



Promoting awareness of the archaeology  
and history of North Devon

## Newsletter, Autumn 2018

Since the last newsletter in Spring 2018 the Society has been busy. We have had three summer visits and two excavations, so we can feel confident that we are an active society. On the other hand, while the summer visits were well attended, the important excavation at Clovelly was short of manpower, which brings into question the viability of any future field projects. Explanation for the absence of physical support for an excavation that ought to be the jewel in the crown for North Devon Archaeological Society lies to some extent in the fact that it was not possible to plan ahead for specific dates (timing depended on harvest which was weather dependent), but quite probably also in the age profile of the membership. There is no blame to be attached: we all get older (I know my knees and wrists won't take it any more). The loyalty of our 80+ members is very heartening, but social factors are somewhat against us. We are not alone in finding a dwindling voluntary contribution. The National Trust, which relies very heavily on volunteers, finds it more and more difficult to recruit new blood. The raised retirement age, the need perhaps to keep on earning beyond official retirement and/or the variety of interests that can be taken up post-work may all count against what might be seen as 'traditional' forms of engagement for the retired. At the other end of the scale, as it were, commercial archaeological units are apparently finding it harder to recruit staff for field work, which means that younger people are also demonstrating other priorities. So whether it's a question of one of those periodic swings away from an interest in archaeology (they do happen, I've observed) or whether it's the changing pressures of life for both young and old, we need to get some younger people involved. When we return to Clovelly, hopefully next year, we may aim to involve the university, but really OUR local society is for OUR local people. We need to get out there and fly the flag!

Nevertheless, the excavation achieved its objectives, as **Chris Preece** now reports:

### **Clovelly Dykes Excavation**

Following the successful geophysics survey carried out by Substrata and the drafting of a project plan (detailed in the Spring 2018 newsletter) plans were made for excavation in the field to the south of the scheduled monument of Clovelly Dykes and the A39.

Permission was granted by Clovelly Estates and liaison with the farmer suggested a small window of opportunity at the end of August/beginning of September dependent on harvesting/re-sowing. With funding in place thanks to our partnership with the AONB as part of their North Devon Coastal Heritage Project we readied equipment and sounded out personnel.

When harvesting was completed Ross Dean kindly came out to site the trenches with his GPS and then we began to remove the modern ploughsoil by machine from the two areas (Fig.1).

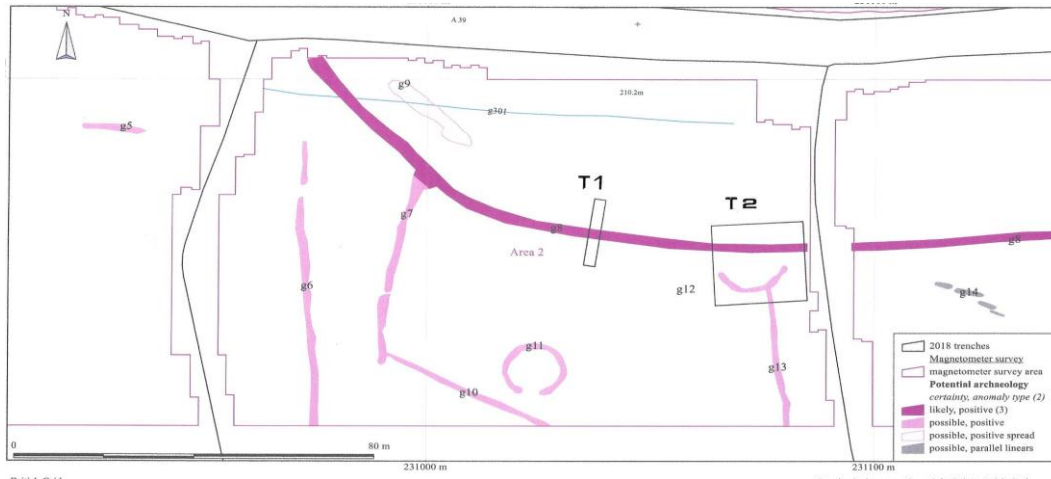


Fig. 1: Trench location plan over geophysics

**Trench 1 (T1)** was sited to section the assumed outer enclosure ditch (120) and once the residual medieval soil (101) was cleaned back the edges of the ditch became more evident. The next context (102) produced no finds, but sealed by this was an alluvial silty layer (103) and the sherds we had been hoping for (8 no less). We await confirmation but initial analysis suggests they are Iron Age (Fig.2). If so this is the first proof of the assumed date range of the Dykes. A bulk sample of this layer was taken for processing.



Fig.2: Sherds from 103

Beneath this was a shallow layer of loose subsoil which had slipped back into the ditch soon after construction (104). The depth of the ditch was a maximum of 1.4m (Fig.3) and this suggests that if the Dykes is a 'developed hillfort' (Cunliffe 2004) then the outer enclosure had a less defensive aspect and that it possibly related more to stock-keeping (the inner enclosure ditches of the scheduled monument appear to be both wider and much deeper).



Fig.3: Section of outer enclosure ditch (120)

**Trench 2 (T2)** was initially an area of 20m x 20m, but as cleaning back progressed, it was decided that realistically it would be better to focus on the eastern half so T2 became an area of 20m x 10m.

The outer edge of the supposed ring ditch (206) was clearly defined (Fig.4), the inner side less so and after cleaning back twice the decision was taken to put a section through it (1.5m length; 1m width). This revealed a double ditch (or possibly a main ditch with outer drip gully). No finds were made in the main ditch but it was rich with charcoal and was bulk sampled. A number of other features were noted within the

bounds of the ring ditch. One, a posthole (208), was fully excavated, recorded and bulk sampled (Fig.5) Of considerable size (more than 0.5m wide and 0.5m deep) it probably originally housed a major support post of the assumed dwelling. Interestingly a largish beach-derived pebble had been



*Fig.4: Cleaning back with ring ditch visible (206)*

So despite limited time on site and with limited personnel, results have been encouraging. Other Iron Age sites in the area have yielded very little in the way of pottery and to find 8 sherds in just one section of the ditch is significant and points to the importance of this site. The alleged find of a blue glass bead by a previous farm tenant (Fox 1996) also hints at high status.

Whether we can do a second season and investigate other features will depend on a number of factors including finance and manpower. Here's hoping!

#### **Acknowledgements**

*This excavation could not have taken place without the support of the North Devon AONB and in particular its manager Jenny Carey-Wood. The co-operation of John Rous of Clovelly Estates and Stephen Goaman the farmer was much appreciated. Steve Pitcher was instrumental in galvanising the project and liaising with various bodies. The help of Ross Dean of Substrata and Bryn Morris of South West Archaeology was invaluable.*

*Finally, I am grateful to all those who took part in the dig in particular Steve George and Nigel Dymond without whose daily attendance the dig could not have taken place.*

#### **References:**

- Dean, R. 2018 'Clovelly Dykes hillfort southern extension, Clovelly, Devon'. (Substrata rep. no. 1801CLO-R-1)  
 Fox, A. 1996 'Prehistoric Hillforts in Devon'.  
 Cunliffe, B. 2004 Iron Age Britain (English Heritage)

### **North Devon AONB Coastal Heritage Project**

**Joe Penfold**, the newly appointed AONB Heritage Officer writes:

A new project is currently underway led by the new North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). *Coastal Heritage* is a two-year project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund with additional support from local partners including the National Trust, Torrington District Council and the North Devon Archaeological Society.

My role is to work with local communities, schools, museums and partners through volunteering, learning, researching and practical archaeology to better understand and enjoy the heritage within the

used as a packing stone. Another presumed posthole of similar size (212) was planned. A smaller presumed posthole (210) was also noted. Two sub-circular features (214;216) were also noted and planned to the south of the ring ditch. The edges of the enclosure ditch as evidenced in T1 were also defined and planned.

All the bulk samples were processed in the flotation tank and have been handed on to South West Archaeology for further selection and analysis. It is hoped that dating material can be obtained which will clarify the relationship between the enclosure ditch and the ring ditch.



*Fig.5: Post-hole (208)*

AONB. A key focus therefore is to reach new audiences such as in the Hartland area where the project would like to support community-led activities reflecting the 'history that matters to you'.

Much of the AONB's heritage is at risk from environmental impacts, lack of official protection and/or lack of public awareness. To address this the project will support practical conservation work on a number of historic and archaeological sites with a particular focus on coastal hillforts and World War II features. Alongside this, training, delivered by Historic England, will be offered to volunteers to help identify, record and assess the condition of the AONB's Scheduled Monuments.



*Joe Penfold at the Skern, Northam Burrows, remains of WWII anti invasion obstacles in the background.*

The Coastal Heritage project is also planning to create interpretation materials for trails, museums and commemorative events (including 75th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2019). Significant as they are, many heritage features might be overlooked by those with an untrained eye. A surprising number of our monuments are made accessible by Open Access arrangements and Public Rights of Way, including the South West Coast Path, and the project therefore aims to interpret a number of heritage sites via in-situ information posts, reflecting themes of historical trade, WWII and the Iron Age.

Having funded the recent excavation work at Clovelly Dykes, the project is consulting partners on carrying out archaeological investigation at another pre-historic monument and plans will be unveiled in due course. Opportunities for further funding are also being pursued and include proposals to carry out photogrammetry of coastal promontory hillforts. Low-altitude photogrammetry offers an exciting opportunity to view hillforts from hitherto 'unseen' perspectives and in doing so provides a valuable appreciation of such monuments in a wider landscape (and seascape) context. Should funding be secured, this aspect of the project will enable 3D models of the monuments to be made available to the end-user via a digital platform.

Over the autumn/winter months there are a number of opportunities for members to get involved including guided walks, practical conservation work and training on 'Assessing and Recording Heritage at Risk'. For details please visit our website <https://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk> , email us [aonb@devon.gov.uk](mailto:aonb@devon.gov.uk) or me directly on [joe.penfold@devon.gov.uk](mailto:joe.penfold@devon.gov.uk) .

### Three Summer Visits

During the summer NDAS members enjoyed three very different excursions, visiting Weare Giffard Hall, Clovelly Dykes and Tawstock Court.

On a very fine Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July a walk around North Devon's most spectacular (but mostly invisible) prehistoric monument was led by Terry Green and Steve Hobbs. Steve, as the Hartland area historian, was as helpful and generous with time and information as he has always been. As on previous occasions, members were deeply impressed by the extent of the monument and the scale of its banks and ditches particularly at the central enclosure where despite the



growth of bracken, the depth of the ditches never fails to be awe-inspiring (photo above). Progress around the monument was punctuated by speculative attempts to interpret this currently enigmatic site, questions which will hopefully now begin to be resolved as we make progress with field work. We are finally going to see a geophysical survey of the central area.

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August saw a visit to Weare Giffard Hall. The afternoon was organised by Keith Hughes who lives in Weare Giffard and followed up the visit leading a walk around the village, Professor Willy de Loecker, owner of the Hall, was host and guide to its many astounding features. These included the magnificent entrance hall, the oak panelled Elizabethan Room and the Great Hall. This magnificent example of a late medieval hall with its hammer beam roof, intricate carvings of heraldic beasts, misericords and minstrels' gallery rendered the visitors speechless with admiration. Weare Giffard Hall is truly a gem and rare in its state of preservation. The tour concluded with refreshments in Holy Trinity Church next door and then a tour of the village taking in the river, lime kilns, mill, and finally recent history, the 2015 Community Orchard.



*Part of the hammer beam roof of Weare Giffard Hall*



*Emerging from the Tudor gatehouse, Laura Peryer in the lead.*

Finally on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> September members and guests visited Tawstock. The afternoon began with a look around the church. Dedicated to St Peter, Tawstock church is said by Pevsner to be the architecturally most interesting in North Devon and is known as the Westminster Abbey of Devon due to its unique collection of monuments. With its central tower and largely decorated (13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century) architectural features it is a rarity and well worth close study. The main purpose of the afternoon was a visit to Tawstock Court. Here the co-owner Laura Peryer welcomed us to the building known to many in North Devon as St Michael's School, but now restored by its new owners to reveal its historic character as the seat of the Bouchier-Wreys, Earls of Bath. Highlights of the visit were the spectacular entrance hall, the morning room, the dining room, the beautifully restored stairwell and the Tudor gatehouse, last remaining relic of the pre-18<sup>th</sup> century Tawstock Court. Not least of the attractions was the cream tea provided for us at the end of the visit.

*For these rewarding visits we owe thanks to the Goaman family, tenants of East Dyke Farm, Clovelly, to Professor Willy de Loecker, owner of Weare Giffard Hall and to Laura and Jake Peryer, owners of Tawstock Court. And thank you also to all who answered my request for photographs.*

## Merton and Huish

### Derry Bryant summarises the origin and progress of the NDAS Merton Project

Strange things happen at NDAS evening lectures. One evening I was approached by a gentleman bearing a bulging briefcase, asking me to look at some flints he had found. The briefcase was stuffed with pieces of worked flint; flakes, tools and cores. My feelings? Horror/amazement/curiosity.. I asked him to go away and bag up each piece individually according to category, as I explained, ie. flake, core, blade etc. following which I would take a look at them.

The gentleman concerned was Phil Collins of Merton – he and Dave Locke, (avid metal detectorists), had picked up worked flints in a field at Huish near Merton. Phil also pointed out several interesting features around Merton including: a field with cropmarks showing up on aerial photos and a possible 18<sup>th</sup> century pipe kiln site at Little Potheridge.

I started analysing the lithics, recording them onto a database. This is now nearing completion, with the help of Henrietta Quinnell (Exeter university), who gave us guidance at two lithic recording workshops.. I have recorded more than 700 worked pieces so far.

We obtained permission from the landowners, Clinton Estates and the tenant farmers to undertake a field project. This would include looking for the kiln site at Little Potheridge, fieldwalking the flint field and surveying the cropmarks at Huish.

#### Little Potheridge:

Regular readers of the NDAS newsletter will be familiar with the excavations that was carried out on the pipe-kiln site at Little Potheridge from 2013 to 2016. This involved initial research, hard physical work during three summer seasons and an immense amount of post-excavation work for Chris Preece who directed the excavations and has had the task of sorting through thousands of claypipe fragments before submitting a report to DAS Proceedings for publication.



*Sorting pipe fragments at Little Potheridge*

#### Flints:



*Flint field at Huish with lone fieldwalker*

with geology research. We undertook a gridded fieldwalk in part of the field in 2016 to look for raw material but were unsuccessful.

The flints from Huish, studied and recorded over the past four years; comprise a large collection ranging from Mesolithic to Bronze Age. The field is located near a known barrow, and is part of a shallow valley in the Petrockstowe Basin. This in itself is an interesting location, mentioned by the late John Newberry in DAS Proceedings No. 60, 2002 "Inland Flint in Prehistoric Devon; Sources, Tool-making Quality and Use", John suggested more research be undertaken regarding sources of flint in North Devon, particularly the Petrockstowe Basin. I am most interested in this part of

the project; hoping to determine if the lithics are from raw material in the locality. John Bradbeer helped me

## **The Cropmarks at Huish:**

Phil provided a 1940's aerial photo showing circular marks in the field adjacent to the flint field. Upon visiting the site, I noticed a large circular area, slightly raised, of different soil structure and colour to the rest of the field. It seemed worth investigating and to this end we will carry out a geophysical survey in October with the Society's TR earth resistance meter. It has been some time since we used the equipment, so it was decided to use this opportunity as a training event. It is important to note that previously this area has been used to extract white clay, so it is possible features are associated with clay extraction. We may also spend a day on earthwork survey (drawing the feature in plan and profile).

Results of the flint analysis and the geophysics surveys will be reported back to the Society on completion.

We would like to thank Clinton Estates and the tenant farmers for their cooperation with the above activities; our finds will add to the historical record of Huish and Merton and we are most grateful. Also to Phil Collins and family for help and hospitality over the life of this project.

*A note regarding "finding" artefacts: The location of any flint pieces or interesting artefacts which are picked up during walking should be carefully noted. It is really important that we note as accurately as possible where such items are found, so that they can be reported to the Historic Environment Record or museum. Once an item has been removed from a location, a part of the historical record of that location has been destroyed.*

## **Agistment, a practice that may have ancient roots**

The Tithe Survey of 1837-1845 represents the most comprehensive picture of the pre-modern landscape since the Domesday survey of 1086. **John Bradbeer** writes:

A few landscape historians have claimed that the Tithe Survey allows the medieval landscape to be reconstructed fairly accurately. Most would not go so far but there is general agreement that traces of medieval features may be found by close examination of the Tithe Map and Apportionment. One such feature that I have found is 'agistment'. This term refers to a specific practice and also to land where it occurred. Agistment is the practice of taking in livestock for a summer season on payment of a fee per animal. Unlike commons, where either the whole parish or specific farms within a parish have rights to depasture animals without payment, agistments were open to anyone, wherever they lived, who was prepared to drive stock and pay the fee. The owner of the agistment then took responsibility for the stock while the farmer could remain at home.

Harold Fox has suggested that various forms of summer seasonal agriculture survived from the Iron Age into medieval times. One such is classic transhumance, where people accompany livestock to the summer pastures, then live in temporary dwellings away from the farmstead. Whilst this had died out in Devon before late eighteenth century writers such as William Marshall and Charles Vancouver could record it, transhumance survived into the nineteenth century in Ireland, where it was known as booleying. Irish booleys are found on hillsides, mountains, and, more pertinently for comparison with Devon agistments, on the fringes of lowland bogs and wetland.

The Tithe Apportionment gives field names and usually also the name of the legal holding of which it was a part. In the parishes that I have studied, 'Agistment' (or gestment, jestment or justment), is the name of 32 holdings. However, seven of these are divisions of Veale's Agistment in Pyworthy parish and in Black Torrington and again in Pyworthy, there are two agistment holdings bearing the same name. It is probably wiser to note the distribution of parishes where the name occurs rather than to

quantify the number or area of such holdings. It is highly likely that the practice of agistment went into decline over a period of many years and perhaps land previously used as agistment was incorporated into neighbouring holdings.



*Sketch map showing parishes with an agistment holding (shaded). Study area boundary shown with dotted line.*

The sketch map shows the distribution of parishes with at least one agistment holding. (NB. At least two of the parishes not yet analysed could well prove to have agistment holdings) It is clear that the name has survived only in the parishes on the Culm Measures to the south of Barnstaple and Bideford and, indeed, seems to be more prevalent in the west of this area. The Culm Measures comprise sandstones, siltstones and shales of Carboniferous age (c 285 Mya). Where sandstones occur on sloping ground, the soils are moderately fertile. However, where siltstones and shales outcrop on plateaus or gentle slopes, heavy clay soils develop which are often water-logged in winter and can form a hard crust in dry and warm summers. These have always been

difficult lands to farm, with many areas, especially between Holsworthy and Halwill, planted up with conifers in the twentieth century. It certainly looks as if most of the agistments are to be found on such difficult land. Being wet, in summer they could offer valuable grazing when the better quality land was suffering from the effects of drought.

## The Landkey Parish Table

**Alison Mills** reports on this latest acquisition at the museum:

In August we were made aware that the 16<sup>th</sup> century table that has stood in the Landkey parish house for over 400 years was being put up for sale at a London auctioneers. The alarm was raised among Devon historians and a massive effort was made to save the table from being removed not only from Devon, but quite possibly from the country. The sale at Bonhams was to take place in September, so time was short. However, discussion with the owners, the Trustees of Landkey United Charities, led to the table being withdrawn from sale and a successful bid to the Museums Association Beecroft Bequest for £10,000 meant that this rarity will now be rehomed in the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon where it will be on display in the museum library, which is being converted into a public research area as part of the extension project.



*The Table*

*Courtesy Bonhams 1973 Ltd*



So why is it so important? The Landkey Table is a rare example of a type of table found in institutions such as colleges, monasteries and almshouses. The earliest long tables were boards placed loosely on trestles and the seats were long benches or, in higher status contexts, individual stools. By the seventeenth century joined refectory tables were adopted in large houses. The Landkey Table is an intermediate type which still has trestles but where the top is fixed and where the benches are attached to the horizontal trestle supports. This emerged in the sixteenth century in institutional contexts. The fixed benches are a very rare feature. It is one of only two parish room tables from the 16th or 17th century known in Devon and is an exceptional example of the workmanship of West Country craftsmen. The table, which was probably assembled inside the parish house, measures almost 17 feet long and is made from a single plank of oak, with benches on either side, one trestle-end carved with the date 1655 flanked by the churchwardens' initials WL and TG (William Lavercombe and Thomas Gould were churchwardens in 1655). This appears to record a repair.



*Introducing the table to its new home.*

Having secured the table, our next problem was getting it back to North Devon. At 17 feet long this was not an easy task and had to be done rapidly. A company called Exquisite Carriage came up with the answer (they had already moved it from Oxford, where it went for assessment before the auction) and on September 20th the table returned to North Devon –almost exactly a month after we first heard about it. The table had probably been assembled inside the first floor Landkey parish rooms and to get it out the window had had to be removed! Fortunately we haven't had to do anything so drastic, but we did need the help of our builders to

get it out of the van and into the museum. It now sits 'flat-packed' in the entrance hall. One day we shall have to get it upstairs!

## Two medieval buildings at Charles

**Bryn Morris** reports:-

Monitoring work undertaken by SWARCH in advance of the construction of a horse menage at Charles, Brayford, revealed the remains of two small medieval buildings. They were uncovered behind Deerpark Farm in the corner of a field listed on the tithe apportionment as 'garden', next to 'Leworthys' field, and about 80m south-west of a site we monitored in 2012 that produced medieval coarseware pottery from several slight ditches. The two structures were represented by rectangular hollows roughly 7x4m across cut up to 0.4m into the natural. The eastern building produced no clear structural evidence or artefacts. The western

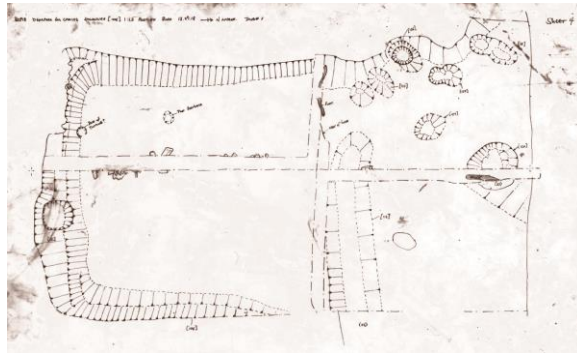


*Rectangular hollow of the west building*

*Scales – 2metres*

structure was rather better preserved. A line of pitched stone to the south-west side may have formed the base of a wall, and there was a single posthole to the middle of each short side, presumably to support a ridgepole. Other mostly insubstantial postholes were excavated in the north-west quadrant of this building. Immediately above the floor was a thin layer of dark soil - perhaps an occupation layer - and a substantial amount of pottery. The bulk of the pottery comes from two vessels. The first was a North Devon medieval coarseware cistern (a water storage vessel). The second vessel was probably a cooking pot with a lightly oxidised exterior but black interior. A smaller number of sherds from a third vessel were in a very hard/well-fired grey fabric; subject to confirmation, this may be a new pottery type.

Structural parallels for these two small 'sunken-featured' buildings are very sparse. Similar structures were excavated by Trevor Miles and Henrietta Quinnell at Pilton, and Building C at Sowton Down is another possible candidate. The best analogies are provided by the sunken-featured structures of the Saxo-Norman phase at Launceston Castle. The discovery of these buildings at Charles would suggest they were once commonplace, and other examples may yet be recognised in the literature. In



*Site drawing of the western building*

terms of dating, the examples at Charles are dated by the cistern to after 1250, while the black fabric of the second vessel may have parallels with the pre-castle (Saxo-Norman) pottery at Barnstaple.

## **The NDAS Programme of Winter Talks and Events 2018-19**

All talks take place at the Castle Centre Barnstaple at 7.30pm.

*Note – the AGM in March starts at 7.00pm*

**16<sup>th</sup> Oct:** Henrietta Quinnell (Exeter University): 'Iron Age Devon and its Hillforts'.

**20<sup>th</sup> Nov:** Emily Wapshott (South West Archaeology): 'The Archaeology of Buildings'.

**11<sup>th</sup> Dec:** NDAS Annual Dinner at the Barnstaple Hotel

**See below for menu and booking form.**

**15<sup>th</sup> Jan:** Joe Penfold (North Devon AONB): 'North Devon Coastal Heritage Project'.

**19<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Chris Preece: Marine Archaeology in Devon – a Personal View.

**19<sup>th</sup> Mar:** NDAS AGM followed by Terry Green: A Review of Archaeology in North Devon

**16<sup>th</sup> April:** Laura Burnett (Finds Liaison Officer South West): Small Finds in North Devon.

TG.

# **The Barnstaple Hotel**

## **Silver Served Christmas Fayre Menu**

### **Homemade Cream of Vegetable Soup**

Parmesan croutons, herb oil

### **Prawn Cocktail**

Marie Rose sauce, brown bread and butter

### **Cantaloupe Melon**

Lemon sherbet, pomegranate, mango sauce

~oOo~

### **Roast Silverside of Beef**

Yorkshire pudding & horseradish sauce

### **Roast Devon Turkey**

Served with a bacon roll, chestnut stuffing and cranberry sauce

### **Homemade Roast Vegetable & Bean Loaf - V**

Served with Vegetable Gravy

### **Grilled Fillet of Salmon**

Chervil & lime cream sauce

Cauliflower & broccoli mornay

Buttered brussel sprouts with chestnuts

Orange & ginger carrots

Roast potatoes

Minted new potatoes

~oOo~

### **Homemade Sweet of the Day**

### **Christmas Pudding**

Brandy sauce

### **Fresh Fruit Salad**

~oOo~

### **Coffee & Mints**

## NDAS Annual Dinner

Ashford Suite  
The Barnstaple Hotel  
Braunton Road, Barnstaple, EX31 1LE.

7.00pm for 7.30pm Tuesday 11th December 2018

2 Courses £19.75 and 3 Courses £22.75  
(Tea & coffee is included in the price.)

### BOOKING FORM

Name/s Attending:

Contact Phone:

Contact Email:

Starter Choice/s:

Main Course Choice/s:

Dessert Choice/s:

No deposit required!

Booking form and full payment for meal/s must be sent to me by no later than Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November.

Booking form and cheque payable to 'NDAS' to be returned to:  
Bob Shrigley, 20 Skern Way, Northam, Bideford, EX39 1HZ.  
Phone: 01237 478122 Email: rvs1120@gmail.com