

Newsletter Spring 2014

The NDAS AGM March 2014:

At the annual general meeting of the society held in March 2014 Derry Bryant stood down as Chair. Linda Blanchard was proposed as the new Chair and was duly voted in. We thank Derry for all her hard work and strong leadership during recent years and we thank Linda for accepting the role and look forward to a future under her chairmanship. Alison Mills was re-elected as Vice-Chair, John Bradbeer as Secretary and Bob Shrigley as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. June Aiken stood down from the NDAS Committee, while Sarah McRae was proposed and elected as a new committee member. The NDAS Committee now comprises:

Linda Blanchard (Chair), Alison Mills (Vice-Chair), John Bradbeer (Secretary), Bob Shrigley (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Pat Hudson (Publicity), Terry Green (Newsletter), Adam Bradford (Barnstaple Town Council), Derry Bryant, Brian Fox, Lance Hosegood, Colin Humphreys (South West Archaeology), Jonathan Lomas, Sarah McRae, Stephen Pitcher.

Your main contacts are:

Linda Blanchard: blanchard.linda@live.co.uk 01598 763490

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Membership Subscriptions:

If you haven't already renewed for the current year, may we remind you that annual subscriptions (£16 per individual adult member, joint membership (couples) £24, junior and student membership £8) became due on 1st April. Subscriptions should be sent to the NDAS Membership Secretary, Bob Shrigley, 20 Skern Way, Northam, Bideford, Devon. EX39 1HZ. You can save yourself the trouble of having to remember every year by completing a standing order, forms available from Bob.

Digging at Little Potheridge

After last year's exploration of the potential clay-pipe kiln site at Little Potheridge (Merton), the Society is this year extending the excavation beyond the area dug in 2013. This is once again being directed by Chris Preece and takes place with the permission of the landowner Clinton Estates and the tenant Mr Nancekivell. The dig is taking place from 17th May to 7th June. The volunteer digger team is already set up and by the time you receive this newsletter will



Starting the dig at Little Potheridge

already be well and truly 'into it'. The aim this year is to extend eastwards and southwards from the area excavated last year in the continued attempt to locate a kiln site. There will probably be an open day towards the end of the three weeks. Information will be provided by email nearer the time.

For the information of anyone new to NDAS, documentary evidence combined with abundant evidence on the ground in the form of a dense scatter of pipe fragments suggests the presence of a clay-pipe manufacturing site at Little Potheridge. It is rare to uncover the kilns in which clay-pipes were made, particularly so in the South West, so success here would be a feather in the NDAS cap.

The Longstone Landscape Project:

Linda Blanchard

The Parracombe History and Archaeology Society (PHAS), some residents of Challacombe, North Devon Archaeological Society, the Exmoor Moorland Initiative and the Exmoor National Park have teamed up to undertake this ambitious new project. With more than forty signed up volunteers there is great potential to research, record and more fully understand the moorland archaeology straddling the parish boundary between Parracombe and Challacombe. The project will last for at least two years. Whilst the majority of the work will be undertaken by volunteers, skilled and unskilled, there are experts on hand to advise and plenty of free training opportunities. There is still room for more volunteers if you are interested. We will provide training.

In the last couple of months the Exmoor Moorlands Project have provided masses of training from first aid, through surveying to flint recognition and Terry Green has trained a group in field boundary survey. Several of us worked with Leicester University PhD Student Doug Mitchum to help him undertake geophysical surveys of a couple of possible Neolithic monuments, one of which may be a mortuary enclosure while the other is an arrangement of standing stones in the pattern of a giant number five on a domino or dice. Another team has begun looking at the deserted settlement of Radworthy beginning with recording field boundaries. A preliminary walkover in areas of possible Mesolithic or Neolithic flint working has already come up with two worked flints. Exmoor National Park have commissioned the firm GSB Prospection to work with us to undertake geophysical surveys of one of the Chapman Barrows.

You can keep up to date with the project via the Parracombe Community and History Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/parracombe)

The Archaeology

The moorland in the area between Challacombe and Parracombe is recognised as one of the most important archaeological landscapes in the South West of England. The area is known as Chapman Barrows and Challacombe Common. Dominated by the Longstone (a slab of slate some 3m high and erected, possibly, up to 6000 years ago) this area commands spectacular views and is littered with prehistoric and more recent earthworks.

The most substantial remains are the Chapman Barrows comprising at least eleven large Bronze Age burial mounds forming a cemetery along the Parish Boundary. The Reverend Chanter and others opened some of the barrows over a hundred years ago. The easternmost barrow was found to have



The Longstone with view towards Wood Barrow

a central burnt patch, a large pottery vessel and some bones, very likely human. These were surrounded by a low stone wall and covered with turves to build a sizeable mound.

Close by and relatively recently discovered is a low rectangular platform some 25 metres long by 10 wide. It is enclosed by a low bank with a slight ditch. This is an intriguing site and recent theories suggest that it could be the remains of a Neolithic mortuary enclosure, which is a place where bodies were placed as part of some unknown ritual or religious practice.

Elsewhere on the moor are prehistoric stone settings and one of especial interest above Challacombe is known as a quincunx. It consists of five stones, under a metre in height, set in the pattern of the five dots on a domino piece of that value, covering an area of about 6 metres by 7 metres.

Just above Challacombe is the deserted farmstead and field system of Radworthy. This settlement was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 indicating that it was occupied from at least Anglo-Saxon times. A complex system of field boundaries hints at many hundreds of years of farming on the site. A recent LIDAR (remote sensing) survey has shown up two circular platforms which might possibly be Iron Age hut circles.

For the project the six priorities are:

1. The Chapman Barrows: These barrows have not been surveyed since the Rev. Chanter investigated them over 100 years ago. The priority will be to get detailed drawings, a good photographic record, a monument condition report and maybe some geophysical surveys. We will also need to put together an archive of the site, collating any maps, old photographs or drawings, any published reports, records or artefacts. It would be useful to research the life of the Reverend Chanter, who lived in Parracombe, and publish a biography.



Trig point on the highest of the Chapman Barrows

- 2. **Chanters Barrow**: this is the easternmost barrow and one which was excavated by the Reverend Chanter and of which some drawings remain. There are lots of questions about this site which we shall hope to answer through careful examination of the barrow and nearby features and (with appropriate permissions) through a re-excavation of Chanter's trench.
- 3. **The Mortuary Enclosure**: This site is being studied by Doug Mitcham of Leicester University as part of his PhD research. He will be undertaking detailed geophysical surveys of the site and will possibly dig a small section through it. He will require the help of a few volunteers on this project.
- 4. **The Quincunx**: This site has been damaged by vehicles on the site. It needs a detailed site drawing and photographs, some geophysics and also a small dig. Exmoor rangers could then reinstate stones which have been displaced.



Measuring a boundary seen as a low earth bank at Radworthy

- 5. **Radworthy**: This abandoned site has never been properly studied. There is the need for examination and recording of the earthworks, a photographic and drawn record of the remains of the settlement together with a study of historic maps and any documentary records. Although the settlement was abandoned in the 1860s there is enough folk memory of it to compile a fragmentary oral history.
- 6. **Spring Head surveys**. Elsewhere on Exmoor stream heads have been fertile areas for finds of flints and signs of Mesolithic occupation. Using archaeological survey techniques and walking across these areas could help us find sites of similar dates within the Longstone landscape.

Not on our priority list but still worth doing is a walkover survey of Butter Hill above Woolhanger which is a blank area in the Historic Environment Record for Exmoor, although local knowledge suggests there should be some stone settings and maybe earthworks.

If anyone is interested, there is also the mystery of the military use of the area for World War II training. Much of Exmoor was used by the British Army and there are suggestions that some of the earthworks on the moor could be survivals of Home Guard training activities.

NB. Metal Detectorists: this is private land and much of it is protected by law so no metal detectors.

When is a Barn not a Barn?

In light of Steve Pitcher's piece on planning (See below), it is encouraging to note the contribution that individual members can make to conservation through simply being aware. The answer to the question in the title can be found in the following account by NDAS member Kevin O'Hanlon.



Truss or cruck bedded in the wall, surface smoke-blackened and pecked.

Last December my wife and I were invited to lunch by a North Devon farmer friend. After lunch we were taken to see one of the barns which was said to have once been the farmhouse, but had been abandoned after a fire. It quickly became obvious that the story was essentially true, for I could see that the massive timbers which supported an upper floor were ornately carved at the ends and set into substantial walls, something which I had seen in books on historic architecture. Arriving on the upper floor I was excited to see that the roof timbers were a medieval A-frame with the trusses set two to three feet into the tops of the walls. I took a number of photographs and at the next NDAS talk showed them to Terry Green who said that Colin Humphreys (of South West Archaeology) should have a look at them.

Alison Mills and myself paid a visit to the farm which turned out to be the most interesting archaeological experience I had been involved in. Colin and Alison's opinion was that the building could date from the 16th or even 15th century, and was indeed an earlier house. The stonework was clay bonded (unfortunately, as it happens, since water seepage has led to some collapse) and the Aframes were coated in soot or smoke stains, the surface of the timbers having been 'pecked' at a later date to provide a key for plaster to cover up the smoke-blackening. It appeared that the massive

beams supporting the upper floor had been inserted some considerable time after the original construction, converting an open hall into a two-storey house. It was thought that some of the other buildings might be contemporary with the barn or house and a dendrochronology survey was suggested on what could turn out to be an important historic building in North Devon. The owner has no plans to do anything with the building other than conserve it. Let's hope that a really comprehensive investigation can be carried out in the future.

Flint!

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the residue of prehistoric flint and chert knapping as well as the artefacts themselves are to be found, under suitable conditions, right across northern Devon. It was for a long time supposed that knapping sites were confined to the coastal areas, and in fact it is true that large quantities of debitage have been found at coastal sites such as Westward Ho! and



The flint nodule found in the River Heddon last year – stashed for future use and forgotten?

Baggy Point and somewhat farther inland in, for example, the Clovelly hinterland (the Eggerton Godwin collection in the Museum of North Devon). A broad scatter of debitage that turned up near Chawleigh some years ago and the large quantity of lithic material picked up through systematic field-walking at West Yeo, Witheridge point to the widespread inland occurrence of flint scatters. The recent discovery of a profusion of flint debitage and artefacts in the Merton, Huish, Petrockstow area further underscores the point. Participants in the Longstone Landscape Project have been provided with flint recognition training and are systematically searching spring heads on Exmoor, these being the kind of site thought to have been favoured by Mesolithic hunter-

gatherers. In fact it is the topography of flint scatters that tells us something about the lives of prehistoric inhabitants of Devon, so that mapping the finds will be an important research tool. However, producing an informative map obviously depends on knowing where the sites are and

that depends on people reporting finds. NDAS has offered flint recognition training on several occasions and will very probably do so again. If you have had training or will take the opportunity in the future, then keep your eyes open when walking beside ploughed fields or on moorland tracks or anywhere the soil is exposed. If you come across flints, take away only as much as will provide evidence of your find and report it either directly to the Historic Environment Service (01392 382246) or to the Museum of North Devon or bring it along to an NDAS lecture evening. The information is invaluable.

Incidentally, John Newberry has commented on the large flint nodule found in the River Heddon at Holworthy Farm which was featured in the autumn 2013 newsletter, suggesting that it may indeed have been brought into the area as raw material and cached in the water (to preserve its moisture content) and forgotten.

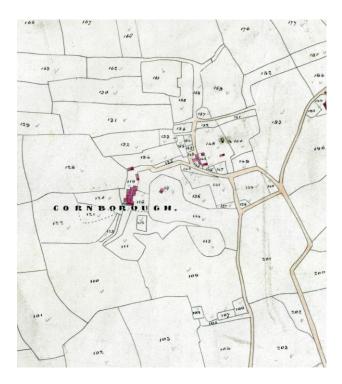
Please take note of the following:

- Do not walk on private land without the landowner's permission
- Inform the landowner if you find anything

Most importantly, note the exact location of the finds in case it is part of a feature - an
archaeologist may come back to that spot in the future to investigate further, and will need
this information. Also the HER will need the precise location to add it to the records.

Northern Devon in the Tithe Survey

John Bradbeer



A section of the Abbotsham tithe map, showing numbered fields around Cornborough

An invaluable resource for examining the agrarian landscape of early Victorian England is the Tithe Survey, carried out in the five or six years after the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. Tithes, originally a tenth of the harvest, were paid annually in kind to the rector of each parish. By the early nineteenth century they had become both cumbersome to administer and increasingly unpopular.. The 1836 Act proposed that payment of tithes in kind be replaced by an annual monetary payment, to be determined by the quality of the land and its then contemporary use. To this end, all parishes where tithes were paid were to be surveyed with lists of land, land-owners, land occupiers, land use and size of parcels recorded in the Apportionment. Accompanying the Apportionment was a large scale map, showing individual parcels

Accompanying the Apportionment was a large scale map, showing individual parcels each with a number so that they could be found in the Apportionment. In some parts of England where Parliamentary Enclosure Acts had been passed, the tithes were already commuted to money payments, but

in Devon, almost all parishes retained tithe in kind. Copies of the Tithe Apportionment are available as downloads from the Devon Record Office and there are plans to make the Tithe Maps similarly available. At the moment, the original maps or microfiche copies may be consulted in the Devon and North Devon Record Offices.

The timing of the Tithe Survey was fortuitous, as within a decade, the Corn Laws had been repealed and the country could now import grain from continental Europe and then from the New World. This, combined with the spread and integration of the railway network, allowed greater regional specialisation in agriculture and effectively the creation of a national market for agricultural products. Devon's specialisation in livestock and dairying dates from the mid-nineteenth century and was consolidated by the long agricultural depression from c 1880-1939. Thus the Tithe Survey gives some glimpse of the agriculture before these momentous changes. It also allows for some evidence based speculation about Devon's agriculture in the early modern era.

My recent interest in the Tithe Survey arose from being Devon Wildlife Trust's Volunteer Warden on some culm grassland nature reserves. Seeing what the land, now wet and rough culm grassland, had been used for some 180 years ago was revelatory and I soon started trying to put specific fields into the wider context of farm holdings and parishes. I have since widened my sample parishes to include some to the north and east of Barnstaple on the outcrop of Devonian rocks. I must add that the

sample is what statisticians politely call opportunistic, so it makes no claim to be statistically representative and indeed, some of my work now suggests that finding a statistically representative sample would be a fraught undertaking.

My sample parishes were surveyed between 1837 and 1842. Local men were employed as surveyors but always in parishes where they did not live. The Act laid down a fairly clear specification for the survey and defined the principal land-uses as arable, meadow, pasture, gardens, orchards, woodland as well as waste (un-titheable land) including buildings, farm yards, quarries and the like. Some surveyors clearly felt that these categories were not refined enough, so they recorded coarse pasture, moory pasture, furzey pasture and morassy pasture, for instance. I had assumed that this was splitting categories as they saw them, but the work of George Cooper of Alverdiscott opens up other possibilities. In the two parishes in my sample that he surveyed, he recorded virtually no meadow at all. It is almost as if he felt that the grassland he saw had to be either pasture or ley pasture in an arable rotation.

The table below presents aggregated data for a sample of seventeen parishes, all on the Carboniferous Culm Measures, south of Barnstaple and Bideford. I have not yet examined enough parishes on the Devonian to make a meaningful comparison. The area involved is around 31,000 acres and I have combined gardens with orchards and farm buildings and other waste. The proportion of land recorded as arable probably stands out. For a few of my parishes, the share of arable land rises to over 75% and only in Huish did the share fall as low as 42%. Huish is a special case in that it contains Heanton Satchville House, the seat of Lord Clinton, and its extensive park was recorded as pasture by the surveyor.

In a total area of 30,755.5 acres the proportions (of agricultural and other land uses) are:-

Arable	Meadow	Pasture	Gardens and Orchards	Houses and Waste	Woodland
67.3%	4.8%	19.5%	1.7%	1.2%	5.5%

The Tithe Survey also offers some evidence for the partial survival of the traditional Devonshire practices of convertible husbandry and beat-burning, which effectively died out within another generation. Convertible husbandry is known from the fourteenth century and is thought to be still older. A farm was effectively divided into the 'infield' of about 7-10 fields around the farmstead and the 'outfield' of the rest of the holding. The 'infield' was worked relatively intensively and received regular applications of farmyard manure, and unlike other rotational systems, fields were never left as bare earth fallows but always had the final crop of cereals under-sown with grass. About a third of the fields in the 'infield' would be tilled in any one year. The 'outfield' was less intensively farmed and about every fifteen years, a field would be prepared for cereal production. This almost always entailed 'beat-burning' or Devonshiring as it was often called. Here the turf would be pared off, sometimes with a special veiling plough, at other times by hand using a special spade, the breast plough or a mattock. The turves were left to dry out and then gathered up to be burnt with furze and straw. The ashes were then spread on the soil and whatever manure, lime or sea-sand that could be procured ploughed in. Two, very occasionally, three crops of corn, and almost always oats in the last year, would be grown and then the land would be allowed to revert to pasture. So roughly a fifth of the 'outfield' would be under tillage n any one year. Some of the surveyors record "arable occasionally" and this points to parcels in the outfield still being beat-burned. At Stowford, in Bulkworthy parish, fields returned as arable occasionally lie along the parish boundary at the edge of the holding and some 1.5 km from the farmstead. They are also now prime examples of wet culm grassland and form Devon Wildlife Trust's Stowford Moor reserve.

I had assumed that common land, such as East Putford Common Moor, where all the farmsteads in the parish had grazing rights, were never beat-burned. I now have to be more cautious in assuming this, for in the Tetcott Aportionment, its now enclosed common was reported to be cleared for tillage, over half the area every twenty years, over a quarter of the area every fifteen years and the rest, the surveyor perhaps laconically noted, was bog and morass. Ecologists recognise several sub-types of culm grassland but the Tithe Survey does not seem to support the idea that variations in past landuse explain present ecological differences. I have noted classic rough wet culm grassland today as arable, pasture and rough pasture, as well as arable occasionally in the Tithe Survey.

The other statistic that might strike people as significant is the share of woodland, at around 5.5%, which is almost exactly the same as the amount of woodland recorded in the Domesday Book, some 750 years earlier. Tree planting was seemingly starting to become popular at the time of the Tithe Survey and there are many examples of small parcels of land, usually only an acre or two at the most, recorded as plantation or firs.

Woodland also shows an interesting pattern with regard to land-ownership, for in many parishes the principal land-owner, such as Lord Clinton or Reverend John Pine-Coffin (at Alwington and Monkleigh) kept the woodland to himself while letting the agricultural land to tenants. Plantations also had the advantage of offering cover for game-birds.

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there. These words from L P Hartley's novel 'The Go-Between' are often quoted but they do seem an apt way to describe northern Devon as recorded in the Tithe Survey.

The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon and the North Devon Record Office:

These very valuable heritage assets are under direct threat. The District and the County Council are both under pressure to reduce expenditure, one result of which is the decision to abandon the Civic Centre in Barnstaple and relocate officers to other council owned buildings. Thus the District Council plans to take over parts of the Museum – and thereby undermine the ability of the Museum staff to function as it should as a community asset - while the County Council has plans to take over the floor of the Library building currently occupied by the North Devon Record Office and Local Studies Library and the North Devon Athenaeum. As a consequence there is a plan to remove a large proportion of North Devon's documentary archive to Exeter and to drastically reduce the service currently provided to the public. These developments should be of deep concern to anyone interested in North Devon's unique heritage and while it is beyond our means to stop any of it, NDAS members should be aware of what is happening, keep an eye on the press and be ready and willing to speak out loudly whenever and wherever possible. Keep your eyes and ears open and use your democratic right to put pressure on the decision makers.

Obituary – Jennifer Gabriel-Powell:

We have to report the death at the age of 30 of Jennifer Gabriel-Powell. Born in the USA, Jennifer met her husband Andy Powell while digging in America. She married Andy, former mayor of Bideford and enthusiast for North Devon pottery and the Atlantic trade. Coming to live in Bideford she made her own contribution to North Devon pottery studies. Jennifer died in March this year. Our sympathies go to Andy Powell and Jennifer's family.

The NDAS Winter Programme 2014-15

The dates for the next winter programme are set out below. The programme of talks has yet to be finalised and will be communicated to you by email or post in due course. It will of course also be in the autumn newsletter.

21 October 2014, 17 February 2015

18 November 2014 17 March 2015 (AGM)

Annual dinner, early December 14 April 2015

20 January 2015

Archaeology and Planning

The current flood of proposals to build on green field sites in our area requires vigilance on our part since archaeology is potentially threatened. Steve Pitcher writes:-

We have had a comprehensive planning system that regulates development in this country since 1948. Despite many changes of government and of priorities it is still based on a two-fold approach: the need to apply for planning permission for most development and the duty of local planning authorities to prepare, consult on and publish plans for the development of their areas – known as local plans.

Currently the Government's policies for the exercise of these duties are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012. Section 12 of the NPPF is about conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The first paragraph is worth quoting:

- "126. Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place."

Later the NPPF states

"128. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using

appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation." (my emphasis)

These paragraphs determine the way local planning authorities handle heritage matters, including archaeological interests. The North Devon and Torridge Local Plan sets out policies and proposals for the development of the area until 2031. It includes a policy on Conserving Heritage Assets:

"The quality of northern Devon's historic environment will be preserved and enhanced through positive management by:

- Conserving and enhancing the historic dimension of the landscape;
- Conserving and enhancing cultural, built, historic and archaeological features of national and local importance and their settings, including those that are not formally designated;
- Identifying and protecting locally important buildings that contribute to the area's local character and identity; and
- Increasing opportunities for access, education and appreciation of all aspects of northern Devon's historic environment, for all sections of the community.

It also contains a statement about undesignated heritage assets. This says:

"Some heritage assets remain undiscovered, especially archaeological remains, or their heritage value is not yet recognised, so will also remain undesignated. Buildings that are not listed but contribute to the local street scene by adding character, diversity and local distinctiveness to northern Devon's historic environment will be identified as locally important buildings. The intrinsic historic value of all of these undesignated heritage assets will also be recognised and conserved."

So far so good! The policy intentions are good and should protect most of what we know are valuable heritage assets. This is important as currently this area is experiencing a large number of major applications, mainly for housing, on the edge of the main towns and villages. Mostly these are on green field (previously undeveloped) sites. NDAS is often notified of these developments and comments when it is considered necessary. The problem is that we don't know enough about the areas on the edge of our towns and villages. Do they contain "undiscovered heritage assets"; if so how would we know and how should we respond?

We have been discussing this matter with the local planners and with Steve Reed, from the County Historic Environment Team. In an ideal world developers would be required to carry out archaeological assessments of their proposed sites before submitting planning applications for them. In practice this doesn't happen, or where it does the assessments are desk-based and refer only to assets that are recorded in the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER). The trouble is that the Devon HER currently has a significant back-log in recording submitted information on sites. In addition it won't contain anything on the sites that are, as yet, unknown!

The answer seems to be constant vigilance on our part. We know very little about the early development of our settlements, particularly in the early mediaeval period. At best we have place name evidence and what might be gleaned from aerial photographs or field-walking. The latter would require landowners' permission, of course. Recently we responded to a major application for a southern extension at Ilfracombe. Although the site contains no recorded archaeology and nothing is listed on the Devon HER, local knowledge enabled us to point out to the planning authority the presence on the site of two farmsteads that are at least post-medieval (and could from place name evidence be earlier).

So here's to keeping a close eye on the planning lists in the local paper and to being terminally nosey about developments going on locally, particularly the major ones affecting historic town and village centres, or on the edge of settlements where there may be archaeological interest! If you spot anything of interest or concern, let us (and the planners) know.

Book Sale:

We are selling off the contents of the NDAS library of archaeological and related books and periodicals. A list with prices can be obtained from Bob Shrigley (rvs1120@gmail.com, telephone 01237478122). Proceeds of the sale go to supplement NDAS funds.