

Haldon's Hidden Heritage

The Haldon Hills – whose name may be derived from the Old English *Haw-hyll dun*, meaning ‘look-out hill’ – are often referred to as the ‘hidden’ hills of Devon. Apart from its forests and landmark tower, most people know little of its rich heritage.

This unique exhibition touches every aspect of the Hills, through geology and prehistory, to the establishment of its grand country mansions. The panels are available to be shown in local community and school halls.



Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with help from Arts Council England, Devon County Council, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and the Forestry Commission.

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Panel design

Northbank, Bath

CCANW and its researchers would like to thank the numerous individuals and organisations for their generous help in assembling this exhibition.

Do you have any interesting material related to Haldon's heritage? If so, we would be interested in hearing from you.

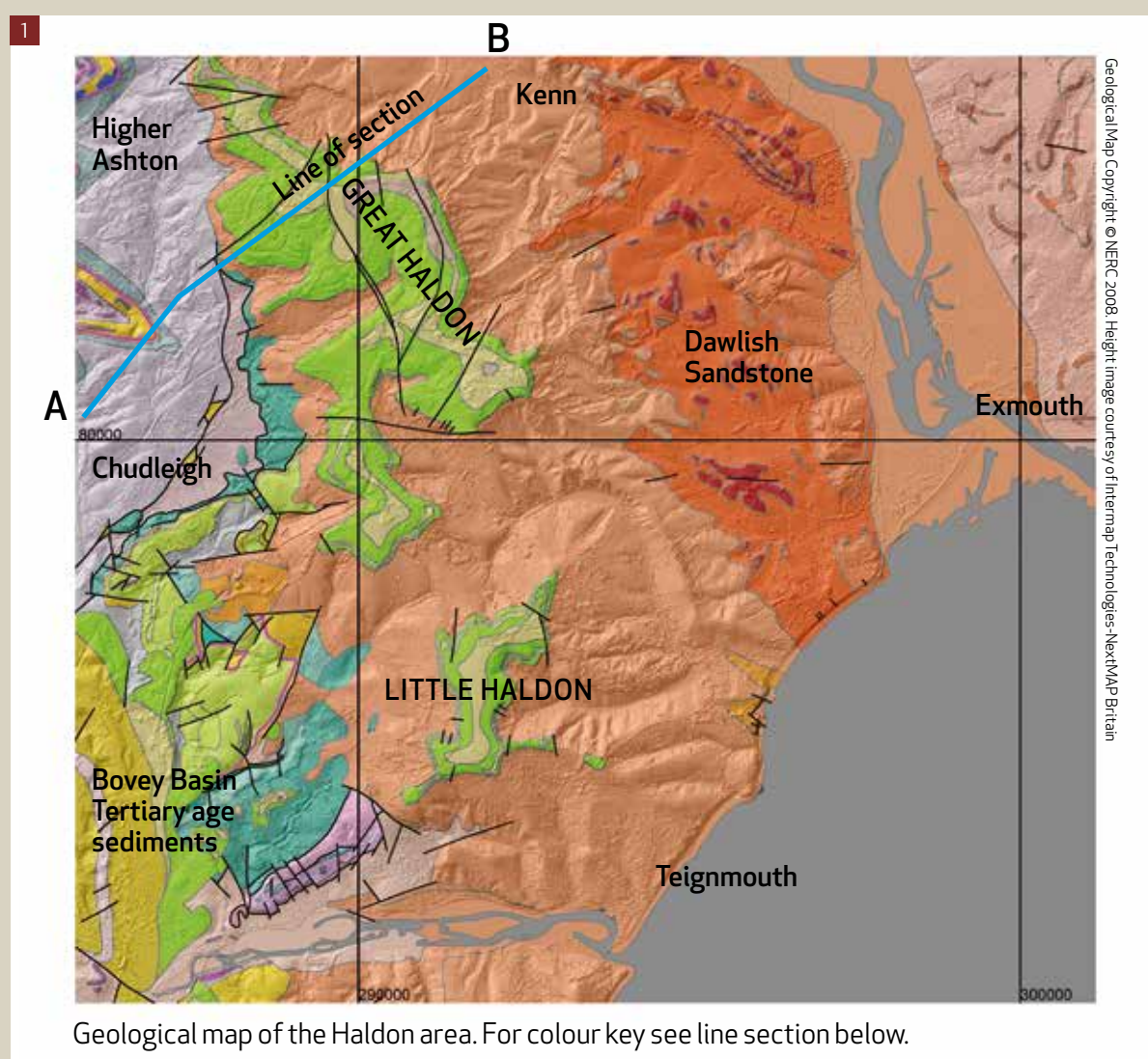


RAMM



Haldon's Rocks – clues to a past world

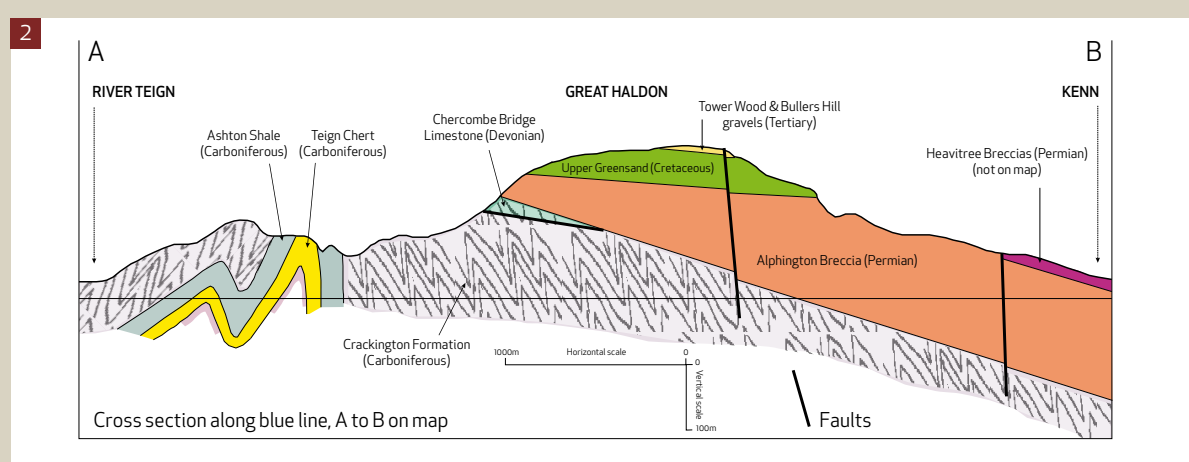
The rocks of the Haldon Hills tell a story stretching back over 360 million years to times when there were mountains, deserts and tropical seas near where we stand today. The maps below show the distribution of these rocks around and on Haldon.



The geological history of the area around Haldon Hills starts during the Devonian Period when this part of the earth's crust was near the equator. In a tropical sea, mud and limestones made up of corals and stromatoporoid reefs were deposited. During the late Carboniferous Period an influx of mud and sand from the north into the sea accumulated to form the Crackington Formation which occupies a large part of the western slopes of Great Haldon.

At the end of the Carboniferous, movement between crustal plates deformed the Devonian and Carboniferous rocks and pushed up a mountain chain into which was intruded molten granite, the Dartmoor Granite.

The climate of the following Permian Period was hot and arid and the mountain chain was quickly eroded with the resulting debris being carried down by flash floods to form big alluvial gravel fans (the Alphington and Heavitree breccias) and sand seas (the Dawlish Sandstone).



The area remained as land probably through most of the Triassic and Jurassic periods, but eventually warm shallow seas submerged the land and depositing shelly sand just off land to the west of Haldon. This sand is the Upper Greensand and fossils from it can be found. In the late Cretaceous deeper seas covered the whole of SW England and deposited chalk which was dissolved away during the Tertiary leaving only the Tower Wood and Bullers Hill flint gravels in which many fossils such as sea urchins have been found.

The present topography of the Haldon Hills and the local river pattern were mainly formed during the Ice Age. The ice did not come this far south but the area was subjected to seasonal freezing and thawing which destabilised slopes and promoted mudflows.

The Tower Wood and Bullers Hill gravels, the Upper Greensand and the Alphington Breccia on the topmost parts of Haldon Hills and on its flanks are good aquifers and many springs issue from them. It is noticeable that many large houses such as Haldon House (Lord Haldon Hotel), Whiteway House, Ugbrooke House and Mamhead House were all built in a position below springs issuing from these formations.

This panel has been prepared by Dr. E.C. Freshney with help from Dr. R.T. Taylor and C. Hildebrandt of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. Thanks are also due to Bruce Napier, British Geological Survey, who produced the geological map and digital terrain model of the Haldon area.

- 1 Geological map and digital terrain model of the Haldon area.
British Geological Survey.
- 2 Geological section line.
Dr. E.C. Freshney.
- 3 View of beds Permian breccia formed from fans of alluvial gravel spilling out from the Dartmoor area into an arid desert. Road cutting on the A30 dual carriageway.
Photograph: Dr. E.C. Freshney
- 4 Close-up of red Permian breccia showing angular debris some derived from the erosion of the Dartmoor Granite in the mountains to the west.
Photograph: Dr. E.C. Freshney
- 5 *Haldonia vicaryi*, coral, Upper Greensand, Cretaceous, Haldon Hill.
- 6 *Spiropora macrpora*, bryozoa or 'moss animals', Upper Greensand, Cretaceous, Haldon Hill.
- 7 *Neithea quinquicostatus*, bivalve, Upper Greensand, Cretaceous, Haldon Hill.

Photographs 5, 6 & 7 Courtesy RAMM, Exeter
Further Reading: *Geology of the County around Newton Abbot*, HMSO, 1984

From Prehistory to the Civil War

People have lived and farmed on Haldon for at least 5,000 years. It has been both a barrier to transport but also a commanding position from which to control the surrounding countryside.



The earliest Neolithic farmers occupied the ridge some 5,000 years ago. Pieces of very early pottery and thousands of worked flints including arrowheads have been discovered near the Haldon Belvedere. Excavations were made in the 1930s by E. H. Willocks and in the 1990s by C & N. Hollinrake and Exeter Archaeology.

The Romans (in Devon c50AD-400 AD) left little trace of their presence on Haldon, but did make use of the existing trackways over the hills. Exeter was an important Roman outpost, but their influence trailed off further west. Recent finds of coin hoards in this area may, however, change this view.



Between 876-1003 AD the Danes frequently attacked Exeter and the villages along the South Devon Coast.

The Black Death reached Devon in 1348 and about one third of the population died. Deadman's Combe, south of Bullers Hill, is thought to be one place where they deposited the dead.

During the Civil War (1642-1651) soldiers were actively engaged in fighting from Exeter to Plymouth. Once again the Haldon Hills provided a natural obstacle, making troop movements difficult and arduous. This area of Devon was mainly Royalist, so the Parliamentarians tried to stamp their authority on it by besieging Powderham Castle, Mamhead House and Old Canonteign.

During the Bronze Age (c2100 BC to 750 BC) the higher reaches of Haldon may have been used for burial sites, rather than dwellings. Numerous cairns and barrows are found all over this area.

The Iron Age Britons (c600 BC) developed the hills using their advanced tools for woodland clearance and ploughing the land. The high plateau would have been a harsh place to farm because of high winds and heavy rainfall.



- 1 Grooved ware bowl. This is a type of pottery made by the first farmers in Devon around 5,000 years ago.
- 2 Haldon from the Belvedere.
- 3 Leaf-shaped arrowheads. Fine examples of flint weapons and hunting tools.
- 4 Flint scrapers. Simple, but effective tools which could be used for scraping meat and fat from animal skins.
- 5 Waste flint flakes. Making flint tools generates a lot of waste but its presence on the Haldon site tells us that tools were made there.

All photographs and examples are from the collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.
Further reading: *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Exploration Society*, 1936, vol II - Part 4 and 1937, vol III - Part I. *Devon Archaeology Society Proceedings* 57, 1999.

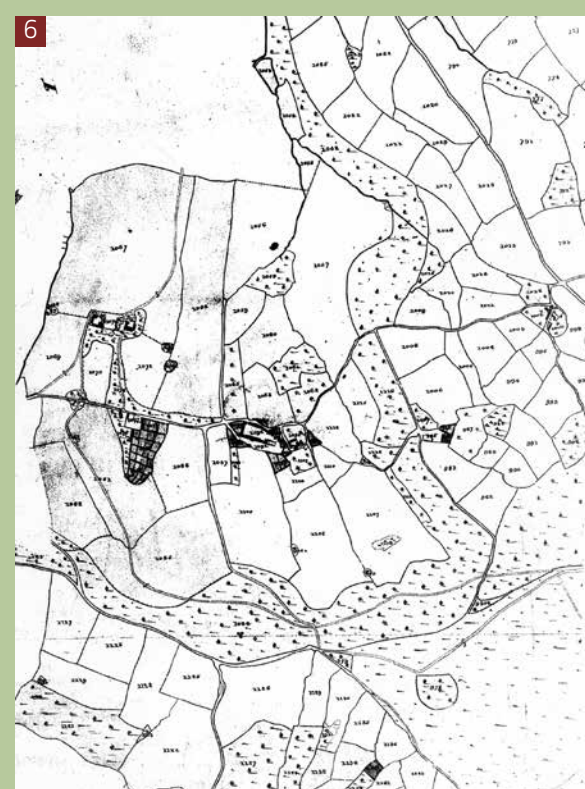
Early History 1650-1850

After the harsh times of the English Civil War in the mid-1600s, and French ships had finished bombarding Teignmouth by 1690 (the last place in Britain to be invaded by a foreign power), there came a period of relative quiet in Devonshire.



However, this was soon marred for many due to the 'Enclosure Acts' passed by Parliament from 1750 onwards. The Acts empowered wealthy local landowners to legally incorporate common land into their estates. It forced many poorer farmers and labourers off the commons, depriving them of anywhere to grow staple foods, graze cattle or collect firewood. Some 2,000 acres of land went to the Palk and Clifford estates, leaving about 1,300 acres of Haldon free for use by commoners.

The historians, Rev. John Swete and Rev. Richard Polwhele, provided detailed accounts of life in Devon. Swete, who lived at Oxton House and was a relative of Sir Robert Palk, drew sketches and painted watercolours of his journeys around Devon in the late 1700s. He visited many of the villages and fine houses on his travels.



Another notable and documented period of Haldon's heritage can be found in the Tithe Maps and Apportionments created during the period of 1836-42. The value of all land in the country was assessed and a tenth of the output, or yield, went to the parish church. The Devon Records Office in Exeter holds the Tithe maps for this area, which are available to view.

The population of Devon taken at the first census in 1801 was 340,308. Coastal towns like Dawlish, Teignmouth and Torquay were being developed into fashionable seaside resorts. In 1844, the first steam train arrived at Exeter and, five years later, the lines had reached Plymouth. This now opened Devon up to the rest of the country, expanding local industry and attracting more visitors.



- 1 Kenn Village, watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, 1796.
- 2 Ashcombe Church, watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, 1795.
- 3 Bickham from Trehill, watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, 1796.
- 4 Kenton Church, watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, 1796
- 5 Kenn Church from Bickham, watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, 1796.
- 6 Tithe Map showing part of Haldon estate c1840.

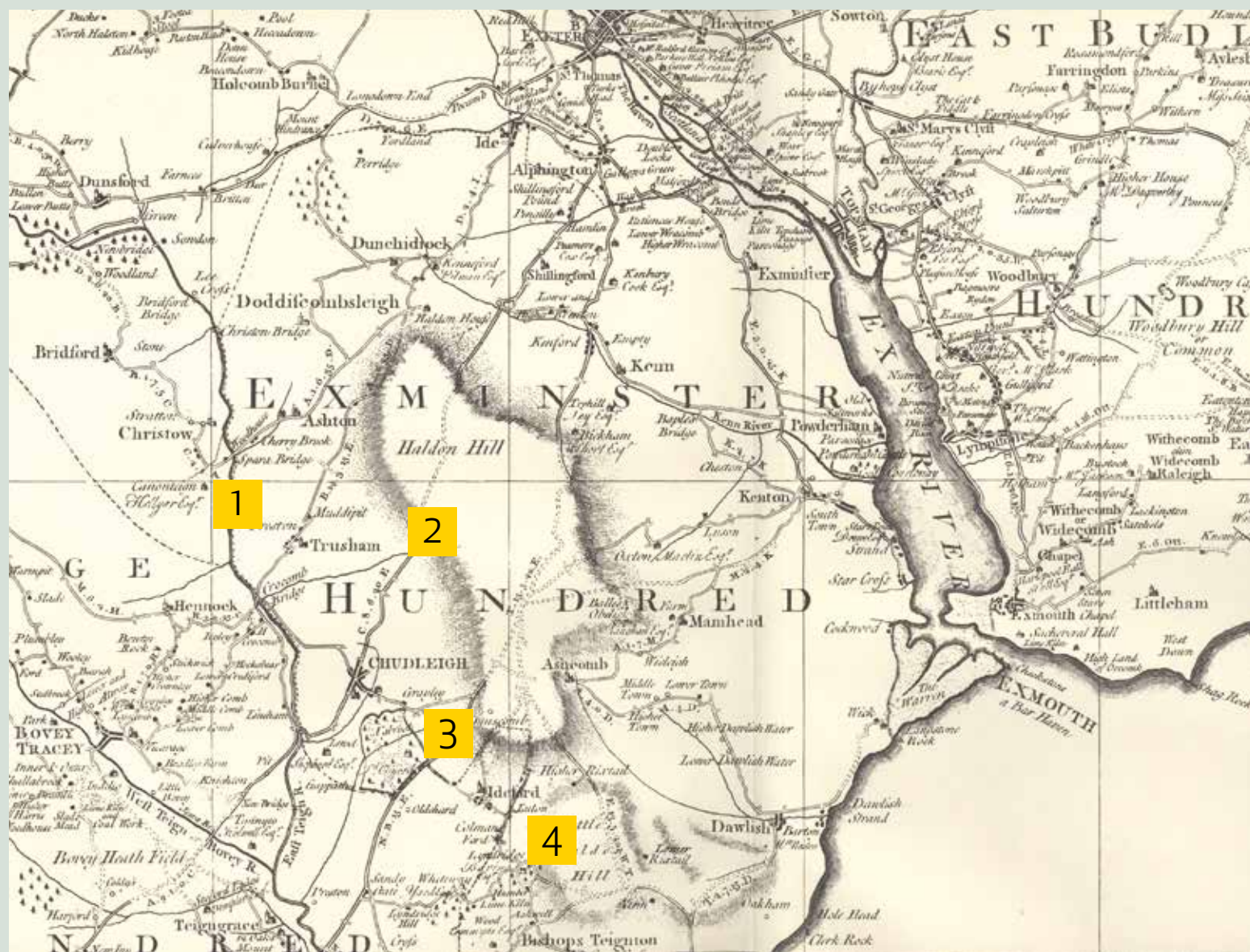
1 to 5 Courtesy Devon Records Office, Exeter.

6 Courtesy National Archives.

Further Reading: *Travels in Georgian Devon*, Rev. J. Swete, Devon Books, 1997
History of Devonshire, Rev. R. Polwhele, first published 1793.

Country Houses and Estates around Haldon

Positioned around the foothills of Haldon are important country estates, several built during the eighteenth century by local gentry wishing new houses within reach of Exeter. The houses and gardens are the work of notable architects and designers such as John Nash, Anthony Salvin, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, Humphrey Repton and David Veitch.



Engraving by T. Allom & W. Le Petit, 1832



1 Canonteign

Admiral Sir Edward Pellew, Viscount Exmouth, who served during the American Revolutionary War and Napoleonic Wars, acquired this country estate. The fine mansion was built adjacent to the old Tudor Canonteign House, and the grounds contain England's highest waterfall, open to the public. It was recently the training base of Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman before filming their BBC series *Long Way Down*.

Watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, c1796, courtesy Devon Records Office



2 Whiteway House

The house belonged to Lord Boringdon of the Parker family who also owned the grand Saltram House near Plymouth. Until recently, it was home of Countess Raine Spencer (stepmother to Diana, Princess of Wales), and her son, William, 10th Earl of Dartmouth.

Engraving by Fawcett, c1785



3 Ugbrooke

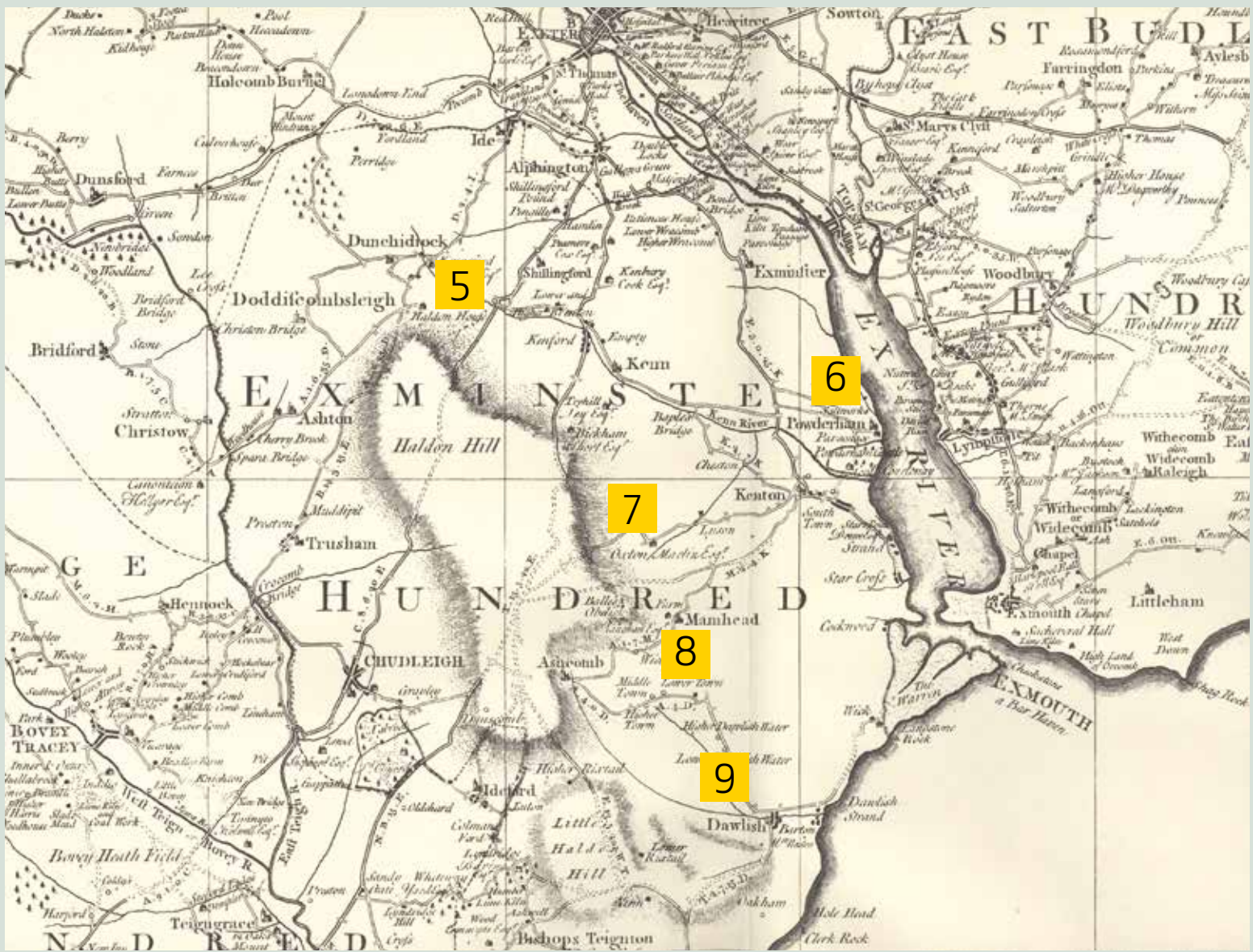
Ugbrooke has a history spanning 900 years and for the past 400 years it has been home to the Lords Clifford of Chudleigh. Robert Adam remodelled the house and 'Capability' Brown landscaped the park in the mid 18th Century. Ugbrooke House has a stunning chapel, St Cyprian's, where mass has been held continuously since 1673 and the beautiful gardens are open to the public during July-September.

Watercolour by Rev. J. Swete, c1796, courtesy Devon Records Office



4 Lindridge

A fine ancient country house particularly noted for its ornate interior, it was victim to fire in 1963. Once a country retreat for the Bishops of Exeter, its ownership then passed to Queen Elizabeth I and then King James I.



Engraving by T. Allom & W. Le Petit, 1832



5 Haldon House

Built by Sir George Chudleigh c1735, but notably the home of the Palk family 1770-1892. The 8,500 acre estate was by far the largest on Haldon. Due to economic hardships after the First World War and the lack of an interested buyer, the house was largely demolished. The north wing survived and is now the Lord Haldon Hotel.

Drawn & engraved for 'Dugdale's England c1775



6 Powderham Castle

Historic home to the Earl of Devon since 1325, Powderham was a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War of 1642-1646 but, after suffering much damage, was eventually taken by the Roundheads. Like Haldon House, the 3,500 acre estate has a Belvedere tower overlooking the Exe estuary. The interior of the house was used in the award winning 1993 film *Remains of the Day*.

Engraving by Stewart & Burnett after Rev. Swete, 1808



7 Oxton

Just north of Mamhead, Oxton was once the home of Rev. John Swete, a writer and artist who recorded his travels around Devon in the late 1700s. The house has now been converted into private apartments.

Engraving by Fawcett, c1785



8 Mamhead

Mamhead was once owned by the Balle family, then the Newmans who rebuilt the house to the designs of famous architect Anthony Salvin. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown landscaped the gardens. The famous Obelisk, erected c1742 by Thomas Balle stands 100 feet high and was used as a navigational aid for the Exe estuary. After Lord Mamhead died, the house was used as a college and then as offices.

Engraving by T. Allom & W. Le Petit, 1832



9 Luscombe Castle

Luscombe was built in 1800 in glorious Gothic style by John Nash for the banker Charles Hoare. The grand gardens were designed by Humphrey Repton. In 1938 the house was given over to girl evacuees aged four to fifteen and it was not until 1948 that the rightful owners were able to return!

Haldon House – days of glory

Haldon House was built in the style of Buckingham House in St. James Park, (now Buckingham Palace). Often quoted as one of the finest country seats in Devon, it was the home of the Palk family for 120 years.



Sir George Chudleigh built Haldon House between the years 1717-35, but died before the house was completed. It originally consisted of four regular fronts with six rooms to each floor. The front of the house faced east and all the principal family rooms were built around the southern aspect.



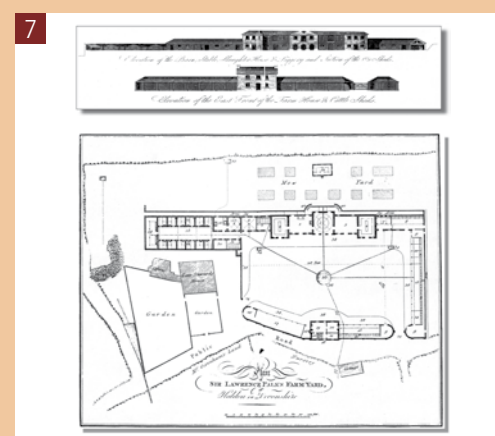
Robert Palk paid £10,000 for Haldon House in 1769. He quickly set about re-modelling the house and improving on the surrounding grounds and plantations. Two wings advancing in front of the house were built and the ground sloping up to the front door removed, exposing the cellars and giving the impression of an extra storey.

The mansion, with its thirty-six bedrooms, was lavishly furnished with Chippendale, Sheraton and Louis XIV furniture. Thick pile carpets with crimson borders covered the floors, painted Japanese mirrors in carved gilt frames hung on the walls. The art collection was of the highest order and the library well-stocked with old books and manuscripts.



The house was supplied by the Kitchen Gardens, covering over 5 acres with numerous glasshouses and connected by a tunnel under the road.

Further down the road was Home Farm, described as a 'first-class model dairy holding' with barns, stables, smithy, cowsheds, piggeries, granary, slaughterhouse, cider press, wagon and cart sheds.



Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, the well-known landscaper of his day and appointed King's Gardener by George III, was called upon to give advice on the grounds at Haldon whilst staying at the neighbouring Mamhead Estate in 1772.

- 1 Haldon House by T. Allom & W. Le Petit 1831.
- 2 Haldon House by G. Campion & H. Wallis 1832.
- 3 Photograph of the house c1920, Chapman & Son, Dawlish.
- 4 The Kitchen Gardens, Sale catalogue 1925.
- 5 The Kitchen Gardens and Haldon House c1925, Chapman & Son, Dawlish.
- 6 Haldon Home Farm today – now Tower Court.
- 7 Plans for Haldon Farm c1800, General View of Agriculture of Devon, Charles Vancouver 1808.

The Palk Family



The history of the Palk Family of Haldon House is a tale of great wealth, lost fortunes and scandal.



Sir Robert Palk (1717-1798) 1st Baronet

Born into a yeoman farming family in Ashburton, Robert Palk was ordained as a deacon before embarking on a career as a naval chaplain bound for India. There, his friendship to General Stringer Lawrence led to a lucrative position as 'Paymaster and Commissary in the Field' to Stringer's army and eventually to becoming Governor of Madras, India. Returning home a very rich man, Palk was knighted by King George III and bought the small fishing village of Torquay, Haldon House and the surrounding lands.

Sir Lawrence Palk (1766-1813) 2nd Baronet

Although a likeable fellow, the first Sir Lawrence did not show any of his father's business acumen and spent much of the family fortune in a short space of time.



Sir Lawrence V. Palk (1793-1860) 3rd Baronet

Following in his father's footsteps, the third Baronet was not interested in looking after the estates preferring instead to gamble and socialise. He had to leave England to avoid his creditors.



Sir Lawrence Palk (1818-1883) 4th Baronet, 1st Lord Haldon.

Lawrence enthusiastically tried to revive the family fortunes. He invested heavily in building Haldon Pier in Torbay and built the Teign Valley Railway Line. He was also Chairman of the Torquay Hotels Company which built the Imperial Hotel. Reputedly, he was a good friend of Prime Minister Disraeli.



Sir Lawrence H. Palk (1846-1903) 5th Baronet, 2nd Lord Haldon.

Known throughout his life as 'Piggy Palk', the fifth Baronet had to facilitate the break up of the Haldon Estates and was forced into bankruptcy. He ended up living in lodgings in Hampton Wick.

Sir Lawrence W. Palk (1869-1933) 6th Baronet, 3rd Lord Haldon.

He worked abroad in the mining industry and also fought in the Boer War in Africa. Inheriting the title of Lord Haldon without an estate or money, he was also made bankrupt and was known to sleep on park benches in London.

Sir Lawrence E. Palk (1896-1938) 7th Baronet, 4th Lord Haldon.

The last of the Palks saw nothing of the once grandiose lifestyle of his forbears. Imprisoned many times for theft, he eventually died on the dole, aged 42.

- 1 The Palk Coat of Arms.
- 2 Sir Robert Palk, oil painting by Thomas Beach, c1780.
Courtesy Mr. T. Fenton
- 3 Lawrence Palk 2nd Bt., by circle of Cosway c1799.
Courtesy Sotheby's, London
- 4 Lawrence Palk, 1st Lord Haldon, 1859.
Courtesy House of Commons Library
- 5 Lawrence Palk, 2nd Lord Haldon, by 'Spy', *Vanity Fair*, 1884.

Further Reading: *The Palk Family of Haldon House & Torquay*, by Iain Fraser.

The Palk art collection



For over 100 years the walls of Haldon House were adorned with many excellent paintings, especially Dutch works of art. Due to the eventual financial decline of the family, all the paintings were either disposed of through family members or ended up in one of the many sales that took place at Christie's from 1891.

Of the one hundred or more paintings that were on the walls at Haldon House, most seem to have disappeared without trace. Shown here are examples of the Palk collection at Haldon House.



- 1 *Lady's Maid Soaping Linen* c.1765-82
Henry Robert Morland
Oil on canvas, 25 in x 29 in.
Morland was fond of depicting his sitters employed in some kind of work. Hung in the Billiard Room at Haldon House

© Tate, London

- 2 *Haldon Hall, 1780* Francis Towne
Oil on canvas, 50 in x 32 in.
Commissioned by Robert Palk. A fine example of the country-house portrait in a landscape – a popular genre in the Eighteenth Century.

© Tate, London

- 3 *Lady Palk*, c.1761 Sir Joshua Reynolds
Oil on canvas, 30 in x 25½ in.
Reynolds was regarded as the finest portrait painter of his day. Apparently, the second Lord Haldon 'divided the family portraits up among the less penurious members of the family'. This portrait passed to his brother the Hon. Edward Arthur Palk in 1891 and not long after it was sold for \$5,000 and went to America.

© Museum Fine Arts, Boston

- 4 *A Scene on the Ice near Dordrecht*, 1642 Jan van Goyen
Oil on canvas, 60 in x 54 in.
Originally in the Boudoir at Haldon House. This picture is unusual for van Goyen because, although he is famous for landscapes with rivers and estuaries, he painted few ice scenes.

© The National Gallery, London

- 5 *Stringer Lawrence* c.1774-1775
Thomas Gainsborough
Oil on canvas, feigned oval, 30 in x 24½ in.
Commissioned by Robert Palk, now part of the Primary Collection at the National Portrait Gallery.

© National Portrait Gallery, London

- 6 *Elderly Woman Reading A Book*, c1640. Jacob Adriaensz Backer.
For many years this painting was attributed to Rembrandt himself but was actually painted by Backer, one of Rembrandt's most talented students. Obtained by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin in 1904, the work was lost during the destruction of Berlin at the end of World War II.

© Rijksmuseum Research Library

- 7 *Hilly Landscape with a Watermill*, c.1670 Jacob van Ruisdael.
Oil on canvas, 52 in x 48 in.
One of four works in Haldon House by Ruisdael, one of the most celebrated of the Dutch landscape painters. Originally in the Drawing Room at Haldon, it is now in Detroit.

© Detroit Institute of Arts, USA



Racing at the Top

Exeter Racecourse is the second highest in the Kingdom – only Bath is higher – and the longest bar Aintree. It is one of the most attractive courses in the land, and the views of the action on this undulating course are superb.



Many famous horses started their racing careers at Haldon. These include Desert Orchid, Best Mate, and Denman, all of whom went on to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Sadly, Best Mate died of a heart attack immediately following a race at Haldon in 2005 which was front page news.

Racing at Haldon first took place c1665 in the reign of Charles II. It has been run under Jockey Club rules since 1769. Prize money has increased from £50 to over £70,000.



There has been a Haldon Gold Cup since c1820. In 1813 Sir Lawrence Palk acquired half of the course and the then existing grandstand under the Enclosures Act. About this time, the *Exeter Flying Post* describes 'the numerous equipages which sallied forth for Haldon, from the dashing four-in-hand, filled with dazzling and elegantes belles, to the humble dog-cart'.

Before and after the Second World War, horses would arrive at Exeter St. David's railway station, from where they would be walked the 4 miles to stables at Kennford. Some stabling at the racecourse at the top of the hill was only built in the 1960s and added to in the 90s.

Currently, (2008), there are 17 Racedays between October and May. Highlights are William Hill Gold Cup Meeting in early November and New Year's Day.



- Advertisement for Exeter's two-day meeting, 1825. Poster, collection: Devon & Exeter Steeplechases Ltd.
- General Gilbert, 'Father of the Indian Turf' with his own mount, Passport, a winner at Haldon in 1840. Coloured print. Private collection.
- Exeter's original grandstand. Photograph taken 1908, reproduced courtesy of Devon & Exeter Steeplechases Ltd.
- Colin Brown riding Desert Orchid at Exeter Racecourse 1985. Photograph © Mark Johnston
- Best Mate beating Seebald, Best Mate Day at Exeter Racecourse 2004. Photograph © Mark Johnston
- 'The Finishing Straight' at Exeter Racecourse. Photograph © Mark Johnston

Haldon Belvedere

Erected by Sir Robert Palk in 1788, the Haldon Belvedere, originally called Lawrence Castle, was built as a memorial to his great friend, Major-General Stringer Lawrence, known as the 'Father of the Indian Army'.



Lawrence, a veteran of the Battle of Culloden, met Palk in India and the two became life-long friends. Lawrence spent much of his retirement at Haldon and was buried in nearby Dunchideock Church.

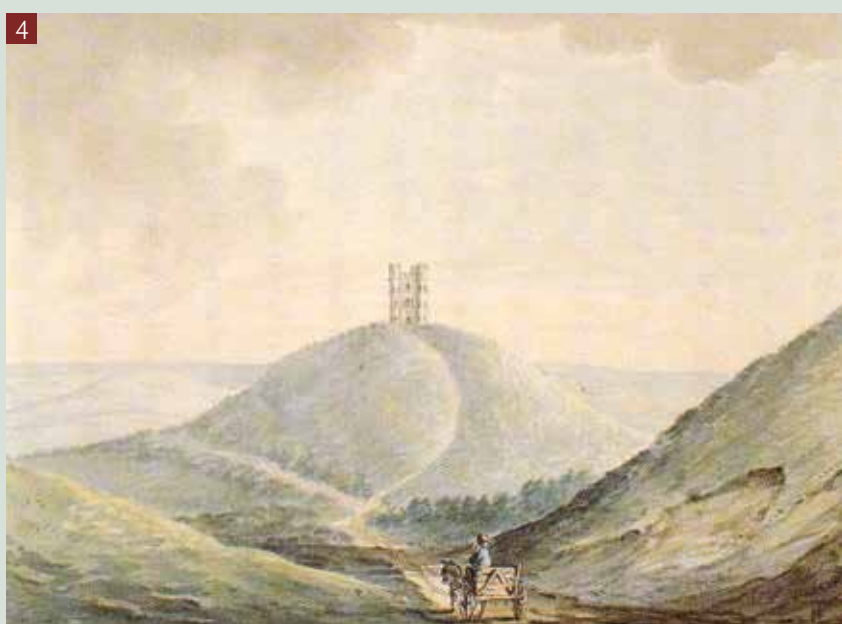
Built of rendered rubble stone and modelled on Shrub Hill Tower in Windsor Great Park, the Belvedere (from the Italian 'beautiful view') cost in the region of £2,000-£3,000 to build.

Haldon Belvedere is one of only a few remaining reminders of the Palk empire. The Grade II* listed triangular white tower is an extraordinary landmark, visible for miles around. On a clear day the views from the roof extend to Portland Bill, the Quantock Hills, Dartmoor, the Exe estuary and the cliffs of Beer and Seaton.

It made a great impression on King George III and his entourage who visited in 1789. In order to avoid mixing with the commoners, a special carriageway was built so that the Royal party and other dignitaries could travel from Haldon House to the tower for the many grand parties held there.

On the break-up of the Haldon Estates in 1925, the building was sold at auction for £300. It then became the home of the Dale family until 1994.

Devon Historic Buildings Trust maintains the tower according to the objectives of the Stringer Lawrence Memorial Trust and to ensure that it remains open to the public. It is also available for civil marriage ceremonies and the self-contained accommodation near the top of the tower is available for holiday rental.



1 *Haldon House & Lawrence Castle*, engraving by Rev. R. Polwhele c1793.

Courtesy Westcountry Studies Library

2 *Stringer Lawrence after Sir Joshua Reynolds*, mezzotint engraving by E. A. Ezekiel of Exeter.

3 Statue of Stringer Lawrence dressed in Roman attire in the Haldon Belvedere.

4 Newly built Lawrence Castle, watercolour by Rev. J. Swete 1792.

Courtesy Devon Records Office

5 Lawrence Castle c1920, photograph by Chapman & Son, Dawlish.

6 Present day Haldon Belvedere.

Further Reading: *The Tower on the Hill*, by C. T. Pidsley, Orchard Publishing, 2008.

Haldon House For Sale

Due to severe financial pressures, the 2nd Lord Haldon was forced to sell the family holdings in 1892. The Bannatyne family from Ireland bought the mansion and estate and spent almost £90,000 restoring and updating the house, installing electricity, an internal telephone system, radiator heating and converting the stables into garages for motorcars.

They entertained often, with cricket and tennis played in the grounds, shooting parties with luncheon in a thatched chalet near the Belvedere and visits to Haldon Racecourse.

The new owners enjoyed twenty-four years of idyllic English country life before Mr. Bannatyne died in 1916, followed shortly by his son, Gerald, who was killed in the First World War. In 1918, Mrs. Bannatyne decided to sell the estate and was fortunate to get £90,000 at auction, following the economic depression after the war.

Because of the post-war timber shortage, the trees on the estate were all felled and the house then put back on the market. After many failed sales in the 1920s, Haldon House was sold for demolition. Everything that could be removed was sold. The complete pine-panelled Lounge Hall was acquired and taken to London where it was bought by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. It is thought the room was then shipped to America.



The building was eventually demolished with only the north wing left standing which is now the Lord Haldon Hotel.



The old Palk pleasure gardens, now Haldon Grange, open each Spring as part of the National Gardens Scheme. They include a series of ornamental pools and winding walks, taking in the many majestic mature trees and shrubs once brought from all over the world.



The kitchen gardens and Home Farm have all been re-developed for residential use.

One interesting curiosity can still be found on the slopes leading up to the Belvedere. A field boundary has been created using over thirty iron bedsteads wired together. It is thought these came from the old house.



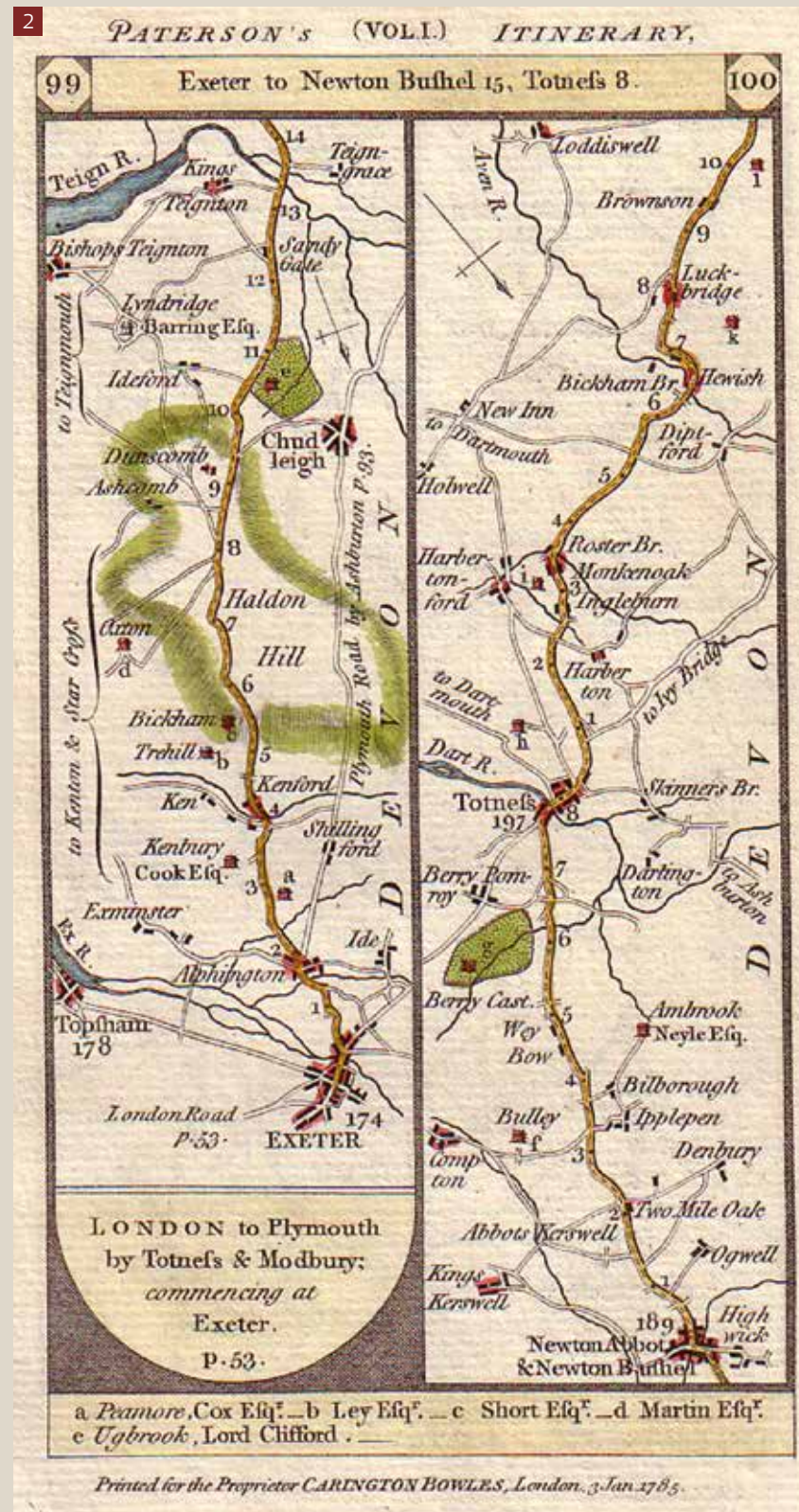
- 1 Demolition Sale catalogue 1925.
- 2 Bannatyne family and guests at Haldon House c1915.
Courtesy Rosemary Lauder/Bannatyne family
- 3 Large pond at Haldon Grange pleasure gardens.
- 4 The Lounge Hall, from Roberson's *Antique Panelled Rooms*.
- 5 Bedsteads forming field boundary.
- 6 Remains of Haldon House – now The Lord Haldon Hotel.

Further Reading:
Vanished Houses of South Devon, by Rosemary Lauder, North Devon Books, 1997.
Moving Rooms: Architectural Salvage, by John Harris, Yale, 2007.
The Palk Family of Haldon House & Torquay, by Iain Fraser, Sylvesterwood Publishing, 2008.



Transport over and around the Haldon Hills

For thousands of years, the eight-mile range of the Haldon Hills presented a natural barrier and a challenge to anyone wishing to make the journey from Exeter to Newton Abbot and beyond.



Rail

When Isambard Kingdom Brunel was asked to build a railway line from Exeter to Plymouth, he chose to run it along the coast via Starcross and Dawlish, then up the Teign estuary to Newton Abbot. This proved cheaper than laying the line over, or under, the Haldon Hills and still remains as part of the Great Western Railway. It was not until 1903 that the Exeter and Teign Valley railway line went through the northern part of Haldon Hills at Perridge, offering an alternative route when the coastal line was closed due to bad weather at sea or rock-falls on the line. The scenic Teign Valley line was eventually closed by the 1950s.



Road

Many of the roads over the hills are thought to have been of early British origin. When the Romans arrived they used the existing roads, occasionally modifying them with their advanced road-building skills. Today, the A380 follows a similar route to the ancient road over Haldon.

Telegraph Hill was so named because of the Naval messages that were signalled by semaphore flags, passed from Plymouth to London during the Napoleonic Wars. These semaphores were permanently manned and watched.

Air

The site of the long disused Haldon Aerodrome was on Little Haldon near the Teignmouth Golf Course. Opened in 1929, the high winds gusting off the moors and sea, the mist and the fog, and the often waterlogged fields, made take-off and landing an interesting, if challenging, experience for pilots. Nevertheless, Haldon had an annual airshow and was part of the route between Plymouth and Cardiff.



- 1 Minister of Transport opening the Kennford bypass 1931. 'A mile long and £23,000 to construct'. *Western Morning News* 20/7/1931.
- 2 Coachman's Map from *Paterson's Itinerary*, 1785.
- 3 Chudleigh Station on the Palks' Teign Valley Line. The station is now under the A38 dual carriageway to Plymouth.
Photograph by Chapman & Son, Dawlish
- 4 The 7923 Speke Hall steam train to Teignmouth, on the route Isambard Kingdom Brunel built in the mid 1800s. It is still the mainline route today.
- 5 First Day Cover 1973 commemorating 40th anniversary of the Plymouth-Haldon-Cardiff air service.

Haldon Work Camp and Open Prison

By the crossroads at the gateway to Haldon Forest Park, the Haldon Work Camp, later the Haldon Open Prison, was the scene of intense activity, with hundreds of men at work.



During the 1930s, the Ministry of Labour set up the Haldon Instructional Centre to accommodate and re-train unemployed men to work in Haldon Forest. It was described in the *Express & Echo* as 'a centre of definite and increasing value in the fight against the ravages of unemployment'. The idea was to harden men and give them the confidence and skills to be able to return to work.

Haldon Open Prison closed in December 1974 and lay empty for almost ten years until put to tender. A private house, Kennford Court was later built on the site.

There was also a First World War prisoner-of-war camp on Kenton Common beneath Mamhead. Because of the high demand for timber during the war, German prisoners were set to work in the forests, felling and clearing trees.

2 "SCHOOL FOR MANHOOD" ON HALDON



Aged between 18 and 45, both married and single men were taken on and given jobs such as clearing ground and building tracks. They were also trained in carpentry and metal work. The days started at 7.15am with breakfast, finished at 5.00 pm, with lights out by 10.30pm every night.

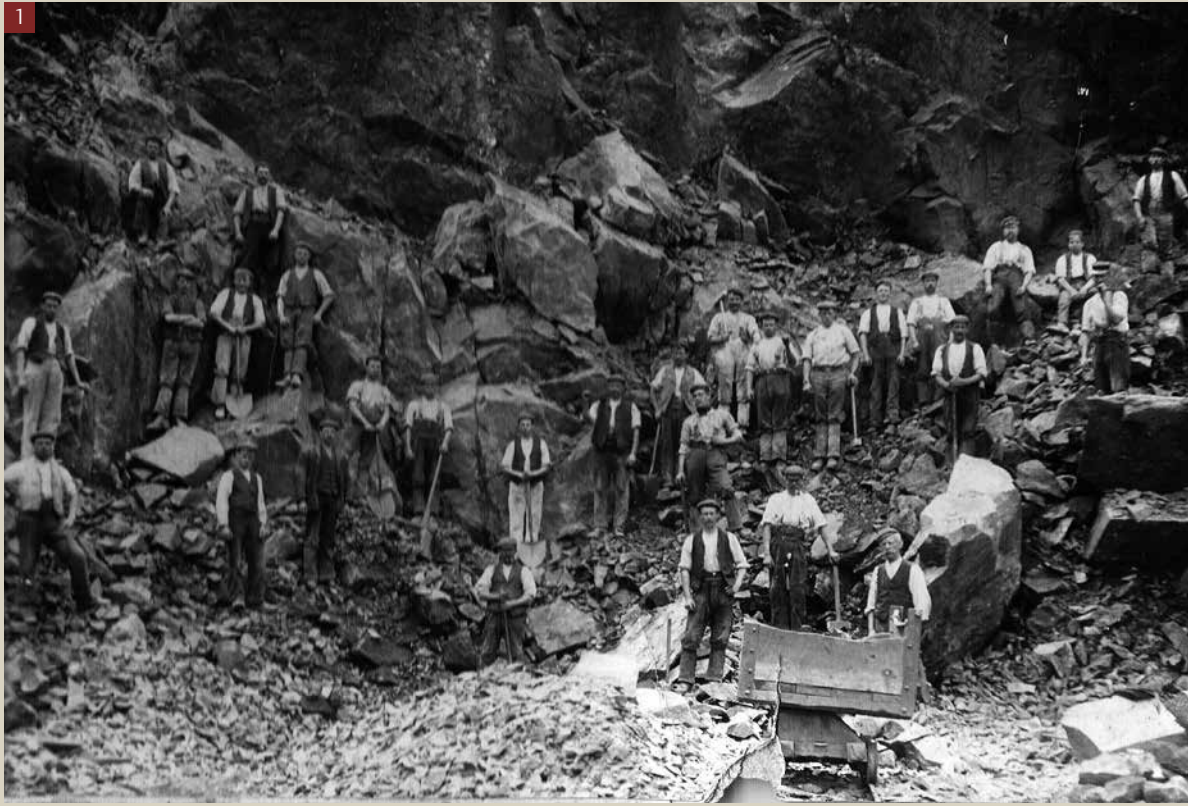
The Ministry closed down its work camps at the outset of war in 1939. In 1949 the Haldon camp was reopened as an open prison with accommodation for almost 200 short-term prisoners. Few absconded but there was one prisoner who would regularly 'borrow' a Forestry Commission Land Rover, disconnecting its speedometer for a pleasure drive, then returning it to the same place every time. This lasted almost a month before it was discovered.



- 1 Aerial view of the Haldon Camp, courtesy Sally Barber, Obelisk Publications.
- 2 Staying for twelve weeks, the plan was to 'rehabilitate the men as eager citizens, better equipped for the fray on the industrial battle front!' *Express & Echo*, Nov 1936.
- 3 The old clock tower. Built by bricklayer George Musto whilst working at the camp, courtesy Sally Barber, Obelisk Publications.

Industry

Apart from forest management on the Haldon Hills, various other industries have contributed to employment over the years.



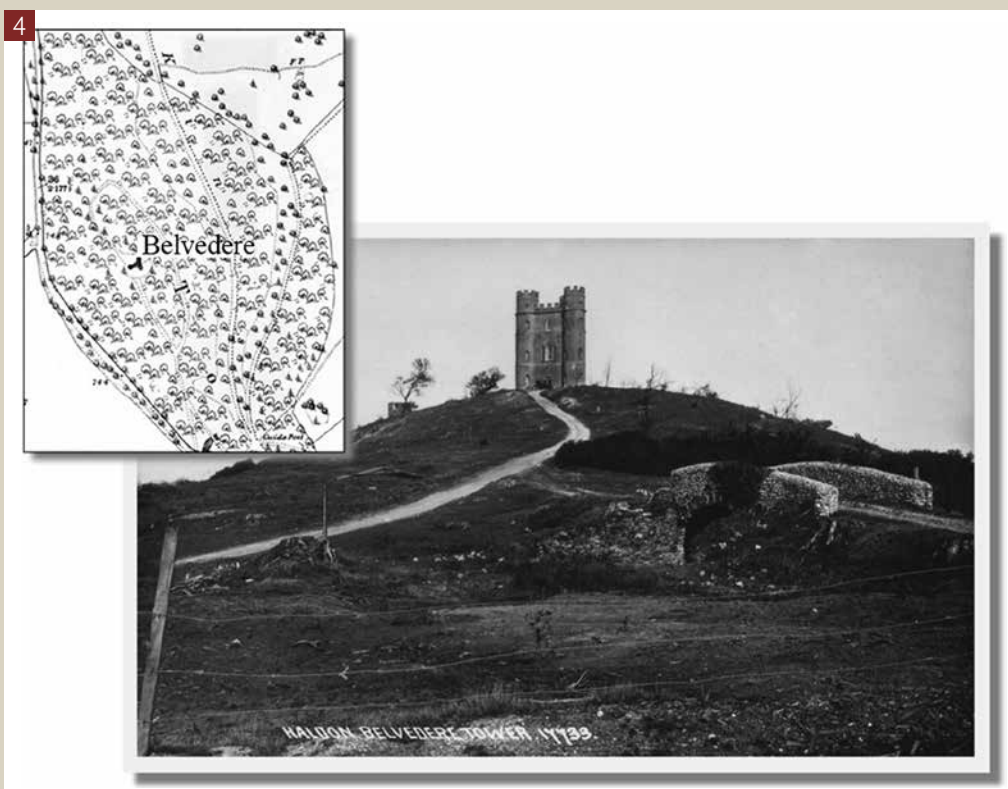
The Teign Valley, nestled between the Haldon Hills and the granite mass of Dartmoor, was a very productive mining area in the 1800s. Lead, silver, copper, tin, zinc, manganese, barytes and iron were all extracted in this area.

Lead was very much in demand; priced at about £20 per ton, with silver – obtained as a by-product of lead mining – reaching around 5 shillings per ounce. The Canonteign estate saw 15,000 tons of lead and 240,520 ounces of silver removed from their land.

Roadstone chippings from Scatter Rock quarry near Christow were recorded as being the toughest stone in England, ideally suited for the 20th century road building boom.



The Teign Valley mines and stone quarries needed a railway to transport their heavy loads. Financed by Sir Lawrence Palk in 1863, the Teign Valley Railway opened in 1882 and eventually reached Exeter by 1903. Apart from the ores and minerals, the railway also transported wooden pit-props and Christmas trees from forests at Haldon.



Remains of limekilns and old flint and sand quarries can still be found over Haldon. Crushed flintstone were sent to the Candy Tile Factory at Heathfield, whilst limestone was used in building, especially in and around Chudleigh.

Ball-clay, found at Chudleigh Knighton and Heathfield, and high quality pottery clay found in the Bovey basin, provided employment for a significant number of local people.

Agriculture has mainly existed on the lower slopes of the hills where the soil is better and mineral rich. Kenton and Shillingford St. George both have their own superb vineyards. There are now also excellent organic farmers and growers around Haldon.

- 1 Teign Valley stone quarry.

Photograph courtesy Dick Lystor

- 2 Great Rock Mine, Hennock.

Photograph courtesy Ron Tucker

- 3 Railway sidings at Trusham Quarry.

Photograph courtesy Dick Lystor

- 4 Tree felling on Haldon Hills c1920, photograph by Chapman & Son. OS map 1890.

Courtesy WCSL

- 5 Kenton Vineyard looking toward Haldon.

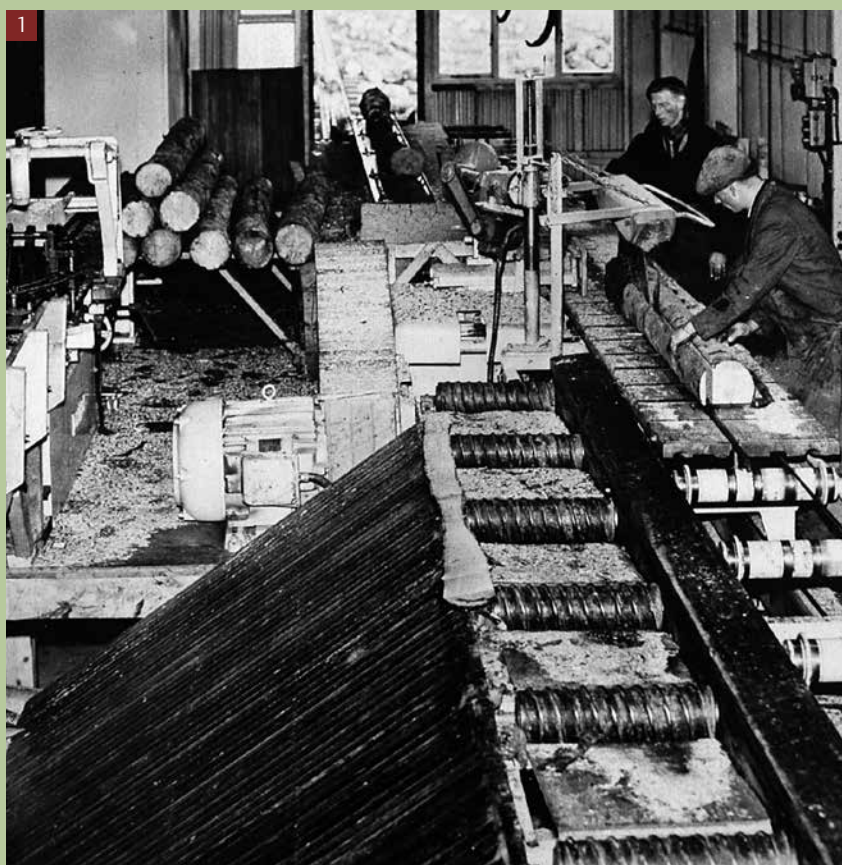
© Kenton Vineyard

Further Reading: *From Haldon to Mid-Dartmoor*, by Tim Hall, Alan Sutton Publishing, 1990.

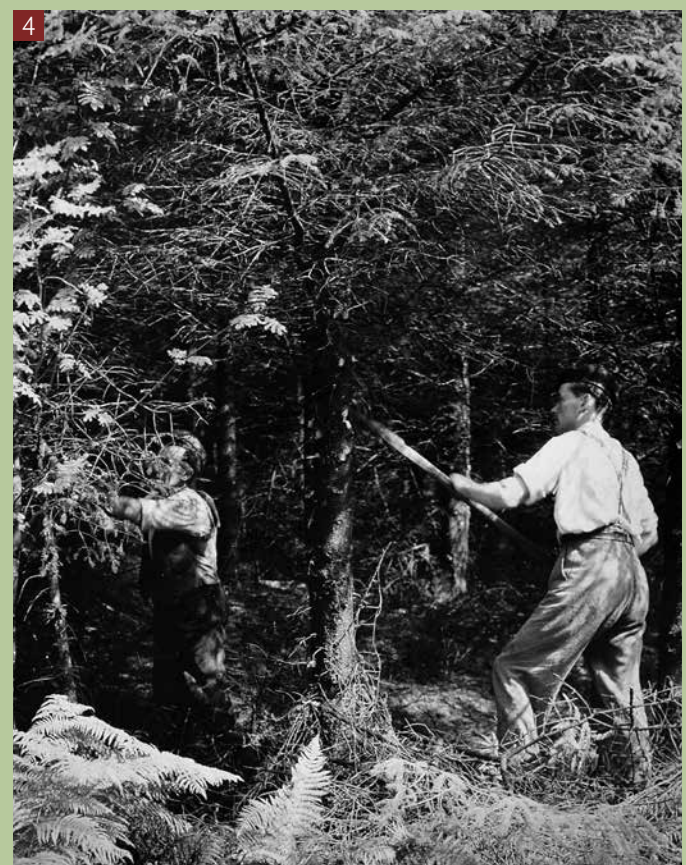


Forestry on Haldon

Before the conifer plantations, the Haldon plateau was covered by heathland and the lower slopes had long grown oak coppice, other broadleaves, and some conifers. This was exploited, unsustainably, during the First World War. It was in the aftermath of the war that the Forestry Commission was set up to provide home-grown timber and reduce our over-reliance on foreign imports.



The Forestry Commission acquired its first 872 acres at Haldon in 1920. Lease or purchase acquisitions continued into the 1960s. By that time Haldon was the nucleus of the Forestry Commission's 'Exeter Forest', totalling 4,759 acres of woodland within a 12 mile radius of Exeter. Today, land managed by the Forestry Commission at Haldon totals 3,566 acres.



Efficiency increased as knowledge grew and machinery became more advanced. From 1920 until 1950, around 60 staff managed forest operations at Haldon (dropping during the Second World War), but by 1985 only 15 operational staff were required. Today, the Forestry Commission has just five operational staff for the Exeter area, a direct result of advances in technology and greater reliance on contractors.



Pioneering forestry on the plateau was not easy, and there were many challenges, most significantly the poor soils characteristic of heathland. Fires lit both accidentally and deliberately gradually destroyed the peat layer, leaving a thin stony soil that was heavily compacted and dried out quickly.

Although Haldon is still very much a working forest, in recent years recreation and conservation have become increasingly important. Haldon is now coming full circle, as some areas of plantation are now being restored to heathland.

In the early days, planting involved hard labour, breaking up the ground with a pick and boring a hole with an iron 'dibble'. Finding the right conifer species for these conditions involved extensive trial and error, and records show heavy losses from severe drought and entire areas scrapped due to poor growth.



- 1 Milling stakes c1950s. In the past, many forests had their own saw mills.

Photograph Forestry Commission.

- 2 Firemen and foresters working at Harcombe to prevent flames from spreading. The foresters were equipped with hoses, carrying water-containers on their backs.

Photograph Western Morning News, 9 September 1933.

- 3 Fencing gang at Haldon, 1947, l to r: Tony Nash, Bob, Mac, Philip Painter, lorry driver, Billy Bray.

Photograph courtesy of John Harrison, loaned by John Hunt, Forest District Manager 1987-96.

- 4 Using a brushing saw to remove the lower branches and prevent knots forming c1950s.

Photograph Forestry Commission.

- 5 Cycling at Haldon, c2008.

Further Reading: *The Forestry Commission: The First 75 Years*, by Douglas Pringle, 1994.

Wildlife on Haldon

Haldon Forest is home to a wide range of wildlife, everything from black Fallow deer through to a rare butterfly. It is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the presence of birds of prey, Nightjars and butterflies.



One of the 'stars' is the perfectly camouflaged Nightjar. This summer visitor produces one of the most unusual songs of any bird and it can be heard on warm summer evenings. Nesting on bare ground in the forest, it has evolved near perfect colouring to avoid any would be predators. Within Devon, Haldon covers just over 0.2% of the county, yet is home to about 50% of the county's Nightjars.

There are many mammals in the forest and these include the nocturnal Dormouse. Haldon Forest is home to a large nest box scheme to help the Forestry Commission monitor this endangered species; important to biodiversity and in decline due to the decrease of hedgerows and coppicing, and fragmentation of woodland. All the data collected is fed into a national scheme to help discover the conservation needs of this protected mammal.



Two species of deer, Fallow and Roe, can be found on Haldon. The Fallow are by far the most numerous and the majority of them are 'melanistic'. This means that their coat is dominated by dark pigments, giving them an almost jet black appearance. However, there are also sightings of white ones and even one that is a bright ginger colour.

Haldon is also home to over 30 species of butterfly. Of these, the Pearl Bordered Fritillary is the most important. The Forestry Commission specially manage areas to help this butterfly, nationally threatened with extinction not only survive, but to expand out into other parts of the forest.



- 1 Nightjar.
- 2 Dormouse.
- 3 Roe deer.
- 4 Fallow deer.
- 5 Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterfly.

Photographs 1,3,4 & 5 Forestry Commission

Jamie McCullough's *Beginner's Way*



In 1980, artist Jamie McCullough created a path approximately a mile and a quarter through the Haldon Forest. He called it *Beginner's Way* and for over two years he and his helpers built 22 sculpted places or features, conceived as a symbolic journey reflecting on the process of creation.



Jamie stipulated that the existence of the path was not reported, signposted or marked on any map. News travelled by word of mouth and through hand-drawn maps on the back of old envelopes. Soon the path was attracting over 1000 visitors a week. Over the years, sheer weight of numbers destroyed many works in the sequence, others became unsafe and had to be removed.

Sadly, Jamie died in 1998. In Spring 2007, CCANW organised an exhibition on Jamie's *Beginner's Way* which brought together original sketches, writings, photographs and correspondence giving a unique insight into the evolution of this important sequence of works, and placing it within the context of work created by Jamie for other places.

The exhibition and accompanying forum, which brought together those who worked with Jamie McCullough at Haldon and helped create *Beginner's Way*, received an enthusiastic response from those for whom this trail has created a deep impression and moving experience over the years.



Please note: the trail, as designed, no longer exists, so the Forestry Commission cannot provide maps and there is no formal way-marking to it.

- 1 Jamie McCullough, 1980s.
- 2 The arch and stepping stones, 1980s.
- 3 One-way drawbridge, 1980s.
- 4 Dark gate, 1980s.
- 5 Shelter, 1980s.

Photographs 2, 3, 4 and 5: Jamie McCullough, courtesy of Lynne Sanderson

- 6 Oak bowl, 2007.

Photograph: Chris Lewis