



Peatland restoration on Trout Hill,
March 2016

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Restoration works were paused just after Easter because of the start of ground nesting bird season. We are now looking forward to public events and surveying throughout the spring and summer, including vegetation surveying and Bogtastic!

Restoration

The peatland sites we restored this winter have been interesting and diverse landscapes: Codsend Moor is rich in well preserved archaeology. It also has some fascinating and diverse ecology including areas of wet flushes alongside drier semi-improved grassland. We also restored an area of 102ha on Trout Hill, Warren Farm. We stopped works just after Easter owing to the start of ground nesting bird season and the remainder of this site, which has a total area of 538ha, will be restored after the summer. In contrast to Codsend, Warren Farm has a vast open landscape and on a clear day you can see views across the moor to Dunkery Beacon and all the way to Wales. The team thoroughly enjoyed the time out (rain or shine) and all in all it was a successful restoration season!

On Codsend Moor we blocked 3Km of ditch over 31ha with 207 wooden blocks, 93 leaky blocks and 39 peat blocks

7.62Km of ditches were blocked over an area of 102ha on Trout Hill, Warren Farm: 330 wooden blocks and 930 peat blocks

Total restored area in Winter 2015/16 = 133 ha

All figures are subject to change

Many thanks to the contractor GRT Countryside Care Ltd. and Gerald Barons, for their hard work and collaboration. Thanks also to the landowners and managers for their cooperation and assistance! Here's to next winter!

For more photos and videos, please visit our facebook page: www.facebook.com/exmoormires



Restoration on Codsend Moors, January



The team heading out onto site



Peat block construction on Warren Farm

Historic Environment

It has been a busy winter overseeing the archaeology during restoration and carrying out surveys in advance of next autumn. January was spent out at Codsend Moor with its rich and complex archaeological landscape of field systems and associated features. The relationship between the peat and the archaeology here is of particular interest. In March, Dr David Luscombe and Dr Naomi Gatis from the University of Exeter Mires team came out to trial photogrammetric survey using a drone. If this is successful, we may try this on a larger scale at the site.



University of Exeter drone ready for take-off as part of a trial of photogrammetric survey of archaeology and peatlands at Codsend 2.

Restoration also took place at Warren Farm, another wonderfully diverse archaeological landscape. There are Bronze Age barrows punctuating the ridge and smaller features such as standing stones which are sometimes engulfed in the tide of *Molinia* grass, making them a challenge to locate! An archaeological walkover survey was also carried out at Horsen Farm by Hazel Riley to help the understanding of what is present. As well as Bronze Age barrows, evidence of medieval and post-medieval transhumance was found in the form of braided holloways and small structures.

As spring gets into its stride, archaeological surveys will be carried out in various locations across the moor in advance of restoration in the autumn – who knows what we'll find next!

Impacts on agriculture research

Guy Freeman's PhD at the University of Exeter assessing impacts of restoration on farming shows the following so far:

- Blanket drag surveys have shown that ticks are most frequent in patches of bracken, dry grassland and soft rush, while blanket bog and *Molinia* hold much lower numbers.
- As restoration should result in a shift from dense *Molinia* to blanket bog it is unlikely that tick populations will be affected as both habitats appear to be unfavourable.
- Based on dung density surveys and the use of time-lapse cameras it appears that, where available, cattle will choose to graze areas of improved grassland and patches of dry grassland among bracken and soft rush.
- As well as continuing the above work this summer analysis of the nutritional quality of selected plant species will be carried out. This data can be used to map out areas of higher and lower grazing value based on the composition of plant species present in those areas.

Meet the Scientist!

Havananda Ombashi: PhD at Plymouth University



After finishing my MSc in Environmental Archaeology at The University of Sheffield last year, I moved down to Plymouth to start a PhD at Plymouth University. For the coming three years I will be creating new reconstructions of past climatic change and land use histories of Exmoor. These reconstructions will be based on the analyses of palaeo-environmental material extracted from the mires on Exmoor. My mission is to find out how land management and climate change could have influenced the development of the peatlands and how changes in land use throughout the past are reflected in the vegetation. By understanding the relationship between land use, climate change and peatland behaviour, we can gain better insights into how the peatlands of Exmoor will be affected by future management and it can help place the field archaeology of Exmoor into context.



With the Simonsbath Mire Volunteers carrying out ditch block maintenance overlooking the Barle Valley in May



Morag giving a tour of one of the monitoring sites to National Trust staff looking to do some mire restoration of their own

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday 7th June: Discover Exmoor's Bog Plants: Take a stroll around Blackpitts and Exe Plain with some mire enthusiasts and discover the many different species that grow in the wet habitats and see the efforts taken to help them thrive.

Wednesday 8th June: Advanced Understanding of Mire Plants and Communities: A follow up to the beginner's ID day. Will involve using a microscope to see the subtle differences between mosses and learning how to identify them in the field. Held at Pinkery Education Centre.

Thursday 9th June: Walk in Time: Landscape Archaeology at Lark Barrow and Kittuck Meads. Take a walk over this area of Exmoor's moorland while learning about its past. Led by Rose, the project's Historic Environment Officer.

Volunteering opportunities:

Simonsbath Volunteers: Ditch block repairs on the second Monday of every month, meet 10am at Simonsbath Sawmill. Next meeting on the 13th June.

Mire Vegetation Surveying: Attend the training days and join us on moorland sites throughout the summer.

Bogtastic Day Needs YOU! Tuesday 26th July. Help is always appreciated at this big family event. Please put the date in your diary! There are many roles to suit any preference from helping to run a wildlife activity to 'meet and greet'.

Bring outdoor gear and packed lunch to all events

To get involved please visit the ENPA's Get Involved events calendar:
www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/get-involved

Vegetation surveying

Vegetation surveying season is nearly here! Get your hand lenses at the ready...

The second week of June sees a new rotation of mire sites reach their turn for surveying. Surveying is carried out in 1 metre square quadrats along a transect line that crosses the ditch. The aim is that sites are surveyed pre-restoration and then every 3 years post-restoration to assess the success or otherwise of mire re-wetting.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer surveyor come along to the plant identification training days in the first week of June (details above).

For more information on the surveying and training days please contact Anne via email: anne.mshand@gmail.com or phone the Exmoor Mires office on: 01398 324491.

To register for the events and for volunteering visit the National Park's website: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/get-involved

Education

The Exmoor Mires Partnership and South West Water are working with South Devon University Technical College to help students understand what it takes to get water from source to tap. A group of students came out to Exmoor in March to look at a restored site and learn all about Upstream Thinking. This was the first visit of many and the second has already been planned for the summer.





Tuesday 26th July
10am – 4pm

A fun packed adventure day for all ages exploring the bogs, wildlife and heritage in and around Simonsbath and Blackpitts

For more details, please visit www.tinyurl.com/Bogtastic16
 or call: Lynmouth National Park Centre on 01598 752509

The Heart of Exmoor

The Heart of Exmoor was a lottery-funded scheme set up through the Exmoor Landscape Partnership to help people enjoy and appreciate moorlands and to support those who take care of moorland landscapes. We were privileged to work with the team at the Heart of Exmoor Project on many events, activities and training days on mire sites across Exmoor from Bogtastic Day to the MICCI (Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative) sessions with school groups, as well as taking visitors from Germany out for a walk and talk.

We will very much miss the Heart of Exmoor team and hope to see them out on Exmoor again soon. More importantly we are sure their good work will leave a legacy and the initiatives they set up will continue helping communities to be involved in all aspects of Exmoor National Park. Thank you!



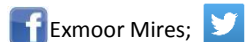
A buzzard caught on our camera trap beside a bog pool full of frogs

With thanks to the many researchers, volunteers, mire landowners and farmers and supporters of the Exmoor Mires Partnership.

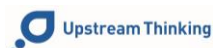
As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or if you would like to get involved and please pass this on to friends and anyone who you think might be interested. Do take a look our website and "like" our Facebook page to keep up to date with the constant advances in our knowledge of your peatlands.

The Document Library section of our website contains many articles and reports: www.exmoormires.org.uk

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Exmoor Mires;



The Exmoor Mires Partnership is a partnership between the local community, farmers and landowners, the Exmoor National Park Authority, Historic England, Natural England, the Environment Agency and South West Water.