

INVITATION TO THE CLA JOINT DEVON AND SOMERSET BRANCH AGM

THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 11.30am

Registration, tea and coffee from 11.00am

ST LUKE'S CHURCH, SIMONSBATH, FOLLOWED BY A
TOUR OF EXMOOR FOREST FARM.

By kind permission of Ed Greenall.

Followed by a two-course buffet lunch and tour.



We are extremely fortunate to be able to hold the 2024 Joint Devon and Somerset AGM at St Luke's Church, Simonsbath, followed by a tour of Exmoor Forest Farm by kind permission of Ed Greenall, on Thursday 26 September.

CLA South West would like to thank the Forestry Commission, Monahans and Strutt & Parker for their generous support.



PROGRAMME

11.00am Registration, tea and coffee
11.30am AGM
11.50am CLA Vice President Joe Evans
12.30pm Introduction to Exmoor Forest Farm by Ed Greenhall
12.45pm Introduction to Exmoor National Park Authority and their plans for Simonsbath with Graeme McViittie (FICFor)
1.00pm Two-course buffet lunch at The Forest Inn
2.30pm Coach Tour of Duredon and Walking Tour of Barle Valley
5.00pm Depart

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

1. Opening by Branch President
2. To receive apologies for absence
3. To confirm and sign the Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting, held on Tuesday 17 October 2023.
4. Matters Arising from Minutes
5. To receive and adopt the Annual Report
6. To elect Branch Officers and Council Representative
7. To elect new committee members
8. Any other business

Nominations for office or for membership of the Committee as given in Item 6, or any resolution a member may wish to propose, must reach Ann Maidment, Regional Director South West, in writing no less than seven days prior to the meeting.

EXMOOR FOREST FARM

Duredon is situated at the heart of the Exmoor Forest Estate, a traditional country estate and organic farm with interesting historic connections as a former Royal hunting chase until 1818. The dramatic rugged scenery of the Exmoor Forest and the North Devon coast are all on the doorstep and offer some of the best walking, shooting, riding, biking and wild swimming in the South West.

The estate is run with biodiversity, flora and fauna as the guiding lights. There are around 300 acres of species-rich grassland and traditional hay meadows which are managed traditionally, with no cutting until after 1 July, and are grazed by the native breeds at risk.

The house and estate are the perfect locations for both film and photographic shoots and has worked with top producers, directors, photographers and stylists to bring their projects to life. Its sister business in Simonsbath, The Exmoor Forest Inn, is known for its delicious food and drink, including organic beef, lamb and venison from the Estate's hill farm.

Graeme McVittie FICFor, Senior Woodland Officer for the Exmoor National Park Authority, will introduce the rationale supporting the national parks plans to increase tree cover on land they own around Simonsbath (farmed by Exmoor Forest Farms) and how this will be pieced together over time to form a new temperate rainforest mosaic. The session will include a short walk into the Barle Valley to consider some of the issues and tree planting techniques deployed.

The tour will involve walking and therefore is not suitable for those with mobility issues. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Southwest office to discuss options.

Directions: The village of Simonsbath is located on the B3223. CLA signs will direct members to the car park. If you are using what3words please use [staple.roost.monkeys](https://www.what3words.com/staple.roost.monkeys).

BOOKING YOUR PLACE AT THE AGM

To book your place at the AGM please login to your 'My CLA' account on www.cla.org.uk and click on Events. Tickets cost £45pp incl VAT. Attendance at the AGM only is free.

If you are having difficulties, please call the South West Office on 01249 700200 or email southwest@cla.org.uk

Bookings close Thursday 19 September.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - DEVON BRANCH



My first year as Devon CLA Chair has been interesting and pretty intense, to put it mildly.

Agricultural businesses and the countryside are facing major changes at the moment with many challenges.

I have met a good number of CLA members so far and listened to their concerns. The previous government were not very decisive in their proposed changes to countryside management. They then sprung the mid-summer election on us and suffered a major protest vote in many rural areas because voters considered they were not effectively supporting the agricultural and country communities. Through DEFRA and Natural England they introduced complicated but unfinished schemes for the landowners to supposedly fill the gap instead of the BPS payments, which has left many of us scratching our heads with a really annoying example being unnecessary bureaucracy over tree planting.

So, what will we see with the new Labour government? It is certainly looking like there will be more bureaucracy and an emphasis on environmental schemes. I am hearing a clear message from many farming families that they are reluctant to move forward with the new schemes and to commit their land for many years, which may change the commercial viability of the farming enterprise and the value of their land in the long term. Hope may be on the horizon with government announcements of changes to planning policy and a statement that the Labour government will support food production but taxation should be watched carefully.

Countryside crime is more active than before. We have had meetings with the Devon & Cornwall Police who are aware of our concerns, and we wait to see if they can deliver but they are slow to respond to their promises. The regular meetings we hold with the countryside crime unit still continue and it would be interesting to know how members find the local police team's advice and response so we have incidents to highlight to them when we meet.

One of the major issues I am involved with is the Dartmoor Review. Since 2021 I have worked closely with my MP Sir Geoffrey Cox. He did excellent work to get the ball rolling and with the appointment of CLA champion David Fursdon, who has worked with a panel - including representatives from DEFRA and the environmental sector. He successfully analysed the problems Dartmoor Commoners and landowners were facing, particularly with the Natural England staff.

These officers have moved on, and we now have new Natural England faces who we hope will work with us. I call the commoners 'the indigenous people of Dartmoor' for whom we need a sensible outcome for all who work, own and enjoy this wonderful area. The CLA have been hugely supportive in helping orchestrate this and I would particularly like to thank their London team.

Before I leave this area I would like to make everyone aware of the 'Wild Justice Group' making a very aggressive statement and threatening to take the Dartmoor Commoners Council to a Judicial Review and we wait and see how this progresses. Will this be the start of a national trend under the Labour government to re-wild areas and will the Right to Roam and country pursuits continue to be a target?

We met several MPs at the Devon County but following the election we have to start again with the new crop to put our case across to them. I am interested to meet all our new Devon MPs and it would be helpful if members could contact Ann and myself to arrange meetings on a farm or estate to show them how the countryside works and the issues landowners and farmers are facing today. Be assured the CLA teams throughout the country and the central team in London play a critical role in all the issues that I have mentioned, and they are closely connected both with government and with the political parties to keep us all informed.

Looking forward to my second year in office I recognise that the county of Devon is very large and has such diverse countryside from coast to coast. I want to better understand member's issues and how the CLA can help. I come from the beef and sheep sector in the uplands plus some lowland and I run a herd of Dartmoor Hill ponies. However, I realise there are many more sectors that have their own issues and with everyone's help, I am planning visits to CLA members in all of these sectors before my term is finished and would be grateful if members could point me in the right direction.

I have a few thank yous to make for the help given to me in the last 12 months; Craig Hodgson for a comprehensive handover, and the Devon committee for valuable experience and input in analysing the many reports presented. Finally, to the CLA team in London, and to Ann Maidment and the South West team, particularly Mark Burton, for their continued support.

Mary Alford
Chairman, Devon Branch

MINUTES OF THE 2023 DEVON BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on Tuesday 17 October 2023 at Branoc Hall, Branscombe.

The Branch President, James Whilding welcomed members.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Rous, Richard Youngman, Ann Willcocks, Chris Murray, George Cave and 5 members of the Association.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the AGM held on 7 October 2022, were signed as being a true and correct record. Proposed by James Whilding. Seconded by Alistair Handyside.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman thanked his fellow officers, committee members and CLA South West Team. The Chairman proposed the adoption of his report. Proposed by Craig Hodgson. Seconded by Hayley Parker.

5. ELECTIONS

In accordance with branch rules James Whilding stood down as President. The Chairman thanked him for his time and contribution to the CLA committee and presented him with a gift.

President: Craig Hodgson. Proposed by James Whilding. Seconded by Alistair Handyside.

Chairman: Mary Alford. Proposed by Craig Hodgson. Seconded by Hayley Parker.

Vice Chairman: Hayley Parker. Proposed by Craig Hodgson. Seconded by James Whilding.

Council Representatives: Mary Alford and Hayley Parker. Proposed by Craig Hodgson. Seconded by Justin Lascelles.

Branch Committee: Alexander Clifford retired from term on committee. The President thanked him for his time and valuable input.

There were two nominations to the Committee at the AGM – George Cave and Leigh Rix. The President proposed that they were elected enbloc. Seconded by Alistair Handyside.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 11.43am.

DEVON BRANCH COMMITTEE

President: Craig Hodgson

Chairman: Mary Alford

Vice Chairman: Hayley Parker

Past National President: David Fursdon DL, MA(Oxon) FRICS, FAAV

Committee members: Jonathan Coyte, George Cave, Earl of Devon Charles Courtenay, Charles Eden, Alistair Handyside, Katherine Hawke, Graham Kerslake, Justin Laseclles, Professor Matt Lobley, Jane Logan, Chris Murray, Robin Milton, Greg Page-Turner, Ralph Rayner, Alex Raeder MRICS, Leigh Rix, Geoff Sayers, Tom Stratton BSc(Hons) MRICS, Ann Willcocks.



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