

A black and white photograph of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, several people are walking along the shore, which is covered in dark, wet rocks. The ocean is visible in the middle ground, and a hazy coastline with hills or mountains is in the background. The overall scene is serene and suggests an archaeological or historical site.

# **NORTH DEVON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**ISSUE 4    AUTUMN 2002**

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01793 414600

NDDC Historic Buildings Officer  
01271 346436

## Useful contacts

**June Aiken** (Parracombe Group) 01598 763316

**Sally Cotton** (South Molton and District Local History Society) 01769 572378

**Janet Daynes** (ACE Archaeology, Winkleigh and District) 01837 83925

**Jane Green** (NDAS Treasurer and Membership Secretary) 01271 866662

**Terry Green** (NDAS Newsletter) 01271 866662

**Sean Hawken** (Community Landscapes Project)  
01392 263851

**Colin Humphreys** (NDAS Projects Manager)  
01271 882152

**Jim Knights** (Brayford and Charles Group)  
01598 710014

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740359

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**Kes Webb** (Combe Martin Silver Mines Research and Preservation Society) 01271 850349

**Rob Wilson-North** (Exmoor National Park Authority Archaeologist) 01398 323665

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## **Autumn 2002: Chairman's Report**

This is a very exciting time to be involved in archaeology in the northern Devon and Exmoor region. The recent discoveries of Romano-British industrial activity on the west Exmoor fringe promise to cast an entirely new light on the early history and development of this area. In this context, landscape projects such as those developed by the Community Landscapes Project and our own work at Parracombe have the potential to contribute significantly. The point of such exercises is to unpick the layers of landscape development to which, at more than one stage, the mining, processing and transport of metals must have contributed.

It seems, in fact, that ancient metal-working is becoming the leitmotif of archaeology in North Devon. In summer 2001, members were involved in Dr Gill Juleff's excavations at Brayford, where evidence of iron-smelting in the Romano-British period is abundant. This year, members were again involved as volunteers on an adjacent site, this time helping out with a District Council and English Heritage funded dig conducted by SouthWest Archaeology on what appears to be an ore-preparation and/or smelting site. Members of NDAS also joined as volunteers in a University of Exeter dig at Sherracombe Ford, where again very extensive Iron-Age and Romano-British industrial activity is in evidence.

Furthermore, during the spring and summer, Trevor Dunkerley, our very active member from Combe Martin was busy again. Not only did he dig another test-pit in his own garden but, with the kind permission of Dr Margaret Eames, he went across to her garden and dug an even deeper one!. Trevor's work is carried out

meticulously, and he manages to extract a lot of significant information from these necessarily restricted excavations. Finds of the waste products of silver-lead smelting in association with early medieval pottery are beginning to suggest that the history of silver mining in Combe Martin has earlier origins than has been thought hitherto. A Tarka Millennium Award will now enable Trevor to pursue his research by surveying the lanes on the east side of Combe Martin, which look suspiciously as if they reflect early open-cast workings.

The Society's own projects, the Parracombe Survey and the Fishweirs Survey made progress during the year. Taking advantage of very low tides in the spring, members met three times to comb the foreshore on both sides of the Taw estuary looking for the remains of fishweirs. The main aim was to confirm the presence of weirs recorded on the Denham chart of 1832. Several were found; others have completely vanished. The huge Horsey Weir to the east of Crow Point, which was so prominent two years ago, has almost disappeared under sand. The Parracombe Survey has been focused this year on Holworthy Farm. During one week of July, members of the Society dug on the remaining earthworks of what has been assumed to be a classic hillslope enclosure within Holworthy Farm. The work took the form of an evaluation with a preliminary geophysical survey and the opening of three trenches, principally to assess the state of preservation of the monument and to recover any datable evidence. Unfortunately this was sorely lacking! (We did discover, however, that sheep have a taste for 30 metre tapes!) We must thank Phil and Julie Rawle for their co-operation in allowing us access to their land.

Progress with publication of the Barnstaple excavations of the 1970's and 80's is slow. Richard Coleman-Smith, who had proposed to

guide the work to publication, has had to withdraw due to ill health. The excavations resulted in the recovery of a very large amount of evidence for the development of the North Devon potteries, and not only here, but in the United States, archaeologists are eager to see it published. The overall aim is to produce a three-volume publication at a suggested cost of £200,000. English Heritage has agreed to fund a feasibility study, but until there is a project design in place, no further funding will be discussed. An important contribution to the project is Alison Grant's revision and expansion of her book "North Devon Pottery - the Seventeenth Century" which will provide documentary background to the archaeology. NDCC is committed to the project and the full support of NDAS has been offered.

Since the Spring, Jo Andrews, who produced the first three issues of the new-look newsletter, has resigned from the position of editor, as her time is about to be taken up domestically. On members' behalf, I should like to thank Jo for getting the new newsletter launched and to wish her and Clive well for their future. The task of putting the newsletter together now falls to the publications committee, and we are extremely grateful to Bruce Aiken of Aiken Graphics for offering his services in preparing the text for printing. Bruce was responsible for the design and production of the new-style membership card, which I'm sure you will have admired. We must thank him for that too.

Finally, the informal meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at the Chichester Arms, Bishops Tawton have now become a regular feature of life for NDAS members. These are an opportunity for free-ranging discussion in a friendly atmosphere. If you haven't yet made it to the pub, give it a try.

**Terry Green.**

## **Parracombe Project: Holworthy Farm**

Terry Green

**Holworthy Farm, belonging to Phil and Julie Rawle, lies in a combe to the south-east of Parracombe, NGR SS 68-44-.**

Since the last newsletter, the Parracombe project has made further progress, in that the investigation of Holworthy Farm is now properly under way. On the 19th May, Society members and volunteers from Parracombe met at Holworthy Farm to field-walk the field known as "Truckle Butt" (Fig.1). The field was gridded in 15 metre squares and throughout a chilly, blustery morning the team plodded up and down, heads bent, gaze fixed on the ground. Apart from several kilograms of stone picked up out of eagerness or uncertainty, the resulting collection amounted to roughly fifty items which could be counted artefactual. These ranged from fragments of glass and 19th century pottery to post-medieval North Devon ware and two fragments which have been identified as medieval. There were also a number of flint fragments, some of which appeared to be prehistoric and worked, others to have been introduced recently (it is plausibly suggested, in imported bales of fodder or straw). The field represents two separate fields on the 1840 tithe map, the lower of which (called "Trucklebed" in the tithe apportionment) appears to be an extension to the (probably) medieval field-system. It was in this area that the medieval sherds were found. The upper part of the field is called in the tithe apportionment "Lower Square Close". Here were post-medieval and early modern materials.

Within the land of Holworthy Farm is a slight earthwork (NGR: SS68704433) comprising an

void enclosure with an associated linear feature running away from it at a tangent (Fig.1 and see the AP on page 72 of *The Field Archaeology of Exmoor*.) This site, which is not scheduled, represented an opportunity to investigate by excavation a possibly prehistoric element of the landscape. In order to help with funding, our fund-raiser Richard Beer had successfully applied for money from the Council for British Archaeology to pay for a geophysical survey on the earthwork, which is located in the field known as Greenwell to the north-east of our field-walking area. On two days in June, Ross Dean of

Substratum conducted a resistivity survey of the earthworks and immediate surroundings with encouraging results. The plot confirmed the existence of an oval feature with a possible entrance and what appeared to be a ditch. Interestingly, a group of dowsers, who spent a day on the site, suggested - without prior knowledge - an entrance in more or less the same location.

On 15th July - a very hot day - a team of volunteers gathered to begin a limited excavation (an evaluation) on the enclosure. The excavation lasted six days, during which three trenches were opened up. Trench 1 was placed across the linear

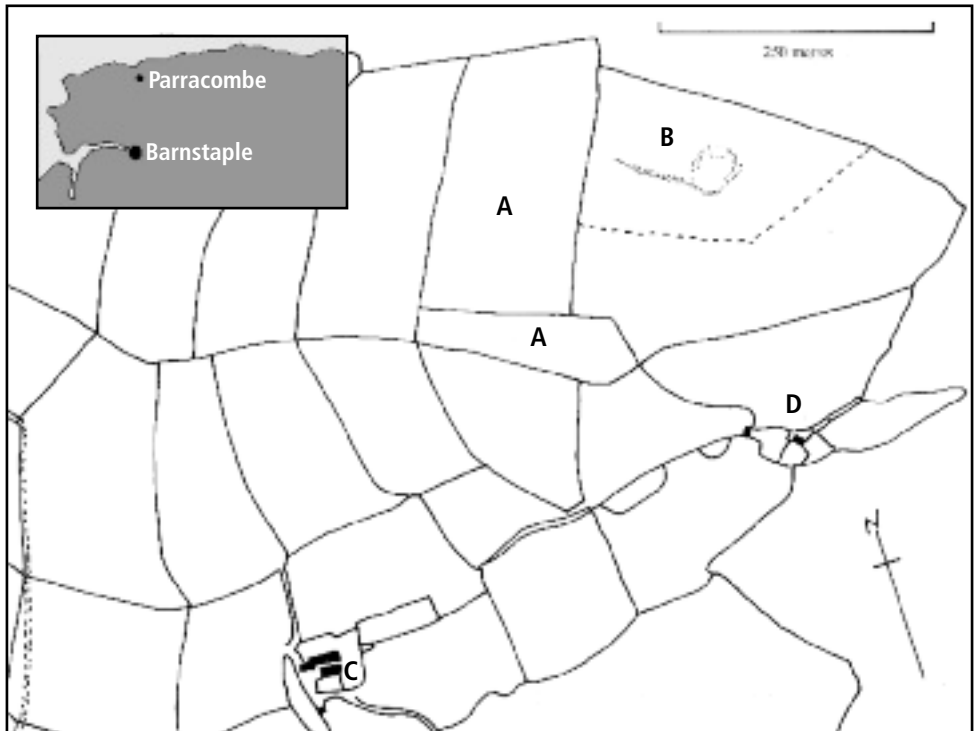


Fig 1: The fields of Holworthy Farm as recorded in the early 19th century.

- A. The fields which were field-walked (now a single field). 'Truckle Butt' is the long, narrow field to the south.
- B. Location of the hillslope enclosure.
- C. House and Curtilage: Holworthy Farm.
- D. House and Curtilage: Higher Holworthy.



*Top: Roger's posthole: Roger Ferrar excavating the one and only post-hole in trench two.*

*Above: Ross Dean carrying out the resistivity survey.*

feature, trench 2 across the edge of the enclosure and trench 3 in the area which, it was thought, might represent an entrance. The linear feature turned out to be a spread of stones, almost all of Hangman grit (the local Devonian sandstone), and all showing signs of weathering. At the core of the spread was a more regular structure of large stones which may have represented the revetment of a natural ridge perhaps to form a lynchet. Trench 2 revealed a spread of the same stone, which, when picked apart, seemed to represent the remains of a stone bank about 3 metres in width. There was no sign of a ditch, though there was one post-hole on the "outside" of the bank. Trench 3 cut across the enclosure bank where it exploited the natural ridge. Here the stone-work was more substantial and on the "inside" there was a surface of closely packed small stones which was interpreted as metalling. There was no



Trowellers in trench three.



clear sign of an entrance. The only datable finds from the three trenches were two sherds of medieval pottery from the topsoil and a small number of flint beach pebbles, some with a preparation flake removed. These might be thought to represent mesolithic activity.

On the face of it, the evidence which we recovered leads to no clear conclusions. The huge amount of weathered stone in the structure suggests the result of initial ground clearance ahead of cultivation. The lack of a ditch was unexpected, but as the enclosure appears to be built of stone, like a ring-cairn, rather than earth, there would have been no need to dig one. There seems to be nothing defensive about the structure, either against people or against stock. The couple of medieval sherds suggest that the ground was ploughed in the medieval period, which might explain the bank or lynchet. Without further investigation, no date can be suggested for the enclosure.

The next step at Holworthy will be to examine the site of Higher Holworthy. This separate holding was listed in the 1840 tithe apportionment, and on the tithe map two buildings are represented together with a garden. On the site now are only the garden enclosure and the ruins of a barn. Of the house there is no obvious sign. It is said that before the 1952 flood there was a pack-horse bridge here, and it may be that the flood water washed away both the bridge and any remnants of a house. For the project it will be a matter of recording what is visible and probably test-pitting. We shall also dig test-pits within the curtilage of Holworthy farmhouse, where Julie Rawle has been picking up post-medieval pottery from the flowerbeds. Finally, during the winter we shall conduct a field-boundary survey. Volunteers prepared to stomp around with clipboard, pencil and ranging pole are always welcome!

## **Fish weirs: as irritating as traffic-cones?**

**A research update - Chris Preece**

### **Documentary Research**

If you've ever been tempted to play skittles with motor-way traffic cones, you've probably come close to replicating the feelings of mariners of the nineteenth century, especially if your port of call was Barnstaple or Bideford. For many of them, fish weirs were a major hazard to navigation, to such an extent that the law-courts were frequently involved in settling disputes. In one instance, the Admiralty, no less, recommended the removal of two weirs at Crow Point, one of which had previously been removed at the behest of magistrates eighteen years before. Another document, referring to the weir at the same location, describes it as "ancient" and details how it was "cut down ... by some of the sailors of Appledore" (presumably with some relish). An Admiralty report further notes masters of vessels complaining of loss of life and property occasioned by weirs upstream towards Barnstaple.

Whether this is the exaggeration of vested interests or not, what is undeniable is the strength of feeling these contraptions engendered. So why go to the trouble and expense of constructing weirs (the Admiralty report notes the total length of one as 400 yards) with such fierce opposition a certainty and demolition a possibility? A statement from one defendant (in the dispute alluded to previously) suggests poverty was a driving force. John Cory Chichester stated that he had six children and "nothing to depend on but the weir". Another explanation is the age-old appeal of something for nothing: a ready supplement to both income and diet.

Documentary research by the NDAS has also

revealed some other fascinating insights into the history of these weirs. The earliest mention of fishing so far unearthed is a 9th century charter reference to the granting of land at Braunton to the Abbot of Glastonbury "for the taking of salmon for his house". This is of particular interest, as monastic links with the taking of fish (in part occasioned by the need for fish on Fridays) have been evidenced elsewhere, notably by Mick Aston (of Time Team fame). There is also mention of a fishery at Bideford in the Domesday Book.

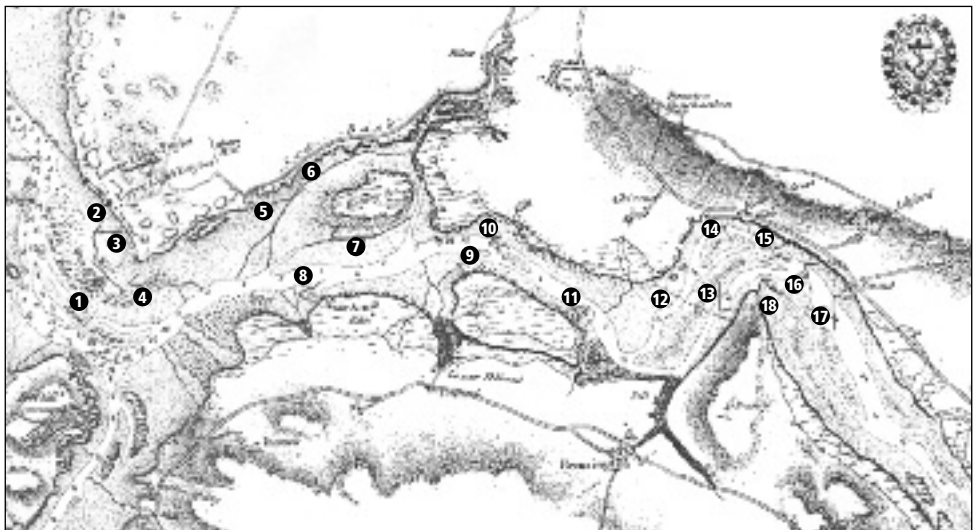
Demonstrating the longevity of these weirs is an exciting challenge for the NDAS and can hopefully be achieved by further documentary research this winter and possibly by sampling/excavation if feasible. In this regard it was interesting to note that the Universities of Exeter and Reading took advantage of low tides at the end of April 2002 to conduct investigations of the features at Westward Ho! (first recorded by Balaam et al: BAR 181, 1987). Lines of predominantly hazel stakes had previously been noted, suggestive perhaps of fish traps. The

deposits date from the Mesolithic to the Romano-British period. The results of the recording and sampling carried out recently may well be relevant to the NDAS project and are awaited with interest. Saxon fish-weirs in Essex have been dated from the 7th to 10th century AD and it would not be surprising to find earlier examples.

### Fieldwork

Lieutenant Denham's chart commissioned in response to the fish weirs dispute, shows some eighteen weirs marked on the Taw/Torridge estuary. The aim of the NDAS field-walking and survey has been to establish how many are extant and can be recorded. Following a successful weekend on the 29th and 30th March 2002, the majority have now been evaluated.

On Saturday 29th March, a good turn-out of NDAS members at Fremington Quay made it possible to divide into two groups, one heading downstream to the west and one upstream to the east. The west group successfully located weir no. 11 (Allen's Rock), and was also able to locate



*Extract from the Denham map of 1832. The fishweirs are chevron-like features here numbered 1 to 18.*



*Remnants of the Heanton Court East fishweir which is number 16 on the Denham map.*

the abraded stumps of two further unrecorded weirs to the west. Two examples showed possible stone infill, a feature noted in weirs elsewhere. Photographs were taken and approximate positions noted. The east group, meantime, had located weir no.13 (Penhill Point West), but found no evidence of no.18, slightly farther to the east.

Flushed with the success of the previous day, those members who could escape domestic demands gathered at Heanton Court to search for three weirs between there and Ashford to the east. Weir survey - like cricket - is a great leveller however, for apart from no.15 (Heanton Court East) which had been previously located, the other two eluded us and we returned chastened to base.

Enough examples have been located to make

measured survey the next priority. This has already been achieved at Crow Point and useful sketches have been made at other sites. Survey at Horsey Ridge has been problematic (at present the substantial remains are largely sanded over again), but hopefully this can be recommenced at a future date, as the size and construction phases offer interesting possibilities of interpretation. Fieldwork is also being focused on parts of the estuary outside the remit of the Denham chart. References have been found to fish weirs at Umberleigh and (unsurprisingly) at Weare Giffard. In addition, there are a number of structures along the Torridge near Tapely Park, at Northam Burrows and at Instow which, despite similarities to weirs, may be jetties, wharves, slips or structures related to shellfish harvesting. Further

research is needed. Additionally, aerial photographs are being investigated (stunning results were achieved at Whitstable Bay in Kent using this resource) and living history (a tape of Appledore fisherman Sid Crick) has yielded some interesting observations on sluice gates at Horsey Weir. There is also the evidence of old photographs and paintings. For those who have trouble imagining a fish weir, a 1795 painting by William Payne reproduced in Alison Grant's books, shows a weir at Coolstone, Instow. The weir at Lynmouth (to the right of the Rhenish Tower), used until recently, albeit a coastal rather than an estuarine example, is well worth a visit, being one of the best preserved in the area.

It is hoped that, weather allowing, survey of some of the extant weirs will be possible this autumn and next spring. Any keen NDAS members who are happy to commit some time should contact me (Chris Preece) on 01237 475368.

## Save your Society the cost of postage!

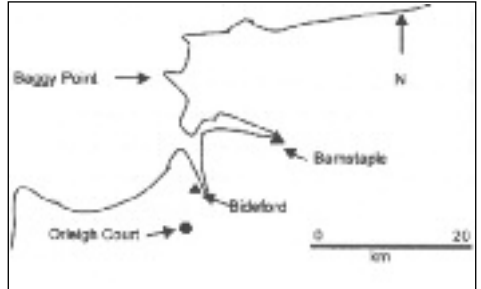
A number of members have supplied an email address, but if you have only just acquired one, please let us know.

Email makes it possible to pass out information quickly and cheaply. Please send to

**gwyngala@onetel.net.uk**

## Flint scatters on Baggy Point

**Analysis of a field-walking exercise - Ann  
and Martin Plummer**



*Fig. 1: Location Map*

Excavations of prehistoric sites are comparatively rare in North Devon and the Exmoor area in general. Most prehistoric evidence is, therefore, recovered through field-walking, as is apparent in the Devon County Sites and Monuments Register.

Whilst assessing all the lithic assemblages held at the North Devon Museum in Barnstaple, our attention was drawn to the collection resulting from a field walking exercise carried out by the North Devon Archaeological Society on Baggy Point in 1992 under the guidance of Alison Mills.

The significant advantage of an organised exercise is that a gridded map is created, thereby locating the finds and providing a secure provenance for any important artefact.

The field selected, numbered 2857 (OS Grid Reference 425 405), lies at the western end of Baggy Point, a small peninsula between Morte Bay and Croyde Bay. Outside the boundary walls on the north-west and south-west sides of the field runs a cart track. The field slopes approximately sixteen metres from the south-west to the east and has a small level area in the south-west corner.

The peninsula is divided geologically between Baggy Sandstone on the southern side and Upcott slate on the north. (Edmunds, Williams & Taylor 1979, Fig 2). Flint and chert do not naturally occur here, but are to be found in water-borne pebble form on beaches in the locality. Other sources of material include clay-with-flints at Orleigh Court near Bideford and chert sources in the Blackdown Hills. It should be remembered that the sea level was much lower in the Mesolithic and that the Bristol Channel was a plain (Green & Walker 1991, P10)..

The material from this exercise has already been recorded in an unpublished paper by Anthony Gist. Gist's approach was statistical-analytic, using the Kilmogotov-Smurnoc test based on quantity, weight, size and colour. From this analysis he deduced that the majority of the material collected was from the Mesolithic period.

Our preliminary assessment of the collection is based only on the flint and chert artefacts, the majority of which are of pebble flint. Two primary aspects are considered: (a) debitage, ie. the waste

remaining from the knapping of the flint; and (b) tools, which represent the social and domestic activities which took place on the site. The 2526 pieces collected have been studied typologically. Of the total, 2204 items represent debitage, 94 are tools, while un-worked (whole and broken) pebbles account for 226.

Knapping produces considerable numbers of flakes that are not suitable for the production of tools, and therefore there is always a large quantity of waste. However, the production of blades is determined by the use to which they are to be put. In other words, blades are generally manufactured. To create a blade from a core you first have to suitably prepare the core. This can be done by a technique called "cresting" (Lord 1993, 52) characteristic of the "blade culture" attributed to the Mesolithic. As a blade core is worked down, more waste flakes are produced as a result of the "reshaping" of the core to enable further blades to be produced, resulting in an imbalance of blade debitage against flake debitage.

The debitage collected included 320 blades,

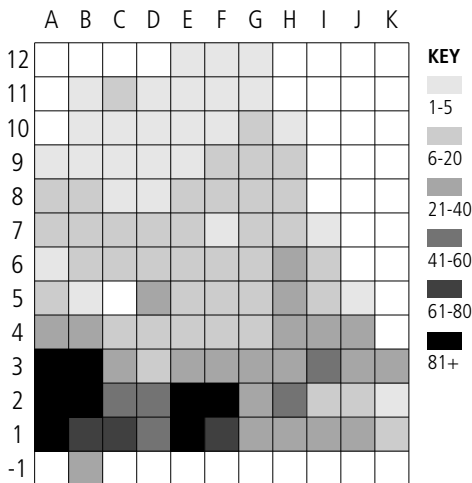


Fig.2: Field No.2857: Combined Tool & Debitage Scatter Plan

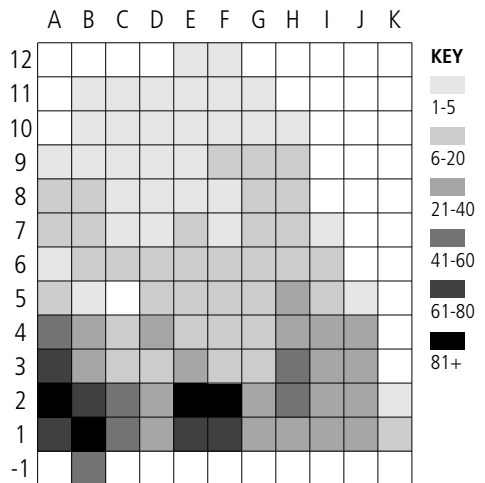


Fig.3: Field No.2857: Debitage Scatter Plan

681 flakes and 968 fragments. Of the fragments, 16 have been identified as microburins, an important indicator of Mesolithic activity.

Not all of the 235 cores collected have yet been clearly diagnosed. Of the 97 that have been thoroughly examined, 87 are predominantly blade cores and 10 have been found to be flake cores.

The tools comprise 42 scrapers, 12 awls, (including borers, piercers, graters), 10 microliths, 3 notched blades, 2 choppers, 2 leaf points and 1 knife. The character of both the debitage and the tools as well as the knapping technique employed clearly indicate the Mesolithic period. Microliths and microburins are also typological indicators. Evidence for domestic activity for the period is supported by the choppers, scrapers produced on blades, together with piercers and borers.

The typology indicates occupation during both the early and late Mesolithic period (ie. c.7,000 - 4,000 BC). The early period is represented by microliths having obliquely blunted points (Barton 1992, 248). The later period indicator is a "Rod" type microlith (Saville 1981, 111).

Evidence of occupation during the Neolithic

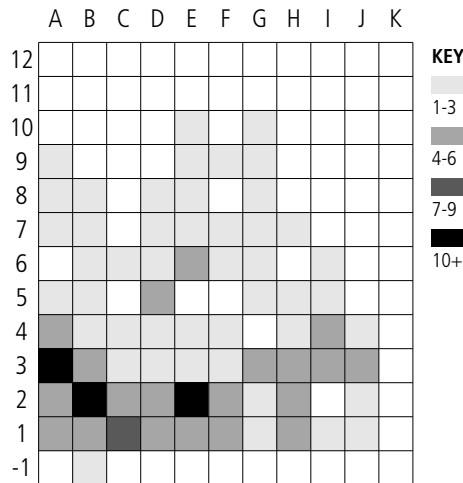


Fig.4: Field No.2857: Core Scatter Plan

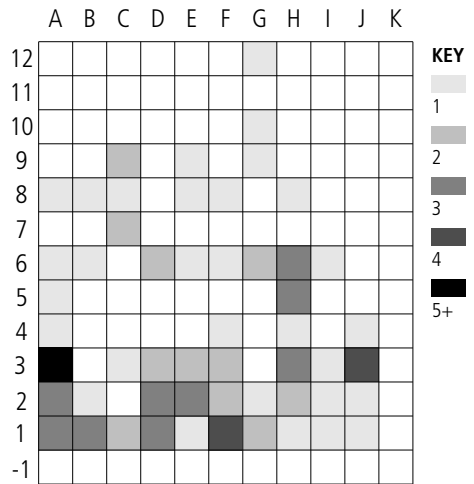


Fig.5: Field No.2857: Tool Scatter Plan

period is more tenuous. Of the leaf shaped points attributed to the Neolithic, only two are present in the collection. One specimen is complete and one is just a fragment. Another indicator for this period is edge trimmed flakes some of which have clearly been produced as scrapers.

Field-walking exercises can produce interesting results both from the artefacts found and from studying their landscape context. The scatter plans Figures 2-5 reveal that most of the activity took place in the south-west corner of the area walked where a level platform exists. On the surrounding slopes, the artefacts decline in number. The concentration of debitage along the south-west boundary of the field would suggest that here there was shelter from the prevailing wind. The core scatter plan confirms this interpretation. On the other hand, the largest concentration of tools lies at the periphery of this area to the north. The concentrations of debitage and cores indicate a knapping area, whilst the presence of borers, scrapers, etc. could indicate domestic activity in the area.

In the modern landscape a boundary wall

along the south-west and north-west sides of the field has mostly likely protected the site. The cart track, which follows the line of the boundary wall, will most probably have destroyed most of the prehistoric evidence.

As the possibility of an excavation being carried out in the near (or distant) future is negligible the benefit of an organised and gridded field-walk can be seen as indispensable for identifying archaeological sites.

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## Reports from Local Groups

### THE SOUTH MOLTON LINHAY PROJECT

*Sally Cotton*

At the request of South Molton Town Council, the Society has been surveying the many small field barns around the town. These buildings are a distinctive feature of the area within 2 miles of the market town, usually set near a gateway into a small pasture field. RCHME defines a linhay as 'a double-storeyed open-sided structure comprising a cattle or cart shelter on the ground floor with a hayloft above. Most common in South West England.' Not all the buildings we are studying quite fit this definition - they vary in size, aspect, construction and plan - but they all provide ground floor shelter for stock or machinery and first floor storage space for fodder.

Working in conjunction with the Town Council, North Devon District Council and Devon County Council, our brief is to study the Linhays in Town Council ownership, survey what is currently there, try to determine original uses, and offer suggestions for future use. Like all small agricultural buildings, these diminutive barns have become increasingly redundant for modern farming practice. Many have been lost since the 1886 six inch OS maps of the area were published and many of those remaining are in poor states of repair. However even those in the last throes of decline are super wildlife habitats. All are attractive buildings and a joy to study. So much so that we plan to study those owned by other farmers in the area.

We are having great fun convening at an unsuspecting linhay, discussing its history and its current and possible future charms. Most are stone built, with greater or lesser amounts of cob, under slate or corrugated roofs, though we have found

one completely built of concrete blocks. To generalise, they seem to have been built to store the hay harvested from the fields in which they stand, to provide shelter for stock and sometimes facilities for milking. It is the opinion of some local people that those on the roads into town were provided for the use of those bringing stock to South Molton Market. The sheep or cattle would be turned into the small fields to wait overnight for market morning. Alternatively those coming into town could leave their horse transport in these 'carparks' before walking the short distance into town. The grass provided grazing in summer, the hay fodder in winter.

What is the linhays' future? Some are too far-gone to be described as more than a pile of stones. One has been turned very skilfully into a charming cottage. Between these two extremes, apart from their traditional uses, what can we suggest? Those about to be swallowed up in our new industrial estate have been claimed by the developers as useful secure stores for commercial enterprises. Those near roads might be given new life as houses. It is the ones in the middle of nowhere, with no current role, that are most at risk of decay and neglect. It is the Town Council's policy to preserve as many as possible, but a building without a use and purpose is a sad thing, doomed to die.

Any suggestions or comments to Sally Cotton on [smolib@hotmail.com](mailto:smolib@hotmail.com), please! Thank you.

## **THE HATHERLEIGH LANDSCAPE GROUP**

*Deborah Laing-Trengove*

It was with some regret that the group put its mill project on hold earlier in the year. Most members felt that this project was proving a little ambitious and unwieldy for a group such as ours, particularly as few members have any practical archaeological experience or expertise. Instead we have turned our attentions to something much more

manageable - the parish tithe map. Hatherleigh is lucky enough to have its own copy of the map and the apportionment from which to work, and over the last few months we have been mapping field-names onto photocopies. Once this has been completed, we plan to look at the 1839 names in relation to information dating from about 40 years ago given by past workers on one of the large estates within the parish, as well as consulting work on local field-names undertaken by the WI and dating from about the same time.

Quite accidentally this work ties in very nicely with our recent involvement with the Community Landscapes Project (CLP) based at Exeter University. With the help of the CLP, our tithe detail will soon be digitised, enabling certain aspects such as land-ownership and land-use to be plotted and mapped separately. Our group very much welcomes the input offered by the CLP for as most of our members come from a historical rather than archaeological background, we feel a definite need for the support of local bodies such as this to enable us to produce relevant and useful work. We look forward to a mutually beneficial relationship.

For further information on the Hatherleigh Landscape Group contact Deb Laing- Trengove

Tel. 01837 810310 or e-mail [DebLT@Internet-Today.co.uk](mailto:DebLT@Internet-Today.co.uk)

## **AN ACE SUMMER**

*Janet Daynes*

Looking back over the summer months (which seem to have sped by), ACE members have managed to cram in plenty of interesting archaeological activities.

We have almost completed a plane-table survey of a large earthwork at Stone Barton, East of Chulmleigh. Hopefully the resulting drawing will help to unravel the mystery of the site, as it has been recorded before as a prehistoric



enclosure, a ring work or a medieval fortified manor house. The farmer who owns the site may use the drawing for the interpretation board that he plans to erect for visitors.

Some time ago, ACE was approached by Cookworthy Forest Centre asking for volunteers to help build a round house for their new forest trail. While this project was being organized, ACE was invited to build a small roundhouse at Langridge Farm near Yeoford, so we jumped at the chance and got stuck in. We have got the wall posts in, the wall plate on and have finished the wattling. On the 7th and 8th of September ACE members attended the first building sessions at Cookworthy Forest Centre, led by Dave Freeman of Butser and Peat moors fame. A most entertaining weekend was had by all, more sessions at Cookworthy and Yeoford are planned for the near future.

Over the summer months ACE members have been involved in experimental pit-cooking, Iron Age black-smithing including making a wooden forge, making slings, bows, growing woad, making prehistoric clothes and researching prehistoric looms with a view to constructing and using one.

ACE members have been involved in two digs this season. Some of us spent three days at North Devon Archaeological Society's excavation of a hill slope enclosure near Parracombe, and five members attended Dr Sandy Gerrard's continuing Bracken Project excavating a Bronze Age roundhouse on Dartmoor.

A civic trust has just been set up in Winkleigh, known as the Winkleigh Society. Within the society there is a history group who want to set up a funded, two-part project, one part being reminiscence, the other a 'Winkleigh House Detectives'. ACE, along with North Devon Archaeological Society have been invited to help set up this exciting project.

Rather than slowing down for the dark winter months, ACE might be somewhat busy!

## Recent acquisitions

### At the Museum of North Devon

By Alison Mills

A Bronze Age axe-head recently found by metal detectorists at Bishops Tawton has been acquired for the museum collections. The axe-head, which measures 62mm by 53mm has no socket or flange, but is not a traditional flat axe (cast in an open mould). The unusual shape suggests it may be one end of a flanged axe or palstave, although the butt end does not appear to be broken off. Hopefully the puzzle can be solved by expert study.

The axe was purchased with the agreement of the landowner and with financial support from the North Devon Archaeological Society.

A prehistoric bronze ring has recently been reported to the museum. The ring, which has a beautiful patina, is cast as a double ring and is c. 40mm in diameter. It may be a terret-ring dating from the late Bronze Age or Iron Age. It was found near the scheduled Iron Age enclosure of Roborough, near Pilton, and has now been loaned to the museum for display by the finder.

A 16th century decorative cast copper alloy box was recently found by metal detectorists near Barnstaple. The box, with a hinged lid, is a beautiful object decorated with punched dots and incised lines and showing some traces of having been gilded. It has been identified as a container for nesting bronze weights, a high status item perhaps used by an apothecary or goldsmith, and comparatively rare. Sadly we were unable to compete with a private purchaser for this item, though we have recorded its discovery.

### The Dissenters' Silver

The Barnstaple Dissenters' Silver consists of 2 porringers, a dish and 2 plates by John Elston of

Exeter (fl. c. 1691-1730) (3 pieces) and Edmund Richards of Exeter (fl. c. 1698-1730) (2 pieces) inscribed "The Gift of Mrs. Mary Gammon to this Church at the Castle Meeting for ever 1707" . Makers' and assay marks.

The Barnstaple Dissenters' Silver is intimately linked with the personalities and history of the town during the key period of its development - the 17th and 18th centuries. The founder of the town's first nonconformist meeting, Rev. Jonathan Hanmer, born in Barnstaple in 1606, had been appointed to the lectureship of Barnstaple parish church following the ejection of the vicar, Martyn Blake, during the Civil War. On his refusal to accept the Act of Uniformity after the restoration of Charles II in 1662 Mr. Hanmer was himself ejected, but continued to preach in private houses, establishing the Castle Street Meeting with his colleague Oliver Peard when the Dissenters gained a measure of freedom of worship in 1672.

Both the Hanmers and Peards were at the forefront of Barnstaple society, and Mr. Hanmer was held in high regard. "His lectures in Barnstaple were greatly thronged, vast numbers repairing to them from all parts round the town, some who lived many miles distant, and among the rest, divers people of distinction; and he was endeared to the people, both of the higher and lower ranks in life". Hanmer was also the grandfather of the poet John Gay, Barnstaple's most famous son.

The North Devon Record Office holds a large number of documents relating to the Barnstaple dissenting congregation, and also a probate copy of the will of Mary Gammon, who presented the silver to the meeting and who died in 1718. She was clearly a wealthy woman, leaving gold and silver to a number of her co-religionists, including the families of the ministers Peard and Hanmer and the Mauzeys - Huguenot refugees who came to Barnstaple from La Rochelle in 1685. The house of her cousin Margaret Christmas was registered for

nonconformist worship in 1719 and later became the site of the Cross Street Meeting House.

Barnstaple already had a reputation as a dissenting town before the Civil War, banning entertainers from the town and being severely critical of its then parish priest. Devon as a whole was known for its large nonconformist population, especially in the North, and this tradition remains strong within the town. By the early 18th century the parish priest declared to the Bishop that he was unable to comment on the state of charities within the town as these were all run by dissenters! Later the nonconformists were leading lights in Barnstaple's vigorous campaigning in favour of the Reform Act, and continued to hold political office - the relationship between the town's nonconformity and political liberalism continued into the 20th century.

The silver was given to the Castle Meeting, Barnstaple by Mary Gammon in 1707 and used by this church when it later merged with the Cross Street Meeting. It remained in the Elders' possession as they became the Barnstaple Congregational Church, then merged with others to form the United Reformed Church on the same site. The church has now joined with the Methodists in a new building and Cross Street Church is redundant.

Recent changes and drops in Church attendance placed the future of the silver in doubt. It now exists as the only three-dimensional evidence of this part of Barnstaple's history. The Castle Street Meeting House, later used as the National School, was demolished late in the 19th century and the Cross Street Church has been sold. The Elders of Cross Street were anxious to ensure the long term future of the silver in the town and avoid any future public sale by their successors at the merged church. The acquisition of the Dissenters' Silver, together with access to the documents held in the North Devon Record Office,

has given the museum the opportunity not only to save this important part of Barnstaple's cultural heritage but also to interpret this important part of the town's history in the context of the other 17th and 18th century material we hold.

The Victoria and Albert / Resource Purchase Grant Fund and independent art charity the National Art Collections Fund promised to support the purchase if the remaining funds could be

raised locally. This was raised with the assistance of the Barnstaple Bridge Trust and Barnstaple Town Council, together with money donated directly to the Museum.

The silver is now on display, accompanied by portraits of the two Rev. Hammers on loan from the church. We are very grateful to Mr. Ralph Forsythe for all his hard work in sorting out this acquisition.

## **An Exmoor Farm Walk**

### **The History, Wildlife and Management of Exmoor's Hedges: an Exmoor walk**

At the end of October Rob Wilson-North, the Exmoor National Park Archaeologist together with ecologist Alison Cox will, with the kind permission of Raymond and Sarah Davey, be leading an afternoon walk at Lyshwell Farm, Hawkridge near Dulverton (NGR SS837306). The farm, which is covered by the Exmoor National Park's Farm Conservation Scheme, lies just within Devon on the northern edge of Molland Common on a spur above the Dane's Brook which here forms the Devon Somerset border. The landscape in the Dane's Brook valley contains a remarkable series of deserted post medieval farmsteads, which reflect the ebb and flow of settlement in this area.

The fields in the valley also mirror the changes that have occurred here, reflecting both the original creation of farms out of woodland and waste as well as the subsequent amalgamation of holdings. On the adjoining moorland are the remains of abandoned field systems and ridge and furrow. The walk offers the opportunity to learn about the unique archaeology of this area as well as its wealth of wildlife and the management of Exmoor's hedges.

#### **The walk will take place on**

Wednesday 30th October, 2.00pm to 4.30pm.

Booking is essential.

Contact: Sarah Hoddinott on 01398 322288

## **News from the North Devon Record Office**

### **Tim Wormleighton**

Recent additions to the holdings of the Record Office, situated in Barnstaple Library, include deposits of records from the following Church of England parishes: Alverdiscott (2976 add 6), Charles (3333 add 4), Filleigh (3335 add 2), George Nympton (3731 add 2), High Bickington (2849 add 6), High Bray (815 add 4), Marwood (3398 adds 5&6), Newton St Petrock (2966 add

3), Satterleigh (1709 add 2), South Molton (3331 add 3), Warkleigh (1710 add 2) and West Buckland (1935 add 5). The South Molton material is particularly extensive and includes surname indices to the parish registers (which are only partially covered by the International Genealogical Index). The Newton St Petrock records include the parish tithe map of 1840.

Nonconformist church records have been received from Atherington Baptist Church (B658), West Down United Reformed Church (B651), and Barnstaple (2347 adds 20-24), Holsworthy (2638 add 8) and Ilfracombe (2334 add 13) Methodist Circuits.

Minutes, accounts and other administrative records of the North Devon Journal newspaper dating from 1938 have been transferred (B643). Although some of the material is closed to public access, there is plenty in the collection to interest those wishing to explore the history of north Devon's longest running newspaper, first published in 1824.

The town of Barnstaple is well represented in recent accessions, which include a large volume compiled in 1810 containing transcripts of the borough charters made between 1445 and 1611 (B144 add 29), accounts, 1936-1963, and a day book, 1895-1896, of Sanders, builders and contractors in the town (B653) and a petition of 1670 concerning travel expenses incurred delivering warrants for raising a force to dispel enemy forces (probably the French) sighted off Dartmouth (B656).

Other noteworthy additions include plans of railway buildings on the Lynton & Barnstaple line, 1952 (B649), a group of papers relating to Bradworthy, among which are records of the Bradworthy and Sutcombe Female Clubs (B657), a large collection of correspondence and photographs relating to Lundy (B627 adds 1&2) and personal papers of Prebendary John Frederick Chanter, Rector of Parracombe and author of many books and articles on local history (B667).

Once the above collections have been catalogued, they will be available for consultation in the Record Office searchroom. Remember that members of NDAS are entitled to use the society's season ticket exempting them from the usual admission charge.

## **Community Landscapes Project**

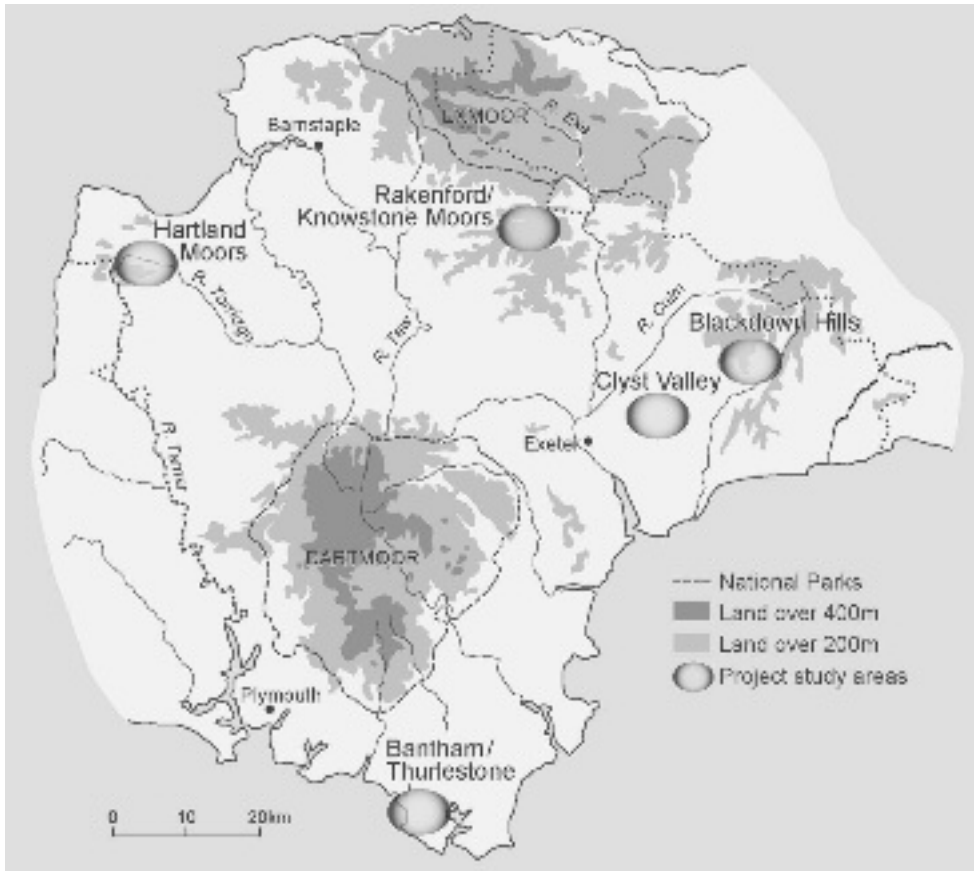
### **Science and Public Participation**

(A project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the University of Exeter & Devon County Council)

Television programmes, such as "Time Team" and "Meet the Ancestors", whilst having undoubtedly helped to fire the public's interest in archaeology, lack the potential to offer the public the opportunity to get hands-on experience. The creation of this three-year project is in direct response to the public's enthusiasm and desire for active involvement in the field of archaeology. Both adults and school students are invited to develop their knowledge and understanding of both the environmental and archaeological sciences by actively participating in unravelling the past landscapes of Devon.

Landscape archaeology is now a key component within the world of archaeology as it leads to a greater understanding of how people, throughout the ages, moved within, and interacted with their environment. Essentially it is concerned with 'archaeology above ground': the physical remains left as earthworks, field boundaries, and trackways etc. As those already involved can testify, the Project staff encourage and train members of the public to use an array of survey equipment to record previously unrecorded archaeological features. All the information from the surveys, along with the documentary evidence collected by volunteers during visits to the Devon County Records Office, is then integrated onto maps and into a Geographical Information System (GIS) for later analysis.

Volunteers also have the opportunity to be involved in and learn about the scientific aspects



*The Community Landscapes Project in Devon*

of the project. This part of the project is concerned with the study of soils and the environmental evidence preserved in the small mires or bogs which are ubiquitous in Devon. Analysis of organic samples enables us to suggest the level of vegetation change and human impact on the landscape throughout both the prehistoric and historic periods. While such scientific backup is not usually available to local groups or the public, this project is aimed at increasing public access to scientific techniques and thereby raising levels of interest and understanding.

The landscape heritage of Devon has often

been seen in terms of a few particularly rich areas such as Dartmoor. It has yet to be perceived by the public that all areas have archaeological potential. In order to redress the balance, fairly 'average' but diverse areas of the county are being investigated, areas for which at present there is little published or even unpublished information. At present the studies are concentrating on five representative areas in Devon. These include the Blackdown Hills and the Clyst Valley to the south-east, Bantham/Thurlestone in the south, Rakenford/ Knowstone Moors in mid to east

Devon and - of particular interest to you, as members of the North Devon Archaeological Society - Hartland Moors in the north (see fig. 1). We believe that in Hoskins' county there is ample potential for public interest, which just needs to be inspired, mobilised and supported. We are therefore also encouraging and supporting groups who wish to imitate our lines of enquiry in their own parishes even if these are outside our study areas.

As to Hartland, we are looking for volunteers of all abilities to be involved at all stages of the study. As a volunteer, you can help with field-survey, planning, environmental sampling and recording. There is also the opportunity to become involved in the documentary studies and recording which take place at the Devon County Records Office (and in the case of Hartland, probably at the North Devon Records Office). The Project is also looking for volunteers to help in the desk-based studies, which are normally carried-out in our office at the University of Exeter. However, due to the distance the North Devon studies can also be locally based. In many of our study areas the Project currently operates through archaeological officers who, on behalf of the project, liaise with local Parish Councillors, interested groups and the public. We now need to extend this very successful system to the Hartland area and are looking for people to become involved from the outset of our studies.

For more information please contact  
**Sean Hawken (Project Manager)**,  
Community Landscapes Project,  
Room T1, Lafrowda House, St. German's Road,  
University of Exeter EX4 6TL

Tel.: 01392 263851

e-mail [s.d.Hawken@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:s.d.Hawken@exeter.ac.uk)

Web address: <http://www.ex.ac.uk/devonclp>

## Dates for Your Diary

NDAS Winter Programme, 2002 - 2003

**12.10.02** Museum of North Devon, Barnstaple, 10.30 am. Sean Hawken, The Community Landscapes Project: a guide to community involvement in landscape archaeological projects.

**21.10.02** Maggie Ford, "Mud-hutting in Devon": The development of the Devonshire cob cottage. Pilton Community College, Chaddiford Lane, Barnstaple, 7.30pm:

**18.11.02** Martin Watts, The Archaeology of Mills and Milling. Martin Watts, who has recently published a book on the subject, will discuss the development of grist mills and their role in history. Pilton Community College, Chaddiford Lane, Barnstaple, 7.30pm:

**3.12.02** The NDAS Annual Dinner at the Riverfront Café, the Strand, Barnstaple

**20.1.03** Peter Claughton, Mining and Metallurgy in Devon: The production of silver in the Middle Ages and beyond. Pilton Community College, Chaddiford Lane, Barnstaple, 7.30pm:

**17.2.03** Ann and Martin Plummer and Janet Daynes, North Devon flint scatters : Ann and Martin Plummer and Janet Daynes will discuss flint scatters on Baggy Point and at Chawleigh. (A large part of the Baggy Point collection was picked up by NDAS members field-walking in the early 90's.) Pilton Community College, Chaddiford Lane, Barnstaple, 7.30pm:

**17.3.03** North Devon Archaeological Society AGM. Pilton Community College, Chaddiford Lane, Barnstaple 7.00 pm

**21.4.03** To be arranged and announced in the Spring Newsletter.

**Plus** Don't forget, informal meetings at the Chichester Arms, Bishops Tawton, about 8.00pm first Tuesday of every month (except Dec and Aug)

### **The DAS Winter Meetings Programme:**

(DAS winter meetings are held at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, unless otherwise stated. Admission free to DAS members; visitors welcome)

#### **Wednesday 16th October, 8.00pm:**

Prof. Michael Fulford: Excavating Silchester: reconstructing life in the Roman city.

#### **Tuesday 12th November, 8.00pm:**

Dr Robert van de Noort: Two men and a boat: the context of seafaring in the Bronze and Iron Ages.

#### **Thursday 23rd January, 8.00pm:**

Prof. Graeme Barker: The Niah Cave Project, Borneo: the prehistory of rainforest foraging and farming.

#### **Tuesday 11th March, 8.00pm:**

Prof. Terry Barry: The Archaeology of the Normans in Europe.

## **Membership**

The Society currently has 77 paid-up members. We are happy to welcome the following who have joined since April this year:

**Janet Bale, Claire Chope, Diane and Ian Godfrey, Caroline Hawkins, Fanny Hall, Marion Hughes, Valerie Wilson.**

May we remind you that subscriptions are due on 1st April annually. The annual subscription provides members with two newsletters per year, entry to talks and other events, insurance cover in field-work and free access to the North Devon and Devon County Records Offices. Currently the subscription stands at:

**Adults** - £8.00

**Joint** (two members at same address) - £12.00

**Students** - £2.50

You are invited to save yourself the worry of having to remember to renew your subscription by taking out a standing-order (forms available from the membership secretary). Otherwise subscriptions should be sent to:

**Jane Green**, 5 Chambercombe Park Terrace, Ilfracombe EX34 9QW (cheques to be made payable to NDAS/NDRA).

The Society is keen to recruit new members. If you know someone who would like to become a member of the North Devon Archaeological Society, please encourage them to fill in the copy of the membership form to be found with this newsletter and send it to Jane Green.

Phone 01271 866662 for a membership form

