

Longhouses and Hard Lives

Daily life on Eastern Dartmoor in the Middle Ages

28th February, 2015

Longhouses and medieval farming are key features which have shaped the Dartmoor Landscape. Yet they are often poorly understood, even by people who live with them.

Morning session: Chaired by Ian Mortimer

9.30-10.00: Gathering and coffee

10.00-10.15: Ian Mortimer: Welcome and introduction to the day

10.15-11.15: Nat Alcock: 'The Heritage of Medieval Houses and Farms: an Overview'

11.15-11.45: Break for coffee

11.45-12.45: John Thorp: 'Higher Uppacott and the Significance of the Dartmoor Longhouse'

12.45-1.30: Lunch

Afternoon session: Chaired by Peter Beacham

1.30-1.45: Peter Beacham: Introduce to afternoon session.

1.45-2.45: Ian Mortimer: 'Documentary sources for understanding medieval localities'.

2.45-3.00: Short comfort-break

3.00-4.00: Tom Greeves: 'Uppacott in its place - medieval life, work and wealth on south-east Dartmoor'

4.00-4.30: Tea

4.30-5.15: John Allan: 'Pottery and the material culture of the medieval peasant on Dartmoor'

5.15-5.45: Plenary Q&A, and closing remarks.

The symposium marks the launch of the Moor Medieval project, part of the Moor than meets the eye Landscape Partnership Scheme, covering South East Dartmoor. It is intended this event will mark the start of a series of activities which will enable us to understand these fascinating and iconic buildings and their medieval landscape.

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Speakers' biographies

Dr Nat Alcock

Nat is an Emeritus Reader in the Department of Chemistry, University of Warwick. In parallel with his scientific career has made a lifelong study of vernacular architecture and social history, and he has published 18 books and more than 60 papers in these fields. These include most recently a major regional study, *The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England* (2013; with Dan Miles). He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and past president of the Vernacular Architecture Group. In 2011 he was appointed OBE for services to vernacular architecture.

His work has included the first major studies on vernacular architecture in Devon and Bedfordshire, and at a national level the examination of cruck and base-cruck construction, and the application of dendrochronology and radiocarbon dating to buildings. He is particularly interested in the correlation of documentary and architectural evidence for buildings, especially using probate inventories, and is the author of the handbooks, *Documenting the History of Houses* (2004; British Records Association), and co-author of two CBA Practical Handbooks: *Recording timber-framed buildings: an illustrated glossary* (1996), and *Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses, 1567-1763* (1994).

John Allan

John Allan, BA, MPhil is Consultant Archaeologist to the Dean & Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, Archaeological Adviser to Glastonbury Abbey, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, President of the Friends of Devon Archives and Past President of the Devon Archaeological Society. He has served as Joint Editor of the Society for the international journal *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Member of Council of the Society for Medieval Archaeology, Member of Council of the Society of Cathedral Archaeologists, a Trustee of the Devon Historic Buildings Trust, and Editor (1984–1997) of the Devon Archaeological Society. For twenty years (1984–2004) he was Curator of Antiquities at Exeter Museum.

He has published one book (1984) and about 80 papers on different aspects of the medieval and later archaeology of South-West England, including ceramics, church architecture, monastic sites, castle architecture, medieval houses, and Anglo-Saxon towns and coins.

Dr Tom Greeves

Cultural environmentalist Tom was born in Plymouth in 1949. The universities of Essex, Edinburgh and Exeter prepared him for extensive research, publication, teaching and interpretation, on which is built his reputation as an authority on the archaeology and history of Dartmoor. He has worked independently since 1990.

A varied career has included being the first Sites & Monuments Officer for Devon, the first Archaeologist for Dartmoor National Park, and Local Initiatives Officer for the environmental arts group Common Ground. Since 1998 he has been chairman of the Dartmoor Society. In June 2015 he is to become President of the Devonshire Association.

He has a particular focus on the story of tinworking on Dartmoor from earliest times to the present day and his doctoral thesis covered the period AD 1450-1750.

Besides unravelling Dartmoor's cultural landscape, Tom's core interests include the Three Hares, European prehistory, the Isles of Scilly, and theatrical performance. He has lived in Tavistock since 1993.

His latest book, *Dartmoor's Earliest Photographs – Landscape & Place 1860-1880*, is due to be published by Twelveheads Press on 27 March.

Dr Ian Mortimer

Ian was educated at the University of Exeter (BA 1989; PhD, 2004; DLitt 2010), and UCL (MA 1993). His PhD was on the subject of 'Medical assistance to the dying in provincial southern England, c. 1570-1720'. Between 1991 and 2003 he worked for Devon Record Office, the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and the universities of Exeter and Reading. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (just elected!), and was awarded the Alexander Prize (2004) for his work on the social history of medicine.

He is best known as the author of the *Time Traveller's Guides* (to Medieval and Elizabethan England). He has published eleven other history books, three novels and two dozen peer-refereed articles, touching aspects of English history from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries.

A firm believer in the public importance of history, he is currently a Secretary-of-State appointee to Dartmoor National Park Authority; President of Moretonhampstead History Society; Joint Hon. President of the Mortimer History Society; and acting Chairman of the Friends of Devon's Archives. He also serves on the Lord Chancellor's Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research, and the Fabric Advisory Committee for Exeter Cathedral.

John Thorp

John was born and educated in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, where he developed an interest in medieval archaeology at school taking part in the excavation of Sandal Castle (Wakefield) and sixth form summer jobs on other sites. He graduated History and Archaeology BA (Hons) University of Exeter in 1971 and stayed in Devon.

From 1972 to 1985 he worked for the Exeter Archaeological Field Unit developing archaeological rigour to the recording and assessment of historic standing buildings. From 1985 to 1987 he worked for Architecton for the then Department of Environment accelerated re-survey of listed buildings, mostly working on East and Mid Devon but also including those parishes in the northeast corner of Dartmoor.

In 1987 he established Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants (partner with Jo Cox). He writes: 'Our projects have been widely distributed (from Yorkshire to Kent and down to Cornwall). However Dartmoor is such a wonderful place to work that we have always dropped our prices here.'

He has published widely, especially in his areas of specialist interest: medieval and post-medieval urban housing; plasterwork and painted decoration; farm buildings; vernacular industrial buildings; and the history of building materials and techniques.

He is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, a founder member and committee member of the Devon Buildings Group, a member of the Vernacular Architecture Group, and a Visiting Lecturer on the MA course in Conservation at the University of Plymouth.