of South Zeal and owner of the Ramsley Mine sett, warned Fursdon that a government plan to flood the Skaigh valley for a public water supply might divert the water being used at the mine. But you can check on the ground that to affect the mine one would have to flood the whole village of Belstone! Anyway the government plan was dropped, leaving South Zeal to make its own arrangements.

The water leaves the reservoir by a tailrace into a metal pipe which we hope to trace down the hill. The purpose of the open reservoir is not clear to us – we have heard that later it was an ornamental pool. It is sited near the 270 metre contour. The furthest house supplied by the water system was Poltimore on Ramsley Hill, whose upper floors are at around the 260 metre level – so there was only just enough head of water to allow this.



Photo: Alan Endacott

One of the valves.

We intend that the final report will give an account of how the system worked, and what role the waterman played in operating it. (We do know that in summer he turned the system on in the morning and then off again in the evening.) Also we are interested in who built or maintained it and where the equipment came from.

Some covers and handles carry the names of businesses. For example Ames Crosta Mills was a Lancashire company founded

in 1926 and specialising in water treatment. The contractor who first set up the system was John Cornish of Okehampton. Alan Endacott remembers evidence of his large ironmongery shop, which used to run from Fore Street towards the present Lidl's.

We warmly thank the owners of the site for their interest and support. We also thank the South Tawton Local History Archive for preserving and analysing information about the water supply system.



The open tanks from the south.



Higher Shilstone Farm, Throwleigh, Devon by Lennard Lewis (circa late C19)

Higher Shilstone

an illustrated talk and film screening by Chris Chapman

On the afternoon of Saturday 15 February 2020, in the teeth of Storm Dennis, 55 people attended Chris Chapman's presentation at Manaton Parish Hall.

Chris introduced his subject by explaining that his connection with the village of Throwleigh came as the result of winning 'best student' prize at Newport College of Art in 1974. With the prize money of £50 he paid a deposit on a mischievous donkey called Mistletoe and that summer began a journey round Dartmoor with his camera, starting at Bagtor in the parish of Ilington.

After trekking and camping across the moor and eventually reaching Throwleigh, he was so taken with the village and its daily life that he decided to spend a few days there. Through

Jack Symonds, a farmer with an egg and cream round, he was invited to tea at Higher Shilstone by Mr and Mrs Martin.

He was immediately fascinated by the interior, not just because of its ancient atmosphere but also by the personal effects the Martin family had accumulated. The farm was unspoilt and an outstanding example of a traditional Dartmoor longhouse dating from the late 15th century. Later he learnt that the house had originally been open to the roof and heated by an open hearth fire, the smoke from which percolated through the thatch.

By 1976 he had established himself permanently in a studio in Throwleigh. On the death of Walter and Louie Martin their widowed daughter, Rita Webber, inherited the farm and Chris remembers looking out of his studio window one day to see her and her four children moving all their belongings from her council house in the village up to Higher Shilstone by tractor and trailer.

At this time the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) had engaged Chris to take a series of colour photographs on the subject of farming on the moor. Hoping he might have some sway with the DNPA, Rita telephoned to ask for his help in support of renovations at Higher Shilstone. She had already approached the Park

requesting a grant to replace the thatch but, unfortunately, their offer of £250 was not enough.

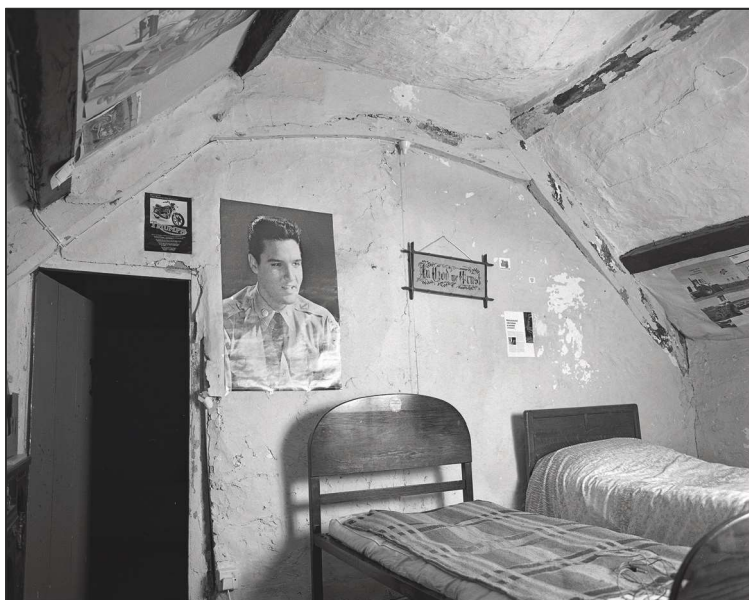
Feeling he might be able to help, Chris took his camera and climbed a ladder to the roof, where he was able to record the sorry state of the thatch. Later, at a meeting about the farming project with Professor Ian Mercer, then the chief officer of the DNPA, he explained Rita's circumstances and how she was struggling financially to run the farm.

His photographs of the thatched roof showed the enormity of the problem and from that point on Ian Mercer took the matter under his wing. Thankfully he was instrumental in escalating the focus on Higher Shilstone



Higher Shilstone with its new thatch 1986

Copyright © Chris Chapman



All photographs Copyright © Chris Chapman

Bedroom revealing the timber crook indicating, along with the smoke-blackened thatch in the attic, that Higher Shilstone was once an open Medieval hall house

and soon afterwards a larger grant was made available. Photographs are a powerful tool. Notwithstanding this modest improvement in conditions,



Doorway from the cross passage to living quarters

the house and outbuildings continued to be a major financial responsibility and by the mid-1980s Rita was thinking of selling Higher Shilstone.



The kitchen stove at Higher Shilstone

At the same time, Chris was commissioned by Peter Beacham, the historic building advisor to Devon County Council, to take a series of black-and-white photographs of the farm to serve as a permanent historical record. With these images he concluded the first part of his presentation, including his own favourite of a bedroom complete with original cruck beams and an Elvis Presley poster.

The audience then watched a 1986 BBC Bristol film, 'Ours to Keep, Selling Shilstone', which Chris has preserved in his

archive. This is an interesting documentary that follows auctioneers Tim Garratt and Roger Hedley from Rendells and historic buildings experts Peter Beacham and John Schofield during the period when the farm was prepared for sale by auction. Interspersed with the (sometimes alarming) musings of prospective buyers, it illustrates the competing interests involved before ending with Rita calling off the auction after the farm's historic building status is upgraded from Grade II to Grade I and a 100% grant made available for its repair.



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Dresser and Fred Flinstone at Higher Shilstone.



Walter Martin in the kitchen at Higher Shilstone



Rita Webber on the doorstep of Higher Shilstone

All photographs: Copyright © Chris Chapman

After the film, Chris told the audience that the future of Higher Shilstone was secured eventually when Rita's neighbours offered to buy the

farm in order to preserve its integrity for future generations. Since then the property has been occupied and cared for by one tenant.



The dung pit at Higher Shilstone (listed Grade II!)

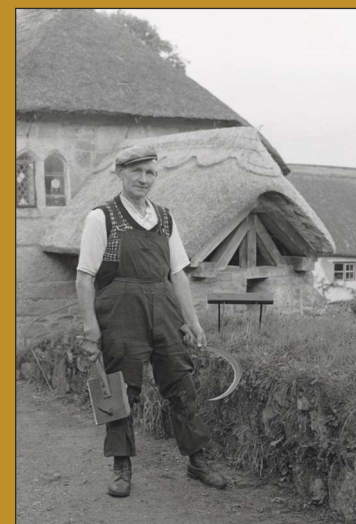
Life in Throwleigh

After a break for tea, Chris concluded by showing a selection of photographs from his extensive archive depicting life in Throwleigh since his arrival in 1976, ranging from the visit of the local bakery van to the thatching of the church lychgate.

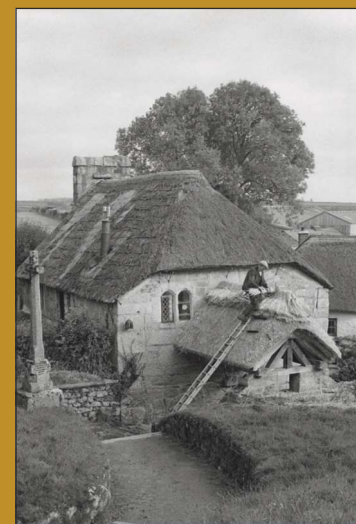


Angela Clark delivering for Endacott's bakery, Okehampton

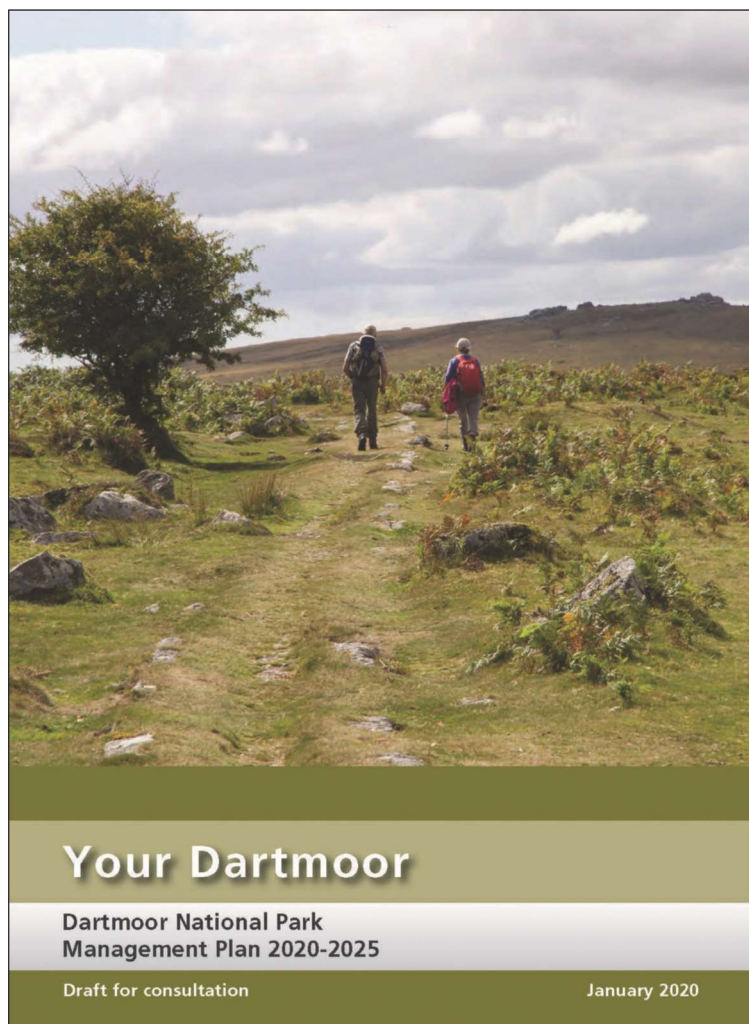
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Wilf Butt, thatcher, St Mary's Throwleigh



Wilf Butt thatching the lychgate, Throwleigh



Copyright © Dartmoor National Park 2020

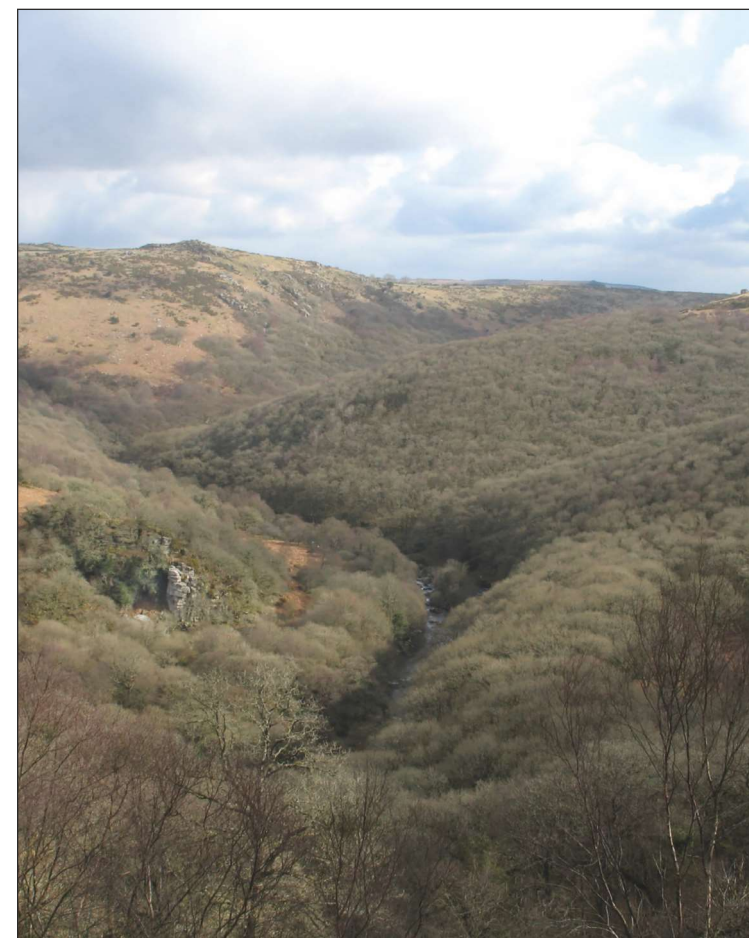
Dartmoor National Park Draft Management Plan Consultation

The Authority's draft five-year strategic plan was based on a consultation exercise featuring debates and workshops on various topics and overseen by a steering group. The resulting draft Management Plan was put out to broader consultation from 10 February to 31 May 2020, along with an invitation for comments.

You can see the Draft Plan on:

<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/management-plan/management-plan-review>

This followed the publication of the Dartmoor Local Plan 2018–2033, which covered structure planning, among other things. Our then Chairman, Dr. Tom Greeves, submitted a detailed and constructive critique on our behalf during the consultation phase and we questioned the need for a separate 'Management Plan'. However, the Authority do appear to have listened to some of our previous criticism and this came across in the new draft. The following is the response submitted by Alan Endacott on behalf of the Dartmoor Society.



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The River Dart from Combstone Tor

The Dartmoor Society Response

The Dartmoor Society broadly supports the vision underpinning the Management Plan and we feel that the overall balance of the Plan itself is fair and demonstrates a genuine willingness to consult with interested parties and to listen to their views.

It should be stated at the outset that we agree on far more than we disagree on and that the following comments should, therefore, be seen in that context. Where no comment is made on a specific topic or proposal it should be assumed that we are broadly in agreement.



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The Malseed family driving cattle to Frenchbeer

Climate Change

We congratulate the Authority on its own efforts to become carbon neutral by 2025. However, while Dartmoor itself has much to offer in mitigating the effects of climate change regionally, we see certain risks in Dartmoor being seen as the carbon sink for the rest of Devon, especially when it comes to investment from

conscience-driven carbon offset schemes. Such activity (such as mass tree planting on peatlands or open moorland) needs to be carefully planned and controlled in order to derive the greatest benefits and to avoid unintended knock-on consequences rather than being largely driven by available funding.

We have similar reservations about some of the current ‘upstream thinking’ policies, including the damming of streams and peatland ‘restoration’. The Society still disputes the historical context of peat denudation on the uplands. We do accept that there are clearly potential carbon gains and other environmental benefits from the consolidation of

blanket peat cover but only where it is clearly demonstrated that nature needs a helping hand. We remain opposed to the current overly invasive methodology. Instead, we would prefer to see a softer, more phased approach to the work, for instance, the manual placing of pre-seeded sphagnum in biodegradable nets to form dams and shallow pools to encourage the gradual establishment of sphagnum bog over a greater area, rather than the current use of excavators and intrusive dams that risk releasing more harmful

methane than the carbon gains are worth and create deep pools, with the attendant physical and health risks to wildlife and livestock.

With regards to sustainable transport, although there is going to be an increasing demand for vehicle charging points and other infrastructure to accommodate low-carbon transport, it will prove almost impossible to cope with the sheer predicted numbers of electric vehicles in the future and we feel the Authority should take bold steps, along with public and private partners, to aim for a fully integrated public transport system to reduce the number of visitors arriving in cars as well as helping local communities to reduce their car usage. For instance, a network of affordable ‘Park and Ride’ facilities around the outskirts of the National Park, operating with low-carbon buses. Dartmoor could become an exemplar of what can be achieved.

Winney's Down, part of the Mires project (photograph by Tom Greeves)





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Vehicle tracks on Winney's Down

When public infrastructure improvements are considered to provide low-carbon facilities, these should not be limited to vehicle charging points and other technologies, such as hydrogen, should be taken into account, especially around the periphery of the National Park. Flexibility should be built in to any project plans to take account of new or emerging technologies and the specific needs of Dartmoor communities, which will, of course, be quite different to more urban areas, should always be taken into account.

We welcome the National Park's commitment to reducing energy consumption through improved building efficiency and the use of small-scale renewable and low-carbon

energy technologies and hope that the resources can be made available to back this up. Given that much of Dartmoor's existing housing stock is of traditional construction and few rural settlements have access to mains gas, there is significant fuel poverty and insulation and heating bring particular challenges, especially with the current high costs of renewable technologies and planning restrictions on their introduction in a National Park. In recognition of this, it would be helpful if there were a specific scheme, administered by the National Park Authority, to draw on Government incentives and advice for home owners and landlords, to take account of the special circumstances of the National Park.

Better for the Next Generation

While we welcome the aim of including young people in decision making, we feel that this is an issue that relates to all ages with respect to the lack of democratic representation of residents on the National Park Authority, in particular relating to planning issues. However, we acknowledge that this is beyond the scope of this Plan and recognise the willingness of the Authority to listen to the views of all stakeholders in order to shape their decisions.

We share the concerns regarding affordable housing, jobs and skills and would welcome any practical encouragement of traditional skills and knowledge being passed on as well as the other ideas put forward. We regret the loss of County Council 'starter farms' within the National Park and the opportunities they provided for young farmers to get established. If it isn't already, this kind of opportunity should be borne in mind in relation to Duchy tenancies, with a certain quota

specifically for young farmers starting out. How this could be subsidised could be the subject of the new ELMS principles.

Part of the process of young people learning about what is special and how to help conserve and enhance it should be to encourage dialogue with the older generation in order to perpetuate the cycle of received wisdom and experience that is so often overlooked by decision makers who, thus, either re-invent the wheel or repeat the mistakes of the past.

We are a little uncomfortable about the idea of waymarked routes. This can be achieved in theory using GPS technology without the need for intrusive way-markers but, in any case, a big part of the Dartmoor experience is learning how to map read and to enjoy orienteering and using one's other senses and these skills should be encouraged in younger people rather than risk being overly protective.



Drystone walling (photograph by Chris Chapman)

Better for Nature and Natural Beauty

There is possibly a need to define what is meant by ‘natural beauty’ as much of what is popularly seen as the ‘wilderness’ of Dartmoor is, in fact, the product of human intervention over thousands of years. While we accept that there is an important place for nature reserves and a patchwork of different habitats with different degrees of management, if left totally to nature, much of Dartmoor would become inaccessible and it is important that this message gets across to the wider public.

For instance, there is a tendency for people unfamiliar with Dartmoor’s history to misconstrue

the meaning of the historical term ‘Forest of Dartmoor’ and demand that trees should be re-planted on the uplands in order to ‘re-wild’ it. Apart from the fact that broadleaved trees would be unlikely to grow in the prevailing soils and conditions, they would be nowhere near as efficient at carbon sequestration as peat.

Presumably the proposed landscape-scale ‘nature recovery areas’ will involve the exclusion of people and livestock? We are not necessarily against the principle where there is a clear and demonstratable need but we would be interested to see any specific proposals in due course.

There is also a strong case to be made for bracken and gorse clearance/control and a return to pre Foot and Mouth stocking levels and allowing and encouraging appropriate overwintering of cattle once more in order to reverse the current over dominance of bracken, gorse and *Molinia* in many areas and to restore the previous biodiversity through better management of the commons by livestock. Bracken is especially problematic in connection with the spread of Lyme disease but also hides (and may even damage) archaeological remains for much of the year, is poisonous to livestock and carcinogenic.

We are supportive of the coordinated approach of the Dartmoor Fires Partnership to tackle the increasing risk of wildfires. However, prevention is clearly the best policy and we would like to see a similar approach to controlled swaling, providing individual commoners associations are fully involved and in agreement. We believe that, as well as a more strategic approach being applied in order to control vegetation and reduce the risk of wild fires in the first place, a more flexible approach is needed within the overall agreed framework, for instance, where the weather prevents planned burns or an outbreak of heather beetle is noted.





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Archaeological excavation on Shovel Down

Better for Cultural Heritage

We applaud the emphasis placed on Dartmoor's cultural heritage and, in particular, the desire to see that the significance of Premier Archaeological Landscapes (PALs) is recognised by other agencies and given a degree of statutory standing. We would like this to have a similar weighting to SSSIs and other conservation designations. However, we note the reference to potential conflicting priorities and the need for a process for assessing strategic environment priorities to guide decision making in relation to other conservation objectives. We trust that extreme caution will be exercised when setting priorities and precedents and that there will be appropriate consultation with all interested parties.

We welcome the principle of a rolling survey of listed buildings and quinquennial buildings at risk survey and hope that sufficient resources are made available or sought to assist the process and to help with any remedial

conservation work required, in partnership with owners and other agencies.

Dartmoor's international importance to prehistoric archaeology deserves a corresponding level of resource. The encouragement of pro-active research into the moor's cultural heritage is very welcome, as is the ongoing work with local communities and volunteers. As this Plan is about vision, ultimately we would like to see it go further and recognise the ecocultural value of all of the open moor by abandoning distinctions between what is considered to be of particular ecological or cultural merit and the often arbitrary boundaries of SSSIs, PALs and other statutory designations, in favour of a single ecocultural designation in full recognition of the equal and symbiotic value of both. We would hope that this would ensure a more even distribution of resources and management to a consistent high quality.

Better for Farming and Forestry

We are broadly happy with the general principles and aims set out in the Management Plan - subject to the previous comments regarding winter grazing for cattle and the need to redress the balance due to under-grazing, the lack of timely swaling on many commons over recent years and the consequent over-dominance of various species (including bracken, gorse and *Molinia*). The rise of *Molinia* in particular has knock-on consequences for the environment as the dense thatch effect produced when it dies down in the winter increases run-off and reduces the ability of the soil beneath to absorb carbon.

As well as recognising the conservation benefits of sustainable farming, we also feel that due consideration should always be given to the importance of home food production over importation, with its additional food miles and

ethical considerations, such as forest clearance, the local impact of cash-crop production in the developing world and often poorer animal welfare standards. Taking good farmland out of efficient production here will inevitably have a knock-on effect on other parts of the world and this aspect should always be part of the carbon offset equation. There is little point in planting thousands of trees on good pasture land for instance if a similar area of rainforest is being cleared in South America in order to produce beef for export to the UK on a carbon-fuelled freighter!

The bottom-up approach to the Farming Futures and Dartmoor Hill Farm Projects is an exemplar of what can be achieved in partnership and it would be good to see this extended to the whole of the National Park, or the commons at least.



Bovey Valley Woods (photograph by Paul Moody)



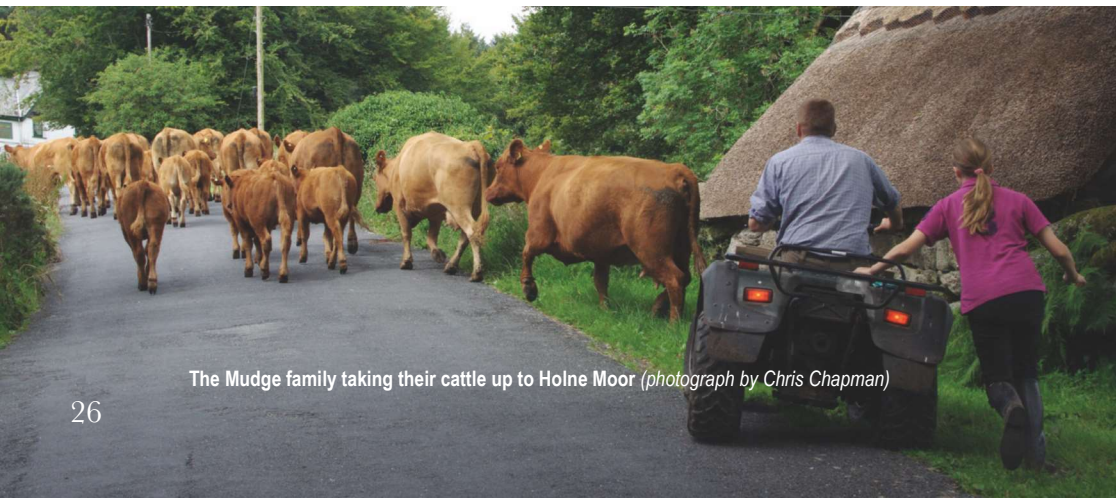
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Yellowmeade Farm, Princetown

The detailed delivery of these aims and policies will, no doubt, be the subject of much discussion between farmers and the various agencies involved over the life of the Plan and as the post-Brexit situation becomes clearer. The Dartmoor Society will be pleased to take part in such discussions where appropriate and helpful. We have a hill farming

sub-committee, looking in more detail at issues affecting farming in the National Park and the Society's position on such matters.

It may be of interest to note that the Society already organise regular farm and woodland visits and that these are reported on our website and in the members' thrice-yearly Newsletter.



The Mudge family taking their cattle up to Holne Moor (photograph by Chris Chapman)



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Courtenay and Ivan Mortimore, Tawton Gate, Yardworthy Pony Drift

Better for People

With regard to visitor pressure on the roads, we feel that there is a conflict between the promotion of Dartmoor as a physical activity playground and a suitable place for potentially destructive pastimes, such as foraging, and the long-term well-being of the environment and local communities. While we respect the rights of individuals to legally indulge in such pastimes, we don't think they should be widely promoted in the media (e.g. BBC Countryfile) and marketing campaigns and should not be actively promoted by the National Park Authority.

Equally, the emphasis should be on managing, encouraging and educating those who wish to visit the National Park of

their own volition rather than campaigns to increase overall visitor numbers. There are some excellent examples of sustainable tourism models within the National Park and these should continue to be encouraged, as should initiatives to help underprivileged groups (such as CHICKS or the Jubilee Challenge) to enjoy and feel inspired by the experience.

We are concerned about the increasing number of large-scale events being staged in the National Park, the damage they can cause and the impact on local communities and farmers. We feel that there are insufficient controls and opportunities for those communities and farmers affected to have their say.



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Stuart and Cheryl Payne of Drewsteignton Post Office Stores

Better for Communities and Business

Recent years have seen increasing numbers of closures of banks and Post Offices, not only in rural areas but in the larger towns that service Dartmoor communities.

This is causing significant hardships to individuals and communities as well as to the surviving Sub-Postmasters who are having to take on more work, including outreach services to villages that have already lost their Post Offices, for little extra money. It also means that, with a lack of public transport, people are being forced to drive (or be driven) significant distances to transact their affairs and this also leads to an increasing sense of isolation for those who can't travel.

Poor reception for mobile phones and slow internet connections for those who can use online facilities (and there are still many,

particularly elderly residents, who can't) exacerbate the problem. There needs to be a Dartmoor-wide strategy to protect such vital community services.

Unfortunately, part of the problem is that the viability of many service and retail businesses within the National Park is affected by the increasing tendency for new residents to commute and have little to do with the local community. This is in part a cultural issue as many choose not to mix or get involved, not having experienced village life before. Obviously, this is a personal choice but needs to be taken into account in the consideration of support for businesses and community initiatives and ways of changing perceptions.

Key Challenges

The Key Challenges referred to in the DNP Management Plan are:

- Landscape Management and Nature Recovery
- More trees
- Existing conifer plantations
- A grazed moorland landscape
- More visitors
- Changing demographics
- Communication infrastructure
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Military training

The examples given in the introduction are a little provocative – presumably deliberately so. However, the semantics are dangerous and run the risk of undoing all the goodwill engendered through the consultation process and undermining any subsequent consensus. It could be interpreted as a power of veto and that, regardless of whatever anybody else says, at the end of the day *'Nanny knows best'*.

Of course, as with all plans, the devil will be in the detail and any general statements may give the wrong impression, but they appear to pre-suppose that environmental 'improvement' will always take priority over all other aspects of the landscape and so a cultural landscape that may be thousands of years old and is 'considered to be of international significance' is seen as less important than whatever the current fashion of environmental management or 'enhancement' is. This could

be seen as rather an arrogant proposition and the justification open to dispute.

The term 'nature recovery' itself is actually a culturally loaded term as it presupposes that the flora and fauna of an inherited, culturally managed landscape isn't 'natural' and, by imposing the exclusion of large mammals (including humans), we are making a cultural choice rather than leaving it to nature. Having said that, we aren't necessarily against the idea and the unaided re-generation of valley-side woodland is clearly particularly effective. We simply want to see that in individual cases, all angles and views are taken into account with open minds. Having said all of that, the succeeding assessment of the challenges and issues is fair and balanced overall and we would respectfully suggest that the introduction is revised to reflect the overall consensus rather than concentrate on potential conflicts.



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Houses at Widecombe

The Dartmoor Society has suggested that the DNP's desire for further indicators could include:

- Percentage of total housing stock not in permanent occupation
- Percentage of households greater than a mile from the nearest Post Office or shop
- Public spend per ancient monument/listed building (including staff resources)
- Climate change indicators such as earliest ground nesting dates (and other observational data), temperature and rainfall data etc
- Satisfaction survey data
- Farm incomes/profitability comparisons pertaining to different agri-environment schemes and farm support areas within the Park in order to assess effectiveness alongside the respective environmental outcomes
- Support for carbon reduction measures per household
- Number of large-scale events and average number of participants, set against previous years

We will appreciate the opportunity to discuss the above points further when appropriate. Thank you.

Alan Endacott MA | Acting Chairman | The Dartmoor Society
Tel: 01647 231171 | email: info@dartmoorsociety.com

Legacies

Founded in 1998, the Dartmoor Society is dedicated to sharing well-researched information and promoting the well-being of Dartmoor and its communities. It has been a registered charity (No 1111066) since 2005 and pursues its broadly educational aims through a wide range of visits, social events, lectures and other opportunities to engage with up-to-date expert opinion.

These are funded entirely by income derived from the Society's own financial resources, based on subscriptions, donations, events and merchandise. The Society has no paid officers or rented premises and only modest administration costs, so its income directly supports its work.

One additional way in which supporters can help the Dartmoor Society is to leave it a legacy in their wills. Whether large or small, these sums help to maintain the Society's status as an independent voice and forum of debate.

In particular, legacies can make a significant contribution to its Research Fund. The Society regards research as essential for good decision-making. As a wholly independent body it has a valuable role to play in ensuring that high-quality information contributes to the well-being of Dartmoor and its communities; and through the Research Fund it can foster specific investigations into key subjects that might not otherwise be undertaken.

Further information on the Research Fund can be found on the Society's website: https://www.dartmoorsociety.com/research_fund.

Leaving a legacy to the Dartmoor Society can be done by means of a straightforward form of words in a new will, or as a codicil to an existing one:

'I bequeath unto The Dartmoor Society (registered charity no 1111066), PO Box 105, Okehampton, Devon EX20 9BA, the sum of £ ..., free of duty, and declare that the signature of The Dartmoor Society Treasurer or other authorised officer of The Dartmoor Society, shall be sufficient discharge for this legacy.'

Thank you for your support.

Acting Chairman's Report 2019–2020

by Alan Endacott

At our last AGM at Scorriton, in April 2019, we said a fond thank you and farewell to our chairman of 21 years, Dr Tom Greeves. That momentous event seems an age ago now, with all that has happened since but, suffice to say, Tom has been a very hard act to follow and we remain indebted to him for the wonderful legacy he has left.



Copyright © Chris Chapman

Dr. Tom Greeves, former Chairman of the Dartmoor Society

There have certainly been some challenges since, as we adjusted to life without Tom at the helm but I think we can be justifiably proud that we have tried hard to follow his ethos and example and, in doing so, enjoyed some notable successes as well as continuing

to wield our independent influence on 'the powers that be' in furtherance of the Society's aims. Recent events should not be allowed to overshadow what was a busy and highly successful year, with some memorable and influential events.



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Charcoal burning at Burnicombe Wood

The year's events started off on 13 May with a visit to Burnicombe Wood, kindly hosted by John and Clare Williamson, where we met the horses they use to haul logs on the steep terrain and

witnessed various traditional woodland management practices in action, including hazel coppicing and charcoal burning in an excellent example of a sustainable woodland enterprise.

On 14 June we joined with members of the Devonshire Association for a visit to St Leonard's church at Sheepstor and St Paul's church at Yelverton to enjoy a fascinating tour and talk by Dr Helen Wilson on the life and work of the Pinwill sisters (Mary, Ethel and Violet) and their woodcarving business (Rashleigh, Pinwill & Co., Ecclesiastical Carvers).



Copyright © Chris Chapman

Violet Pinwill (above left) and carvings made by the Pinwill sisters in St Leonard's church.



Copyright © Alan Endacott & Chris Chapman

For our summer barbecue, we visited the Langaford Farm Charitable Trust near Lettaford and, led by their community engagement officer, Megan Lowe,

enjoyed a wonderful walk around the wildflower meadows and wildlife ponds and witnessed the results of their butterfly conservation work.

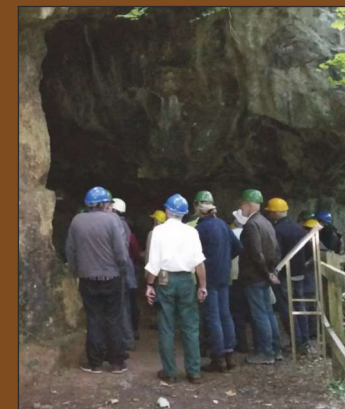
In July we were treated to an insightful visit to Moorlands Farm near Princetown, courtesy of Gill and Layland Branfield. Layland took us on a tour of the farm (*below*) and explained the many issues facing hill farms with characteristic passion and first-hand knowledge.



Copyright © Alan Endacott 2020

We attended Chagford Show and Widecombe Fair with our stand as well as the celebration of the Moor than Meets the Eye project at Manaton.

In September we had a fascinating visit to the William Pengelly Caves Trust Centre at Buckfastleigh, with the benefit of our knowledgeable guide, Sheila Phillips. It is a special site on many levels - geologically, archaeologically and ecologically and the Trust successfully balances the needs of conservation alongside carefully controlled public access and educational work.



Copyright © Alan Endacott 2020

October saw our memorable flagship Debate, The Secret Life of Birds, which was held in a packed Ashburton Arts Centre (*below*). Caya Edwards succeeded in bringing together an impressive selection of people working with bird projects or leading authorities in their respective fields

to present their work and observations and highlight various conservation issues. This proved to be an excellent opportunity to share knowledge and ideas and was hailed a milestone event, with the content of the presentations disseminated widely after the event as a lasting legacy.



Copyright © Chris Chapman

This was followed by our Research Lecture at Bovey Tracey in November. Dr Paul Lunt and Dru Butterfield presented their scientific evidence of the beneficial

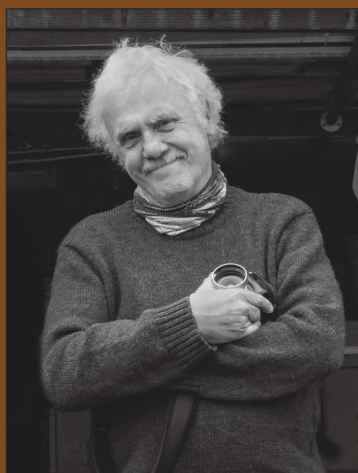
impacts of conservation grazing at Bellever Forest, Postbridge with Dartmoor ponies, once again helping to stimulate debate and influence policy making.



Copyright © Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust 2020

Courtesy of the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT)

In February, the well-known, Throwleigh-based, Dartmoor photographer Chris Chapman entertained us with an interesting and poignant illustrated talk and film screening on Higher Shilstone Farm, Throwleigh. His personal recollections and documentation revealed the threats and challenges facing the owner of a decaying but remarkably well-preserved longhouse in the 1980s, together with its community context.



Copyright © Helen Duval 2020



Copyright © Helen Duval 2020

At this point, when we seemed to be going from strength to strength, the pandemic sadly put paid to the remainder of our events programme. This would have included a visit to Widecombe for a presentation on North Hall Manor by DNP archaeologist Andy Crabb and our AGM in Chagford, which was to have been preceded by a talk from Eamon Crowe of Natural England.

In spite of the lock-down, our work has continued behind

the scenes. We made written representations to various bodies and enquiries during the year and your executive committee met with Dr Kevin Bishop and various senior members of the National Park staff to discuss a range of concerns. When things return to some form of normality, this is planned to become a regular arrangement, giving us the opportunity to have constructive face-to-face discussions on current and future issues.

In July last year, Joss Hibbs gave a presentation to the executive committee on her research into the semi-wild hill pony herds and her written submission to the House of Commons Agricultural Bill Committee for the breed to be recognised under the proposed 'public payment for public good' arrangements. We subsequently sent a letter of support for Joss to the Committee and received positive responses from a number of local MPs. We made similar representations to our local

MPs in relation to bidding for money to increase the chances of re-introducing rail links to Dartmoor.



Copyright © Helen Duval 2020

Okehampton Station

Towards the end of 2019, the Glover Review of National Landscapes was released and a forum was held at Parke, bringing together representatives of various Dartmoor organisations to discuss the implications. We were ably represented by Wilf Hodges. While we welcomed raising the profile of nature and natural beauty, we were disappointed that the opportunity was not seized to make National Park authorities more democratic or to give equal weight to cultural heritage.

We commented at length on the DEFRA National Food Strategy Review, highlighting what Dartmoor's farmers and growers have to offer and the challenges they face. I also attended an interesting Climate Resilience Learning Journey in relation to the moor that was organised by the Totnes-based Bioregional Learning Centre. Climate change is undoubtedly a major challenge for Dartmoor's communities. However, I have often heard from hill farmers and others over the years about the basic misconceptions some organisations and officials have about the impact of farming on upland ecology and broader

water management and climate change issues, and I was disappointed to hear the same old arguments being used again, to justify peatland 'restoration', reduced grazing and mass tree planting on the high moor. I raised concerns during the day and subsequently in writing, in an attempt to give a balanced view without sounding negative. The perpetuation of often unjustified or unproven assumptions is an ongoing concern, as is a 'one size fits all' national approach to specific local conservation and climate change.

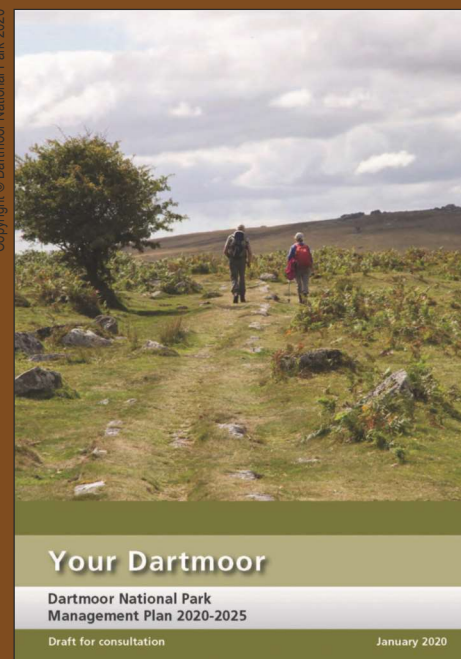
In the same vein, we submitted comments to the Peatland Inquiry, instigated by the House of Commons' Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, reiterating our concerns about the current approach to the peatland 'restoration' programme on Dartmoor. Liz Miall has represented us on the Peatland Partnership and raised pertinent questions during field visits to see the impact of the work. We continue to question the evidence basis for the intrusive approach, while having constructive dialogue about possible alternative approaches.

More recently we have submitted comments on the draft Dartmoor National Park Management Plan (reproduced in this edition of the Newsletter). We are forming a hill farming sub-committee to examine agricultural issues more closely, to inform our discussions with the National

of Natural England and other relevant bodies to see and discuss the issues on the ground. We had hoped to be able to stage a follow-up event this summer to see the results of the trial and discuss commons management issues further, in order to establish some form of consensus and a workable way forward with all interested parties present. I must, at this point, pay tribute to our former executive committee member, Fairfax Luxmoore, who contributed a good deal to the debate prior to stepping down earlier this year.

There does seem to be a growing understanding between the various parties and a willingness to listen to local wisdom; but we must remain vigilant and continue to drive our message home while promoting or seeking high-quality research and observational evidence to back up our own arguments. Otherwise the risk is that fashionable, though ultimately superficial and ineffective, 'quick-fix' environmental ideas gain hold. Simply planting a million deciduous trees to die in the acid soils of the exposed uplands, or damming streams and bogs without questioning the justification or possible unintended consequences, is actually letting future generations down when the resources could be better used elsewhere.

Copyright © Dartmoor National Park 2020



Park Authority and others. An instance of where the Society has made a difference has been the winter grazing trial on Gidleigh Common over the last two years. The fact-finding event organised there by Tom Greeves a couple of years ago brought commoners together with representatives

We continue to monitor planning applications and occasionally comment on behalf of the Society where we consider a dangerous precedent might be set or a valuable heritage asset inadvertently lost. Sometimes we have felt it necessary to support schemes where overall community benefits might outweigh individual concerns. Of course, as the old adage goes, you can't please all of the people all of the time but we do try to weigh up all the issues and arrive at a consensus before submitting comments on the Society's behalf.



The recent lock-down has proved the importance and potential of electronic communication and banking and I hope that this is something we can develop as a Society in the future to enable speedier and more efficient communication with members. Our website and, increasingly, social media are also important communication tools and I am grateful to Chris Wright and all those who have contributed material over the past years. I would particularly like to see our social media presence improved as part of a drive to engage with new audiences.

However, the Newsletter remains a central platform for getting our news and views across and keeping

our members informed and involved, as well as providing an archive of past activities and proceedings. We are indebted to all those who produced the Newsletter, particularly our former editor, Steve Mason and, of course, Barry and Tanya Welch who picked it up and kept it going when Steve had to stand down mid-year.

Talking of Tanya, I cannot let this moment pass without proposing a huge vote of thanks for all she did for the Society over the years and we are so sorry that she took the, no doubt, difficult decision to stand down earlier this year. She worked incredibly hard as our Hon Secretary for a number of years and, to many, was the front line of the Society. She and her

husband Barry threw themselves into all our activities and worked tirelessly on our behalf. We will pay a more formal tribute at some point in the future but I want to say a personal thank you to them now.

I also want to thank Barrie Quilliam and Caya Edwards, both of whom retired from the committee during the year. They were also industrious behind the scenes and at events and contributed a great deal towards the success of the Society over the years and their input is also greatly missed. They too will be thanked properly when a suitable occasion arises.

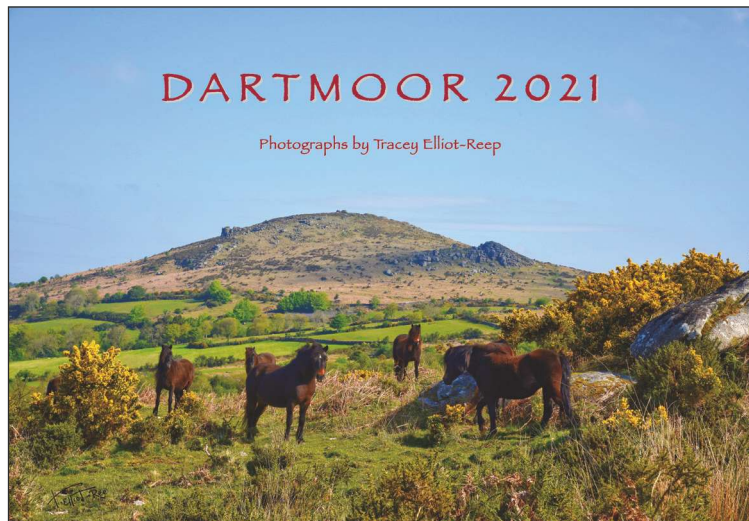
In the meantime, we are fortunate still to have a small but very hard-working and dedicated committee to keep the organisation going and I am so grateful to them for all they do. It has been a particularly challenging few months but, where they could, they have all stepped up to share the load so a huge thank you to them and to all of our members for your ongoing support. In particular I would like to thank Tom Orchard for managing our finances and preparing our annual accounts with his usual diligence, Wilf Hodges for running our membership affairs so efficiently and for sorting out our archives and merchandise, Annabel Crowley for taking

on editorial tasks and, for the time being, co-ordinating events and Chris Chapman for being a good all-rounder and helping us with logistical support, including merchandise orders until more permanent arrangements can be made.

As for the future, the suspension of Society activities during the lock-down has at least given us the opportunity to take a good look at what we do, our structure and how we operate. A new editorial team consisting of Annabel Crowley, Chris Chapman and Wilf Hodges, assisted by professional designer Helen Duvall, will produce future editions of the Newsletter. We are recruiting new members, both to the Society and the executive committee and I hope we will continue to find new ways of working together and with other organisations towards our shared goals. We have yet to find anyone to replace Tom Greeves as chairman but I hope that we have succeeded in keeping his vision alive and kicking in the meantime! I am very proud of what we stand for and what we have achieved as an organisation and I hope that, as we emerge from the awful pandemic, we will continue to grow and prosper as an independent voice for those who find Dartmoor a source of livelihood or inspiration.

Calendars

Due to the current restrictions, we have opted for a different method of selling calendars this year. Instead of selling them ourselves, we are inviting members to go directly to the website of photographer Tracey Elliot-Reep, who has kindly agreed to pay a £2 commission to The Dartmoor Society for every copy of her 2021 calendar sold to buyers who quote the code DSOCIETY2020.



Copyright © Tracey Elliot-Reep 2020



Copyright © Tracey Elliot-Reep 2020



Front and back covers (pictured opposite) and a sample month of July 2021 (above). The calendars measure 233 mm x 333 mm (unfolding to 466mm x 333 mm) with a pre-cut hole for hanging. Each calendar is supplied with an envelope for posting and four postcards.

Please visit her website

www.traceyelliotreep.com/collections/calendars

to buy your new calendar using the code **DSOCIETY 2020**. You will pay Tracey's normal price for a calendar, and she will contribute £2 from every sale to The Dartmoor Society.

Thank you for contributing to our funds in this way.

Membership Matters



Email Addresses

The current pandemic has starkly emphasised the degree to which society relies on electronic communication. The Dartmoor Society is committed to keeping all its members fully informed, regardless of whether or not they use computers; however, we know that increasing numbers of members do routinely communicate via email and we would like to be able to reach you in that way where possible. Please, if you are in any doubt as to whether we have your email address, and are happy to communicate with us in this way, let us know by emailing **secretary@dartmoorsociety.com**.

New PO Box



Please note that the Dartmoor Society has a new address: The Dartmoor Society PO Box 105, Okehampton, Devon EX20 9BA

Merchandise

The cancellation of most of our 2020 programme has left us unable to offer members the range of merchandise we would normally bring along to events. While our books remain safely stowed in boxes, ready to emerge when the times allow, we do have our usual Christmas cards featuring two new views of Dartmoor. These can be bought from our website, www.dartmoorsociety.com, or by using the form on page 46.

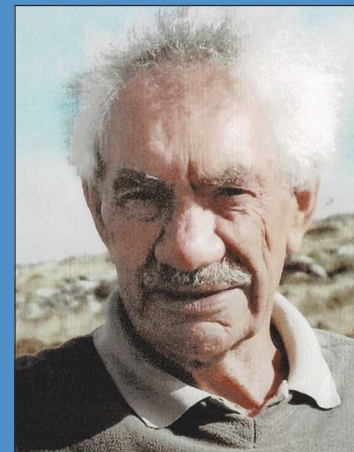
In addition, instead of selling calendars ourselves this year, we have made an arrangement with the photographer Tracey Elliot-Reep whereby the Dartmoor Society can benefit from the sale of calendars bought directly from her website. Please see page 42 for full details.

Events

We are committed to rearranging many of the interesting events we had planned for this year, as soon as it is practicable to do so. Farm walks, forest and garden visits, talks and research lectures are all in the pipeline and we very much look forward to seeing you at them during 2021.

Obituaries

Sadly, we also have to report the passing of two of our loved members: Douglas (Dill) Yardley,



a keen Dartmoor walker, who died in Wivenhoe, near Colchester, in February and Jenny Sanders, the authority



on Dartmoor longhouses, who died peacefully in a nursing home at Peter Tavy in May. **Our condolences go to their family and friends.**

Christmas Cards 2020

10 Christmas cards (5 of each photograph) in each pack
Price £5.00 per pack including postage and packing.



Merrivale stone rows, photograph by Steve Mason.



Lints Tor, photograph by Nigel Machin.

To place your order:

Please order online at:

<https://www.dartmoorsociety.com/merchandise>

Otherwise please complete form below to place your order by post:

The Dartmoor Society | Christmas Cards

Order by post:

1 pack of 10 Christmas cards (5

cards of each photograph)

£5.00 per pack

(inclusive of postage)

Qty	Total
<input type="text"/>	£

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....

Telephone

Email

Please make your cheque payable to **The Dartmoor Society** and send with your order form to:

The Dartmoor Society

PO Box 105

Okehampton

Devon

EX20 9BA

All profits raised are donated to **The Dartmoor Society** (registered charity No. 1111066)



All of these retailers and 4000 more will make a donation to the Dartmoor Society every time you buy online from their stores...



Please ask your friends, family and non Dartmoor Society members to register with easyfundraising and shop in support of their important work.



Fundraising

The Dartmoor Society is a charity that depends wholly on income from subscriptions, events, donations and merchandise to fund its activities. It has no premises or paid staff, so every pound it raises goes towards the work it does.

The Society is registered with the UK's biggest charity shopping fundraising site.



Easyfundraising generates free donations from your online shopping to your chosen charity.

We are inviting all members to consider using easyfundraising when shopping online as a way to claim valuable funds that are waiting to be donated from a wide range of food, clothing,

home and garden retailers, restaurants, entertainment and utilities companies. More than 4,000 businesses have elected to help their customers' chosen charities in this way.

At the moment, some 15 of our members are registered with the scheme and have raised over £450 for the Society through their online shopping. If more members were to register, they could generate more funds at no cost to themselves.

How?

After registering, just start each online shop at easyfundraising. When prompted, choose the Dartmoor Society as your charity, then shop as normal. The retailer will automatically donate between 1% and 5% of what is spent to charities chosen by their customers.

It's simple to register, easy to use and it's free.
Please register as a shopper at:

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/cause/dartmoorsociety

The Dartmoor Society

*An independent voice for those who find
Dartmoor a source of livelihood or inspiration*

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Membership Secretary: Wilf Hodges FBA	01837 840154 secretary@dartmoorsociety.com
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Editorial Committee

Annabel Crowley, Chris Chapman, Wilf Hodges

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info@dartmoorsociety.com**

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