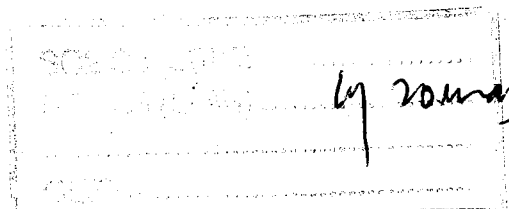


DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT



FOURTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DARTMOOR STEERING GROUP

1. The Thirteenth Annual Report of the Dartmoor Steering Group was submitted to the Secretaries of State for Defence and the Environment in December 1994. Since then the Steering Group has held its 35th Meeting and the Working Party has had three Meetings. A press statement was issued after the Working Party's Meeting in the Spring and the Steering Group's Meeting in the Autumn, in order to maintain local public awareness of the close co-operation and positive work undertaken within the auspices of the Steering Group.
2. The Steering Group and its Working Party have continued to keep under review the best possible reconciliation of the requirements of military training, conservation and public access.

DARTMOOR ACTION PLAN

3. Work on the conservation and recreation initiatives, started some three years ago, has nearly been completed; a number of obsolete military artefacts have been removed, unauthorised vehicular access has been reduced, some redundant tracks have been restored, military infrastructure decreased, public knowledge and awareness improved and public access increased. New objectives are now being prepared together with a series of projects that will maximise safe public access and reduce the impact of military infrastructure and training activities still further while maintaining effective training for the Armed Services.
4. **Conservation and Recreation Objectives**
 - (a) **Removal of Redundant Military Artefacts**

The major part of the work, principally involving the removal of old observation posts and bunkers, has been completed. Landscaping of some sites continues. Where the professional archaeological view of the DNPA suggests it, a few artefacts are being retained as part of the historical record of Dartmoor.
 - (b) **Tracks**

Work has continued on the prevention of unauthorised public vehicular access and the restoration of tracks to moorland, mainly on Okehampton Range. Military Standing Orders have been modified to reinforce non-damaging vehicular and other training use.
 - (c) **Reducing Visual Intrusion**

The visual intrusion of signing has been reduced with new signs being produced in subdued colours. Two more lookout huts have been replaced. Okehampton Anti-Tank range is to be banked up so that it is more easily absorbed into the landscape.

(d) Improving Public Knowledge and Awareness

The MOD display at the DNPA's High Moorland Visitor Centre continues to attract interest, the guide for walkers continuing to prove useful and the information and interpretation board at Okehampton Moorgate being impressive and well received.

An MOD article was included in the DNPA's "Dartmoor Visitor", a free information paper running to 200,000 copies.

(e) Increasing Public Access

The Range Danger Area boundary was reduced on 29 January 1996 to give the public all year round access to four additional tors; Watern Tor on Okehampton Training Area and Great Mis Tor, Roos Tor and White Tor on Merrivale Training Area.

5. It is hoped that, in addition to a comprehensive photographic record which is being compiled, the development of computer graphic displays will prove a useful addition to the recording of the military use of Dartmoor and conservation projects. Having such a visual record of the improvements carried out and control measures imposed in the light of increasing environmental legislation will assist greatly.

ACCIDENT 18 JUNE 1995

6. The Steering Group heard with regret of the accident involving 2 children who had been injured by a 2" World War 2 mortar bomb on Great Mis Tor, near Princetown on 18 June 1995 while letterboxing. Once the civil police had completed their enquiries a military Board of Inquiry was convened. The report was considered by the Under Secretary of State for Defence who authorised an action plan which was welcomed by the DNPA and Duchy of Cornwall as sensible and pragmatic. The additional measures announced were increased periodic co-ordinated searches using Battlefield Area Clearance resources where necessary, the display of warning signs which include pictorial symbols, the addition of warnings in the main European languages in the relevant Ministry of Defence and Dartmoor National Park publications, the inclusion of warnings in civil police lectures to schools, the highlighting of warnings on maps, inviting letterboxers not to use ammunition boxes or bury letterboxes, to avoid impact areas and to publish warnings and for the Dartmoor National Park Authority to arrange for their guided walk leaders and information assistants to include information on the action to be taken should unexploded ordnance be found, place prominent messages on their notice boards and to add warnings at stiles. The DNPA has offered MOD its full co-operation in implementing the recommendations. The announcement of these measures, many of which are already being implemented, has provided reassurance.

WILLSWORTHY CAMP


7. The new camp at Willsworthy was completed and officially opened on 12 May 1995. The old camp has been demolished and work is in hand, in conjunction with DNPA, to restore the site back to its surrounding moorland vegetation.

COMPLAINTS

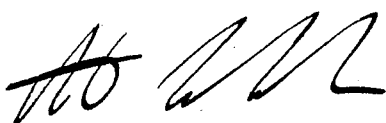
8. DNPA received few complaints during the year although 2 large exercises in June 1995 had caused concern. Trench digging had prove difficult to restore in the dry summer. The commoners were particularly sensitive about such damage in view of criticism of their own activities. Range staff were restoring the sites during the Winter and they would be examined in the Spring.
9. Dry training had caused some public confusion as walkers and visitors were not always clear that blank ammunition and fireworks were being used and that access, when warning signals were not displayed, was safe. Means of educating and advising the public are being introduced.

USE OF DARTMOOR

10. The Steering Group heard from GOC 3(UK)Div of the importance of Dartmoor as a training area, particularly for the training of infantry and commandos. He hoped that it was becoming clearer to the public that the Services were taking a more sensitive approach to the use of such environmentally important areas and he was appreciative of the pragmatic approach taken by DNPA. To build on that relationship, GOC 3(UK)Div intends to hold an Armed Services' Day on Dartmoor on 11 October 1996 for an invited audience of people interested in Dartmoor to be informed why, and for what purposes, the Armed Services use the Moor and to describe the arrangements made for public access and safety and the measures taken for the protection of the environment.
11. The Environment Act 1995 had re-defined the purposes of National Parks and set out new duties on the DNPA and on all relevant authorities which includes MOD. A new free-standing Authority for the DNP would be established from April 1997. The Act confirmed the importance of the special qualities of National Parks in England and Wales and their proper conservation and enjoyment.
12. Future work of the Steering Group will continue to seek balance and a positive approach towards achieving these twin essential national needs.



SIR ANTHONY BARROWCLOUGH QC
Chairman



LT COL A H CLARK



ROGER GASH

Joint Secretaries