‘By Wagonette and Charabanc’

Tourism on Dartmoor in the 1920s

Peter F. Mason

Preface and acknowledgements

This essay has been researched and written as part of the Devon History Society project, *Devon in the 1920s*. I hope that it provides an overview of the developments in tourism that took place on Dartmoor in that decade. It is by no means comprehensive – there are certainly omissions and, no doubt, errors. Please let me know about these so that they can be amended and omissions added. I have received a wealth of information from the people listed below. However, any errors are mine.

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They come by wagonette, a vandal brood;
They sprawl at leisure – “a great herd of swine
Feeding”; and having fed they strew around
Paper, smashed glass and cardboard on the ground,
Leaving, where none but the gods might meetly dine,
Food wrappings and the relics of their food.

This verse, first published in *Punch*, was quoted by Breton in *The Heart of Dartmoor* in 1926 when he was writing about visitors to Vixen Tor on the western side of Dartmoor:

> The tor is the private property of Mr Parsons [and has been] owned by the family for two hundred years […] He kindly allows visitors to visit the tor. Of late years so much trouble has been given by thoughtless people, who strew the ground around the tor with paper and broken bottles, that closing the tor to visitors and picnic parties has been under consideration.[1]

In April 1923 a journalist writing in the *Western Evening Herald* described the scene on Dartmoor on Easter Monday:

> Not since pre-war days have I seen such multitudes of people flocking Dartmoor way as was seen on Monday. In charabancs, motor cars, converted commercial lorries, in a variety of horse-drawn vehicles, on motor or push bikes, and on foot, they all made for Devon’s great uplands – the freedom fields of the West.[2]

These quotes illustrate the developing interest in Dartmoor by visitors and tourists in the 1920s, but even before the First World War the author A. L. Salmon was complaining about the number of visitors:

> When a district is haunted by tourist and artist, when cars and brakes unload crowds of chattering sightseers, something of the outside world comes with them; and modernism has other more subtle avenues of approach. The cheap daily paper penetrates to these solitudes, and brings with it other things that are cheap. It may leave its readers still credulous and still ignorant; but the nature of the ignorance and the credulity have altered – and perhaps not wholly for the better. There is loss as well as gain. The old traditions have passed from the minds of the people to the guide books.[3]

In August 1919, even before the armistice had been signed, thousands of people set off for their first holiday in years. However, a memorial on the green in North Bovey, which marks

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[1] Henry Hugh Breton, *The Heart of Dartmoor: The Land of the Purple Heather and the Golden Furze, with a Memoir of the Late George French* (Hoyten and Cole, 1926), p. 15.
[2] ‘The Charm of Dartmoor’, *Western Evening Herald*, April 1923 [Source: Legendary Dartmoor, accessed 20 January 2020].
[3] Arthur L. Salmon, *Dartmoor* (Blackie & Son, 1913), p. 63 [accessed via Internet Archive 22 June 2020].

the signing of peace with Germany on 10 January 1920, is a reminder that although fighting had ceased, the war was not formally over until the beginning of that year.

Dartmoor first became a tourist destination in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When touring in Europe was brought to a halt between the late 1780s and 1815, during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, travellers looked to the dramatic landscapes of the Lake District, Wales and Scotland for inspiration. Devon, which was already established as a tourist destination, was also visited, and Dartmoor provided sought-after striking scenery. Incidentally, the word 'tourist' did not come into common usage until the 1780s and the word 'tourism' was not coined until 1811, initially with a deprecatory meaning.

A key event in boosting tourism in the nineteenth century was the coming of the railway, with the first through train reaching Exeter on 1 May 1844. It is no coincidence that Samuel Rowe's *A Perambulation of the Antient and Royal Forest of Dartmoor* was published a few years later in 1848, and the first local guidebook that we would recognise as such, Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Devon and Cornwall*, was published in 1851. Railways spread around Dartmoor in the coming years: Newton Abbot to Moretonhampstead opened in 1866 and the northern route via Okehampton and Lydford was completed in 1874.

Numbers of visitors to Dartmoor continued to increase during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first fourteen years of the twentieth century. Although visitors stopped coming to Dartmoor when war was declared in 1914, tourism did revive to a certain extent during the war years – possibly more so on Dartmoor than at seaside resorts. After the war, in the words of David Parker, 'superficially life across the county seemed unchanged. As always, age-old sights and activities intermingled with signs of modernisation.'[4]

From the start of the decade there were those who were seeing the commercial potential of tourism to Dartmoor. In a scheme never to be fulfilled, Dartmoor Restaurants Ltd issued a prospectus in March 1922. The company planned a 'modern and up-to-date Pavilion Restaurant' to be located on the high ground overlooking the Two Bridges Hotel.[5]

A 'Come to Devon' movement was formed in 1929. In March of that year, the *Western Times* reported that, at a meeting in Torquay, 'It was proposed by Mr Ernest Underhill of Plymouth, seconded by Mr C Spencer of Lynton that the "Come to Devon" movement be instituted.'[6] The meeting was attended by representatives from across Devon including the Dartmoor towns of Ashburton, Moretonhampstead and Yelverton. The representatives from Moretonhampstead also represented Lustleigh, Bovey Tracey and Chagford. Activity under the 'Come to Devon' banner had started a year earlier and it built on an existing 'Come to South Devon' scheme.

[4] David Parker, *The People of Devon in the First World War* (History Press, 2013), p. 253.
[5] Quoted in Kelly Matthew, *Quartz and Feldspar: Dartmoor: A British Landscape in Modern Times* (Vintage, 2016), p. 184.
[6] *Western Times*, 22 March 1929 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 6 June 2023].

In the 1920s and 1930s, with the increasing mobility of the middle classes, the tourist industry in Devon became less reliant on seaside resorts and this enabled 'increasing numbers to seek out remoter coastal villages and the countryside, often as parts of touring holidays.'[7]

A 1940 report by the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population, quoted in *The Englishman's Holiday*, reported that:

> Evidence suggests that the growth of services represented by such [seaside and other holiday] resorts, including the service of transport, has been among the most rapid forms of economic growth since the [1914–18] war, and that its effect upon the movement of population has been of the first importance.

This author also suggests that 'after the First World War, there was an increase in the number of "more or less permanent camping sites for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians"'.[8]

H. V. Morton described his book published in 1927, *In Search of England*, as a 'record of a motor-car journey around England'. He goes on to assert that:

> … never before have so many people been searching for England. The remarkable system of motor-coach services which now penetrates every part of the country has thrown open to ordinary people regions which even after the coming of the railway were remote and inaccessible. The popularity of the cheap motor-car is also greatly responsible for this long-overdue interest in English history, antiquities, and topography. More people than in any previous generation are seeing the real country for the first time. […] The danger of this, as every lover of England knows, is the vulgarisation of the countryside. […] Against the vulgarisation of the country we must place to the credit of this new phase in the history of popular travel in England the fact, already mentioned, that thousands of intelligent men and women are every year discovering the countryside for themselves.[9]

In this essay I will look at who was holidaying on Dartmoor in the 1920s, where they were staying and what they were doing, including how they were entertained. I will include contemporary descriptions of Dartmoor from guidebooks, memoirs and literature and consider the development of holiday and second homes.

Although the Dartmoor National Park was not created until 1951, I am using the boundaries of the park as my definition of Dartmoor. Bounded by the A30 to the north, the A38 to the south, the A386 to the west and the Teign Valley to the east, the park takes in the towns of Okehampton, Tavistock, Ivybridge, South Brent, Buckfastleigh, Ashburton and Bovey Tracey at the edges and Princetown, Chagford and Moretonhampstead on the moor itself.

[7] Gareth Shaw, Justin Greenwood and Allan Williams, 'The Growth of Tourism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in *Historical Atlas of South West England* ed. by Roger Kain and William Ravenhill (University of Exeter Press, 1999), p. 456.

[8] J. A. R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (Harvester Press, 1976), p. 240.

[9] H. V. Morton, *In Search of England* (The Folio Society, 1927), pp. viii, ix.

Dartmoor on the page, stage and screen

Guidebooks[10] would have been the main source of information for the prospective tourist to Dartmoor, but novels also provided descriptions to attract the visitor. Portrayals of Dartmoor on stage and screen would also have aroused interest. William George Aston, writing in *The Tatler* in 1928, advised his readers to read about the areas to be visited before setting off. As far as Dartmoor was concerned, he reckoned that the moor was 'more Conan Doyle than Eden Phillpotts'.[11]

In the preface to the 1916 edition of the *Homeland Handbook to Dartmoor*, but repeated in later editions – including those published in the early years of the 1920s – the author Beatrix F. Cresswell, wrote that Dartmoor had 'been discovered':

> … only recently has it impressed itself upon the public, as the finest health resort, the best rest cure, and the most fascinating playground for holiday makers in the West of England […] There has been building everywhere. Comfortable hotels; snug bungalows, little houses with "accommodation for visitors" have sprung up on every part of the moor; and the tourist of today, whether afoot or awheel need undergo none of the strenuous efforts in search of food or shelter which were faced by the adventurer into Dartmoor twenty years ago.[12]

This quote confirms that Dartmoor had become a destination for tourists before the First World War. The *Homeland Handbook* is a good example of a guidebook written by someone with an intimate knowledge of Dartmoor. First published in 1898, it ran into numerous editions continuing to be published into the 1950s.

[10] Cautionary note: firstly, guidebooks are not always easy to date as they rarely include a publication date and, secondly, the main text was not always changed between editions, therefore the descriptions may refer to an earlier time.

[11] *The Tatler*, 22 August 1928 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].

[12] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), Preface.

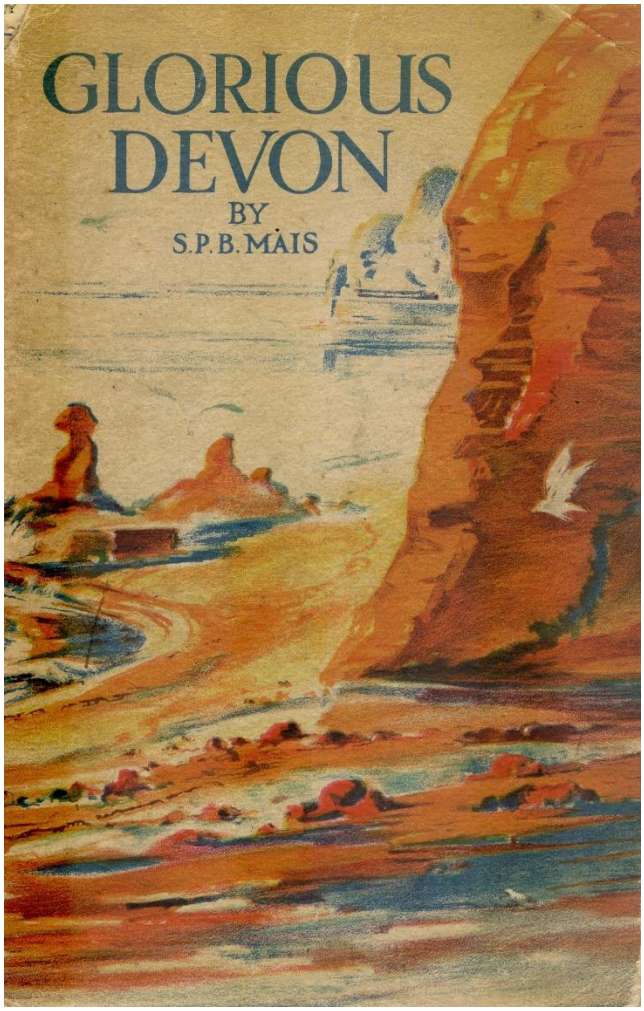

Figure 1: Cover image of *Glorious Devon* by S. P. B Mais (1929) (author's collection).

The Great Western Railway Company was responsible for publishing books aimed at potential visitors to places served by their lines. Sales of one of these, *Holiday Haunts*, rose from 100,000 copies of 712 pages in 1924 to 200,000 copies of 964 pages in 1928. The purpose of these publications was set out in the preface to another of their publications, *Glorious Devon*:

> The purpose of this book is twofold, to send you to Devon, and when you get there to help you see it. Those who have never been to the county avoid it for two reasons. They are afraid that it is overcrowded; they are afraid that it has been overpraised. They are wrong on both counts. There is too much of it for it ever to be overcrowded. Its scenery is too varied and our ordinary vocabulary too limited to allow of overpraise.[13]

In writing about Dartmoor, the author goes on to lament the fact that:

> … hosts of motorists, for some inexplicable reason, really believe that they have exhausted the delights of Dartmoor after crossing it at fifty miles an hour from Moretonhampstead to Princetown. That there should be two highly picturesque interesting roads across the moor has

[13] S. P. B. Mais, *Glorious Devon*, 2nd edn (GWR, 1929), p. 1.

> gone, paradoxically, some way to prevent numbers of people from ever getting, except in the literal sense, anywhere near Dartmoor at all.[14]

Writing in 1926 in the foreword to *Unknown Devon*, Lawrence Du Garde Peach said that his aim was to introduce readers to parts of the county which, in his opinion, were still relatively undiscovered.[15] He emphasised that *Unknown Devon* wasn't a guidebook, rather a personal view of the county and the places that pleased him. He wrote eloquently about Dartmoor:

> Dartmoor is probably the most compact, the most clearly defined and, for its size, the most comprehensive piece of moorland in the country …[16]

And:

> Dartmoor is a great playground, but you cannot know it from a car. Really to appreciate all that Dartmoor has to show, you must tramp the heather and ling with some good companion, like minded with yourself. And it is a lifetime's task; you will not exhaust it in a summer vacation.[17]

Eden Phillpotts, whose novels we will come to shortly, was a great lover and describer of Dartmoor. The *Ward Lock Guide* quotes him at length in its introduction to Dartmoor:

> For the most part it offers the naked beauty of heathery hills rolling in gentle undulations upon each other; here rising to the granite crowns, ragged upon the sky-line; here sinking to the river valleys and deep, green combes. It is a place of wonderful, subdued colour, where great passages of light and shadow roam on a scale which gives a suggestion of vast size, despite its real limitations. It is not austere save in the central loneliness and among the wilds and bogs at the lofty heart of it; indeed, the vales and level heaths are gracious and full of the beauty begot of the rivers and marshes, the diversified and flowery herbage, and the roaming flocks and herds. The heights sparkle under their tors, and there, even on hottest days of summer, the air is of a quality that those who have not breathed it cannot guess. It is a paradise of the painter and sportsman, and for those who, though they care not for these things, discover the tonic peace that Dartmoor offers at all seasons of the year.[18]

Dartmoor was portrayed in several novels in the 1920s. H. V. Morton asked in *In Search of England*:

> Has any Dartmoor novelist compared this eerie two hundred miles of Devonshire with the African desert? Dartmoor is the green Sahara of England, a wilderness of hills and heather, hills folded on hill mile after mile, great clouds billowing, and over the moor the strange desert atmosphere as of Some One watching. Could any novelist tackle a more heart-breaking subject than the mystery which Dartmoor seems to hold? I doubt if any writer will ever wrest it from her. An untameable aloof desert![19]

Although writing a few years before Morton laid down this challenge, the author H Clayton East had already written about deserts in her first novel, *The Breath of the Desert*, and in 1925 she published her second novel, *The Jingle Driver*. The book was subtitled *A Breath of Dartmoor* in reference to the earlier book. In *The Jingle Driver*, the female narrator sets off

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[14] Ibid., p. 82.
[15] Lawrence Du Garde Peach, *Unknown Devon* (Jarrold and Sons Ltd., 1927).
[16] Ibid., p. 121.
[17] Ibid., p. 138.
[18] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), pp. 9–10.
[19] H. V. Morton, *In Search of England* (The Folio Society, 1927), p. 86.

from her home on the southern fringe of Dartmoor to buy a pony and trap from a farmer over the border in Cornwall. The main part of the novel covers her return journey across Dartmoor, meeting on the way a number of interesting characters. Clearly written with first-hand knowledge, *The Jingle Driver* is perceptive about Dartmoor:

> There are many differing beauties that we may admire, but only a few that appeal to the heart. Dartmoor is one of these. Yet I have known people come to Dartmoor and see nothing in her. "There are no trees," they say, "and no cornfields. It is useless, unproductive land. It ought to be reclaimed". Dartmoor reclaimed! The rocky heights of High Willhays, Great Miss Tor, Sittaford! The inhospitable ridge of Hamildon, the bogs of Cranmere, the bracken-grown, boulder-strewn slopes of Tavy Cleave, the stunted oaks of Wistman's Wood, the heather and the whortleberry! These under the knife of the plough! God forbid! Truly, the hand that fashioned us fashioned us all unlike![20]

And again:

> The quiet and wonderful peace of these Dartmoor byways is always a fresh wonder to me. Their aloofness from the wear and tear of life, their absolute stillness, strike me anew every time I come to them.[21]

Eden Phillpotts was for many years the president of the Dartmoor Preservation Association and his passion for the moor comes out in the many novels he wrote that are set on Dartmoor – eighteen in his 'Dartmoor Cycle' of stories published between 1898 and 1923. These were popular with the public and introduced a wide audience to the moor. Each of the novels is set in a different location and they left little of Dartmoor unrecorded. Through them readers gained a graphic picture of the moor. Vivid as they are, modern readers may well find some of the descriptions overblown, as in this extract from *The Thief of Virtue*:

> A rare day of ineffable splendour crowned Dartmoor, and to the seeing eye, even upon this desert was displayed a vision wonderful – a dream of life mating with matter, of the protoplasmic element flying, swimming, growing, ripening, multiplying, and displaying its eternal miracle upon the bosom of the sun-supported earth. The colour was of a cloudless noon in August; the forms were familiar hill and stone-capped tor, broad marsh and glittering stream, roaming herds and flocks scattered widely on the undulating land. The earth and the fulness of it rolled out glorious, ridge on ridge, to the transparent blue of the horizon… [22]

Similar descriptions can be found throughout Phillpotts' writings. In *The River*, he describes the area near the source of the River Dart: 'The high lands clamber round about to a wild horizon that is roughly hurled upward in mighty confusion against the sky...'.[23] Elsewhere, he writes of the scene in summer when 'heat danced on the tors, and the lonely heights of the Moor were swept with a fine, transparent haze.'[24] He talks of the 'mid moor' being a 'great plain ringed about with hills' and 'the region glitters with little tributaries that flow to the Dart […] mists wander over […] streamlets and break in waves of colourless light…'. Fox

[20] H. Clayton East, *The Jingle Driver* (Alston Rivers Ltd, 1925), pp. 110–111.
[21] Ibid., p. 119.
[22] Eden Phillpotts, *The Thief of Virtue* (John Murray, 1910), p. 287 [accessed via Internet Archive, 29 September 2021].
[23] Eden Phillpotts, *The River* (Kessinger Publishing, 1902), p. 5 [accessed via Internet Archive, 29 September 2021].
[24] Eden Phillpotts, *The Judge's Chair* (John Murray, 1914), Foreword.

Tor Mire is 'brushed with quickening green'[25] and Cosdon Beacon '… seen featureless against the southern sky, arrests and challenges among the needles and turrets of the tors by reason of its distinction, its difference and its might.'[26]

After a long and varied career,[27] Louis Monty Miller, Agatha Christie's brother, needed to be settled somewhere. In the early years of the 1920s, the family assisted him to a permanent home at Crossways in Throwleigh, where he lived until the end of the decade. It is thought that not only did Christie visit her brother there but she also did some of her writing in the village.[28] *The Sittaford Mystery*, published in 1931, was set in Throwleigh and the surrounding area. The distance of Sittaford from Exhampton (which stands in for Okehampton) fits with Throwleigh, and the description of it consisting 'of a smithy, and a combined post office and sweet shop,' exactly describes the village. She also set one of the short stories she wrote for *The Sketch* on Dartmoor. One of these, *The Adventure of the Dartmoor Bungalow*, featured Hercule Poirot travelling by train to Moretonhampstead and on to a murder scene at the 'Granite Bungalow' nine miles away in a village called 'Hoppator'.[29]

We also shouldn't ignore the power of theatre and cinema to raise awareness of an area. Interest in Dartmoor as a destination would have been boosted by the release in 1921 of the first film adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. This was a silent version starring Elle Norwood.[30] According to the advertising it was: 'One of the finest detective mysteries ever presented on the screen. The night scenes on Dartmoor must be seen to be believed – they are unique.' A full orchestra was promised at every screening.[31] A second version was made following a poll among British cinemagoers as to which story they would most like to see filmed by the film company, Gainsborough. Shot during the winter of 1929–30 and issued in 1931, it featured several actual Dartmoor locations including Lustleigh Station, which stood in for Baskerville. Widecombe, Ashburton and Tavistock were also used as locations. This wasn't the famous version that starred Basil Rathbone, but it was the first sound version.

[25] Eden Phillpotts, *Miser's Money* (Macmillan, 1920), p. 12 and 374 [accessed via Internet Archive, 4 February 2024].
[26] Eden Phillpotts, *The Beacon* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p. 7 [accessed via Internet Archive, 4 February 2024].
[27] See *Agatha Christie, An Autobiography* (Collins, 1977);
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/205176230/loius-montant-miller> [accessed 22 October 2021].
[28] Michael Paget (ed), *Throwleigh: Pictures & Memories from a Dartmoor Parish* (The Throwleigh Archive, 2006), p. 166.
[29] *The Sketch*, 9 January 1924 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[30] Born Anthony Edward Brett (1861–1948). Online references spell his acting name, Eille, but a showcard for the film uses the spelling Elle.
[31] *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 29 October 1921 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 7 February 2022].

Figure 2: Dr Watson arrives at Baskerville Station (Lustleigh) in the 1932 version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (© Lustleigh Community Archive)

Interest would also have been heightened by the release of the film *The Farmer's Wife* in 1928, based on Eden Philpott's novel *Widecombe Fair*. The play had been first staged in the West End of London in 1924. By 1926, when Laurence Olivier went on tour in the lead role, it had already been performed 1,300 times.[32] Philpott's novel *The American Prisoner*, with scenes set in Dartmoor Prison, was filmed in 1929 for British International Pictures. It was adapted from his 1904 novel. The plot tells the story of an American sailor imprisoned on Dartmoor during the American War of Independence, who manages to escape and fall in love with a local squire's daughter.[33] In 1929 the director Anthony Asquith was making a silent film, *A Cottage on Dartmoor*. With scenes filmed on the moor it is described on the British Film Institute website as 'one of the jewels of British silent cinema'.[34]

In 1921 a play with the intriguing title of *The Gentleman from Dartmoor* was being toured right across the country, even as far as North Shields, by 'F Hill-Mitchelson's Repertoire Company of First Class Players'.[35] In August of the same year at the Vaudeville Picture Theatre in Bath, 'Rita's Fine Dartmoor Novel, *The Iron Stair*' with 'actual scenes of Princetown Convict Prison and escape across Dartmoor' was playing daily, all week.[36] The early years of the decade also saw the Ideal Film Company producing short films, mostly

[32] Wikipedia, 'The Farmer's Wife' <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Farmer%27s_Wife> [accessed 06 May 2021].
[33] Video Detective, 'The American Prisoner' <https://www.videodetective.com/movie/the-american-prisoner-193315> [accessed 07 February 2022].
[34] Sam Wigney, '10 great films set in the West Country', *BFI*, 12 May 2017 <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-films-set-west-country> [accessed 07 February 2022].
[35] *Shields Daily News*, 7 April 1921 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 06 February 2022].
[36] *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20 August 1921 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 06 February 2022].

travelogues, to be shown alongside the main feature. Number 30 in the series doing the rounds in 1921 featured Dartmoor.[37]

Another example of a successful play, subsequently filmed, which enjoyed great success and helped to promote Dartmoor is *Escape*, a play in nine episodes by John Galsworthy. The world premiere was on 12 August 1926 at the Ambassadors Theatre in London's West End. The play ran until March of the following year, when it went on tour of England. The hero of the play is sentenced to Dartmoor Prison for manslaughter and escapes from a work detail. The plot is a series of episodes during the prisoner's escape in which he meets people who will either abet or obstruct his escape, ending with him giving himself up in Lustleigh church. *Escape* was issued as a film in 1930 and remade in 1948 starring Rex Harrison and Peggy Cummins.

Galsworthy also wrote a short story, *The Apple Tree*, which was published as one of *Five Tales* in 1918. *The Apple Tree* is a fictionalised imagining of the sad love story that led to a farm girl committing suicide after being jilted by her lover and her subsequent burial at the site known as Jay's Grave on the boundary of Widecombe, North Bovey and Manaton parishes.

We should also remember that publicity about visits to Dartmoor by well-known people would likewise have helped promote it and attract visitors. The most famous of these in the 1920s was the visit of the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII. As part of his tour of the Duchy of Cornwall he walked from Princetown to Cranmere Pool on Thursday 19 May 1921. He did this having already taken part in a drag hunt with the Lamerton Hounds. At Cranmere Pool he signed the visitors book and left postcards in the famously remote postbox.[38]

Accommodation

The majority of places providing accommodation were, as they are today, around the edges of the moor – often places that were accessible by public transport. So, Christow, Dunsford, Bovey Tracey, Lustleigh, Moretonhampstead, Buckfastleigh, Ivybridge, Yelverton and Princetown were reached by Great Western services. Okehampton and Tavistock, by Southern Railway. Bus services or private transport took visitors on to Chagford and Widecombe.

Ashburton is 'beautifully situated [with] some of the most attractive portions of the Moor […] within easy reach' and it provided 'an admirable headquarters […] easy of access by rail' and Tavistock is described as 'an attractive place and a delightful and convenient headquarters.'[39] Bovey Tracey is recommended in the guidebooks as an excellent base for Dartmoor excursions and for walking on Dartmoor, and Yelverton advertised itself to Plymothians as a health resort.

[37] *The Courier,* Dundee, 15 August 1922 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 07 February 2022].
[38] *Western Morning News*, 20 May 1921 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 22 March 2021].
[39] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 98.

Figure 3: 'Naughty weekend' postcard c. 1930 (© Simon Butler collection)

Chagford was described as:

> … the most popular place on the borders of the moor. Hither come large numbers of visitors who are seeking change of air from the more relaxing towns, and find pleasant quarters at the hotels and apartment houses, or in the farms and houses close by.[40]

Two of these were Creaber and Teigncombe, near Gidleigh, recommended in the *Homeland Handbook* as being a 'pleasant places for a summer holiday, with the advantage of being on the very edge of the moor, instead of in the valley below it.'[41] In 1923 a correspondent to *The Sphere* was recommending Chagford as a place to stay on Dartmoor with 'the famous Teign Gorge and Fingle Bridge within easy walking distance'.[42] By the 1930s *Holiday Haunts* was reporting that: 'So many people have made Chagford their headquarters for exploring Dartmoor that its hotels now surpass those of many towns, though Chagford itself retains all the charm of a moorland village.'[43]

In an article for *The Tatler*, the writer complained that the only place where he had been served hot toast on his tour of the West Country was at the Three Crowns, Chagford. He went on to quote an American saying: 'The English serve their toast cold and their cocktails warm.'[44]

Beatrix Cresswell recommended Okehampton as a place to stay:

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[40] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 47.
[41] Ibid., p. 50.
[42] *The Sphere*, 12 May 1923 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[43] *Holiday Haunts* (GWR, 1933), p. 319.
[44] 'Uncomfortable England', *The Tatler*, 24 April 1929 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].

> There are many advantages in approaching Dartmoor from Okehampton. We can get there direct from London by the London and South Western Railway. An omnibus from the town meets the trains. The newly-built villas on the station road offer a choice of accommodation; the temperance hotel will be found quiet and comfortable, especially by ladies who may arrive when the artillery camp has come into its summer quarters on Black Down.[45]

The author goes on to recommend hiring 'sturdy little moor ponies' or fishing in the Okement, Taw or Torridge rivers. By the end of the decade, Okehampton's popularity was increasing. Not only was it close to the moor but there were local attractions, which included an open-air swimming pool and the picturesque Simmons Park offering tennis courts, a bowling green, a bandstand and a teahouse.

By the 1920s Princetown had:

> … won repute for the rare and health-giving qualities of its air. It [offered] every convenience and comfort in the way of hotel and other accommodation, whilst the railway [kept] it in touch with the outer world, and motor coaches [connected] it directly with Tavistock.'[46]

Hotels

There was an increase of thirty-six per cent in the number of hotels in our study area being advertised between 1919 and 1930. Some of these were entirely new; others were upgrading themselves from either a boarding house or an inn. For example, the only hotel in Ashburton advertising itself in *Kelly's Directory* in 1919 was the Golden Lion. By 1930 this had been joined by the London Hotel, the Kingsley Private Hotel and the Globe Hotel.

During the 1920s hotels advertised the attractions of Dartmoor. Many boasted their proximity to the moor – the Two Bridges Hotel, near Princetown, was an 'ideal centre for the moors' and the Tors Hotel at Belstone was 'right on the moors.'[47] Incidentally, the Tors Hotel was one of only two establishments on Dartmoor that advertised themselves in *Country Life* in the twenties, the other being the Old Inn at Widecombe.

The Moorland Hotel at Haytor was 'the nearest to the famous Haytor Rock'. It was also catering for car owners, advertising that it possessed a 'motor garage'. The nearby Haytor Hotel prided itself on its 'spacious grounds' and that it was a 'moorland health resort'.[48] The Ludgate Hotel congratulated itself on being 'most charmingly situated right on the moor near Haytor Rock'. It also had a garage and motors for hire. Gray's Posting House, Moretonhampstead, boasted that it had 'the patronage of the local gentry and the elite of the various towns of Devonshire.'[49]

The Moor House Hotel at Yelverton, standing 'in its Own Grounds in Unique Position, facing South' advertised itself as being an excellent moorland centre, offering golf, hunting, and fishing.[50] Beechfield House, Yelverton offered 'extensive views of many of the various

[45] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 60.
[46] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 122.
[47] *Western Morning News* and *Mercury*, 20 May 1926 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 3 May 2020].
[48] Information from *Kelly's Directory 1930* and *Devon Trades Directory 1930* <http://www.my-history.co.uk>
[49] Advertisement in *The Shire of the Sea Kings*, 2nd edn (1908).
[50] *Dartmoor (*Ward Lock & Co, c. 1931), advertising, p. 15.

Devon Tors' and Fernleigh prided itself on being: 'The Moorland Health Resort'. The grounds of the Manor Hotel at Lydford included 'the beautiful wooded valley and gorge of the River Lyd, and the celebrated Lydford Waterfall'.[51]

Group ownership of hotels had now appeared with Trust Houses Ltd. acquiring the Dolphin Hotel in Bovey Tracey in the mid-twenties**.** They also owned the Haytor and Moorland hotels, the Forest Inn at Hexworthy, the Forest Inn Chalet at Dartmeet and the Duchy Hotel in Princetown, described in 1928 as being 'the biggest and cheapest hotel in Britain!'[52] Another 'chain' of hotels was run by the People's Refreshment House Association Ltd (PRHA). On Dartmoor, these were the Church House Inn at Holne and the Queen's Head Hotel in Tavistock. The PRHA, founded in 1896, ran public houses but, through their pricing policy, they encouraged the drinking of non-alcoholic beverages. There were also several temperance hotels around the moor, including ones at Lustleigh, Moretonhampstead, Okehampton, Postbridge and Tavistock.

Frederick Hambleden, the son of Viscount Hambleden, founder of the WH Smith stores, built the Manor House near North Bovey in the 1890s. When he died in 1928 the house was put on the market in order to pay death duties. It was purchased by the GWR in 1929 and opened as a luxury golfing hotel – The Manor House Hotel[53] in 1930.[54]

An example of the developing market for holidaying on Dartmoor is that of the Mill End Hotel, near Chagford, which opened at the end of 1929 or early in 1930. Their first brochure, printed in the form of a letter card, described the hotel as 'a charming old-world country residence which has been carefully re-modernised, yet still retaining its original features.' The hotel, situated on the banks of the River Teign, boasted that 'every window enjoys delightful views over the surrounding countryside'. The 'equitable climate' of the area, apparently delivered 'an abnormal amount of sunshine' allowing visitors to sit out-of-doors even in the autumn. Facilities for guests included tennis and croquet in the grounds, fishing, and bathing in the river, as well as walks in the area and motor tours from the hotel.[55]

Nearby Easton Court Hotel probably opened around the end of the decade, appearing for the first time in *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire 1930*. In a book published in 1932, the author Alec Waugh described the newly opened hotel:

> Its atmosphere is difficult to describe. The house is old, oak-beamed and thatched. Dartmoor stretches to the back of it. It is decorated by an antique dealer, and notices proclaim that the furniture is genuine and for sale. But it is upholstered by trans-Atlantic, not by Tudor taste. Thick mattresses take the impression of the body's weight. A reading lamp is set beside each bed. There is a bath room, and there are bath salts in it. The first guests of a new hotel are necessarily the personal friends of the proprietors.[56]

[51] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925).
[52] WG Aston, 'Petrol Vapour', *The Tatler*, 22 August 1928 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[53] Now Bovey Castle.
[54] Bovey Castle <https://www.boveycastle.com/uk-staycation-at-our-hotel/bovey-castle-history> [accessed 19 October 1922].
[55] 'Mill End' Residential Hotel, Sandy Park, Chagford, Devon (WSL, 1925), p. 647.
[56] Alec Waugh, *Thirteen Such Years* (1932), Google Books edition (2012) [accessed 13 June 2023].

Figure 4: Easton Court Hotel (© David Morecombe collection).

Apartments

In 1919 in the Dartmoor area, in addition to accommodation offered by hotels and public houses, apartments were listed in *Kelly's Directory* by twenty-one people in Okehampton, fourteen in Chagford, eleven in Belstone, nine in Moretonhampstead, seven in Lustleigh and six in Bovey Tracey. Other places with apartments to let included Brentor, Dousland, Ilsington, Postbridge, South Brent, Sticklepath, Tavistock, Walkhampton, Yealmpton and Yelverton. In fact, visitors had the pick of every town and village on and around Dartmoor.[57]

The names of the properties no doubt helped to attract bookings: Dartmoor House, Moorland House, Tors Park and Moors Hall in Belstone, Moorland View in Bovey Tracey, Moorlands and Teign View in Chagford, Cleve House in Lustleigh and Dartmoor View in Moretonhampstead, to name but a few.

The quality of the accommodation may have sometimes left something to be desired; writing in the first edition of *Small Talk at Wreyland*, published in June 1918, Cecil Torr suggested that the 'craze for rustic lodgings' was comparatively new. He went on to comment that:

> People crowd down here in summer, and will put up with any kind of lodging, as they mean to be out-doors all day. I have heard of rooms with "Wash in the Blood of the Lamb" in illuminated letters, where there should be a wash-stand.[58]

Although in 1919 there was an occasional listing for a boarding or lodging house and 'Board Residence', there are no references to bed and breakfast accommodation. The term first appeared in *Bradshaw's Railway Guide* in 1910, but it did not come into widespread use until the 1930s. JL Hodson in *Our Two Englands*, published in 1936, described it as 'a new form which the historian should make a note of.'[59] However, one advertiser, Mrs Crump of The Cosy Tea Rooms Moretonhampstead, did advertise bed and breakfast in the 1930 edition of the *Devon Trades Directory*.[60]

[57] Information from *Kelly's Directory 1919 Devon* [accessed at <specialcollections.le.ac.uk>].
[58] Cecil Torr, *Small Talk at Wreyland* (First Series, 1918), pp. 56–57.
[59] J. L. Hodson, *Our Two Englands* (Michael Joseph, 1936).
[60] *Devon Trades Directory 1930* <http://www.my-history.co.uk>.

Figure 5: Kestor Hotel, Manaton (© David Morecombe collection).

Increasing demand for accommodation on Dartmoor through the 1920s brought new developments such as the building of Kestorway, near Chagford, by Alice Hinton in 1923. The house also served as a sweet shop, tobacconist and tea rooms.[61] By the 1930s there were over 300 bedrooms on offer in apartments around Dartmoor in *Holiday Haunts* and 443 in the *Automobile Association Handbook*.[62] However, there had been a sixty-seven per cent reduction in the number of people advertising accommodation in apartments or boarding houses in *Kelly's Directory*. The reason for this is not clear. Those that did advertise sometimes gave more details of what was on offer: 'Roborough' in Ashburton offered 'every accommodation for motorists; lock-up garages; separate tables; gas fires in bedrooms' as well as a 'café and tea lawn'; Mrs Toye of 'Crossways' in Whitchurch was advertising that she provided good accommodation for tourists, hot and cold baths, and a garage; in Yelverton, Mrs Matthews offered a special winter tariff.[63]

Some of the descriptions in Edith Dart's novel, *Sareel*, published in 1920, give us an idea of what life was like for visitors in farm accommodation in the period after the First World War. The heroine, Sareel, having been brought up in a workhouse, is sent at the age of sixteen and a half to work in a Dartmoor farmhouse. Her duties at the farm, which kept her fully occupied, included working in the dairy, cleaning, baking, making butter, cooking and looking after the guests that the farm took in in the summer. Her work also included preparing the guests rooms, laying the fire in the parlour, cooking and serving breakfast and dinner, and preparing a 'luncheon-basket'. In the words of her employer:

> Twull soon be time coming round fer the visitors to begin. June they do start in most years, but I've aknown 'em here in May too, so be as 'tis warm and fine then. Thee'll have to whip round purty dapper then, me maid, and so I warn 'ee. There's a mort to do wi' more cookin' and clanin' and folks to wait on for meals. Us have took 'em in this twelve year and more.[64]

[61] Information from Chris Walpole (Belstone Archive) and the current owners: Jim and Pauline Hamer.
[62] *Automobile Association Handbook* (1929).
[63] Information from *Kelly's Directory 1930* and *Devon Trades Directory 1930* <http://www.my-history.co.uk/>.
[64] Edith Dart, *Sareel* (Palala Press, 1920), p. 9.

> Sareel's work was nearly doubled with the advent of visitors in June and [there was] a succession of them until the end of September. There was more cooking and cleaning to be done, and all manner of strange offices required of her by the strangers. She waited upon the parlour, after many directions by her mistress and injunctions as to her behaviour.[65]

One of the characters in the story returns to Dartmoor in August and is surprised to be able find accommodation: 'I thought in August one could never get rooms on the moor unless you wrote months before.'[66]

Farmhouse accommodation was popular: by the beginning of the 1930s there were forty-three places offering this type of accommodation in *Holiday Haunts*.[67] Jacqueline Sarsby, in her book about a farming family on the north-eastern edge of the moor, suggests that, by the 1920s, 'farm tourism was already much better developed in the county than is generally realised, and this was true of Dartmoor […] visitors were bringing useful money into the farm, visitors had their own bedrooms, sitting rooms and 'full board'.'[68] Pinchaford Farm, near Haytor, advertised: 'Tuition given in riding, hunting and stable management', as well as opportunities to ride with the South Devon Hounds and Haldon Harriers, which met locally three times a week.[69]

Figure 6: Riding on Dartmoor (© Dartmoor Trust Archive).

So, who were the visitors staying on Dartmoor in the 1920s? The 1921 Census gives us a snapshot. With the census taking place in June during the school term, families would be less likely to take holidays, so it is not surprising that over seventy per cent of those on holiday were forty-one or older. The oldest was an eighty-five-year-old woman, who had been born in Devon, staying at the Beechfield Private Hotel in Yelverton. The youngest was a few-months-old baby girl staying with her parents at the Haytor Hotel, Ilsington.

[65] Ibid., p. 13.
[66] Ibid., p. 50.
[67] *Holiday Haunts* (GWR, 1933).
[68] Jacqueline Sarsby, *A Dartmoor Farmer, His Daughters and His Diary,* (Rotherfold Press, 2018), pp. 205–206.
[69] For example: *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 10 November 1928 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].

Twenty-two of the men were in employment, with their roles ranging from medical officer of health through to banking and accounting, from the services and the church to a chiropodist and a warehouseman. An interesting entry is that for a visitor to Chagford, which reads: 'Miller, Corn Merchant, Farmer and Steam Plough Man'. His wife is listed as a 'Threshing Owner'. There are four others staying at the hotel who listed their birth places as Norfolk, so it is possible that they were a group of friends on holiday together.

Four males were self-employed; ten gave no details of employment so were likely to be of independent means. The ten men who gave details of employment before retirement were a lieutenant colonel, an army captain, a royal naval surgeon, a wholesale wine merchant, an engineer, a cashier, two accountants and two farmers. There were six women in employment and three were self-employed. Thirty-six listed none or 'home duties' and one is listed as an unemployed housekeeper.

Transport

In this section I look at information on how visitors were reaching Devon and Dartmoor and how they were getting around the moor while on holiday. As the country emerged from the war, confidence that visitors would want to come to Dartmoor was high. For example, in 1920, Thomas Cook's Bristol Office was advertising a six day 'Grand Tour' visiting Wells, Cheddar, Lynton, Ilfracombe, Newquay, Penzance, Land's End, Truro, Torquay and Dartmoor: First-class hotel accommodation, all meals and gratuities were offered for a 'strictly inclusive' fare of 14 guineas.[70] Although, as we will see, there was an increasing appearance of cars in the 1920s, railways were still key in supporting tourism in the interwar years.

Figure 7: Advertisements in *Crossings Guide to Dartmoor*, 2nd edn (1912).

[70] *Western Daily Press*, 21 July 1920 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 3 May 2020].

In the 1920s Dartmoor was well served by the railways. Services provided by the GWR enabled visitors to travel by train to at least ten places on the borders of the moor as well as Lustleigh, Moretonhampstead and Princetown. Southern Railway services reached the northern and western side of the moor, which allowed visitors to reach Okehampton, Lydford and Brentor, the latter two places also served by the GWR. Holiday season tickets were also available. In 1927, for example, one was available embracing Exeter and all the South Devon resort towns as well as stations on the Moretonhampstead line. Weekend tickets were available. Weekly season tickets were also advertised 'between any pair of stations in the area EXETER, MORETONHAMPSTEAD, BRIXHAM, DARTMOUTH.' The advertisement promised that a season ticket enabled you to 'travel as often as you like.'[71]

The General Strike of 1926 did impact on tourism in Devon. Apparently, people cut short their holidays when it was announced, but a brochure issued by the GWR entitled *Restoration of Train Services on and from Monday, July 12th, 1926*, refers to the reinstatement of services:

> The train service would be as per the timetable of 21st September, 1925 with two additional services on Saturdays to the West Country from London and one from Bristol. On 4 Saturdays in July there will be a fast service to Exeter taking 3 hours.
>
> On Sundays there would be 3 trains a day from Plymouth to Yelverton (and back) but otherwise there were only timetable alterations on this service.[72]

Visitors arriving by train would be collected by local firms and they, and their luggage, would be taken to their hotel or guest house. On the southern and south-eastern edge of Dartmoor, these firms included 'Blue Cars' of Ashburton, which began operating motor buses and charabancs in 1920 and Potter's 'Tor Bus' of Liverton, first seen on the local roads in 1921.[73] In 1923 Wilfred Beard of Widecombe began taking local residents and visitors on shopping and sightseeing journeys in a car that the family had purchased.[74]

Horse-drawn coaches had taken visitors on trips to scenic spots, such as Haytor, in the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. These were usually linked to or run by the railway companies. After the war, motor vehicles became a common sight. In the notes to the publication of the seventeenth edition of the *Homeland Handbook to Dartmoor* published early in the decade, the publishers noted that 'The horse coaches have […] disappeared and their place has been taken by motor vehicles which skirt and cross the Moor regularly.'[75] This, however, may not have been strictly correct. When the American, Herbert Corey toured the West Country in 1929 he noted that 'Dartmoor was the only place in England where "the quaint horse-drawn vehicles remain in regular service".' Two photographs in his article for the *National Geographic Magazine* illustrated this form of transport.[76]

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[71] GWR, *August Bank Holiday and Summer Period Excursions July 28th to September 24th 1927* (WSL, 1927) p. 385. 2042/WES/1927

[72] GWR, *Restoration of Train Services on and from Monday, July 12th, 1926*, (DHC, 1926), p. 385. 2042/WES/1926

[73] For a full history of Potter's 'Tor Bus', see Roger Grimley, *Tor Bus Remembered* (Kithead Ltd., 1994).

[74] Roger Grimley, *Memories of the Widecombe Bus* (Kithead Ltd., 1995), p. 11.

[75] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925).

[76] Herbert Corey, 'Down Devon Lanes', *National Geographic Magazine*, vol LV, no. 5 (1929).

After the end of the First World War there had been a rapid expansion in the number of firms running charabanc tours.[77] Devon General was set up in 1919 and Bulpin's of Newton Abbot started 'Pride of the Moor' tours at a similar date. In 1923, the GWR began an expanded series of daily road excursions from Bovey Tracey and Moretonhampstead, using their own fleet of 'Road Motor' vehicles – largely Daimler-built charabancs. In 1925 these vehicles carried 19,696 passengers from Bovey Tracey and 24,446 from Moretonhampstead and Chagford.[78] In that year the GWR started a service from Bovey Tracey to Tavistock and back, via Moretonhampstead, stopping at the Warren House Inn for coffee, lunch in Princetown and on to Tavistock, passing Dartmoor Prison on the way. Passengers were allowed two hours to explore Tavistock before returning via Dartmeet, Widecombe, Manaton and Becky Falls. In June of the same year, a service to Becky Falls was initiated with an extension to Manaton beginning in September.[79] In 1928 the service to Haytor was extended to Widecombe.[80] The services run by the GWR transferred to Devon General in 1929.[81]

Figure 8: Charabanc on its way to Widecombe, c. 1922 (© Paul Rendell collection).

By 1923 there were nearly one hundred vehicles owned by some thirty to forty members of the Torquay Motor Coach Proprietors Association alone.[82] One of the most adventurous firms, and the leading member of that Association, whose name still exists today, was Grey Cars, established in 1913. In the 1920s they set up a series of tours from various locations in South Devon, including Torquay. Tours to places such as Lydford Gorge, Princetown, Postbridge, Becky Falls, Haytor and Fingle Gorge were advertised in various ways:

> This Tour – by the aid of our Grey Torpedo Car – is specially designed to solve the problem [of distances to be travelled] and is unique in the route planned, as it opens to view many

[77] See Appendix 1 for a selected list of firms providing trips to Dartmoor.
[78] John Owen, *The Moretonhampstead Branch: A Railway from Shore to Moor* (Kingfisher Railway Productions, 2000), p. 61.
[79] John Cummings, *Railway Motor Busses and Bus Services in the British Isles, 1902–1923*, vol. 2, combined edn (Oxford Publishing Co., 1978, 1980), p. 118.
[80] Ibid., p. 122.
[81] Ibid., p. 123.
[82] *Torquay Times*, 16 March 1923, report on public enquiry into closing certain roads in the county to charabancs.

remote scenes of picturesque interest. Many visitors from our crowded towns have found great pleasure in this delightful Tour, and have accorded it unqualified praise.

Or:

This circular journey is specially planned in order to convey the tourist to most of the salient points of interest on Dartmoor, embracing an infinite variety of attractive scenes.[83]

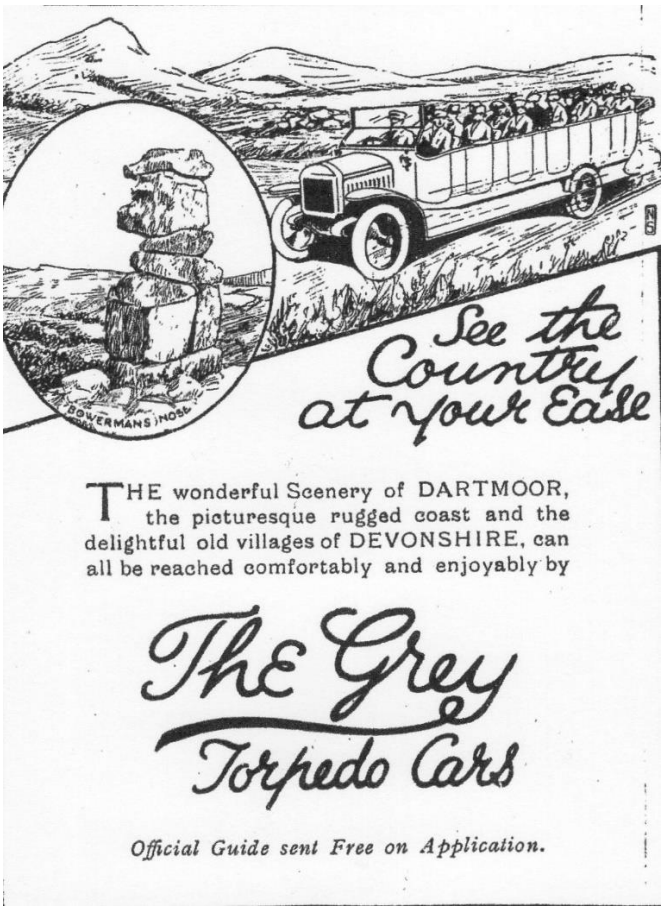

Figure 9: Advertisement for Grey Cars tours to Dartmoor (Westcountry Studies Library collection).

Passengers were given the chance to pause 'at the gateway of the famous Prison' in Princetown; 'to stroll under the trees – crossing a rustic bridge' at Becky Falls – the falls themselves being 'not very spectacular' in summer; and to climb to the top of Haytor 'by the aid of a hand-rail'. At Fingle Bridge they were invited to reach the Gorge and Glen:

> … by a meadow-path […] the Gorge is spanned by a time-worn bridge, wreathed with ivy, rising above the silvery waters of the Teign. Hemmed in by lofty hills, thickly studded with tall trees, the ground below carpeted with ferns and mossy growths, the view never fails to satisfy the eye of the artist, and also every lover of natural beauty.[84]

[83] *Motor Tours in South Devon by the Grey Torpedo Cars* (Cheltenham, 1925), WSL ref: p388.3222 TOR/GRE.
[84] Ibid.

Trips could last eight hours and cover ninety miles, although half-day trips were also offered. Visits might end, for example, with tea at the Dolphin Hotel, Bovey Tracey, where refreshments were offered at 'Reasonable Prices'.[85] A visitor to Lustleigh commented on the charabanc parties in the visitors book kept at the station:

> I've spent a day and ere I leave,
> A word of praise for Lustleigh Cleave,
> Char-a-banc parties crane their necks,
> The short-sighted ones don their specs – and marvel.[86]

Hopkins & Sons were another company to run motor coach tours across Dartmoor in the 1920s. Their 'Blue Moorland Cars' started from Dawlish at 2.15 p.m., returning at 7.15 p.m. and took the passengers to 'the very heart of Dartmoor'. The trip was described as: 'Truly a journey through some of the most picturesque country in the British Isles. To know Dartmoor is to love it.'[87]

A. E Thomas of Chagford ran tours from Exeter as well as Chagford, both by coach and private car.[88] WH Gubb & Sons ran coach tours from Ilfracombe with the delightful name of 'Lucky Violet Cars' which, if the map in a 1930s advertisement is to be believed, reached as far as the northern edge of Dartmoor.[89] Another company, Blue and Grey Coaches, ran day trips to Dartmoor, departing Ilfracombe at 8.00 a.m., returning at 7.45 p.m.[90]

On occasion a large number of charabancs were required for group outings, such as one by the Foresters Friendly Society in the summer of 1922 that took over a thousand delegates and their wives on 'a moorland trip to Princetown, Two Bridges and Tavistock.'[91] A total of forty-four charabancs were required to accommodate the group and, apparently, the trip took place on a wet afternoon with one participant commenting that 'it started to rain as we were crossing the moor and scarcely ceased until we returned to Plymouth in the evening.'[92]

In 1923 a writer in the *Western Times* commented on the large numbers of charabanc parties from Torquay, Plymouth and Cornwall visiting Buckfast Abbey.[93] At lunchtime, the square in Princetown was also regularly crowded with motor coaches and charabancs and 'the restaurants [were] filled to overflowing, while people who [preferred] an *alfresco* meal dot[ted] the neighbouring slopes.'[94]

If Agatha Christie's description in *The Sittaford Mystery* is to be believed, Throwleigh was another place visited by charabancs:

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[85] Ibid.
[86] *GWR Magazine*, vol. 35, no. 7 (July 1923) [Copy of article held by Lustleigh Community Archive].
[87] Hopkins & Sons Tourist Brochure, Simon Butler collection.
[88] *The Dartmoor Guide*, 2nd edn (1932–34), p. 46.
[89] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33).
[90] Information from Michael Blower, 4 April 2023.
[91] *The Burton Advertiser*, 5 August 1922 [accessed by C Walpole, July 2022].
[92] *Kington Times*, 20 October 1922 [accessed by C Walpole, September 2022].
[93] *Western Times*, 17 August 1923 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 13 April 2021].
[94] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 122.

> Charabancs do [come] in the summer time […] It's the three and sixpenny morning run from Exhampton. Ascent of Sittaford Beacon[95] with a halt half way up from Exhampton for light refreshments.[96]

By 1923 the number of charabanc tours coming to Dartmoor were thought to be a problem. Mrs Stawell wrote in the updated version of her book, *Motoring in the West Country*, published in 1925:

> Not many years ago Heytor was the essence of wild solitude. At some seasons no doubt it is so still. But all through the summer, except at early and late hours of the day, a constant stream of motors and charabancs brings a large population to the foot of this famous rock.[97]

This was perceived to be such a problem in certain places that, in 1923, Devon County Council brought forward proposals to close certain roads to large vehicles including charabancs. The proposals were examined at a public enquiry at which six urban authorities, including Torquay, Paignton, Teignmouth and Newton Abbot, opposed the plans. On Dartmoor there was particular concern about two roads: the road from the Exeter to Princetown road that provided access to Manaton and Becky Falls via Long Lane, Heatree Cross and Langstone Cross; and the Liverton to Haytor road via Ilsington (at the time the principal route from Haytor to Newton Abbot). Not only were the local authorities concerned about the cost of maintaining the roads, a task which fell to them not the county council, but also the danger to cyclists and the fact that, in the case of the Liverton to Haytor route, farmers felt they were 'only able to drive their cattle along the road […] during the early morning and evening.' One witness at the enquiry even suggested that there were one million charabanc passengers a year on the route to Manaton. The applicants:

> … felt […] that the unrestricted right of these vehicles to invade remote parts of the county was incompatible with the amenities, almost with the rights, of the rural dwellers [and] other users of rural roads regarded charabancs as a "perfect pest, an absolute nuisance".[98]

Nonetheless, the inspector ruled that certain roads, including the one to Manaton and Becky Falls, should remain open, with improvements being made to it paid for by funds from the Department of Transport.[99]

However, the situation appears not to have improved as Clinton-Baddeley, writing in 1925, commented that 'every year hundreds of visitors crowd to the villages on the fringes of the moor, and over the high roads charabancs and motor-cars exercise a shallow *de facto* jurisdiction.'[100] H. V. Morton commented on the behaviour of the passengers he witnessed in Widecombe:

> A fiendish noise arose in Widecombe. Several spirited young men began to press the motor horns of the chars-à-banc with great vigour […] By twos and threes and fours the lingerers returned to their vehicles, seated themselves, and with a cheery wave of their hands to Old

[95] Cosdon Beacon.
[96] Agatha Christie, *The Sittaford Mystery,* 1931 (HarperCollins*,* 2017), p. 152.
[97] Mrs Rodolph Stawell, *Motoring in the West Country* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), p. 78.
[98] *Torquay Times*, 16 March 1923, report on public enquiry into closing certain roads in the county to charabancs © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 6 June 2023].
[99] *Western Morning News*, 26 October 1923 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 13 April 2021].
[100] V. C. Clinton-Baddeley, *Devon*, (Adam and Charles Black, 1925), pp. 88–89.

> Uncle Tom Cobleigh, thundered off towards the open moor between the hedges […] The smoking concert[101] put [Widecombe] in the heart and the char-à-banc put it on the map![102]

Although some hotels, inns and cafés specifically catered for charabanc parties, this was not always the case. In 1924 the landlords of the Dartmoor Inn, Lydford and the Forest Inn, Hexworthy were called before magistrates to explain why they had turned away charabanc parties. Both landlords said that it was their policy not to cater for large groups of visitors.[103]

Today, we largely take for granted the provision of public conveniences at popular tourist spots but this was not always the case. In 1921 Okehampton Town Council made an application to the Ministry of Health for 'sanction to borrow £350 for the erection of public conveniences in Fore Street.' The *Western Times* reported that 'there was no public convenience in the town beyond a urinal by the Cattle Market, and there were constant complaints by visitors and others in consequence, while nuisances were frequently committed in the public streets and thoroughfares.' In answer to questioning by the inspector, the deputy town clerk, Mr Fullwood, confirmed that what had brought the issue to a head was the number of charabanc parties 'stopping in the town daily, while touring from Plymouth, Exeter, North Devon towns, and places further afield.'[104]

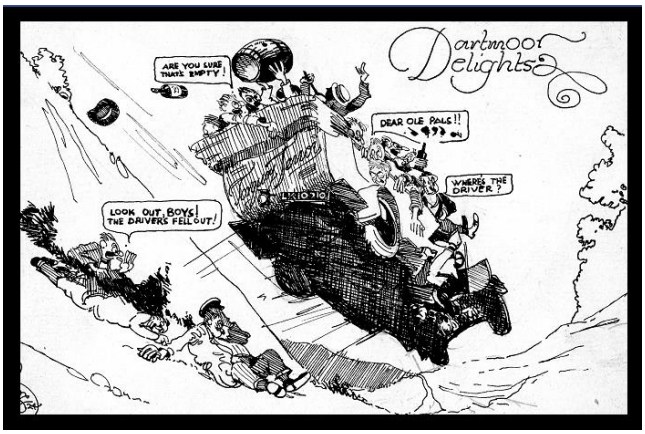

Figure 10: 'Dartmoor Delights' cartoon courtesy of Tim Sandles (Legendary Dartmoor).

There are several reports of charabanc accidents. For example, in 1924 one of the brakes failed on a charabanc on the road between Dartmeet and Holne Chase: 'The driver, Mr George Partridge Jnr., immediately applied the second brake, and with great presence of mind, dragged the charabanc into the hedge, bringing it to a standstill without mishap.'[105] However, a much more serious accident had happened in 1920 when two people died and eight others were seriously injured when a charabanc overturned near the top of the one-in-five gradient Six Mile Hill near Dunsford and careered downhill after the brakes failed.[106]

[101] Smoking concerts were performances of music before an audience of men, popular during the Victorian era. The song 'Widecombe Fair' would have been a favourite inclusion.
[102] H.V. Morton, *In Search of England* (The Folio Society, 1927), pp. 89–92.
[103] *Western Times* (15 February 1924) © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 13 April 2021].
[104] *Western Times*, 28 April 1921 [accessed by C Walpole, 16 March 2021].
[105] Accessed from Legendary Dartmoor Facebook post (17 February 2022).
[106] *Western Times*, 23 July 1920 [accessed by C Walpole, 21 December 2020].

Through the 1920s, private cars were an increasingly frequent sight. In 1986, in an article in the *Dartmoor Magazine*, Roy Chorley recalled:

> … that the ten years from 1920 to 1930 were of special significance for the people of Dartmoor […] The immediate cause of change being the new transport […] Crude as was this early transport it soon began to reduce the seclusion of the moorland villages. It affected even the towns as then came private cars in ever greater numbers often on their way to what became known as "beauty spots"[107] […] Cars were open tourers and when the hood was folded back all the passengers were clearly visible and in the early twenties, I would wave to them and generally receive a friendly response.[108]

Cars were not always welcome:

> … a recurring newspaper theme throughout the early Twenties was an attack on motorists as "road-hogs". Roads in some parts of England were indeed thoroughly unsafe for motor traffic – narrow places, banks and hedges concealing turnings, bottle-necks, restive horses, unattended railway crossings.'[109]

And this certainly applied to Dartmoor.

In 1921 Newton Abbot Rural District Councillors were discussing widening the road outside the Moorland Hotel at Haytor. They were far from convinced that they 'should be called upon to maintain roads in [their] district that are used principally by visitors'. Mr. W. H. Whiteway Wilkinson declared that:

> Some afternoons in the summer these roads are almost like Piccadilly. No one, unless they were on the spot, had any, conception of the traffic that was on these roads in the summer. The danger to the public also was no mean item, and the serious question that arose was whether rural parishes ought to be saddled with the huge expenditure of their upkeep for the sake of the pleasure-seekers from all parts the country.[110]

Possibly because of this, in 1921 a seven days' census was taken of vehicles using the Bovey–Haytor–Widecombe road. This showed a daily average of thirteen motor coaches and fifty-two cars. By 1925, when a new census was made, the average number of coaches had risen to eighty, and there was an average of two hundred and seventy cars and fifty motor cycles.[111]

Mrs Stawell, writing in the updated version of her book *Motoring in the West Country* published in 1925, suggested that enquiries would have to be made about the state of the road from Drewsteignton to Fingle Bridge because '… not very long ago there was no way to the riverside but an extremely steep and narrow lane, with no surface worth mentioning.'[112] At Lustleigh the author pointed out that for drivers:

> … spaces […] are limited. Drivers of large cars will be wise if they turn near the church under the elms, or, if they wish to explore further, make enquiries before they pass beyond that

[107] The use of the words 'beauty spot' dates back to 1846 [OED online, accessed 12 March 2020] but may not have been in wide use until the twentieth century.
[108] Roy Chorley, 'Dartmoor in the Twenties'*, Dartmoor Magazine,* 5 (1986).
[109] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939,* (Hutchinson, 1985 edn), p. 181.
[110] *Western Times*, 11 November 1921 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 3 May 2020].
[111] Quoted in *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 47.
[112] Mrs Rodolph Stawell, *Motoring in the West Country* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), p. 81.

> point. It is always worthwhile to make enquiries now, for new roads are constantly being made and old roads widened.[113]

This contrasts with what she wrote in the earlier 1910 edition:

> Drivers of large cars must turn near the church under the elms, and see Lustleigh on foot, for there is no turning point further on, and the road beyond the village is impracticable. Its beauty is alluring, but its steepness is serious, and such is its narrowness that even a car of moderate size brushes the hedge on each side.[114]

Figure 11: Surfacing roads at Lustleigh, 1930 (© Lustleigh Community Archive).

Even in the late 1920s, although road surfaces were being improved, visitors to Lustleigh were still being advised to park their cars on the green by the church steps and walk to the Cleave. By June 1928, Lustleigh Parish Council was considering the problem of car parking in the centre of the village.[115] No doubt because of a growing problem with litter, in 1929 the Council accepted a gift of three wire litter baskets to be sited there.[116]

In 1923 the Automobile Association installed a roadside telephone box on the road from Moretonhampstead to Two Bridges at the Bee Tor junction with the Chagford Road. The Sphere reported that 'this lonely road across Dartmoor is much frequented during the touring season by motor tourists travelling between Exeter and Plymouth'. At this date the nearest 'motoring repair establishments' were about seven miles away in either direction and the nearest hotel was five miles away.[117]

In 1924 the motoring correspondent of *The Tatler* was advising motorists visiting Dartmoor 'to think a good deal about [their] bottom speed, not only for climbing the terrific hills which make up this paradise, but also for going down the other side of them'. The writer went on to

[113] Ibid., p. 80.
[114] Mrs Rodolph Stawell, *Motor Tours in the West Country* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), pp. 59–60.
[115] Lustleigh Parish Council minutes (11 June 1928).
[116] Lustleigh Parish Council minutes (10 June 1929).
[117] *The Sphere*, 1 September 1923 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].

comment on the 'extremely good condition' of the roads and praised the Automobile Association for erecting the most sensible warnings he had seen in any country:

> At a safe distance from the crest of every hill between Tavistock and Ashburton stood a sign-board, which informed you in a way which you could not disregard that the approaching descent was extremely dangerous, and that bottom speed should be engaged before starting down it.[118]

Even in 1928, according to a W. G. Aston writing in *The Tatler*, the narrowness of the road from Moretonhampstead to Tavistock was causing problems. In his words this was:

> The narrowest "A" highway in the country, and of course it boasts the widest coaches and motor-buses. After I had been twice shoved into the ditch by these brutes swinging road corners (and there *are* some corners), I decided that next time, if I was spared, I would have a shot-gun as well as a Klaxon.[119]

The eighth edition of Ward Lock's *Guide to Dartmoor*, published in the early 1930s, advised all drivers – especially those travelling from distant places – to 'provide themselves with wraps, as it can be very chilly on the Moor late in the day, while the weather may change with startling quickness.'[120]

An indication of the increasing number of cars being brought by people holidaying on Dartmoor is the number of hotels offering garaging in 1923.[121] There was space for 807 cars and 344 motorcycles in hotel garages listed in the 1929 edition of the *Automobile Association Handbook.* It would appear that these hotel garages were serving different types of accommodation – apartments, for example – as well as the twenty-six hotels listed in the handbook. 'Experienced mechanics' were also available at the White Hart Hotel in Moretonhampstead.[122]

All the main towns around the moor, as well as Princetown had at least one garage and, as well as doing repairs and providing breakdown services, by the middle of the decade most would have been selling petrol. Some of the garages also offered to hire cars. By the 1930s one of them, Aggett's in Bovey Tracey, advertised that it was catering for American tourists.[123]

[118] *The Tatler*, 2 April 1924 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[119] *The Tatler*, 22 August 1928 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[120] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932/33), p. 17.
[121] *Devon and Cornwall Directory* (Aubrey & Co, 1923).
[122] *RAC Guide and Handbook* (1920–30), advertisements, p. 171.
[123] *The Dartmoor Guide*, 2nd edn (1932–34), p. 14.

Figure 12: Central Garage, Bovey Tracey, c. 1920 (© Bovey Tracey Heritage Trust).

The arrival of motor vehicles on Dartmoor in the 1920s led to the creation of one of the moor's best-known legends – that of 'the hairy hands'. According to the story, the 'hairy hands' are a pair of disembodied hands that appear suddenly, grab at the steering wheel of a moving car or the handlebars of a motorcycle, and then force the victim off the road on the B3212, halfway between Postbridge and Princetown. The first appearance of the story came in a short article that appeared in the *Daily Mail* on 14 October 1921. This told the tale of three accidents that took place at the same spot: two motorcycle crashes and a motor coach which swerved, mounting the grass verge, throwing some passengers clear of the vehicle. The article gained a lot of attention and was repeated in other newspapers before being elaborated and repeated by folklore collectors in the coming decades.

The thing about these stories is that there are few facts to back them up. There were accidents in the area and it is known that the camber was later adjusted, after which there were no more incidents there. So how did the story arise? At the beginning of the 1920s there was an increasing number of motor vehicles on the road. However, roads were still in poor condition, vehicles had few safety features and all-round braking had yet to be introduced. In fact, there was a spate of traffic accidents in the summer of 1921 that provided fertile ground for over-imaginative journalists.[124]

Recreation

We get an idea of the recreational activities that visitors were coming for from the advertisements of hotels and inns. In 1930 the London Inn in South Brent was advertising that there was 'Hunting, fishing, shooting and golf nearby.'[125] Fishing and hunting were also

[124] Information from Mark Norman, *The Folklore Podcast*.
[125] Devon Trade Information from *Kelly's Directory* (1930).

advertised by the Brentor Hotel.[126] Guidebooks drew attention to the possibilities for following fox- and otter-hunting.[127]

Figure 13: The hunt meeting outside the Forest Inn, Hexworthy (© Tom Greeves collection).

The Moorland Hotel and the Haytor Hotel were both offering tennis, croquet and bowls in 1927.[128] In 1923 a correspondent in *The Sphere* wrote about the numbers of holidaymakers playing tennis on courts at hotels in Torquay. She went on to comment that 'on the Dartmoor hills, under the shadow of the famous Haytor Rock […] at the Moorland Hotel, men and young women seem to be as keen [on tennis] as elsewhere and the tennis court is occupied nearly day-long'.[129]

There is a long-established tradition of open-air swimming pools on Dartmoor. Some were provided by hotels, including the Fox and Hounds at Bridestowe, the Golden Lion in Ashburton, and the Bullaven Farm Hotel near Harford. There were also public open-air pools in Simmons Park, Okehampton, and in Longtimber Woods, outside Ivybridge. The latter was originally built as a reservoir, but when it was replaced in 1916, it became a public pool with changing facilities and a springboard.[130]

[126] *Royal Automobile Club Guide and Handbook* (1929–30), advertisements, p. 78.
[127] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), pp. 14–15.
[128] *Western Morning News*, 3 May 1927 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[129] *The Sphere*, 18 August 1923 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[130] Ivybridge Heritage <https://ivybridge-heritage.org/longtimber-woods> [accessed 03 March 2023].

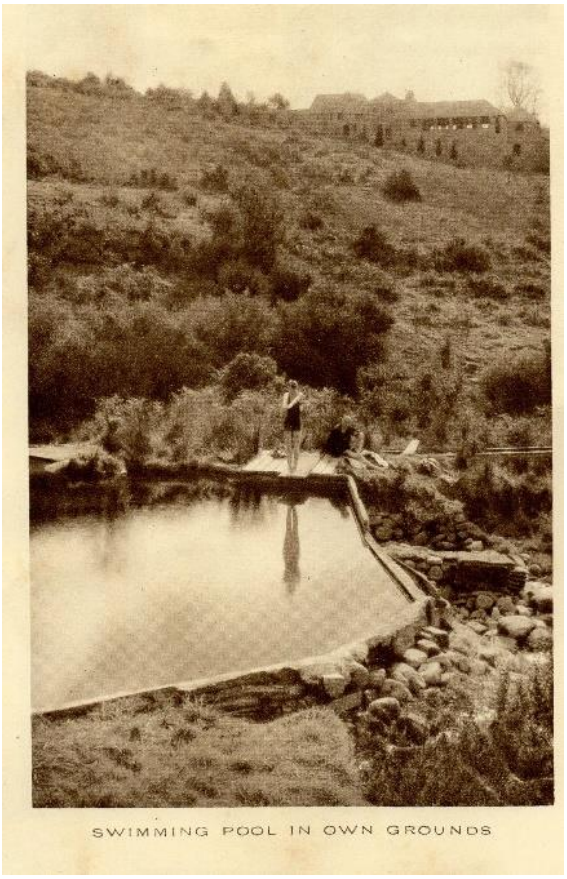

Figure 14: Swimming pool at Bullaven Farm Hotel (© Paul Cleave collection).

As well as motoring, walking on the moor was, of course, an important recreational activity. In the early days a guide was often employed to lead walkers – particularly on to the remoter parts of the moor. Cranmere Pool, situated at the remotest point on the northern part of the moor, was the prime location requiring a guide to lead you there, the best known of them being James Perrott of Chagford who began guiding in the 1850s. In the 1920s James' sons carried on the tradition, providing rides and fishing as well as guided walks.[131]

Until the end of the First World War, the folded maps with covers first published in the late 1890s by the Ordnance Survey had plain covers. In order to boost sales after the war they decided to turn their attention to the designs on the map covers. The artist Arthur Palmer was chosen to illustrate the cover of the Dartmoor map. Palmer's illustrations tended to have an old fashion aura, reminiscent of the Edwardian era, which gave his covers a special charm that made them very attractive to the public.

There were plenty of opportunities around the moor for camping. For example, by the 1930s, the *Come to Dartmoor Guide* included listings for over fifty campsites.[132] Today there are parts of the moor where 'wild camping' is permitted. Current rules state that 'if you can carry everything you need in your backpack as part of a Dartmoor walking expedition, you can

[131] Information from Emma Cunis [emails of 22 February 2020 and 24 February 2020].
[132] *Come to Dartmoor Guide* (post 1932), pp. 51–52.

backpack camp for one or two nights in some areas of open moorland, well away from roads or settlements using a 'no impact' approach.'[133]

In the 1920s the *Homeland Handbook* suggested that:

> … camping out on Dartmoor in fine weather is one of the most delightful experiences possible […]. Tented out by some brawling stream that lulls you to sleep at night, and serves for bathing, washing, and fishing during the day, a sense of delicious repose comes over one.[134]

Among its other services, the Haytor Tea House offered 'tents equipped for camping out.'[135] The *RAC Guide and Handbook* for 1929–30 carried an advertisement for a tent to be attached to your car in order to 'Save Hotel Bills when Touring.'[136]

Preparing to camp might, as described by JK Bateson, involve 'collecting armfuls of heather' for a bed and then 'covering it well over with the rubber ground-sheet, and then pitching the tiny tent in position over the whole.' The writer goes on to write that, 'being already wise in the ways of camping on Dartmoor, we then collected a quantity of loose stones from either side and built our outside wall – and very fine it looked when our labours were over!'[137]

Despite recognising that Dartmoor 'is hilly, very hilly', the *Homeland Handbook* also recommends cycling on the moor: '…the advantages are so many that the rider who cares more for pleasure than pace will find his cycle a real convenience.'[138] In the 1923 *Devon and Cornwall Directory* a number of establishments boasted that their accommodation was suitable for cyclists.

While on holiday, visitors would probably attend one of the local shows, for instance, the Annual Show at Chagford which takes place on a Thursday in August. In 1925 it was held on 20 August and we have a reference to it on a postcard, dated 18 August, written by someone who was staying locally with a farmer:

> … I do believe we changed the weather when we started our holiday. We are having a fine time and Annie is enjoying herself for we are down by the River Teign and it's glorious (no bees about) – Thurs is their show. Fred busy with his corn. I hope you are all enjoying your holidays …

Okehampton Show was started in 1891 and was staged on what is now the home of Okehampton Rugby Club in the centre of the town until 1982.[139] Tavistock Goose Fair, held on the second Wednesday of October since 1823, was no doubt popular for autumn visitors to Dartmoor. A month earlier, visitors would have been drawn to Widecombe Fair which still takes place on the second Tuesday in September. Originally an opportunity to show and sell sheep and cattle, in the 1920s children's sports were included, before stalls selling rural arts and crafts were added in the 1930s.

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[133] Dartmoor National Park, 'Camping' <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/camping> [accessed 26 March 2021].
[134] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 106.
[135] *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (1923).
[136] *Royal Automobile Club Guide and Handbook* (1929–30), p. 500.
[137] J. K. Bateson, *Moorland Mysteries: A Book on Dartmoor* (Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1925), pp. 56–57.
[138] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 114.
[139] Okehampton Show <https://www.okehamptonshow.co.uk/about-us> [accessed 03 March 2023].

Figure 15: Widecombe Fair c. 1930 (© Paul Rendell collection).

At one time the annual fair that took place in South Brent on the last Tuesday of September would have rivalled the fairs at Widecombe and Tavistock. One observer writing in 1922 recorded the scene:

> The last Tuesday in September has for years been set apart in the ancient little town of South Brent as the annual fair day, and yesterday, from dawn until long after dusk had crept in over the moorland hill, almost under the shelter of which the town nestles, the place was alive with the lowing of cattle, the whinnying of the horses and moorland ponies, the bleating of sheep, the shouts of the herdsmen, the clamour of the cheap-jacks, and the broad Devon voices of the bargainers all intermingling in a hive of activity. […] A visitor chancing to pass through the place would have been alarmed and curious, for from end-to-end of the town, in the main thoroughfare and in the side streets there seemed to be a hopeless conglomeration of beasts, men, and women, a seeming confusion which would require no small amount of disengaging. Yet most of those present appeared to be wandering amid the sheep, the horses, and cattle with no great concern.[140]

One unusual recreation that was popular in the 1920s and early 1930s that must have attracted tourists was the 'Dartmoor Rodeo.'[141] In 1922 the Yelverton Sheep Dog Society held their first annual sheep dog trials and gymkhana event at Heathcott Corner, Yelverton. In the 1920s and 1930s one of the main attractions at the show was the 'Dartmoor Rodeo', based on American rodeos where competitors would attempt to ride an untamed and unbroken Dartmoor pony or wild steer. In 1926 the *Western Morning News* reported:

> Tremendous amusement was caused by the attempts which were made to ride unbroken Dartmoor Ponies without saddle or bridle, and the fact that the winner was successful in retaining his seat for only 20 seconds indicates how speedily the other 24 entrants were thrown. An even stronger objection to being ridden was shown by the untamed steers, and a 7 second record won the prize.[142]

[140] South Brent Fair <https://www.legendarydartmoor.co.uk/2017 December 19/south-brent-fair> [accessed 03 March 2023].
[141] Information collected on the Legendary Dartmoor website.
[142] *Western Morning News*, 6 September 1926 [accessed via Legendary Dartmoor 02 June 2023].

Figure 16: Dartmoor Rodeo, *Western Morning News*, 16 August 1934 (accessed via Legendary Dartmoor).

As well as boys, and some girls, from around the moor entering the competitions, men came from the local army and naval bases. By the early 1930s, the event in Yelverton was being advertised as 'The Grand Dartmoor Rodeo'. Copied elsewhere on Dartmoor, the rodeo continued to be included into the 1950s in events at Ilsington, Lee Moor, Meavy, Okehampton, South Tawton and Walkhampton.

In the evenings it might have been possible for visitors to be entertained with live events, lantern slide shows or films being shown in town or village halls. In Bovey Tracey, for example, films were being shown on a regular basis as early as 1917,[143] and the function room of the King's Arms was being used in this way, possibly in the twenties. [144] In Okehampton, the Picture Palace, later renamed the Premiere, had opened its doors in 1915.[145] Major A. O. Ellis, who also ran a cinema in Paignton, opened the Picture House in Station Road, Buckfastleigh, in c. 1922.[146]

Popular places to visit

So, where were the popular places to visit on the moor? Many of them are the same as today: on the south-eastern corner of the moor there are the rocks at Haytor, easy to access with wide ranging views and a taste of the wildness of Dartmoor. Nearby are Becky Falls and Lustleigh Cleave. On the western edge is Vixen Tor and in the centre of the northern part of the moor is the remote Cranmere Pool. The village that was most popular with visitors, then as now, was Widecombe-in-the-Moor, popularised through the song about Widecombe Fair. The attraction at Princetown was Dartmoor Prison.

This section will look at some of what was written about these places in the 1920s. Du Garde Peach summed this up well:

[143] Gordon Chapman, *Devon at the Cinema* (Devon Books, 2000), p. 56.
[144] Ibid., p. 70.
[145] Ibid., p. 60.
[146] Ibid., pp. 68–69.

> I suppose Hay Tor rocks, Widecombe, Dartmeet and Princetown, including Two Bridges, are the most visited places on the moor, but they are not overrun. These things are comparative, and though at times Widecombe may seem too full of one's fellow-men, or Hay Tor rocks a little overcrowded, one has only to remember some of the other beauty spots of our country to know that relatively here is solitude.[147]

Widecombe-in-the-Moor

The author of the GWR guide, *Holiday Haunts*, thought that 'to spend an hour in Widecombe is to think it quaint. To stay there is to love it for ever.'[148]

Du Garde Peach wrote in *Unknown Devon*, that Widecombe:

> … is, of course, well known; very many excursionists visit it every summer, and many thousands more who have never seen it, and probably never will, sing the epic story of Uncle Tom Cobley and Tom Pierce's Grey Mare with gusto; […] Widecombe-in-the-Moor rises superior to its popularity; if it now rather tends to blossom into tea-shops and to display itself on picture post cards, it does as a concession to visitors and without compromising its own simple dignity. All the same it is best to visit Widecombe in the late autumn or early spring, when chars-à-banc are hibernating and trippers are at rest.[149]

H. V. Morton 'never realised the power of song until [he] came to Widecombe!'

> Four chars-à-banc were drawn up opposite the village green. Old Uncle Tom Cobleigh stood leaning on an ash stick, his back bent, watching from the green the swift descent of the trippers with their cameras. Young men and women roamed vaguely arm in arm through the lanes, languishingly or gaily, according to temperament. Elderly women swarmed over the church; men in holiday humour sampled the village inn. A hen crossed the road delicately, as if trying to avoid the cameras.[150]

Princetown

The attraction of Princetown for the visitor lay both in its claim to be the 'highest town in England' and the existence of the prison. 'Regarded as a centre for this part of Dartmoor its merits are indisputable. The surrounding scenery is magnificent, and many interesting features of the moor are within easy walk.'[151]

Lustleigh

The *Ward Lock Guide* described Lustleigh 'as one of the most prettily situated villages in the vicinity of the Moor.'[152] The *Homeland Guide* urged visitors to:

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[147] Lawrence Du Garde Peach, *Unknown Devon* (The Bodley Head Limited, 1927), p. 136.
[148] *Holiday Haunts* (GWR, 1933), p. 337.
[149] Lawrence Du Garde Peach, *Unknown Devon* (The Bodley Head Limited, 1927), p. 135.
[150] H.V. Morton, *In Search of England* (The Folio Society, 1927), p. 89.
[151] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 80.
[152] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 50.

> … pay a short visit to this unique Devonshire village; in few localities will you see so much granite. One would imagine that giants from Lustleigh Cleave had amused themselves by throwing rocks all over the place. There is granite in the gardens, granite in the fields, rocks crop up in the middle of the village, and seem strewn in every direction.[153]

Indeed, Lustleigh Cleave was the main attraction having been described as 'far-famed' since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Fingle Gorge

Fingle Bridge is described by Beatrix Cresswell as 'one of the beauties of Devon, and no one must omit seeing it. […] a quaint old bridge spans the river […] Below, the river splashes and sings among the stones, and the banks are lovely, no matter which way you turn, Prestonbury coming down precipitously to the water's edge.'[154]

Cranmere Pool

Before the military roads were constructed, a walk to Cranmere Pool was a challenge. Early walkers, sometimes accompanied by a guide, did the sixteen-mile round trip from Chagford to what was the remotest spot on Dartmoor. The famous Dartmoor guide, James Perrott, sited a jar on the cairn at Cranmere Pool in the 1850s for visitors to leave their calling cards. In later years, walkers left a stamped addressed postcard for the next visitor to collect and post.

Figure 17: HP Hearder signing the visitors' book at Cranmere Pool, c. 1920 (© Dartmoor Trust Archive).

[153] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 34.
[154] Ibid., p. 37.

J. K Bateson, writing in 1925 describes Cranmere Pool as 'the (rather muddy!) goal of so many travellers' feet – eagerly sought because so notoriously hard to find in the miles of peaty treacherous bog-land that surrounds it.'[155]

In *Unknown Devon* Du Garde Peach wrote that:

> Cranmere Pool is not for the char-à-banc traveller; to get there you must walk and scramble over hills and down rocky dales, you must ford here and there a mountain stream, or leap from stone to stone across its boulder-strewn bed, you must be prepared for mists and bogs, and, if you are wise, you will take map and compass with you.[156]

A visitors' book was first placed at Cranmere Pool in 1905. Having been replaced several times, in 1928 a Devonport resident placed a solid bound volume at the cairn, inviting people to record their names and impressions. Several entries recall the difficulty of finding Cranmere Pool: 'Cheered to reach the pool and see other fools vainly searching on the horizon'. Suggestions for development included that the pool should be 'dug, cemented and made into a swimming bath'. However, the lack of water led to a further comment suggesting that 'the Duchy could supply a couple of piers enabling visitors to imagine themselves at Weston-Super-Mare with the tide out.' Other writers commented on the rubbish left by visitors: 'More like a dustbin than a pool.' The noise from military manoeuvres upset another visitor: 'Our friends the idiots who call themselves soldiers, now that the Peace Pact is nicely signed, are cheerfully blazing away with rifles, machine guns and artillery, just to show that Britons never, never will be slaves.'[157]

Elsewhere

Some places that were popular are not on the visitors' route today. For example, the stone rows at Merrivale were apparently 'visited by thousands'.[158] Elsewhere the 'Buckland Drives' were described by Beatrix Cresswell as being 'celebrated'. Popular from the nineteenth century until they were apparently closed early in the 1920s, they consisted of carriage drives which went through Buckland Woods and followed the River Dart through spectacular scenery. After they closed, holidaymakers were advised to visit the nearby Holne Chase Drive, where there was 'a glorious if hilly walk of some nine or ten miles'. The Chase was open to the public three days a week from 1 May to 30 September.[159] Another path that was open in the summer months, again for three days a week, ran alongside the River Dart near Hexworthy.[160]

Bickleigh Vale by the River Plym was also only open to the public three days a week. When open it was 'entered at its northern end at a lodge near Bickleigh Bridge […] its forest paths wind among tall trees or between thick foliage of lesser ones, with high banks radiant with flowers.' Refreshments were available either at a local cottage or at Plymbridge.[161]

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[155] J. K. Bateson, *Moorland Mysteries: A Book on Dartmoor* (Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1925), p. 56.
[156] Lawrence Du Garde Peach, *Unknown Devon* (The Bodley Head Limited, 1927), p. 137.
[157] Accessed from Legendary Dartmoor Facebook post (29 December 2020).
[158] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 125.
[159] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 140.
[160] Ibid., p. 142.
[161] Ibid., p. 120.

Hawns and Dendles, situated on the southern edge of Dartmoor north of the village of Cornwood, was also highly recommended:

> This beautiful wooded ravine is only open to the public on three days in the week, Monday, Wednesday and Saturday; the entrance passing by a farm where refreshments are to be had. The path brings us under trees that close overhead, completely sheltering the Yealm that dashes over the rocks below. Upward winds the path, now well nigh touching the river bank, now rising above it. A waterfall, spanned by a rustic bridge, suggests a human touch. Elsewhere all is natural beauty – the beauty of the deep wooded combes of Somerset combined with the bold wildness of Dartmoor.[162]

Cafés and tea gardens

Cafés and tea gardens provided refreshments for visitors as well as hotels and inns. These were located at most of the popular attractions. It is sometimes difficult to research them because they were frequently temporary, often being set up in someone's garden just for the summer months. For example, a relative of the Lustleigh baker, William Osborne, has a family story from the 1920s of him setting up tables under an oak tree in the field opposite the station. No photographs or written records of this exist but I have no reason to doubt the veracity of the story.

My research has revealed that there were at least fifty refreshment places in existence at some point during the 1920s and this is probably an underestimate. Understandably, more than one was situated in places popular with visitors and these were in permanent buildings. For example, close to Haytor were the Haytor Tea House and Long Barn Café – in addition to the nearby hotels.

Figure 18: Long Barn Café, Haytor (© Dartmoor Trust Archive).

The *Homeland Handbook* reported that in Widecombe the Old Inn 'has expanded into a luncheon and tea room at the back to accommodate the many excursionists who find their way into Widecombe.'[163] The North Hall Café, in Widecombe had, by the 1930s, been

[162] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 90.
[163] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 30.

extended to cater for two hundred people. These were in addition to the Wayside Café and the Widecombe Green Tea Rooms. All of these were open in the 1920s, although not necessarily at the same time.

Figure 19: Fingle Bridge Tea Shelter (© Elisabeth Stanbrook collection).

The Tea Shelter at Fingle Bridge, begun in 1907 by Jessie Plant, was no more than that: a temporary structure open on one side with the roof covered with branches of heather. By the late 1950s a substantial inn and restaurant had been established on the site, now known as the Fingle Bridge Inn.

Figure 20: Badger's Holt Tea Garden (© Tom Greeves Collection).

There were several tea rooms and gardens on the River Dart, notably Badger's Holt at Dartmeet, which advertised 'Devonshire teas served on riverside lawn';[164] the Dart Bridge Tea Rooms and the Dart Tea Gardens at Buckfastleigh. By 1930 there were five cafés in Ashburton including the Ye Old Card House Café, four in Okehampton, three in Ivybridge and two in Yelverton. [165]

What visitors were taking home

Visitors to Dartmoor would have sent postcards to friends and relations while staying in the area and would have bought souvenirs to take home with them. They might also have bought the typical Devon products of cider or clotted cream as seen in these advertisements.

Postcards

Postcards were produced by a wide variety of publishers – some local shops published their own cards while other publishers, such as Battershill's of Plymouth, sold through local shops. Battershill's advertised 'Photograph Postcards of Dartmoor: Views of the Tors, Bridges, Hut circles, Crosses, etc.'[166] However, the main publishers of postcards were Chapman, Tuck, Frith and Salmon.

Chapman & Son of Dawlish produced over two thousand photographs in the seventy-seven years of their existence (c. 1890–1967). The majority of these were scenes around Devon, which were reproduced on postcards. Almost every site on and around Dartmoor was depicted on their postcards and they even produced a set of cards of cartoons illustrating the

[164] *RAC Guide & Handbook* (1929–30), advertisements, p. 102.
[165] *Kelly's Directory* (1930).
[166] *Crossing's Guide to Dartmoor*, 2nd edn (1912), p. xiii.

characters in the Widecombe Fair song. It is more than likely that the majority of visitors would have bought a Chapman postcard to send to friends or to take home as a souvenir.

As well as using photographs of Dartmoor scenes on the postcards published by Raphael Tuck & Sons, the firm began to reproduce paintings on postcards in 1903. These so-called 'oilettes' were designed to look like paintings. In the 1920s an extensive series of Dartmoor scenes were still on the market for visitors to Dartmoor. Principle among the artists' work used at this time was George Henry Jenkins Snr (1843–1914) and Alfred de Breanski Jnr (1852–1928).

J Salmon Ltd. was the oldest established postcard firm in Britain. The colour postcards that they produced were highly popular in the 1920s. Artists who produced paintings of Dartmoor for Salmon's postcards included William Henry Dyer (fl. 1890–1930), A. R Quinton (1853–1934) and Henry B. Wimbush (1858–1948). Another artist whose work was reproduced on postcards was Andrew Beer (1862–1954) and these were published by a Bristol company, Barton, Harvey & Son Ltd.

Paintings

Visitors may also have been purchasing paintings of the moor. The image of Dartmoor that some coming for the first time will have had in their minds would have been based on the GWR poster 'Glorious Devon' first used in 1925. This used a painting of Dartmoor by Frederick John Widgery (1861–1942). FJ Widgery continued painting into the 1930s and so it's likely that works by him would have been on sale in local galleries, including ones in Exeter, Torquay and Plymouth. Other artists whose paintings would also have been on sale included Charles E Brittan Jnr (1870–1949) and, in the early twenties, Bernard A Gotch (1876–1963) who painted extensively on Dartmoor in 1920 and 1921, and held a large exhibition of his work in Plymouth in 1921.[167]

Souvenirs

Representations of pixies in brass were a common tourist souvenir of Dartmoor and would have been available in many local shops. Other brass souvenirs might have included candlesticks, letter knives, door knockers and horse brasses.[168] Visitors would also have purchased pottery souvenirs, possibly from one of the firms producing studio pieces, for example Bovey Tracey Art Pottery, which opened in 1920. However, many would have sought pieces with local references possibly referencing the name of one of the places they had visited. Examples of these are the items produced by Devonmoor Art Pottery and the Stoke-on-Trent firm, WH Goss, that produced crested china from the 1880s until 1929.

[167] Tim Sandles, 'Bernard A. Gotch', *Legendary Dartmoor* (2021) <https://www.legendarydartmoor.co.uk/2021 January 30/bernard-a-gotch> [accessed 12 April 2023].
[168] Tim Sandles, 'Dartmoor Piskies', *Legendary Dartmoor* (2016) <https://www.legendarydartmoor.co.uk/2016 August 29/dartmoor-piskies> [accessed 29 March 2023].

Figure 21: R. Kernick's shop, c. 1925 (© Dartmoor Trust Archive).

Devonmoor Art Pottery was established at Liverton just before the First World War. However, production only got seriously underway in 1922 after Herford Hope took it over. A significant part of their production in the twenties was of Toby jugs in seven sizes, from one-and-a-half inches high up to six-and-a-half inches. Devonmoor's main outlet on Dartmoor was at Kernick's in Widecombe, as seen in a photograph taken around 1925 (Figure 21). The name Widecombe was added to Toby jugs and other items produced specifically for the souvenir market such as animals, cruets, houses and a pottery model of Widecombe Church. A set of seven pitchers ('grotesques') was produced representing the characters in the Widecombe Fair song. A version of a model of Ann Hathaway's Cottage in Stratford-upon-Avon, which could be used for cigarettes or sweets, was produced with a blank panel on the roof. Suitably inscribed, it was sold in Dartmoor shops as Tom Cobley's cottage!

White porcelain china was produced by Goss in a variety of shapes, ranging from cups and jugs to classical shapes. Each item was decorated with the crest and the name of the location where it would be sold. If, as at Bovey Tracey, the town didn't have a crest, a generic one was used. It was not even necessary for the item to be relevant to the town, as in the lighthouse and sailing yacht that are in the collection of Bovey Tracey Heritage Centre.

Holiday and second homes

The development of holiday and second homes on Dartmoor began well before the 1920s. With the coming of the railways, some places such as Yelverton, ten miles from Plymouth, on the western edge of Dartmoor, or Bovey Tracey, Ilsington and Lustleigh on the south-eastern corner, came within commuting distance. However, the pace of development no doubt increased after the First World War.

In the 1920s there were developments in most of the towns and villages around Dartmoor. The author of the Ward Lock's *Guide to Dartmoor* refers to 'new houses […] being built ever

closer to, and even on, the Moor proper.'[169] In Mary Tavy new houses were 'spreading up the hill that indicate her popularity'[170] and [South] Brent 'grew, [as it] reacted to the […] discovery of Dartmoor as a healthful resort of pilgrimage…'.[171]

In the Homeland Association book about Dartmoor, which ran to numerous editions, Beatrix Cresswell described new building on the north-east edge of the moor: 'Throwleigh, though larger than Gidleigh, is hardly more important, but that it finds its popularity among visitors to the moor is proved by the erection in recent years of bungalows, all of which are occupied during the summer.'[172] This development in Throwleigh, although earlier than the twenties, was something that was used in Agatha Christie's *The Sittaford Mystery*, referred to earlier. In the novel, Captain Trevelyan on his retirement, built a house for himself in Sittaford and, '… as a speculation, he had built six small bungalows, each in a quarter acre of ground, along the lane.'[173] However, these bungalows in Throwleigh were built by Willoughby Lowe in the upper part of Shilstone Lane at the beginning of the twentieth century.[174]

Firms in Torquay and Newton Abbot were advertising the availability of 'Houses, to be sold or let, Furnished or Unfurnished' in the seventeenth edition of the *Homeland Guide* published in 1921. *Country Life* carried advertisements for summer or winter lets throughout the decade.

Throughout the 1920s, a firm in Reading was advertising in their range of prefabricated buildings, 'The Dartmoor Hut'; a wooden sectional house 'containing four bedrooms, two living rooms and offices: a real home centre for the family holidays or for holiday parties […] A Holiday Home at a "Hut" price' [my underlining]. Elsewhere, the advert boasted that it would provide 'An ideal weekend retreat' or 'A cottage for your chauffeur'. [175] Whether any of these were put up on or around Dartmoor and where the name came from are open questions. Two 'furnished bungalows' in a 'large field' at Haytor were advertised in 1928 as an 'ideal camp'.[176] These may or may not have been 'Dartmoor Huts'. Although I have not been able to find any of these still surviving on Dartmoor, there are other similar buildings which may owe their origin to other firms.

A photograph exists, taken in August 1925, of a holiday home constructed in stone by Pizwell Bridge on the Wallabrook. The cottage has since been demolished.[177]

[169] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), p. 13.
[170] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 71.
[171] Eden Phillpotts, *Children of Men* (William Heinemann Ltd., 1923), p. 51.
[172] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *Dartmoor With Its Surroundings*, 17th edn (The Homeland Assn., 1925), p. 56.
[173] Agatha Christie, *The Sittaford Mystery,* 1931 (HarperCollins*,* 2017), p. 3.
[174] Michael Paget (ed), *Throwleigh: Pictures & Memories from a Dartmoor Parish* (The Throwleigh Archive, 2006), pp. 27 and 166.
[175] For example: *The Bystander*, 28 February 1923 © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 25 January 2022].
[176] Advertisement from *Western Daily Press* © British Newspaper Archive [accessed 6 June 2023].
[177] Tom Greeves, *Images of England: Dartmoor* (Tempus, 2004), p. 118.

Figure 22: Holiday cottage at Pizwell (© E. Stanbrook collection).

Although originally intended to become the family's permanent home, Castle Drogo is probably the best-known property on Dartmoor that served as a second home during the 1920s. Building of the castle began in 1911, but with work delayed during the First World War, it wasn't to be completed until 1928. However, the family began to use it as a holiday home in 1925, while retaining the family home at Wadhurst and a house they initially rented and then bought in Torquay.[178]

Reminiscences of Dartmoor

Leopold Amery, who came from a long-established Devon family, was a frequent visitor to Dartmoor, particularly Lustleigh from where his family originated. For instance, he and his family attended Sung Eucharist in Lustleigh parish church on Easter Day 1928, having spoken in London a few weeks earlier of his 'hope to set foot on old Dartmoor again and feel the springy turf beneath my feet …'.[179] In his first book of reminiscences, *In the Rain and the Sun*, he wrote about his love of walking and of Dartmoor:

> … much of what is best [of Devon] can still only be reached on foot. […] above all the pathless solitudes of the high Moor where I have often spent long days without meeting another wanderer. Despite all the modern facilities for getting to places walking still remains the best way of getting to know them, to make them part of oneself and not fleeting motion pictures. […] For sheer variety of interest and beauty the southern and eastern edge of the Moor is supreme. Here the contours of the Moor itself are boldest and the crowning rocky tors most frequent. But the bleakness of the Moor is everywhere diversified by more fertile valleys with their villages and fine churches, and intersected by the deep gorges or 'cleaves', with their luxurious vegetation, of the moorland rivers making their way down towards the lower country. The Teign from Fingle to Dunsford, the Bovey in Lustleigh Cleave, and, above all, the Dart from Dartmeet to Buckfast, offer an unrivalled feast to the eye as one looks or comes down on them from the high open grounds above.[180]

[178] Sian Evans, *Castle Drogo* (The National Trust, 2009).
[179] *Lustleigh Parish Magazine*, vol. 40 (May 1928).
[180] Leopold Charles Maurice Stennett Amery, *In the Rain and the Sun* (Hutchinson & Co., 1946), pp. 40–41.

In the summer of 1921, the composer Thomas Wood camped with friends on the banks of the River Teign. Each day, Wood went off on his own on to the moor, somewhere between Shovel Down and Tavy Head, in order to, in his words, 'think and make notes' in a large leather-bound volume of manuscript paper for what became songs for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He described the scene:

> The only tolerable position for writing in it was to lie flat and I did lie flat, shoulder-deep in heather that smelt of bloom and morning dew and peat. I had a blazer over my legs to keep away the horseflies, a groundsheet under me to keep away the damp; and ahead and below, for mile after mile, the great rolling stretches of the Moor. It lay shimmering in the heat. Bracken, and gorse, and the grass-paths that the ponies used: pools in the bog fringed round with reeds: little streams that sprang between the rocks, laughing, and spun eddies for the speckled trout to dart through; stone circles, hut circles, kistvaens, and tumbled clitters of granite reaching up the bare brown tors; all wild, untameable, and mine to look down on from my hiding-place by the stunted rowan bush, secret then secret still; and good, I found, for music.[181]

Dorothy Brown and her husband Langford lived at Kingskerswell. Most years from 1913 to 1930, she and her family took a purpose-built caravan to Dartmoor for their annual summer holiday. This continued through the years of the First World War and into the 1920s. The first caravan developed for pleasure in the UK was built in 1880 and was horse-drawn.[182] The first car-towed caravan did not enter commercial production in the UK until 1919,[183] and for many years these would have been an expensive rarity, so in 1913 Langford Brown designed his own caravan and had it built by Jury & Sons, a Kingskerswell joinery firm. This caravan, christened the 'Loiterer', was not designed for touring – it was towed to where the family wanted to camp by various methods of haulage over the years.

In 1921 they planned to camp at Heatree, Manaton, but because of 'great difficulties in getting milk', they took the 'Loiterer' to Postbridge; some of the family travelling there by car.[184] They camped near the East Dart, south of the main road, for almost a month from 26 July. Dorothy writes:

> … although it was a very dry summer and water was urgently needed everywhere, we had almost continuous rain at Post Bridge and it was so chilly we lived in woolies [sic] and it was never warm enough to bathe and Theo and I only paddled two or three times. Langford fished a little and caught delicious little trout, but the river sank too quickly to allow much fishing. We found a great deal of white heather and had many very happy tramps over the Moor.[185]

They returned to Postbridge in August the following year. On the way there, before the lorry towing the 'Loiterer' reached Moretonhampstead, they met a charabanc, whose driver refused

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[181] Thomas Wood, *True Thomas* (Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1936), pp. 277–78.
[182] Marcin, 'The History of Caravanning in a Nutshell', *CampRest.com* (2020). <https://camprest.com/en/blog/motorhome-caravan-news/the-history-of-caravanning-in-a-nutshell> [accessed 10 August 2020].
[183] David Guest, 'Celebrating 100 Years of the Car-towed Caravan', *Camping & Caravanning* (2019) <https://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/magazine/1317/celebrating-100-years-car-towed-caravan> [accessed 10 August 2020].
[184] Dorothy and Theo Brown (ed), *Family Holidays Around Dartmoor: From the Logbook of 'The Loiterer', 1913–1930* (Devonshire Assn. 1995), p. 51.
[185] Ibid., p. 55.

to reverse, at least not until there were nine cars backed up one way and five the other.[186] Again, the weather was wet and cold.

In 1923 they decided to holiday at Lowerdown, Bovey Tracey for the month of June and were rewarded with warm, dry weather:

> It was one of the prettiest places we have ever camped in with masses of foxgloves and pretty grasses all round. There was a dear little stream running close by the Caravan, where Theo and I paddled, and Langford made a little water-wheel which ran beautifully. […] Our milk and butter was brought daily to us from Major Hole's farm, and the butcher and baker came several times in the week.[187]

In July 1924 they chose to camp near the Cherry Brook at Powder Mills. This was another cold wet summer and they complained that they were not near the farm from where they collected their milk and mail.[188]

In 1925 they were again at Lowerdown. By this time, they had installed electric light in the caravan powered from a battery that could supply it for a month.[189]

After a trip to Wiltshire in 1926, they returned to Postbridge in 1927, camping in Drift Lane. The weather was again poor: 'Rain, rain, and yet rain, and tremendous winds.' On this visit Dorothy remarks that they saw 'two other caravans' on the moor.[190]

In 1928 they camped at Teigngrace but took trips onto the moor in their car.[191] After a motoring holiday in the north of England in 1929, they returned with the 'Loiterer' to Lowerdown in 1930. Although they only stayed for ten days, for once the weather was good.[192] Incidentally, on each trip they were near enough to their home for servants to bring out vegetables and other supplies, as well as bringing the car over for day trips around the moor.

Beatrice Chase, the pseudonym of Olive Katherine Parr (1874–1955), celebrated Dartmoor in many of her writings, from the landscape itself, its tors and bogs, to the changing light at a 'cloudless summer dawn' to evening twilight: 'How can we say whether the moor is lovelier in sunlight or moonlight?'[193]

She became well known through her writings. However, this fame brought problems with it. In her book, *Pages of Peace from Dartmoor*, published in 1920 she wrote about these difficulties:

> … in consequence of the behaviour of some trippers we are compelled to erect deplorable notices in order to live at all during the tripper season, otherwise we should have to pay one man full wages to do nothing else but control them.[194]

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[186] Ibid., p. 57.
[187] Ibid., pp. 61–63.
[188] Ibid., p. 66.
[189] Ibid., p. 67.
[190] Ibid., p. 74.
[191] Ibid., p. 75.
[192] Ibid., pp. 76–77.
[193] Beatrice Chase, *The Dartmoor Window Again* (Haldon Books, 1918), p. 197.
[194] Beatrice Chase, *Pages of Peace from Dartmoor* (Longmans, Green, 1920), p. 113 [accessed via Internet Archive, 22 June 2020].

After deploring the behaviour of the tourists, Chase goes on to examine why the 'vulgar, coarser-natured type' of visitor comes to Dartmoor in the first place and she concludes that:

> … they come because Dartmoor attracts them [and] therefore they cannot be wholly coarse and vulgar […] They care enough to come in the first instance. After getting here they care enough to stay. They care enough to come again and they unquestionably love it whilst they are here.[195]

In an article for *The National Geographic Magazine* an American, Herbert Corey, described the fifty days he spent touring Devon in 1928.[196] Although he and his companion enjoyed their visit to Devon and there were pleasant aspects of the time they spent on Dartmoor, he did not relish driving on Dartmoor's roads:

> … on that first day on the moor we drove as though the Devil were after us. The place is unwholesome and terrible […]. Of course, Dartmoor is beautiful; yet it was not so for us. It was a nightmare and unforgettable, lonely and sad. The little car panted faithfully up hill after hill. At the top of each we saw just what we had seen from the pinnacle of the hill before – an unending sweep of hills and valleys. Always the hills crowned with gray [sic] rock remains of a ruined dwelling. Here and there were the monuments of a people dead so long there is no memory of them in all the world, and often, in the empty valleys, patches of poisonous green.
>
> The man who has whisked across Dartmoor in a fast car, driven by a chauffeur whose stolidity is assurance, may think we suffered from nerves. So may that man who has lived with Dartmoor long enough to love it. To me it seemed a granite hell. The roads are not dangerous unless something breaks; then, any road is dangerous. But one finds himself pressing on involuntarily. Suppose the little car should grow tired of this infernal sequence of climbs and drops and kinks? Suppose that a fog should come and blind one with its woolly blanket? Suppose one should be deserted on Dartmoor at night? I tell you, I was afraid.
>
> … we drove in fear of chars-à-bancs. Pronounced *charrybang*, for the most part. They rumbled down the roads and tossed our little car aside like a ship in a bow wave. Much of our driving, it seems in quite inaccurate retrospect, was in second gear. When we were not blindly diving between tall hedges, down hills with hairpin turns toward cockeyed ditches and flocks of sheep, we were howling up again in low. In the end, gradients lost their terror. It was the narrowness that affrighted.

In Princetown he and his companion were again afraid: '… this Dartmoor prison is cold and bare. Drivers are directed not to stop their cars in the vicinity and holiday-makers may not use their cameras.' After describing the possibility of sinking in one of Dartmoor's bogs or being spooked by a ghost, he goes on to say: 'We feared the moor. Not even the beery mutterings of the drinkers in the Three Crowns Inn at Chagford reassured us.'

Corey, despite describing Chagford as 'that white, shining village on a furze-clad knoll, with the Teign at its feet', thought that its description as 'that loveliest of villages' was 'absurd'. He went on: 'Devon is full of villages which are equally the loveliest' and he did describe the hamlet of Stiniel, near Chagford as '…the most charming hamlet in Devonshire.' He was also captivated by the walk to Fingle Bridge, which was one of the 'places of sylvan delight [in] entrancing Devonshire'.

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[195] Ibid., pp. 120–121.

[196] Herbert Corey, 'Down Devon Lanes', *The National Geographic Magazine*, vol. LV, no. 5 (1929).

Mrs Dorothea Grant remembers coming from her home in Exmouth to holiday in Lustleigh when she was a child in the early 1920s:

> We used to go for picnics at the weir which I imagine must have been on the River Bovey. My aunt's idea of a picnic was to send hampers in advance by the garden boy. I don't remember what we ate but such things as cutlery and salt cellars were included.[197]

Although visitors' books have rarely survived, where they do, they can also provide insights into how Dartmoor was appreciated. A charming poem was entered in the visitors' book belonging to a house in Lustleigh, named *Grovelah*, in August 1921 by a M. F. Lewis,

> In Lustleigh there's a little house
> Which is a great delight
> For it's quite full of kindness
> And pleasant to the sight
>
> I always think with pleasure
> Of the Devon hills and streams
> But in the centre of my heart
> The name of "Grovelah" gleams.[198]

Into the 1930s

'Dartmoor is in a state of transition.' These words introduce the reader to the moor at the beginning of the 1930s:

> From being a land of romance and mystery known to but a few, it is becoming a popular holiday-ground, the main features of which are familiar to thousands. Before motors conquered distance and defied hills only the frontiers of the Moor, so to speak, were open to those who were not good walkers. Since the war development has been rapid, and as roads have improved traffic has increased; in former quiet places where motor coaches most do congregate "buskers" now entertain the crowd. In the general interest it has been necessary to close some of the steeper, narrower roads to the larger-sized motor coaches, but the ordinary light car is ubiquitous, and it is now possible to motor almost within sight even of the elusive Cranmere.[199]

As we move into the 1930s it can safely be said that the modern era of tourism on Dartmoor had arrived. In 1933, for example, the *Western Times* reported on preparations for Easter:

> It is told that the Moorland Hotel at Haytor has added a bathing pool to its attractions, and that the Forest Inn at Hexworthy is constructing a tennis court. Electric light has been installed in the Churchhouse Inn at Holne...[200]

The author of the second edition of *The Dartmoor Guide*, published between 1932 and 1934, reports that:

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[197] Extract from letters from Mrs Dorothea Grant (August 1991), Lustleigh Community Archive [LUSSA 2009.431].
[198] Lustleigh Community Archive.
[199] *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Dartmoor*, 8th edn (Ward Lock & Co., 1932–33), pp. 12–13.
[200] Accessed from Legendary Dartmoor Facebook post (10 April 2020).

> Many changes have taken place during the last few years, and well-known places of interest have been closed, while new ones have taken their places. Trees have been demolished or thinned out, roads have superseded tracks and paths, and houses have been erected even on the Moor itself. In spite of all these signs of progress and advancement, however, Dartmoor retains its charm and beauty, and is becoming more and more popular as a holiday resort.[201]

And finally, in the *Beautiful England* book about Dartmoor, possibly written at the end of the decade, Arthur Salmon, using words that echoed comments written by him in 1913 concludes his description of the moor with these words:

> When a district is haunted by tourist and artist, when cars and brakes unload crowds of chattering sightseers, something of the outside world comes with them; and modernism has other more subtle avenues of approach. The cheap daily paper penetrates to these solitudes, and brings with it other things that are cheap. […] But the beauty of the moorland changes not, and it is its beauty that is our real concern.[202]

[201] *The Dartmoor Guide*, 2nd edn (1932–34), p. 5.
[202] Arthur L Salmon, E. W. Haslehurst (illustrations), *Dartmoor (Beautiful England)*, (Blackie & Son, 1932?), pp. 63–64.

APPENDIX 1

Motor coach and charabanc firms running tours to Dartmoor

(Some were also running service routes)

Great Western Railway linking with trains	
Tor Bus Service	Haytor
Blue Cars	Ashburton
Bulpin's	Newton Abbot
Ball's Ltd	Newton Abbot
Greenslade's	Exeter
Grey Cars Torpedo Cars	Torquay and Paignton
Fleet Cars	Torquay
Cawdles (Royal Blue Coaches)	Torquay
Reliance Cars	Paignton
Hopkin's & Sons - Blue Moorland Cars	Dawlish
WH Chubb & Son	Ilfracombe
The Blue & Grey Coaches	Ilfracombe
Scarlet Pimpernel Cars	Ilfracombe
T Truscott & Sons	Tavistock and Plymouth
John Blackwell	Tavistock
Maid of the Mountains	Bristol
Yellow Car Co., Ltd.	Plymouth

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