



Registered Charity No 1109196

TEACHERS' INFORMATION PACK

BELLEVER FOREST & LAKEHEAD GRAZING



Prepared by the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust
Registered Charity No. 1109196

'Saving Dartmoor Ponies Through Innovative Education'

CONTENTS:

Preparing your visit

The Countryside Classroom

Bellever & Lakehead Grazing

Teachers Briefing Notes

PREPARING YOUR VISIT:

Thank you for your interest in visiting Bellever and Lakehead Grazing. The Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust (DPHT) is a registered charity; its primary aim is to preserve the remaining herds of indigenous Dartmoor ponies remaining on the commons of Dartmoor. The DPHT runs a herd of Dartmoor Ponies on the moorland areas of Bellever.

During your visit you will learn how these tough ponies are integral to the management of the Dartmoor landscape. Pupils and participants will also discover how Dartmoor was formed and

how Bellever, which sits in the heart of the National Park, has changed over the past 3 millions years through the influence of weathering and man.

This pack will help you to prepare a successful programme tailored to suit the needs of your group.

FARM INFORMATION

Farm name: Bellever & Lakehead Grazing

Farm address: Bellever, Postbridge, Devon, PL20 6TU

Contact person: The name of your guide will be agreed prior to the event on your booking form

Contact address: Parke Estate, Bovey Tracey

Post code: TQ13 9JQ

Tel no: 01626 833234

Email admin@dpht.co.uk or cherryaw22@gmail.com

Website address: www.dpht.co.uk

Booking a visit:

In the first instance, please telephone the DPHT Centre on 01626 833234. **Visits are free** but you will need to organise and pay for transport. We will send a confirmation booking form once a date has been agreed.

Cancellation arrangements:

If you are unable to carry out your visit, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can make alternative arrangements.

How to get here: Bellever is signposted from the B3121 Postbridge. Directions will be sent with your booking form

On arrival:

Your guide leader will be waiting for you at the agreed time and place

Facilities:

Bellever is open throughout the year.

Suitability for people with restricted mobility:

Hard surface parking area

Surfaced paths

Toilet for the disabled

Parking available for:

Minibuses, Cars, Coaches

Other facilities:

Toilets / hand washing facilities

Picnic area

The visit:

Welcome

Health & Safety requirements

Facilities – toilets, etc

An introductory talk about Bellever and surrounding area.

Guided walk of Bellever and Lakehead Grazing

Question and Answer session

Final discussion and learning outcomes

Evaluation Form:

This visit is provided free of charge. In order for us to be able to claim a payment as part of our *Higher Level Stewardship scheme* we require that you complete an evaluation form which we will provide. Please take a few moments to complete this form after the visit and hand it to us before you leave. Additional feedback regarding the visit is also appreciated. Thank you.

Complaints procedure

If you have any complaints regarding your visit please inform us so that we are able to improve our service.

Risk assessment

We recommend a pre-visit to our site, during which you can carry out a risk assessment and become familiar with the site. Any specific requirements or needs of the visiting group can be discussed. A copy of the DPHT's risk assessment is available on request.

Health & safety

We comply with Health and Safety Regulations. However, it is important that all pupils and supervising adults are aware of the correct Health and Safety guidelines.

Clothing

Make sure that pupils wear appropriate outdoor clothing, including sturdy outdoor shoes (not sandals). We suggest all participants wear warm waterproofs in the winter months and a light waterproof, sun block and hat in the summer months.

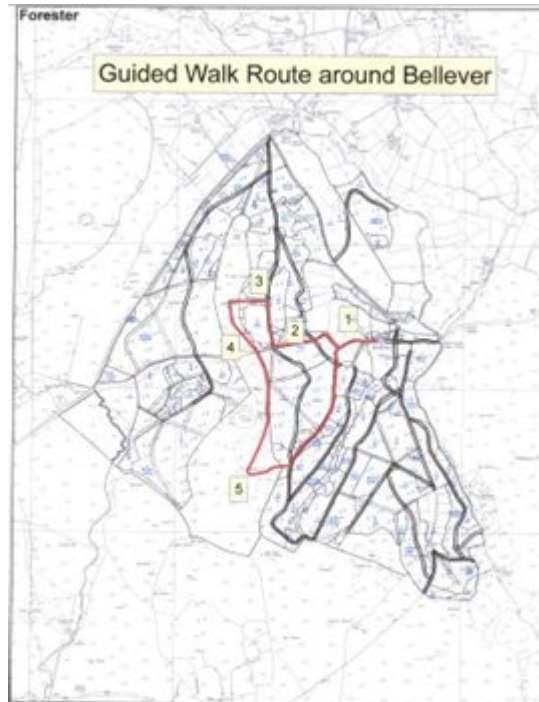
Behaviour

Teachers/group leaders are responsible for the pupil's behaviour throughout the visit.

Ponies have survived on Dartmoor for over 4,000 years

THE COUNTRYSIDE CLASSROOM

The countryside offers an invaluable teaching resource. Your visit can be used to teach all aspects of the curriculum through learning about farming and the countryside. We hope that this information pack will give you ideas to inspire your pupils and get the most out of your visit.



Bellever is an area of conifer plantation and moorland situated south of Postbridge between the B3212 and the East River Dart.

Topics of particular interest include conservation grazing, moorland management, history of the Dartmoor Pony, forestry, natural history and an abundance of prehistoric stone rows, cairns and settlement sites.

Talking points during a 2hr guided walk
(information is delivered at a level to suit the year group)

- 1.The hamlet of Bellever – Medieval Long House**
- 2.Bronze Age Settlement - Cairn and Forestry**
- 3.Bronze Age Kist – previous habitants of Bellever**
- 4.The Lichway and Conservation Grazing**
- 5.Bellever Tor – Tor formation and Ordinance Survey trig point**



Bronze Age Huts or Roundhouses

Can we cater for the specific learning requirements of your group?

The Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust has several years experience in working with a range of schools groups, special needs students and young people with behavioral issues. We are able to offer a bespoke visit for your group ensuring the learning outcomes relate to the National Curriculum.

How your visit to Bellever can link to the National Curriculum Subject Areas For Years 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

English	Speaking and Listening	Question and Answer session
Science	Life processes and living things in their environment	How conservation grazing benefits plants and wildlife.
History	Knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past	Learning about the history of Bellever from Bronze Age to Modern day.
Geography	Knowledge and understanding of places Knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable tourism development	Reading an OS map and following the guided route Learning about the local economy at Bellever i.e farming, forestry,
Physical education	Knowledge and understanding of fitness and health	A guided walk around some fairly strenuous areas
Citizenship	Developing skills of enquiry and communication Developing skills of participation and responsible action	Question and answer session Working as a group on an area of rough moorland can be a challenge in itself

BELLEVER & LAKEHEAD GRAZING

The DPHT rents 82 hectares of moorland surrounding Bellever Tor. This offers the Trust outstanding opportunities to develop its management plan to preserve the Dartmoor pony. The site comprises some of the best heather heathland on Dartmoor and an abundance of archaeological features. The land is a wildlife haven, which benefits from pony grazing. The Trust wrote a five year management plan in February 2020 to encourage more biodiversity, particularly ground nesting birds. We have cut a number of glades in the thick vegetation either side of Bellever Tor. You may observe our herd of Dartmoor Ponies grazing the thick overgrowth around the tor or further down on Lakehead conservation grazing.

Lakehead Grazing – 82ha of moorland heath.

The site enables the DPHT to mature young stock which will improve their value. But, most exciting is the opportunity to run a protected breeding program for vulnerable herds if it is felt numbers of breeding stock on the commons drops significantly.

Our main objective will be to manage the pony herds, maintain the heathland, and conserve the streams and wet areas.

Our aims are to maintain a reservoir of Heritage Ponies (native Dartmoor ponies) which can be returned to the moor for the benefit of our children's children, practice best land management at all times, and provide educational / recreational tours for visitors.

After a successful application to Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme the DPHT was granted a HLS grant (Higher Level Stewardship) in February 2008. This was renewed in 2019 and now runs on an annual rolling contract.

The aims of the Higher Level Stewardship?

The five primary objectives of Higher Level Stewardship are:

Wildlife conservation

Maintenance and enhancement of landscape quality and character

Natural resource protection

Protection of the historic environment

Promotion of public access and understanding of the countryside

There are two secondary objectives where spin-off benefits are sought from management designed to achieve the five primary objectives. These are:



Flood management

Conservation of genetic resources

The DPHT has agreed to carry out a range of objectives (options) in relation to our HLS agreement. Below is one of our main options.

Restoration of moorland

The DPHT is paid an annual amount to help towards the maintenance and, where necessary, restoration of moorland habitats to benefit upland wildlife, retain historic features and strengthen the landscape character.

The DPHT is permitted to graze 26 Dartmoor Ponies on a continual basis.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

Bellever Forest is a 540 Ha block consisting of 297 Ha, of productive, mainly coniferous woodland with the remainder being agricultural land and open space. It is the second largest of the Forestry Commission (FC) woodlands that make up the 1568 Ha managed by the FC within Dartmoor National Park.

The land was acquired in 1930/31 on the sale of Bellever Farm to the FC by the Duchy of Cornwall, on its failure to find a tenant. At the same time the FC purchased both Fernworthy and Brimpts. Planting had been started on all of these sites by the Duchy, with Bellever being completed by the FC just after the Second World War.

Most of Bellever is above 300m with the highest point being Bellever Tor itself at 400m. This means that the wind can be a problem throughout the forest.

Management of the forest

Here at Bellever and the other woodlands on the high moor the main objective was timber production and the choice of tree was Sitka Spruce. This is not a native species, originating

from North America, but is ideally suited to the rigours of the moor and is now the most important commercial tree species in North and West England, Scotland and a large part of Wales.

Traditionally trees were planted about 2m apart, tended and when big enough, thinned, usually at 20/25 years old. Thinning continued, usually at 5 year intervals until having reached 50-60 years of age crops were clearfelled. Although thinning with eventual clearfell is still part of our management practice, we are moving, in some parts of the forest, to a lower impact approach by removing the clearfelling part of the process and regenerating these areas through continuous cover systems. This is aided by the fact that Sitka Spruce seeds freely and sites are generally free from competing vegetation.

Bellever forest is growing at the rate of approx 5000 cubic metres /or metric tonnes each year. Not all of this is of a harvestable age but it gives an idea how quickly the forest grows.

Today thinning and felling remains essential to woodland management but has become increasingly subsidiary in its importance to the benefits that the forest can bring in environmental, economic and social terms. It has been calculated that all woodlands in the South West are worth £575 million to the region's economy through tourism and other public benefits. Timber income is just a small part of that figure.

In the future the Forestry Commission's aim is to gradually produce woodland that is more diverse in terms of wildlife habitats and landscape with increasing benefits of health, recreation and education for the public, including the socially excluded and less able.

Bellever Clapper Bridge

Clapper bridges, which are a feature of Dartmoor, were probably built by farm settlers and are mostly on the line of Packhorse tracks. They are built of huge slabs of unwrought granite laid upon piers and buttresses of the same stone. Bellever Clapper bridge is very typical but the best example is at nearby Postbridge.

Recreation

Bellever is the most widely used of our moorland woods in terms of recreation. Where the FC own the land, as at Bellever, it is open to the public. There are three car parks, two being located on the western side, just off the B3212, with the largest and most heavily used situated close to the East Dart river at Bellever. Here we find an attractive mix of open space, water, woodland and public facilities and is the most heavily used area of the forest. The car park is also the start and finish of one of the two FC walks (red) in Bellever. The other, longer walk (yellow), begins and ends at the Postbridge car park and takes in Bellever Tor. In general recreation tends to be low key, mostly walking, cycling, and orienteering etc. although we do permit one motor rally during the spring of the year.

Wildlife

There are increasing roe deer numbers with the occasional fallow and red deer. Over fifty different species of bird live in the forest, ranging from Siskins and Crossbills through the more common ones including Warblers, Redpoll, Blackcap etc to predators such as Buzzards and kestrels plus the less common Hobby and Goshawk. Also we have seen increasing numbers of nightjars occupying the areas where the trees have been felled once the vegetation and trees begin to grow again. Butterflies are present during the summer but tend to be migratory rather than permanent.

TEACHERS BRIEFING NOTES

Bellever Through The Ages

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Students will also discover how Bellever, which sits in the heart of the National Park has changed over the past 3 millions years, through the influence of weathering and man.

Ponies

The ponies roaming apparently freely on the open moor all belong to different farmers. The foals are born in the spring and early summer. The herds stay on the moor all the year round, but in autumn they are rounded up, the young to be identified and marked by their owners. Many are then sold at the pony markets. The first written record of the sturdy Dartmoor breed was in AD 1012. In the early years of the 20th century Dartmoor ponies were crossed with other breeds to make them more suitable for work in mines and for other purposes, so many of those seen on the moor are not traditional Dartmoors. More recently, the DPHT has been involved in a scheme encouraging farmers to breed traditional-type Dartmoor ponies. Ponies are generally selective grazers; they have the ability to switch to less palatable forage when necessary and with the season. They play a particularly important role in the grazing of purple moor grass in the spring and western gorse in the late winter.

Tors

About 250 million years ago liquid rock (Magma) rose from the centre of the earth and cooled under the surface as a granite mass, which today we know as Dartmoor. Over the next 200 million years through erosion the granite has been exposed to form Tors.

Early man

There has been human activity on Dartmoor for 12,000 years. At one time almost the whole Moor was covered with trees, but in the Middle Stone Age (circa 10,000 – 4,500 BC) small groups of wandering, hunting and gathering people made clearings in the forest. Animals were encouraged to graze in the clearings, which could then be hunted more easily. The remains of flint tools used by these groups have occasionally been found on the fringes of Dartmoor.

In the New Stone Age (circa 4,500 – 2,300 BC), a more settled way of life emerged; in the lowlands farms were created and animals and crops domesticated. On Dartmoor further clearance of trees took place.

Most of the remains of early man that we can find on Dartmoor today are from the Bronze Age (circa 2,300 – 700 BC). They lived in simple round houses, known as hut circles and built a variety of ceremonial monuments on the moor such as stone rows, stone circles and buried their dead under stone mounds (cairns).

Towards the end of the Bronze Age the weather on Dartmoor became colder and wetter. The soil became acidic, causing grass and crops to grow less easily, which made Dartmoor a less pleasant place to live. So man moved off the high parts of the moor to live in the low-lying areas.

Medieval Bellever

Man returned to the high moor in the early Middle Ages also known as the Medieval Period (10th century). They built rectangular houses, known as Longhouses and farmed the surrounding land. Longhouses were used to accommodate both the farmers and the animals under one roof. From about 1300 AD the climate became cold again and crops started failing. This, along with the Black Death, which was sweeping across the country led man to leave the high moor. Man slowly returned, and most of the land at this time was owned by one of the three Abbeys at Buckfast, Buckland and Tavistock. Much of the land was used for sheep farming with wool becoming a very important commodity. Dartmoor later became a very prosperous place through tin mining, and remained so right up to 1920, when the last tin mine closed.

Bellever Today (last 100 years)

Today farming, forestry and tourism are the main industries in Bellever.

The hamlet of Bellever is inhabited by 35 people and consists of a farm, which has been here since medieval times, a Youth Hostel, which was built in a disused barn in 1934, and 13 houses, which were built in the 1950's for the forestry workers. The forest which surrounds us was first planted in 1924 by the Duchy of Cornwall and later managed by the forestry commission. The trees are harvested every 40 – 50 years and mainly used for making fencing or are pulped for paper. The surrounding moorland is grazed by cattle, ponies, and sheep. But it is also a very popular tourist destination. Thousands of people each year walk in the area and climb on Bellever Tor, which is 433m (1453 ft) above sea level. On top of Bellever Tor is a Triangulation Pillar (trig point), one of 6557 around the UK and was used by Ordnance Survey from 1936 – 1962 for surveying the surrounding land and creating the many maps we still use today.

Additional Learning resources

The Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust – www.dpht.co.uk

The Dartmoor National Park Authority – www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk

The Forestry Commission – www.forestry.gov.uk

Bellever Youth Hostel – www.yha.org.uk



An excellent example of a chambered tomb with a stone row at Grid Ref SX 646 776.



Siskin Female Roe Deer Common Buzzard