



EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK

March 2010

Historic Environment Review

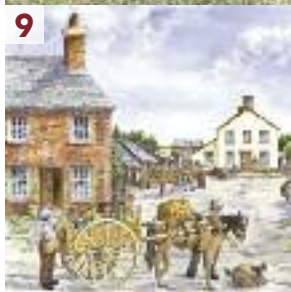


Enhancing
the qualities that make
Exmoor
special

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Right: Silcombe - interior of Threshing Barn
© Chris Chapman.
For more of Chris Chapman's photos see the articles on pages 3 and 4.



Not just a living but a way of life

During the recent England's Past for Everyone project on Exmoor, a survey of farmsteads was carried out by local volunteers. During that work volunteers met a number of farmers who have a detailed knowledge of the history and uses of the buildings. Several of these farmers kindly agreed to be interviewed for the project, but it was felt that, to do justice to them and their farmsteads, a selection of high quality photographs should be commissioned to capture the essence of these places.

In April 2009 we were pleased to be able to work with Chris Chapman - best known for his stunning photographs and films of Dartmoor and for his work during the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. Chris photographed a small selection of farms and farmers, and his images sensitively complement the spoken word.



Top: Silcombe, threshing barn
Above: Silcombe looking south
Below: Arthur Knight, Wydon Farm



Oral Histories of Exmoor Volunteers Please

In recent years there have been several projects aimed at recording people's memories of Exmoor: Birdie Johnston's Exmoor Reflections project in the 1990s, The Exmoor Flood Memories Project in 2005 and more recently an offshoot of the England's Past for Everyone project recorded the knowledge and memories of a handful of Exmoor farmers.

Many of the oral history recordings of Exmoor can be accessed through the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (ENPHER), The Somerset County Record Office and the Dulverton Heritage Centre.

Oral history interviews are a valuable way to record memories that would otherwise be lost to future generations. They are a unique way of collecting important information about the past, and can be extremely helpful when researching the history of Exmoor. This is why we would like to encourage those of you with an interest in recording oral history to get in touch with us. We have sound recording equipment and can provide access to training. If you feel that you could volunteer some time to undertake oral history projects, please contact the Historic Environment Record Officer (details are on the last page).



Left: John Tucker at Stetfold Rocks, Exford
Below: Silcombe Farm, Oare
both photos (© University of London, Chris Chapman. Taken as part of the England's Past for Everyone Project, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund)



The 9th Exmoor Archaeology Forum

Andy Woodcock reflects on the 9th Exmoor Archaeology Forum, on 22 October 2009.

The forum saw us exploring 19th century iron mining in the Brendon Hills through the work of the West Somerset Mineral Railway Project.

Held at Ralegh's Cross, close to the centre of this former area of industrial activity, we were treated to a morning of illustrated talks followed by an afternoon of field trips to see some of the sites on the ground. If the format of the day was different from previous years then so was the composition of the large and enthusiastic audience. Not only were regular attendees of the Forum well represented but also many of the volunteers who have been working on the Project.

Whilst Mike Jones told us of the history of iron mining and of the West Somerset Mineral Railway, David Dawson explained how the Project had developed and of the many agencies and organisations who have been involved. Mary Olszewska spoke of the ways in which the Project was being used to engage the community at all levels, Phil Gannon gave a volunteer's perspective and Robin Miller an insight into the conservation of various sites.

Lunch offered an opportunity to view progress on the new website (www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk), before field trips to visit sites on the Brendon Hills and in Watchet.

This was a day packed with interest which fuelled our enthusiasm for this former industrial landscape, surprised us at the extent to which nature had reclaimed the sites and left us with regret that so much had been destroyed by past generations; in all a day that recognised the success of what had been achieved so far but left us determined to ensure that the legacy of the Project continues into the future.



Lanacombe - investigating the Bronze Age landscape

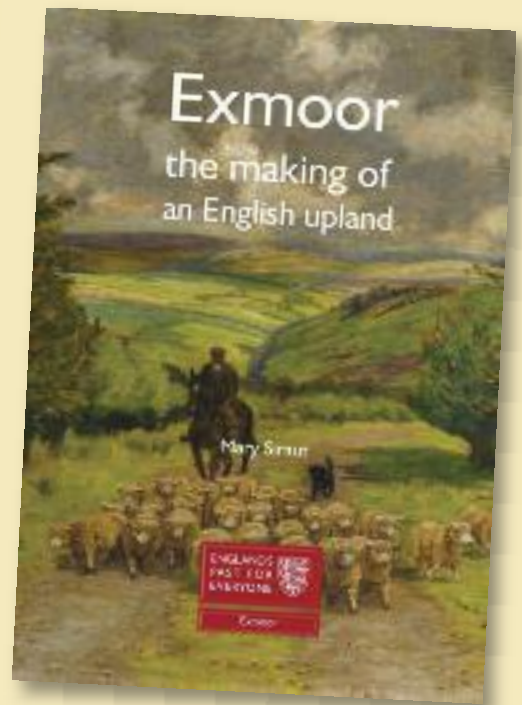
During the summer of 2009 work continued on the Exmoor Miniliths Project (reported on in last year's Review). The project team led by Dr Mark Gillings and Dr Jeremy Taylor from the University of Leicester with Dr Josh Pollard from the University of Bristol, concentrated on the long east-west spur of Lanacombe north of Simonsbath. Lanacombe has a series of groups of prehistoric standing stones, set at intervals along the spur. One of the questions posed is 'are the standing stones in isolation, or are they part of a more extensive prehistoric landscape?'

Excavations were opened at several locations to investigate a series of stony spreads which just poke through the turf and other areas suggested by geophysical survey in 2008. The excavations revealed several stone cairns (pictured above) probably dating from the middle Bronze Age around 3500 years ago, and some probable embryonic field systems. The picture which is now emerging, is one of a very busy landscape at this time - the standing stones forming a highly visible part of a much more extensive and complex Bronze Age landscape. It is hoped that work will continue in 2010.

Exmoor the Making of an English Upland

On 3 June 2009 the most significant book on Exmoor's history for many years was published. The book was launched at an event in Dulverton Town Hall which also celebrated the results of the England's Past for Everyone project which led to the book. Present were the author, Mary Siraut (County Editor of the Somerset Victoria County History), local volunteers and farmers who had helped with the project, and representatives from organisations and bodies which have supported the project including the Victoria County History, Somerset County Council, Exmoor National Park Authority and the Exmoor Society.

The book investigates the history of 12 parishes in southern Exmoor from prehistoric times until the middle of the 20th century. It tries to go beyond history and find out how Exmoor's communities have shaped and been shaped by their local landscape with all its vagaries, challenges and peculiarities. The book cover - from a wonderful watercolour by Anne le Bas - shows a typical view of the Exmoor landscape with a shepherd on horseback driving a flock of sheep. It conjures up the working title of one of the book chapters: 'mainly sheep'!



The Romans in Dunster?

During the summer of 2009 visitors to Dunster's National Park Centre were treated to a touring exhibition about the Roman south-west. The event, organised by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, showcased objects from the Exmoor region and explained how they related to the wider Roman world. The exhibition was kicked off by Roman soldiers from the Ermine Street Guard.



Hunter gathering

Excavations at the hunter gatherer site at Hawkcombe Head continued during 2009. The dig, led by Dr Paula Gardiner (University of Bristol), continues to reveal the traces of Exmoor's oldest inhabitants (some 8000 years ago) in the form of fragmentary hearths and the postholes of possible structures. This year a fragment of bone (as yet unidentified) was found which will hopefully be dated by radiocarbon analysis and may shed further light on the Exmoor hunter-gatherer way of life.



The Old Mineral Line Online

During the course of the West Somerset Mineral Railway Project, a new website has been created by Heike Bernhardt (WSMR Project Assistant). The website gives access to information about the history of the line and users will be able to find historic photographs, a selection of Mike Jones' plans and drawings of sites and buildings, teaching resources, downloadable leaflets and much more.

Visit: www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk

Environmental Stewardship

The Environmental Stewardship Scheme is now fully functional on Exmoor. Whilst the majority of landowners and farmers are still in the previous Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme, there has been a steady stream of applications to the new scheme. Exmoor is a target area for Higher Level Stewardship and large areas of Exmoor's moorland have been put into the new scheme.

Part of the HLS application is the production of a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) which includes a comprehensive report and management advice for all historic features on the holding. The remaining ESA agreements on Exmoor will all come to an end by 2013 so it is anticipated that the Historic Environment team will be busy producing reports and getting positive management for sites and features through HLS over the next three years.

A new element of Environmental Stewardship will be starting in July 2010, Upland Entry Level Scheme (UELS) replaces the Hill Farm Allowance and will be an important vehicle for providing environmental gain on Exmoor's upland farms.

Professional Work Placements

During 2009 three professional work placements were hosted or jointly hosted on Exmoor, with the universities of Bristol and Exeter. Naomi Hughes carried out a condition survey of prehistoric standing stones on land owned by Exmoor National Park Authority. Derwyn Gregory carried out

geophysical survey on recently identified hunter gatherer sites on Brendon Common with the kind co-operation of the Badgworthy Land Company. Becca Pullen worked with Hazel Riley (one of English Heritage's Archaeology Field Investigators) on a survey of the recently discovered prehistoric enclosure on land owned by the National Trust at Little Hangman near Combe Martin, and on an assessment of the extensive prehistoric landscape around the Chapman Barrows and at Furzehill.



The West Somerset Mineral Railway



The West Somerset Mineral Railway - known locally as The Old Mineral Line - runs from Gupworthy on the Brendon Hills to the west Somerset coast at Watchet. It connected the once thriving iron mines of the Brendon Hills and the communities that served them during the Victorian period, with the Severn Estuary at Watchet. Beyond Watchet quay, boats conveyed iron ore across the Severn to the great furnaces of Ebbw Vale in south Wales.

The local communities which came into existence to support the enterprise have long gone, leaving behind the remains of cottages, schools, chapels and shops, as well as those of the railway and the iron mines. Together these places evoke a strong sense of the scale and ambition of the Victorians.

During 2008 and 2009 a local consortium of organisations and individuals with specialist interests has been busy conserving and interpreting aspects of the Old Mineral Line and its landscape. Those efforts are nearly complete.

- Exmoor Mines Research Group
- Exmoor National Park Authority
- Exmoor Society
- Forestry Commission
- Somerset County Council
- Somerset Rural Youth Project
- Watchet Market House Museum
- Watchet Town Council
- West Somerset Council



- Three important industrial structures have been conserved
- An education and events programme has been run with local schools and 600 pupils between 3 and 18 have enjoyed site visits.
- There has been a lecture series, monthly guided tours and drop in events. 1140 members of the public have attended events.



- An online learning resource has been produced. It includes teachers' packs, images, reconstruction drawings, an interactive flyover map, voiceovers using characters from the past and video footage of the Project.



- Displays in Watchet Market House Museum have been improved and two working models have been made which help tell the story of the Old Mineral Line to visitors to the Somerset coast.
- A website about the West Somerset Mineral Railway has been developed, which includes teachers' resources, contemporary photographs and the results of the Brendon Hills Industrial Survey and much more.
- A leaflet series has been printed, with newly commissioned colour reconstruction drawings.
- On site interpretation is being produced.
- A highly detailed, authoritative monograph has been printed about the West Somerset Mineral Railway and the Brendon Hills iron mining.
- Access to Watchet West Pier has been improved, and the rails of the Old Mineral Line have been located, excavated and exposed.
- The popular trail which runs from Watchet to Washford along the trackbed has been improved.

By the end of the project we will also have:

- Completed other physical access improvements.
- Published a popular book on the West Somerset Mineral Railway (publication date late summer 2010).



For more information visit:

www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk



Brendon Hill Village
Illustration by Anne Leaver

Mapping Exmoor's archaeology from the air

In July 2009 the 2 year project to map Exmoor's archaeology from air photographs was completed. 12,000 photographs were examined; over 2200 previously unknown sites were recorded and 600 existing sites had extra information added, representing a 70% increase.

The project - part of English Heritage's National Mapping Programme - was funded by English Heritage and involved the full time employment of two archaeologists on Exmoor National Park Authority staff for two years. The results of the project have added greatly to our knowledge about Exmoor's past and will inform conservation and research into Exmoor's historic environment for years to come; they will be available to the general public through the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record.

A wide range of monuments dating from prehistory to the twentieth century have been recorded. Highlights include a spectacularly situated hilltop enclosure on the costal cliffs of Little Hangman near Combe Martin. This enclosure is probably prehistoric in date, and potentially dates to the Neolithic or Bronze Age.



Previously unrecorded evidence for the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement of the Exmoor area was also identified, including unusual examples of cropmark enclosures visible on the western and eastern fringes of the National Park, including hints of a possible Roman road near Stogumber.

Most monuments, however, were visible as earthworks or former earthworks, and the greatest impact of the survey was on the medieval and post-medieval periods, relating particularly to the reclamation and improvement of Exmoor. For instance, over 650 hillside irrigation systems were recorded. For the first time the evidence of the Knight family's ambitious 19th century improvement schemes on the former Royal Forest has been mapped in detail with massive drainage systems covering over 240 hectares.

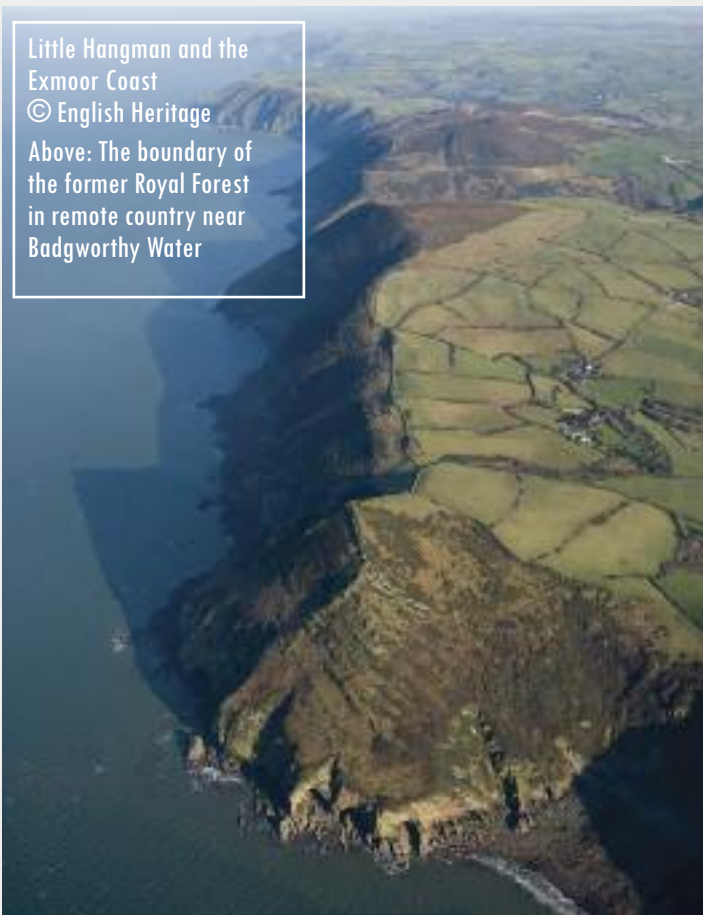
The survey also added to our understanding of WWII activity on Exmoor, including the remains of a wireless communication station at Lynton and the site of a temporary searchlight battery at Holcombe Water. The overall extent of the Exmoor Firing Ranges was also identified for the first time - covering over 22 square kilometres.

In December 2009 Exmoor National Park Authority obtained 100% funding from English Heritage for a project to publish the results of the National Mapping Programme. The book will focus on the archaeology of reclamation - in other words, the evidence for how people have attempted to farm Exmoor from medieval times to the end of the 19th century. As part of the project a series of thematic essays will also be produced to introduce the subject matter of the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record.

Little Hangman and the
Exmoor Coast

© English Heritage

Above: The boundary of
the former Royal Forest
in remote country near
Badgworthy Water



Scheduled Monuments at Risk survey

Scheduled Monuments are designated because they are nationally important and are the most valuable archaeological sites. On Exmoor scheduled sites include prehistoric burial mounds, standing stones and hillforts, Roman fortlets, medieval settlements and structures, industrial monuments and WWII pillboxes. Although protected by law, Scheduled Monuments are still at risk from a wide range of processes such as agricultural intensification, forestry, development and natural forces like coastal erosion. In order to ensure that Scheduled Monuments are in good condition and being managed sensitively ENPA conducts a field survey of the 200 sites every five years.

During the summer of 2009 Dr Lee Bray carried out the condition survey. The results of the survey will inform and focus conservation works during the next five years. They will be funded through various funding streams including a partnership scheme between ENPA and English Heritage called The Monument Management Scheme and through Environmental Stewardship.

The variety of monument types that are scheduled on Exmoor meant that Lee covered all aspects of the Exmoor landscape from remote moorland to urban

centres, “from the isolation and remoteness of Trout Hill to dodging traffic on the A39 was all part of a days work”. The results of the survey are interesting and the overriding message is how the climate and reduced stocking is impacting on our archaeology. Vegetation and scrub encroachment have always been the biggest threat to the condition of monuments on Exmoor. Since the last survey in 2004 there has been a distinct and significant increase in sites under threat from gorse, bracken and scrub. A total of 87 monuments are affected to some degree by vegetation and of those 33 are regarded as significant, severe or extreme. While only 15 monuments are regarded as suffering from environmental damage such as erosion and weathering, it is worth highlighting that 4 of those sites are rated as having significant or severe damage.

Overall the results are positive with 151 sites, over three quarter of Exmoor’s Scheduled Monuments, being in very good, good or moderate condition. 44 sites have been rated as poor or bad and no sites were rated as very bad. Of the 44 sites in bad or poor condition work is already progressing on 23 sites.

The most significant element of the report is trend prediction; whilst this cannot be completely accurate it does highlight sites which may deteriorate during the next five years. Once again vegetation change is the most significant predicted damage.



Porlock Bay Monitoring

Archaeological monitoring of the coastal erosion at Porlock Bay continues. Fortunately 2009 saw little change and the shingle ridge has been relatively stable over the last year. One point of interest is there appears to be more red sand in the system than in previous years to the extent that the submerged forest is now rarely visible. The sand is beginning to encroach on the paleo-channel further up the surface. These channels contain a wealth of environmental evidence about the prehistoric salt marsh; hazel nuts and organic material are visible in bands. As a result of the encroaching sand and the increased exposure of

the organic bands small sections have been excavated and the samples sent for analysis.



Valley Mires



The three year Exmoor Valley Mires Project being carried out by Heather Adams (University of Plymouth) is now in its final year. The aim of the PhD project is to quantify the extent and condition of small mire sites on Exmoor. These mires have enormous palaeo-environmental potential and as a result the ability to increase our knowledge of the landscape. The field work phase of surveying, collecting data and monitoring is now over. During the course of this year Heather will be looking at water table monitoring data to determine the effect of drainage and cut features on the hydrology of sites, pollen identification and condition assessment of peat samples as well as identifying testate amoebae in core samples and humification analysis of peat from cores.

Seven local volunteers have helped Heather over the last two years and she is extremely grateful for all their assistance and commitment, often in rather trying conditions.

The pollen analysis is integral to the Exmoor Valley Mires Project in providing vital site specific data but the results will also add to the wider understanding of the dates of key archaeological sites that are within or near the study areas. Both the University of Leicester and Bristol University excavations yielded secure archaeological deposits that are datable and both have been sent for radiocarbon dating. All of which will increase the chronological knowledge of the archaeological landscape across vast tracts of Exmoor.



Above: The landscape of valley mires

Right: Monitoring work in progress

Below: Swap Hill near Larkbarrow
with mire in the foreground



Local List

There are over 6000 sites of historic interest on Exmoor; only a small proportion are protected by designation with 200 Scheduled Monuments and 1000 Listed Buildings. The Historic Environment Team is setting up a 'Local List' which will highlight those sites of national importance or local distinctiveness that are not protected. Inclusion on the list would ensure that sites of significance to Exmoor and the local community are recognised. The inclusion criteria for the list has been carefully crafted to ensure that only sites that meet rigorous scrutiny are included.

Giving advice on aspects of the historic environment

One of the roles of Exmoor National Park Authority's Historic Environment Team is to provide curatorial advice - for archaeology and historic buildings - to the planning process. This activity takes place all the time, but in November 2009 involved the provision of advice during groundworks in Dulverton churchyard. The church was built in the 13th century and was remodelled in 1852-5, but it is likely that the site, dominating the medieval market town, dates from before the Norman Conquest. Any ground disturbance would have been likely to have an archaeological impact. In reality, the works - to provide better access to the church - had relatively little impact. However, the remains of several

unmarked graves were encountered no more than 15 cms below the present ground surface. The human remains were carefully removed and then re-interred close by within the graveyard.



Other applications range from new builds for local needs housing, extensions, conservatories and development for local businesses. Applications relating to renewable energy have increased significantly, solar panels, ground source heat recovery and wind turbines all have implications for the historic environment. The distinctive and wonderful historic landscape of Exmoor is often affected by development and leisure trends such as new agricultural buildings and construction of ménages. The Historic Environment team deal with all planning applications in relation to Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, historic buildings and sites with archaeological potential. We deal with an average of 400 applications a year. We strive to achieve a balance between the needs of the applicant and safeguarding the qualities that make Exmoor so special.

Exmoor National Park Local Plan contains an Annex entitled 'The conduct of Historic Building Recording and Archaeology within Exmoor National Park', this document provides guidance to developers and planning applicants on the process relating to planning and the historic environment.



In the steps of Exmoor's oldest iron masters

The remains of the early iron industry on Exmoor were investigated by the University of Exeter between 2001 and 2005 with funding from English Heritage.

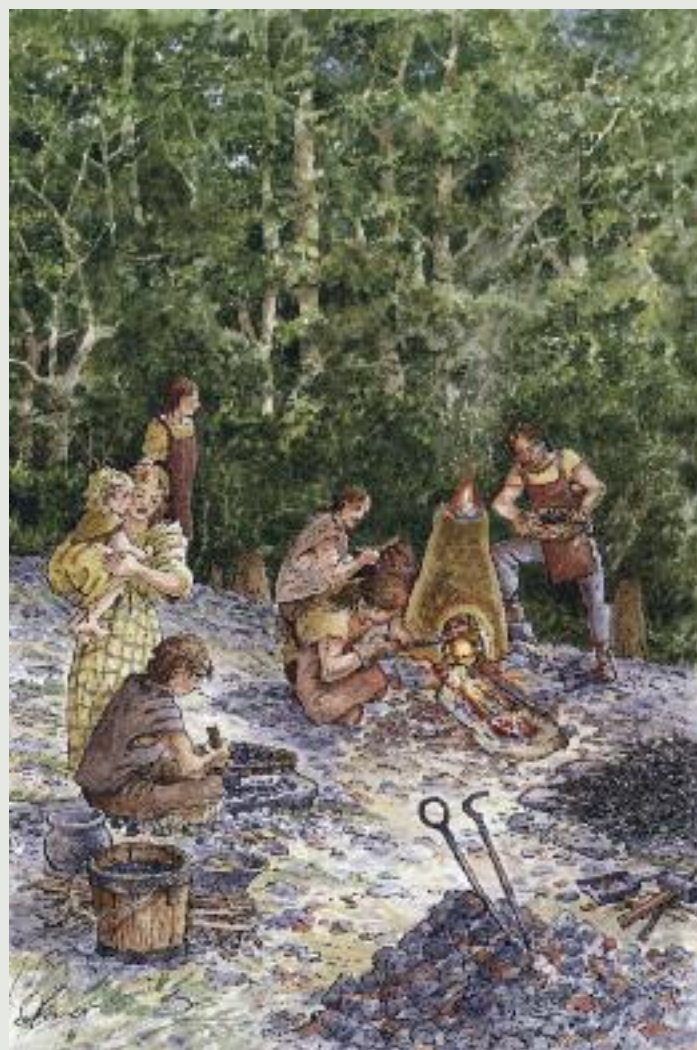
The project investigated a number of sites, including Sherracombe Ford and Roman Lode and sites in the Barle valley, with fieldwork, geophysical survey, excavation and analysis of pollen, charcoal and ceramics, and a sequence of radiocarbon dates. Sherracombe Ford is one of the most well preserved iron smelting sites on Exmoor, surviving as waste heaps (containing quantities of slag) and building platforms (which were the main furnace working areas). Roman Lode is an extensive and complex site of openworks and bell-shaped quarry pits, indicating that there was a long period of exploitation of iron deposits here. Much of the Exmoor Iron Project research has been added to the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (ENPHER), and further academic publication will be produced by the University of Exeter in due course.

In the meantime 'A Field Guide to Exmoor's Early Iron Industry' has been written and will be published in May 2010. It will describe the evidence for early mining and iron smelting and will list places where you can see visible remains and follow the iron industry from its Roman beginnings to the medieval period.

The booklet has been written by Dr Lee Bray who worked on the Exmoor Iron Project and subsequently has worked as an archaeologist for Exmoor National Park Authority; it also contains a series of colour reconstruction drawings by Anne Leaver as well as site maps and air photographs. The booklet will be available from National Park Centres and other local outlets.

Right: A Reconstruction showing Roman iron smelting at Blacklake Wood near Dulverton (© Anne Leaver)

Below: Excavation of the Sherracombe Ford iron smelting site (photo Rob Wilson-North, ENPA)



What do you want to know about Exmoor's Past?

The Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (ENPHER) is now online! Access to the ENPHER has been improved. Everyone is still welcome to contact the Historic Environment Record Officer by email, telephone or in person (by appointment) for enquiries about archaeological sites, historic buildings and other aspects of Exmoor's past, but there is now also the option of searching the records online at Heritage Gateway; www.heritagegateway.org.uk.



Heritage Gateway gives you online access to historic environment resources allowing you to search local and national heritage records. You are therefore able to search the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record alongside other local Historic Environment Records and Listed Buildings Online, Images of England and PastScape.

Records held within the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record have doubled since 2008.

A substantial part of the additional information was compiled by the Devon and Somerset County Councils before being transferred to Exmoor National Park Authority. The Authority acknowledges the previous work carried out over many years by English Heritage, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, the Ordnance Survey and both County Councils in developing and maintaining the Historic Environment Records for the National Park. The recent transfer of data has enabled the information to be localised, so that all historic environment enquiries relating to Exmoor National Park can be dealt with by Exmoor National Park Authority.

The information held in the ENPHER has been increased and improved over the previous five months by the work of a temporary assistant who has been adding information on numerous historic and archaeological sites, including the late Mesolithic site of Hawkcombe Head, 10 years of archaeological monitoring at Porlock Bay, conservation on the West Somerset Mineral Railway and research into Exmoor's early iron industry.

A programme of content improvement is planned, which will work through the report collection held with the ENPHER, ensuring that the database is as complete and up-to-date as possible.

For Historic Environment Record enquiries please email her@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.



Above: Ashwick Theatre from north west
Below: The Sheepfold on Lanacombe.
Commonly known locally as 'Buscombe Beeches'



Dates for the diary

All these events are listed in the **Diary Pages** of the **Exmoor Visitor**. Check the **Exmoor National Park Authority** website, local press and visitor centres nearer the time for full details.

Saturday 17th July to Sunday 1st August
Festival of British Archaeology

Monday 26th July to Sunday 1st August
National Parks Week

Saturday 17th July
**10th Exmoor Archaeology Forum -
Iron Age and Roman Exmoor**

The 10th Exmoor Archaeology Forum will focus on Iron Age and Roman Exmoor. The day will consist of a series of illustrated lectures by experts and will look at the regional context of Exmoor at this time as well as examining the evidence for Iron Age settlement on and around Exmoor.

Please check the Exmoor National Park Authority website, local press and visitor centres nearer the time for full agenda, booking details and admission charges. (Please note that admission to the Forum is by pre-booking only.)

Tuesday 20th July
On the edge of Dumnonia - Iron Age Dunster
Discover the remarkable Iron Age fortifications around Dunster with a National Park Archaeologist.

Friday 23rd July
**Fire Breathing Dragons and Pans of Gold -
from Pinkery to Chapman Barrows**
This walk uncovers 5000 years of history in one of Exmoor's most evocative landscapes.

Saturday 24th July
Make a Roman Mosaic
Come along to learn about Roman mosaics and to make your own Roman style mosaic. This basic mosaic making course will involve designing and making a small mosaic which you may keep. Materials are provided and the course is suitable for all (parental supervision of under 10s is required). This event is being run as part of the 2010 Festival of British Archaeology. Limited spaces, Booking required, £2 charge per person (to cover materials). Please contact Jessica Turner on 01398 322289 to book a place.

Friday 30th and Saturday 31st July
Timberscombe Hillfort Excavation - Open Days
Exmoor National Park Archaeologists and local volunteers will be investigating the Iron Age Hillfort near Timberscombe. Come along to the site to find out more about the reality of life in Exmoor's Iron Age some 2500 years ago.

Contact us

The **Historic Environment** team is based in **Exmoor National Park Authority's Conservation & Land Management Section** at **Dulverton**:

Exmoor National Park Authority,
Exmoor House,
Dulverton
TA22 9HL,
01398 323665.

Historic Environment Manager

Rob Wilson-North

Direct line: 01398 322280

rwilson-north@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Historic Buildings Officer

Mark Clitherow

Direct line: 01398 322278

maclitherow@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Conservation Adviser (Archaeology)

Jessica Turner

Direct line: 01398 322289

jturner@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Historic Environment Record Officer

Faye Glover

Direct Line: 01398 322273

fkgllover@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Externally funded project post:

Aerial Survey Officer

Exmoor National Mapping Programme

Cain Hegarty

Further information about the projects in this review can be obtained from the Historic Environment team or from:

www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk