

NORTHERN DEVON IN THE GREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

REPORTS COVERING NORTH DEVON DISTRICT 2021

Table 1 sets out the reports filed with ADS relating to 2021. The reports are then discussed in a little more detail, in alphabetical order of parish. A brief synthesis of the findings completes the document.

Table 1: Summary of reports for 2021

Parish	Site	Grid Ref	Report Producer	Type of Report*	Nature of Development
Barnstaple	Christchurch, Bear Street	5599 3334	SWARCH	Monitoring & recording	Repairs
Bishops Tawton	Thornccliffe Works	5673 2994	SWARCH	HBR	Conversion to residential development
Combe Martin	Hansons Garage, Castle Street	5892 4613	SWARCH	Monitoring & Recording	Commercial development
Countisbury	Glenthorne	7995 4950/ 7943 4978	Hazel Riley	Arch survey	England Coast Path
East Worlington	Land adj. St Mary's Church	7749 1373	SWARCH	Monitoring	Construction of retaining wall
Martinhoe	Hunters Inn	6550 4800	SWARCH	Appraisal	Installation of ground source heat pump
Parracombe	Killington Farm	6621 4598/ 6674 4580	AC Archaeology	Watching brief	Electricity cable
Shirwell	Oakford	5841	Oakford	Evaluation	Groundworks

	(Okewill?) Farm	4036	Archaeology		
South Molton	Land off North Road	709 264	AC Archaeology	Arch excavations	Residential
Swimbridge	Tordown House	6344 3131	SWARCH	HBA	Alterations
Witheridge	6 The Square	8041 1460	Stuart Blaylock	HBR	Conversion to residential use

*HBR/S/A - historic building recording/survey/assessment, DBA - Desk-based assessment, HVIA - Historic visual impact assessment

11 reports were recorded in 2021, in 11 parishes. Of these reports, 6 were produced by SWARCH, with AC Archaeology producing 2. Most were developer commissioned, the exception being the survey commissioned for the England Coast Path project at Glenthorne.

1. Barnstaple: Christchurch, Bear Street

Archaeological monitoring was carried out during renovation work at the north-east corner of the 19th century church. This involved the excavation of a trench. An earlier wall was exposed in the north face of the trench, which was extended to reveal more of its length. The wall exhibited structural phasing and was built of roughly shaped blocks laid in courses. It was presumed to be the remains of the structure which was demolished when the church was built. The wall was possibly mediaeval although more likely to have been 17th century and showed evidence of post-mediaeval repair. Although this was a small excavation, it did provide archaeological evidence that the north side of Bear Street was built up, as shown on contemporary 17th century maps.

2. Bishops Tawton, Thorncliffe Works

This report records a historic buildings survey of a distinctive group of buildings fronting the village street in Bishops Tawton. The site was undeveloped until the mid-19th century when a smithy was first built there. This was replaced in the 1890s by an agricultural engineering business which was owned by the Thomas family and produced a patented seed drill. On the roadside boundary a privately-funded reading room was built for residents of the village in 1870. The agricultural engineers business evolved into the 20th century and eventually took over the reading room building. The use as an

engineering works ceased in 1970 and the buildings were used for storage until. The buildings have now been converted to residential use.

The report notes that this is an unusually complete and authentic agricultural engineering works showing a high proportion of surviving period features. The site's historical associations with the development of the Patented Thomas Seed Drill and the provision of the village Reading Room, give a view of the late 19th/early 20th century social history of the village.

3. Combe Martin, Hanson's Garage, Castle Street

Monitoring and recording of groundworks associated with commercial development were carried out at this site, which lies along the main village street some way inland. No archaeological features or finds of significance were recorded.

4. Countisbury, Glenthorne

This was an archaeological survey along the route of the proposed England Coast Path where it was to pass through the Glenthorne Estate in Countisbury. The survey highlighted the extent of the 19th century planned landscape and recorded a number of associated structures, including a linhay, a large bank and ditch and several terraces and paths. The Coast Path is intending to follow some of the terraces and paths and the report makes recommendations for interpreting the features of the planned landscape.

5. East Worlington, land adjacent to St Mary's Church

Monitoring and recording were undertaken as part of works to excavate a trench prior to constructing a retaining wall along the side of a barn on a site adjacent to the parish church. No archaeological features were identified in the trench.

6. Martinhoe, Hunters Inn

An appraisal of the archaeological potential and heritage assets in the vicinity of Hunters Inn, in connection with the installation of a heat pump within the car park opposite the Inn, was carried out at the request of the owner, the National Trust. The Hunters Inn was first identified as an inn in 1823. It was extended from the original small thatched cottage during the 19th century and rebuilt, after a disastrous fire, in 1903. No archaeological features or heritage assets were identified on the site or within the near vicinity.

7. Parracombe, Killington Farm

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for a new electricity cable trench. The site is within 100m of Beacon Castle an Iron Age

defended settlement and Scheduled Ancient Monument. The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or finds.

8. Shirwell, Oakford (Okewill) Farm

An archaeological evaluation was carried out of groundworks comprising three trenches. The reason is that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential to the north-west of a ditched enclosure. However, no archaeological features, finds or dating evidence were found.

9. South Molton, North Road

This is a report of the excavation of two areas on a proposed residential development site to the north-west of South Molton. The site lies to the west of North Road and to the north of Gunswell Lane. In the first area of excavation two concentric ring gullies were excavated, with associated postholes. The conclusion was reached that these represented a probable Iron Age roundhouse. The small number of prehistoric finds, pottery sherds and flint, tended to confirm this.

The second area revealed ditches that represented probable mediaeval field boundaries. The associated finds, primarily of pottery sherds confirmed this. The field system is thought to have continued in use into the post mediaeval period. On the edge of the excavation area lay another ring gully, but with no dating evidence its association with the probable Iron Age roundhouse in Area 1 could not be established.

10. Swimbridge, Tordown House

This is a historic building assessment carried out for the current owners of Tordown House, who planned to make some alterations in keeping with its historic character. The house is grade 2 listed and located in a downland landscape at the head of a small valley two miles to the north-east of Swimbridge.

The house has a complex history and character. Ownership by the Earl of Bedford and, indirectly by the Chichester family, led in the 18th century to its purchase by John Nott who lived in it during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was associated with Bydown House to the south of Swimbridge and may have served as a dower house to it during that period. It was then leased to various members of the clergy, the most notable of whom was Rev John Russell of Jack Russell fame. A footnote to this sequence is its ownership in the late 20th century by the modernist artist Gerald Moore.

The house is mediaeval in origin, with the west service wing showing signs of this origin although largely 17th century in structure. The current house was built in the mid-18th

century as a small gentry house and this forms the basis of its structure and appearance. Additions and alterations took place throughout the 19th century. A conservatory was added to the front entrance in the early 20th century. An extensive range of farm buildings and stables across the lane to the east is of 18th and 19th century origin and is included in the HBA. The stables may be associated with the occupancy of the house by the hunting parson, John Russell.

The HBA provides a thorough and fascinating description of the history, development, design and contents of the house. It provides the owners with a guide to appropriate alterations, to restore its essentially mid-18th century character.

11. Witheridge, Hope House, 6 The Square

This is a historic building assessment of a stable block and coach house that form part of Hope House. The house and outbuildings were built in 1877 as a vicarage for Witheridge. They replaced the previous vicarage on the site. The purpose of the HBA was to record the stable block and coach house before they were converted to residential accommodation as part of the main house.

The HBA demonstrated that the buildings were typical of late 19th century parsonage buildings in the area. Neither they nor the house are listed but they nevertheless have some historic value in the context both of the village and of this type of church accommodation.

Conclusions

From an archaeological point of view most of the 2021 reports are disappointing. Only the report of the site at North Road, South Molton adds to our knowledge of the archaeology of the area. The minor excavation in Bear Street, Barnstaple did confirm that the north side of the street was already developed by the 17th century. Also of note are the historic building surveys of the former agricultural engineering workshop and reading room in Bishops Tawton and Tordown House in Swimbridge, both of which revealed interesting detail, both of the buildings and their social history.

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