

NEWS • WALKS • HISTORY • WILDLIFE • BOOK REVIEWS

DARTMOOR NEWS

ISSUE 188
APR / MAY 2023

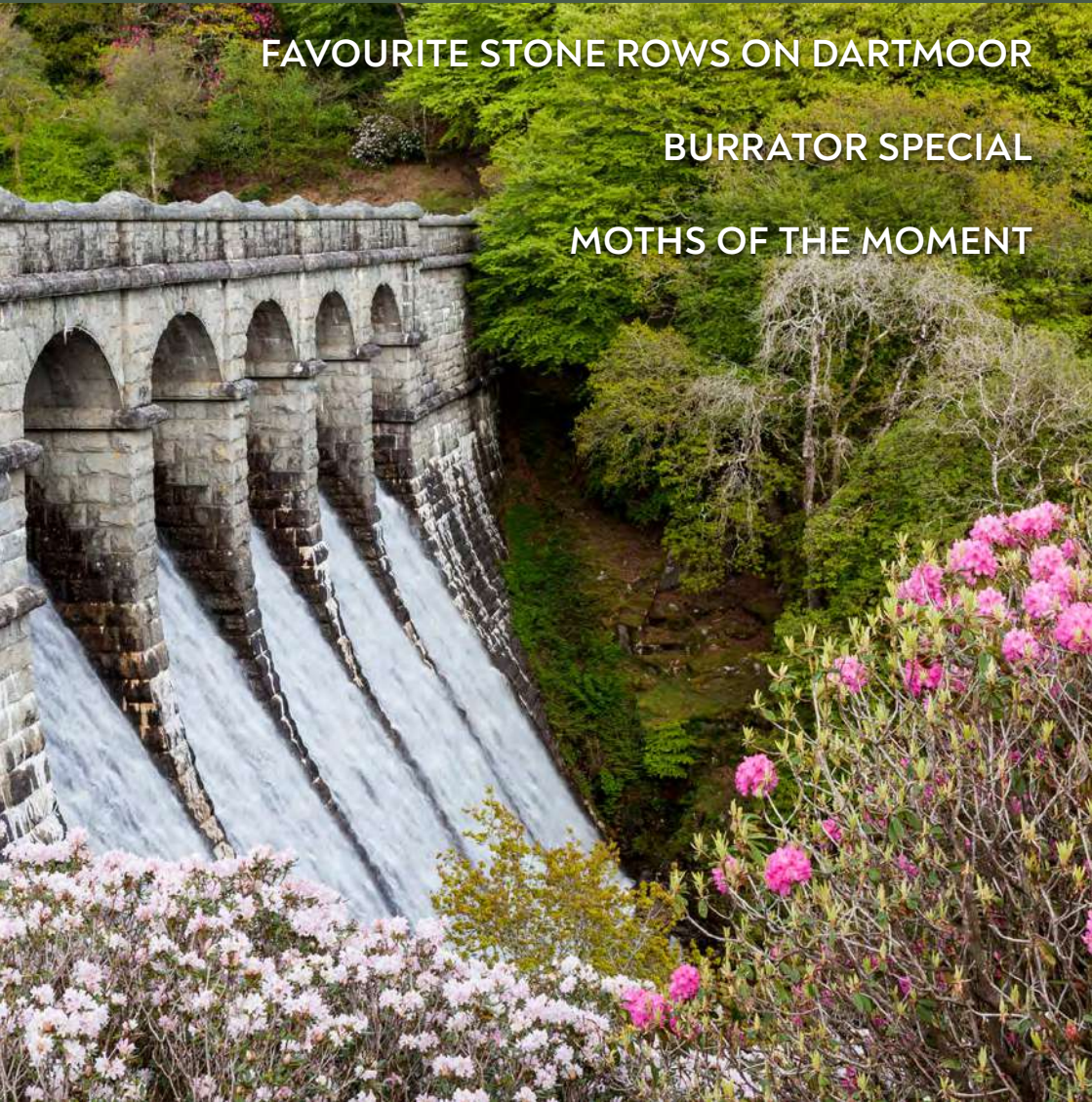
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FAVOURITE STONE ROWS ON DARTMOOR

BURRATOR SPECIAL

MOTHS OF THE MOMENT



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ONTO
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CONTENTS

News Desk.....	3-21
Fur Tor on New Year's Day.....	23
Moths of the Moment.....	26
Old Newspaper Snippets.....	29
Vikings on Dartmoor.....	30
Dartmoor Letterboxing Diaries - Tales From a Misspent Middle-Age....	32
Burrator - A Double Anniversary.....	35
Favourite Stone Rows on Dartmoor.....	41
Conan Doyle and the Dartmoor Pixies.....	43
Tales from the Museum.....	44
Death on Dartmoor - A Farmer Killed at Sheepstor.....	45
Dartmoor Boundary Posts - Revisited - PCWW.....	46
Dartmoor's Western Police Stations.....	50
Dartmoor Inscribed Stones.....	51
Exploring Burrator Guided Walks.....	53
Dartmoor Dining.....	55
Okehampton Railway Station: Review of Services and Facilities.....	57
Spotlight on Dartmoor Bridges.....	59
Dartmoor Moon Walk 2023.....	61
Dartmoor's Hidden Gems - Burrator Falls and Burrator.....	65
Dartmoor Boundary Stones- Cornwood Parish Boundary.....	68
Nature Notes.....	71
Book Reviews.....	72

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Next Issue

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BACK ISSUES

106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 113-117, 120-124, 126-129, 131-134, 137, 140, 142-145 147-148, 150, 152-187 only. These cost £4.00 each including postage. All other copies are now sold out. Please make cheques payable to *Dartmoor News*. A digital copy of issues 1-12 is available for £10; please pay by cheque as above or by PayPal and supply your email address so the document can be sent to you.

CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor is always pleased to consider news items, details of events, photographs for the front cover, Dartmoor Views, Dartmoor Memories and short articles for publication.

Contributors to this issue include; Chris Chapman, Simon Dell, Mark Fenlon, Peter Hamilton-Leggett, Paul Harris, Robert Martin, Andrew McAuley, Wendy Newing, Old Jack, Max Piper, Chris Redman, Kristy Turner, John Walling and Chris Walpole. All the above have written articles or supplied the Editor with news items or photographs.

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FRONT COVER

Burrator Dam by
Wendy Newing

NEWS DESK

The latest news around Dartmoor is brought to you by Paul Rendell. All items and photographs, unless otherwise credited, are by Paul Rendell. We hope you enjoy!

If you have any news about Dartmoor, please email it to paul.dartmoor@gmail.com.

East Dartmoor Confusing Signage

Max Piper reports

Some contradictory signage has appeared at Cleave House above Christow. One sign says 'Bridleway Only, No Through Road', whilst the one above states that it is a 'Public Footpath' and that 'Dogs Must Be Kept On A Lead'. The latter two are illegal and this sign should be removed.



The confusing signs

Max Piper

Greatrock Copse Signpost

Report by Max Piper

A relatively new signpost has been erected at the east end of Greatrock Copse, at the point where the public footpath breaks out into a felled section beside a memorial bench. The sign reads 'Access to Greatrock Farm only'.



The new sign

Max Piper

New Defibrillator for Belstone

The village of Belstone already has a defibrillator in the old phone box near The Tors pub. Another defibrillator was installed last winter at self-catering centre Bernard's Acre on the southern edge of the village in the hamlet of Birchy Lake, not far from the River Taw and the lower end of Taw Marsh. You call either 999 or 102 for the code number.

Dartmoor Ramblers Protest at the Threat to Ban Wild Camping on Stall Moor

Max Piper reports before the outcome of the Friday 13th court case

Alexander Darwall and his wife Diana have owned the 4000 acre Blachford Estate on southern Dartmoor since 2011. They first came into conflict with members of the public when they terminated car parking at New Waste in 2014, which was a significant blow to visitors who then faced a long trek along narrow country lanes to reach this spot. In 2022 they launched a legal battle against DNPA by challenging the right to wild camp without permission, explaining that the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 does not include the right to wild camp and that it does not constitute outdoor recreation.



Wild camping protest at Princetown

Max Piper

The Darwalls have backed their claim by commenting that some wild campers have been lighting fires, leaving behind litter, and causing antisocial behaviour. However, with Stall Moor being difficult to reach in the first place, with the nearest parking in Cornwood, it is difficult to believe this without sufficient evidence, and this is in spite of the fact that the Blachford Estate carries out pheasant shooting and deer stalking on their land. Neighbouring landowner John Howell, who closed Harford Moor Gate car park in 2021 using similar arguments about erosion and damage to moorland by the public, has backed the Darwalls' legal battle.

If successful, there is no doubt that other landowners would follow suit, and that is particularly concerning when just thirteen landowners own much of Dartmoor. It would jeopardise the Ten Tors Challenge, where 2400 teenagers annually walk long distances each May carrying all of their kit with them, and those undertaking Duke of Edinburgh Award treks. In the meagre 8% of land to which the public have access in England, Dartmoor is the only place where wild (backpack) camping is permitted within Common Land, so long as you are more than 100m from a road. It has always been a tradition much loved by locals and outsiders alike so, understandably, this legal challenge has caused a lot of unrest. At 11am on 11th December 2022, on a bitterly cold morning, hundreds of Dartmoor wild campers and public access activists massed in front of the National Park Visitor Centre (Duchy Hotel) in Princetown to protest at the threat to ban wild camping on Stall Moor. They ranged from the very young to the very old, the most experienced to the least, and were addressed by passionate speakers.

The protest lasted for about an hour and attracted much media attention. Various people displayed banners, some of which read 'Save Dartmoor! If One Landowner Succeeds, Others Will Follow' and 'For Everyone Forever - Dartmoor Right To Roam'. Afterwards some people departed but the rest of the group walked to King's Tor.

Princetown History Club

Every month members of the Princetown History Club meet in the Princetown Community Centre or on the moors for a walk. Indoor meetings start at 7.30pm, outdoor meetings at 7pm. They are also open to non-members. Forthcoming events include:

April 4th; A talk by Paul Rendell on the tors of Dartmoor.

May 2nd; A talk by Layland Branfield on his farm at Moorlands.

June 6th; A walk around Mardon Down, led by Andy Crabb, DNPA archaeologist.

July 4th; A visit to Moorlands Farm with Layland Branfield.

August 1st; A visit to Over Tor rabbit warren, led by Paul Rendell.

September 5th; A talk by Geri Parlby on Tavistock's Tudor ship

October 3rd; A talk by Chair Simon Dell on Tavistock Canal's poetry trail.

November 7th; A talk by Tim Jenkinson on 'Faces in the rocks.'

The charge is £2 for visitors for an evening talk. For outdoor events, the charge for members is £1 and for visitors £2.

For more information visit www.princetownhistoryclub.weebly.com

New Gates at Smithacott

Two new gates have been installed north of Kennick Reservoir, near Smithacott. These provide better access to the private woodland.



The new gates

Max Piper

More Dams for Dartmoor

As part of the re-wetting plan for Dartmoor, large tree trunks have been used as dams on the south moor between Ryder's Hill and Snowdon. These dams are pretty colossal, with the intention of holding back water.



One of the dams

Max Piper

Getting Help on Dartmoor

If you walk on Dartmoor you probably know how bad the mobile phone signal can be. Do you know how to register your phone to be able to text to the 999 system if you are in trouble in remote areas, including on the moor? A few years ago a new emergency text service was set up to allow people to text 999 when voice calls cannot be made but there is sufficient signal to send a text.

You should be able to contact the 999 emergency services by SMS text from your mobile phone when you need assistance in the hills when mobile reception is poor and there is not enough signal to make a call. However you will only be able to use this service if you have registered with emergency SMS first. To register, text register to 999. You will receive a reply and will then need to follow the instructions you are sent. The text system is meant to be used only when voice calls cannot be made and the system does not guarantee that texts will be delivered so users should wait until they receive a reply from the emergency services before assuming help has been summoned.

Further details can be found at www.emergencysms.org.uk.

New Finger Post near Hennock

DNPA has erected a new finger post near Brandiron Cross, Hennock in the last few months.



The new finger post

Max Piper

Clam Bridge Damaged By Floods

The old clam bridge across the River Bovey in Lustleigh Cleave has been partly destroyed by winter floods. On 7 January the river was very high with Foxworthy Bridge nearly underwater after it had been raining for the previous few days. Lower down the valley the old clam bridge was partly underwater and part of the hand rail was damaged by the strong current.



The old clam bridge

Dartmoor News on Facebook

You can find *Dartmoor News* on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/dartmoornews

Tottiford Log Stacks

Opposite the entrance to the Tottiford Reservoir car park, logs have been stacked up in the layby.



The stacked logs

Max Piper

Lion's Mouth

Report by Chris Walpole

In the middle of January the Lion's Mouth fountain in Belstone Cleave below Skaigh House was tampered with. The pyramid-shaped top of the structure was removed and placed upside down on the trough, and the trough itself was moved about a foot away from the main structure so that the water was no longer spouting into it. The fountain was repaired at the end of the month by Belstone Commoners James and Michael Reddaway.



The damaged fountain

Chris Walpole

New Sign at Tongue End

Report by Chris Walpole

A new 'No Unauthorised Vehicles Beyond This Point' sign has recently been positioned by DNPA at the start of the bridleway in Belstone parish that leads from Tongue End to The Mount and Sticklepath, hopefully to stop joyriders on trail bikes from using the track. This bridleway is none other than the old main road between Falmouth and London (and part of the old Okehampton to Exeter turnpike road) that daily mail and stagecoaches would have used until 1829, when a new road (once the A30 trunk road, now downgraded to the C774) was built that contoured the slope to the north.



The new sign

Chris Walpole

North Hessary Tor is Now Higher

North Hessary Tor is now 517m high again, not 509m as Ordnance Survey (OS) wrongly showed on the 2022 edition of the paper map OL28. OS have now agreed they made a mistake after Max Piper contacted them – the height was shown as 517m on previous editions of the map.

Buckfastleigh Post Office Closes

Another Post Office has been lost on Dartmoor with the recent closure of Huccaby's convenience store and Post Office in Buckfastleigh. The Post Office only moved into Huccaby's in 2019 but now that it has closed, the nearest Post Office is one mile away in Buckfast.



The closed Post Office

New Defibrillator for Shipley Bridge

South Brent Parish Council has bought a solar-powered defibrillator cabinet and has obtained permission from South West Lakes Trust to install it in the car park at Shipley Bridge.

Riverside Work at Fingle Bridge

Earlier this year work was carried out on the river bank below Fingle Bridge on land belonging to the National Trust and the Woodland Trust. The banks of the River Teign had started to erode away so the area was closed off and matting laid with wood sedge plants and grass added to help the vegetation grow back. Part of the bank has also been re built.



Part of the river bank repairs

New Fencing in Shaptor Wood

Report by Max Piper

There are quite a few holes in the ground in Shaptor Wood, especially in the north part of the wood. In the far south new fencing has been erected at SX 81700 80005, possibly around an old mine shaft related to the micaceous hematite mining at Shaptor Mine.



Part of the new fencing

Max Piper

Beckamoore Car Park

A small car park beside the Beckamoore Stream below Little Staple Tor, not far from Pork Hill, was closed off after a car had to be pulled out after it became stuck in very soft mud after a lot of rain in January. Large boulders have been placed to stop vehicles entering while a decision is made on how to improve the surface.

Wonderful Dartmoor Signs

If you come across any wonderful signs on Dartmoor please send a photo to us for this feature. This sign was found beside a public right of way near Manaton, The Lost Marbles Dept.



The sign

Cutting Back the Broom

There is a lot of broom on top of the hill at Whiddon Park near Chagford, so much in fact that it has taken over the hillside in the last few years. While it looks very nice when the shrub is in bloom and the hillside is covered in yellow, it is nevertheless invasive. In the last few months the National Trust have cleared the area and made one of the main paths much wider.



The tall broom

National Park Visitor Centre

With big cuts to DNPA's funding in prospect they are having to make some major changes, including losing staff and the probable closure of the flagship Visitor Centre in the middle of Princetown. The Visitor Centre, which is housed in the Old Duchy Hotel, was due to close at the end of March this year but now is due to closed at end of September this year.

New Street Furniture near Meavy

DNPA have replaced some street furniture on the footpaths near Callisham Farm. First, a new fingerpost marks the junction of some tracks; it states which way the paths go, so is very useful. Second, an old stile has been replaced making it easier to use the footpath between Lovaton and Meavy via Callisham Clapper Bridge.



The signpost



The replaced stile

Arthur Smith 1940-2023

By Simon Dell, Chairman of Princetown History Club

On 9th January 2023 Princetown and the wider Dartmoor community lost one of its most well respected and well known characters in Arthur Smith. Arthur lived the whole of his life in the house where he was born at Rundlestone and was very proud to be a 'Dartmoor man born and bred'.

His father Harry, like Arthur after him, had been a postman locally and Harry was the last mounted postman covering his rounds all the way out to Postbridge on horseback. Harry was also a smallholder farmer on the moors and Arthur naturally followed in his footsteps.

Arthur's mother was Olive Annie née Cole who was from a well-respected moorland farming family and she showed Angus cattle for the Duke of Cornwall (later Edward VIII). His grandparents had farmed at Beardown Farm so Arthur was therefore a generational farmer and proud of his moorland heritage.



Arthur with lambs

Chris Chapman

He was schooled at Princetown until aged 15 when he left to attend Plymouth Technical College to further his education; this necessitated cycling into Princetown to catch the GWR train to Yelverton and onwards to Plymouth. Eventually after leaving college he returned home and worked as a shop assistant locally until the death of his father in 1955, leaving Arthur and his mother to run the cattle herd at Rundlestone. The area had significantly more houses and farms in those days and he loved nothing better than losing himself in his memories of the old farmsteads up towards Great Mis Tor and surrounding moorland.

In the early 1960s he went to work in Tavistock to supplement the family income, working at Fairy Winches making Land Rover winches at the factory in the town, where he also worked on designs for automatic animal feeding equipment. He recalled that during the snowstorms of 1963 he had to climb out of the bedroom window to get out of the house and then dig his way back in through a tunnel to find the front door! It was just after that winter that his mother died at home at the age of 63. His father had died at 55 and Arthur was always proud to say that he 'bucked the trend!' He continued to live at the house and a few years later took on work for the post office as rounds man covering right up to Postbridge where he would drop off post for delivery by Bob White the farmer from Lower Merripit.

In 1978 Arthur proposed to Eunice from another Princetown family; she worked in a solicitor's office locally and he sold a cow to buy a ring! They married in the village church and then for many years travelled widely around the world on holidays to far-flung places on all continents but at heart he was always a home bird. He and Eunice kept sheep and he would get up at 4am

for work and then tend the livestock once he'd finished his rounds. Eunice died in 2000, the year before Arthur retired in 2001.

In an interview for the *Dartmoor Magazine* a few years ago with the renowned photographer Chris Chapman he said 'Living up here, it's a harsh climate but if you are born into it, it doesn't bother you'. Arthur was a long standing and popular member of the Princetown History Club and well respected throughout the generations of those who live in the village and surrounding area. His passing marks the loss of an irreplaceable friend, whose soul belonged to the moorland where he was born and lived his whole life.

(With thanks to Chris Chapman for his image of Arthur and for the information upon which this is based)

Willsworthy Reservoir

Near the head of Willsworthy Brook is a small reservoir (SX 5442 8380). This reservoir is used as a water supply for Willsworthy Firing Range as well as Willsworthy Camp. It was built over 50 years ago and the metal pipework has started to rust away. Last February work was carried out to bypass the leaking metal pipe and replace it with a plastic pipe, this from where the metal pipe crosses Willsworthy Brook all the way to the firing range.



The new pipework

Foggintor Quarry

On the gate near Yellowmead Farm, Princetown, a new sign reads 'No unauthorised access along the track'. The sign is a bit misleading as this is access land, so presumably they mean no vehicle access. The sign was erected by the Maristow Estate.



The new sign

Path near HammerslakeTor

A new sign has been erected giving access to a challenging footpath just below Hammerslake Tor, Lustleigh. The sign tells you to use both stiles, just make sure you get the right one.



The new sign

Max Piper

Work Planned in Wray Cleave

Wray Cleave near Moretonhampstead is not visited very often but it is a wonderful woodland full of large tors (see *Dartmoor News* Issue 173 for details) and some great plant life. There are a number of public footpaths within the woods; however, as they are not walked much they have not been kept up to standard, but this is due to change this spring. Work started in February with a survey of the paths and what 'street furniture' would be needed to bring them up to walking standards. Agreed routes need to be close to those marked on the OS map, but it is not possible to follow the map routes in some places due to the steep terrain, rock outcrops and fallen trees – and walkers like to use the easiest routes.

DNPA Ranger Stuart Hoopell is working with helpers Paul Buck, Max Piper and Paul Rendell, backed up by the sector Ranger, Pete Rich. Once the routes are cleared of vegetation, they will be waymarked and any new steps or other features will be added. There are plans to possibly replace one of the stiles with a gate and erect new fingerposts at the start of the footpaths. This work will take many months to complete.



Max and Stuart surveying the paths

Future of Princetown Churchyard Remains Uncertain

Princetown churchyard is still being used for burials, although the Parochial Church Council (PCC) says it cannot afford to look after it as very few burials take place nowadays – in fact, only four since 2020. The PCC are considering closing the churchyard due to the lack of funds available to meet ongoing maintenance costs. At the moment the Dartmoor Forest Parish Council have gathered together a group of volunteers to keep the churchyard tidy.

Miniature Pony Centre Closes

The Miniature Pony Centre near Moretonhampstead closed down in February due to lack of visitors. They managed to get through Covid but now with the cost-of-living crisis, people are cutting back on their spending. Over the Christmas season their ticket sales were badly affected and with 2023 unlikely to see much of an improvement they decided to shut the doors after the February half term.

Electric Recharging Point at Chagford

A new electric recharging point has been installed by Scottish Power in the main car park in the moorland town of Chagford.



The new recharging point

Meavy Signpost

The road sign near Lower Meavy Bridge has recently been replaced. It now shows the cycle routes as well as the roads to Meavy, Hoo Meavy and Yelverton.



The new sign

New Fencing at Sand Pits, Princetown

The old tin mining shafts near Meavy Head, Princetown, have been fenced off. The area is known locally as Sand Pits. There are six new fences around the shafts which can be seen from the main Dousland to Princetown road.



The new wooden gate and fence

Metal Gate Replaced by Wooden Gate near Big Rock

Beside the Hill Bridge Leat, which comes off the River Tavy, is Kenter Tor, also known as Big Rock. Until recently there has been a metal gate beside a clapper bridge which crosses the leat near this tor. This has now been replaced by a wooden gate (SX 52659 79852) but the problem is that the gate opens towards the leat, which means you have to be very careful not to fall into the water when opening it.



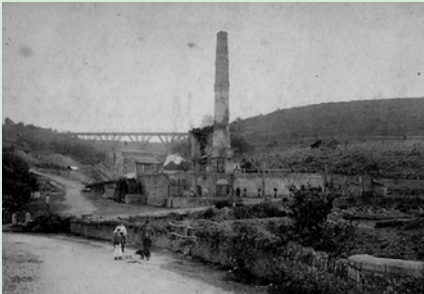
The new wooden gate and fence

Max Piper

Horrabridge Brickworks

Since publishing the article on the Devonshire Brick Co at Horrabridge in the last issue of *Dartmoor News*, author Peter Hamilton-Leggett has been sent a photo of the brickworks from New Zealand.

The Tavistock Local History Society asked Peter if he knew where William Warren (died 1897) and his wife Susan (died 1894) were buried. They had lived at Magpie Cottage, Horrabridge and are buried in Buckland Monachorum cemetery. The Society had been contacted by Lynne and Keith Alford from New Zealand. Presuming that they had lived near the brickworks Peter asked if they had a photo. Would you believe it, a photograph was sent and can be seen below.



The brickworks

Copyright Lynne Alford

Clearance Work at Scorhill Stone Circle

Clearance work around Scorhill stone circle took place in February to enable Alan Endacott to undertake geophysical surveys for the Prehistoric Ritual Landscapes of Northern Dartmoor Project. Some gorse was cleared with the help of the Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group with the support of Pete Rich and Andy Crabb from DNPA and Penny and Chris Warren.

New Houses for Yelverton

DNPA have approved the building of 41 new houses at Yelverton. Buckland Monachorum Parish Council raised four matters which they wanted DNPA to consider before granting the application, including provision of solar panels and heat pumps and making a financial contribution towards the new cycle track from Yelverton to Burrator which would use the old railway line at the back of the new housing estate. They also suggested the development boundaries should be reviewed and that local affordable needs are met.

Ric Cheadle, Parish Council chair and Buckland Monachorum ward borough councillor, said: 'Whilst we supported this planning application, we didn't expect our points to dramatically change the eventual decision but we wanted them heard and for there to be amendments before voting.' DNPA did not seem to want to talk about these matters but the development will include electric charging points.

Lydford Beating the Bounds

Beating the bounds of Lydford parish is due to take place in May this year. The probable date will be Saturday 20th May and the full parish boundary is about 16 miles (26 km). The route before lunch will be on farmland and through Lydford Gorge, then in the afternoon the remaining nine miles will be out onto the moor, past Wallabrook Head, up between Sharp and Hare Tors and down to Deadlake Foot, before turning north alongside the Rattle Brook, past Bleak House to the furthest boundary stone from where the route heads west past the Dunnagoats, Dick's Well, Arms Tor and through Nodden Gate to cross Fernworthy Down back to the finish at the Sports Field.

Walkhampton Church House

DNPA have replaced a finger post near the Church House at Walkhampton Church. There are many wonderful church stiles within that area and this footpath takes walkers to some of these.



The new finger post

Bridleway Repairs

Report by James Daymond

In February the track linking the Jobbers' Road and Peat Cott was resurfaced with imported stone. The small parking area at the start of the track has also been resurfaced. There is no physical barrier stopping any form of vehicle from using or parking on the track.



Part of the new surface

Gates Replaced on Black Down

In the last few months a number of wooden gates have been replaced on Black Down beside the A386 above Mary Tavy. The new metal gates in the fence keep livestock off the road; they have long handled latches so horse riders can open them more easily.



One of the new gates

Replacement Ladder Stile at Sampford Spiney

DNPA have replaced a stile over a wall on the footpath between Stoneycroft and Eastontown within the parish of Sampford Spiney – this makes crossing the wall easier than previously.



The new stile

Work at East Wray Cleave

DNPA Ranger Stuart Hoopell has been busy working on the footpath that goes through East Wray Cleave in the Wray Valley, from Lower Elsford Farm to East Wrey Barton through the woods. Stuart has installed a new gate at SX 78902 82716 below the farm.



New gate with finger posts

Max Piper



New steps

Max Piper

Ridding Down Fencing

Some of the old wire fencing on Ridding Down near Lee Moor has recently been replaced. This is near Broomage Tor and Crownhill Tor.



Some of the fencing

Mining Around Ashburton

The Dartmoor Tinworking Research Group (DTRG) are holding a Community Day in Ashburton Town Hall on Saturday 29 April. The day will explore the rich legacy of mining in the Ashburton parish area, where the mining profile involved numerous individuals and companies attempting to work the tin deposits, to varying degrees of success. Documentary records tell an interesting story of ownership challenges, water disputes, changes in mining technology, mining individuals and private investment.

Starting at 10am in Ashburton Town Hall there will be displays about Dartmoor tinworking, a bookstall selling DTRG publications, a display from Kelly Mine (space permitting), coffee and two interesting lectures entitled 'The Tinworks and Tin Mines of Ashburton Parish' and 'The Ashburton Copper and Umber Mines'.

Meeting at 2pm at GR SX 767 733 a guided walk will take the group around the important mining area around Owlacombe. This is a fascinating mining landscape, with a number of mining features, surviving structures and tinworking remains dating from the medieval period right through to the early 20th century. DTRG is grateful to landowners for allowing access. The walk does involve some slopes and rough terrain so sturdy footwear is recommended. The walk aims to finish by 5pm.

Places are limited, so please email: secretary@dtrg.org.uk to book early.

For more information on DTRG, please visit www.dtrg.org.uk or email Anne on annetimw@btinternet.com

William Donoughy Memorial Stone

At the end of February, a team of volunteers lead by Paul Rendell cleared the William Donoughy Memorial Stone below Hartland Tor. The stone was starting to be hidden by gorse and was not easy to reach. It was last cleared five years ago by Simon Dell and volunteers.



Before work started

The stone marks the spot where William Donoughy died while walking on the moors in February 1914. Many fans of the book *Dartmoor 365* by John Haywood like to visit the spot but it was no longer easy to find.

This time around a path was cleared from near the holly tree to the north of the stone to the path down to the East Dart River, as well as an area around the stone. The team comprised Simon, John, Alan, Alison, Fiona, Bev, Peter, Phil and Lynn.



Some of the group working



The team after the work was completed

Simon Dell

Wild Camping on Dartmoor

Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) have been discussing the need to review the Dartmoor Commons byelaws for roughly the last decade. In September 2021 DNPA set about reviewing the byelaws – a set of Dartmoor specific laws that include rules on things like lighting fires, parking, vehicle access, livestock, projectiles etc. There is also a camping byelaw. The main purpose of the review was to update some poor wording for clarity and bring it in line with current practices.



The Cornwood protest

DNPA put their proposed changes out to public consultation allowing users of the moor to give feedback. Around the same time, Alexander Darwall, owner of the Blachford Estate at Cornwood since 2013, challenged DNPA's position in a court action, claiming that the 1985 Dartmoor Commons Act (aka the byelaws) did not extend a right for the public to camp on Common Land. DNPA maintained that it did, the landowner claimed that it didn't. The Blachford Estate covers about 4000 acres (1600 hectares) and includes some Open Access Land (which is, in this case, also Common Land).

The two parties went to court and on 13th January 2023 Sir Julian Flaux, Chancellor of the High Court, issued his judgment in the case of Darwall v Dartmoor National Park Authority. He found that Section 10(1) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 does not confer on the public any right to pitch tents or otherwise make camp overnight on the Dartmoor Commons. Any camping requires the consent of the landowner. DNPA quickly discussed and agreed a deal with most common land owners to allow backpack camping to continue to take place for a nominal payment. On 21st January 2023, around two thousand people protested at Cornwood at the loss of their wild camping rights, an event organised by environmental activist organisation Right to Roam. The walkers, in a procession which stretched for nearly a mile, went from the picturesque village of Cornwood up to the top of Stall Moor, which is owned by Mr and Mrs Darwall. Many of the protesters were local, coming from Plymouth and other parts of Devon, but some travelled from as far as the Midlands, Kent, the Isle of Wight and Essex. Although the event was organised by Right to Roam, this ruling has nothing to do with that right, just about camping. The right to walk on the moors is not affected.

Many people do not understand what wild camping is. Years ago it was called backpacking, when you carried a tent, food, sleeping bag, cooking stove etc on your back and walked away from any road, buildings or fields. But now it seems some people think they can camp beside a road or river and just carry their gear a short distance from the car, pitch their tent and build an open fire. After Covid lockdown ended a lot of people began camping inappropriately in places such as Bellever, where on some nights there were over 50 tents and a number of open fires beside the East Dart River, which damaged the area and rapidly became a big problem.



Protesting at Parke

Russell Ashford, a farmer whose land includes Buckfastleigh Moor, says a number of times every year he has to clean up after campers who do not treat the land with respect, including leaving behind human faeces. 'In terms of litter, there's beer cans, bottles, syringes sometimes' he says.

On 27th January, DNPA members held a meeting to decide if they should seek permission to appeal the judgement. There was no automatic right to appeal. A small group gathered at Parke on that morning asking members to vote to appeal. DNPA members did indeed agree to seek a right to appeal.

Many local councils are backing this and the Dartmoor Preservation Association have launched a crowd funding appeal for money to help DNPA fight this case, as they believe there should be a right-based not a permission-based system to backpack camp on Dartmoor. This story will continue for many months to come.

Great Western Railway to Withdraw Castle Class HSTs

Great Western Railway has announced the withdrawal of its Castle Class High Speed Trains (HSTs), with all units set to be withdrawn by December. This will see the disappearance of powercars 43010 Lydford Castle, 43097 Castle Drogo and 43194 Okehampton Castle, among many others. The trains, which currently work services between Cardiff Central and Penzance, will be replaced by newer Intercity Express Trains.

New Railway Station for Okehampton

West Devon Borough Council have been awarded £13 million from the government's Levelling Up Fund to build a new railway station. This new station on the eastern edge of Okehampton will include high quality cycle facilities and electric vehicle charging points on site to better connect communities and promote active travel. Buses from many outlying villages will call in to make this a transport hub. The existing station is not big enough for the current demand, however it will not close when the new one opens in a few years time.

Fisherman's Bridge Restoration Project

As part of the River Teign Restoration Project, the National Trust have been busy repairing the river bank near the Fisherman's Bridge. Since 2020 very little soil has been left in places along the river bank, with much of it being washed away by the river. The area is well-used by people and dogs playing in the river so plant life is trampled and roots destroyed, leaving bare soil which is washed away when the river is in spate. This soil and silt gets washed downstream choking up the gravel beds where salmon and trout breed.



The fenced off area

To address this problem, the National Trust have laid netting and planted wood-rush as well as fencing off the area to give the river bank a chance to recover.

BURRATOR NEWS

More Fencing Around Mining Area

Wooden fencing has appeared around many more mine shafts and wheel pits in the Eylesbarrow and Wheal Catherine mining areas. This was reported in the last issue of *Dartmoor News* but since then more places have been fenced off, making at least six such areas. Fencing has also been erected around the Wheal Catherine wheel pit further towards the River Plym.



One of the mine shafts near Two Brothers Adit

Keaglesborough Tin Mine

More fencing has been erected around the mine shafts at Keaglesborough Tin Mine near Raddick Lane above Leather Tor Bridge. This mine dates from around the 1560s. Last winter many of the shafts near the dressing floors were fenced off.



A fenced off mine shaft

Burrator Dam – New Sign

A new sign has appeared at Burrator Dam pointing out that passing bays are not places where you should park your vehicle. People have been parking on the corner near the stile into woods where the granite outcrop known as Burrator is to be found, from which the reservoir takes its name. Burrator Parish Council said 'we urge visitors not to park too close to the corners of the dam as this restricts access for large vehicles. Please respect Passing Bays in our parish as they are vital to keep traffic flowing in our lanes.'



The new sign

Burrator Exhibition

This year sees a couple of anniversaries for Burrator Reservoir - 125 years since the completion of the reservoir and 100 years since its enlargement and the raising of the dams. South West Lakes Trust are planning to stage an exhibition at Burrator Discovery Centre to mark these occasions. This will start on the weekend of 1st April and the displays will be in place for a couple of months. There will also be a number of guided walks taking place around Burrator to mark the anniversaries.

Further details of the walks can be found at www.paulrendelldartmoor.co.uk

New Track Partly Destroys Old Railway Embankment

A couple of new tracks have been bulldozed through the Peek Hill Plantation. The paths start near the old Lowery Crossing on the Princetown Railway line and head out towards Lowery Quarry.

There used to be a couple of lovely winding paths through the woods here but now machines have made these new wider tracks partly on the old path. Near where the path heads to a wall and a wooden stile, near the entrance to the quarry, part of the railway embankment has been destroyed. This railway line was built in the 1920s as part of a plan, which never happened, to remove granite setts from the quarry to take down to Plymouth. You can read about it in *Dartmoor News* Issue 168 May/June 2019.



The new track

Paths Upgrade at Arboretum

The paths within the Burrator Arboretum have been repaired in the last few months. The arboretum was created in the 1980s after a hurricane felled lots of trees around Burrator. South West Water decided to clear the area and plant over 100 different species of trees, including rarer species like redwoods. A couple of ponds were created, one of which took two days to build so it is known as the Two Day Pond. Paths were also laid out with some usable by wheelchairs. Over the years the paths have eroded away and it has been decided to upgrade the area in partnership with the South West Lakes Trust (SWLT), who manage the area, and DNPA's Miles without Stiles initiative.

In the future SWLT plan to thin out some of the trees beside the Narrator Brook to allow sunlight in and self-seed conifers will be removed. Some fruit trees have also been planted recently.



The upgraded path

Kingsett Clam Bridge

It was reported in Issue 186 of *Dartmoor News* that a new bridge built of wood and metal had been erected across the Newleycombe Lake below Kingsett Farm. This was washed away in the flooding last January but since then someone has rebuilt the bridge so walkers can once again cross the brook.



The new bridge

Fiona Rothwell



NHS recommended

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FUR TOR ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

By Paul Rendell

Fur Tor, also known as Vur Tor and the 'Queen of the Moor', is a very remote spot on north Dartmoor and is the meeting place for the New Year's Day Meet which started in 1981. Walkers and letterboxers trek out to Fur Tor early on 1st January, then at lunchtime they all meet up for some festive cheer, letterboxing and a group photograph. People approach from all directions including Postbridge, Lane End, Holming Beam, Two Bridges, Fernworthy, Bagga Tor and sometimes from the north, which is a much further distance.



Camping at Fur Tor 2023

Max Piper

The first Fur Tor Pilgrimage in 1981 was the brainchild of Ian and Caroline Kirkpatrick; six people made the trek. Since then the meet has taken place every year and the numbers attending have grown immensely. To reach this tor involves a round trip of about 10 miles (16km) and in winter it can be a challenge due to stormy weather, difficult river crossings and the short daylight hours.

People have their favourite ways of reaching the tor but the traditional route is from Postbridge, up Drift Lane and Broadun and then across to Cut Hill and along to Fur Tor. The walk takes place regardless of the weather and over the years conditions have ranged from snow and sharp frost to rain and fog. There are always ample opportunities to collect letterbox stamps as many people make special 'New Year's Day' stamps for the occasion. Some have been previously sited and others are taken to the tor on the day. There is always an 'official' Fur Tor Meet stamp which is produced by the Kirkpatricks.

I first went to Fur Tor on New Year's Day in about 1985/6 and then visited most years until 1997. Since then I have only been on odd occasions. I remember in 1996 leading a group from Lane End to Fur Tor and we came back via Tavy Cleave. Scrambling over the rocks was not a problem and walking along the leat was okay until someone behind me asked a question. I turned to answer and fell in the leat. What a laugh, well it was to the other walkers. Serve me right as we had been drinking wine at Fur Tor, toasting the New Year.

On some occasions there used to be around fifty to sixty people there but nowadays numbers are rather lower, usually between a dozen and thirty. With the 'official' Fur Tor stamp there is a visitors book and it can be interesting to read people's comments. The one day stamp and the book are usually taken out on the day by various walkers; in the last few years Dave Johnson (Moor Trekkers) or Roland Harris (Roomtrad) have carried them. This year they were taken out by the Editor.

The latest book started in 2011, when the first visitors were Shirley and Roland as well as Richard Elliot (Where the Hand of Man Hath Never Trod). That year seventeen people stamped the book, but not everyone stamps or writes in it. The following year, eleven people make entries in the book.



The letterbox stamp

In 2013 Dave Johnson came from Bagga Tor Gate, which is the short route in but it does cross boggy ground as well as a number of rivers including the Tavy. Just eight wrote in or stamped the book. It is a shame the book does not often mention the weather as I am sure this affects the number of people reaching Fur Tor. Even fewer visitors arrived in 2015 – just six – but one person recorded their route and the weather. They left Bagga Tor Gate at 8.30am and by 9am they were wearing their waterproof trousers which were not waterproof as they found out! At

9.30am they were at Fur Tor Brook/Tavy and were soaked. Then they took a diversion to Tavy Head via South Tavy Head getting there about 11.45am before reaching Fur Tor by 12.30pm using a GPS. Their journey back was not much better as at 2.30pm they were thigh high in the River Walkham near Turf House. They finally got back to their car at 3.45pm.

In 2016 Roland Harris and Dave Johnson came from Postbridge via Cut Hill. There were ten visitors that day.

In 2017 Sid wrote 'Raining Again!!' – it seems to be bad weather on most New Year's Days. That year there was a bigger turnout with eighteen people reaching the 'Queen of the Moor'. One group of five came in from Postbridge with two dogs; from Bagga Tor three people with three dogs; and one person came from Smeardon Quarry, near Peter Tavy. The other arrivals did not state which way they came.

2018 was a very good year with thirty one people and a number of dogs including fourteen members of Stannary Hash House Harriers with four dogs. Eight people came in from Bagga Tor with one person camping at Fur Tor overnight, having walked from Bagga Tor the day before. The weather was good with just one heavy shower at Fred's Folly on the East Dart.

Over twenty people arrived in 2019 including the Stannary Hash House Harriers and three members of Plymouth Ramblers. A group calling themselves 'Dartmoor & Exmoor Wild Campers' were also there; they returned again the following year. Also in 2020 were the 'Fab group' being Fiona, Amanda and Bev. Max Piper was also there and the Plymouth Ramblers led by John Skinner. This was a great year as Dave Johnson records over fifty people arriving during the day. Dave walked in from Bagga Tor via the Walkham and returned via the Meads. The weather was better than expected with only occasional light drizzle.



New Year's Day 2022

Paul Rendell

2021 was very different as only a group of four arrived due to the Covid 19 pandemic. 2022 was much better with about twenty there on a wet and misty day. It was also very windy with wind speeds of 30mph recorded by a group coming in from Postbridge, including the Editor, Max Piper, Amanda, Bev, Olwen, Charles and Ruby the dog. They returned via Cut Hill (for a full report see the Feb/Mar 2022 issue of *Dartmoor News*). Dave Johnson and Roland Harris

brought the visitors book and stamp; they also came from Postbridge via Flat Tor, West Dart Head and Cut Combe.

So to this year, 2023. As usual it was a 'damp' day. Whilst we did not have too much water from the sky on the day, we did have a hail shower on the way back to Postbridge. The ground however was waterlogged and we paddled most of the way there and back. Around thirty people turned up during the day with around twenty five present just after midday. The Editor brought a small group from Postbridge with the official one day letterbox stamp and the visitors book. Three brave people camped overnight beside the tor, it was a wet night with some heavy showers. Two of the campers, Nigel and Tracey, arrived from Postbridge the evening before; it was 'a bit moist' they said. The Plymouth Ramblers were there again, also coming from Postbridge, in fact most people came up the East Dart from Postbridge. Eric and Sheena Felton trekked in from Fernworthy, while some walkers who tried to walk in from Lane End did not arrive, possibly because of problems crossing the rivers including Rattlebrook, Tavy and Amicombe Brook.

What is the weather going to be like on 1st January 2024? Will you be making this annual pilgrimage next year? If so, which way will you go to visit the 'Queen of the Moor'?



Some of the walkers at Fur Tor on New Year's Day 2023

Paul Rendell

MOTHS OF THE MOMENT

APRIL/ MAY

New series by Chris Redman

Easter seems like a good time to commence a series of short articles that will continue throughout the year, highlighting just some of the huge variety of moths that fly locally. We are particularly fortunate in the South West, and Devon especially, to have a vast array of moths that can be seen by day and also drawn to light at night. Over a year, with a light trap set on most weekends, it should be very possible to record well over 200 species in the average Dartmoor garden. And, over time, there is also the outside chance to encounter a true rarity.

It is important to emphasise that when referring to a moth 'trap', all moths lured to the light are released unharmed the following day or evening. It is thought that the number of UK moths has decreased by about a third over the past fifty years, so the days of pinning and collecting these very important creatures are long over.

As the temperatures at night begin to rise consistently, so the moth trap starts to attract more colour and diversity. The small brown moths of late winter begin to recede, now supplying the larvae that will become essential food for nesting chicks. Only a few can be included in this short account of what is flying at present but here are some highlights.

Widespread, and a moth of heathland and moors, is the fluffy **White Ermine**. It is one of the few 'brilliant white' moths of the UK with a variable number of black dots on its wings.

These may sometimes form a curved line, when it could be confused with a light Buff Ermine or female Muslin Moth.



White Ermine moth

Chris Redman



Spectacle moth

Chris Redman

Fairly unremarkable when seen from above, the **Spectacle** starts to turn up in April.

But it is when viewed from the front that one sees how it received its name as the fur above its head has markings resembling a pair of flying goggles topped with an outrageous Mohican.

Not to be confused with its larger butterfly namesake, the **Brimstone Moth**, with its more distinctive chestnut-brown markings and ringed white crescent, is arguably just as glamorous.

It lies with its wings flat, showing off a rich sulphur-yellow base colour, hence 'brimstone'. At this time of year, it can be attracted to light in quite large numbers, and it can also be seen flying by day, particularly at dusk, if disturbed from vegetation.



Brimstone moth

Chris Redman



Buff-tip moth

Chris Redman

Possibly one of the greatest mimics of the moth world is the extraordinary **Buff-tip**. With its silvery wings held tight to its cylindrical body, it has buff ovals with darker brown borders (like bark lining) located at its wing tips and above its head.

Thus, whether looked at from the side or head-on, it gives the perfect impression that one is looking at a piece of snapped birch twig. So confident and effective are they in their own camouflage that they feel no need to hide or fly away when released from the trap in the morning and are often seen later in the day in exactly the same spot awaiting nightfall.

Another great proponent of vegetation mimicry, this time a 'dead leaf specialist', the **Scorched Wing** is another evolutionary winner of an obviously successful design in the survival game.

With its pale orange-brown colour, irregular curved lines, and purplish brown 'scorch marks' breaking up its edges, it is almost impossible to see among old foliage.



Scorched Wing moth

Chris Redman

Another large moth with uncanny camouflage is the iconic **Peppered Moth**. These days, especially in rural areas, the most likely form to be seen is one which has off-white wings with a sprinkling of black dots, dashes and lines ('peppered'). Placed on a concrete wall, it blends in perfectly. But evolution has been at play and, forty to fifty years ago, mainly in more industrialised urban areas, the **Peppered Moth** was sooty black with few white spots. This adaptation ensured better concealment in environments affected by significant air pollution. It is thought that this dark form once comprised 60-80% of Peppered Moths in the London area in the 1980s. This figure has declined over the past decades, to be replaced by the paler form pictured, due to improved air quality.



Peppered

Chris Redman



Poplar Hawk

Chris Redman

The Hawk-moths are some of the largest, most impressive moths in the UK and one of the first and most widespread to be encountered at this time of year is usually the **Poplar Hawk-moth**. With its unique shape and greyish ripples, crossed with a fan of fine cream lines on its upper wings, it looks like the moth equivalent of a military stealth transport plane. When threatened it will flash its hind wings to reveal red chestnut bases intended as a warning to any potential predators.

Finally, no talk of moths could be had at this time of year without including the **Emperor Moth**. With larval food plants of heathers, hawthorn, blackthorn and bramble, Dartmoor is a haven for the '**Emperor**' and, if lucky, one might see the orange flash of a fast-flying male when out walking the moor on a warm spring day. But the most predictable way to see this stunning creature closely, with its extraordinary eyed wings, is to use a pheromone lure. This will of course only attract the male of the species, but the larger female, with her greyer tones, flies at night and can occasionally be tempted to enter a light trap.



Emperor (male)

Chris Redman

As we move into June, the numbers of moths to be seen can be bewildering. On a warm, muggy, slightly overcast night with little wind, activity around a light trap can be frenetic. More stunning moths will be introduced in the next edition of *Dartmoor News*.

OLD NEWSPAPER SNIPPETS

By Old Jack

BURRATOR FARMING SNIPPETS

Kingsett Farm –In Crazeymere [Crazywell] Pool, near Yelverton, yesterday, the decomposed body of a man was found by Mr John Pearce, of Kingsett Farm, Walkhampton. The pool is a lonely spot on the moor, and is reached by a steep descent. Three handkerchiefs found in deceased's pockets were marked with the initials 'R.W.' The body was removed to the Manor Hotel, Dousland, where an inquest will be held today.

Western Morning News –Thursday 22nd October 1903.



A postcard of Crazywell Pool

Paul Rendell Collection

Deancombe Farm –Live and Dead Farm Stock for Sale – Auction at the farm on Thursday 28th March 1895 – Mr George Pengelly leaving the farm – Included in sale: 4 Dartmoor ponies, sheep, cows, and potatoes.

Western Morning News –Saturday 23rd March 1895.

Deancombe Farm –To be let, by Private Treaty, on terms to be agreed upon, with immediate possession, Deancombe Farm, in the parishes of Walkhampton and Sheepstor, 14 miles from Plymouth and 8 miles from Tavistock, where markets are held, comprising 245 acres of pasture and arable land, and farm buildings, together with grazing rights on adjoining commons. The farmhouse is not to be included in the tenancy. Body & Son, Land Agents, 12 Princess-square, Plymouth

Western Morning News – Saturday 15th July 1916.

VIKINGS ON DARTMOOR

By Andrew McAuley

Some of Dartmoor's earliest recorded history involves stories of Viking raiders, but much of it is shrouded in local legend, and there is a fair amount of fiction to be separated from fact. Bloody Pool near Shipley Bridge is said to be the site of the 851 battle of Wicganbeorg in which Ealdorman Ceorl defeated a Viking force. There is nothing but local legend to connect the battle to this location – legend which seems to have been fed by the discovery of prehistoric spearheads at Bloody Pool.

It is much more likely that this rather forgotten battle took place at Weekaborough, near Berry Pomeroy. Deeper into Dartmoor, Grimspound is said by some to take its name from the Norse god, Odin, who was also known by the name Grim (among many others). However, the Saxons frequently named features of mysterious origin 'Grim' (such as 'Grim's Ditch' in Oxfordshire), and we might presume that Anglo-Saxons discovering the remains of a Bronze Age settlement in a remote spot may well have found it mysterious.



Part of the Lydford Palisade

Andrew McAuley

It is fairly well-known locally that the Vikings sacked Tavistock in 997: raiding had stopped for a time due to the 'Danegeld' that King Ethelred was paying to keep raiders out of Britain, but by 997 the cost was crippling him (16,000 pounds of silver was paid in 994 alone). When the silver dried up the raids resumed. The Vikings sailed up the Tamar, burning every hamlet they found, stopping at Tavistock. Ordulf, the High Reeve of Devon, had built Tavistock Abbey in 974 – just in time for Viking raiders to burn it to the ground on their way to Lydford where a royal mint was located. Lydford was one of four Saxon burhs in Devon: a stronghold where the populace could seek protection and the local fyrd (warriors) be mustered. Local history has it that a battle ensued, with varying outcomes depending on the source: there is, however, no evidence for a battle whatsoever.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles tell us that the Vikings 'went up (the Tamar) til they came to Lydford, burning and slaying everything they met... and brought to their ships great plunder.' Some sources take this as inclusive of the burning of Lydford. However, the mint continued to produce coinage and there is no physical evidence of the burh being torched. It is much more likely that the



Plan of Saxon Lydford

Danes scorched the surrounding hamlets and farms in a futile effort to encourage the men of Lydford to come out and fight; perhaps they even tried an assault against the burh palisade before calling it a day, making off with such booty as they could. Whatever the outcome, the raiders clearly hadn't swiped enough loot during their raid, as after overwintering somewhere near the mouth of the Tamar they went on to raid Dorset.

The Danes would be back in Devon in 1001 when a battle was fought near Exeter which would turn out to be one of the causes for the St Brice's Day massacre. Thereafter Devon, and by extension Dartmoor, would be safe from the axes of the Danes until 997, when a re-enactment of the 997 raid was held. Unfortunately, the event was poorly planned and only a few re-enactors turned up – so the people of Lydford are presumably safe until at least the year 2997.

Editor's note: There is a longer version of this article in the author's book *Conflict in Medieval Devon, 614-1497*, which is reviewed in this issue.



Saxon and Viking in battle

DARTMOOR LETTERBOXING DIARIES - TALES FROM A MISSPENT MIDDLE-AGE

By Robert Martin

NO. 5 – STILL WALKING ON THE WILD SIDE!

I'm back again with yet more stories of my close encounters, and some of my other meanderings, as they come to mind. So, let's start with birds – some of which are constant companions on letterboxing forays deep into the moor.

When I started this game some 33 years ago, my day in the summer months was dominated by the sound of skylarks. They were always way up above my head, and seemed to follow wherever I walked. The annoying thing was, it was very rare to actually see them in flight, so, when it was time for a drinks break, I used to lie down and concentrate on exactly where the sound was coming from. Sure enough, before long a fluttering black speck came into focus, seemingly hovering miles above me. I couldn't believe that something that small could have such a penetrating voice!

Very sadly, it's rare to hear that sound these days – or perhaps I need to get out more! Although its shrill, insistent call used to get on my nerves, I'd give anything to hear its voice again. Whatever happened to our larks?

... And what about cuckoos? We hear that they too are now an endangered species. Every spring time we used to compete for who heard the first cuckoo before the others. It seemed to get earlier each year, and there was real excitement, as though that first faint cuck-oo was a sacred invocation to say that winter was over, and those wonderful long balmy days were just around the corner! Our favourite place for hearing (sometimes seeing) them, was the Becka Brook below Hound Tor, and this year was no exception.

Eventually, of course, you start to realise that you can have too much of a good thing, so after hearing cuckoos all over the moor for about a month, we would long for them to shut up! So, the big question is – are they really in decline? Based on my, and many other people's tales, I would say a bigno – certainly not on Dartmoor. Perhaps you might like to let the Editor know your thoughts on this. I could relate many more stories of avian sightings and contacts (buzzards, hobbies, red kites, barn owls), but space and time mean...

... that I must move on now to Dartmoor flora – not so much a close encounter as a delightful surprise on coming across fascinating plants unexpectedly. There are so many I'd like to mention, and to ask if you've had similar experiences. Just to get it over quickly, I'll refer to the dreaded bracken, which is a letterboxer's pet hate, and is now ubiquitous across the whole of Dartmoor.

Every year, as the bracken started to appear at the end of May, we would be determined to avoid going anywhere near those areas, but that resolution was soon broken when we got a new clue to a 'must have' box. I can remember several crazy times, fighting my way through bracken areas, low down on a hillside and close to water, with it literally towering over my head (walking through zero visibility in a snowstorm comes to mind!)



The King and Queen of Java preparing to fight through a gorse thicket!

Before we leave this lovely subject, perhaps someone could explain why many people refer to bracken as 'ferns', which, to me, is a complete misnomer. Any answers out there? (Editor comment – bracken is a member of a fern family)

Just to get the ball rolling, bracken and ferns have a totally different growing habit, reproduce differently and bracken always dies back in autumn/winter (thank goodness – but even the dead stalks can be lethal if you don't watch your feet!). I've noted over the years that there have been (half-hearted) attempts by DNPA and others to control the spread of bracken, using various herbicides, but they never got further than a few experimental areas. A permanent solution was ruled out on the basis of cost. Meanwhile, it continues to spread at the rate of about 10 per cent per year!

Now onto another creeping predator – gorse (or furze, as many people call it, but I prefer *Ulex Europaeus*). I've had many an up-close and personal confrontation with it, particularly the low-lying variety which seems to delight in lacerating ones bare legs! It can grow to a height of 10ft, and when grouped together, forms an impenetrable barrier to the most determined letterboxer. I wonder who knows the saying: 'the gorse will stop flowering when kissing goes out of fashion'? I'm sure you will have noticed that there is always a gorse bush flowering somewhere, in every season of the year.

Also, if you (like me) have walked through a gorse 'avenue' in the height of summer, the delightful sweet coconut aroma of thousands of yellow flower-heads is enough to make you feel quite drunk! (try it next summer and enjoy that overwhelming heady experience).

I'll now move swiftly on to some more acceptable flora which I've encountered in many areas of the moor – several by pleasant surprise. Of course, there have been so many varieties that it would be boring to mention them all here, but I'll start with what I know as bog cotton, also called cotton grass and Harestail. It seems to grow mostly in the deep moor near river heads etc, but my richest encounter was when I was on my way back from Swincombe Head, crossing Ter Hill, during April.

I was suddenly aware that I was approaching what looked like a layer of newly-fallen snow, but was in fact thousands of bog cotton heads waving in the wind. The sight was mesmerising and naturally I stopped to pick some to take home to Her Majesty! Each head had about four or five cotton tufts, so a prize indeed.

Another time, I was right in the middle of the boggy area down behind the Bell/Chinkwell Tor area, around June time, when I noticed pink-purple colours amongst the reeds. I remember getting down on my knees in the bog and examining several amazing 10 inch high erect stalks with masses of exotic-looking flower-heads. I had never seen anything like it before. When I got home I rushed to find it in a reference book – failed!

After lots of asking around, I decided it had to be a southern marsh orchid. I remember thinking at the time – ‘what, orchids on Dartmoor – really?’ Since then of course, I’ve seen many more (including the heath spotted orchid), but that first occasion was truly an exciting experience for a Dartmoor novice!

Just one more worth recording here: until I saw my first one on Dartmoor, I could not believe that the delicate foxglove could grow, and positively thrive, in the wilds of Dartmoor. But this was confirmed for me when, in mid-summer 1990 the Gang of 6 did our first letterbox search up the River Plym, crossed it (with difficulty) and went up the tributary of the Langcombe Brook.



A cowflop!

Some way up it we found another small brook on the left, quaintly known as Dead Man’s Bottom. It was up here that the treasure lay hidden. We were all astounded to see that there were hundreds of foxgloves growing only up this short spur! Why just there?

It was only later, when we asked other more knowledgeable letterboxers, that we understood a bit more. The whole of this area (and the Plym below) was a major tin-mining centre, so a lot of excavations had taken place, particularly in Dead Man’s Bottom, where you can find the remains of a tinnners’ hut/shelter. So, the ground had been long-disturbed, and thus a perfect seeding-ground for foxgloves.

Other names for foxgloves are flop-poppy, flop-dock and finger hut, but my personal favourite (peculiar to Dartmoor?) is cowflop! According to legend, Dartmoor was well-manured by the hundreds of cattle which roamed the moor, thus providing perfect growing conditions for foxgloves. There is even a tributary of the East Dart, just above Sandy Hole Pass, called Cowflop Bottom – says it all really!

Right now – that’s pretty well told you all about my fauna and flora adventures. Look out for my next instalment, which will contain more tales of the Gang of 6, and some of the things they/we got up to.

BURRATOR – A DOUBLE ANNIVERSARY

Paul Rendell explores the history of Burrator Reservoir as this September marks a double anniversary; 125 years since the reservoir was completed and 100 years since the raising of the two dams.

It was on 21st September 1898 that Burrator Reservoir was officially opened by Councillor J Bond, the Mayor of Plymouth at the time. The weather was warm and sunny as thousands of people watched him unveil a memorial stone. Sir Massey Lopes, on behalf of the Plymouth Corporation Water Committee (PCWC), presented Cllr Bond with a handsome silver loving cup. Afterwards a banquet was held in the Guildhall in Plymouth for around 400 guests. It was a hearty reception according to Edward Sandeman, the water engineer for the reservoir. During the event many guests were presented with medals as souvenirs of the occasion. The medals, made from bronze, a white metal or silver, were also presented to the workers and staff at the PCWC. During the evening the Royal Marines band played and many speeches were made. The reservoir had cost a total of £178,000, including £102,000 on Burrator Dam and £24,000 on the smaller Sheepstor Dam.



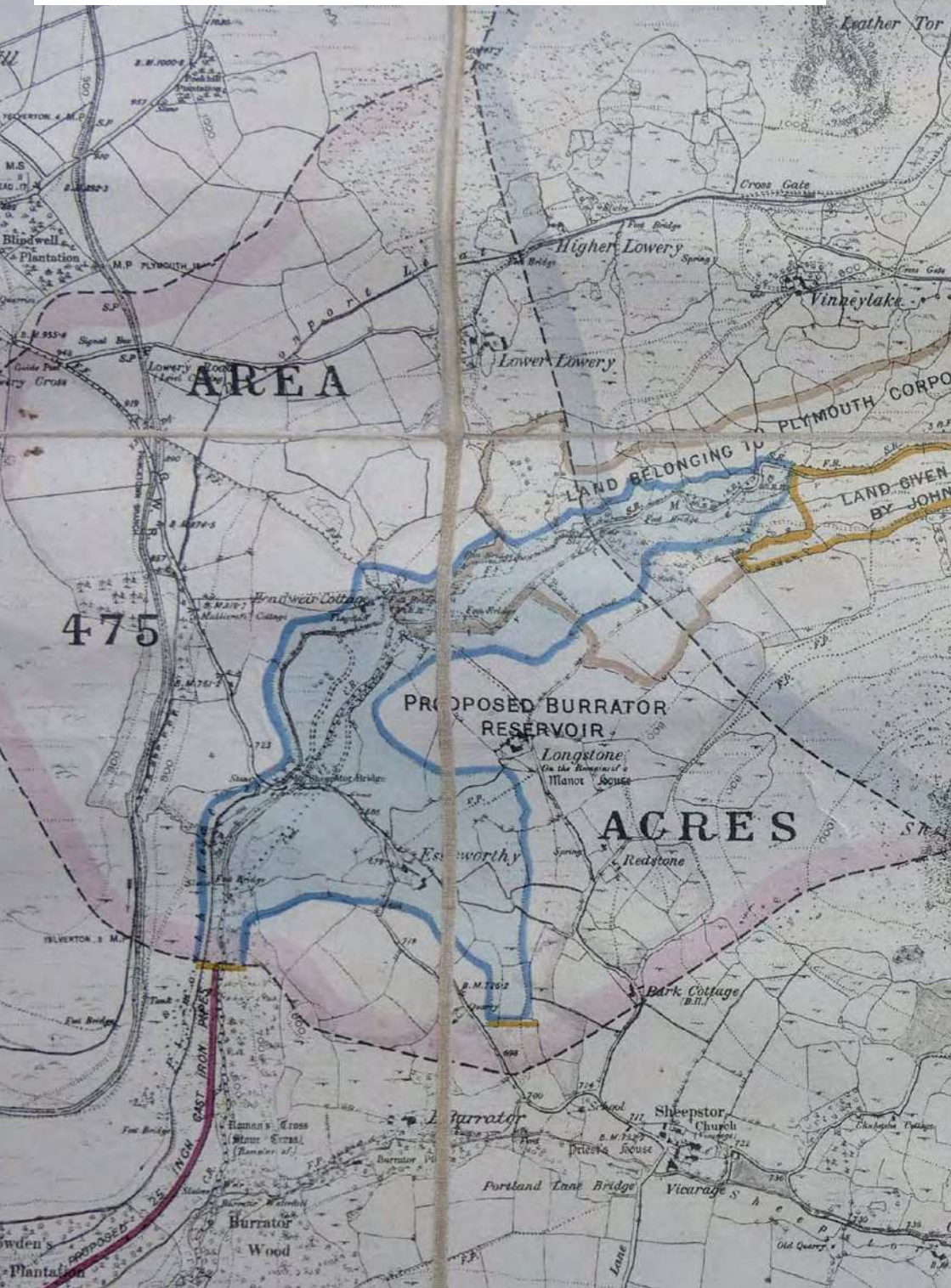
The Burrator medal

Paul Rendell



Burrator Dam being built

Paul Rendell Collection





4885

Kingseat or Kings

Norsworthy

Middleworth

Dana Tor

Boughton

Plantation

Drancombe

Yellowhead
Down

Yellowhead

TO CORPUS
BAYLY ESOR

Feather Bed
Pickles or Parties
House

Collyton



Sheepstor Dam being built

Paul Rendell Collection

Burrator Dam was the first of the two to be built, with construction starting on 9th August 1893. It was constructed of concrete faced with granite blocks. Sheepstor Dam was built the following year and is an earth embankment with a core wall of puddle clay above the original ground level, with a concrete section below ground. When the dams were finished, the rivers were allowed to fill up the reservoir but soon it had to be emptied out as run off from the surrounding hills

made the water appear very dirty – in fact it was clean, but it did not look very nice. After a few months the reservoir started to refill but again it was emptied because the water was found to be not as pure as it should have been. Edward Sandeman had to stand in front of the water committee to explain. The third time it was filled, the water was much better.

In order to preserve the purity of the water discharging into the reservoir, the Corporation bought the whole of the watershed in 1916. The last portion of land was freely donated to Plymouth by John Bayly of Sheepstor.

Boundary posts marked 'PCWW 1917' (Plymouth Corporation Water Works) were erected that year on the moorland surrounding the area.



The pillars of the suspension bridge being erected

Paul Rendell Collection

In January 1917 the reservoir was completely frozen over with the surface covered by ten inches of thick ice, yet a constant supply of water still flowed to Plymouth.

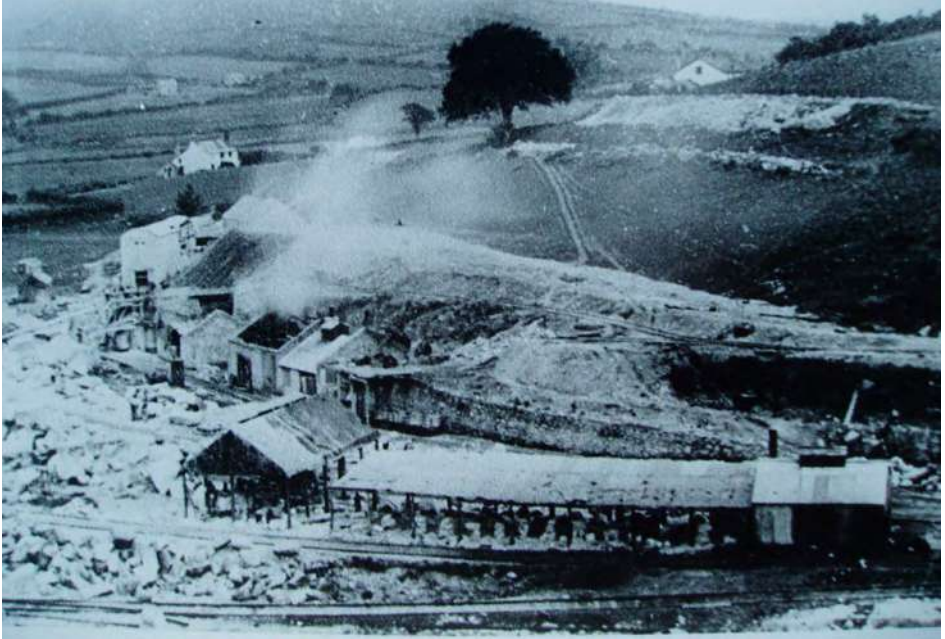
Work started on raising both Burrator and Sheepstor Dams by 10 feet in December 1923. The plan was to enlarge the capacity from 668 million gallons to 1026 million. The work was financed by the Government as part of an unemployment relief programme after the First World War. A temporary suspension bridge was erected by Messrs Orr, Watt & Company, of Motherwell in Scotland. This was built near Burrator Dam to carry traffic while the work proceeded, as the usual main road into the village of Sheepstor was across Burrator Dam. The company was paid £50 for proving and erecting the bridge, which included three months maintenance work afterwards.

At each end of the suspension bridge was a sign that read:

Notice

Nothing exceeding 10 tons weight must cross this bridge.

Chars-a-banc are not allowed on the bridge.



The quarry now under the reservoir

Paul Rendell Collection

The bridge had to be tested so a workman from Yelverton was asked to take his stream roller across; having safely reached the other side he was paid £5.

A few weeks later, Russell Lillicrap, a timber merchant from Horrabridge, drove his traction engine towing a threshing machine across it. The weight was too much and stretched the cables so much that they had to be repaired.

The masonry dam at Burrator, the roadway and the arches had to be removed when a portion of the spillway was taken down. The whole structure was then raised to the new height, the ends of the dam built further into the hillside and the arches and roadway rebuilt.

There was trouble at the reservoir as some men were being paid a different rate to others from Plymouth and the money was not enough to feed the family. The Burrator men were receiving 49s 6d for a 44 hour week. Out of this they paid 12s for board if they were living in the accommodation provided for them and 2s 6d coming and going by train at the weekends. If there was bad weather at Burrator, which there often was, the men only got paid 3s 7d per week. Some men left and others went on strike. In the end they were paid the same rate as the men from Plymouth.

The Royal Insurance Company received a claim from the Mayor of Plymouth stating there had been a fire around midnight on Monday 29th October 1927. The fire started in the drying room in one of the workmen's hut. It seems that cinders from a stove fell on some of the men's clothing and the building was partly destroyed. They paid out a sum of £16 15s 4d for all the clothes in December of the same year.

The water engineer at the time of the dams being raised was Frank Howarth. The enlarged reservoir was opened by the Mayor of Plymouth, Alderman WHJ Priest, at the 'Fyshinge Feast' held on Wednesday September 12th 1928. This was a big event for Burrator; the day was made a local holiday with school children coming out to see the re-opening and it was said that over 30 buses brought people from Plymouth to Burrator and that the railway company laid on extra trains from Plymouth. A number of charabancs took local people on a circular tour of the reservoir. Burrator Dam became a Grade II listed building on 1st September 2000.

References:

Byng, Brian A & Walsh, Peter; *Burrator: a pictorial history*; 1985.

Numerous letters, newspaper cuttings and reports held by the author.

Western Morning News, various issues, September 1898.



Doing the final touches to the dam

Paul Rendell Collection



The suspension bridge

Paul Rendell Collection

FAVOURITE STONE ROWS ON DARTMOOR

Max Piper asks Dartmoor lovers for their favourite stone rows

Stone rows are, along with stone circles and standing stones, perhaps the most magnificent prehistoric features dotting the Dartmoor landscape. These sites can consist of one to three parallel rows of stones and their purpose remains largely a mystery. Were they used as a ceremonial pathway? Indeed it cannot be a coincidence that many are orientated north-east towards the rising sun.

I asked some people what their favourite stone rows are and why, but this is understandably not easy to answer because there are so many fabulous examples. This article looks at some notable ones.

Stalldown Stone Row

As expected, this beautiful single stone row is many people's favourite, including mine. Stretching across the broad Stall Down, this row comprises the largest stones seen in a stone row on Dartmoor, and at the northern, higher end they are like monoliths. These huge stones, which are visible from the Erme valley to the north, are known locally as the 'Cornwood Maidens'. The location of Stalldown Row is particularly delightful, with far-reaching views to the south.



Stalldown Stone Row

Max Piper

Assycombe Stone Row



Assycombe Stone Row

Max Piper

Assycombe Stone Row is beautifully situated within Fernworthy Forest. The area, formerly moorland, was afforested to coincide with the construction of Fernworthy Reservoir in 1942. The Assycombe Row is accentuated by its position on the steep north-west flank of Assycombe Hill, possibly the steepest gradient of any Dartmoor row. It consists of two rows of stones and many people like it because of its atmospheric position, enhanced by the trees on a misty day.

Cosdon Stone Row (The Cemetery)

North Dartmoor does not have as high a concentration of stone rows as the south, but the Cosdon Stone Row, which is a rare triple row, is one of Dartmoor's finest. This site has a stunning aspect and people love its location and the views across the mid Devon countryside. Also known as 'The Cemetery', the row is often included as part of an exciting, lung-busting walk up from South Zeal, and is a wonderful place for a picnic.



Cosdon Stone Row

Max Piper

Hurston Stone Row

Max Piper

Hurston Stone Row

Although it is not too far from Bennett's Cross, Hurston Stone Row is not that easy to find, being on the side of the ridge and off the Two Moors Way path. It is a text-book example of a double stone row with a north facing aspect. It's an attractive antiquity which offers wonderful views and its southern terminal (blocking) stone is impressive.

Drizzlecombe Stone Row

Whilst the stone rows here are by no means as grand as elsewhere, the concentration of prehistory is staggering. Dave Parks, owner of the Prehistoric Dartmoor Walks website, notes this site as his favourite because of 'the huge standing stones that end the rows including the tallest on Dartmoor' and how the ceremonial complex was so important and valued by writers – notably Baring-Gould, Worth and Burnard – who lovingly re-erected the tallest standing stone in 1893.



Drizzlecombe Stone Row

Max Piper

When approached from any direction, though particularly from Higher Hartor Tor, Drizzlecombe fills you with awe, and it is totally understandable why people adore it; its romantic setting within the Plym valley, surrounded by fabulous artefacts, makes it one of Dartmoor's best prehistoric monuments.

I would like to thank Rob Naylor, Dave Parks, Amanda Ellis, Sheron Vowden, Tim Jenkinson and others for their input on this article.

CONAN DOYLE AND THE DARTMOOR PIXIES

By Chris Walpole

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) published *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the most famous of all Dartmoor stories, in 1902. A spiritualist in his adult life, with an interest in the paranormal, he became convinced in 1920 that photographs taken in a West Yorkshire garden a few years earlier by sixteen year old Elsie Wright and her ten year old cousin Frances Griffiths, which appeared to show the girls in close proximity to fairies, were genuine. When he published an article including the photos, the case of what became known as the Cottingley Fairies aroused much interest, some agreeing with Conan Doyle, others certain the images were faked.

Whilst visiting Plymouth in February 1923 to give a lecture on Spiritualism at the Guildhall, Conan Doyle spoke to the *Western Morning News* about his belief in 'the little people'; *Don't laugh at the Cornish pixie and don't laugh at the Dartmoor fairy. Personally I have not the slightest doubt that these little creatures exist. They are a parallel form of life, running alongside of us on another plane. Now and again that plane impinges on ours, and sensitive people see forms of life that are unknown to us. They are surprised, naturally, and I have no doubt the fairies are surprised too. I daresay both have to meet a good deal of scepticism when they tell the story. But you cannot get over evidence by laughing at it, and the evidence is unmistakable. My own children have seen fairies, and that long before they were told fairy stories. Their fresh little souls saw what is invisible to us. It is strange, perhaps, that we should get these occasional manifestations of a life that is out of our focus, but there is nothing unscientific about it. And I can quite understand why these evidences should arise in the wild, unspoilt places of Cornwall and of Dartmoor.*



Dartmoor pixie house beside one of the tracks up to Cosdon from South Zeal

Chris Walpole

TALES FROM THE MUSEUM

Kristy Turner explains another item found in the Museum of Dartmoor Life, Okehampton

WE ALL SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM!

It seems the first person in England to be served ice cream was Charles II in 1671. While he was at the Feast of St George at Windsor Castle, it was served to him alone with white strawberries.

In 1718 Mary Eales wrote a cookery book called '*Receipts*' which contained a recipe for ice cream. It was made for Queen Anne and from reading the instructions, must have contained a lot of coarse ice crystals as no churning was involved. Tin ice pots were filled with cream and tightly closed.



The ice cream maker

They were put into a bucket and surrounded by ice then covered in straw. It took four hours to freeze and was only available to the landed gentry who might have an icehouse in their grounds. A real luxury.

The first ice cream making machine appeared in 1843. It consisted of a wooden bucket that would have been filled with ice and salt. A central metal container held the cream and a turning handle allowed you to churn it, resulting in a smooth frozen cream. Very labour intensive.

In 1847 Swiss entrepreneur Carlo Gatti arrived in London. After running a successful chestnut and waffle stall, he opened a café and restaurant specialising in chocolate and ice cream. He took ice from the Regent's Canal to freeze his cream. Penny licks were popular, selling a scoop in a small glass that was then reused by the next customer! Very unsanitary. In fact they were banned in 1899 as they were believed to be contributing to the spread of tuberculosis.

By 1862 Gatti had become the largest importer of ice in London, which he stored in deep basins inside massive ice houses. He then sent out delivery carts to sell ice to whoever wanted it. We briefly had an ice works on Dartmoor near Sourton Tor with hopes of doing the same, however it wasn't to be.

At the end of the 1800s mechanical refrigeration became available that used electricity and gas. This finally took ice cream to the masses.

Agnes Marshall was a Victorian cookery book writer known as the Queen of Ices. Her 1888 book contains a recipe for '*Cornets with Cream*' which is possibly the earliest mention of the edible cone.

Here at the Museum we were given this 'Kwik Freezer Instantaneous Ice Cream Making Machine' (try saying that with a mouthful of raspberry ripple!) which was patented in 1913. It is aluminium with brass and wooden fittings. Sadly, I have been unable to find out exactly how it works but if anyone knows, please get in touch. My guess would be that the drum is filled with ice and turned, as the cream is poured under it?

After the First World War, ice cream was sold from tricycles all over the country. Wall's Ice Cream went into production in 1922, to great success. By 1924 their sales were £13,719 but such was their popularity that by 1927 their yearly profits had grown to £444,000. A cool result!

DEATH ON DARTMOOR - A FARMER KILLED AT SHEEPSTOR

Paul Rendell reports on a death that took place during hay making in 1882

Working on a farm can be very dangerous as this story will tell. Mr William Jackman from Narrator Farm, Sheepstor, was in the hay field with two other men, when a thunderstorm started and he suggested they should put some hay on their pitch forks and hold it over their heads to keep off the rain.

Within minutes a flash of lightning caught the prong of the fork, and the electric fluid passed into his body, causing instantaneous death. The two other workers nearby were so effected by the shock of seeing him dying that they were under medical treatment for some days after. As soon as they regained some self-possession and saw Mr Jackman on the ground motionless, they sent for Mr de Woolfson, surgeon, and when he arrived he found 'life was extinct'. The shirt sleeves of the deceased were scorched, but there was no mark on the arm; the chest was much scorched.

Mr Jackman, aged about 30, had managed his father's farm for a number of years and had only been married about a year. The other men with him were John Parsons and Thomas Pethick from Plymouth.

The inquest was held by Mr Rodd on Tuesday a few days after the death in July 1882 at Narrator Farm. Pethick, labourer, said he was working on Narrator Farm with the deceased on Saturday and at about 5.30pm a severe thunderstorm came on. They saw the weather was looking unpromising and commenced putting the hay in pooks but before they had finished there were several severe claps of thunder. The deceased had a steel prong in his hand, and had stuck some hay on it. He advised the witness and Parsons to do the same, to keep the rain drops off their heads. They did not do so but within the same instant the witness was knocked down by a flash of lightning.

Parsons, the first to recover from the shock, said he found the shirt and trousers of the deceased on fire. He managed to put the fire out. Mr de Woolfson said when he arrived life appeared to have been extinct about an hour and half. He had no doubt it was lightning that killed him. There were marks on the chest and the nose was bleeding. The coroner summed up and the jury returned a verdict that the deceased was killed by lightning.

(From the *Tavistock Gazette* 18/8/1882)

DARTMOOR BOUNDARY POSTS – REVISITED

PLYMOUTH CORPORATION WATER WORKS

By Mark Fenlon

The Editor suggested that it might be a good idea to bring together all of the information about the metal boundary posts that are positioned at various locations around Burrator Reservoir.

As mentioned previously (*Dartmoor News* Issue 135), the locations of 17 'Posts' were identified using information gathered from an online mapping source (old-maps.co.uk). Unfortunately, that resource has since been closed down. Another online mapping website, provided by the National Library of Scotland, shows 11 of the *Posts* on the 1954 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map.

Only eight of the 17 *Posts* have been located. They are each made of cast iron, with the letters *PCWW* on the front face. Three of the posts, Nos 2, 5 and 6, have the addition of a downward pointing 'arrow' above the lettering, on their front faces. Four do not have the 'arrow', but have the makers name, Ellacott & Son / Plymouth Foundry, on the back (Nos 10, 11, 12 and 13). One of the *Posts* (No 1) has only *PCWW* on it. Although the exact purpose of these markers remains unclear it has been suggested that those with the arrow on them mark the route of underground pipes. As for the others, their purpose has yet to be discovered.

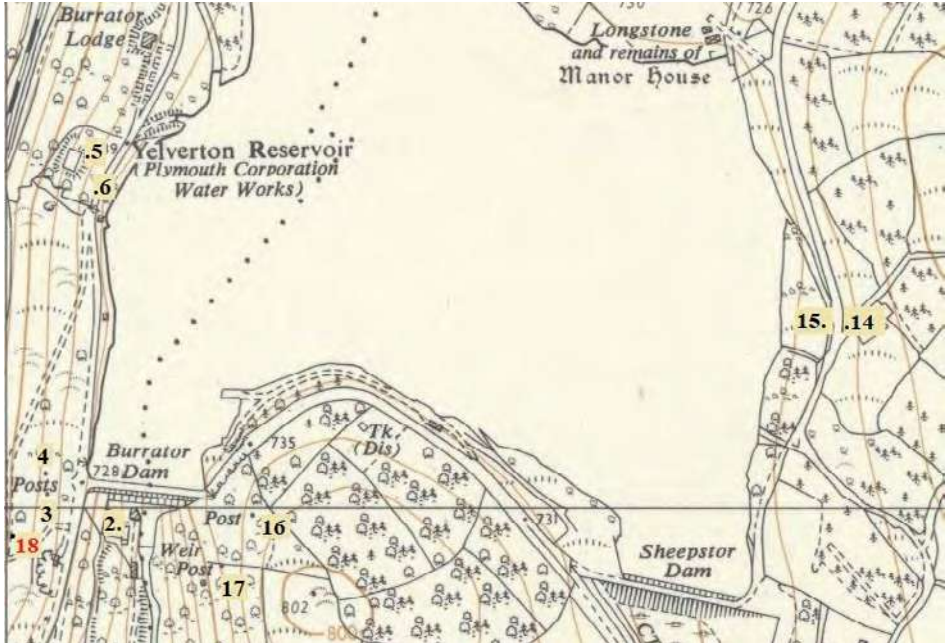
The map on the following page shows the positions of the nine *Posts* in the immediate area around the Burrator and Sheepstor Dams, these being; Nos 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16 and 17. Of these, only Nos 2, 5 and 6 are extant; the others are missing. Their close proximity to the road probably made them an easy target for 'collectors'.

Not shown on the map is *Post* (No.1) which is located near the quarry car park, some 400m south of Burrator Dam.

A photograph of an otherwise unknown *Post* was discovered in the Ted Fitch Collection which is held at the South West Heritage Trust: Devon Archive Catalogue, at Exeter. It shows a *PCWW* metal boundary post installed on the edge of the former trackbed of the Great Western Railway, near Burrator Halt. Although its exact location is difficult to determine, the metal inspection cover shown near the *Post* might provide a clue.

Other *Posts* of the same style (Nos 3 and 4) were positioned a short distance below the trackbed. To avoid having to renumber the whole group, an additional *Post* has been allocated the number 18.

The next group of *Posts* are located at the eastern end of the reservoir, above its southern shoreline. This curious grouping of seven *Posts* runs along a 100 metre stretch of the shoreline, but they do not appear to be defining any form of boundary. Nor is there any visible infrastructure relating to the reservoir in the immediate area around these *Posts*.



1954 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map Annotated to show Posts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18

All seven Posts are within the area of 'Land Given To The Corporation By John Bayly Esq', but none stand on that boundary.

In a Plymouth Corporation minute book, viewed at the Plymouth & West Devon Record Office (PWDRO) a possible purpose for the Posts was found. Item 1642 reads as follows:

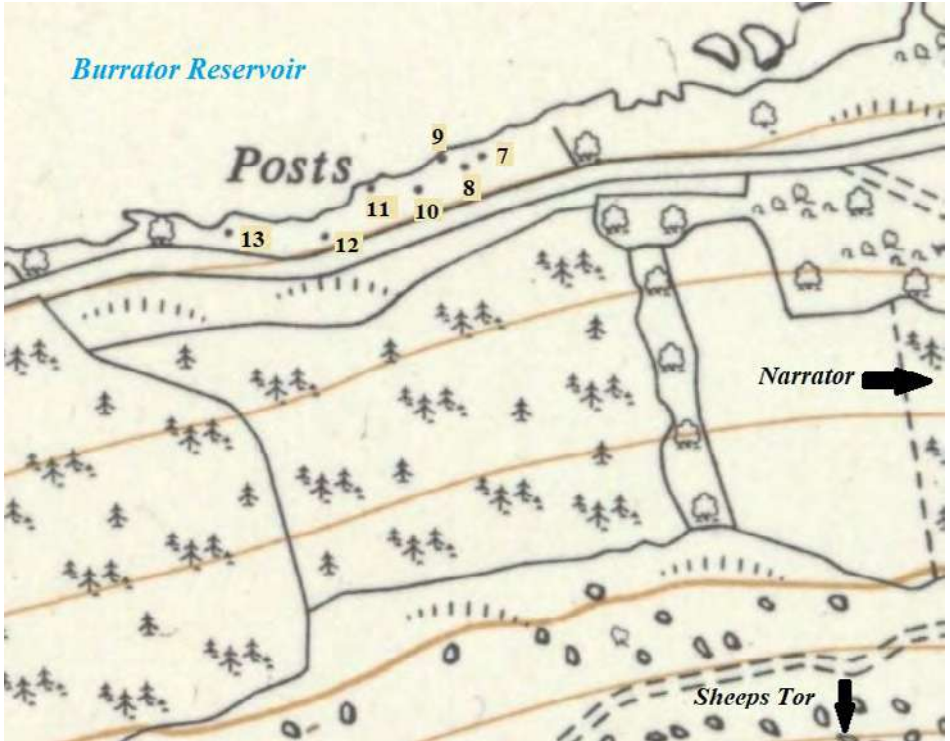
The sub-committee having considered the best manner of defining the fishing rights at Burrator Reservoir, reserved for Sir Massey Lopes, Mr Bayly, and the Corporation, recommend that posts be erected around the fringe of the reservoir in such a manner as to define the rights of all parties in strict accordance with the Plymouth Water Act, 1893. The sub-committee approved the motion.

From their positions, as shown on the map below, it seems very unlikely that those seven Posts (7-13) marked fishing rights. One would expect them to define a specific area, rather than being spread, haphazardly, above the shoreline. Why are the Posts concentrated in such a relatively small area? Until the exact purpose of these seven Posts is discovered we must consider this matter unresolved.

BP PCWW 1 SX 54919 67653 approx. Burrator Reservoir. On north side of road, south of entrance to quarry car park. **P C W W**

BP PCWW 2 SX 55098 68002 approx. Burrator Reservoir. In the bushes, west of the pump house, below the west end of Burrator Dam. **↓ / P C W W**

BP PCWW 3 SX 55216 6794 approx. Burrator Reservoir. Above the drinking fountain at the west end of the Burrator Dam.



1954 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map Annotated to show Posts 7 to 13

BP PCWW 4 SX 5524 6799 approx. Burrator Reservoir. Above the drinking fountain at the west end of the Burrator Dam.

BP PCWW 5 SX 55093 68355. Yelverton Reservoir. Below the north-east corner of the reservoir. ↓ / **P C W W**

BP PCWW 6 SX 55099 68335. Burrator Reservoir. On top of the wall, on the west side of the road. ↓ / **P C W W**

BP PCWW 7 SX 5643 6889 approx. Burrator Reservoir. At the north-east end, near the edge of the wooded area above the southern shoreline.

BP PCWW 8 SX 5643 6889 approx. Burrator Reservoir. At the north-east end, near the edge of the wooded area above the southern shoreline. South-west of previous post.

BP PCWW 9 SX 5642 6889 approx. Burrator Reservoir. At the north-east end, near the edge of the wooded area above the southern shoreline. North-west of previous post.

BP PCWW 10 SX 56429 68897 approx. Burrator Reservoir. At the north-east end, near the edge of the wooded area above the southern shoreline. South-west of previous post. **P C W W** – front| **Ellacott & Son / Plymouth Foundry** – back

BP PCWW 11 SX 56403 68894. Found uprooted, at the north-east end of the

reservoir, on the southern shoreline below the wooded area. Between the sites of BP PCWW 10 & 12. SX 55194 68522. Installed at the Burrator Discovery Centre (c2016).
P C W W – front | **Ellacott & Son / Plymouth Foundry – back**

BP PCWW 12 SX 56392 68871. At the north-east end of the reservoir, near the edge of the wooded area above the southern shoreline. To the west of BP PCWW 10.
P C W W – front | **Ellacott & Son / Plymouth Foundry – back**

BP PCWW 13 SX 56352 68869. At the north-east end of the reservoir, on the south bank, in wooded area. **P C W W – front** | **Ellacott & Son / Plymouth Foundry – back**

BP PCWW 14 SX 55823 68167. Burrator Reservoir. On east side of road near the former access lane to Redstone Farm.

BP PCWW 15 SX 55815 68167. Burrator Reservoir. On the west side of the road opposite the former access lane to Redstone Farm.

BP PCWW 16 SX 55241 67995. Burrator Reservoir. In the wooded area above the east end of Burrator Dam.

BP PCWW 17 SX 55211 67944. Burrator Reservoir. In the wooded area above the east end of Burrator Dam.

BS PCWW 18 SX 55000 68042 very approximate. Beside disused GWR trackbed, high above the west end of Burrator Dam.

References:

National Library of Scotland online mapping

Plotting Plymouth's Past – PCWW stones: *Dartmoor News* Issue 129 (p28) / Issue 135 (p24)



Back

Mark Fenlon



Front

Mark Fenlon

DARTMOOR'S WESTERN POLICE STATIONS

In the last of the series, Simon Dell looks at a small village station near Yelverton

WALKHAMPTON POLICE STATION

Walkhampton Station, like those at Morwellham and Chillaton, was an early casualty of progress and change, surviving little more than 60 years after the formation of the Devon Constabulary. The account written in a short booklet entitled *Walkhampton – Church, Parish and Village* by L Govier, published in 1984, gives an excellent record of policing the area.



The former Walkhampton police house in 2020

Simon Dell

The earliest recorded bailiff is in the Walkhampton Manor Court Rolls for 1563-1585 but, like many of the villages in the area, the Poor Law Act of 1601 had a profound effect. Constables were appointed by the court at Jump, now known as Roborough. In 1641 John Dunning and Roger Attwill held this office. Village and court records detail Constable Peter Reed as being at Walkhampton in 1821 as the unpaid official. By 1847, only nine years before the formation of the Devon Constabulary, there were four such officers of the parish holding the title of constable – Messrs William Gosling of Knowle, Samuel Hannaford of Easter Green, John Giles of Lowery Steant and John Creber of Horseyatt.

It was not until 1861, some five years into the era of the Devon Constabulary, that the school records for the village provide any information in respect of the children of the local constabulary. It is then stated that Richard Howe, constable of Walkhampton, had his daughter admitted to the school. Again, two years later, Constable Samuel Seabright's daughter is shown to have attended. Constables Constantine Bowman and William Greek followed in 1864 and 1871, respectively. It is worthy of note, however, that unpaid parish officers continued to be appointed until 1872; James Maddock, local blacksmith, was the last to hold the parish position as a forerunner to the modern-day special constable.

The names recorded by L Govier as constables for the village are Border (1883-7), Dymond (1892-7), Hurford (1887-8), Hart (1900), Fry (1902), Clogg and Podger (1906) and Constable West, who left in the early 1920s to supplement the single officer at Yelverton. And so came the end of an era, one in which Walkhampton, being a major parish on the western side of Dartmoor, had warranted a resident constable for many years.

The dwelling rented by the Devon Constabulary as the local police cottage was Staddons House. This building is opposite the site of the former post office, near the village school, much altered now but still standing in silent witness to many of the village events of yesteryear.

DARTMOOR INSCRIBED STONES

NEWS AND VIEWS

If you find any inscribed stones on Dartmoor and want to know more about them please let us know. If you know the answers to any questions raised here please also get in touch.

C Stone at Dart Bridge, Buckfastleigh

The C stone (SX 74429 66615) near Dart Bridge has recently been cleared of vegetation by Paul Buck, Paul Rendell, Tim Jenkinson, and Max Piper. There is supposed to be a second C stone on the north side of Dart Bridge, but this has not been found.



The cleared C stone at Dart Bridge

Paul Rendell

'Take Off' Stone Nearly Hit by Vehicle

The 'Take Off' stone at Beardon beside the A386 near Lydford has recently been cleared by the Editor, who found it had nearly been hit by a vehicle wheel. The stone was stolen many years ago so DNPA had a new stone made to replace it. It is found beside the road in a small layby. Vehicles often stop here and it seems that one vehicle's wheel just missed the stone.



The 'Take Off' stone

Paul Rendell

Milestone on Black Down Cleaned

The old milestone on Black Down near Mary Tavy was recently cleaned by Mark Fenlon and the Editor. The stone was covered in dirt and lichens and was no longer readable – but now it is clear to read.



The milestone on Black Down

Paul Rendell

Another Milestone Cleared

The milestone near the Toll House on the road out of Tavistock heading towards Mary Tavy was hit by branches from a fallen tree last year. The Editor cleared some branches away from the stone as reported in a previous issue of *Dartmoor News*.



The milestone near the Toll House

Paul Rendell

'Annie Pinkham's Men' Found

Over the last few years the number of 'Annie Pinkham's Men', the row of stones beside the A386 road near the old Wheal Betsy mine above Mary Tavy, have decreased, but in February Mark Fenlon and the Editor re-discovered at least four of these stones. They had been cleaning the milestone on the other side of the road on Black Down when they looked down the bank and saw, partly hidden in the grass, a number of cut stones near gaps in the row of the 'men' beside the road. When investigated, they turned out to be a reused granite gatepost and three other 'men' from the row of stones.



Mark beside one of the fallen 'men'

Paul Rendell

East Dartmoor's Lesser-Known Tors and Rocks

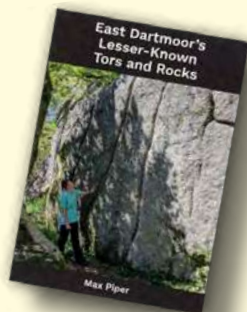
by *Max Piper*

This new paperback book now out is full of photographs and has 348 pages. The tors and rocks are within an area not often visited.

To get a copy, send a cheque payable to 'Paul Rendell' at:
*The Coach House, Tramlines,
Okehampton, Devon, EX20 1EH*

£24.00 including postage.

Also available from www.paulrendelldartmoor.co.uk



EXPLORING BURRATOR GUIDED WALKS

SUNDAY 16th APRIL – EXPLORING THE TORS

Start time: 10.00am

Meeting Point: Nosworthy Bridge, Burrator Reservoir, meeting in larger car park

Duration: 7 miles (11km) – 4 hrs. Cost: £8

Route: Exploring the many tors around Burrator including Middleworth Tor, Snapper Tor, Little Down Tor, Down Tor, Combeshead Tor, Cuckoo Rock, Rough Tor, and Sheepstor.

FRIDAY 19th MAY – EXPLORING THE PLANT LIFE

Start time: 10.00am

Meeting Point: Burrator Dam Quarry car park

Duration: 5 miles (8km) – 3 hrs. Cost: £7

Route: Discover the many flowers and plants to be found around the reservoir

MONDAY 12th JUNE – EXPLORING LESSER KNOWN FEATURES

Start time: 10.00am

Meeting Point: Nosworthy Bridge, Burrator Reservoir, meeting in larger car park

Duration: 7 miles (11km) – 4 hrs. Cost: £8

Route: Exploring the many lesser known features including the site of the Harter Reservoir, inscribed stones, potato caves and other odd items.

SUNDAY 23rd JULY – EXPLORING OLD FARMS AND MINES**Start time:** 10.00am**Meeting Point:** Nosworthy Bridge, Burrator Reservoir, meeting in larger car park**Duration:** 5 miles (8km) – 3 hrs. Cost: £7**Route:** Middleworth, Deancombe, Combeshead, Outcombe and Narrator.**MONDAY 14th AUGUST – EXPLORING THE OLD RAILWAYS****Start time:** 10.00am**Meeting Point:** Burrator Dam Quarry car park**Duration:** 5 miles (8km) – 3 hrs. Cost: £7**Route:** Discover the old tramways and railways near Burrator.**SATURDAY 9th SEPTEMBER – EXPLORING BURRATOR'S OLD FARMS****Start time:** 10.00am**Meeting Point:** Nosworthy Bridge, Burrator Reservoir, meeting in larger car park**Duration:** 9 miles (14.5km) – 6 hrs. Cost: £11.50**Route:** Exploring the many ruined farm buildings as well as looking at tin mining in the area. Visiting Leather Tor Farm, Devonport Leat, Stanlake Farm, Kingsett Farm, Down Tor Stone Row, Combeshead Farm, Potato Cave, Deancombe Farm and Middleworth Farm.

Please book for these walks and pay by 6pm the evening before – email paul.dartmoor@gmail.com or phone 01837 54727.



Leather Tor Bridge

Paul Rendell

DARTMOOR DINING

With Pauline Greenwood

THE MARY TAVY INN – MARY TAVY

On a beautiful sunny February morning we decided to visit this pub for our lunch and we were not disappointed. We sat in the tastefully decorated restaurant where there are tables for two, three and four. There was a good main menu to choose from, also stone baked continental pizzas, gluten, vegetarian and dairy free options available. All fish is line caught from Kingfisher, Brixham, with the meat supplied from Palmers of Tavistock.

On the lunch time menu are baguettes (white or granary all served with salad and coleslaw) priced from £8.95-£9.25; paninis £8.50; three egg omelettes served with hand cut chips and coleslaw £10.50. On the main menu; ham, eggs and hand cut chips £11.50 (GF); beer battered fish and hand cut chips with mushy peas and home-made tartare sauce £15.50; fish pie with fresh vegetables £14.95; Mediterranean vegetable and ricotta lasagne with salad, chips and garlic bread £13; beef lasagne with salad, chips or garlic bread. £13.95; burger, sirloin steak and gammon steak.



Part of the dining area

Paul Rendell

I chose the fish pie which I really enjoyed, cod, haddock and salmon covered with a lovely mash, it came with red cabbage, broccoli (perfectly cooked) and carrots. The Editor had the gammon steak with the usual egg, tomato, mushroom and onion rings with French fries. For desserts I had the sticky toffee pudding with custard. Paul had chocolate and caramel tart with ice cream which is supplied by the Dartmoor Ice Cream Company who are based in Princetown. We both enjoyed our meal and would be happy to eat here again.



Gammon and chips

Paul Rendell

Lunch is served between 12pm and 2.30pm. Dinner and pub classic menus between 6pm and 9pm. Sunday lunchtime roast between 12pm and 4pm. A variety of teas and coffees are available, also hot chocolate. Booking a table is advisable. There is a beer garden, it is dog friendly. B&B holiday accommodation is also available. Closed on Mondays. There is a good sized car park on the other side of a narrow lane. The pub has a five star rating and can be found on Tripadvisor. This is a traditional Country Inn on the edge of Dartmoor and you can reach the moor by walking from it.

The Mary Tavy Inn is located on the A386 between Tavistock and Okehampton.

www.themarytavyinn.co.uk

Phone number: 01822 810326



Sticky Toffee Pudding

Paul Rendell

OKEHAMPTON RAILWAY STATION: REVIEW OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Shortly after the completion of Okehampton station's heritage restoration project, Chris Burridge-Barney visited the station to survey the services and facilities on offer

As many readers will be aware, Okehampton station re-opened to regular weekday passenger services in November 2021, after a gap of 49 years. The western terminus of the Dartmoor Line, it is served by hourly Great Western Railway (GWR) trains to Exeter via Crediton, from morning to late evening, seven days a week. Some services terminate at Exeter St Davids, but most continue to Exeter Central.

Okehampton station is also well-served by buses, including the 6 to Holsworthy and Bude, the 6A to Exeter, the 118 to Lydford and Tavistock, and the 306 to Launceston. Together these provide a connection between Okehampton town centre and the station onto most daytime trains (there is no connection to/from the last two evening trains). The author has found this particularly useful when travelling to the station, avoiding a steep climb up Station Road.

Though the station opened in 1871, the main building dates from the early 1930s, when the Southern Railway rebuilt the station. It has three platforms, but only one (Platform 3) is used at present; Platforms 1 and 2 were formerly used by Dartmoor Railway heritage services to Meldon Viaduct, but these ceased when the Dartmoor Railway went into administration in 2020.

The station's reopening has seen the addition of a few modern features, such as accessible signage and dot-matrix displays, to ensure it meets the needs of all passengers on today's railway. However, these have in no way diminished the station's heritage feel, and it remains resplendent in Southern Railway green, bedecked with posters advertising resorts served by the Southern's 'Withered Arm'.

As part of the above mentioned restoration project, the station café has been refurbished and fitted out with panels detailing the station's history. Named the 'Bulleid Buffet' after railway engineer (and former Belstone resident) Oliver Bulleid (1882-1970), it serves a variety of hot and cold meals, including several plant-based options. The author enjoyed his vegan all-day breakfast (substituting the egg for an extra sausage) and noted an impressive selection of snacks to go.



The booking hall

Chris Burridge-Barney

Next door to the café is the booking hall and former booking office, which a volunteer kindly showed the author around. The latter contains a range of Edmondson railway tickets, as well as the former Okehampton signal box telephone and notice detailing the number of rings required to reach other locations (3 pause 1 for Meldon Quarry signal box, 2 pause 3 for Lydford Down Sidings etc.)



Platform 2

Chris Burrige-Barney

Moving further up platform 3, we find an unstaffed Dartmoor National Park information centre. Though smaller than its counterparts at Haytor, Postbridge and Princetown, this features a 3D light-up model of the area around Okehampton Station, as well as information on the history, geology and ecology of Dartmoor. A former station barrow has been put to good use, displaying a range of leaflets, including several of Devon County Council's bus timetable booklets.

Adjacent to this is a Dartmoor Railway Association shop, predominantly selling second-hand railway books but also stocking photographs of the area around Meldon Reservoir, and railway-related postcards. Finally, at the Exeter end of the platform, are the waiting room and ladies' and accessible toilets.

Across the footbridge, on Platform 2, is the Arthur Westlake Museum, a treasure trove of artefacts relating to local railway history. It is named for Arthur Westlake (1918-2011), a former train driver and area manager at Okehampton, whose efforts helped ensure the line and station survives to this day. Inside are such curiosities as the finial from the down starting signal at Okehampton, station signs from Sampford Courtenay, North Tawton and Crediton, and the line closure notice from 1972.

From the rear of the station, it is a very short walk onto the moor, via a footpath over the A30, connecting to a bridleway to Klondyke Corner; suggested walks from the station are available from <https://dartmoorline.com/>. Also adjacent is the Granite Way cycle hire shop and café, and Youth Hostel Association Okehampton, located within the former goods shed.

All in all, those behind the restoration project, including Network Rail, GWR, Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership, the Dartmoor Railway Association and DNPA, are to be highly commended for their sterling work. They have succeeded in not only making the station a pleasant place to wait for a train, but a destination in its own right, and an excellent gateway to northern Dartmoor.

SPOTLIGHT ON DARTMOOR BRIDGES

A new series in which Paul Rendell visits some of the many bridges on Dartmoor. Most people just drive over a bridge not taking much interest in its history, its structure or the features that can be found nearby. This series plans to look in-depth at some of these bridges

PIALL BRIDGE

HOW TO FIND:

On the road between Lee Moor and Cornwood at grid ref SX 596 605

HISTORY:

A road bridge which goes across the Piall Brook, dating from the mid-late 19th century. Built from granite ashlar, partly rock-faced. Single deeply-chamfered four-centred arch with roll moulded hood mould. Cutwaters on downstream side only with semi-octagonal piers above.



The bridge looking up river

Paul Rendell

THINGS TO SEE:

Plaque on parapet inscribed – ‘This Bridge erected at the cost of William MacWorth

Praed Esq was accepted by the County of Devon’. The bottom of the plaque is now

covered by the road surface and the date, if there is one, is obscured.

There is a benchmark with stud on top of the downstream parapet.

‘C’ (County) stones are to be found each side of the bridge.



The plaque on the bridge

Mark Fenlon

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION:

The bridge is a Grade II listed structure, first listed on 2 February 1984.

The Piall Brook starts life within the china clay pits, so often flows with a milky white colour.

The nearby Delamore estate at Cornwood has been with the Parker family since 1688; the current house was built in 1859. William Mackworth Parker was born 1 September 1886, the eldest son of Lieutenant Colonel William Frederic Parker. He was killed in 1915 during the First World War.



One of the ‘C’ stones

Paul Rendell



The benchmark on the parapet

Paul Rendell

DARTMOOR MOON WALK 2023

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Thur 6th April

Meeting Point: Pork Hill car park, SX 531 751

Duration: 3 miles (5km) – 2 hrs. Start 7.30pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Fri 5th May

Meeting Point: Car park below Gutter Tor, SX 580 673

Duration: 4 miles (6.5km) – 2 hrs. Start 8.00pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Sat 3rd June

Meeting Point: Haytor higher car park

Duration: 3 miles (5km) – 2 hrs. Start 8.00pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Mon 3rd July

Meeting Point: Pork Hill car park, SX 531 751

Duration: 3 miles (5km) – 2 hrs. Start 8.30pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Tue 1st Aug

Meeting Point: Four Winds car park, SX 561 749

Duration: 4 miles (6.5km) – 2 hrs. Start 8.30pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Thur 31st Aug

Meeting Point: Haytor higher car park

Duration: 3 miles (5km) – 2 hrs. Start 8.30pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Fri 29th Sept

Meeting Point: Car park below Gutter Tor SX 580 673

Duration: 4 miles (6.5km) – 2 hrs. Start 8.00pm

Dartmoor Moon Walk – Sat 28th October

Meeting Point: Four Winds car park SX 561 749

Duration: 4 miles (6.5km) – 2 hrs. Start 7.30pm

These walks will give you a chance to walk in the dark on Dartmoor. Hopefully we will be walking in the moonlight, so bring a torch. We will learn about some of the many legends and we should see the sun set and the moon rise if we get a clear evening. Bring a drink and a snack and wear warm clothes. Dogs are not permitted on these walks.

Cost is £7 per person, under 16 £5 per person, and you must book and pay in advance as there are limited spaces. The walks will book up fast so be quick. You can pay by Paypal, cheque or Bacs.

Email: paul.dartmoor@gmail.com or phone 01837 54727.



Walkers at Ditsworthy Warren House

Glavind Strachan Photography



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DARTMOOR'S HIDDEN GEMS - BURRATOR FALLS AND BURRATOR

Paul Rendell re-visits a little waterfall and a great tor near Burrator Dam, hidden gems first visited in Dartmoor News Issue 117 (November/December 2010)

HOW TO FIND

Park at Burrator Dam, walk across the dam and as the road turns left go right over a stile. Burrator is straight in front of you. Climb the hill and walk beside a fence at the top of the hill. Follow it to the waterfall.

INFORMATION

Thousands of people flock to see Burrator Reservoir every year; they visit the dam, maybe walk around the reservoir, take a photo of the water coming out of the Devonport Leat saying this is Burrator Waterfall and then have an ice cream. But they have not visited some gems hidden nearby, including the real Burrator waterfall.



Burrator

Paul Rendell

THINGS TO SEE

Burrator Falls (SX 55212 67582). This is Sheepstor Brook and is a wonderful series of waterfalls heading down the hillside to join the River Meavy (Mewy). Sadly overgrown with lots of fallen trees but still a wonderful spot. There are at least three large redwood trees growing nearby. A wide track leads to the valley floor and another heads off towards one of the Burrator outcrops.



Burrator waterfall

Paul Rendell

Burrator House Hydro-Electric scheme. From the top of the waterfall to the bottom and across the River Meavy you will see metal pipes which were part of the hydro-electric scheme to supply power to the house in the 1920s. No longer used. Most of the remains are across the Sheepstor Brook in Burrator Woods.

Burra Tor or Burrator (SX 5520 67909). This tor is an amazing series of rocks and outcrops that go on for ages within the woods. If you go to the bottom of the tor and the base of the dam beside the River Meavy and look up, it is like a giant granite fortress covered in mosses and other woodland plants. There is a long wall of rock reaching a height of nearly 25 feet (8m). Among the tors is a well-preserved remnant of a workman's hut, possibly used by the men working on the dam. This is one tor you must visit for it is a joy. You will even find caves among the outcrops.

Weir across the Meavy. At the very bottom of the waterfall, and not easy to reach, is the remains of an old weir which was constructed to divert water from the river before the reservoir was built to supply Meavy Mill.

Burrator Falls Rocks (SX 55218 67585) A collection of rocks on both sides of Sheepstor Brook and a small outcrop within Burrator Woods near the waterfall.



Redwood trees

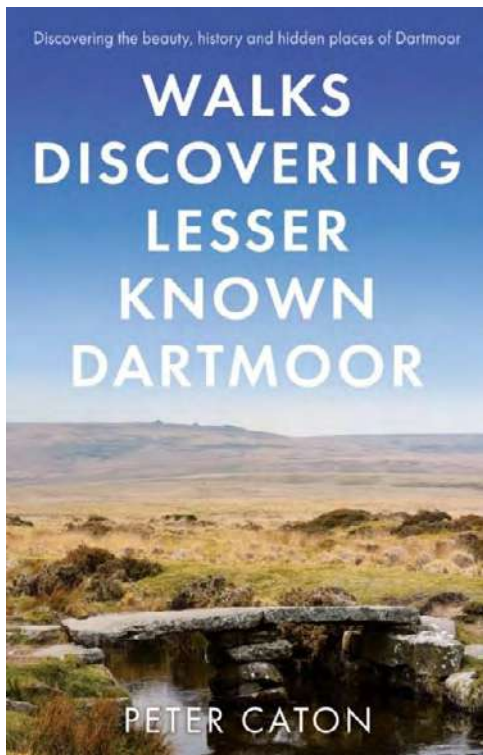
Paul Rendell

WHY A HIDDEN GEM

Peaceful away from the crowds, not too far to walk from the road. Ancient woodland covered in bluebells in the spring and some wonderful plants. Can be very steep exploring the hillside so take care.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Best not to visit in the summer months, too much bracken around and fallen trees cover the waterfall. Not an easy place to walk if you get off the paths and tracks.



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For those who don't know Dartmoor they provide routes for interesting walks of varying length and difficulty. Whilst some of the points of interest will be familiar to those who know the moor well, the walks will take you to places that very few people visit, passing little known artefacts with something new for almost everyone.

Produced in full colour with routes clearly marked on OS maps, the book includes comprehensive background information on the moor and the history, stories and legends of the many places visited on each walk.

www.petercatonbooks.co.uk

DARTMOOR BOUNDARY STONES

CORNWOOD PARISH BOUNDARY – HALL FARM

By Mark Fenlon

When following the Cornwood parish boundary in a clockwise direction, from its northernmost point at Broad Rock, it heads east along the shared boundary with Dartmoor Forest to the A Head stone. It then turns south, following the River Erme to Red Lake Foot. From there it leaves the Forest boundary and follows the river southwards, on the shared boundary with Harford Parish.

At the confluence with Piles Brook, the Cornwood boundary leaves the River Erme and heads west to follow the northern perimeter wall of Yadsworthy Waste. It then heads north-westwards before turning to the south, to pass through the enclosed land around Yadsworthy Farm and then Hall Farm.

In the fields to the west of Hall Farm, the shared boundary is defined by a series of boundary stones. Although having received little attention from Dartmoor commentators, they have long been a source of intrigue for this author.



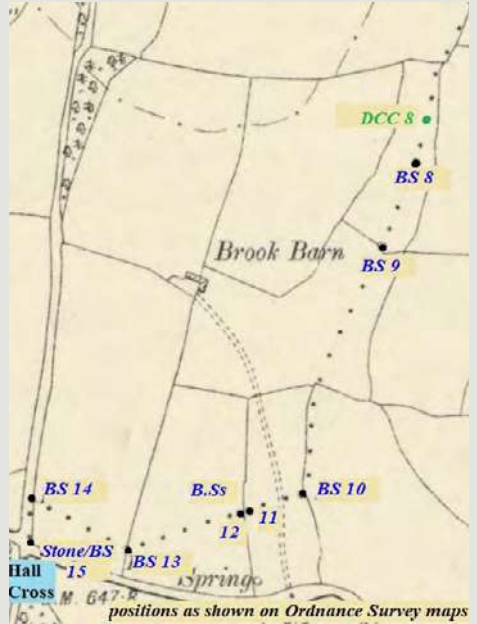
The newly discovered stone *Mark Fenlon*

As with all new boundary stone investigations, old maps are the first reference source. Unfortunately, in this case, the information gleaned from the various map editions created more questions than answers.

On the 1842 Tithe Map of Cornwood there are seven positions, each marked as a BP (Boundary Post). The 1838 Tithe Map of Harford shows seven unlabelled positions, each marked by a small sketch that resembles a 'boundary stone'. Both maps show the 'boundary markers' standing against the field hedges, but the sides of the hedges on which the markers stand, differ.

That confusion is exaggerated by the early 25-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) maps that show seven positions, each marked as a BS (Boundary Stone), that are different to those on the Tithe Maps. The OS maps also show an additional position, at Hall Cross, which is marked as *Stone* (1887 edition) and as *BS* (1906 edition).

The Devon County Council's (DCC) Environment Viewer adds even more confusion. Of the seven positions, marked by a 'pink triangular' pin, one is in a different position to those on all of the other map sources. Also, the information attached to another pin describes two BSs at that position which makes a total of eight BSs on DCC's Environment Viewer.



When combining the information from each of the sourced maps, there are a total of eleven different positions marked as a *BP*, *BS* or *Stone*.

The maps above, 1842 Tithe Map of Cornwood (left) and Ordnance Survey (right), show the differences in the positions of the boundary markers. They are numbered in the order that they appear, in a clockwise route around the parish boundary, from north to south and then east to west.

In February 2022, Steve Grigg and Frank Collinson confirmed the locations of three of the boundary stones, each being inscribed C|H. These are shown as BS11, BS12 and BS13 on *Map 2* above. An account of their exploits can also be viewed on the *Dartmoor Explorations* website, under *Parish and Manor Boundaries*.

Several months later, the Woodland Trust confirmed their purchase of the Hall Farm Estate, which includes the fields where the BSs are located. Permission must now be sought to gain access to that land.

Towards the end of 2022, the Editor was granted access to the area. During his explorations, he confirmed the presence of the same three BSs.

Early in February 2023, the Editor and the author visited the area to record the three rediscovered BSs and conduct a thorough search for those not yet located.

Some of the sites were in marshy areas and searching for them proved quite challenging. At two of the sites, newly installed stock fencing prevented close access to the hedges, so only a visual search could be conducted.

With BP13/BS13 beyond arms length inside the fence, it was not possible to remove the vegetation that obscured the inscribed letter 'H'.

A similar situation was encountered at the site of BP14/BS14, where the stock fence was over one metre from the hedge. The only way to gain access was through a gate in the lane, north of Hall Cross.

A decision was made to return to this area after completing our search for the other BSs. As it turned out, the search was very disappointing and produced the same results as those previously mentioned. For the author, the highlight was seeing the three 'known' BSs for the first time.

Leaving Hall Farm, the Editor drove the short distance to Hall Cross and parked. He remained in the car whilst the author scurried up the lane and climbed over the gate. Several minutes were spent scouring the hedge for any object with a straight edge that could possibly be a boundary stone. As each object was dismissed, hopes of finding the BS diminished.

In a final act of desperation, a half-hearted poke at a soft clump of moss hit something solid beneath it. With little expectation, the layer of moss was lifted and there, before the author's eyes, was an inscribed 'C'. Once again, stubborn persistence had paid off.

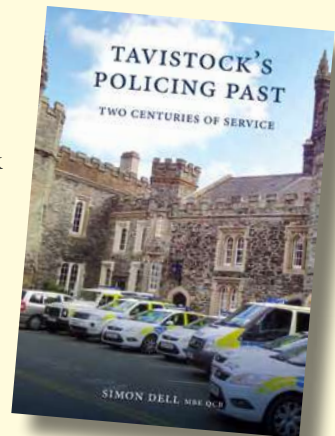
Buzzing with excitement, an attempt to phone the Editor was greeted with 'No Signal'. A shout of his name, followed by the words 'I've found it', brought the Editor from his car to the site. On his arrival, the BS was then cleaned to reveal the full C|H inscription.

This rediscovery instantly became the highlight of the day, and what a way to round off our trip to Hall Farm.

Tavistock's Policing Past

by Simon Dell MBE

"Tavistock's Policing Past" was published to celebrate the restoration and opening of Tavistock Guildhall as a 'gateway' centre for the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. This book charts the life of that unique building which housed the magistrates' court and police station from 1848 - 2012. That significant record made Tavistock Police Station one of the oldest purpose-built police stations in the country in continuous use.



This book also commemorates over two centuries of policing in Tavistock and West Devon, from the early years before the guildhall was built, through the centuries to when the police service moved into its new, modern home.

Copies are available from Simon Dell's website: www.simondell.co.uk

NATURE NOTES

A round-up of what is happening in the natural world on the moor. If you see any unusual wildlife, please let us know.

Clare Meiklejohn saw a weasel near Doe Tor Brook on 9th December – ‘It was moving much too fast to get a photograph’ said Clare.

On 12th December a great white egret was seen in a small stream near the Two Bridges Hotel. It stayed for a few days before moving on.

Just before Christmas an otter cub was found near Postbridge. It was rescued and taken to the Otter Sanctuary at Buckfastleigh. The cold snap in December followed by heavy rain and floods made life hard for this little cub and it got separated from its mother. It was lucky to be rescued. It will undergo a lengthy rehabilitation before being released back into the wild this spring.

At Rushlade Bridge on New Year’s Day morning Max Piper saw a roe deer crossing the road. On the same day the Editor saw about 20 golden plover on Broadun near Postbridge, whilst heading towards Fur Tor with a group of walkers.

On 15th January Paul Buck, Tim Jenkinson, Max Piper and the Editor saw two roe deer in Kings Wood, Buckfastleigh.

A flock of about 50 lapwings were seen flying over the fields near Whiddon Down on 27th January by the Editor.

On 3rd February Brian Bolt was out with friends and reports: ‘While walking on the track past Dinah’s House on our way back for a drink at the Warren House Inn we looked down to a small pool where I saw some frogspawn. Not a lot but beside it were two small frogs. I know from past experience that we always see frogspawn on Dartmoor much earlier than in our garden ponds, but this early was a surprise.’

On 8th February, Max Piper saw a fox running across the south-east slope of Gripper’s Hill, above Harbourne Head.

The Editor saw a herd of 20 roe deer on 9th February, including a group of six white deer, near Chagford.

Helen Burden, Karen Howell and the Editor saw 14 golden plover flying around Langcombe Hill high above the River Erme on 12th February.

Janette Hemingway reports seeing and hearing skylarks singing on 19th February on Black Hill in the Haytor area and the day after on Belstone Common.



BOOK REVIEWS

- ★★★★★ BEST BUY
- ★★★★ VERY GOOD
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★ OKAY
- ★ NOT WORTH BUYING

CONFLICT IN MEDIEVAL DEVON 614 – 1497 by Andrew McAuley.
 Published by Yorkie-Montague Books. 166 pages, £14.99. Further information from www.AndrewMcAuleyauthor.com You can buy from Amazon or through select Devon bookshops including The Ivybridge Bookshop and The Westcountry Bookshop in Newton Abbot. ★★★★★



This book examines every aspect of military conflict in medieval Devon through four ages.

- I: The Age of Dumnonia. The ancient kingdom resists aggressive expansion from Wessex through battles at Beandun, Posbury, and Gafulford.
- II: The Viking Age. Anglo-Saxon Devon resists Viking invaders, including the supposed son of the legendary Ragnar Lodbrok. Battles occur at Lydford, Exeter, and Cynwith.
- III: The Norman Age. The remnants of Harold Godwinson’s family rally in Devon to resist the Norman conquest at Exeter and return with a mercenary army at Northam. Later, King Stephen deals with insurrection throughout Devon.
- IV: The Age of Chivalry. The Hundred Years’ War brings rampaging pirates to Devon’s coast with a huge raid on Devon and a battle at Blackpool Sands, then local nobles turn against each other in the warm-up to the Wars of the Roses and a pretender to the throne besieges Exeter.

The book is illustrated with over 40 photographs, maps, and drawings. While there was very little medieval conflict on Dartmoor, the book does look at battles at Lydford and Tavistock. The author has done his research and tries to give the full picture of what really happened – so there must be very little information left for future historians to discover.

THE PLACE-NAMES AND FIELD-NAMES OF CHAGFORD PARISH by Richard Dunn. Self published. Paperback, 114 pages, £8.50. You can also buy at Astor’s Bookshop in Chagford or from the author via chewmagnafeildnames@gmail.com ★★★★★



This book contains maps of the place-names and field-names within Chagford parish as recorded in 1841 with over 40 places and about 2000 fields, together with a full discussion of what all these names might mean. Does Holy Street have a link with months? Are there really fields called Elbow, Honey Bags, Twelve O’Clock and Twickey Stones. I just love the number of maps in the book.

There are even fields with the word ‘tor’ in them but there are no tors there as far as we know. Rattle Torr – rattle possibly meaning plants like Red Rattle and Yellow Rattle. Pople Torr, Higher & Lower – Pole possibly meaning stony or pebbly but no known tor there today.

If you love maps and like old names, you will love this book.

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