

The Three Hares, A Curiosity Worth Regarding

Tom Greeves Sue Andrew Chris Chapman



I am writing to you as your name and contact details are on our private mailing list regarding an expression of interest in the above title...

At Chagford Show in the summer of 2023 I met up with a friend who is a well-known bookseller here in Devon. He told me that in the previous year he had sold two second-hand copies of our book, one for £300, the other for an even greater sum. He asked if I had any left in stock? I replied "I'm afraid not, it's long out of print." As I left the tent the benefit of hindsight started to spoil my day. If we had priced it correctly in the first place, we would have had the funds for a reprint. A review in New Scientist led to an interview with Sue on the BBC World Service, and before we knew it the book was being posted to all corners of the globe and it soon sold out.

Since then we have tried to find a publisher to take over the title, but because the book is deemed to be academic, we have not been able to find one, despite having a long list of people who would like a copy.

Given that the cost of a reprint is out of our reach, in 2024 we released the title as a downloadable PDF e-book @ **£75.00 GBP**.

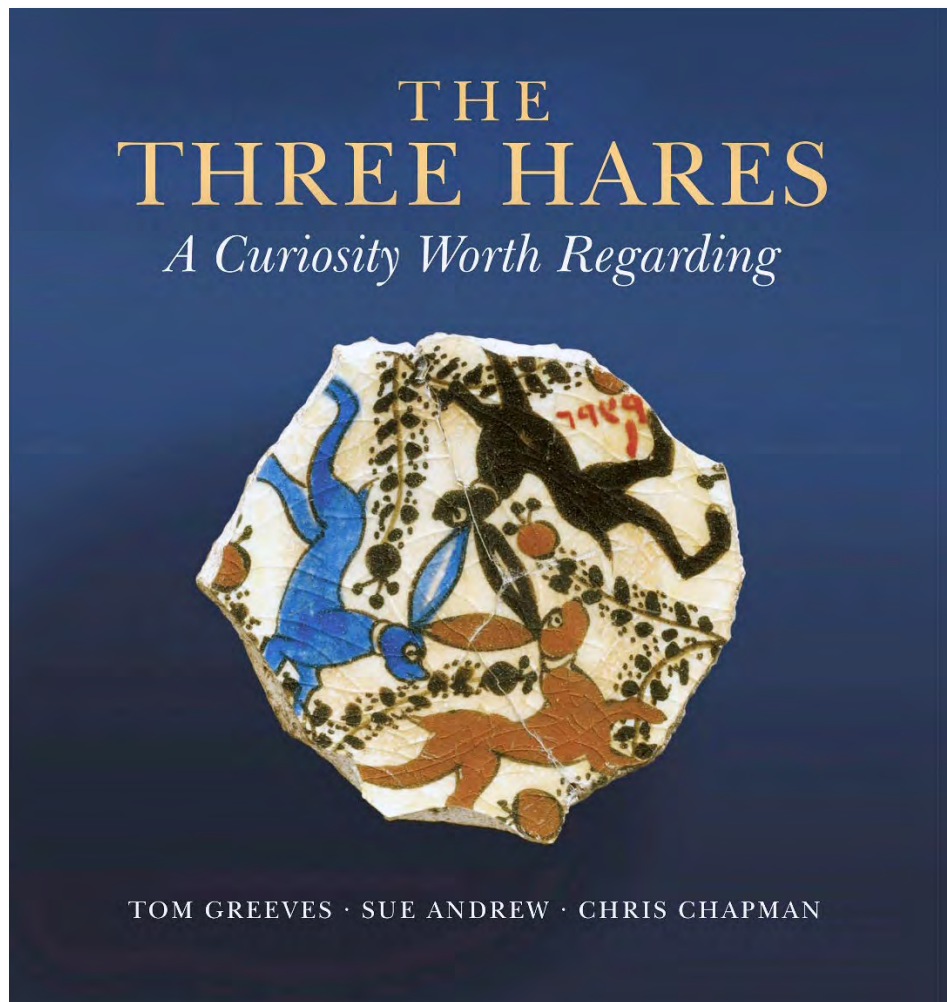
If this is of interest, I have inserted details of how to purchase, together with a sample of the personalised bookplate.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

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The Three Hares - A Curiosity Worth Regarding

Tom Greeves, Sue Andrew and Chris Chapman

with contributions from David Singmaster, Laurie Smith and Richard Westcott

From fifteenth-century rural churches in deepest Devon to sixth-century cave temples on the edge of the Gobi Desert in China, this book follows its three authors – Tom Greeves, Sue Andrew and Chris Chapman – over a period of twenty-five years or more, on the tantalising trail of a mysterious medieval motif. The motif – three hares running in a circle sharing three ears which form a triangle at the centre of the design – is a paradox, for although only three ears are depicted each beast has two.

Along the way, a modern Devon myth is exposed, and the Three Hares in the sacred art of Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism are explored, and tentatively explained, before the trail leads into the Islamic world, and the great Mongol Empire. The creative spirit which gave form to the Three Hares in the medieval period, and which survived conflict and conquest, manifests itself in modern times and the inspirational work of contemporary craftspeople is presented.

Contributions from specialist authors on puzzles, geometry, and number bring the book full circle. The book is richly illustrated with photographs of people and place, and of exquisite, rare and precious artefacts held in private collections. Unusually, the book also gives a valuable insight into the photographic method.

Peter Beacham OBE, *former Heritage Protection Director for English Heritage*, writes:

This book is a revelation. What begins as a personal quest of the three authors to discover more about a curious motif found in the medieval roofs of some modest Devon churches develops into an unexpected odyssey, sustained over decades, which takes them across continents and into many different cultures and faiths. Exploring beyond ever widening horizons as they pursue the extraordinarily diverse manifestations of this humble yet haunting image, their tale is rich in human encounter and cultural discovery, diligently researched, thoughtfully and engagingly told, and beautifully illustrated.

e-book, 370 pages including jacket, 326 illustrations

Price: £75.00

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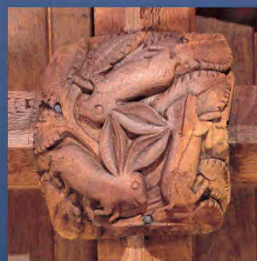
LIZ MIALl

Artists Proof, THREE HARES, SNOWBOUND by Andrew Seaby

THE THREE HARES



Three Hares oak boss, Spreyton – chancel



Three Hares oak boss, South Tawton, Devon

THIS BOOK IS A REVELATION. What begins as a personal quest of the three authors to discover more about a curious motif found in the medieval roofs of some modest Devon churches develops into an unexpected odyssey, sustained over decades, which takes them across continents and into many different cultures and faiths. Exploring beyond ever widening horizons as they pursue the extraordinarily diverse manifestations of this humble yet haunting image, their tale is rich in human encounter and cultural discovery, diligently researched, thoughtfully and engagingly told, and beautifully illustrated. And in the telling, their story becomes something more, an affirmation of our shared humanity, of things like the three hares' ears which bind us together.

PETER BEACHAM OBE

e-book

£75.00

The Daily Telegraph, Saturday July 3rd, 2004

Saturday 9th September 2006

VOSGES

Partie de chasse internationale

Trois lièvres reliés par les oreilles, trois Anglais parcourant le monde en quête du mystérieux symbole et un Spinalien qui chasse le même gibier. Etrange coïncidence.



Michel Terrier et Sue Andrew : débat de spécialistes.



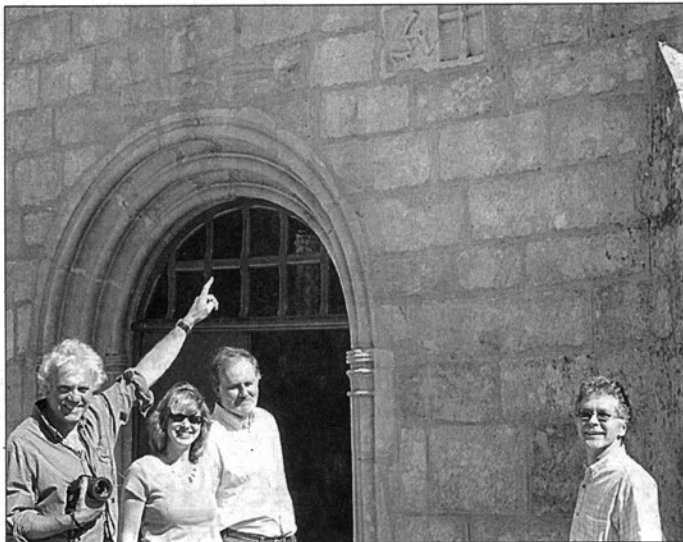
Les Anglais découvrent la représentation des lièvres sur une maison de Naymont.

Il y a 17 ans, un Spinalien au nom prédestiné, Michel Terrier, graphiste, passionné de vieilles pierres découvre sur une maison de Naymont un motif qui l'intrigue : trois lièvres aux oreilles communes disposés en cercle. Les historiens locaux avancent plusieurs hypothèses : une piste celte et une chrétienne (la trinité) mais les investigations de Michel Terrier vont le mener plus loin que les Vosges où il en répertorie cinq. Si cette figure est fréquente sur les édifices religieux en France (églises et synagogues) et en Angleterre, on la trouve en Chine dès le VII^e siècle sur des temples bouddhistes, au Tibet, sur des poteries en Iran, donc bien au-delà du monde judéo chrétien.

Fécondité

Presque deux décennies plus tard, le Vosgien a réuni une importante documentation et, grâce à internet, il a découvert le site de trois Anglais lancés dans une chasse effrénée à travers le monde puisqu'ils sont allés jusqu'à Mogao en Chine. Les lièvres auraient circulé le long de la route de la soie pour arriver jusqu'à nous. Michel Terrier, perfectionniste se promettait de contacter ces spécialistes

d'Outre-Manche quand il aurait encore approfondi sa recherche sur le grand Est et voilà que le hasard les lui amène comme par magie. Sue Andrew, historienne, Tom Greeves, archéologue et Chris Chapman, photographe, ayant décidé une chasse au lièvre dans l'est de la France ont débarqué il y a quelques jours au Val d'Ajol, ayant repéré via internet l'hôtel de la Réserve. Là le photographe Chapman avise dans le hall des cartes de Joël Couchouren et, saisi par la parenté entre les paysages vosgiens et ceux du Devon, il décide de se rendre chez le photographe de Sapois. Autour d'un café, les Anglais expliquent l'objet de leur venue en France : la chasse archéologique aux lièvres. Joël Couchouren sursaute : il connaît Michel Terrier. Le contact est vite établi entre les « chasseurs » et une partie de campagne est vite organisée : objectif Naymont et Thielouze. Echange de documents, photographies, les passionnés se sont prêtés une oreille attentive. Les Anglais ont trouvé « lovely » les lièvres de Naymont, très intéressants à leur goût. Ils préparent un livre et leur interlocuteur vosgien leur a offert sur un plateau ce qu'ils au-



Chris Chapman, photographe, Sue Andrew, historienne et Tom Greeves, archéologue, en compagnie de Michel Terrier devant la chapelle de Thielouze.



Gravure française du XVII^e siècle.



Céramique égyptienne du XII^e siècle.

raient mis des années à trouver. Quant à la signification de cette ronde de lièvres, les hypothèses restent en suspens : un symbole sexuel peut-être, attesté en français par la ressemblance entre le terme conil et le mot qui désigne la partie la plus intime de la femme. De toute évidence, le lapin évoque la fécondité et les oreilles communes l'entente, la communication. Le débat est lancé et la chasse est ouverte. Ouvrez vos oreilles et vos yeux et signalez vos découvertes à qui de droit.

Simone SCHMITZBERGER
Michel Terrier : nourdin@wanadoo.fr. Site anglais : www.chrischapmanphotography.com ou threehares@btinternet.com



Sur la synagogue de Schwabisch hall.

Itinéraire

Une représentation des trois lapins aux oreilles communes est visible au musée d'Epinal, la pierre vient de l'église de Charmois l'Orgueilleux.

Dans la Vôge, à ce jour, trois sites sont répertoriés : sur une pierre angulaire d'une maison de Naymont, sur la façade de la chapelle de Thielouze et sur le portail de l'église de Xertigny. Pas très loin, à l'église de Jorxey. En Haute-Saône, à Luxeuil, à l'hôtel du cardinal Jouffroy.

On peut aussi en voir à Paris, à l'hôtel de Cluny, à la cathédrale de Lyon avec cette fois un motif à quatre lapins... La liste est longue.



CHRIS CHAPMAN

The sign of three

Nic Fleming joins a mysterious hunt

The Three Hares: A curiosity worth regarding by Tom Greeves, Chris Chapman and Sue Andrew, Skerryvore Productions, £30



THREE hares race round in an endless circle. Each has two ears, yet there are only three ears in total as each ear is shared by two hares. It's a powerful image, puzzling yet satisfying.

Tom Greeves, a former archaeologist with the Dartmoor National Park Authority, first saw it in 1967 on the cover of a book about Dartmoor folklore. Twenty years later, he saw another – this time on an oak roof boss of a 15th-century church in the Dartmoor village of Throwleigh.

When he returned in 1989 with photographer Chris Chapman, a local artist told them the symbol could also be found in Buddhist caves in China. Intrigue turned to passion. Along the way, art historian Sue Andrew joined up for a global quest to find more.

In *The Three Hares*, the trio tell their fascinating story, starting in

England and Wales. But the pace hot ups in France and Germany, with a cast of baroque characters. There's the black-robed Benedictine monk, who, when shown the three hares, declares robustly: "Not Christian! Animals!" And then there's the chainsaw carver with a stone, three-hares boss built into his home, who poses with his bare-chested son – both wielding axes.

The authors travel to China to see the sacred Buddhist Magao caves, near the old Silk Road town of Dunhuang. The symbol was

"A black-robed monk, when shown the three hares, declares robustly 'Not Christian! Animals!'"

painted at the centre of elaborate ceiling representations of textile canopies dating from the Sui and Tang dynasties (AD 581 to 907). A retired local researcher explained that much of the painting was done while trade thrived along the Silk Road, so the symbol may have come from ancient Persia.

Another key artefact is a 13th-

The three hares symbol crops up everywhere from Devon to China

century copper coin with the hares motif on one side, and on the other, names of two Mongol leaders and Islamic references. For the authors, this may be fresh evidence of the importance of religious and cultural tolerance in the Mongols' empire-building success.

But as ever with interpretation, nothing is certain. When Greeves began his research in the west country, the Three Hares were known in Devon as "The Tinnners' Rabbits". Local writers described them as the mark of tin miners giving thanks for rich finds by rebuilding or enlarging churches.

Greeves was sceptical. His research revealed no link, with the motif all but absent from the tin-producing areas of Cornwall, and the ears' length more in keeping with hares than rabbits.

So what does it mean? The three hares symbol on a 13th-century bell in the former Cistercian monastery of Kloster Haina, Germany, was believed to avert evil influences. Elsewhere in medieval Germany, in France and in Devon, it was seen as a warning to resist temptation and confess to sins. The symbol also appears in a 1309 Jewish manuscript, as well as in several Ukrainian synagogues in later centuries.

Greeves concludes that while the meaning has varied across religions and cultures, the ubiquity of the hares symbol attests to its importance. Modern observers are free to create their own interpretations, he says. He also hopes sharing knowledge of beautiful things that connected civilisations across religion and time may help unite disparate peoples in a fractured age.

The authors are clear their book is not the final say on the mysterious symbol. But readers left frustrated by this should remember that animals in an eternal circle never stop. ■

Nic Fleming is a writer based in Bristol

BOOK REVIEWS

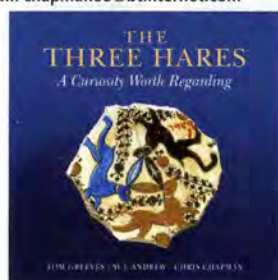
BOOKreviews

Peter F. Mason look at some recent publications

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The Three Hares A Curiosity Worth Regarding

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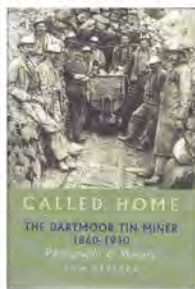
Over half of the known examples of the Three Hares motif in England occur in Devon, with the majority of these being found on roof bosses in churches on the eastern edge of Dartmoor. It is therefore no surprise that the search for the origin of the motif and its meaning would fascinate Devon-based writers and researchers Tom Greeves and Sue Andrew and photographer Chris Chapman. Their interest in the subject, extending over forty years, has taken them on a journey across England, France and Germany, and to Buddhist cave temples in China.

This lavishly illustrated book tells the story of the physical journeys the authors made and examines all the theories about its meaning. It is striking that the Three Hares motif is 'woven into the fabric of the sacred places of Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity'. It has also been used in secular contexts as, for example, a logo for a wheat and starch company and in children's puzzles. The authors have traced the motif back to at least the seventh century, and it is likely that it reached Devon by the 14th century where its religious intent, along with images of the Green Man, was to 'prompt a deep and intensely personal reflection on sin'. The authors also record that a local oral tradition has it that the Three Hares represent 'Hope, Health and Happiness'.

Chapman's excellent photographs are backed up by a chapter written by him on how the images were made. With other chapters putting to rest the myth of the 'Tinner's Rabbits' and chapters on puzzles, the geometrical form of the motif and a comprehensive bibliography, this is a major addition to the literature. The Three Hares are certainly 'A curiosity worth regarding', and this book enables the reader to do this comprehensively.

Called Home The Dartmoor Tin Miner 1860–1940

Tom Greeves
Twelveheads Press 2016 h/b
160pp Illustrated £16
ISBN 978 0906294 87 1



When Tom Greeves was showing photographs of miners to Dartmoor people in order to put names to faces, the phrase 'I can't call 'e home!' was sometimes said in frustration at not being able to name the person. This gave Greeves the title

for the book in which he has 'called home' many miners and their families. The subtitle of the book goes on to place emphasis on the men who worked in the mines

Called Home brings together photographs of the last days of tin mining on the moor and first-hand recollections of those days. In the late 1960s and 1970s Greeves talked to people who had been involved in the mining industry on Dartmoor and amassed a unique collection of photographs, of which there are more than 160 in the book. The photographs not only provide visual evidence of the workings of the mines and those who worked there, but also show what parts of the moor looked like a hundred years ago – for example the spoil heaps at Vitifer mine, now cloaked in gorse and heather.

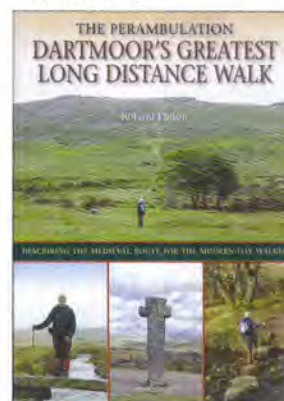
There is technical information about the three mines which are the focus of the book – Hexworthy, Vitifer and Golden Dagger – and extensive notes and a comprehensive bibliography. This is an important addition to the literature about Dartmoor and will be of interest to social historians as well as mining enthusiasts.

For those interested in the history of tin mining a booklet is available that was published to coincide with the Dartmoor Tinworking Conference in Tavistock in May 2016. This contains plans, photographs and information about several of the other Dartmoor Mines (ES, ISBN 978 0 9529442 2 5: see *In the News*).



The Perambulation – Dartmoor's Greatest Long Distance Walk

Roland Ebdon
Halsgrove 2016 h/b
160pp Illustrated £19.99
ISBN 978 0 85704 281 1



The Perambulation of the boundary of the 'Ancient Forest of Dartmoor' has fascinated historians and walkers for many years. It was first undertaken in AD1240 on the orders of Henry III in order to define the boundary so that fees for grazing on the royal land could be claimed. Roland Ebdon has studied the history of the creation of the Forest and the subsequent arguments over the centuries about the exact line of the boundary, and has tried to relate this to the topography of the moor today. His examination of the various texts has led him to some new conclusions about the route.

At the heart of the book is the author's attempt to make sense of the references in the texts to places along the Perambulation and to relate them to modern names recorded by the Ordnance Survey. Not everyone will agree with the author's conclusions, but he offers the opportunity for readers to examine for themselves his arguments in the 16 excursions. Readers contemplating undertaking the excursions will need to examine them alongside detailed OS maps and transcribe Ebdon's notes – the book is not one to be carried on a moorland walk. The excursions are ways of exploring the Perambulation and could be used as a basis for planning walks on the moor.

The book is a useful addition to the literature about the Perambulation, not least in its extensive summaries of previous writings about it. It is extensively illustrated with photographs and sketch maps. Although repetitive at times, it effectively describes the journey the author has taken through the research and in the field.