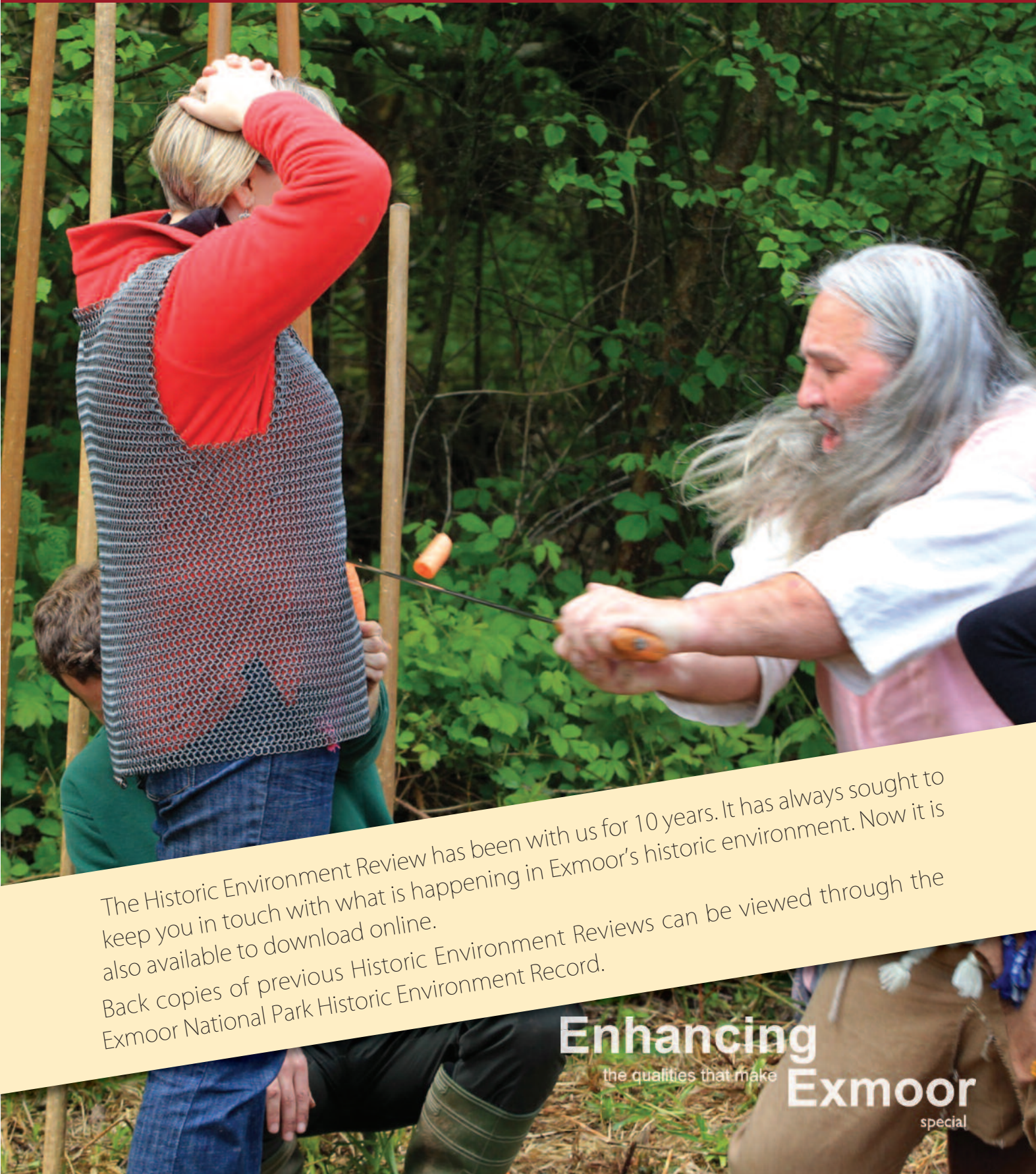




EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK

May 2011

Historic Environment Review



The Historic Environment Review has been with us for 10 years. It has always sought to keep you in touch with what is happening in Exmoor's historic environment. Now it is also available to download online. Back copies of previous Historic Environment Reviews can be viewed through the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record.

Enhancing
the qualities that make
Exmoor
special

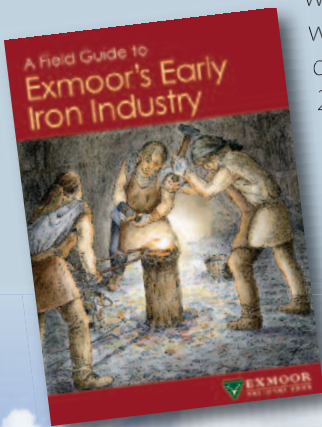
Round Up of 2010

English Heritage has agreed to publish a book on how farming has shaped the landscape of Exmoor. The study, which forms part of the **National Mapping Programme survey of Exmoor** (and is funded by English Heritage), has used air photographs and new research to understand how people have shaped Exmoor through farming practice since the time of Henry II. We hope to see the book published during 2012.

Heritage Lottery Fund support for the **West Somerset Mineral Railway Heritage Project**, which has been fundamental to its success, came to an end in the summer of 2010. Since then work has been underway to set up a body to carry forward the valuable work of helping people to find out about the WSMR and sustain the work of safeguarding it for the future. This work culminated in a public meeting in Watchet in November. We hope a new body will be created during 2011.

Excavations were carried out on the Iron Age hillslope enclosure at **Timberscombe** in May and July 2010. The site has been owned by Exmoor National Park since the late 1990s but a better understanding of the below ground archaeology was needed in order to ensure the best management of the site.

During 2010 a **Field Guide to Exmoor's Early Iron Industry** was published. Written by Dr Lee Bray and drawing on the work of the Exmoor Iron project which excavated iron smelting sites on Exmoor between 2001 and 2005, the booklet tells the story of iron mining and smelting up until the Industrial Revolution. Site descriptions and maps take you on to the ground to see the archaeology of this industry for yourself. The Field Guide is available from National Park Centres priced £5.



Conserving and understanding Exmoor's past relies heavily on having good, up to date information, and so we are continuing to develop the **Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record**. During 2010 we obtained funding from Natural England to update selected archaeological records to help agri-environment scheme applicants. We are also developing the HER's own website to enable better access for those who are online. For those who are not, you are always welcome to make an appointment to come and view information about Exmoor's past, by appointment, at Exmoor House.

Several **university-led fieldwork projects** continued during 2010 despite the current national difficulties in obtaining funding for this work. Staff and students from the University of Leicester carried out survey and excavations on the late Neolithic and Bronze Age field systems, stone settings and cairns on Lanacombe, whilst staff and students from the University of Bristol helped by volunteers, continued the targeted, delicate excavations on the hunter gatherer occupation site at Hawkcombe Head.

Valley mires contain a remarkably detailed and valuable record of how the environment has changed over thousands of years. They are a document of how people, the climate and natural events have shaped the environment of Exmoor. Work on the **sustainable management of upland valley mires** which is being carried out by the University of Plymouth to assess their condition has now been completed and the results will be available by Easter 2011.

Monitoring work on the archaeology of **Porlock Beach and Marsh** continued in 2010. The monitoring has been underway since 1998 and has charted the changing environment around the breach in the shingle ridge and logged archaeological discoveries. Currently, the pace of the remodelling of the shingle ridge on Porlock Beach has slowed and no archaeological discoveries were made during 2010.

Excavations at Lanacombe
(photo: M. Gillings)



Events 2010

The Festival of British Archaeology 2010 was a busy and exciting time on Exmoor. It got started with the 10th Exmoor Archaeology Forum, which focused on Iron Age and Roman Exmoor. This was followed, later in the week, by two walks. The first, 'On the edge of Dumnonia - Iron Age Dunster', took in Bat's Castle, Gallox Hill and Grabbist Hill, giving the attendees information on these impressive Iron Age sites, whilst at the same time enjoying beautiful views down into the medieval town of Dunster. The second, 'Fire Breathing Dragons and Pans of Gold - from Pinkery to Chapman Barrows', not only explored the reclamation of the Royal Forest and the prehistoric monuments on the Chains, but also introduced an air of mysticism to the walk, with details on local legends and myths.

Mid-way through the festivities, a workshop was run at Dunster, where children had the chance to learn about Roman mosaics and could even make their own mosaic. Lots of fun was had by all.



The last week of the Festival coincided with National Parks Week, whose theme was cultural heritage, so what better way to celebrate the archaeology of Exmoor than with a finale of Open Days at the Timberscombe Hillfort excavation?

The excavations had already been running with volunteers for a week in May and another week in July. Sections had been dug through the ditch and rampart in order to reveal the true scale of the structures, and to see if any dating evidence could be discovered. The excavations were open to the public over two days, giving people the opportunity to learn about the site and finds. Iron Age re-enactors and a blacksmith were on site, along with demonstrations in geophysical survey



and woodturning. Visitors were given tours of the hillfort, and children were able to take part in their own Iron Age battle.

Schools

In May, during a week of excavation at the Iron Age Timberscombe hillfort, over 100 young people from 5 local schools got their hands really dirty by digging alongside archaeological experts and volunteers. The students were given a tour of the site, where they learnt about the hillfort and about Iron Age and Roman life on Exmoor. They all got the chance to excavate and learnt how to process finds; they were also treated to



master classes in Iron Age pottery making and weaponry skills. Later in the year, as part of the Sixth-Form



History Enrichment at West Buckland School, staff and 10 students went on an evening tour of the archaeology of Countisbury.

Then, in November, around 30 young people from Holy Cross School, Chipping Norton, who were on a residential field trip to Yenworthy, were given a day of rain soaked entertainment and education on the North Devon coast



of Exmoor. The day started with a visit to the top of the Iron Age promontory fort at Wind Hill, where the students learnt about Viking symbols, myths and legends, and also investigated how to read the landscape. They then walked on to the enigmatic earthworks at Horner's Neck, where they



speculated on the date and purpose of the site and were told about medieval runes. The day culminated in a trip to the Culbone Stone, a cross inscribed stone of 7th-9th century date, where students were able to consider their school's name and its echoes from the past, as well as the use of symbols and

their purpose both in past cultures and in the present day.

Despite the continuous rain, all involved thoroughly enjoyed the day, but the highlight had to be the re-enactment of a Viking battle whilst carrying the Raven Banner.



Fragile Past

Exmoor's historic landscape is rich, diverse and exceptional. It is also fragile and irreplaceable. Sites that have been part of Exmoor's landscapes for thousands of years can be lost in minutes. There are some significant current threats such as sea level rise and coastal re-alignment which will cause the loss of many historic features. Other more insidious threats face pristine archaeological sites on moorland. Of these, the greatest is bracken which silently and gradually destroys buried archaeological deposits. In fact, bracken and scrub encroachment is the single biggest threat to Exmoor's



The Sheepfold At Long Chains Combe © English Heritage

Scheduled Monuments. Sudden weather events may also cause severe damage to historic features. Some years ago a standing stone on Mattock's Down was destroyed by a lightning strike and this winter severe cold weather has been partially responsible for the closure of Simonsbath Bridge. The Listed structure has been deemed unsafe after the parapet on the upstream side was seen to have moved away from the pier bases.

Protecting our heritage in a way that ensures that the past is not needlessly destroyed, but that also allows the landscape to develop is a constant challenge. For the last 120 years policy has developed in a piecemeal way, and although it



Mounsey Castle

has worked reasonably well it is not perfect. Traditionally the legislation treated buildings separately from archaeological sites but in March 2010 PPS5 (Planning Policy Statement 5 and Practice Guide) replaced existing PPGs 15 and 16 and introduced a number of new concepts aimed at



Hut circle under bracken at Holdstone Down

encouraging better understanding and management of the historic environment, to capitalise on the social and economic benefits of good conservation and regeneration. It is early days, but we hope that PPS5 and the Practice

Guide will lead to an integrated approach to all types of 'heritage asset' such as buildings, archaeological remains, monuments, landscapes, parks & gardens. In real terms it means that applications will require heritage statements to illustrate the significance of the site and show the way in which the proposed development will ensure that the historic character remains intact. Additional legislation in relation to Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments still operate in conjunction with the new guidance.

The Local List

In order to make the most of the new guidance we are compiling a 'Local List' as a means of identifying those parts of the historic environment that are considered to be locally important or special and that are valued by local communities. We see the Local List becoming an important part of heritage protection. The criteria for inclusion on the Local List are being trialled by a small group of historic environment professionals and members of the public. Once the selection criteria are deemed robust the Local List will be a good way of identifying what part of your local environment matters to you.

Scheduled Monuments at Risk

The last survey of Scheduled Monuments at Risk was conducted in 2009/10 and the most significant issue was scrub encroachment due in part to changes in grazing patterns, land management regimes and climate change. Each year we undertake a programme of practical conservation work on a number of Scheduled Monuments



Sheep stall at Kittuck or Three Combes Foot © English Heritage

through the Monument Management Scheme which is joint funded by English Heritage. The practical work is carried out by or supervised by Exmoor National Park archaeologists. During 2010 we worked on fourteen sites, including scrub control on eleven Iron Age hillslope enclosures, conservation building work on the walls of Barlynch Priory and consolidation of two Late Neolithic stone settings. Bearland Ventilation Flue is being monitored under the Scheme by volunteers. It is hoped that fixed point photography at the site will establish whether there are earth movements below the flue. Conservation works are planned for 2011 at the deserted medieval settlement at Grexy Combe, sites on Doverhay Down and West Anstey Bronze Age Barrows.

Agri-environment schemes

Natural England is funding, under its Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, investigations of the historic boundary of Dunster Deerpark and a whole farm survey of the 19th century model farm at Emmett's Grange. Underpinning such important developments with archaeological survey and investigation is fundamental to ensuring that the historic environment is properly understood and appropriately managed.

Favourite Walks:

The Archaeology of the Lyn Gorge

Jessica Turner's favourite walk focuses on prehistoric settlement but also includes breathtaking scenery and inspiring landscapes.



Lyn Gorge © English Heritage

From roadside parking near Hillsford Bridge, head up to Myrtleberry Cleeve. The footpath leaves the road and leads through oak woodland to Myrtleberry South, a well preserved and beautiful Iron Age hillslope enclosure where you can trace the level stances for the roundhouses which once stood there. Stay on the path until it emerges out of the woodland with views to Lynmouth and beyond. Further along is a set of wooden steps that lead down to Myrtleberry North, a larger Iron Age hillslope enclosure with a detached outwork, located on the spur above Watersmeet.

From the site follow the path down through the woods to the road. Carry on down to Watersmeet House which was built in 1852 as a hunting and fishing lodge for the Glenthorne Estate. Take the path up behind the house through Horner's Neck Wood. This part of the walk is steep and not for the faint hearted, but the reward is spectacular views and the magnificent and unique archaeology at the top. Horner's Neck is a very narrow, precipitous-sided spur with the low banks of a group of buildings perched dizzily on the tip. Their date and purpose remain uncertain, but there is nothing else quite like them on Exmoor.

Head towards Countisbury and the Church of St John nestled into the hillside. From here join the coast path down to Lynmouth. The path passes the massive ramparts of Wind Hill which is not only the largest Iron Age promontory fort in England but is also the reputed location of the battle of Cynuit where, in 878, the Vikings were defeated by the Saxons. Return to Hillsford Bridge along the path beside the river to Watersmeet House, this path passes a leat forming part of one of Britain's earliest hydro-electric schemes and the traces of the Lynrock mineral water bottling plant; both structures were destroyed in the Lynmouth Flood Disaster of 1952.

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