

DARTMOOR NEWS

Scenes on Dartmoor

Action for Wildlife

Born largely from the conventions emanating from the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, Action for Wildlife aims to highlight wildlife conservation across the whole of the Dartmoor National Park (DNP) – quite an undertaking!

Dartmoor is already a centre of excellence for nature conservation with its plethora of designations: Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and ESAs, to name just a few. Action for Wildlife seeks to fill the gap that may not be catered for by the many other schemes.

Working with farm and land managers, Action for Wildlife has undertaken in excess of 80 wildlife enhancement schemes, involving a huge range of species and habitats.

Salmon spawning beds have been repaired by removing the source of silt that chokes gravel beds. Sand martin nesting sites have been protected by 'contouring' sand quarry bases to prevent predator attack. Acres of scrub have been removed and grazing reintroduced on grassland that is important for a rare plant, the Deptford Pink.

Action for Wildlife is supported by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA), English Nature, The Environment Agency, the Duchy of Cornwall and DEFRA.

Scheme strives to secure future for Dartmoor ponies

A breeding programme aimed at improving the quality and type of Dartmoor ponies, designated by the Rare Breeds Society as 'vulnerable' has resulted in over 350 colts and fillies being born and registered to date.

Launched 14 years ago, the Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme is backed by the Duchy of Cornwall, the Dartmoor Pony Society, the DNPA and DEFRA Veterinary Service. It aims to produce hardy ponies which can stand up to the harsh Dartmoor winters without needing extra food.

In summer 1988, 17 hardy Dartmoor mares from seven owners and a pedigree Dartmoor stallion supplied by a Duchy tenant were put into one moorland enclosure. The mares were inspected and approved by the Dartmoor Pony Society, and pony handling pens were built to make the gathering and loading of the animals less stressful.

Visitors were able to view the enclosure thanks to a right of access granted by the tenants, John and Diana Coaker of Sherberton Farm. Information boards were fixed to the entrance gates, and leaflets were available at the DNP Information Centre.

The number of owners wanting to take part has steadily increased over the years and, as more ponies have been approved, enclosures have been added to cater for them. Guided walks, now offered by the DNPA during July and August, are extremely popular and help to increase understanding of the ponies and how they are managed.

The scheme has had other benefits: partnerships with the National Trust and English Nature have enabled young ponies to spend the winter on less exposed coastal sites. In turn, their grazing helps conservation by encouraging the return of wild flowers and plants on remote headlands.

The scheme is successful, but for it to continue to be so moorland pony owners must adopt a forward-looking attitude. The single most influential factor in improving the breed is the bloodline. Delegates at the Dartmoor Pony Society International Convention in 1995 acknowledged that the Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme is the gene bank for the future of the breed.



Above: 10th anniversary celebrations of 'Taste of the West' at Two Bridges Hotel, Dartmoor

Common aims on Dartmoor

The Duchy's largest single land holding is its Dartmoor Estate. At 70,000 acres, it occupies around one third of the whole Dartmoor National Park and includes most of the high moor.

The Duchy works closely with the Dartmoor National Park Authority. This partnership exists at many levels, from DNP rangers and staff on the ground to senior executive staff of both organisations, members of the DNP Committee and The Prince's Council. The Duchy and the DNPA are represented on numerous bodies which meet to discuss rural matters in the south west.

At an operational level, the two organisations work closely together on environmental projects. Initiatives have included bracken control programmes, heather regeneration research, species projects and the conservation of historic sites.

Much of the work of the Authority's Dart Biodiversity Project (identifying key species in the River Dart catchment area and operating conservation programmes) and now the wider Dartmoor Biodiversity Project, takes place on Duchy land. The Duchy and the DNPA each have their own long running schemes to support the continued existence and improvement of ponies on Dartmoor. Shared conservation objectives provide many opportunities for environmental cooperation.

Most Duchy tenants have in the past signed up to environmental management agreements with the DNPA, managing their farms in accordance with agreed environmental objectives in exchange for annual or capital works payments. These are now gradually being replaced by agreements with DEFRA under the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme which has been extended to Dartmoor.

The DNPA occupies some Duchy properties, such as the former Duchy Hotel in Princetown, which is now the popular High Moorland Visitor Centre. The permanent exhibition includes a section about the Duchy's history on the moor. The north wing is the Duchy's Dartmoor sub-office.

Other properties leased by the DNPA from the Duchy include the car park and visitor centre at Postbridge and most of the road verges on the open moor, which enables DNP rangers to control visitor parking and ice cream vending concessions.

The Bronze Age settlement at Grimspound is a well preserved series of hut circles and enclosures and is a scheduled Ancient Monument. In a three-way guardianship agreement, the DNPA manages Grimspound, with occasional conservation and protection work taking place under the supervision of English Heritage.

Long before the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 opened up the prospect of statutory public access rights to open areas around the country, the Duchy and the DNPA had already liaised closely on what

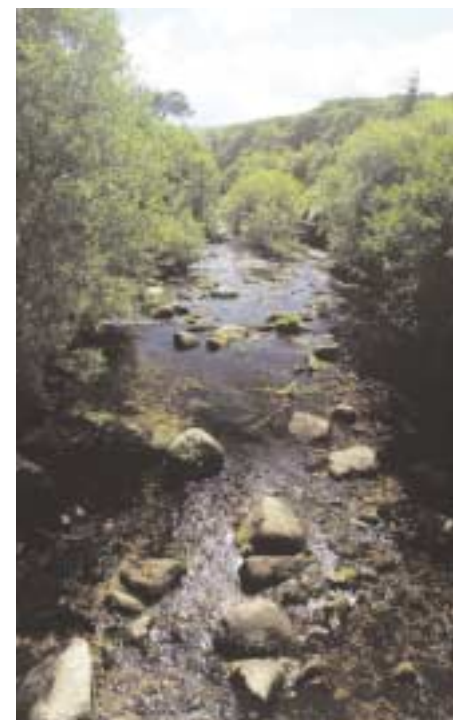
was to become the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985.

This gives the public a right of access to the commons of Dartmoor, securing for ever what had previously been enjoyed only on a *de facto* basis. It also provides an important means of managing access through the DNPA ranger service. This has proved invaluable in helping to balance conservation with increasing demand for visitor access, and is the foundation for a great deal of day-to-day liaison between the two organisations.

With many common causes at heart, this working relationship with the DNPA continues to thrive.

News compiled by Colin Sturmer and Chris Gregory

Below: Dartmoor stream



EASTERN DISTRICT NEWS



Above: *Bartletts Farmhouse*

From Falconers to Bartletts in one (not so) easy move!

Simon and Judith Peach put their thinking caps on in 1999. Simon had succeeded to the tenancy of Falconers Farm, Milton Falconbridge, 10 years before and Judith had the house how she wanted it – always busy with bed & breakfast guests.

But the farm was hopelessly fragmented, needing two or three of them every morning and evening to bring the cows home, and the buildings were too small – accommodating 70 cows at best. Was it better to develop the holding or move?

At the same time, David Browse decided to retire from farming and Bartletts Farm in Isle Brewers became vacant. The Duchy offered the tenancy to Simon. It was virtually in a ring fence with a road through the middle, and the buildings had potential, as did the house. Unfortunately the farm only had 230 acres and nowhere for Simon's parents to live.

Luck was on their side: two neighbouring tenants retired, freeing up additional land, and the Duchy was given planning permission to convert the stone barn. The deal was done. "The move itself was quite a challenge, coupled with the fact we were faced with the wettest

Below: *Celia and Colston Gay of North Widcombe Farm*



autumn since records began," Simon and Judith explain. "We shall never forget moving livestock, straw and fodder over land and roads that were flooded for six months."

"There are still many problems facing farming but we feel we can face the future much better here and look forward to the challenges ahead."

Royal visit to Eastern District

The Duke of Cornwall spent a day in the Eastern District on 4th October 2002. During the visit he officially opened the retirement cottages at Homeleaze and met the new tenants.

He also visited the Rickyard at Newton St Loe to see the barn conversion, met Duchy staff and presented certificates to the winners of The Duke of Cornwall's Habitat Awards at the Eastern District Office. A highlight of the day was the Tenants' Lunch at Priston Mill.

The Duke also saw the Duchy's new development at Thicket Mead, Midsomer Norton. He then visited North Widcombe Farm, Widcombe, where he was given a tour of the farm (which was awarded a silver medal in the Duke of Cornwall's Habitat Awards) ending with tea at the farmhouse with Colston and Celia Gay, their three children and Colston's parents.

Below: *The Duke meeting villagers at Newton St Loe*



Above left and below: *The water meadows at Louds Mill*

Above right: *Award winning Rickyard at Newton St Loe*



Water meadows restored at Louds Mill

Nick Finding, tenant of Fordington Farm at Dorchester, hopes to complete the restoration of 45 acres of water meadows with the aid of a Countryside Stewardship Scheme grant. Nick spotted the opportunity to provide aesthetic improvements and soon had the support of schools, colleges and local volunteers – he even got the local fishing club onside!

The water meadows were created in the mid 19th century, and fell into disuse in the 1950s. The main channels and some of the drains had mostly survived and are now in good condition after having been dredged, but all the carriers and bottom drains have had to be re-cut with a specialist plough (normally used in paddy fields!). The six oak sluice gates had to be replaced and their brickwork repaired.

Nick says: "The fields had been sprayed and fertilised in the past but no longer, and in time the area should revert back to its original grasses and wild flowers and enhance insect and other wildlife habitats. Two large scrapes have been included to attract back snipe, waders, geese and swans."

The restoration work has been a success, according to Nick. The meadow should flood each year between December and February, providing a valuable insight into the workings of water meadows in the past.

News compiled by Tom McCaw



Rickyard wins CLA award

The Rickyard, a traditional stone barn conversion at Newton St Loe, has been selected to receive an award under the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) Farm and Country Buildings award scheme.

The aim of the scheme is to show that rural buildings can give value for money as well as being functionally sound and aesthetically pleasing in the context of their environment and the landscape.

The Rickyard is a listed stone and tile granary that has been converted to offices. It now provides 242 square metres of top quality air-conditioned accommodation for Nelson Money Manager plc, who use it for office and conference facilities.



ISLES OF SCILLY NEWS



Above: Colin Sturmer MVO FRICS who is to take over as Land Steward.

Right: The Duke talks to crowds on St Mary's

New staff at Hugh House and the Harbour Office

Colin Sturmer is to succeed Jeremy Pontin as Land Steward. Colin has worked for the Duchy since 1965, first in London, then moving to Dartmoor in 1970.

As Deputy Land Steward he was responsible for the management of the 67,500 acre Dartmoor Estate within the Dartmoor National Park, as well as the estuaries of the Tamar, Avon, Salcombe and Dart, including seven marinas and over 4,000 moorings.

He and his partner Janet will live in the White House on the Garrison on St Mary's. A keen runner, hill walker and sailor, Colin owns a 1957 Barnett class Lifeboat, which he will take with him to the Islands.

Irene Pearson has joined Hugh House as an assistant secretary. Irene works part time for us in the summer months (when she also assists her husband, David, with their Hugh Town bookshop) and full time in the winter. Irene was formerly the deputy Superintendent Registrar of the Islands.

The principal staff change in the Harbour Office was the sudden death in 1999 of Bill Burrow, our deputy Harbour Master and Boatman, which was a shock to us all. Bill, who joined the Duchy in 1991 on his retirement following a distinguished career with the RNLI as their full-time Engineer, was a much loved Island character. One of Bill's favourite pastimes was his responsibility for the Duchy launch *Blue Dolphin*.

Bill's successor is Roy Lethbridge, who is returning to his roots in the Islands after a busy maritime career. Roy is part of the famous Lethbridge family, four generations of whom have been born and bred on the Islands, descendants of a stone mason who arrived some 150 years ago to help build the granite tower of the Bishop Rock Lighthouse. Since his arrival in 1999, Roy has had the challenging additional responsibility of the Duchy's new dedicated pilot boat *Progress*.

A royal welcome from the Isles of Scilly



The Duke of Cornwall visited the Islands on 7th June 2002.

His Royal Highness visited the Carn Gwarvel site of the newly Federated School, which embraces the five school sites on the Islands, and was given presentations by Members and Officers of the Council and pupils and staff of the School.

Next stop was the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust's new Volunteer Centre in the recently refurbished and converted former Woolpack Battery on the Garrison. Here he met volunteers working on environmental projects.

Over 200 Duchy farm and business tenants were entertained by His Royal Highness with a buffet lunch at Tregarthen's Hotel and tea after his short trip to St Martin's in the Duchy's launch *Blue Dolphin*.

During his visit to St Martin's, The Duke inspected a number of new building and improvement works which have been completed since his last visit in 1996.



Above: The Prince William being piloted into St Mary's Harbour by Progress

Above right: Jim Stephens at work in Tamarisk garden

New pilot boat ensures safe passage

Following the Pilotage Act of 1987, the Duchy took over as the pilotage authority in addition to its role as harbour authority for St Mary's.

Since then, pilots John Nicholls and Jeremy Phillips have provided the pilotage service on the Islands, successfully protecting many hundreds of vessels. The waters in and around the Islands are extremely hazardous, and the role of the pilot, an expert seaman and navigator, is to help vessels negotiate dangerous waters safely.

To assist this process the Duchy bought *Progress*, one of the Harwich Harbour Authority's surplus Nelson 44 Pilot boats, powered by twin 380 bhp Volvo diesel engines. This is driven by Roy Lethbridge and Michael Shave, the Deputy and Assistant Harbour Masters.

News compiled by Jeremy Pontin



Right: Roy Lethbridge, Deputy Harbour Master



Garden updates for Tamarisk and Hugh House

In October 2001, during my first visit to the Isles of Scilly, I discovered that Land Steward Jeremy Pontin was keen not only to redevelop the Tamarisk garden, but also that of Hugh House, the Duchy office in Hugh Town.

With the help of my colleague Jim Stephens, who is a committed fan of the Islands, and the gardener, Duncan Graham, a plan was devised. Duncan had already done a lot of work, clearing away the worst of the overgrown vegetation and cutting back some of the shrubs. We decided to go for a complete overhaul of the front of Hugh House, and concentrate on the lower half of the garden around Tamarisk.

By spring 2002 the ground had been cleared ready for the first consignment of plants. Unfortunately, as can often happen when transporting goods to the Islands, the weather slowed proceedings. The plants had been lovingly crated up – no mean feat considering the size of the spikes on the Agaves – and were on their way to Penzance when sailings were cancelled due to bad weather. Frustratingly, this continued all week, also delaying the planting of a golden wood on Tresco in honour of The Queen's Golden Jubilee, for which part of the consignment had been intended.

Eventually everything arrived safely, and the planting began. It is still a little fresh, but with the speed at which plants grow on the Islands, I hope to see the spaces filling in quickly. In spring 2003 we plan to move on to the next section of the garden.

We have used this opportunity as a chance to experiment with plants not usually seen on the Islands. Who knows – it might broaden the range of plants taking advantage of the unique climate enjoyed by the Isles of Scilly.

Tracy Wilson



Island faces: Joe Hicks



View across the Duchy's Herefordshire estate

Above: Joe Hicks

Above right: *The one that didn't get away!*

Perhaps the oldest of the Hicks 'clan', all related somehow, is Joe (Joseph Trenear). Now 82 years old and living in a bungalow at Telegraph with his wife Betty, he heads an immediate family of three children, eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Born at Maypole Farm to Alfred and Bertha (a Pezzack of Mousehole) Joe was one of eight children – six boys and two girls. He left school at 14 to work on his father's farm, then at Parting Carn picking flowers.

It was the height of the 1930s Depression and life was tough. Fortunately Joe's father also operated the Island's milk round from his herd of four Jersey cows, and the extra income helped him to balance the books.

As is traditional for many Scillonians, a seafaring life beckoned for Joe. He joined the Royal Navy in Plymouth at 17, serving throughout the Second World War. Demobbed in 1945, he married Betty Williams of St Just-in-Penwith, who had come to the Islands during the war to join her married sister, Netty. One of their first homes was The White House, believed to be one of the oldest dwellings on the Garrison.

After a short spell with the local electricity company, Joe joined the Coastguard Service as part of a five-man full time staff based at Telegraph. Thirty years later, in 1981, he retired and was presented with the Imperial Service Medal by The Prince of Wales.

Helped by a civil service pension, Joe turned to fishing as a way of life. He bought

a 27 ft boat, *Penguin*, and began operating 50 pots for lobsters which were sold at Newlyn. He was later joined by his eldest son Allan and together they operated 100 pots.

For some time Joe had a small farm tenancy where he grew flowers, potatoes and vegetables which were sold on the mainland. It was a useful source of income, particularly during the winter months when there was no fishing, but then – as now – transport costs were a large part of farmers' annual outgoings. When the cost of transporting potatoes to the mainland rose dramatically from £10 to £60 per ton, Joe ceased trading "abroad".

On 14 May 1993, *Penguin* was moored up by the Old Quay so her engine could be refitted. Joe's nephew, John, selected the wrong gear in his Mercedes which promptly drove off the Quay into the boat. Fortunately Joe was not aboard and John escaped unharmed, but it was some time before the Islanders stopped teasing him about the installation of a new Mercedes engine in the *Penguin*!

Joe and his cousin, Mike, were elected Councillors in 1988. They believed they should stand as true born and bred Island representatives at a time when there were a number of incomers standing for election.

Joe now lives quietly with Betty, supervising his large family and tending the garden.

Jeremy Pontin

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