

BRANSCOMBE PROJECT HISTORY SNIPS

Barbara Farquharson

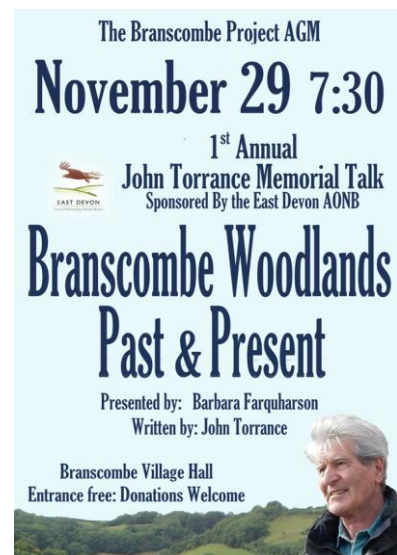
Dear People,

There hasn't been time this month to write a proper *History Snips* so I'm using this opportunity to tell you what the Branscombe Project is hoping to do in the coming year.

By the time this Parish Newsletter goes to press, we'll have had the Celebration for John Torrance in the village hall. Some of you will have come to the Celebration and others to the Exhibition, and I hope very much that it's let you to catch a glimpse of a remarkable man.

Chris Woodruff who runs the East Devon AONB wanted to honour John and suggested that the AONB inaugurate and fund *An Annual John Torrance Talk*. This seemed like a wonderful idea – and something that would have given John great pleasure.

So – on **November 29th** we'll hold the Project AGM (which those of you who come regularly will know takes place in record time); then Chris Woodruff will introduce the **first Annual John Torrance Talk**. As it happens, last year John had prepared a winter talk on **Branscombe Woodlands, Past & Present**. It was kyboshed by Lockdown. His talk will become the first talk, and I'll attempt to read it in his place.



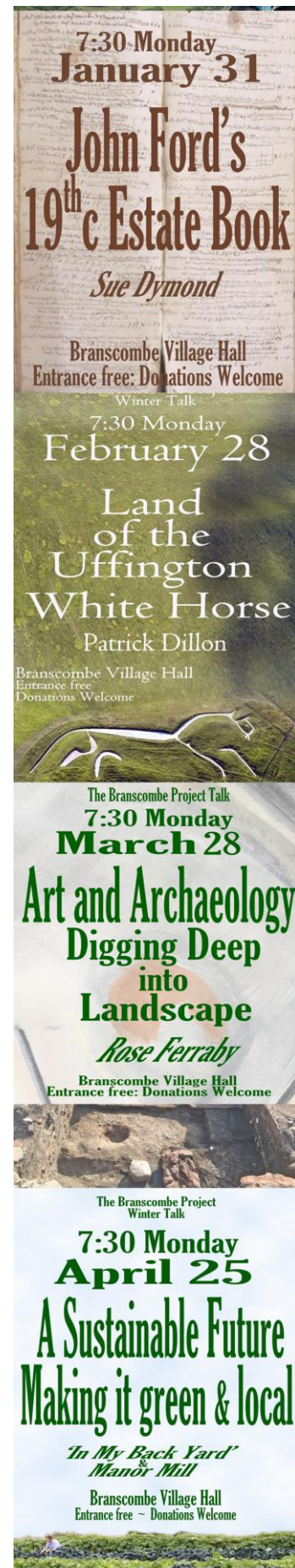
John had also prepared some Woodland boards for last year's Easter exhibition. That too was cancelled, so now the boards will go up alongside the talk.

After that, and starting in January, we'll continue with the Winter Talks. Two of these are ones held over from last year. On **January 31st** Sue Dymond will talk about **John Ford's Estate Book**. These accounts provide a wonderful insight into running an estate and home in Branscombe in the first part of the nineteenth century.

On **March 28th** Rose Ferraby, well-known archaeologist *and* artist, will talk about **Art and Archaeology – Digging Deep into a Landscape**. She'll talk about some of the projects she's worked on, including making images for the British Museum, working with poets to think about Bronze Age barrows, and painting the peat of the Mesolithic.

There'll also be two new talks. Patrick Dillon will talk about **The Land of the Uffington White Horse**. The White Horse is a huge hill figure created about three and a half thousand years ago on a spectacular stretch of chalk escarpment overlooking the Upper Thames Valley. Current archaeological thinking has it that the figure is a sun-horse image, tracking the passage of the sun through the sky. But why was this *particular* place chosen? Drawing on cultural traditions from the steppes and plains of central Asia, and the ecology of pasturelands in Europe, Patrick thinks he has an answer. The talk will be illustrated with remarkable new drone photography by Hedley Thorne.

The last talk will be on **A Sustainable**



Future: Making it Green & Local. Last year, before Lockdown, we'd talked with Laura and Jon (Bulstone Springs), Joe and George (Elbow Farm), Jenny and Ian (Natural Branscombe), and Nicky Westlake (Manor Mill) about small-holdings and organic farming in Branscombe and Beer. We'd also talked about small-holdings and bio-diversity with Rob Skinner from the National Trust and Chris Woodruff and Pete Youngman from the AONB, and we'd put together an exhibition. One of the questions that emerged was how to work with the local community. Then came Lockdown and suddenly the need to service local communities became urgent. There'd always been an intention to create a cooperative, now it became a reality and 'In My Back Yard' got under way. Like everything else, last year's exhibition had been shelved, and so, for the last of the winter talks, the exhibition will go up, and all the people that we'd originally talked with will give us a first-hand account of the effect of Covid and Lockdown.

So there we are - a mixture of talks, old and new, combined with rotating exhibitions. Of course Covid may create more problems, but we very much hope that we'll be able to keep going and that you'll join us in the hall.