12. Practical Work

12.1 Re-erecting boundary stones

As part of the boundary stone project, it was agreed that every effort would be made to re-erect all the boundary stones that were discovered lying down or leaning at an acute angle. In most cases these stones have been used by cattle as rubbing posts. The animals' continuous trampling around the stones had lead to hollows being formed that filled with water, while the sheer weight of the animals was enough to push over the boundary stones.

To date, the project team has discovered nineteen boundary stones lying down or leaning at an acute angle, or these twelve have been re-erected, giving priority to those which are more accessible, while further stones will be re-erected during the summer of 2006. With the current grazing regulations that restrict the number of cattle on the moors and their removal during winter months, the team hopes that once re-erected these boundary stones will not be threatened to such an extent by the cattle in the future.

All the boundary stones that were found lying down were examined and the letters on them identified so that when they were set up, the correct alignment could be achieved. In some cases, where they constitute part of a row of boundary stones, this has been easy; however with isolated examples, more documentary research has been needed to establish their alignment.

Another problem has been that some of the sites have been so boggy or marshy that it has been difficult to find stable ground or indeed stones suitable to block the bottom of the boundary stones. On Newton Downs, boundary stone no. 143/3 was set up on a peaty, stone-less site, while when the team dug the hole for boundary stone no. 144/13 on the boundary between Greenbarrow Downs and Manor Common, it was through almost pure China Clay.

All of the boundary stones have been set up with the help of volunteers, aided with hand tools, ropes and blocks; only one stone required mechanical means.

12.2 Naming the Commons

The second part of the practical work was to employ a local stonemason to carve the names of each common on a suitable granite boulder. These boulders were identified during the survey of the boundary stones. The idea was that each name should be discreetly carved onto the granite to identify the common, but should not be too intrusive. A list of the locations of each stone with their national grid reference can be found in the appendices.