



EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK

2008

Historic Environment Review

Enhancing
the qualities that make **Exmoor**
special

March 2009



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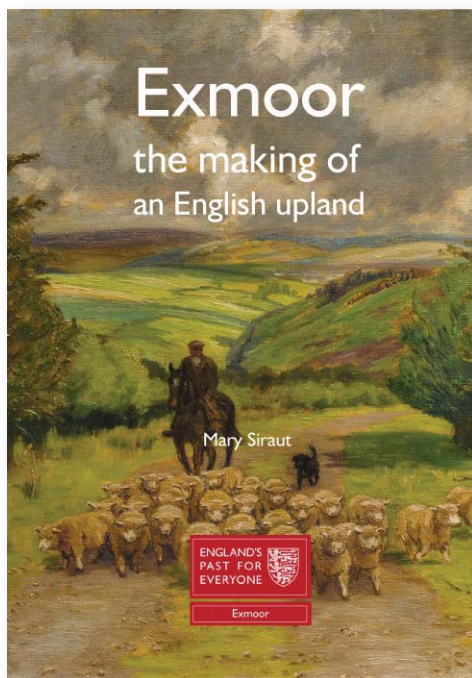
Front Cover Image
Martinhoe Roman fortlet, photographed in March 2008 (©English Heritage)

Exmoor Farmsteads

The England's Past for Everyone project (reported on in this Review) recorded around 30 groups of traditional farm buildings in southern Exmoor during 2007. To continue this work, a consultant has been engaged who will lead a small group of volunteers in recording more of Exmoor's farm buildings, many of which are redundant, or face collapse or the loss of character and internal fittings.

England's Past for Everyone

During 2008 work on the publication of the England's Past for Everyone project was completed and the text and illustrations sent to the publisher. It is envisaged that the book: **Exmoor - the making of an English Upland** - will be published during the summer of 2009 forming part of a national series comprising 11 volumes on aspects of English local history.



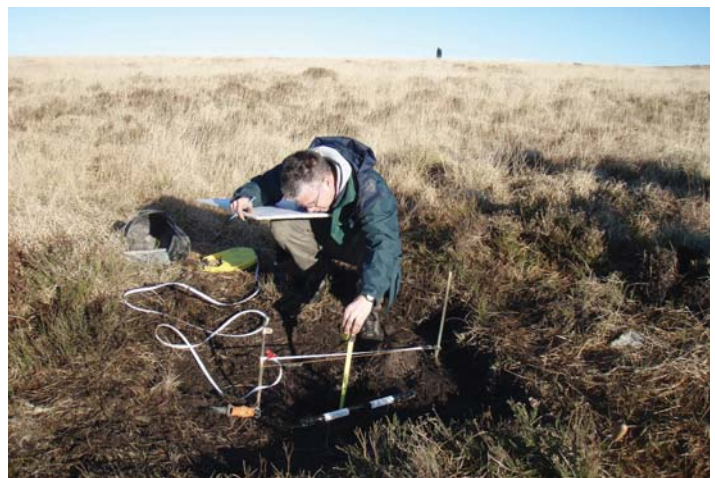
A fundamental part of the Exmoor EPE project was the recording of over 30 groups of historic farm buildings by a hard-working group of volunteers led by Anne Todd. During that process the volunteers met a number of farmers who had a deep and intimate knowledge of their farm buildings and it was decided to carry out a small oral history project to capture these precious memories. So far 5 interviews have been completed by Jane Golding from English Heritage, but we hope to keep this aspect of the project going over the next few years as more interviewees come forward. We would very much like to hear from you if you have, or know anyone who has, a knowledge of the workings of Exmoor farm buildings.

Protecting Scheduled Monuments

There are just over 200 scheduled monuments within the National Park and they represent some of the best examples of Exmoor's archaeology. The Monument Management Scheme is an annual programme of work, funded by English Heritage and Exmoor National Park Authority to conserve Exmoor's most threatened scheduled monuments. This year the sites involved have ranged from the Early Bronze Age stone row at Wilmersham, to the WWII pillbox at Roadwater. At the former, National Trust and Exmoor National Park Authority archaeologists and volunteers and a student from Exeter University consolidated a fallen stone. At the latter - a rare surviving example of a bunker disguised as a summer house, originally complete with a wooden roof and dummy sash windows - the scheme funded the replacement of lead from the roof. Other work involves the regular clearance of vegetation from some of Exmoor's earthwork monuments including Iron Age settlements and a medieval motte and bailey castle. More work is planned on a variety of sites in 2009.



Re-erecting a fallen standing stone on the Wilmersham Common stone row (photo Lee Bray)



Recording the fallen stone on the Wilmersham Common stone row (photo Naomi Hughes)

Regular aerial reconnaissance forms a valuable and efficient way of monitoring the condition of scheduled monuments. During 2008 sorties were flown by Damian Grady of English Heritage in February/March. The conditions proved to be exceptional and in addition to providing valuable information about the condition of sites, a number of previously unrecorded archaeological monuments were identified.



Martinhoe Roman fortlet photographed in March 2008
(©English Heritage)



Close to Woody Bay Station, this photograph reveals incredible detail of 2 Bronze Age roundhouses, a burial mound and associated fields, subsequently overlain by medieval or later field banks and ridge and furrow. (Photographed in March 2008 ©English Heritage)



Life on Bronze Age Exmoor: Final Conclusions from Holworthy Farm

Terry Green looks back on the North Devon Archaeological Society's excavations at Holworthy near Parracombe, the most extensive excavation programme so far on a prehistoric settlement site on Exmoor:

This is the third and final update on excavations on a hillslope enclosure at Holworthy Farm. The site represents the ploughed-out remains of an oval enclosure delineated by a stone bank, created probably around 1500 BC. Within, there is evidence of domestic occupation in the form of a circle of post-holes, probably representing a roundhouse, together with quantities of Bronze Age pottery dating from around 1200 BC. Two gullies filled with wood ash appear to indicate processes involving heat. Radiocarbon dates from these and other contexts indicate (probably not continuous) activity on this site from around 1700 BC to around 250 BC.



The earthworks of the oval enclosure at Holworthy (centre right) being grazed by sheep. In the distance the distinctive coastal profile of Holdstone Down and Trentishoe (photo Rob Wilson-North)

Our knowledge of Bronze Age Exmoor has hitherto been restricted to funerary monuments: so far we have only ever seen the Bronze Age dead. At Holworthy Farm specialist examination of the finds has enabled us to see something of the living.

In the middle of the second millennium BC settlement is focused within a non-defensive enclosure in an open, grassland environment which was already partly given over to settlement and agriculture. Within the ringwork over a period of up to 400 years, structures were built and altered, among them at least one substantial circular structure. Nearby oak woodland provided timber for building purposes; hazel may have been coppiced and the rods cut for hurdles; oak, hazel, alder, hawthorn, willow and ash provided wood for fires. Wheat and barley were grown. From among the fire ash, the charred seeds and preserved pollen

of weeds of cultivation suggest that cereals were grown nearby, something which at this altitude (340 metres) is not profitable in today's climate. Before the grain could be ground into flour with a stone saddle quern it had to be parched, a process involving fire and one which could go wrong, the overheated and charred grain being discarded. Hazel nuts were also gathered and roasted. Pottery was used, though perhaps not to any great extent. It was manufactured locally in a regional style, the clays perhaps brought from glacial deposits on the Exmoor coast. Traditional stone technology using local sources of flint and hard, gritty sandstone was still in use, perhaps becoming slowly superseded by metal, though we have no evidence for it, bronze implements probably being too precious to be discarded.

In the 12th century BC, some change, quite possibly climatic, caused the settlement to be abandoned. This took place in an organised fashion, posts being removed from their sockets and some of the stone-lined holes being stopped up with a stone, while others received a deposit of ash. The life of the settlement was memorialised through the deposition of articles of daily life, and the residues of fires were sealed beneath large stones. After the departure of the people, vegetation grew over the site and when it was reclaimed by later generations, the remnants of its earlier occupation remained buried. There is insufficient evidence to trace the story any farther. All we can say is that 800 to 1,000 years after the settlement had been abandoned, people were here again using a different generation of pottery, lighting fires and growing and processing cereals. They set up at least one timber post and, either to mark its erection or its removal, they placed a deposit of the ever important grain in the base of its hole. We do not know how they used the enclosure on the hillside: only that they were here. And it may be that memory of the place, its use and its significance, was held long enough in the area to be memorialised in a post-medieval field name, 'Holy Pound'.

This is as far as our understanding of the Holworthy Farm hillside enclosure goes at present. Questions remain and further excavation would be profitable not only on this site, but on others within Greater Exmoor. While the monuments of Exmoor's prehistory have been ably recorded, understanding of them is at a very early stage. North Devon Archaeological Society hopes to have made a significant contribution to the endeavour. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the project.



July 2004: Consulting on the best way to deal with a feature. Behind Derry's head, large stones can be seen capping off an ash-filled gully.

Two post-holes of the post ring side by side; oak charcoal from the hole on the left was dated to around 1200 BC, while charred grain from that on the right produced a radiocarbon date of around 250 BC.



Conservation Areas

There are 14 settlement Conservation Areas within Exmoor National Park. All have received a Conservation Area Appraisal which identifies the most significant elements and those which contribute to the area's historic character. These appraisals were completed about five years ago and will be reviewed in 2009. The review will not replace the existing appraisals but will enhance them and will take the opportunity to appraise the public realm: features such as paths, road surfacing and overhead wires. The review will lead onto a map-based exercise and wider consultation which will identify possible enhancement projects that will be carried out over the next few years.

Sustainable management of the historic environment within Exmoor's upland valley mires: A project update.

Without a time machine, past climatic and environmental changes cannot be observed directly. Instead, we can infer them from proxy records such as peat bogs and lake sediments. Peat has been accumulating on Exmoor for over 10,000 years, preserving pollen and plant remains from different periods within the peat as it grows. The analysis of these exceptionally well preserved deposits can allow us to build up a picture of the changing environment from modern times back into the distant past. It can also enable us to fill in gaps in the information provided by archaeological sites: for example it can tell us whether standing stones were placed in open or wooded landscapes, or when ancient field systems were used and abandoned.

The 'Exmoor Valley Mires Project', is a PhD project based at the University of Plymouth and part funded by Exmoor's Sustainable Development Fund. It began in October 2007, and aims to quantify the extent and condition of small mires in the National Park, so that the potential of this peat resource for increasing archaeological knowledge can be assessed. Investigating the effects of past and current land use on the preservation of peat deposits also forms a key part of the project. Small mires are the primary interest to this project because the peat within them can preserve a detailed record of their local environment (within a few kilometres) through time, providing a landscape context for archaeological sites. They also currently receive no statutory protection for their archaeological value. One final outcome of the project will involve the development of a system for valuing mires in terms of their potential to increase our knowledge of Exmoor's historic environment.

To date, work on the project has involved: a walkover survey of around over 100 mires throughout Exmoor to assess mire and peat condition, and identify the main threats to peat preservation; the placement equipment to allow weekly monitoring at 3 mires to assess the impact drainage and peat cutting on seasonal water table levels; and the extraction of samples from these sites to assess the effects of water table variation on pollen and plant remains preserved within the peat.

Walkover survey of mire sites, including mire identification, peat assessment, and vegetation survey, will continue in the spring. To date, volunteers have played a vital part in project fieldwork. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Heather Adams by email at heather.adams@plymouth.ac.uk



Heather Adams collecting peat samples from a valley mire

The MIRE Project

The autumn and winter of 2008/09 has seen the second annual programme of work by the MIRE project on Exmoor, which aims to revitalise the valuable wetland habitats of the region's upland peat bogs. Historically, especially during the 19th century, these areas were drained as part of agricultural improvements. The methodology of the MIRE project involves blocking these drainage schemes, many of which are still partly functioning, through the construction of wooden and peat dams.



This work has a two-sided impact on the historic environment: It has a potentially adverse effect because the drainage ditches are part of the historic environment and form evidence of a significant phase in the development of Exmoor's landscape and, also because the peat itself may contain an invaluable record of past environmental change and cultural

impact on the landscape; in addition they will contain exceptionally well preserved archaeological objects. Any activity which disturbs the peat may therefore cause significant destruction of archaeology. On the positive side, the MIRE project aims to preserve the wetlands and this plays a very valuable role in protecting Exmoor's palaeo-environmental resource and the artefacts contained within the peat.

In order to minimize damage to archaeology and to let the project achieve its valuable aims, the MIRE project has incorporated safeguards in its procedures which include on-site observation and advice by archaeologists. So far, this is generating valuable data about past environments on Exmoor including the identification of standing stones within the peat at Exe Plain and the retrieval of fragments of ancient wood from both the Blackpitts and Alderman's Barrow sites that suggest a more wooded landscape at some point during the past.

On The Tails of Exmoor's Hunter Gatherers



2008 was the year of the hunter gatherer on Exmoor

Excavations were carried out at Larkbarrow and Hawkcombe Head, whilst two completely unknown hunter gather sites were reported by members of the public on Brendon Common and have now been confirmed and added to the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record.

What do hunter gatherer sites look like and how old are they? The sites so far found on Exmoor are thought to date from the Late Mesolithic around 6000-8000 years ago, and comprise scatters of flint objects brought from as far afield as the Blackdowns and as near as the north Devon and Exmoor coast. The flint is worked into characteristic tools such as arrowheads (called 'microliths'), bladelets and scrapers but archaeologists also find large quantities of waste material from flint knapping, which itself can tell us a great deal. Hunter gatherers exploited large tracts of landscape, living off the land and it seems likely that their occupation sites reflect seasonal hunting and gathering for specific foods.

Such sites are very rare indeed across England, but current work is establishing that Exmoor may be of enormous significance because of the number, survival and good preservation of these very ancient archaeological sites.

Larkbarrow 2008

Flints were found somewhere near Larkbarrow Farm in the 1950s, but nothing had been found since and Exmoor being Exmoor, little serious attempt had been made to add to the record - in short there was much more to be done. Then in 2005 Ralph Fyfe from the University of Plymouth chanced upon some flints in the valley mire below the farm and handed them in to the National Park Authority. Finally in 2007 Richard McDonnell noticed an amber coloured flint exposed in a sheep scrape beside the track which leads to Larkbarrow. The three or four pieces of flint could, just could, have indicated a hunter gather site, and it was decided to carry out more investigative work at Larkbarrow to prove the date of the site, to establish its extent and to assess its condition.

South West Archaeology were commissioned to complete a geophysical survey of the site and during May 2008 a series of small excavations were opened by staff of Exmoor National Park Authority and an undaunted and skilled group of local volunteers. Meticulous planning ensured that we dug on what seemed like the only dry week of 2008!

The excavations revealed that the site was in use by hunter gatherers in the Late Mesolithic period (8000-4000 BC), with a quantity of flint cores, flakes, scrapers and microliths found and identified to this period. The flint artefacts will be studied in more detail by a specialist to compare them with finds from

ON THE TAILS OF EXMOOR'S HUNTER GATHERERS

other known Mesolithic sites on Exmoor, such as Hawkcombe Head. This will help to build a fuller, but still hazy, picture of the Mesolithic landscape of Exmoor.

Larkbarrow has worked its magic. The place is in itself one of extraordinary beauty, but this is enhanced by the atmosphere created by stony scatters and wall footings of the ruins of the Knight farmstead built 150 years ago and destroyed during WWII. Who would have thought that beneath the fields of the Victorian farmers and the GIs' shrapnel from WWII would be found the tell tale traces of our most ancient ancestors whose nomadic lifestyle brought them repeatedly to this place?

During the excavations over 70 young people were given the opportunity to become archaeologists for a day. Students from three local schools: Dulverton Middle School, St. Michael's School, Tawstock and Exford First School, were invited to take part in the excavations. The students were shown how to excavate, how to sample peat to study the evidence for past environments, and how to use aerial photographs to interpret changes in the landscape. A flint knapper, Karl Lee, also demonstrated the craftsmanship and talent needed to make flint tools.



Students from St Michael's School, Tawstock discover, at first hand, the traces of their hunter gather ancestors (photo Rob Wilson-North)



View of the excavation site in the foreground, with the deserted Victorian farm behind. (photo © AerialCam)



Worked flint found during excavation at Larkbarrow. (photo Rob Wilson-North).



Karl Lee demonstrating flint knapping techniques to students from St Michael's School, Tawstock. (photo Rob Wilson-North)



Heather Adams from the University of Plymouth explains the contents of an auger sample which has been taken from the peat in the valley mire below Larkbarrow. The peat itself may have started to form during the Mesolithic period when hunter gatherers knapped flint on the hillside above. (photo Rob Wilson-North)

Hawkcombe Head

Excavations by Dr Paula Gardiner of the University of Bristol in the summer of 2008 carried on the work began there over three seasons from 2002-4. The site had already been dated to the late Mesolithic through radiocarbon dates obtained from a hearth and a posthole, but the current work has uncovered several more post holes as well as more hearths. It is hoped that excavations will continue.



Mesolithic flints from Hawkcombe Head, including cores, microliths and a honey coloured blade (photo Anne Leaver)

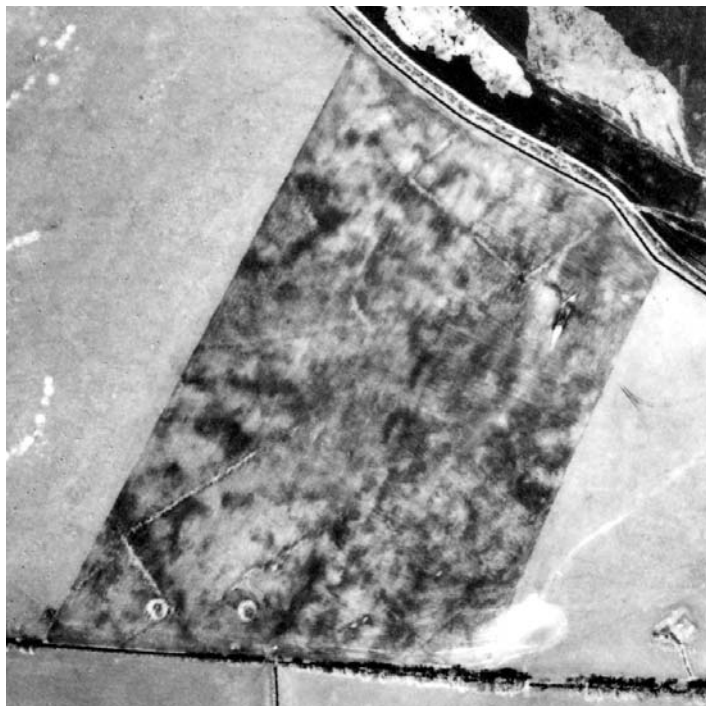
The National Mapping Programme survey of Exmoor

The discovery on aerial photographs taken in 1979, of 20 metre high initials - 'JW' and 'SC' - cut into the moorland vegetation on Brendon Common prompted the 2007 Exmoor Historic Environment Review to ask, albeit with little expectation of ever receiving an answer, 'are you JW or SC?'



The air photograph of 1979 with its 'landscape graffiti' (© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey OS 79/013 198 17-APR-1979)

It was therefore with some surprise that Clare O'Connor at Exmoor National Park Authority received a call from Mr John Watts with the tentative answer, 'Yes, I think I am 'JW''. The story of his and the late Mr Stan Curtis' landscape graffiti caught the imagination of the local press and gained wide coverage both in print and on television. Both men had been working for the Fortescue Estate on Exmoor Forest but had become irritated by an aeroplane which continually passed back and forth overhead. To 'give the pilot something to look at', Stan and John inscribed their initials on the surface of the moor in giant letters, little knowing that the aircraft was carrying out systematic aerial photography across Exmoor.



Extensive and carefully laid out prehistoric fields and hut circles visible on an air photograph taken on 2 May 1977 (© Exmoor National Park Authority).

Although recent in date and fleeting in nature, this 'scribing' on the landscape can be seen as a modern, transient but nevertheless similar example of the more lasting features which people have created on Exmoor since the Neolithic period some 5000 years ago, the kind of impact the Exmoor National Mapping Programme (NMP) survey was set up to record. The project is now over halfway through and is continuing to increase our understanding of Exmoor's past, from finding new evidence of prehistoric settlement and farming to identifying the extent of the Second World War firing ranges. It is on course to substantially increase the number of known archaeological sites on Exmoor.

2008 Archaeology Forum

Normally archaeology is associated with things beneath the ground, but the 8th Exmoor Archaeology Forum saw us taking to the air. This year, the spotlight of the gathering was turned upon the benefits and uses of aerial photography within the Park. The Forum, entitled 'Exmoor's Past: An Aerial View' was themed around the work of the National Mapping Programme survey of Exmoor. It was held in Dulverton Town Hall in September where a receptive audience gathered to hear presentations on a range of subjects arising from the survey. The National Mapping Programme's survey of Exmoor, lasting for 2 years and 100% funded to the sum of £125,000 by English Heritage, is aimed at analysing, interpreting and mapping archaeological features visible on the available archive of around 14,000 air photographs.

The Forum amply demonstrated the uses of aerial photography within archaeology and none of those in attendance can have been in any doubt at its end that the technique constitutes a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the archaeologist. There were two main thematic threads to the day: Firstly, the different perspectives that can be gained from the air. Not only is it possible to see sites in their entirety, but also within their landscape and within their relationships with other sites and, as if that wasn't sufficient, previously unknown features, invisible at ground level, become apparent.

The second thread running through the day was one of variety; the range of papers on offer demonstrating the significant impact which aerial photography has had and is having on our understanding of the historic environment of the National Park from numerous different perspectives. Chronologically, we ranged from the Neolithic to yesterday, and ranged across the National Park from the intertidal fish weirs on the coast to the prehistoric enclosures and cairns on the

high moorlands. The diversity of the ways in which humans have interacted with Exmoor's landscape was also highlighted and included agriculture, in the form of Bronze Age field systems and 19th century irrigation ditches as well as military activity from Roman forts to WWII artillery ranges. More mysterious were examples of how the Exmoor landscape had a conceptual or ritual significance to past societies in the form of its barrow groups and, most exciting of all, the newly-identified enclosure surrounding Little Hangman which may have been constructed by the earliest farmers in the region between 4000 and 2500 BC. Finally, there was even an excursion into the history of archaeological aerial photography itself which, perhaps to everyone's surprise, has a pedigree stretching back from the computer age to the Edwardian age!



An oblique air photograph of Lynmouth showing the fishweir on the foreshore - one of a large number recorded along the Exmoor coast (© English Heritage)

The 8th Exmoor Archaeology Forum fully demonstrated the significant part aerial photography has played in the past development of our understanding of Exmoor's archaeology. The work of the National Mapping Project will ensure that this central role will continue; of the features identified during its work to date, between 50% and 70% are new to the record. The implications for our understanding of Exmoor's historic environment and our ability to manage it are both profound and positive.

Exmoor's 'Areas of Exceptional Archaeological & Historic Importance'



As part of the Moorland Initiative in 2004/5, a rapid assessment of the moors identified 48 areas of cultural heritage significance. Since then Exmoor National Park Authority has secured preliminary Heritage Lottery Fund support for one of its Landscape Partnership grants. Development funding for this grant has been used to commission the University of Plymouth to revisit, redefine and develop the 48 areas. The result of the work is an increase in the surface size of the designated areas and the inclusion of areas of palaeo-environmental importance. The project team has also produced statements of significance for each area and has developed a unique methodology for monitoring the condition of each area. The work has involved staff from the university, English Heritage's regional offices and Exmoor National Park Authority. Exmoor is thought to be the first protected landscape to identify such areas and at the same time to develop robust condition monitoring criteria. The areas themselves reflect the range of historic features found on the moorlands, from prehistoric monuments to medieval villages; from abandoned Victorian farmsteads to the remains of WWII military training sites. Also included are wetland areas, such as valley mires and sites with historic associations.



Areas of Exceptional Archaeological and Historic Importance include the remarkable concentration of prehistoric monuments around Chapman Barrows, Longstone and Wood Barrow (photo Rob Wilson-North)

Bronze Age fields and 19th-century farms: analysing the historic landscape on Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors

The archaeological remains on Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors, north east of Exford and south of Rowbarrow, are some of the most important on Exmoor. The low banks of prehistoric fields and enclosures are overlain by medieval fields and 19th century enclosures, creating a tangle of features which can be unpicked to tell the story of over 3000 years of farming on the moors below Dunkery Beacon.

Around 1500 BC Bronze Age farmers laid out large blocks of rectangular fields across Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors, on a common NE/SW orientation, apparently paying little attention to the local topography. They lived in round houses with high, conical thatched roofs, and the low stone walls of these houses still survive, close to the fields where they worked, keeping cattle and growing corn.



Stones marking the way into a Bronze Age field on Codsend Moors (Hazel Riley).

Moving forward in time to the medieval period, a farmstead or hamlet at Codsend was well established by the early 14th century, indicated by the reference to Roger de Coddessone in the 1327 Tax Roll for Somerset. This was just one settlement in a landscape which was, by this time, characterised by dispersed farmsteads or small hamlets. Others in the vicinity of Codsend mentioned in the 1327 Tax Roll include: Ackland; Blagdon; Cutthorne; Prescott; Little Quarmer; Stone; Thorne; Watercombe and Wheddon Farms. These farmers used Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors for the occasional crop of rye, for grain and for thatching straw, and you can still see the stony banks of their plots running over the top of the prehistoric fields.

By the late 17th century this practice had ceased and the moors were common grazing until the end of the 19th century when enclosure banks were built and

planted with beech hedges around the moors to enclose the great chunk of land which now cuts high into the open moor of Rowbarrow and Dunkery Beacon. At about the same time two small farms were established and their fields used the same land that the Bronze Age farmers had farmed 3400 years before. The foundations of the farm houses with their neat garden plots and infields still lie on the moors and the tithe awards for the parishes of Exford and Cutcombe tell us that they were Holemoor Farm, home of Hugh Pearse, and Codsend Moor Farm, the home of Thomas Brewer and William Owen in the 1840s.



The ruins of Codsend Moor Farm, established by 1826 and abandoned by the end of the 19th century (Hazel Riley).

English Heritage have carried out a survey and analysis of this remarkable landscape, to underpin the future management of this sensitive area which is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest, home to the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and candidate for inclusion in the Exmoor Mire Project.

Hazel Riley

English Heritage, Archaeological Survey and Investigation

Dunster

Dunster is one of the most unaltered medieval settlements in England, and as a result is of great importance both as a living document, but also because its historic character gives it great charm. Recently a working group has brought together representatives from various groups within Dunster and after careful consideration has produced a masterplan. The Dunster Working Group has also appointed Graham Lamacraft as project manager.

Consultants have been approached to develop proposals for the public realm aspects of the masterplan.

Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record

In May 2008, Exmoor National Park Authority appointed an Historic Environment Record Officer. Now, with funding from English Heritage, development of the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (ENPHER) is underway. The data previously held by Somerset and Devon County Councils is being added to the ENPHER, so that Exmoor National Park Authority can deal with all historic environment enquiries within its boundary.

The ENPHER collects and organises all known information on Exmoor's past into a searchable database, which is linked to digital mapping. We have a collection of aerial photography, reports, historic maps and plans. Historic landscapes, archaeological sites and finds, and historic buildings are included in the database, along with designated sites such as Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments. Anything from a World War Two pillbox, to an Iron Age hillfort, to a Mesolithic flint blade is recorded.



The Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record documents features even when their use and purpose is uncertain, such as this possible sheepfold and shepherd's cottage at Hoarook Water. (Photo Faye Glover)

All new research is added to the ENPHER, so that there is as complete a record as possible for Exmoor's historic environment. Results from all of the projects discussed in this Review will be pulled together in the ENPHER.

The ENPHER is regularly used by Exmoor National Park Authority staff, in consultations on planning matters and agri-environment schemes. This information is also available to members of the public, to enable them to do their own local research. If you would like to use the ENPHER you can contact the Historic Environment Record Officer (details are on the last page), who will be able to send you information on your area of interest. If it is necessary for you to visit the ENPHER in person, booking is essential as there is currently only limited visitor space.

During 2009, we aim to make the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record available online at Heritage Gateway, where you can already search the national datasets for information on Exmoor: Listed Buildings Online, Images of England, PastScape and Viewfinder (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway>).

Condition survey of prehistoric standing stones on land owned by Exmoor National Park Authority

During the autumn and winter of 2008 all the prehistoric standing stones on land owned by Exmoor National Park Authority have been visited to assess their condition. The work has been done by Naomi Hughes from the University of Exeter as a Professional Work Placement for her degree course and repeats surveys done in 1990/91 and 2001. The findings of Naomi's survey will inform conservation work at these sites during 2009.



One of the groups of prehistoric standing stones on Lanacombe - these sites are often vulnerable to livestock damage, especially when the ground is softened by prolonged wet periods in the summer. (photo Naomi Hughes)

**Steaming Ahead -
The West Somerset Mineral Railway Project**

2008 has been a busy year for the West Somerset Mineral Railway project. It follows the award of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £603,500 in December 2007 to undertake conservation and public access work on the remains of the West Somerset Mineral Railway.

Two key industrial sites have been conserved on Forestry Commission owned land at Charget Woods: Langham Engine House, which was built in 1866 to unite several underground iron workings, and Bearland Ventilation Flue, a Scheduled Monument at Risk, which was constructed in the 1860s to draw foul



fumes out of the mines and replenish them with fresh air. Access trails to these sites will be created in 2009. Conservation work also began in the wet autumn of 2008 on the Incline, another

Scheduled Monument, and an incredibly important legacy of Victorian railway engineering: it is one of the last, longest and steepest broad gauge inclines in the country.

An events programme consisting of guided walks, lectures and family activities has been launched which aims to raise awareness of the history of the Mineral Line, and keep people informed about the project as it progresses. A group of Mineral Line volunteers have been recruited and are currently being trained to lead guided walks and monitor the sites.

In addition to this Mary Olszewska, the Heritage Education Officer, has been working in partnership with Danesfield Middle School to produce educational resources which link into the National Curriculum.

Watchet Museum has been working up plans to refresh their exhibition of Mineral Line artefacts, and the new display will hopefully be ready for opening in April 2009.



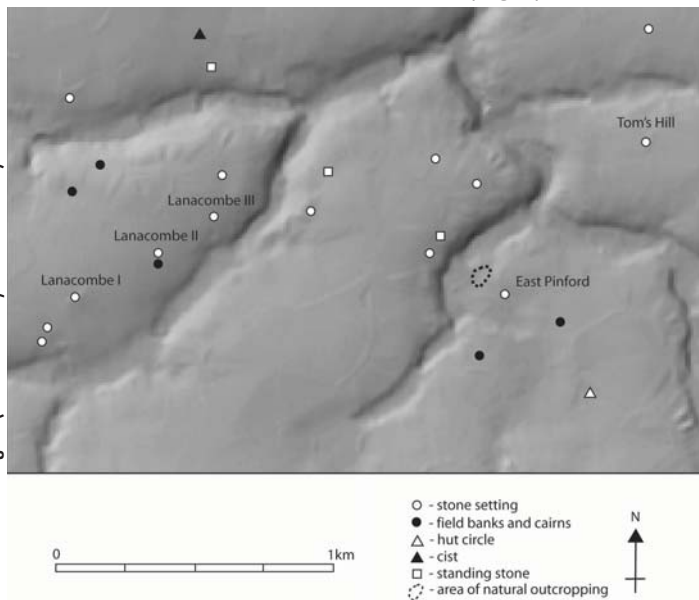
All sites which received Heritage Lottery funding will be open and accessible to the public by summer 2009. People will be able to add to their knowledge of the Mineral Line with various new publications, a website, information leaflets, and on site interpretation.



In search of the prehistoric stone erectors of Exmoor - the current view from Lanacombe

Following the successful excavations and surveys carried out in 2007, the focus of the 2008 fieldwork by the University of Leicester was on the broader archaeological context of the Lanacombe stone settings. At present we know very little about the contemporary landscape of the settings and what was going on in the areas between the individual clusters of standing stones. With the exception of small adjacent cairns, the settings today form a largely isolated distribution in a densely vegetated landscape of moor grass and reeds. Whether they always stood as isolated structures in an otherwise empty cultural landscape or instead formed part of a rich and dense tapestry of other monumental and funerary foci, field systems, activity areas and settlement - still awaiting discovery beneath the thick carpet of contemporary vegetation - is currently unknown. To explore this we targeted geophysical survey not on the settings but instead the areas of moorland around and between two of them - Lanacombe II and III (Fig 1).

Fig 1 (© University of Leicester)



The results have been extremely encouraging, highlighting a range of potential structural features. These take the form of fragments of what may be a cairn-defined rectilinear field system to the southwest of Lanacombe II along with a group of unusual hollows immediately to the northeast of the setting that may correspond to stone quarry pits. (Figure 2). At Lanacombe III the survey revealed a possible hut circle/ring cairn to the southeast of standing stones (Figure 3). The next stage will be to test the veracity of these conclusions through targeted excavation. In each case, during the process of survey newly identified stone components to each of the settings were noted and mapped.

Dr Mark Gillings
University of Leicester

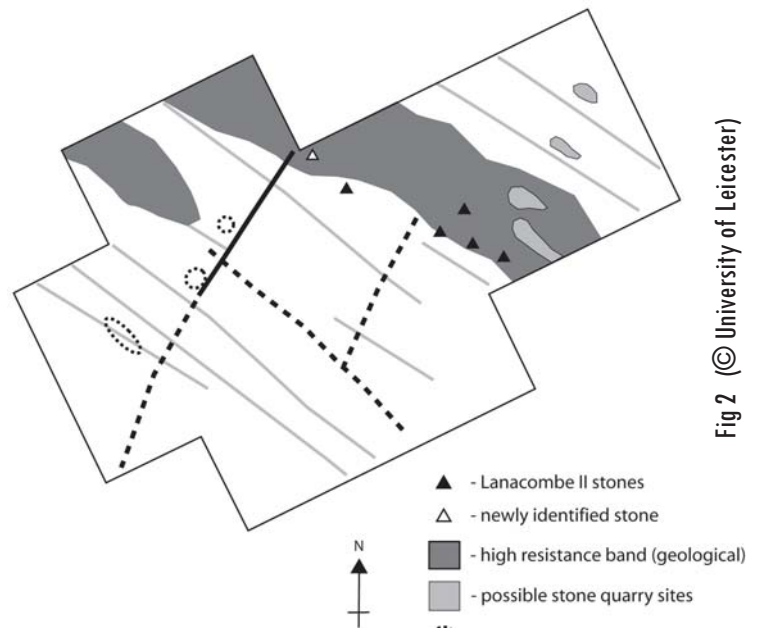


Fig 2 (© University of Leicester)

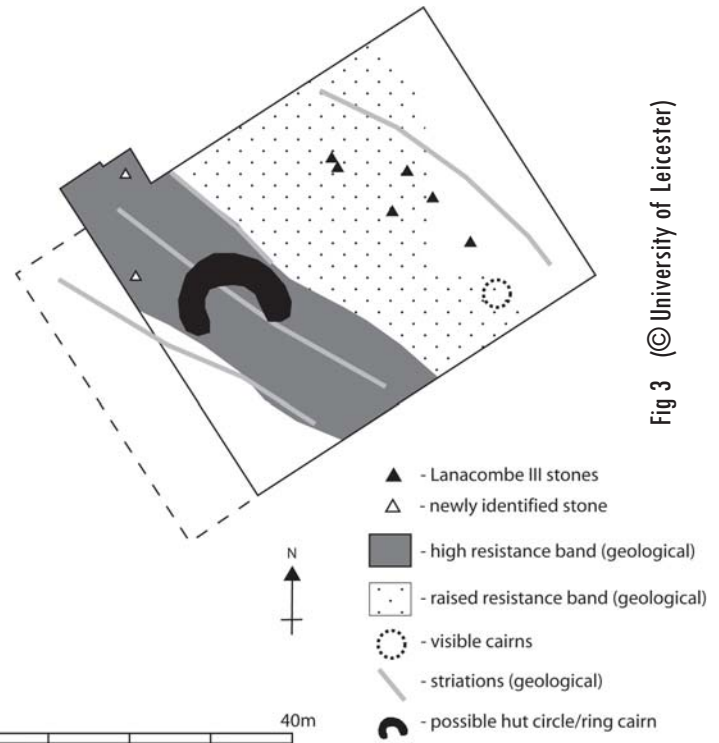


Fig 3 (© University of Leicester)

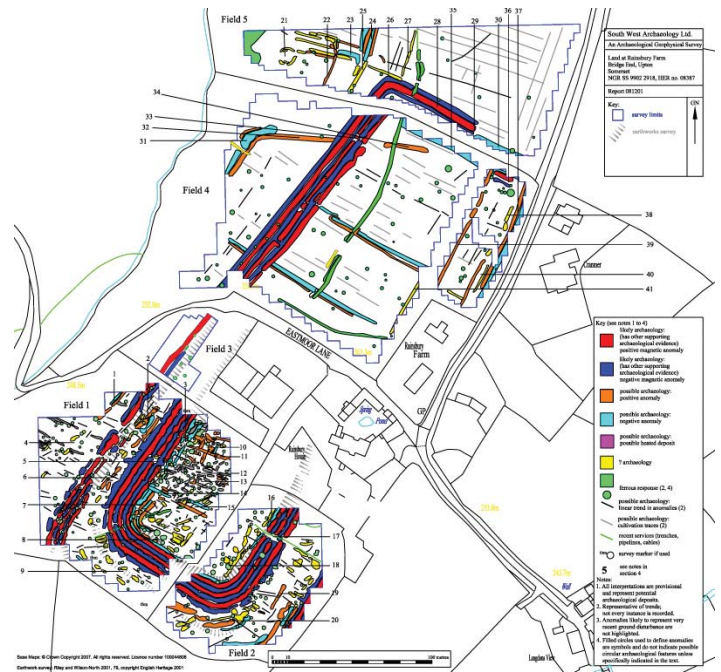
A Roman Fort at Upton

Until recently, direct evidence of the Roman army on Exmoor was confined to the fortlets of Old Burrow and Martinhoe in their dramatic cliff top locations on the north Devon coast (see page 4). However, recent work near Upton on the south-eastern edge of the National Park has given us a deeper insight into the invader's view of the Exmoor region.

Nothing was known at the site until a programme of aerial photographic transcription was undertaken in the late 1990s by the Royal Commission on the

Historical Monuments of England (now merged with English Heritage). Helen Winton who carried out the transcription, noticed on an air photograph taken in 1977, a large rectangular platform, 95m long and 65m wide, occupying the end of a ridge overlooking the River Haddeo. Interpretation remained uncertain but the site was clearly archaeological and of significance. Why had no-one noticed it before? The answer to this lay in the fact that the air photographs were taken in advance of the construction of Wimbleball Lake but the images were classified and restricted. The photographs remained outside the public domain for almost twenty years until they were examined by an archaeologist. Following the discovery, a detailed survey of the earthworks was carried out by the Royal Commission, which tentatively suggested that they might be Roman.

Here the matter rested until 2007 when Exmoor National Park Authority, with the kind co-operation of the owner, commissioned a series of geophysical surveys. These were completed in the winter of 2008 and reveal a massive triple bank and ditched Roman



fort with an enormous annex or outer enclosure covering 5 hectares, making it one of, if not the largest Roman military enclosure west of the River Parrett.

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