



Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

Autumn Newsletter 2012

From the Chairman, Derry Bryant:

Welcome to the autumn edition of the NDAS newsletter. It has been a quieter summer on the “digging “ front, nevertheless there has been a fair bit of activity behind the scenes. Post excavation work continues on the West Yeo material: the flints collected from the third field “Mead 2” are now logged onto the database, and Bob Shrigley has worked on producing distribution/scatter charts. Thanks Bob! Work on the project report continues, gathering together all the information into one document. Kate Palmer, farm owner, reports that the trenches have now been filled by mechanical digger, so the building we discovered will be preserved for the future. Our thanks again to Kate and Robert for their unstinting enthusiasm and hospitality

New Project for 2012/2013: We have also been working towards the proposed project in the Merton area. I am pleased to say that we have received permission from Clinton Estates and the tenant farmers to carry out a full survey/archaeological evaluation (including excavation) of the possible clay pipe kiln site at Little Potheridge. Chris Preece, archaeologist and clay pipe enthusiast, has returned from his teaching abroad and has kindly agreed to be Director of the excavation which will probably happen next April/May. We start off with a geophysical (earth resistance) survey at the site the weekend of 13-15 October, to try and locate the kiln which is shown on the 1887 OS map. The field has just been combined so we need to do this work before the next crop starts to grow. The farmer has agreed to leave this corner of the field free for our excavation next year.

This is an exciting project; there was evidence of clay pipe manufacture in Barnstaple during excavations by North Devon Rescue Archaeology in the 1980s, but the kiln was never found. Little Potheridge appears to be of an earlier date, so to find the kiln would be really important.

NB. GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AT LITTLE POTHERIDGE 13, 14, 15 OCTOBER 2012

See recent email

A word about fund raising

With any practical archaeology project there are costs involved; we were incredibly lucky with West Yeo in that we were able to use facilities provided by Kate and Robert, including storage of equipment, toilets etc. Our biggest cost so far has been the hire of the mechanical digger at approx £450. We need to raise funds to replace this expenditure and prepare for publication, plus to start fundraising for our next venture. There will be items such as Portaloo hire, digger hire (we will have another open trench), printing, publication etc. We will be applying to various bodies such as the CBA (Council for British Archaeology), DAS (Devon Archaeological Society), but these are not always forthcoming. If anyone has any ideas – small or large, please let us know, (raffles/sponsors/social events, anything considered!)

Don't forget that we have a source of revenue in our 50th anniversary book “Bronze Age to Bottle Seals”, a picture of which and an order form for which are on our website. It is a useful Christmas present, and at £7 to

NDAS members is good value, and a good record of some of the research undertaken in North Devon including our own Bronze Age discoveries at Holworthy. Have you got your copy yet?

The Royal Archaeological Institute has invited us to submit a one-page contribution to their Jubilee Year space on their website. Terry has come up with a one page description of the Holworthy Farm excavations of 2002-5 (to which the RAI contributed financially) and we shall proudly supply a picture of the Bronze Age pot to go with it!

Christmas Social

During the first week of December we shall have the Annual Dinner – held last year at “The Bank” restaurant, Barnstaple. Pat Hudson is currently sourcing (or even “saucing”?) local hostelrys to find a good venue. It’s a chance to meet and mingle with other members in an informal atmosphere – we hope as many of you as possible will attend. Details will be issued nearer the time, with location, menu and price. This is also a good opportunity to have a fun raffle.

NDAS Equipment:

Thanks go to member Chris Hassall who kindly stepped in with an offer of a space in his barn, for storing the excavation/surveying equipment. Bob and Terry moved the equipment from West Yeo and it is now safely stored and locked up at Chris’s place near Landcross. Much appreciated, Chris.

Among the equipment is our flotation tank, devised and built by David Parker for the organic material from Holworthy Farm. It has been on loan to South West Archaeology for a few years and has had heavy use in floating organic material from the Romano-British site at Cullompton. It’s now looking a bit worse for wear, and although the tank is still just about serviceable, it would be good to have a new one. If there is anyone out there who might fancy putting his or her hand to a bit of metalwork, then please contact Bob Shrigley on 01237 478122 or email rvs1120@gmail.com. A sketch of the basic design can be found by locating the Spring 2005 Newsletter on the NDAS website.

Lithics Recognition Day

On Saturday 15th September we held a Lithics Recognition day, led by Henrietta Quinnell and John Newberry. Unfortunately at short notice the venue was changed from Barnstaple to South Molton, because the Round Britain cycle race was due to start from the Strand and involved closing the town centre, making access difficult for our lecturers and members to attend. Several members were unable to reach the new venue, so apologies to those who couldn’t make it.

However, 13 members of NDAS turned up at South Molton Assembly Rooms. The day took the form of an active workshop where delegates were able to handle and inspect a variety of flint artefacts at close quarters. The basics of lithic production were covered; methods of producing cores, flakes, blades, types of debitage, with a rough chronology from the late Paleolithic through Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age. Explanations of typology of tools for each period was included.

At lunchtime delegates were encouraged to draw three flints each, with individual coaching by Henrietta and John, the idea being to help understand the chronology of the toolmaking process by removal of flakes, and retouching edges to form the finished artefact.

Members were shown both modern replicas and prehistoric flint and chert tools, from tiny microliths to large hand axes, with discussion on colours/textures/patination and guidelines for collecting. It was pointed out that when flints are found and picked up by walkers, careful note should be made of the exact location, and the information recorded in the Historic Environment Record – flints are an important part of the historical resource

and if they are removed and their location not recorded, then a piece of history is effectively lost. Also, landowner's permission should always be sought prior to walking and collecting; the items actually belong to the landowner!

It was a very busy day with a lot of information and excellent resources, with informative handouts. We are most grateful to Henrietta and John for their help and professional advice and enthusiasm and hope they will be able to visit us again in future to give guidance on our collections

Clovelly Dykes Visit

On 15th July some 25 NDAS members and friends met at East Dyke Farm, Higher Clovelly for a guided walk over Clovelly Dykes, the impressive but enigmatic earthworks situated in the angle between the A39 and the road to Hartland. The walk was led by Terry Green and Stephen Hobbs, the Hartland historian. Fortunately for once in this year's lamentable summer the sun shone. Members of the party were suitably impressed by the huge scale of the banks and ditches and having heard something of the standard interpretation of the site, threw in their own ideas. However the purpose of Clovelly Dykes remains a mystery despite our best efforts. One of these days we *might* get to do a geophysical survey!

Follow-up to Excavations at the Exeter Inn:



Volunteers at work in the Museum

Last November an invitation was extended to NDAS members and to the general public by South West Archaeology Ltd to join in a rescue excavation to the rear of the old Exeter Inn in Litchdon Street, Barnstaple. From the site, which apparently represents the location of 16th century pottery manufacture, a very large quantity of pottery, mostly kiln waste, was recovered and had to be processed. With the help of volunteers, this processing has been taking place on a weekly basis at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon throughout this year. It has been a process of 'refining' the excavated material by selecting out those pieces which are potentially diagnostic and likely to contribute to a typology of 16th century North Devon pottery. This has meant that the large quantity of

material has been successfully reduced to manageable proportions, allowing a proper analysis (potentially) to be produced.

The determination of South West Archaeology and the Museum to see this process through represents the most recent attempt to tackle the long delayed publication of the corpus of North Devon pottery. However, this is only the beginning. Stored in the covered back yard of the Museum are well over a thousand boxes of pottery recovered during excavations in the 1970s and 80s and still awaiting analysis. Fortunately a methodology has now been established, but now it is necessary to maintain the impetus and work doggedly through those thousand-plus boxes. While the present team is doing sterling work, more volunteers will be required when it comes to dealing with the rest of the material.

In archaeological terms this is important work. From the 16th century onwards pottery from North Devon was carried to Ireland, North America and Canada and even to Australia. North Devon pottery turns up on most medieval and post-medieval sites in northern Devon and beyond, but until thorough studies of the material

yielded by kiln sites in Barnstaple – and Bideford and Torrington – has been done there is nothing to refer to in trying to understand its significance. This is especially important to archaeologists in North America where access to a reference work on North Devon pottery would help in understanding the development of early settlements.

In this connection John Bradbeer has written the following:

North Devon Pottery in Ireland

During the first few years of this century, the Celtic Tiger economy of Ireland was roaring. One aspect of this was an ambitious programme of road improvements and motorway construction. Thus between 2002 and 2008, Ireland National Roads Authority (NRA) found itself acting as one of Europe's largest commissioners of archaeological surveys and full-scale excavations. Such was the volume of work that the NRA launched its own magazine, *Seanda*, to publish headlines and a summary of finds from the many motorway routes. The magazine is available on-line at www.nra.ie/archaeology

Ireland is rich in archaeology and most routes yielded significant new discoveries. A couple of them are of interest to us here in North Devon, as pottery from North Devon was found. This in itself is not remarkable, given both the large quantities produced locally and the extensive trade between North Devon and Ireland since medieval times. Indeed, the Hiberno-English word 'bastable', meaning a cast-iron cooking pot or plate used over an open fire, is regarded as deriving from Barnstaple.

One site to yield North Devon pottery was Carrickmines, next door to Leopardstown race course, about 12 kilometres SE of Dublin's city centre. The site proved to have a long history of occupation, starting in the Neolithic. From about AD 1400 it became the seat of the Norman-Irish Walsh family and boasted a castle, which was badly damaged in the Irish wars coterminous with the English Civil War. In the Cromwellian land settlement, it was given to new Protestant owners and the castle robbed to build a smaller mansion and home farm, which was then leased to a succession of high status tenants. It seems that these were responsible for bringing North Devon sgraffito ware to the site. The fragments found at Carrickmines have been dated as late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

A second site containing fragments of North Devon potter was Annagh a townland (the Irish subdivision of a parish) about 18 kilometres NE of the city of Galway. The area was already known to be rich in prehistoric archaeology, with many barrows, cairns and enclosures, and a mass rock dating from Penal Times (c 1660 – 1800). There was also a poorly documented house, probably built in the latter part of the seventeenth century, after the Cromwellian land settlement. Around the house fragments of North Devon gravel-tempered ware were found. The pottery has been provisionally dated to about 1680-1730. This find is noteworthy in that it occurs inland and in an area where the Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in general lived in far less style than around Dublin or in the rich farming areas of parts of the south and east of Ireland. Galway is known as one of North Devon's trading partners but the passage from North Devon was longer and more hazardous than those to places like Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Arklow or even Dublin.

Motorways have been built in and around Cork, Limerick and Waterford but none of the brief reports that I have seen of excavations for these projects mentions finds of North Devon pottery, which is perhaps a little unexpected, given North Devon's historic links with Ireland. With the road building programme in Ireland effectively frozen for the foreseeable future, it is not likely that much more North Devon pottery will come to light in Ireland.

'The Bumper Book of Barnstaple'

The historic town of Barnstaple has enjoyed the attentions of numerous chroniclers since the 16th century, but not until the 20th century did archaeologists take an interest. During development of the Library site and of

Green Lanes a lot of archaeology was done and both before and since numerous small to medium scale evaluations have been undertaken and recorded, but not very much has ever appeared in print and certainly none of it has ever been brought together under one roof. For Exeter this has been done by the now defunct Exeter Archaeology, producing a single data-base for academic reference. Now South West Archaeology Ltd together with the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon has taken on the task of producing a similar reference work for Barnstaple. This is being strongly encouraged and funded by the County Archaeologist who is also promoting a similar undertaking for Newton Abbot. The first stage of what has been jokingly called 'The Bumper Book of Barnstaple' is now complete, providing a source for anyone wishing to produce an up-to-date history of the town. One big surprise: whereas it was initially thought that the list of sites would run to a few hundred, it in fact amounts to well over a thousand entries!

Excavations at Embury Beacon

NDAS member Thor Beverley took part in the National Trust excavation at Embury Beacon (on the coast south of Hartland Quay) and has written this report:

In April/May this year I spent two days working on an excavation of the Iron Age hillfort or cliff castle at Embury Beacon, organised by the National Trust and AC archaeology. The excavation was described as the last chance to dig at Embury Beacon before the site is lost to the sea. Estimates are that three-quarters of it may already have disappeared. It is spectacular and exposed, with views over the sea towards Lundy in front and across open countryside behind. Wind and rain swept across it on my first day, making conditions challenging. The second day could not have been more different. The sun shone and hosts of swallows and other migrant



Excavation of the ditch

birds passed overhead, making landfall after their long journey. It all made for a really special day, digging in the sunshine with wildlife and spectacular scenery to enjoy. Added to this was a group of primary school children who visited the site and were delighted to turn up finds such as a badger's skull in the spoil heaps (hidden there by the National Trust warden) – they certainly left thinking archaeology was just great!

In terms of finds, the site seemed almost empty. I found a small flint flake on my first day which was only the second find in over two weeks. The previous excavation in the 1970's had found pottery, a whetstone and other items, but these were in the central portion of the site, now sadly lost over the cliff. The two trenches through the outer ditches did show how deep they originally were and also provided evidence of re-cutting.

I would suggest that you visit Embury Beacon (SS 215195) whilst you still can. I visited again in late September and more of the site has been lost in the past 4 months.

Archaeoscan

Lance Hosegood has provided the following report of his experience with this very worthwhile organisation.

Archaeoscan is an organisation based in the Cotswolds area, which provides community involvement and training in archaeology. Their main emphasis is on geophysical survey and excavation and anyone can take part whatever their previous experience at a cost of £20 per day to cover costs etc.

Tony Roberts, a former air traffic controller but now an MA in Landscape Archaeology and presently studying for a PhD at Bristol University, organises archaeological investigations of sites that might not otherwise be investigated, with the help of local land owners.



Archeoscan teaching session

I booked for two days at the beginning of September to take part in some exploratory excavations at a possible Roman 'villa' site near Upton Cheney in South Gloucestershire. Sadly, the first day was rained off, but with three trench sites already marked out after a previous magnetometer survey (prompted by earlier discoveries by antiquarians and more recently by metal detecting), nine of us took off the turf and had a day in the sun! We came across very little as we worked our way through the top soil to where we hoped to discover why a strong response had been indicated by the magnetometer. The clayey nature of the first context gave up some of the local limestone and few small pieces of pottery but little else before my day was over.

However, I have since been told that the trench provided some very nice patterned Samian Ware, a piece of Nene Valley Ware, a brooch pin and a very nice ring intaglio with carved horses on it. There was also some painted wall plaster within a possible structure on a rock cut terrace, which may have been at the back of a building (a corridor perhaps?).

A second trench revealed a terrace with building and a 'soak away' drain and the third trench provided a boundary ditch to about one metre depth which had been re-cut several times.



At work on a Roman building near Tetbury, Gloucestershire

Overall, a successful exploration of the site and indicating that further investigation should reveal what appears to be a 'high status' site. I am hoping to go back and take part in the next stage and anyone interested in further information about Archeoscan or taking part can contact them by email at enquiries@archeoscan.com or by phone on 07901 746140.

The Ferriby Bronze Age Boat

Derrica Hodgson reports a visit to Falmouth

Derry Bryant and I went to the Maritime Museum in Falmouth some weeks ago to see the "Bronze Age" boat being built there. The aim is to replicate the "oldest boat ever found in Western Europe" - found in the mud at Ferriby, nr. Hull and dating back to c.2000 BC.

This challenging project began with the making of replica Bronze Age tools - shipwright Brian Cumby then had to learn how to split logs and trim them into shape using these bronze tools. It was at this stage that Derry and I visited the Museum. All work is done in full view of Museum visitors but we were allowed "in" to handle the tools and wood ourselves. The next stage will be to sew the planks together using yew fibres and to caulk the gaps with moss to ensure water-tightness. It has been estimated that this boat could carry six tons - so no mean feat!

"Boatman Brian" was only too delighted to discuss and demonstrate this project. They are planning to launch the boat on Oct. 29th and we hope to visit again to see the completion of this fascinating undertaking.

For further details visit: www.nnmc.co.uk or boatmanbrian@btinternet.com or tel.01326 214557

NDAS and Planning

It shall be the duty of every member who makes a discovery, or who hears of a threatened destruction of any site or object of apparent archaeological value, to report the facts to the Secretary and the appropriate authority.

The above clause from the NDAS Constitution has been rather forgotten. We used to regularly monitor planning applications and react when necessary, but being able to rely generally on the input of the Devon County Historic Environment Service in the planning process, we have become complacent. Now with staff cuts, relaxation of the planning laws and the Government urging more house building, we need to be more vigilant and make a noise. Three current issues highlight this need.

South Molton:

Planning Application NDDC No 54384 Land off North Road/Gunswell Lane, South Molton: Mixed Use Development:

The 11 fields proposed for development include one called, in the South Molton title apportionment, 'Tower Close'. Within the field aerial survey reveals a kite-shaped enclosure which has been identified by Wessex Archaeology (in a desk-based assessment carried out in 2011, ref: 76470) as possibly prehistoric. The site, centred at SS708264, can be recognised on Google Earth. With its commanding position, this appears to be a hilltop enclosure and is potentially the only prehistoric feature noted in South Molton. As such it is of vital importance to the heritage and historical culture of the town and the whole of North Devon and should be fully investigated and preserved.

The County Historic Environment Service have objected to any development on this field and the immediate vicinity, without prior and thorough investigation, and are recommending that the agents contact the County Archaeology Service for a brief setting out the works required.

This significant archaeological and historical feature is under threat from the proposed development and if you feel strongly about safeguarding such features, perhaps you could register an individual objection to the Planning Department? A letter of objection from the NDAS Chairman has already been sent, but individual contributions may also help. Letters should be sent to Jean Watkins, Planning Officer, Civic Centre, Barnstaple.

The field can be accessed by the track opposite the small car park by the recreation ground/toll house as you enter South Molton from the main roundabout at Aller Cross. The plans are available for viewing at Amory House, South Molton, (Town Clerk Malcolm Gingell.)

Braunton:

Planning Application NDDC 54517: Broadlands Farm, Saunton Road, Braunton: Erection of one livestock and general purpose agricultural building.

This planning application at an existing farm on the edge of the Great Field might seem on the face of it to be unobjectionable. Broadlands Farm, centred at roughly SS476366 is represented by a string of agricultural buildings occupying a former cultivation strip within the Great Field. The plan involves building in the next field

to the west, which is at present unoccupied by building. While the owners make a case for the viability of their family business, there is a matter of important principle at stake. Do we accept any further compromising of the unique Braunton Great Field? With the current pressure to build, thin ends of wedges come to mind.

If you are concerned about this development, your point of contact is as above, Jean Watkins, etc.

Joy Street, Barnstaple:

It's already too late for this one, but it is worth mentioning. A building on the corner of Joy Street and Green Lane has recently been demolished to ground level. This was the last surviving member of a group of buildings between Green Lane and the High Street, the others having been demolished when Green Lanes shopping centre was built. The difference is that in the 1980s the buildings to be demolished were surveyed and recorded, and were discovered to have 16th century origins. In the present case no steps were taken to secure a record apart from a few meaningless 'snaps' taken by a surveyor.

This particular wreck is beyond salvaging, but it should remind us to be dutifully vigilant.

If you are concerned- for archaeological reasons - about any development of which you become aware, then you should contact either your NDAS Secretary Amanda Jones (mandyjones100@hotmail.com, telephone 01272 860179) or your District Council Planning Officer or go direct to Stephen Reed at the County Historic Environment Service, archaeol@devon.gov.uk, telephone 01392 382246.

The NDAS Winter Programme of Talks 2012-13:

Tuesday 16th October: *Hillsborough Hill Fort Survey* - Dave Edcombe (AONB North Devon)

Tuesday 20th November: *West Dartmoor Farms* - Dr Tom Greeves (ex Archaeologist Dartmoor National Park)

Tuesday 15th January: *Recent Archaeology at Combe Martin Silver Mine* - Mary Houldsworth (NDAS)& Mitch Warburton(CMSRPS)

Tuesday 19th February: *Ice Age Devon & Early Humans I* - Tom Cadbury (RAMM Museum, Exeter)

Tuesday 19th March: AGM/social + *Dowsing for Devon's Heritage* Alan Neal (Professional dowser and author)

Tuesday 16th April: *Some Designed Landscapes of Exmoor and North Devon* Simon Bonvoisin (Historic Landscape Consultant)

All talks take place in the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple beginning at 7.30pm.

NB. The AGM on 19th March 2013 begins at 7.00pm.

Terry Green, Editor

Note: The next newsletter will appear in May 2013. If you have any information or a report which may be of interest to other members, please forward it to Terry Green (email: gwyngala@talktalk.net) for inclusion in the next edition.