

The Dartmoor  
Preservation Association.



William Crossing

**MR. CROSSING'S REPORT**

“Being Mr. Crossing’s report  
as to damage to ancient monuments  
and encroachments on Dartmoor, 1901.”



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**With an introduction by  
John Bainbridge**

**DARTMOOR PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

*'The Plundering of Dartmoor has been slowly going on for a long period, but within the last century the spoliation has been rapid.'*

Robert Burnard *Plundered Dartmoor*, 1896.

*Mr Crossing's Report as to Damage to Ancient Monuments and Encroachments on Dartmoor* was originally published as an addendum to the eighteenth annual report of the committee of the Dartmoor Preservation Association (DPA).<sup>1</sup> The decision to engage the services of William Crossing was taken earlier in the year and Crossing completed the writing of the survey in late September. As the detail in the Report suggests, Crossing took his commission extremely seriously, his findings being 'the result of a perambulation which extended over many days.'<sup>2</sup>

The turn of the century was one of the better times in Crossing's turbulent writing career. His reputation as a Dartmoor expert had received a boost with the serialisation the previous year of 'A Hundred Years On Dartmoor' in *The Western Morning News*. In August 1901 *A Hundred Years On Dartmoor* was published in book form to both critical acclaim and excellent sales; the first edition selling out within a month and the second edition in a day.

So the idea of surveying Dartmoor must have been an attractive proposition for Crossing, providing both an opportunity to return to parts of the Moor not visited for some time and to present his evidence in written form. As a noted recorder of ancient monuments and a firm believer in the DPA's objectives, Crossing must have had a genuine concern about the removal of stone for road-building and the growing number of illegal encroachments on Common land. Undoubtedly the fee paid would have been a welcome supplement to the author's income in advance of any payment for *A Hundred Years On Dartmoor*; Crossing at that point not knowing if his new work was to be successful. The DPA accounts for 1901 record the sum paid: 'Mr W. Crossing for report on damage to ancient monuments, etc., on Dartmoor by road menders, and on new inclosures on the Commons - £10.00'.<sup>3</sup>

But why were these early Dartmoor environmentalists so concerned that they felt the need to have such a detailed survey undertaken? Since its inception the DPA had been fighting a series of actions against the unlawful enclosure of Common Land on Dartmoor. Litigation, with mixed results, had increased in the 1890s and the Association – with Robert Burnard and

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1 The full title is the *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Dartmoor Preservation Association for the Year Ending December 31st, 1901*.

2 Ibid, p. 6

3 DPA Annual Accounts and Balance Sheet, Jan. 1st - Dec. 31st, 1901.



J. Brooking Rowe at the helm – had devoted considerable financial resources to countering these threats to ancient Dartmoor rights.

Victories in the Courts were notably achieved in respect of enclosures on Holne Moor, where pressure from the DPA forced the Hon. Richard Dawson to remove a partly-constructed keeper's lodge and a half-acre enclosure, and encroachments on Belstone Common which were removed after a lengthy law-suit. Justified by the weight of these legal precedents the association was not averse to inciting direct action when confronted by new enclosures. During a clash in 1900 between the DPA and Whitchurch Parish Council, Burnard and Brooking Rowe had urged the aggrieved Commoners to '...throw down this enclosure, legally, without fear of any consequences. The enclosure is illegal, and they, or any one of them, have a right to pull it down...' <sup>4</sup>

We are seeing here the remnants of the great habit of enclosure which had taken in so much land in the earlier years of the century. But these contemporary Dartmoor encroachments were legally dubious, carrying none of the official sanction which had dispossessed peasants in other parts of England. By this period there was little of the bafflement at loss of land which had earlier fired the poetry of John Clare or brought condemnation from educated and liberal social commentators. As Crossing's own examination of the enclosures at South Tawton Common shows 'land-cribbing' was not simply the habit of the richer landowners but of the commoners themselves, who happily disregarded venue rights and damaged antiquities in their desire for an easy profit. Though the DPA was at that time essentially a middle-class movement the spirit of radical opinion lived on, as the inclusion of this familiar old anti-enclosure rhyme in a published annual report shows:

The law condemns both man or woman,  
Who takes the goose from off the Common,  
But leaves the greater felon loose,  
Who steals the Common from the goose. <sup>5</sup>

But the destruction of ancient monuments and enclosure did not always go together and since its formation the DPA had been alarmed at the removal of stone generally from the Moor; ancient monuments had been vandalised, the faces of tors quarried away, and river beds and open moorland looted in the quest for materials for roadbuilding. Robert Burnard had already drawn the attention of members to the scale of this predation at an association AGM: 'Road menders are still helping themselves to

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4 *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Committee of the Dartmoor Preservation Association for the Year Ending December 31st, 1900.* p. 10.

5 *Ibid.*

whatever stones they can lay their hands on near the roads, and ancient stone remains are suffering in consequence. It is difficult to cope with these depredations, but it is hoped that publicity will result in a considerable lessening of the evil'.<sup>6</sup>

In the year of Crossing's survey alone the DPA reported damage to both Belstone Tor and the Scorhill stone circle and recognised that any monument adjacent to a public road was at risk. Indeed the taking of stone for roadworks was positively sanctioned by the old Highway Act of William IV which empowered '...the roadmender to search for, dig, and carry away materials for mending the highway in any waste, common, river, or brook in the parish'.<sup>7</sup> The improvement of Dartmoor roads during the Victorian age had led to a greater demand and the high cost of quarried stone acted as a further inducement to plunder a cheaper source of supply. The only legislation designed to protect antiquities was *The Ancient Monuments Act* of 1882, amended in 1900, and this was a complicated piece of law to operate, offering scant protection as it depended on the goodwill of landowners to lease or sell threatened monuments to county councils. Nonetheless, the amendments in 1900 encouraged the DPA to obtain information on the current situation and indirectly led to the employment of William Crossing.

But was the survey worthwhile? Almost certainly yes. The DPA's agitation on unlawful enclosures and moorland spoliation, bolstered by Crossing's evidence, achieved sympathetic and bullish headlines in both the national and local press, securing the DPA valuable allies in the National Trust, Devon County Council and the Society of Antiquaries. Such widespread pressure led to the eventual reform of both the old Highways Act and legislation protecting ancient monuments. Attempts to enclose Common Land declined after this time and the DPA, riding high on a wave of press support and public popularity, devoted more of its energies to fighting other Dartmoor evils, such as china clay extraction and the expansionist desires of the military on the Moor.

And what of William Crossing? It is tempting to speculate that re-acquaintance with so many parts of the Moor sowed the seeds which led to the publication of his *Guide to Dartmoor* eight years later. This *Report* might be among the slightest of William Crossing's works, but it was probably – in its own way – far-reaching. The wild Dartmoor that we know and love today has only survived thanks to the energies of William Crossing and the committed members of the Dartmoor Preservation Association.

John Bainbridge

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6 Ibid.

7 *DPA Eighteenth Annual Report*, p. 4



**WILLIAM CROSSING** 14 November 1847 – 3 September 1928



## MR. CROSSING'S REPORT.

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IN accordance with your instructions I have followed up the main and by-roads of Dartmoor in order to ascertain whether any damage to ancient monuments is at present being committed by road-menders. I have also made observations on the boundary line between the Commons of Devon and the In-country, with a view of discovering whether any fresh inclosures are being formed, or have recently been formed, and have crossed the Forest in several places for the same purpose. South Tawton Common has, agreeably to your express desire, had special attention devoted to it, and several days have been spent there conducting quiet inquiries.

For convenience I have divided the moorland district into four divisions, as follow:-

**One.** That part of the moor lying to the northward of the main road running from Peak Hill, Walkhampton Common, to Moor Gate, at the fourth milestone from Moretonhampstead.

**Two.** That part of the moor lying to the southward of the main road running from Peak Hill, as above, to Two Bridges, and thence to Sherberton Common, near Ponsworthy.

**Three.** That part of the moor lying between the main road from Two Bridges to Moor Gate, as above, and the road from Two Bridges to Sherberton Common, as above, and bounded on the east by the Vale of Widecombe.

**Four.** That part of the moor lying to the eastward of the Vale of Widecombe.

The ROADS in **Division One** comprise that which bounds it on the south; the roads from Princetown and Two Bridges to Pork Hill; the by-roads on each side of the Walkham valley;



the roads on the common near Sampford Spiney, and on Plaster Down and Whitchurch Down; the roads on Black Down, and from there to Sourton Down; the road from Ramsleigh Mine to Gidleigh; and the road from the moor gate near Jurston, in the parish of Chagford, to the point where it joins the Princetown highway. In addition to these there are also the roads running southward from Belstone to the Forest, and to Halstock Down.

The BOUNDARY LINE between the Commons of Devon and the In-country in **Division One** marks the confines of common land in the parishes of Walkhampton, Whitchurch, Sampford Spiney, Tavistock, Peter Tavy, Mary Tavy, Brent Tor, Lydford, Bridestowe, Sourton, Okehampton, Belstone, South Tawton, Throwleigh, Glidleigh, and Chagford. Of these parishes Walkhampton abuts on the west quarter of the Forest; Peter Tavy abuts on the west and north quarters; Lydford, Bridestowe and Sourton (combined), Okehampton, Belstone, South Tawton, and Throwleigh abut on the north quarter; Gidleigh abuts on the north and east quarters; and Chagford abuts on the east quarter. The other commons named lie outside the moors belonging to these latter parishes, and do not therefore touch the Forest.

On the main road running across the moor from Walkhampton Common to the fourth milestone from Moreton, nothing was observed calling for any special mention. At certain places, notably at Two Bridges, and near the entrance to Archerton, stones were found ready broken for the road, but there were no traces of any spoliation near. Neither was anything of the kind seen between Two Bridges and Rundle Stone, or Princetown and Rundle Stone. There was a stone - breaker at work near the Foggintor Mission Room, and a careful examination was therefore made of the antiquities in the vicinity. The hut circles and the stone rows were visited, but there were no signs of any recent damage. On Whitchurch Common, east of Beccamoore Combe, and on the north side of the road, some surface blocks of granite have lately been split, but there are no objects of antiquarian interest very near that might be likely to suffer. Further on, near the top of Pork Hill, many men were at work, as usual, breaking stone for the Tavistock Highway Board. The stone is procured from a small quarry of trap rock, on the south-east side of Cox Tor Hill, but at some distance from the for itself.

On the very rough bit of road leading from near Merivale Bridge by Long Ash Farm, Hucken Tor, and Davy Town, to

Ward Bridge, nothing was noticed. Although, as I understand, it is a parish road, it does not appear to receive any attention whatever above Davy Town.

On the 6th September a steam roller (Tavistock Rural Council) was at work in the road between Brook and Huckworthy Common. I ascertained that the metalling was being brought from Pu Tor, by which, however, was meant the common round Pu Tor. This stone I afterwards saw being loaded into carts, as noticed further on. There were one or two holes by the roadside on Huckworthy Common, from which boulders had probably been removed.

Near the road between Sampford Spiney and Hecklake are several worked blocks, seemingly intended for curb stones or channelling. Below Hecklake the road leads to Vixen Tor Farm, and by its side several openings have quite recently been made into the hill, and the granite laid bare. Some blocks have also been removed. One of these openings is of large size, and the soil has been thrown out to form a bank on the lower side of the road, which here runs along the side of a steep hill. But no further operations have been conducted; only the laying bare of the granite. On the side of the hill facing Vixen Tor Farmhouse is a new quarry, opened, I am informed, in 1900, by Messrs. Damerell, of Plymouth.

The road is not continued beyond the farm gate, but the higher track, which runs just outside the boundary wall of the moor, can be gained from the quarry either by proceeding up the combe close by, or by mounting the hill and crossing a newtake. This higher track leads from Merivale Bridge into the road near the gate at Hecklake, and forms a direct means of communication between the former place and Sampford Spiney. From the point above the new quarry to the main road near Merivale it is simply a green path; in the other direction, as far as Pu Tor Cottage, it is a rough moor track.

Following it towards the last-named place Heckwood Tor is speedily reached, the track passing close to the rocks. Some stone has been quarried on this tor, but not recently.

A short distance further on—towards Hecklake—stone is being quarried close beside the track. It is from this spot that the metalling was being taken to repair the road near Huckworthy Common, where the steam roller was observed. The quarry, or pit, is dangerous, its edge being close to the road. There are other similar pits on this common. Granite is being cut in many places round Pu Tor Cottage, but I could not discover that anything other than boulders had been



broken up. There were no signs that any objects of antiquarian interest had been destroyed.

On Pu Tor itself there were no indications of recent quarrying of stone, but there are several worked stones lying round the foot of the tor. Some had probably been not long before removed; at all events, I noticed that there were signs of a cart having been driven quite recently to the tor, and the remains of chaff upon the ground that had evidently fallen from the nose-bag of a horse.

The quarry on the south-west side of Sampford Tor will very soon cause the disappearance of the latter. A blacksmith's shop is erected there, and there were several stonecutters at work.

On the road from Sampford Spiney to Moortown, which skirts the common, nothing was observed; nor in Quarry Lane, which leads from Moortown to Whitchurch Down.

Plaster Down was also visited, but there is nothing to report concerning it.

The same remark applies to Whitchurch Down, except that I would desire to draw attention to the broken cross by the roadside, just where the latter leaves the down and descends towards Mount Tavy. A stone-breaker was at work very near to it, and there is a possible danger that it may be destroyed. As it only requires a shaft to render the whole complete, it might perhaps be deemed desirable to take steps to effect its restoration.

On the boundary line from the starting-point at Peak Hill to the point where Pork Hill enters the moor, no fresh inclosures were observed. Near Merivale Bridge a considerable portion of the slope below Mid Staple Tor, on the common land of Whitchurch, has been taken for quarrying purposes, and a wall has been erected round it. A row of cottages for workmen has also been built.

The road from Tavistock to Okehampton enters Black Down about four and a half miles from the first-named place, and runs over the down for a distance of about two miles in a direction N.N.E. There is also another road on the down leading from Iron Gate to Wortha Mill, with a branch to Brent Tor, the latter having been made since the building of the railway station there. In addition there are several rough cart tracks over the down, but neither on the roads nor on these was anything observed meriting attention.

There is, however, a case of inclosure having been made on this down quite recently, although it is only a small piece

of land that has been appropriated. A corner formed by the hedges of two fields abutting on the down has been taken in from the common, and a masonry wall built to inclose it. It is about twenty-two feet by twelve feet. The adjoining property belongs to a Mr. Rice, of the parish of Brent Tor, and it was he, I am informed, who made the inclosure. Two other instances occur near by, where cottagers have fenced in small pieces from the down—one near the gate opening on Burn Lane and the other a little southward of Lydford Station.

Eastward of the main road over Black Down Government rifle ranges are to be formed. No land in the parish of Mary Tavy will be required for the purpose, further than, it is said, a road from Lydford railway station to the ranges will be made, and such will be entirely in the parish of Mary Tavy. But when firing practice is proceeding access to the Forest from Black Down will be completely blocked. Moormen who may then require to drive cattle from the one to the other will have to make a considerable detour.

After leaving Black Down the main road again enters on the commons at about eight and a half miles from Tavistock. Here it acts as a dividing line between Fernworthy Down on the west and Vale Down on the east. At the south-eastern corner of the former, and close to the road, a house is in course of construction, but within an inclosure of some standing, and not on the common itself. There is nothing to report concerning these downs.

After passing through the hamlets of Southerly and Lake, and the little village of Sourton, the highway enters Prewley Moor, across which it runs for a short distance, parallel and close to the London and South Western Railway. By the roadside, at the end of the down nearest Sourton, was a heap of stones ready broken for road-mending, but they were not granite, and had not been taken from the common. Although boulders are numerous at this spot, I could not discover that the stone-breaker had been at work among them. Nothing would suffer here, as there are no antiquities very near to the road.

The border line from the summit of Pork Hill, by Peter Tavy Combe, Cudlipp Town, Redford, High Down, and Sourton Common, to Prewley Moor, I have also examined, but have not been able to discover any recent attempts at inclosure on any part of it. I have also followed up the Peat Railway from Noddon Gate to Rattlebrook Head, as well as



the old track from the former place to the road at Higher Bowden, but there is nothing to report concerning either.

The road over Halstock Down to Crovenor Steps, and also that from Belstone to the same place, with its continuation towards Ock Tor, have been examined, and also the border line from Halstock Down to Belstone Cleave, and to Cosdon Hill. No destruction of antiquities or inclosures in course of formation were noticed here.

Belstone West Cleave was also examined, and the track from near Fatherford Viaduct, past the old rectory, followed up, but no attempts at inclosing were discoverable. The road from Fice's Well, in Okehampton Park, through Halstock Farm to Halstock Pound, was also passed over. Halstock Clapper—a large single stone—is not now to be seen. It is, however, still in existence, but hidden beneath a rough bridge of timber and stone, by means of which carts can now pass over, instead of fording the Moor Brook.

Belstone Cleave was also examined, from above the church down to Sticklepath.

The main road from Tavistock to Exeter, by way of Okehampton, passes through the village of Sticklepath, about three and a half miles from the latter town. About a mile beyond the village named it leaves the foot of Cosdon and the moor country, but a branch from it skirts the moor, running by Clannaborough and Shelstone Farms towards Gidleigh. It enters Throwleigh Common at Payne's Bridge, near which a house has been erected within the past few years. On the common close by are a number of hut circles, most of them much overgrown with heather, but whether any belonging to this cluster have been taken to furnish material for the walls of the house I could not discover. I do not, however, think that such is the case. I looked carefully over the ground, and could see no signs of stone having been taken from near the huts. There was a heap of stones broken for road-metalling by the roadside near the house, but no indications of any acts of spoliation.

Stone has been taken in considerable quantities from Shelstone Tor, which is close to the road, but not recently.

This road I examined to its termination at the gate of Berry Down Farm, near Creber Pound, but have nothing further to report concerning it. It will be well to watch the hut village on Throwleigh Common, as being so near the road it may at any time be resorted to as a convenient quarry by road contractors.

## SOUTH TAWTON COMMON.

The road we have just been noticing runs from Sticklepath to Payne's Bridge at the base of Cosdon, and it is on the eastern slope of this hill above the road that, for so many years past, inclosures have been formed. I regret to say that the practice of stealing parts of the common is still going on. I spent a considerable time in examining these inclosures, and crossed them in a number of places by means of the network of rough roads running between the various plots. There is a track leading from the village of South Zeal to the Forest, and this crosses the road at Prospect Place, near Ramsleigh Mine. For some distance it climbs the hill through inclosures of long standing, but when reaching a part of the common which is open to the higher slope of Cosdon, the first of several inclosures now in course of formation is met with. This is on the east or left side of the road in ascending, and not far from where a little stream passes under it. The inclosure is not large—at present. Three sides are of granite, the fourth being closed in by hurdles. The idea seems to be to extend the walls as occasion offers, moving the hurdles out perhaps a yard or two at a time. This could be done in a few hours, so that the inclosure will grow almost imperceptibly. When the "land-cribber" thinks it is large enough he will erect the fourth wall, and the thing will be complete. This plan appears to be the one generally adopted here; there are several examples now existing of inclosures being formed in this way, as I shall show.

A short distance up the track, and on the same side of it, there is another inclosure. In this case the hedge is being formed of turf, and a dyke is being made by the cutting of the latter. When this hedge is carried a little further at each end it will touch the former inclosure and another situated further up the hill, and a large piece of common on the east will then be cut off.



Further up the track, but on the westerly or right side, is an inclosure in course of extension. Part of the wall is weathered, and a line of scattered stones shows the former extent of the plot or field. The portions of new wall can, of course, be readily distinguished. As in the former instance, one end is closed by means of hurdles.

Still further up this road is another new inclosure. This also is on the right. Here the mode of "land-cribbing" is well illustrated. A small piece of wall only has as yet been built, but hurdles fence the plot in from the common, and a crop of potatoes has been raised on it this year. The accompanying sketch plan will convey some idea of its form. The hurdles marked (2) are carried over a depression, which must be filled up before the wall can be extended from A to B. The wall will probably be carried from E to the point at C, and the hurdles moved out, the wall afterwards being completed from C to D.

Further on what is now the inclosure pushed highest up the hillside is reached. It was formed about two years ago and is of considerable extent. The inclosing wall is well built, and was not, so far as I have been able to gather, formed gradually, as in the case of the others noticed, but men were employed by the "cribber" to carry the work out, and were paid at the rate of two shillings per perch for their labour. The inclosure has been well cleared of stones, a number that were taken out of it now being thrown together outside its south-eastern corner. A crop of potatoes has been raised on the ground this year. The upper or western -side of the newtake abuts on the track from South Zeal to the Forest. At no great distance from the south-western corner of it the track passes the eastern end of the well-known triple stone row. This has not been interfered with, as stones were found in plenty within the space to be inclosed, but should another newtake be formed outside it there is danger that this interesting monument, with its double kist, may be destroyed. Two groups of hut circles, shown on the one-inch Ordnance map of the 1891\* survey, I cannot now find, and there appears to be little doubt that they have been used as material for forming the walls of these recently made inclosures.

The new walls can readily be detected, as the stones used in building them, having in most instances been split, of course look white. They are not formed of already weathered

\* Published in that year, but the survey was made in 1882-6.

# ENCLOSURES ON SOUTH TAWTON COMMON.

W

Common.

C

D

HURDLES (I)

E

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

S

NEW WALL

GATE

OLD WALL

N

NEW WALL

HURDLES (2)

A

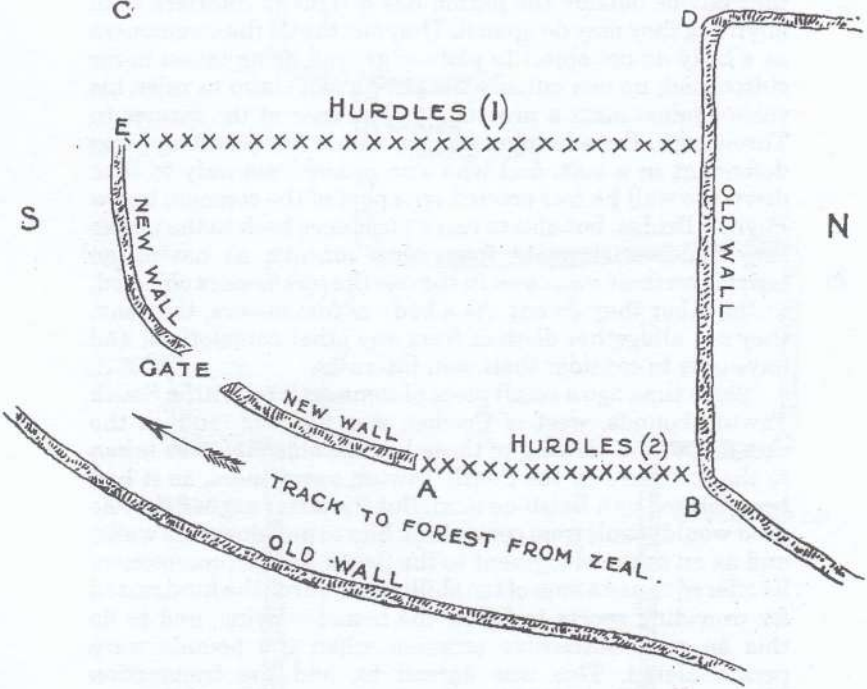
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

B

TRACK TO FOREST FROM ZEAL.

OLD WALL

E





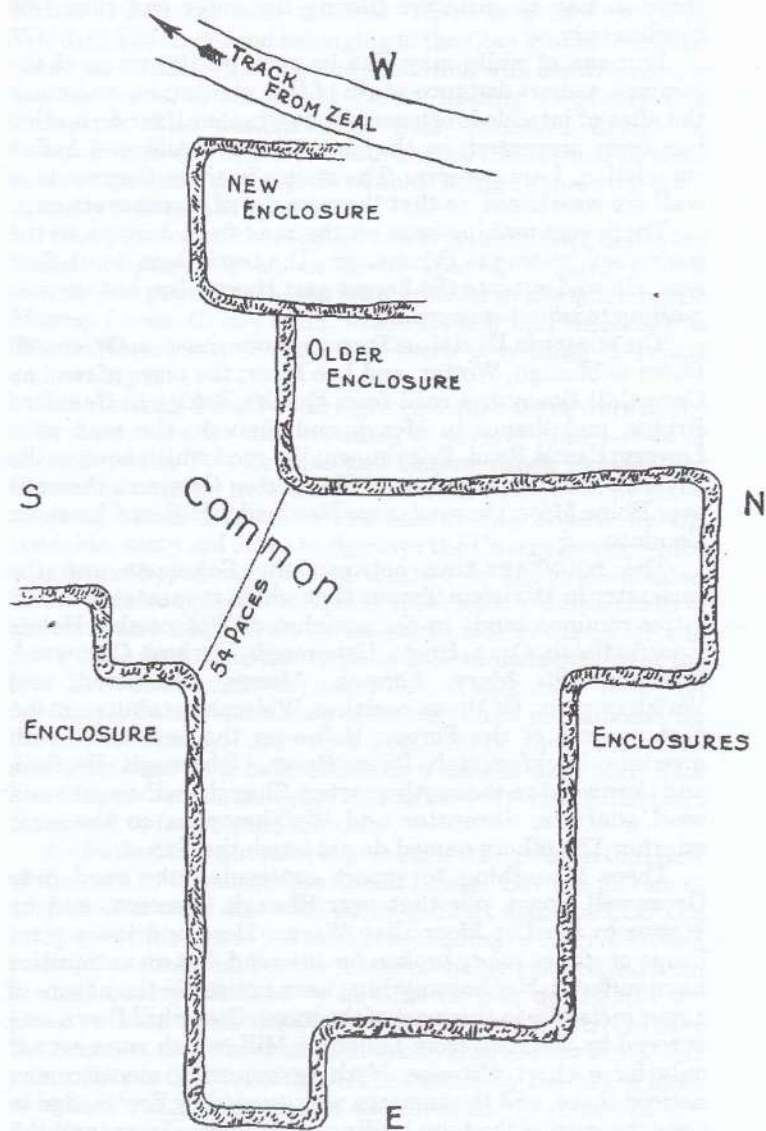
stones. No case of actual building was seen; only the evidences, as here noticed, that inclosures are in process of formation.

Although the commoners of South Tawton, by building their walls in what may be termed a stealthy manner, evidently do not desire to draw attention to their inclosing operations, they yet seem to consider that they have a perfect right to fence in portions of common if they choose, and appropriate such land to their own individual use. They regard South Tawton Common as being theirs, and consider that no one outside the parish has a right to interfere with anything they may do upon it. They say that if the commoners as a body do not object to plots of ground being taken in for cultivation, no one outside the parish can claim to raise his voice against such a proceeding. The case of the farmer in Throwleigh, the adjoining parish, who a few years ago was defendant in a suit, and who was ordered not only to take down the wall he had erected on a part of the common below Payne's Bridge, but also to carry the stones back to the places they had been brought from, they consider as having no bearing on their own case. In the one the commoners objected, in the other they do not. As a body of commoners, they say, they are altogether distinct from any other commoners, and have only to consider their own interests.

Some time ago a small piece of common land within South Tawton bounds, west of Cosdon, was inclosed, and on the occasion of the viewing of those bounds objection was taken to the inclosure by the South Tawton commoners, as it had been formed by a Belstone man. But the latter argued that no good would result from compelling him to pull down his walls, and as an acknowledgment to the South Tawton commoners he offered to pay a sum of ten shillings towards the fund raised for providing sports to follow the bound-viewing, and to do this on each successive occasion when the bounds were perambulated. This was agreed to, and the transaction illustrates the belief held by the commoners of South Tawton that with them rests the right to sanction the inclosing of any portion of Dartmoor lying within the bounds of their parish.

South-eastward of the new inclosure last referred to, and much further down the hillside, the inclosures have been built in such a manner as to leave a very large corner almost completely surrounded by walls. The building of a wall about fifty-four paces in length would inclose a large area of common land. The accompanying sketch plan will show this.

ENCLOSURES ON SOUTH TAWTON COMMON, W.S.W. OF WEST WEEK.



On another part of this common, and close to the higher plantation on the shoulder of Cosdon above Sticklepath, there is also an inclosure having the outer end closed by hurdles only.

Portions of walls may also be seen on the verge of the common a short distance south of this plantation, and mark the sites of intended inclosures, but whether their formation has been prevented, or they have been abandoned before completion, I am not sure. The stones in these fragments of wall are weathered, so that they are not of recent erection.

There was nothing seen on the road from Jurston to the main road leading to Princetown. The track from South Zeal was followed out into the Forest past Hound Tor, but there is nothing to report concerning it.

The **ROADS** in **Division Two** comprise those on Greenwell Down to Shaugh, Wotter, and Lee Moor; the piece of road on Crownhill Down; the road from Quick's Bridge to Cadaford Bridge, and thence to Meavy and Shaugh; the road near Lowery; Castle Road, Princetown; the road which bounds the Division from Two Bridges to Sherberton Common; the road over Holne Moor; the roads over Newbridge Hill, and Leusdon Common.

The **BOUNDARY LINE** between the Commons and the Incountry in **Division Two** is that which separates from the latter common lands in the parishes of Widecombe, Holne, Buckfastleigh, Dean, Brent, Ugborough, Harford, Cornwood, Plympton St. Mary, Shaugh, Meavy, Sheepstor, and Walkhampton. Of these parishes Widecombe abuts on the east quarter of the Forest; Holne on the east and south quarters; Buckfastleigh, Dean, Brent, Ugborough, Harford, and Cornwood on the south quarter; Shaugh on the south and west quarters; Sheepstor and Walkhampton on the west quarter. The others named do not touch the Forest.

There is nothing to report concerning the road over Greenwell Down, nor that over Shaugh Common, and by Wotter to the Lee Moor Clay Works. Here and there were heaps of stones ready broken for the road, but no antiquities have suffered. Nor has anything been noticed in the nature of a new inclosure in this part of the moor. Crownhill Down was entered by the road from Loughtor Mill, which runs over it only for a short distance. Nothing requiring mention was noticed there, and the common was crossed by Broomedge to near the gate of the lane leading to Cholwich Town, and the road followed towards Cornwood. I then retraced my steps to



Tolchmoor Gate, and turned aside in order to learn the present state of the stone row on Great Hill on Cholwich Town Farm. It had not been touched. There is a new hedge at Whithill Yeo on ground belonging to the Clay Works. Between these and Cadaford Bridge no spoliation was discovered, nor on the roads across Lynch Down leading to Meavy and Sheepstor. The ancient cross near Cadaford Bridge is, however, still down, and it would be well if this could be fixed in some manner, as the present shaft being so short the cross is easily overturned by cattle.

On a piece of common called Lowery Stent, close to Lowery Farm, a quarry is about to be opened. I learn that a twenty-one years' lease has been granted in the same by Sir Massey Lopes. Castle Road, which leads from Princetown to White Works, was visited, but there is nothing to report concerning it.

On the road from Two Bridges eastward there were heaps of broken stone for road-mending in several places—two or three between Two Bridges and Cherry Brook Bridge—but there was nothing near these that could be injured by those wanting stone. But there are one or two objects by the roadside, eastward of the bridge over the Cherry Brook, which it is to be hoped may not be touched by the road-mender. These consist of faint vestiges of lines a little to the north of the road and a hut circle on the south side of the latter and quite close to it. This hut circle is noticed incidentally in the Rev. E. A. Bray's *Journal*, under date of 25th July, 1831. Not far from it I observed a heap of stones placed in readiness for the stone-breaker, and on a spot where such work had evidently been done before. Stones were also seen placed for breaking at two places near Cock Lake, but nothing had been disturbed to furnish the material.

Unfortunately a similar report cannot be given of that part of the road to the east of Dartmeet Bridge. Several instances of spoliation were met with there. A short distance from the bridge, on the right of the road in ascending, a heap of broken stones was observed, but these had probably been raised from a small quarry pit close by. A little further up the hill the green path on which the Coffin Stone is situated strikes over the common, and about one hundred yards northward of this point, that is to say, on the left in ascending the hill, a heap of broken stone was seen on the common. On reaching it I found that an ancient reave, and one which from its connection with other remains is of more than ordinary



interest, was being destroyed to furnish material for road-mending. The reave leads to a small inclosure of fine stones, having a good example of a hut circle at its eastern end. There is strong reason to fear that the whole of this will be destroyed unless steps are taken to prevent it.

On the other side of the road, the southern, and between it and the green path passing the Coffin Stone, two heaps of broken stone were observed, but examination showed that no objects of any antiquarian interest had been destroyed there.

Near the summit of the hill, and on the left, and a short distance in from the road, is another heap of metalling. Here part of another old reave has been destroyed. It is very much overgrown with grass and heather, but is plainly to be seen in its course from Dartmeet Hill across the road and on the common towards the southern slope of Yar Tor. At the spot where the damage has been wrought, the stones have apparently been dug from it and broken up, and the surface turf has been replaced.

Not far from this spot, and also near the western corner of Ouldsbroom inclosures, and between that point and Sharp Tor, I observed a stone-breaker at work on the 18th and 19th September. On approaching him I found he was destroying a reave, or line of stones, that appears to have formed one side of a square inclosure. A great part of it had already disappeared, and the damage had evidently only recently been committed. Much havoc may be wrought here if stone-breakers are suffered to obtain the stone they require where they choose.

Opposite the north-eastern corner of Ouldsbroom inclosures, and about one hundred and fifty yards up the slope towards Corndon Tor, I saw a heap of metalling. Proceeding to it I found that it stood quite close to a hut circle, and appearances indicated that the heap also stood on the site of another. There is, in fact, scarcely a doubt that a hut circle has here been destroyed, and it is highly probable that the existing one will also disappear if some steps to prevent it are not soon taken.

Just where the road leaves the common and descends towards Ponsworthy, there was another heap of stones, but whether they had been brought there, or were broken there, I cannot say. At all events, there is no damage to report as having been wrought near the spot where they were seen.

The heaps of metalling met with from Dartmeet Bridge to this point stand on ground strewn with hut circles and other

remains, and there is no doubt that these have been, and are, frequently resorted to by road-menders. This is done in order that they may save themselves the trouble of breaking up the larger stones, which are found in abundance in every part of these commons. It is no question of scarcity of material; they simply take that which is the most handy, without any scruple, and very often in ignorance. Great attention will have to be paid to this locality, or it is to be feared much spoliation will take place.

Nothing was noticed on the roads from Ouldsbroom and Sherberton Common to Pound's Gate, nor on the road leading from the latter place to New Bridge. On the drive made by the late Dr. Blackall there is a quarry pit where stone is broken, but nothing requiring mention was observed near it.

On the road from Holne Moor Gate to Hexworthy there are one or two instances of recent spoliation. Immediately within the gate a new road is being made on the left to form an approach to a house now being built on the verge of the common, less than a quarter of a mile from the gate. This will stand within a field, one of the walls of the house being built on the line of the hedge, but not encroaching on the common. Nothing has been disturbed on the common near by; indeed, there are no antiquities close at hand.

There is a small quarry pit just inside Holne Moor Gate, where stones are broken for the road.

On the hillside, eastward of Wennafoord Bridge, a new road is being made towards the site of the dam that it is intended to throw across the valley, as part of the scheme for obtaining a water - supply for Paignton. Wennafoord Bridge, and the present road for some little distance on each side of it, will, when the works are completed, be submerged. Beyond cutting through an old reave, no damage is being done by the making of the new road. It is, however, not improbable that the reave will be broken into when the time comes for metalling the road. That portion of it on the lower side of the latter will, in any case, be under water, so that it does not, of course, matter what is done there. But it also extends up the hill in the direction of Bench Tor, and this part is threatened with possible injury.

Road-metalling has at times been obtained from a small quarry pit by the roadside near Wennafoord Bridge.

On the hill between the bridge named and the combe in which Hangman's Pit is situated, two old reaves have been destroyed, though the stones formerly composing them have



not yet been taken away. They are now lying close to the sites of the reaves and parallel to them, while on the former the turf has been replaced. These reaves run approximately north and south, and are on the south side of the road, and over a hundred yards apart. Close to the western reave a small cairn has also been destroyed, but the stones which formed it are still heaped by its site. There is a stake, painted white, and similar to those marking the boundary line on the site of the new reservoir, or lake, at Wennaforde, close to the eastern reave, so that these stones are probably being excavated by the contractor for that work. As there are hut circles very near the western reave, operations here will have to be watched, or it is highly probable their destruction will result.

On each side of the combe at Hangman's Pit, and also on Cumston Tor Hill, near Saddle Bridge, there were heaps of stones broken for road-mending, but no signs of damage to the hut circles near by.

No recent inclosures have been noticed on any part of the border line in this division, nor have any been seen further out on the commons included in it, or on that quarter of the Forest that they abut upon.

The **ROADS in Division Three** include the road from Runnage across Soussons by Blackaton Farm and Dunstone Down to Widecombe; the road from the highway near Moor Gate (four miles from Moreton) down the Challacombe valley to Blackaton; the roads over Corndon Down and the north part of Riddon Ridge; and the road by Yar Tor to Sherrill.

The **BOUNDARY LINE of Division Three** runs through the parishes of North Bovey, Manaton, and Widecombe, all three of which abut on the east quarter of the Forest.

There is nothing to report concerning the road from the highway near Moor Gate, and which runs by Grimspound, and forks off at Challacombe. One branch runs down to the bridge over the Webburn near Grendon Cottage, there joining the road to Widecombe, and the other runs down further east and joins the same road to Widecombe, at the foot of the hill under Blackaton Farm.

Between the foot of Meripit Hill near Post Bridge and Runnage, several heaps of road-metalling were seen, but these were probably obtained from the quarry pit near the gate that crosses the road. The stone circle on Soussons Common had not been interfered with in any way.

A heap of metalling was seen near the top of the hill between Grendon Cottage and Blackaton Farm; the boulders near by probably furnished it.

Stones were being broken at the corner of Dunstone Down, not far from Rowden Farm. The stone was raised from a small quarry at that spot.

No new inclosures were discovered in any part of this district, although the commons were crossed in many directions.

Nothing was observed on the road between Foxworthy and the northern end of Riddon Ridge, nor on the short piece leading from near Ouldsbroom Cross, between Yar Tor and Corndon Tor, to Sherrill.

The **ROADS in Division Four** comprise those running from Welstor Common by Cold East Cross to Widecombe, by way of Scobetor and Blackslade; the road from Cold East Cross to Hemsworthy Gate; Hemsworthy Gate to Lud Gate under Hey Tor; the road from Lud Gate by Yarnier Well to Leighon; the road over Trendlebere Down; the road from Leighon to Swallerton Gate and over Cripdon Down and Hayne Down; from Swallerton Gate to Holwell Down and Widecombe Hill.

The **BOUNDARY LINE of Division Four** between the Commons and the In-country is the moorland border line of the parishes of Manaton, Bovey Tracey, Ilsington, Ashburton, and Buckland. The commons belonging to these parishes do not abut on the Forest, with the exception of that of Manaton.

At the point where the roads from Cockingford Mill and from Chittleford and Blackslade meet, two piles of broken stones were observed. A search on the common near by did not show that any spoliation had been committed. The road was followed up to Welstor and back to Hemsworthy Gate, and a search was made among the inclosures on the slope of Torhill on Blackslade Common. Some blocks that had formed part of a dilapidated reave were found to have been split; these were on the higher slope of Pil Tor. The old Tunhill Road was followed, which runs near to the Blackslade Kistvaen. The kist was found to have been untouched, nor was there anything to call for note on the old track.

From Hemsworthy Gate the road was followed by Saddle Tor and Hey Tor to Lud Gate. From thence the road known as the Higher Terrace Drive was followed up, passing by Yarnier Well to the point where the road leaves the commons to enter on the lane leading to Manaton. Nothing whatever



needing mention was seen here, nor on the road leading back to Bovey Tracey over Trendlebere Down.

Not far from the gate where the road from Yarner Well descends towards Becky Falls and goes thence up to Manaton, a heap of metalling was seen, and also two heaps near the gate across the road leading to Leighon. These stones, however, were obtained from the clatter covering the side of the hill.

Nothing was noticed on the roads on Cripdon Down, nor on Hayne Down, nor upon that between Swallerton Gate and Widecombe Hill. Careful observation was made, but no new inclosures were seen, nor did inquiries elicit that any had been formed.

Upon the whole it cannot be said that the destruction of ancient monuments at present taking place on the Moor is of a wholesale character. But there is no doubt that, if not checked, it will prove continuous, in which case the total or partial disappearance of groups of hut circles and other remains is, of course, only a question of time. The chief damage is being done on the road running from Dartmeet Bridge to Sherberton Common, but the operations at Wennaforde on Holne Moor may by-and-by be productive of mischief, and it will be well that they be carefully watched. The encroachments under Cosdon are of a serious nature, and firm action must be taken if the "land-cribbing" is to be stopped.

WILLIAM CROSSING.

*27th September, 1901.*

# Dartmoor Preservation Association

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the William Crossing 150th Birthday Celebrations.*



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