



**EXMOOR**  
NATIONAL PARK

September 2017

# Historic Environment Review



# Welcome to our Review of work in the historic environment of Exmoor National Park in 2016.

In recent years there has been focus of work on historic buildings and this is reflected by the contents of this review as well as being the focus of our Annual Archaeology Forum held in Brushford in October 2016. The spotlight is also on Dunster (see pages 6 & 7) where much new information has come to light through research and volunteer activity as well as recording during development. As always we have reports on a number of projects demonstrating the huge dedication and support Exmoor's receives from groups and individuals.

## Northern Devon In The Tithe: A View of Agriculture in the Early Victorian Period

I was first introduced to the Tithe Survey some fifty years ago as a schoolboy visiting the Devon Record Office. In my retirement, I have returned to the Tithe Survey and embarked upon a study of a selection of parishes across the modern local government districts of North Devon and Torridge.

The Tithe Survey was carried out between 1836 and 1845 as part of the commutation of a tithe in kind (originally one tenth of the produce) to a payment in cash. In much of England as Parliamentary Enclosure of open fields occurred, the tithe had been changed to a cash payment and finally in 1836, Parliament agreed that for the rest of England and Wales, this too should be the norm. A Tithe Commission was set up and the method of survey and processes of reform were stipulated by Parliament. Parishes were to be mapped and the land-use surveyed and a valuer would make an estimation of the cash payment for each parcel of land. If a parish meeting agreed these figures, then the Tithe was Agreed and the Tithe Commissioners simply approved the survey. If the parish meeting, including all the landowners and occupiers could not

agree, then an Assistant Tithe Commissioner heard the conflicting pleas and made a binding Award. In northern Devon rather more Tithes were agreed than awarded.

The Tithe Survey comprises two elements: an Apportionment, with every parcel of land numbered and its owner, occupier, field name, land use and size recorded; and the actual Map (usually at a scale of 3 chains to the inch, or the equivalent of the modern 1: 1250 plan. I have transcribed the entries, holding by holding and converted the acres, roods and perches to decimal acres. I have now covered all of the Devon parishes within the Exmoor National Park, except North Molton, which is easily the largest of the parishes. Of course, the former Royal Forest, the modern Exmoor parish, had no Tithe Survey as there was no parish church to be supported by tithe. I hope to write a paper on the Devon Exmoor parishes to go with other papers on the Tithe that I have published in *The Devon Historian*.

**John Bradbeer, North Devon Archaeological Society**



## Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey

This survey of Exmoor's coastal heritage, funded by Historic England, increased the number of recorded features along the coast by 350. It includes an overview of coastal change from the Palaeolithic period onwards and an assessment of the degree and nature of threat posed to the sites.

High cliffs provide a robust defence against coastal flooding, although sites on the narrow foreshore such as lime kilns, boat houses and fish weirs are vulnerable. The cliffs themselves



suffer localised minor collapses and sites under threat on the cliff slope and cliff tops have been identified. The low lying areas of Lynmouth and Porlock contain the greatest concentration of sites that are at risk of erosion or flooding.

The assessment covers a wide range of sites including prehistoric settlements and burials, submerged forest, Roman fortlets, medieval settlements, mining remains and standing buildings, as well as piers and harbours, fish weirs, lime kilns, coastal look outs and World War II pillboxes and defences. Wrecks along Exmoor's coast are poorly located and understood. 15 Scheduled Monuments and 190 Listed Buildings are included in the 1426 historic assets recorded, as well as six Conservation Areas and eight Principal Archaeological Landscapes. All monument records created or enhanced by the project are on Exmoor's Historic Environment Record and are available via our website: [www.exmoorher.co.uk](http://www.exmoorher.co.uk).

Further work and research priorities for the Exmoor coast have been identified with reference to the Historic Environment Research Framework for Exmoor as well as the South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF) and the Maritime Archaeological Research Agenda for England. These will help to inform future research, as well as a Phase 2 fieldwork project for the Exmoor coast.

The Exmoor RCZAS report was produced by Fiona Pink from AC Archaeology who worked full time on the project at Exmoor National Park. It was submitted to Historic England in 2016 and is planned for final publication in 2017.

As part of our coastal activities a weekend CITIZAN event was held on Porlock beach in September 2016 with a small band of local volunteers trained to record and monitor the sites of the area, particularly features exposed at the submerged forest in front of the shingle ridge. CITIZAN, (the Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network) is a project set up to train volunteers and local groups to record and monitor coastal sites [www.citizan.org.uk](http://www.citizan.org.uk)

## Recording Porlock houses 2016: The Old Rose and Crown.

The Old Rose & Crown opposite the Church was probably an inn from early times and still has built in benches, a first floor function room and a washroom complete with copper. It was closed as a public house in 1887, reportedly because of rowdyism!

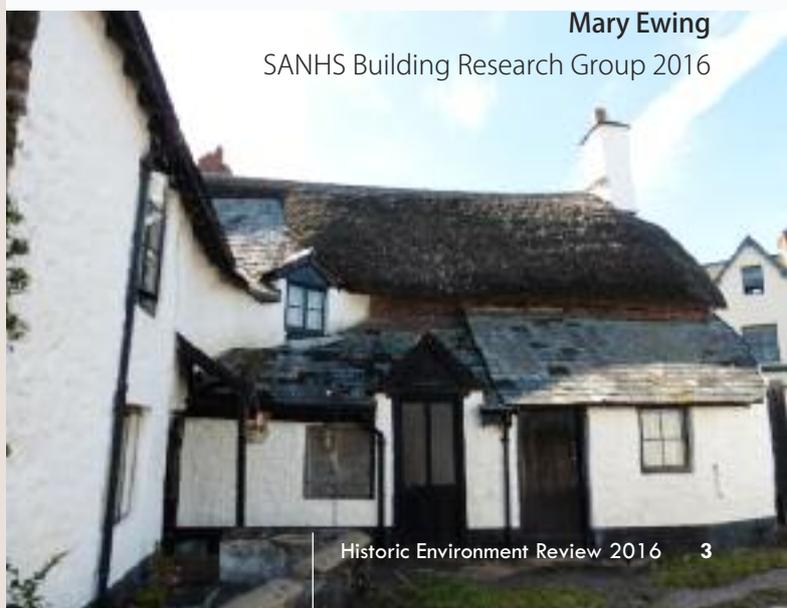
At the far end of the block is a small shop which was known as "Cape's Stores" (now part of Sanctuary Cottage) but which has been re-aligned since the time of the tithe map (1841). This was run from 1887 by Mr & Mrs Cape and later on by Maria Cape alone. In some old trade directories, they are shown to have been "grocer and corn dealer" and there are still bins for grain in a store at the rear.

Sanctuary Cottage was recorded in 1982 (see "Capes Stores" vernacular building record in Somerset Record Office). Ovolo moulded beams and a spice cupboard with carved initials IH and AH dated 1624 suggest it is a 17th century building. This middle part of the block was a bank around 1900 or so.

The Old Rose & Crown itself is difficult to date because of many alterations that have been made over the centuries. There are suggestions that it was originally a medieval open hall. In an upstairs corridor a ceiling retains the line of an earlier roof. In the main room is a beam which rests on corbels in places and has the appearance of an early jetty beam which could have supported the wall of a solar, or private room, above an inner ground floor room. Other features - an old window and door frames appear to be of 16th or 17th century date.

Apart from buildings which are yet to be surveyed, it is hoped to extend the study to Porlock Weir and to outlying farms in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the history of the settlement. Help with any aspect of the history of Porlock and with our recording or research, would be very welcome. Thanks are expressed to the many who have helped with surveys and to owners who have allowed access into their property.

An exhibition was held at the Visitor Centre in September 2016 of the 11 buildings investigated so far, and also displayed at the ENPA Annual Archaeological Symposium in October together with a presentation update.



Mary Ewing

SANHS Building Research Group 2016

# Exmoor Mires Partnership



**Being out on site for mires restoration works is a good opportunity to get to know the landscape, to see remote sites and understand the subtle relationships of archaeology.**

At Warren Farm, the archaeology varies from hidden prehistoric standing stones and barrows in the molinia to 19th century agricultural improvements by the Knight family, such as the leats, canals and a railway, as well as drainage ditches themselves. We discovered a previously unrecorded standing stone, which may be part of a wider setting of stones which now lie recumbent.

Research work has continued at Codsand and Hoar Moor, an area rich in archaeology. After mapping as much as possible using aerial photographs and topographic models, we commissioned a walkover survey by Hazel Riley. A huge range of archaeological features were recorded, giving us new understanding of the development of the area over time. The post-medieval landscape at Codsand and Hoar Moor can now be understood as an agriculturally active area, with small farm buildings and related sheep-folds and



**The stone of the circular enclosure covered in summer vegetation at Codsand Moor**

May, and has written a series of poems for the project around the peatlands, people and archaeology. This has brought a different perspective to the work we do on the moor.

Being the archaeologist for the Mires Partnership gives a unique opportunity to understand the moorland landscape in a whole variety of ways. It offers the chance to think about the fascinating ways that humans have changed the landscape, and allows us to reflect upon how we will take this landscape on into the future.

**The drone preparing for flight at Codsand Moor**



shepherds huts going in and out of use. Specialists from the University of Exeter carried out a photogrammetric survey using a drone, to create a detailed 3D model of the ground surface. We now have the challenge of unpicking the chronologies of the features and their relationships with peat formation. Research is planned to continue here with geophysical survey and excavation.

Bog related events have been very popular. At Bogtastic 2016 we ran pottery making, tree ring and pollen analysis activities with Vanessa Straker from Historic England and geographers from the University of Exeter. We have also had a poet-in-residence. Dr Jos Smith from the University of East Anglia who visited restored mires at Acklands and Codsand in



**Standing stone on East Pinford, discovered during restoration at Warren Farm**

**Dr Rose Ferraby,**

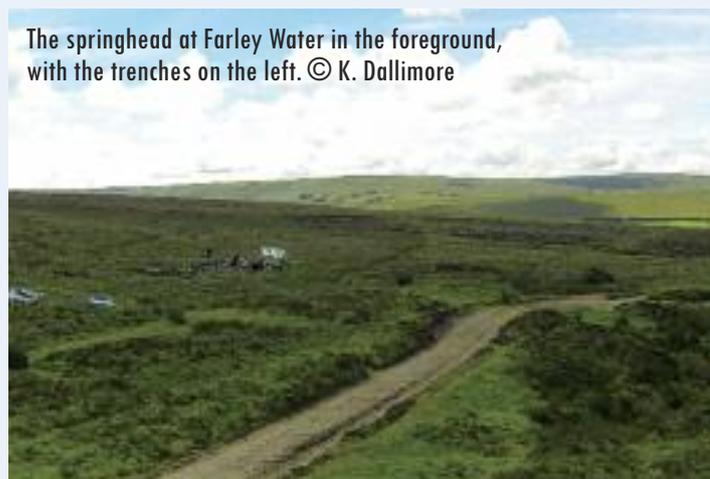
Exmoor Mires Partnership Historic Environment Officer  
*We were sorry to lose Rose in December 2016 when she took up an opportunity with University of Cambridge, but delighted to welcome Dr Martin Gillard to the post in March 2017. Martin has had a long association with Exmoor having completed his Doctoral thesis on the medieval landscape of Exmoor some 15 years ago.*

# The Farley Water Landscape Project

## The Exmoor Mesolithic Research Group

A scatter of Prehistoric flint had been picked up as surface finds by visitors and members of the Exmoor National Park Authority, from an area around the Farley Water springhead on Brendon Common. In 2009, fieldwork by a postgraduate student from Bristol University recovered blades, flakes, microliths and micro-cores from the Mesolithic period and this has highlighted the archaeological potential of the area around the springhead. As a result, a team of postgraduate and undergraduate students from Bristol University, under the direction of Dr. Paula Gardiner, undertook a week's fieldwork in July 2016, to explore the area.

Bronze Age activity had been found earlier at Farley Water by Lee Bray, formerly of Exmoor National Park Authority, who obtained two radiocarbon dates from charcoal in a section adjacent to the trackway running parallel with the springhead. The possibility of Bronze Age activity in the area was taken into account during the 2016 fieldwork.



The springhead at Farley Water in the foreground, with the trenches on the left. © K. Dallimore

### Fieldwork and Excavation 2016

A walkover survey was initially carried out to locate the presence of any surface flint and was marked and recorded using high resolution GPS. 11 pieces of flint were recovered from an area close to the trackway and springhead, which included 4 retouched tools.

Four trenches were laid out (1m x 1m) on anomalies from an earlier geophysical survey. Trenches 3 and 4 were sterile; Trench 1 produced one piece of burnt flint. Trench 2 was very promising as it produced flint immediately. This trench was extended



Top row: Microliths (1-3), microburin (4), retouched blade (5), rod (6).  
Bottom row: retouched blades.

2m north and 1m east ('L' shape 3m x 2m). It was from Trench 2 that 150 pieces of debitage and 46 retouched tools were recovered. All trenches were taken down to the natural. In one of the quadrants, ten pieces of a copper ore stone were found. No features such as postholes, hearths or pits were found in any of the trenches. All the trenches were taken down to the natural and all the spoil was sieved.

### The Flint Collection

The raw material is derived from pebble flint. There are 150 pieces of debitage (waste flakes) and 46 retouched tools. Included in the retouched tools are 4 cores, a thumbnail scraper, microliths (a rod and a triangle), a microburin and a denticulate. These are diagnostic of the late Mesolithic. There is burnt flint in the collection and



Excavating Trench 2

although no hearths as a substantial feature were found, there are small quantities of charcoal from Trench 2. The presence of the cores and a microburin suggest that pebble flint was brought into the area to be knapped on site. The presence of retouched blades and flakes suggests that a variety of activities may have taken place at Farley Water, as well as hunting.

The green copper ore stones are a puzzle. They are concentrated in one corner of Trench 2 and there are no similarities at Hawkcombe Head.

The 2016 fieldwork and excavation has established a strong late Mesolithic presence close to the Farley Water springhead. The evidence suggests that hunter-gatherers may have walked across the moorland from the more substantial site at Hawkcombe Head, for a day's hunting on Brendon Common. They brought their raw material with them to make arrowheads and other tools and may have made no more than an overnight stay. The springhead may have been chosen for its location, at the top of a natural coombe, which gives ample vision if deer are passing through the landscape. Short visits by small groups would have extended a group's hunting territory by moving out from Hawkcombe Head over the extended moorland of Brendon Common and hunters could be there-and-back again within a day's walk.

It is hoped that further fieldwork will establish the extent of Mesolithic activity in the area and The Exmoor Mesolithic Research Group will return in 2017.

Paula Gardiner, 2016

## Romans On Our Doorstep At Dunster Beach?

Walking along Dunster Beach just outside the National Park in 2015, Phil Webber noticed big shards of pottery sticking out of the low beach cliff. When Time Team - Dig Village returned to Dunster in October, Phil presented the pieces to one of the pot experts. To Phil's astonishment, and that of the village gathering, the expert said that they were Roman – surprising because no evidence of Roman occupation had been found before in Dunster. The expert then before their eyes put the shards together into a pot.

Over the winter, the beach was battered by successive storms, with several feet of the cliff being washed away, and more pot falling out. Phil collected all the pot shards, and the Dunster Museum Archaeology Group has had much fun trying to piece them together into 6 large pots.

Somerset County Council referred Phil to the CITiZAN project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which helps local people investigate archaeology on the coast at risk from coastal erosion. In spring 2016, CITiZAN and Historic England helped villagers conduct a geophysical survey in the field next to the beach. It was blowing a gale and made worse because nobody could wear anything metallic to avoid affecting the equipment. Everyone looked like Michelin men, with layers of clothing, and bin bags to keep themselves dry.

The signs of double ditches and square enclosures, characteristic of Romano-British settlements have been found. Since then a local metal detectorist has found some Roman coins in the vicinity and Time Team has revealed that one of the test pits in Dunster High Street has turned up a piece of Roman pottery.

**Jeni Fender**

Dunster Museum Archaeology Group  
[www.facebook.com/madeindunster](http://www.facebook.com/madeindunster)

## The Dig Village Project In Dunster

The "Dig Village" project is an initiative of Professor Tim Taylor, the creator of Time Team for a series of community archaeology projects. The project co-ordinates local volunteers, professional archaeologists and historians to explore unresolved questions about the archaeology of an area. Test pit excavations, historic building surveys, tree-ring dating, documentary research and landscape and townscape analysis, together with storytelling, lectures and other activities aim to involve as many sections of the community as possible; the whole process being recorded by professional film crews for broadcast on television or online. The pilot project in Dunster, spread over five seasons from 2012-2016 is still ongoing. Dunster, though celebrated as a picturesque town, has had surprisingly little detailed archaeological study. Significant aspects of its history, including the pattern of Saxon and early medieval settlement; the location of the harbour; the impact of the foundation of a Norman castle and priory and the effect upon the urban fabric of the Dissolution and the Civil War have never been

examined archaeologically, and many theories about the development of the settlement remain untested.

As well as extensive test pitting in different areas, attention concentrated on the medieval priory and its relationship with the town. Test pits established the line of the eastern boundary of the priory precincts and the presence of a



**13th-century roof of Priory House.**

cloister and claustral ranges to the north of the priory church. Priory House preserves significant pre-Reformation fabric, including an historic roof structure (above), and a large late medieval hall, with an exceptionally handsome roof (below). The latter building appears to have intruded on the site of the cloister, suggesting significant late-medieval replanning of the monastic buildings.

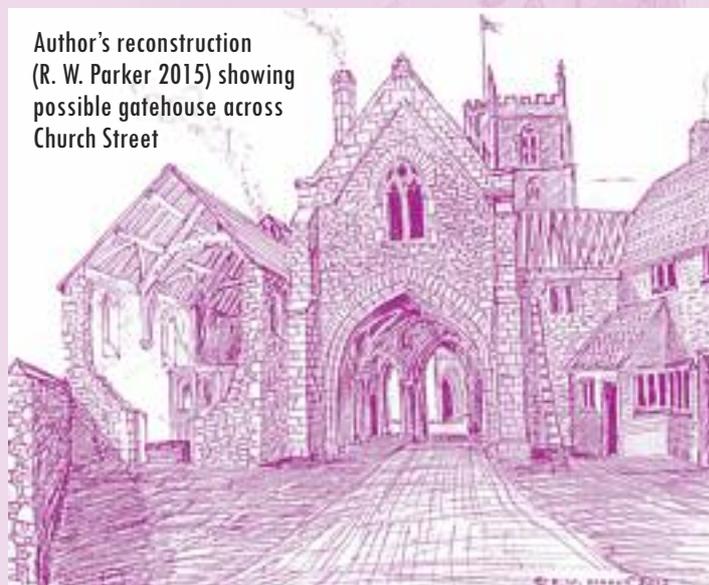


**The 15th-century roof of the Hall range of Priory House**

Several buildings were examined to the south of the church, including one exceptional building of early 14th-century date, with smoke blackened roof timbers supported by true crucks, interpreted as a potential

Almonry building associated with the southern gate of the priory precincts, which may have stood across the street at this point (see below). The narrow part of Church Street seems to be a lane within the priory, and the ranges of buildings to the south of the lane, which also preserve magnificent true-cruck roof structures, without smoke blackening, have been tentatively identified as service buildings such as stable, workshops and stores. It is possible that, despite the loss of its main claustral ranges, Dunster Priory may have one of the best- preserved monastic precincts in the country.

In the lower parts of West Street building investigations were undertaken on an ad-hoc basis by invitation of their owners. Though many of these buildings have modest



**Author's reconstruction (R. W. Parker 2015) showing possible gatehouse across Church Street**

18th- and 19th-century fronts, they contain earlier fabric, including at least three more true-cruck roof structures almost certainly of 14th-century or even 13th century date. One of these houses had galleried rear structures and gables facing the street. Another house, though largely of post-medieval date, contained highly unusual plank- and -muntin screens at first floor level, as well as impressive ranges of 16th and 17th-century windows and a splendid framed staircase.

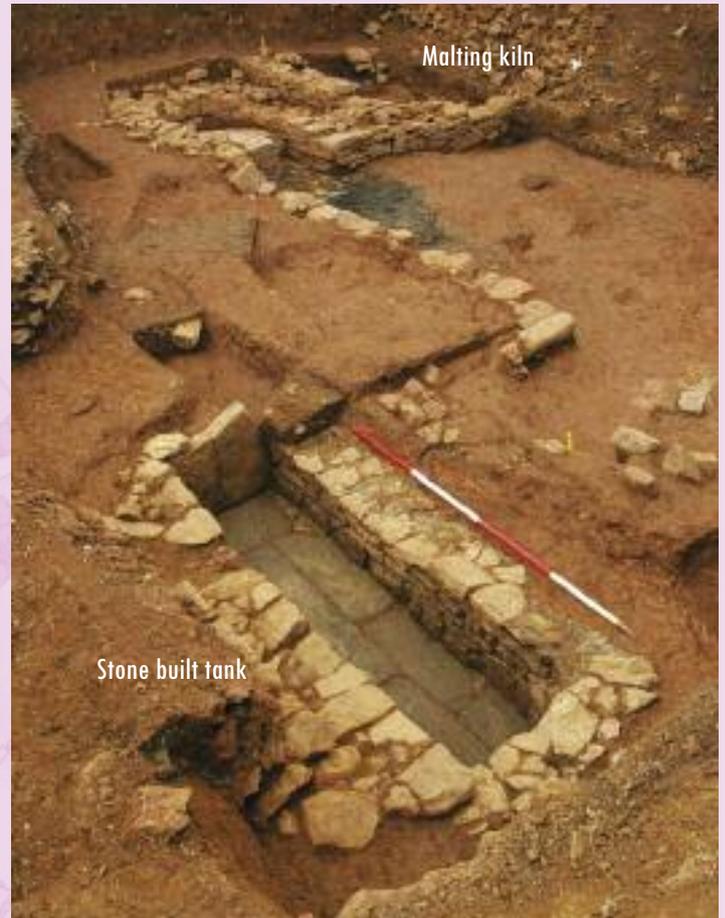
The opportunity to visit so many properties, through the consent of owners interested in the 'Dig Village' project, has revealed the survival of an extraordinary number of early urban buildings in Dunster, their significance far greater than their external appearance suggests. It is hoped that a return to Dunster will uncover yet more early buildings and continue to expand our knowledge of this fascinating, beautiful and friendly town.

**Richard Parker**

## The Luttrell Arms

Opportunities to excavate in the heart of Dunster are few and far between, but in March 2016 South West Archaeology was engaged by the owners of the Luttrell Arms Hotel to monitor works in the garden. This was as part of planning permission and Listed Building Consent for a new tunnel linking a parking bay at the top of Dunster Steep with its Victorian wine cellar. Deliveries to the front of the Hotel on Dunster High Street were causing problems for both pedestrians and drivers. The work uncovered the well-preserved remains of three substantial masonry structures: a circular malting kiln, a narrow watertight stone-built tank, and a large outbuilding.

The malting kiln is located to the rear of the garden, behind the oldest surviving part of the Luttrell Arms and may date to when the Luttrell Arms was known as The Ship Inn in the early 17th century. The kiln was well built, with an entrance of carefully-dressed blue lias. The watertight stone-built tank remains enigmatic and predates the malting kiln. It may have been built as a cistern, but could have been used to steep the malt before germination. The walls of the outbuilding survived up to 1m high and are probably medieval in date. A covered drain suggests it might once have housed animals, perhaps horses for the Inn. Two phases of cobbled lane approached the building from the west, and this cobbled way aligns with the carriage arch in the front elevation of the Hotel. All of these structures were buried under a thick deposit of dumped soil, up to 1.4m deep which may be dated to the late 1770s when The Ship was described as 'ruinous' and rebuilt and rebranded as the Luttrell Arms. Given that Henry Fownes Luttrell is noted for modifying the castle and the surrounding landscape, we suspect this is him sweeping away a ruinous eyesore: the decaying outbuildings would have been clearly visible from the castle, and would have detracted from his views to the new tower (completed 1770) on Conygar Hill.



The final surprise was the discovery that the malting kiln and the outbuilding were built into the top of 3m wide, 2m deep, steep-sided medieval ditch that was backfilled in the c.14th century. The fills have produced a good assemblage of medieval pottery, including imported Saintonge (North French) pottery, animal bone and limpet and mussel shell. Given its location, this seems to be a clear candidate for a hitherto-unsuspected town ditch, but one that was superseded curiously quickly.

Beyond the garden the remains of the 18th century cottage shown in a painting next to the pottery kiln survived, less than 0.5m below the current ground surface. Measures were put in place to avoid exposing this structure, but small areas of cobbling were recorded and four rubble sacks of pottery wasters that had been used as hardcore were collected. The kiln only worked for a short time in the 1760s, and while the interior was excavated in 1998 and 2000, only un- or partially-fired 'green' pottery was recovered. The collection will make a significant contribution to the study of this kiln, making it possible to undertake a range of scientific analyses that were not possible before.

The results of the work will be published in the Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society and it is hoped that some of the finds can go on display in the hotel. Lastly, SWARCH would like to thank Nigel, Anne and Tim Way, together with the staff and ground crew for their help, without which this logistically-challenging task could not have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

**Bryn Morris**

# Understanding Exmoor's barrows

The 400 Bronze Age barrows within the Exmoor National Park are probably the most visible and publicly recognised type of archaeological monument on Exmoor's moorland landscapes. Barrows have been prominent in people's perceptions of the moor over a long period: several were used as marks along the boundaries of the medieval Forest of Exmoor and many have traditional names, among them, for example, the Chapman Barrows, Larkbarrow and Robin and Joaney How. They still provide distinctive and familiar landmarks for people working on or moving about the moor. Many are Scheduled Monuments and therefore regarded as of national importance.

Despite their visual and cultural importance in the landscape, however, little is known of the particular character of Exmoor's barrows, of who created and used them and, other than in broad terms, of when: only two sites have been dated by modern methods. Neither do we know how they differ from – or are perhaps similar to – barrows elsewhere in the south west; the last overview of the dating and distinctive elements of Exmoor's barrows was published by Leslie Grinsell in his *Archaeology of Exmoor* more than 45 years ago. No systematic modern analyses have been carried out on finds recovered from Exmoor's barrows.

In the light of this situation south-west Bronze Age specialist Dr Andy M Jones and landscape historian and archaeologist Graeme Kirkham developed the Understanding Exmoor's Barrows project as a way of gaining new data on Early Bronze Age burial traditions in the wider Exmoor area. The first phase of the project, now complete, identified artefacts and materials from antiquarian and unpublished excavations on barrows which are now held by museums. A total of 23 institutions were contacted or their collections searched through online catalogues.



**A probable hone or sharpening stone excavated from Brockenburrow, Challacombe, by the Reverend J F Chanter, now in the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon (10cm scale). (Photograph: Graeme Kirkham.)**

The results from this initial search are very exciting, revealing material from a total of 12 barrow and burial sites across the region. Phase 2 of the project will focus on obtaining radiocarbon dates from these and carrying out specialist research on the associated finds, including pottery, flints and other artefacts.

Funding is currently being sought for this work, which it is hoped will take place in 2017. The results of the research will be published in appropriate journals and be made available for inclusion in the relevant Historic Environment Records.

The project ties closely to a number of priorities highlighted by the Exmoor National Park Authority historic environment research framework, in particular improving understanding of the chronological framework for particular types of monument and making use of otherwise neglected museum holdings.

**For more information on the Understanding Exmoor's Barrows project, contact Graeme Kirkham ([gkirkham@dodman99.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:gkirkham@dodman99.freeserve.co.uk)) or Dr Andy Jones ([andjones@cau.org.uk](mailto:andjones@cau.org.uk)).**

**The mutilated eastern barrow of the West Anstey barrows, Anstey Money Common, Exmoor. (Photograph: Graeme Kirkham.)**

# Longstone Landscape Project



This two year community project investigating the historic and prehistoric landscape surrounding the eponymous Longstone, between Parracombe and Challacombe, officially ended at the end of 2015 with the end of the Exmoor's Moorland Landscape Project. Project leader Faye Balmond's report is deposited in the Exmoor Historic Environment Record and can also be found on the North Devon Archaeology Society's (NDAS) web site ([www.ndas.org.uk/page19.html](http://www.ndas.org.uk/page19.html)).

A group of hardy (some would say fool-hardy) volunteers from Parracombe, Challacombe and NDAS have surveyed and geophysed their way around much of Challacombe Common and the deserted settlement and field system at Radworthy. With support and training from experts, we have searched for flints and found only a few. We have measured and drawn humps and bumps, heaved sophisticated (and probably expensive) machinery over earthworks, walked over the area many times and learnt a great deal about both the archaeology of the area and the processes involved in investigating this. Some more patient members have searched for and found historical documentary evidence. When the funding for the Longstone Landscape Project ended we decided to carry on under the auspices of the Parracombe Archaeology and History Society. During 2016

we carried out further survey work on the Radworthy farmstead; surveyed all but one of the Chapman barrows; added to our knowledge of the Reverend Chanter.

We intend to continue into 2017. There are surveys to complete and prepare for the archives; we hope to undertake further survey work on Radworthy, we would like to find out more about the antiquarian excavations carried out in the area by Rev. Chanter; we also want to look in more detail at the earthworks on the western side of Challacombe Common, including a rectangular enclosure that may have been a telling house used for counting animals on and off the common.

Volunteers agree that taking part in the Longstone landscape Project has been very rewarding. We have learned a lot, laughed a lot, exercised a lot and made plenty of like-minded friends. If you would like to find out how to join us in the coming year please contact David Cherrill at [decherrill@btinternet.com](mailto:decherrill@btinternet.com) or Jill Jones at [jill.mike1@btinternet.com](mailto:jill.mike1@btinternet.com). No previous archaeological experience is necessary – you just need warm, waterproofs and a packed lunch!



# Historic Signposts



The traditional cast-iron and wooden road signposts found within Exmoor National Park and the Greater Exmoor area add a distinctive character to the roads and lanes enjoyed by locals and visitors.

The signposts are not only important assets for local parishes, who are keen to see them repaired and renovated, but an important collection at a regional and national level. Road signs for travellers were erected from the 18th century onwards and were locally varied in style. However, in 1963 the Warboys committee recommended a modern standard for UK signs which led to the replacement of many traditional signposts in the majority of English counties. Somerset and some parts of Devon retained their existing signposts and as a result the historic signposts on Exmoor are widespread and are a distinct part of the heritage of Greater Exmoor.

There are substantial differences between the signposts in the two counties with those in Somerset being cast iron and those in Devon less common and more mixed but thought to be predominantly wooden. These historic signposts are an often overlooked aspect of landscape and built heritage and the cost of their maintenance has led to the majority being neglected over time.

Prompted by local community concern that these heritage assets are in a poor state of repair, as reported in our last Historic Environment Review, a survey of 126 posts in 23 parishes in West Somerset was undertaken by parish volunteers in the autumn of 2015 to record their nature and condition.

This data was used to inform an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in September 2016 and we were delighted to receive confirmation of a grant in December 2016,



supported by additional funding from Exmoor National Park and Somerset County Council.

The award led to the appointment of a part time officer, Charlotte Thomas, in February 2017. As well as supporting communities to refurbish and to undertake repair of damaged signposts, a key aim of the project is to work with the Exmoor Society to support volunteers in the study of local collections of historic documents, personal photographs and other historic sources to gain a new understanding of the history of the posts and how they changed over time. Additionally, the state of signposts outside the pilot area remains unknown and the project will work with local communities to complete the survey to determine the number of historic posts across Exmoor; their type; location; condition; age and history. The project will support local communities in becoming directly involved in the conservation and future maintenance of the signposts.

**For more information contact Charlotte Thomas, see back page for details.**



Before



After

## Dulverton Weir and Leat Conservation Group

2016 has been a year of continuous progress in the project to conserve Dulverton's medieval Urban Watermill Landscape (weir and mill leat). During the year the Trust, together with its partners (ENPA, West Somerset Council, Dulverton Town Council, British Canoeing, Society For Post-Medieval Archaeology, West Country Rivers Trust, Somerset County Council) have continued to carry out research into the archaeology of this valuable historic asset.

At the beginning of 2016 the original leat cobbled floor was identified behind Town Mills, indications are that a significant part of the floor of the mill leat may be cobbled and this was supported by more cobbled floor being found 150 yards away by Leat Bridge (adjacent to Dulverton Book shop) later in the year.

In April the Dulverton system featured in a conference on comparative water technologies at University College London's Institute of Archaeology. A paper on the Dulverton system was given alongside papers on ancient systems in China, Mesopotamia, Syria and Jordan.

Following on from the survey of the weir carried out by Hazel Riley for ENPA the Society for Post Medieval Archaeology carried out an archaeological study of Dulverton Mill Leat in September. The study was able to plot the height above sea level of the whole watermill landscape



from its inlet (at Weirhead) to its outlet (below Lower Mill), showing that the system was laid out to give a colossal total 'fall' of 6.4 metres over its length. With that in mind, it becomes easier to understand just what a large investment was made in waterpower at Dulverton and how it was possible to run 8 watermills off the system.

Having achieved Charitable Trust status in August 2016 we look forward to commencing the fundraising, planning, work with Regulatory Authorities and Public Consultation before conservation work can commence. Our website at [www.dulvertonweir.org.uk](http://www.dulvertonweir.org.uk) has the latest news as well as studies, research reports and photographs.

**The RT Hon The Lord Dulverton**  
Patron Dulverton Weir & Leat Conservation Trust

## Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age landscapes of Exmoor

**A collaborative doctoral award PhD jointly supervised by the University of Leicester and ENPA was completed by Douglas Mitcham in early 2017. The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and ENPA.**

This was the first detailed synthesis of Exmoor's Later Neolithic and Early to Middle Bronze Age Landscapes, investigating published works, records, archives, museum collections and GIS data, and complemented this with targeted fieldwork. The thesis focused on three areas where standing stones are present. Attention was also directed towards other features, including a long enclosure on Challacombe Common, a henge or disc barrow on Parracombe Common, and a probable Bronze Age field system at Lanacombe. The project undertook the first extensive analysis of Exmoor's Neolithic and Bronze Age flint collections, using the collection from Kentisbury Down as a case study.

A new understanding emerges of these monuments: dynamic entities which were changed and evolved, rather than static, finished constructions. Other practices were also taking place on Exmoor, such as the incorporation of different sized stones and the construction of small stone monuments, but Exmoor's stone settings reflect a regionally distinct tradition. Rather than large megalithic constructions being used to control or influence how people moved through

space, it is suggested the small stone monuments allowed a different dynamic of human interaction. The small stones allowed a setting to be created by a few people in a short space of time, and meant that the form and space of the stones could be frequently and easily manipulated. Miniaturisation may have been deployed to create specific affects, for example to question people's perception of scale, with people feeling empowered, like giants as they walked among the small stones. Further, the small stone arrangements may have distorted people's perception of the passage of time, an affect that has been demonstrated when humans experience small scale environments. Here the perception of the passage of time speeds up, leading to a feeling that a larger span of time has passed, than is actually the case. Miniliths were potent structures. The stone settings in particular appear to have been woven within people's lives in the landscape on Exmoor rather than set apart in liminal, or isolated ritual landscapes.

Thank you to those who have made a contribution to the success of this project, at the ENPA, the University of Leicester and at local museums and heritage services, the enthusiastic fieldwork volunteers, and the landowners and tenants for allowing fieldwork to take place.

**Doug Mitcham**

## Exmoor Archaeology Forum

Our 2016 Annual Exmoor Archaeology Forum held in Brushford Village Hall examined our rich built heritage through recent research, recording, conservation and development projects. Presentations included the results of new investigations into the historic settlements of Dunster and Porlock, with talks by Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, the Time Team Dig Village project at Dunster and on excavations in advance of development at the Luttrell Arms Hotel, Dunster, where the work has greatly increased our knowledge of the medieval town.

Publication work on a medieval hamlet excavated at Ley Hill has brought new light to our understanding of the lives of Exmoor's rural medieval inhabitants and the buildings were compared to a contemporary surviving cottage in Selworthy. Recent work on mills and water power was explored, and included a display by the Dulverton Weir and Leat Conservation Group. Some of the issues our buildings and built structures face were considered, from climate change and updating historic houses to maintaining our much loved historic signposts. A number of the subjects of the presentations are included in this review.

Our 17th Exmoor Archaeology Forum will be held on 14 October 2017 at Porlock Village Hall.

## A New Life For An Old School?

In 1970 Simonsbath School closed and after use as an outdoor education centre and subsequent years of neglect it was acquired by Exmoor National Park in 2013. Recently discovered documents show that the earliest buildings, White Rock Cottage, were a pair of single storey workers' houses built in February 1820 when John Knight bought the former Royal Forest of Exmoor. Beneath them is a subterranean building, possibly a cold store, built into the river bank. Together the cottages and the store formed a backdrop to John Knight's gardens laid out in nearby Ashcombe. In 1857, Simonsbath village had developed sufficiently for a schoolroom to be added to the cottages.

After surveys and research, community consultation and considerations of options and feasibility studies the Simonsbath Steering Group has developed proposals for re-use. The old schoolroom as a community space or parish room, would have modern facilities and the atmosphere of the old Victorian schoolroom. White Rock Cottage would become an unmanned museum to tell the story of the Royal Forest of Exmoor, John Knight's reclamation of Exmoor, Simonsbath village and school. The public toilets would be refurbished and the other end of the building would be used as a workshop or pop-up shop for Exmoor businesses to showcase their work. As well as this, the car park in Ashcombe would be improved and access to the old gardens in Ashcombe would be enabled.

We hope that applications for external funding will be made in early 2018. We welcome your views and are keen to learn more about the history of the buildings and of Simonsbath

**Rob Wilson-North.**

## Research Framework 2017-2022

Our latest research framework for the historic environment is now published and can be found on the archaeology page of our website.

The report reviews the achievements against the objectives of the previous research frameworks and sets our research priorities and objectives until 2022.



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Further information about the projects in this review can be obtained from the Historic Environment team or from [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

You can also download a PDF version of this publication from [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/Whats-Special/history/publications](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/Whats-Special/history/publications).



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Front cover: Excavations at the back of the Luttrell Arms.



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