



EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK

May 2015

Historic Environment Review



Welcome to our review of work in archaeology and the historic environment across Exmoor in 2014. We've seen more community activity than ever particularly with Dig Porlock Village and the Longstone Landscape Project. Volunteers are also participating in major projects such as the Exmoor Mires Project which continues to produce exciting new results. We've been hugely impressed with the endurance and

enthusiasm of the members of these groups, turning out in all weathers and producing first class work which is really adding to our knowledge of Exmoor. Conservation and recording work on buildings, earthwork sites and landscapes continues and we see work begin on a number of projects extending into 2015. We hope you enjoy this new review and enjoy exploring Exmoor's wonderful past.

Explore Exmoor's Past on the HER website

Last year saw the launch of our new website, Exmoor's Past, which provides access to the information held on the National Park's Historic Environment Record (HER). The website is proving popular and contains a wealth of information relating to Exmoor's archaeology and historic buildings, together with details of other resources available. The website can be accessed at www.exmoorher.co.uk.

Here you can search for information using the **Simple**, **Advanced** and **Map** searching tools (a **Search Help** page is also available here to explain the search criteria used). You can also read a variety of articles on different aspects of Exmoor's heritage in the **Subject** section, which includes summaries of different time periods, heritage features and cultural heritage associations and different projects and research studies undertaken across the National Park. In the past year articles on the Mesolithic period on Exmoor and on Exmoor's bridges have been added to the site.



Marsh Bridge

Currently under development is a section that aims to provide information on archaeological artefacts from Exmoor, including items recovered during excavation, chance finds or within private collections. Many of these objects can be seen in local museum collections. Examples of items featured so far include the aurochs skeleton from

Porlock Bay (now in the Porlock Visitor Centre), a prehistoric saddle quern found near Landacre Bridge and a Mesolithic hammer stone found near Horsen.

Under the Resources section are a variety of useful weblinks to heritage organisations both in the local area and nationwide. You can also view information on the supporting reference collection held by the HER, such as reports that can be accessed online through the Archaeology Data Service website archaeologydataservice.ac.uk and books, journals, reports and photographs in the HER. These can be viewed by appointment by contacting our offices in Dulverton on 01398 322273 or by e-mail at HER@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.

Iron Age loan box added to prehistoric teaching resources

A fascinating and free educational resource now exists enabling a very 'hands-on' approach to finding out about Exmoor's prehistoric past. Three loan boxes of handling objects are available to schools, educational and community groups, free of charge. They cover the Mesolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods and hold replica objects such as flint tools, deer skins, beads and pottery. The Iron Age box is the latest addition to the



collection and is already proving popular with its replica clothing allowing children to dress for the Iron Age. Each box comes with activity suggestions and guidance material for teachers and has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership.

To arrange a loan or to find out more about how you could make use of one of these boxes contact the Historic Environment Team her@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk or 01398 322273, or visit www.exmoorher.co.uk/teaching-resources.

Longstone Landscape Project in 2014

In 2014, members of Parracombe Archaeology and History Society along with residents of Parracombe and Challacombe, North Devon Archaeological Society, the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership and Exmoor National Park teamed up to begin the Longstone Landscape Project. The aim is to research and record the archaeology of the moorland straddling the Parish boundary between the villages of Parracombe and Challacombe, on the Devon side of Exmoor with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the importance of



Photo by
Linda Blanchard

this landscape in prehistory and beyond. This year the project has involved a range of training opportunities in fieldwalking, measured survey, geophysical survey, field boundary recording, archaeological excavation and research focused on the Chapman Barrows cemetery and mortuary enclosure on Challacombe Common and Radworthy deserted farmstead. Fieldwalking for flint has been carried out across a broad stretch of the landscape in the hope of identifying any previously unrecorded Mesolithic sites. The survey work undertaken by the volunteers is vital in progressing our understanding of Exmoor's prehistoric residents and improving



understanding of the landscapes we are familiar with today. Work will continue in 2015 to add further to this knowledge and provide training opportunities in archaeological skills.

New volunteers are always welcome, contact: parracombe1@gmail.com



Get Involved

As the 2014 Exmoor Archaeology Forum highlighted, much of the work undertaken on Exmoor is supported or undertaken by volunteers. Historic Environment volunteers this year have assisted with and run events, education sessions, monitoring projects, and undertaken reporting, survey and excavation.

As part of the Get Involved Project the Historic Environment Team are advertising opportunities online at www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/get-involved. Get Involved opportunities have a range of commitment levels, from one-off taster days to training events and project work. Opportunities are available across the Authority and the project is working with a variety of partners, including The Crown Estate and The National Trust to ensure a range of activities are offered. If you have a specific interest or are looking to undertake a placement or project, please get in touch to discuss whether we can tailor something to suit you. (see back page for contact details).

North Hill Big Adventure Day 2014

The annual North Hill Big Adventure proved very popular once again in 2014, with over 250 people visiting the site to explore the WW2 history of this area of moorland, above Minehead. For many the highlight was the military vehicle parade, utilising concrete roads originally laid down for tanks in the 1940s. Exmoor National Park historic environment staff and volunteers were on hand to explain the different elements of the site and its vital role during WW2, as well as providing tea and wartime recipe cakes.

During 2015, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, there will be two opportunities to see one of England's few remaining 'Castles in the Sky'. These were the chain of radar stations that ringed the coast of Britain during the Second World War and include the exceptionally well preserved North Hill radar station, which has been subject to conservation work on both its roof and doors over the past two years. This year it will be open, as usual, for North Hill Big Adventure Day on 29th August. We will also be opening it for the morning of 12th September as part of Heritage Open Days 2015 when there will be an exhibition inside and a chance to find out more about the radar station itself, as well as the part North Hill played in preparing troops for the D Day landings in Normandy in 1944.



Exmoor Mires Project



A large proportion of the historic environment work for the Exmoor Mires Project over the last year has focussed on Exmoor's early prehistory, continuing the investigations started in 2013 on Lanacombe and Wintershead and undertaking more work at Spooners.

The 2013 Wintershead excavation uncovered a Late Mesolithic pit which had undergone intense heating and contained a fill rich in charcoal and baked clay fragments. Subsequent investigation has revealed the charcoal to consist entirely of oak heartwood, suggesting the presence of relatively mature trees in the vicinity at this time. The assemblage of worked flint and chert recovered from the site includes pieces diagnostic of the Mesolithic period, but also of the Neolithic, a period seldom represented in Exmoor's archaeological record. The presence of a probable burial mound, likely to date to the Early Bronze Age, implies the site continued to be significant to the local population. Current interpretation suggests Wintershead was used intermittently over several millennia.

At Lanacombe, the latter half of 2014 saw the excavation of five trenches. These were aimed at investigating some of the anomalies identified by the extensive geophysical survey undertaken in 2013, with some of the upstanding archaeological features which suggested the presence of a relict field system of possible Middle Bronze Age date. The highlight of these excavations was two trenches investigating an oval enclosure with an apparent annex attached to its eastern side. Both trenches revealed a series of intercutting pits suggesting the enclosure and annex are not defined by continuous features, but by a string of smaller pits which may have been re-dug at intervals to renew the enclosure. At a later stage, the 'annex' was also defined by a stony bank. It seems most likely that these features are of prehistoric date and it is hoped that the palaeoenvironmental samples currently being processed will deliver suitable material for scientific dating. The post-



Sampling the burnt mound on Spooners



Excavations on Lanacombe

excavation analysis of the evidence is still at a very early stage, although it seems likely that the original interpretation of the surface archaeology as a Bronze Age field system may be too simplistic.

Recent months have also seen an evaluation excavation undertaken at Spooners, on a feature identified as a possible burnt mound, a type of monument variously interpreted as representing feasting, saunas, sweat lodges, or craft processes. This low, elongated mound at the confluence of two streams, produced an intense magnetic anomaly in a geophysical survey in 2013 suggesting significant heating. A trial excavation trench supports this interpretation, revealing the mound to be composed of charcoal and heated rock fragments. Radiocarbon analysis of a charcoal fragment yielded an early date of c. 2,300

calibrated BC. It is possible that the charcoal was derived from old wood and that the mound may be from several centuries later, falling in the Early Bronze Age. Burnt mounds are relatively rare in South West England and the Spooners example is only the second known on Exmoor.

Finally, the Exmoor Mires Project has commissioned an investigation of the pre-peat soils of Exmoor. This has run concurrently with the Wintershead, Spooners and Lanacombe excavations, all of which have uncovered relict soils which pre-date the beginning of peat formation. Analysis is ongoing, but we hope the results will tell us a great deal about the environment of early prehistoric Exmoor and the changing conditions which led to the onset of widespread peat formation.



Dig Porlock Village 2014

In 2013 high on the moor in Porlock parish, a number of archaeological projects were undertaken funded by the Exmoor Moorlands Landscape Partnership and this saw local people taking part in a whole range of activities from geophysical survey and field walking to excavation and measured survey of earthworks (see Historic Environment Review May 2014).

There has long been an active interest in the history and archaeology of Porlock by local people but there was now added impetus and call for a community investigation into the archaeology of the village itself. This matched Exmoor National Park's research priorities (2010-2015) and objectives for community engagement in the National Park Partnership Plan (2012-2017) and so a plan for Dig Porlock Village 2014 was formed.

In February, a public 'roadshow' was held in the Village Hall. Resources from the Historic Environment Record (HER) including local maps and aerial photographs and historic photographs collated by the MineheadU3A group were scrutinised. The Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Historic Buildings Group produced a display on historic building recording to gain new participants and sites to study in Porlock itself. Many potential garden sites

and buildings were offered for excavation or recording.

Following this, research days were held at Exmoor House and the Somerset Heritage Centre where maps and records were examined to research sites and buildings proposed for further study.

Porlock has a fascinating history, from Viking raids recorded in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, a striking later medieval church containing significant monuments and a chantry

chapel, to being favoured by late 18th and early 19th century Romantic poets who vividly described its isolation and stunning location.



Our 'dig' took place in June initially with two 1 x 2 metre trenches at St Dubricius primary school excavated in turn by 60 children. Twelve other 1 x 1 metre trenches were later excavated over 27-28 June in gardens around the village. The trenches were excavated in 10 centimetre 'spits' through the garden soil, which in some areas proved to be as much as 80cm deep! The village Hall was a hive of activity as our communications hub with displays open to visitors and finds washing and finds identification

In the village the trenches were in the former manors of Sparkhayes, Doverhay and Porlock, clustered around what is now the centre of Porlock, and three trenches outside the historic development area.

There was a tiny sprinkling of prehistoric struck flints from across the sites indicating the kind of background activity we might expect in this area. Of the three trenches outside the core of the village, one on Bossington Lane produced the only two fragments of medieval pottery found. One is a rouletted jug from Ham Green, Bristol and the other probably a late medieval jug from North Devon.



© Barry Hitchcox

A small number of pottery sherds from 15th-17th centuries are in the collection including a fragment of Elizabethan Frechan Stoneware from Ye Olde Cottage, the rest mainly coarseware fragments are predominantly from North Devon but also from Somerset. Also from Ye Olde Cottage are fragments of an enamelled high quality drinking glass probably dating to the late 16th or 17th century. From the late 17th century onwards the finds are more plentiful and North Devon Scraffito pottery is a really distinctive aspect of the finds collection. There is more evidence from the early 18th century with Bristol Delftware and Yellow Slip Ware from Bristol and Staffordshire being present in many of the trenches from the core of the village. Interestingly, at this time wares from North Devon are completely dominating the market in the village. This is new information as previously there were no collections of this type from Porlock or nearby.

A discovery of skull and pelvic bones of horse in an area just outside the church yard alongside a former path through the Rectory garden, but now in the school grounds, caused



much excitement. Could these be related to the activities of the Rev Stephen Hales, Rector of Porlock from 1718 to 1723? He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and made major contributions in a range of scientific fields including botany, pneumatic chemistry and physiology and is known to have conducted experiments on horses in research on blood circulation. Sadly we cannot say for certain as the bones are associated with glass thought to be of a slightly later mid - 18th century date.

Historic building recording with the Historic Buildings Group began on Ye Olde Cottage which was discovered to be of late medieval date with roof timbers indicating that it was originally one storey. An open hearth in the main room caused the roof timbers to blacken in the smoky atmosphere, an upstairs was probably inserted in the 17th century when a fireplace was installed. The cottage is within Doverhay Manor on land granted in 1475 to Chantry priests for their subsistence in the will of Sir John Harrington and may have provided an income through rent. Later on, in the 19th century the cottage was lived in by Abraham Sparks a tailor and his family, and some of the pins found in the excavation in the garden may have belonged to him. A number of other historic buildings have been identified for recording and the work will continue in 2015.

We are grateful to John Allan for examining the finds and to Mary Ewing for the results of historic building recording.



Hoar Oak Cottage

During 2014 Exmoor National Park completed works to conserve and stabilise Hoar Oak Cottage.

The building, which probably dates from the beginning of the 1800s but may be much older, is an evocative and historically important reminder of the hardships of upland sheep farming on Exmoor. It was occupied until 1958 and then allowed to fall into disrepair. By the early 2000s it was clear that the building needed a radical solution. Ideas varied widely, ranging from proposals to convert it into an outdoor education centre through to total demolition. Conservation is often contentious and successful conservation projects are usually underpinned by a strong partnership - and so it was with this project: Exmoor National Park Authority has worked closely with the Friends of Hoar Oak Cottage, the Exmoor Society and Exmoor Uprising to find a sustainable solution for the building. All were keen to avoid any form of development in this remote and very special corner of the moor. After much discussion it was agreed that the building would be reduced and consolidated as a stable ruin. The key objectives were to create a safe, accessible structure which will remain recognisable as a cottage and give context to the surrounding historic landscape with its field patterns and remains of settlement stretching back to the Bronze Age around 4000 years ago.



photo by Graham Wills

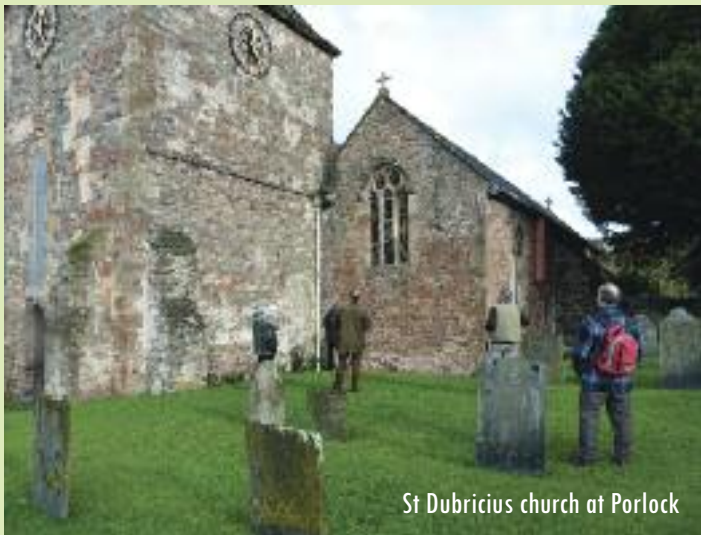
Many organisations and individuals have played a part in the success of this project and in particular we would like to thank the contractor Paul Quinn for his sensitive treatment of the building, Bill Mitchell who organised the Commando Helicopter Force to convey materials to the site, Nick Eveleigh, the Badgworthy Land Company, Elizabeth Bradshaw, Exmoor Uprising, Exmoor Society, Friends of Hoar Oak Cottage, various Exmoor National Park staff who worked on the project, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Amory and Heathcoat Trusts who funded the work through the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership.

Hoar Oak Cottage before and after consolidation



Help and advice for the owners of historic buildings

During 2014 we completed our Buildings at Risk survey which is a quinquennial review of the condition of all of the Listed Buildings within the National Park. The good news is that most buildings are in stable condition which is credit to those who look after them. However, we recognise that information for owners can be difficult to come by and so we have begun a range of activities to help anyone who is interested in historic buildings learn more about them and how best to look after them. During 2014 there were a series of events run by West Somerset Vernacular Buildings Group (Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society) including a talk by Chris Sidaway, an exhibition in Dunster National Park Centre and at the Archaeology Forum, several practical building recording sessions and a 'taster day' in November in Porlock.



St Dubricius church at Porlock

For more information and to find out about our events programme during 2015 please contact one of the historic environment team (see contacts on back page) or look on our website.

Simonsbath

Exmoor National Park purchased White Rock Cottage (the former Simonsbath School) in 2013. The buildings had been long neglected despite their evident historical importance. They probably began life in the 1820s as a gardener's cottage for John Knight who had recently purchased the former Royal Forest of Exmoor. Later they were added to in the form of a pair of workers' cottages. Following the establishment of the school in 1857 a whole series of additions took place up to its eventual closure in 1970.

During 2014 surveys were carried out in advance of the conservation of the buildings. The work has included commissioning an historical timeline of the school and speaking to ex-pupils who remember life there. We have also carried out archaeological surveys of John Knight's lost

gardens and designed landscape that were laid out before the school existed.

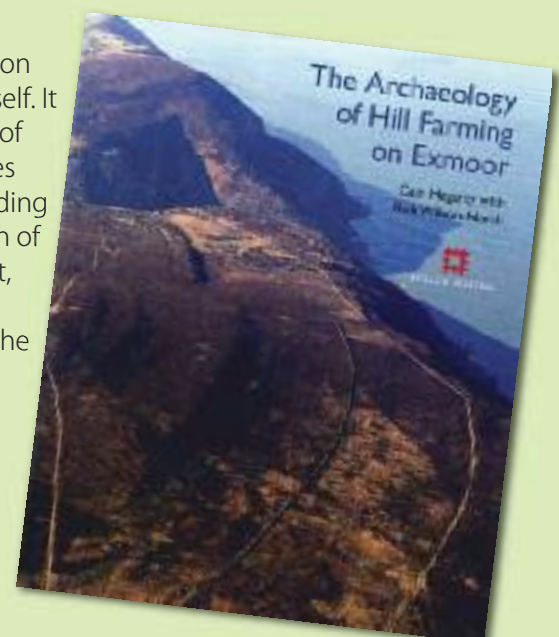


White Rocks in Ashcombe Gardens

During 2015 we hope to begin the process of conserving and finding a new use for the former school buildings and also improving access to the lost gardens in nearby Ashcombe valley

The Archaeology of Hill Farming

English Heritage has published a new book showing how hill farming has played a fundamental part in shaping the landscape of Exmoor. The Archaeology of Hill Farming on Exmoor brings together the results of the National Mapping Programme Survey of Exmoor, carried out between 2007 and 2009, which was a comprehensive study of all of the aerial photographs of the National Park. Taken together the photographs provide a narrative of how hill farmers have battled to tame this harsh, wet upland in the face of almost insurmountable challenges. Written by Cain Hegarty with Rob Wilson-North, the book uses archaeological evidence revealed on air photographs to look afresh at the Royal Forest, the surrounding Commons and on the farmland itself. It tackles a range of subjects, themes and areas including the Reclamation of the Royal Forest, water management, the peat cutting industry and shepherding.



Iron Age hillfort Conservation

In 2014 we undertook conservation work at three Iron Age hill enclosure sites; Berry Castle, Porlock, Oldberry Castle, Dulverton and the enclosure at Timberscombe. These sites can all be visited by the public and although all very different in size and shape fall within the category of Iron Age enclosure sites. The work involved removing scrub vegetation which not only obscures the sites making them much harder for visitors to appreciate and access but can also cause damage to below ground archaeological remains through extensive root systems.

In 2015 we will be undertaking our 5 yearly condition survey of scheduled monuments which can help identify those needing some extra care.

Aerial Photograph of Timberscombe enclosure copyright
English Heritage 24927-041 27 March 2008

Changing coasts

Exmoor has a wealth of historic sites along its coast; in the inshore area, on the foreshore, adjacent to the coast and further inland including on the cliff tops. The National Park has identified a need to understand what historic features are present, what the potential risks to these are and how the sites might be affected by coastal change.

This work began by looking at the existing records in the Historic Environment Record (HER), evaluating what we already know about sites along the coastline. In 2014 the historic Tithe Maps and Ordnance Survey maps were consulted, with new records created and existing records updated with additional information.



Aerial photo of Martinhoe Beacon and North Devon Coast ©24932_004 English Heritage 2008

This programme of enhancement revealed information about everyday life, access, water management, industry, coastal exploitation, safety on the coast, coastal change, tourism and recreation.

Well known sites such as the Roman fortlet at Martinhoe Beacon sit alongside new records showing the development of the coast

through tourism and recreation including a summer house from Summer House Hill (MEM23044) and a tidal bathing pond on Woody Bay Beach (MEM22769). Seats are a new monument type recorded in the HER, with several recorded in Culver Cliff Woods (MEM23027) and on North Hill (MEM23022), where they provided viewing points and resting places for 19th Century gentry rambles. The new and enhanced records are already available to both the public and heritage professionals by searching on the HER website or contacting the HER (see back page for contact details).

The research is ongoing and from early 2015 the National Park is working in partnership with Historic England (formerly English Heritage) who have fully funded a Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey of the Exmoor Coast to be completed at the end of 2015 as part of a national programme of coastal surveys. Its results will enable coastal managers to develop informed management strategies, as well as generally providing a more comprehensive understanding of our coastal heritage.

The Exmoor Archaeology Forum 2014

For 14 years Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) has staged an annual archaeological conference. Last year it was held at Filleigh Village Hall on 27 September. It was well attended and superbly organised. Rob Wilson-North (ENPA) outlined archaeological work before 1954 and achievements during the sixty years of the National Park. A recurring theme was Exmoor's relative neglect compared with Dartmoor and only from the 1980s has this been redressed. Rob was too modest to mention his own role in much of this, but we should be grateful to Rob and his predecessor Veryan Heal, that sixty years on from its foundation, we are now well informed about the archaeology and landscape history of Exmoor National Park.

Faye Balmond (ENPA) and Linda Blanchard (Parracombe Archaeological and Historical Society) talked about the Longstone Landscape Project on Challacombe and Parracombe Commons. This is community archaeology at its best in a well-known area of Exmoor. The community archaeology theme was taken up by Shirley Blaylock (ENPA) who gave a summary of the 'Dig Porlock' project.

Rob Wilson-North outlined John Knight's vision for the transformation of his 1820 purchase, the former Royal Forest of Exmoor, with a 'picturesque' landscape at its heart in Simonsbath. Rob explored the evidence for the development of a garden that Knight had started to create in Ashcombe, near Simonsbath House.

The Exmoor Mires Project assesses the impact of proposed mire restoration on the archaeology and uses this to guide work as well as investigating what is found. Using case studies, Lee Bray (ENPA) showed how poorly known areas had rich archaeology. Preventing the peat from drying out by strategic blocking of 19th and 20th century ditches contributes to the protection of organic material of archaeological significance.

Hazel Riley showed how place-names, map, documentary and field evidence revealed a complex network of hollow-ways and tracks leading onto the moor, especially from the Devon side. The parallels with the work of Harold Fox on Dartmoor were apparent.

For over a decade Ralph Fyfe of the University of Plymouth has been working on the palaeo-environmental record held in mires on and around Exmoor. While there was some broad pattern of differences in vegetation inside and outside the former Royal Forest, there was potentially as much variation among sites within the Forest as there was difference from sites beyond it. In the period AD 500 to 1000, sites in the Royal Forest had relatively little heather but on West Anstey Common, heather was more abundant. In the period 1500 to 1800, heather became more important at most sites which suggested either more burning or reduced grazing. Ralph showed the impact of moorland drainage; from almost all his sites peat mosses had ceased to be found after c 1800.

The day concluded with Rob Wilson-North offering a glimpse of some potential new projects in the next few years.

John Bradbeer (North Devon Archaeological Society, from article in NDAS Newsletter)

Scheduled Monument Condition Survey 2015

Scheduled Monuments are designated and legally protected archaeological and historic sites of national importance. On Exmoor the scheduled sites range from the well-known Roman fortlets at Martinhoe Beacon and Old Burrow and prehistoric cairns on Dunkery to bridges, deserted settlements, tiny stone settings on the remote moorland and even a pillbox. Every five years Exmoor National Park undertakes a survey of the 200 Scheduled Monuments within the Park to monitor their condition. The sites can be under all kinds of pressure and suffer from a range of issues such as visitor or stock erosion and vehicle or vegetation damage or even just prevailing weather conditions. The Park is contacting landowners to gain permission for access and following the survey aims to work with the owners and Historic England (formerly English

Heritage) to bring any sites that are in a poor or deteriorating state back into good condition. The survey will be completed in 2015 and we will report on the results in the next review. We are looking for volunteers to help with future condition surveys of scheduled monuments and other significant sites, if you are interested please contact us.



Packhorse Bridge at Allerford

Coming up:

The Historic Environment Team are involved in a number of events occurring through 2015. For more information on the events and to find details of further events run by a variety of organisations see

www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/enjoying/events

July 20

Simonsbath Sawmill Open Day.

July 29

Bogtastic, a family fun day in Simonsbath celebrating the special qualities of Exmoor's moorlands with Sawmill Open Day.

August 1

Culbone Stone Open Day.

Aug 29

The Big Bank Holiday Adventure on North Hill. Family Day of activities focussed on the WWII Radar Station and tank training grounds on North Hill including a parade of military vehicles.

September 10

Simonsbath - a vanished mansion and its picturesque gardens, see the results of recent research and conservation on John Knight's unfinished picturesque gardens in Ashcombe and on the former Simonsbath school buildings 2.00pm as part of Heritage Open Day.

September 12

Castle in the Sky; the Radar Station on North Hill open 11.00-13.00 for Heritage Open Day.

September 13

Simonsbath Sawmill open for Heritage Open Day.

September 21

Simonsbath Sawmill open day.

October 19

Simonsbath sawmill Open Day.

November 14

15th Exmoor Archaeology Forum, a day of presentations highlighting recent archaeological work.

Contact us:

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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

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Front cover: Dig Porlock Village with children from St Dubricius C of E First School, Porlock.

You can also download a PDF version of this publication from www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/Whats-Special/history/publications



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