

Newsletter, Autumn 2014

We've had such a splendid summer that there has been very little to hold up ongoing projects, specifically the NDAS excavations at Little Potheridge, Merton and the Longstone Landscape Project, which is a joint community archaeology exercise between Exmoor National Park, Parracombe Archaeological and Historical Society and NDAS. In addition members have been able to visit excavations by Wessex Archaeology at Batsworthy Cross, Knowstone and the joint Exmoor National Park/University of Bristol Mesolithic site at Hawkcombe Head. The long-running West Yeo project is now concluded with a very thorough report by Derry Bryant which has gone to the Devon County Historic Environment Record (HER) together with an account of the project and its results in the Devon Archaeological Society newsletter. The full report can also be found on the NDAS website www.ndas.org.uk. The Little Potheridge project has not yet come up with the hoped-for clay pipe kiln; it has yet to be decided whether there should be further work in 2015 or beyond. Chris Preece reports below.

Before proceeding there are two bits of personal news, one happy and one sad. Firstly congratulations to Alison Mills on her marriage to Philip Belcher. I'm sure all NDAS members will wish Alison and Philip great happiness in their future together. Secondly and sadly, we have learnt of the death of John Newberry who was a friend of the Society and who, together with the late Ann and Martin Plummer, was extremely helpful to us in identifying and advising on finds of flint and chert from Northern Devon, latterly from Holworthy Farm and most recently from West Yeo.

The Elusive Kiln of John Pardon:

Little Potheridge Survey and Excavation 2014

Following the failure to find a kiln in 2013 using evaluation trenches partly premised on the results of an earth resistance survey, NDAS commissioned a gradiometry survey which it was hoped would highlight burning events and provide target areas for excavation in 2014. The results were disappointing and showed nothing obvious. It was decided therefore, to use open area excavation to try to relocate the test pits previously dug by Phil Collins and also to expand eastwards following the promising results from T2 extension in 2013.

A topsoil strip was carried out using a JCB with grading bucket and the areas then cleaned back by trowel. Several N/S linear features were revealed. The first exposed was a medieval field bank with ditches either side. The eastern ditch had been re-cut and contained some pipe kiln waste with some pockets of discarded white pipe clay. The western ditch was much shallower



Fig.1: Early work on the linear ditch



Fig.2: Assiduous NDAS washers at the daily cleaning.

finds that kiln sites produce (Fig. 2). All of these are now being catalogued and analysed with a view to publication in 2015. The post-excavation work will however take a considerable time due to the sheer quantity of finds.

Finds were particularly abundant in the kiln waste linear (Fig. 3) ditch. The pipe bowls ranged from early to late C18 forms. Many were marked, the earlier examples having IP initials on the flattened spur, later examples being decorated with a roulette on the side of the bowl with I PARN. This is presumed to relate to John Pardon, a documented pipemaker working at this time.

Decorated pipe stems were also found, including one with a bowl decorated with the Pardon roundel. Thousands of pieces of pipe stem, some up to 15cm in length, were also found.

The most unusual pipe bowls to be found this season were bowls with a free form rouletted decoration on the side of the bowl (Fig. 4A), and two featuring 'Dutch' type figurehead decoration of the early C18 but evidently 'Pardon' forms. These are most noteworthy. The rouletted bowl is paralleled by a similarly decorated bowl fragment from Crediton where a Pardon pipe was also found. In addition, several wig curlers (Fig. 4B) were found, one significantly, complete with the IP initials.

Many large pieces of muffle, used to protect the pipes during firing, were located, most of which were reinforced with pipe stems. In addition, hundreds of fragments of sheet were found.

Subsequent to the excavation, a further earth resistance survey was carried out in another field

with only a few finds in the top of the context. To the west of this feature was a spread of waste pipe clay. This abutted a spread of kiln waste which included stems, bowls, kiln furniture etc. This proved, on excavation, to be the northern end of a linear ditch evidently purpose dug for the deposition of kiln waste (Fig. 1). It ran to the south end of the area excavated where it appeared to be petering out. Adjacent to this linear at the south end was a spread of burnt orange hand-made bricks, probably deriving from the dismantling of a kiln, and another small spread of pipe clay.

All the features were sampled and recorded. The ditches were sectioned in several places. A major use of NDAS manpower was meeting the daily need for keeping up with the cleaning of huge numbers of



Fig.3: Section through the linear ditch showing the abundant waste deposited here.

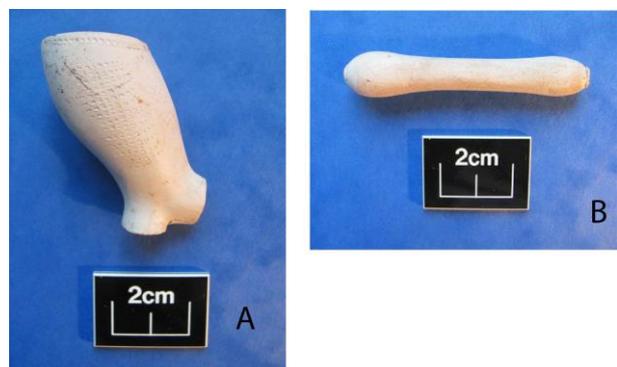


Fig.4: Pipe bowl with rouletted decoration (A) and wig-curler (B)

immediately to the north of the current site. The results of this survey are currently being studied and may be the basis for further excavation next year.

NDAS is most grateful to Devon HES, the DAS and the CBA for grants for the two seasons' work and for the unremitting enthusiasm of all the volunteers who participated.

Chris Preece

The Longstone Landscape Community Archaeology Project



Work on this project has been progressing well over the summer with teams concentrating on Radworthy, searching for flints at spring heads and recording the Chapman barrows.

Walkovers of the springhead areas are still progressing with Julia Holtom and June Aiken, who are co-ordinating the work, reporting that around a dozen flints have been found - not as many as we would wish. There is a lot of rough pasture in the areas we would most like to observe and so we are reliant on animal scrapes and track which have worn through the peat and exposed the earlier ground surface in section. Dr Paula Gardiner kindly had a quick run through some of the flints and reports that at least one of them is likely to be mesolithic in date, others are cores and flakes.

We worked alongside “Jimmy from Time Team” who works for GSB who were commissioned to carry out remote sensing on the easternmost of the Chapman Barrows. This is the one that we have christened Chanter’s Barrow due to the fact that the Rev J F Chanter, antiquarian and local cleric, excavated this mound and published his results. The results from Magnetometer survey, Ground



Drawn topographical survey on the Chapman Barrows

Penetrating Radar and Earth Resistance surveys were all consistent. The mound is approximately circular, around 25m in diameter, and it appears to have been constructed on a sloping ground surface. There were strong indications of a stone kerb, which bears out Chanter’s records, buried under the outer perimeter of the mound and a “halo” beyond. This could be slumping of the mound but more likely indicates a ditch. Other hotspots suggest there is still archaeology to be found beneath the mound.

GSB also surveyed a small horseshoe shaped cairn close to the barrow. This had a strong magnetic response and was positive on the earth resistance survey. It was interpreted as a possible burnt mound but is not a typical site for this type of monument which is often located near water. So the original hypothesis of a tea hut for Chanter’s workmen cannot be ruled out.

We have completed surveys of the Chapman Barrows 1 and 2 and will be announcing the next lot of work parties shortly. We are also delighted to find that there is a cache of Chanter’s papers at the Goldsmith’s library and we have tracked down his portrait at the National Portrait Gallery and are awaiting permission to use the image.



Volunteers measuring and recording a field boundary at Radworthy

Another aspect of the project involves documentary research and landscape survey at the deserted settlement of Radworthy. Abandoned in the 1860s this remote farmstead and field-system on Challacombe Common has medieval origins. It has never been fully researched and recorded, so the initial stage of the project has involved a team of volunteers spending several days walking over the ground and recording the field boundaries. This activity has already borne results in that several of the boundaries have been identified as 'cornditches' marking not only the probably original medieval limits of the field-system but also internal divisions which were never before apparent. Apart from these, most of the boundaries are low

earth banks rather than the typical Devon hedge-bank. Of the house and barn abandoned in the 1860s very little remains, but among the fields two possible building-platforms have been identified which will almost certainly be investigated next year.

Most of our training sessions have now finished but we are still happy to take on new volunteers who are prepared to pick up techniques as we go along. If you are interested in staring at the ground as you stumble over rough moorland searching for flints or holding the end of a tape in a howling gale (actually we have mostly been very lucky with the weather) then do please contact me and I will add you to the volunteer register blanchard.linda@live.co.uk

Linda Blanchard

Exmoor Archaeology Forum 2014

For fourteen years now the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) has staged an annual conference on recent archaeological developments on Exmoor. This year the Exmoor Archaeology Forum was held at Filleigh Village Hall on 27 September. It was well attended and superbly organised by the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA). The morning started with Rob Wilson-North outlining archaeological work of both the pre-National Park Authority and that achieved during the sixty years of the National Park. A recurring theme of the twentieth century was Exmoor's relative neglect compared with Dartmoor and only from the 1980s, with the reinvigoration of all the National Parks, but especially Exmoor, has this relative neglect been redressed. Rob was too modest to mention his own role in much of this, but the fact is that we should be grateful to Rob and his predecessor Veryan Heale for the fact that sixty years on from its foundation, we are now well informed about the archaeology and landscape history of Exmoor National Park.

The second contribution was from Faye Balmond of ENPA and Linda Blanchard of the Parracombe Archaeological and Historical Society, who talked about the origins and current progress of the Longstone Landscape Project on Challacombe and Parracombe Commons. This was community archaeology at its best and even in a relatively well known area of Exmoor, new and interesting finds have been made and systematic records made. The community archaeology theme was taken up by Shirley Blalock (ENPA) who gave a summary of the 'Dig Porlock' project from 2013. Some intensive activity involving 14 small test-pits and a large number of local people greatly increased knowledge of Porlock and the evolution of this fascinating village.

The morning sessions finished with a presentation by Rob Wilson-North on John Knight and his vision for the transformation of his 1820 purchase, the former Royal Forest of Exmoor, into a productive estate with a 'picturesque' landscape at its heart in Simonsbath. Rob explored the evidence for the early development of a picturesque garden that Knight had started to create in Ashcombe, immediately to the west and north of Simonsbath House. Neither the house nor the garden was ever completed, but the exploration of what little was achieved may throw a surprising light on the Knights' plans for and development of Exmoor,

There were three papers in the afternoon session. The first was by Lee Bray of the Exmoor Mires Project. This has two aspects, the first to assess the impact of engineering works and specifically access by heavy plant on the archaeology of sites to be restored. The second is to investigate and document what is found in the course of this work. Using several case studies, Lee showed how relatively poorly known areas had a rich and varied archaeology. He also reminded us that preventing the peat from drying out by strategic blocking of nineteenth and twentieth century drainage ditches also contributed to the protection of organic material of archaeological significance. Following Lee's talk, Hazel Riley gave a most interesting presentation on Exmoor's tracks and route-ways. This covered place-names, map, documentary and field evidence and showed a complex network of hollow-ways and tracks leading onto the moor, especially from the Devon side. The parallels with the work of Harold Fox on Dartmoor were apparent and were made by Hazel.

The final presentation was by Ralph Fyfe of the University of Plymouth. For more than a decade Ralph has been working on the palaeo-environmental record as held in mires on and around Exmoor. He gave us an update on more recent work and added insects and testate amoebae to the pollen and plant fossils as environmental indicators. He showed that while there was some broad historical pattern across all of his sites, especially of differences in vegetation history inside and outside the former Royal Forest, there was potentially as much variation among sites within the Forest as there was difference from sites beyond it. He showed that in the period AD 500 to 1000, sites in the Royal Forest and around its western edge had relatively little heather but on West Anstey Common, heather was significantly more abundant. In the period 1500 to 1800, heather became more important at most sites and suggested some change of management, either more burning or reduced grazing. Ralph was also able to show from almost all his sites that peat mosses (*Sphagnum* spp) had ceased to be found in peat layers after c 1800 and that this was the result of the impact of nineteenth and twentieth century moorland drainage.

The afternoon concluded with Rob Wilson-North offering a glimpse of some potential new projects on Exmoor in the next few years. He felt that Exmoor's woodlands deserved multi-disciplinary study, with particular emphasis on biodiversity and landscape history. More work was needed on Simonsbath and the National Park faced some new challenges from climate change and sea-level changes in the coastal zone. He hoped that funding would allow continuation of the Exmoor Mires project and that further community archaeological initiatives would be forthcoming

John Bradbeer

An A-Z of Northern Devon's Archaeology:

In the autumn 2013 newsletter we reported on the plan to compile and publish an A-Z of North Devon Archaeology and expressed the hope that it might be ready by the middle of 2014. Like most such hopeful timetables, there has been a certain amount of slippage and we are now looking at a date in 2015. However, just so that you know we have been doing what we promised, here is a report on progress.

We have compiled some 40 plus entries from Axes to Yeo (still stuck for a Z) varying in length from a couple of hundred words to over 2,000. Prompted by the fact that our area receives rather little coverage in the available literature, we have set ourselves the aim of providing an accessible, non-academic handbook of the archaeological and landscape-historical features of Northern Devon. In most cases we have pointed to readily visible examples and where there is public access we have provided guidance on locating characteristic sites. Note that we talk of 'Northern Devon', the intention being to cover all of the two Local Authority districts North Devon and Torridge while also dealing with West Exmoor and some of North Cornwall. Our target readership – apart from NDAS members, of course – is local people who are curious about their historic environment plus visitors and newcomers to the area.

We have been debating whether to publish through a commercial publisher or to self-publish. Interest was expressed by Halsgrove Publishing, but in the end it has been decided that self-publication is the better route to take, digital technology and the Internet making this much more feasible and potentially profitable than it might have been in the past. However, this is not cost-free and we are faced with finding around £3000 up front. We shall therefore be looking for sponsors among those who might gain from or might support our publication venture. Any ideas will be welcome and should be communicated to John Bradbeer (johnbradbeer@btinternet.com). We shall also be seeking to secure pre-publication sales, so be prepared!

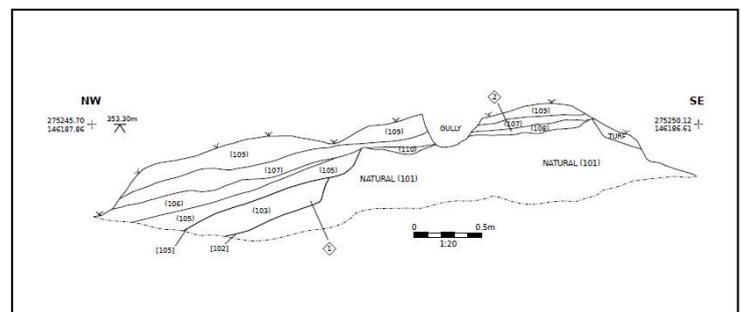
An Incidental Discovery:!

Derry Bryant writes:

As part of a training day with the Longstone Landscape Project, I joined with a group of volunteers to visit a springhead at Farley Hill, Exmoor (SS75-45-). We were being trained to look for possible flint scatters, and were shown how to plot them using hand-held GPS meters. We walked along the path near the springhead and started to pick up worked flint pieces which had probably been washed out of the topsoil/peat by heavy rain. I found a long narrow flint notched bladelet on top of the grass beside the path. It was sitting on a bank beside the path, and I was looking at the side of the vertical bank, thinking about the geology, noting the yellowish natural stone under the top layer of peat and vegetation, when I noticed a wide band of red coloured soil with red stones in, at first going down vertically, then sloping away. Taking a closer look, I noticed small pieces of charcoal mixed in with the stones and particularly at the bottom of the feature. I could see a distinct difference between the yellow soil and the red band, and thought it looked like an archaeological feature, i.e. a deliberate cut into the soil. I assumed it might be a hearth or fire-pit. I pointed it out to Rob Wilson-North who was with us, and took some photos. Rob arranged for the section to be recorded and charcoal samples to be taken. These were sent off for radio-carbon dating; the results were most interesting, indicating an early to Middle Bronze Age date (around 1900 BC).



The feature beside the track (Derry Bryant)



Section drawing of the feature (Lee Bray, ENPA)

NDAS Study Sessions

One idea that has emerged from putting together the A-Z is that members might appreciate some tuition or training in fundamental and important archaeological topics. To gauge potential interest we sent out a questionnaire about some form of study session. It was gratifying to receive a positive response from many NDAS members, so thank you to all of you who sent back a completed questionnaire.

There was universal support for the idea and some broad level of agreement both on timing and the sorts of topics we should aim to cover. Weekday evenings were more popular than daytime sessions on Saturdays and so our first study session will occur on 18 March 2015, after the AGM. We may consider both Saturday day-time sessions and further evening sessions for the 2015/6 season and we would welcome any further comments about timings.

Our survey showed that the membership was more enthusiastic about pre-medieval archaeology than about later periods. This was to some degree mirrored in preferences for topics for study. So we have provisionally chosen the topic of lithics (ie stone tools) for our March study session. We hope to have an archaeological professional to guide us in our studies but until this has been confirmed, it would be premature to say much more than that our aim is to have as much hands-on experience with artefacts illustrations and other materials as possible. It would not be another lecture or talk and your questions, no matter how naïve you may feel them to be, will be an integral part of the session.

We still have your replies on file and know roughly what other topics and time periods might prove popular for future sessions. But, again, if you have further thoughts, then please do let us know. One idea to emerge from some of the questionnaire responses was some sort of portal to information on archaeological methods such as how to go about things like field walking and drawing sections. We hope to explore the possibility of having such a portal on the society's website and any suggestions that you have about websites you have found helpful would be much appreciated.

Any comments and suggestions on this can be sent to the Secretary, John Bradbeer (johnbradbeer@btinternet.com)

Braunton Great Field:

A major reason for planning the A-Z was to raise awareness of the archaeological and landscape-historical treasures of our area. One that people may have forgotten about or may not be aware of is the Braunton Great Field. This 320 acre area of arable land between Braunton village, Braunton Burrows and Braunton Marsh is a great rarity, being one of only two surviving and still operating examples of the medieval open-field system in England. The other is at Laxton in Nottinghamshire, where rather more of the medieval system continues in existence. While it has to be accepted that Braunton Great Field is the second best example nationally, its very presence here in North Devon adds to its uniqueness, since the style of land management that it represents is not at all characteristic of Devonshire practice. While there were, until enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries, other working open-field systems in the county (at Brixham, for example), the Devon farming landscape is historically characterised by dispersed farm hamlets with 'in-by' land often divided into strips, but not on the scale of the classic open-field system most commonly found in central England. In fact it was for a long time denied that the open-field system had ever existed in Devon. It was H.P.R. Finberg who, in the 1960s, demonstrated from documentary evidence that the practice had prevailed in parts of the county and it was Braunton Great Field that provided the bulk of his evidence.



The 320 acres of the Great Field that we see today (photo, North Devon Athenaeum) represent only part of a field-system that once encompassed land to the east, south and west of the village. Today the Great Field remains unenclosed with strips of land divided by earth balks known as landsherds. The strips are gathered together in 'furlongs' with names such as Marstage, Venpit, Longlands and Bowstring. Seen from the air or when traversing it on foot, the impression of the Great Field under crop is of a portion of the North German landscape transposed to North

Devon. Even so, the pattern of around 80 long narrow strips seen today is a pale reflection of that which existed at the time of the tithe survey in 1842, when there were 448 strips with 48 owners and 62 cultivators. Inevitably agricultural change over the last 170 years has led to a reduction of people working the land and amalgamation of strips to accommodate modern machinery. This process is reflected in the village itself where, in 1842, there were 88 'farmers', among whom were 45 owners of land holding 207 strips between them. Others were tenants of the various Braunton manors (see below). The homes of these farmers were within the village (in South Street, for example) from where they worked land scattered around Braunton. Today the Great Field is held by 20 owners with around a dozen actual cultivators.

The reasons for the survival of the Great Field are varied and remain subject to debate. One factor, it is suggested, was the necessity to maintain the 'Great Hedge', the barrier which, before the reclamation of Braunton Marsh, protected the valuable arable land from the incursion of sea water: many hands were required for this essential work. Probably more significant however, is the exceptional fertility of the soil which historically was said to bear a grain crop year after year without a break: no-one would relinquish their hold on such fruitful land without a compelling reason. A further substantial reason lies in the history of Braunton. We first hear of Braunton or 'Brannocmynster' in 857 when it was granted to Glastonbury Abbey 'for the taking of fish'. It was taken back by the King in 973 and in the Domesday Book of 1086 it was recorded as a King's manor. In 1202 one third of the King's manor was hived off as the manor of Braunton Gorges, and then in 1229 the other two thirds were granted to Cleeve Abbey, becoming the manor of Braunton Abbots. At a later, uncertain date Braunton Gorges was further divided to create the manor of Braunton Arundel. There was a fourth manor, Braunton Dean which may have descended from the original Glastonbury holding. With the exception of the latter, tenants of all the manors held strips in the Great Field, not in distinct blocks, but interspersed throughout. Since a tenant could not be subject to two manors, this suggests that the interspersed strips of the three manors reflect an allocation of strips made out of the original King's manor when the land was first divided up. This in turn suggests that the Great Field itself had its origins in the early medieval period, possibly as early as the 9th century when it was held by Glastonbury Abbey. The probable consequence of this chequered history was that, when it came to a question of enclosure, the pattern of ownership and tenancy was so complex that any sensible process of amalgamation was impractical.

Thus Braunton Great Field stands out both as an all but unique, nationally significant survival of the once widespread open-field system and as a memorial to the convoluted history of this most interesting parish. Despite this it has at present no statutory protection, so that, apart from its intrinsic value to the families who cultivate it, only the vigilance of local people and of those whose job, duty or

pleasure it is to stand up for significant heritage landmarks can stand in the way of pressures to eat away at it. If you weren't aware before, then hopefully this short piece will have been enlightening.

Terry Green

'Grey' Literature:

Some members may have read a piece by Andrew Selkirk in the August 2014 issue of Current Archaeology. He pointed out that there was a great deal being published on the archaeology of England as part of the statutory planning process when archaeological work was an element of the application or a condition for development. This is 'grey' literature in the sense that it is in the public domain but not found in books, monographs or papers in learned journals and so can slip from view. Andrew Selkirk argued that the synthesis of this literature with the more established and conventionally published work of the past was both an important undertaking and one that professional archaeologists were generally too busy to undertake. So he suggested that this was an obvious task for local amateur archaeological societies to take on. There is a searchable database available from Archaeological Data Services: (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/>).

The NDAS Committee has discussed this and feels that we should endeavour to do something along these lines for the two local government areas of North Devon and Torridge. Our first aim would be to produce an annual listing of these various reports for inclusion in the Newsletter and on the NDAS website. A more ambitious aim would be to try to produce the annual synthesis of the material that Andrew Selkirk advocates. Two committee members have volunteered to try to do this, one focusing on North Devon DC area and the other on Torridge DC area, but would welcome offers of help from any other members. Please contact John Bradbeer (johnbradbeer@btinternet.com) if you might be interested in participating in this task.

NDAS Winter Programme of Talks 2014-15

*All talks take place at the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple and all talks begin at 7.30
Talks are free to NDAS members, visitors £2.50.*

Note that the AGM on 17th March begins at 7.00pm

21st October 2014:

Dr Ben Pears, Project Officer, AC archaeology: *The Results of Recent Excavations at Embury Beacon Fort, Hartland, and other AC Archaeology Investigations in and around North Devon*

18 November 2014:

John Bradbeer: *The Tithe Survey and Victorian Agriculture in Northern Devon*

20 January 2015:

Charlotte Russell, Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, English Heritage: *Heritage at Risk and the Work of English Heritage South West Team.*

17 February 2015:

(Topic and Speaker yet to be confirmed)

17 March 2015 7.00pm: North Devon Archaeological Society AGM followed by a study evening on the topic of 'Lithics' or Recognising and Recording Flints.

14 April 2015:

A Representative of Wessex Archaeology: *Rescue Excavation of a Medieval Settlement at Batsworthy Cross, Knowstone.*

The NDAS Annual Dinner:

The annual dinner this year will be on Tuesday 2nd December, 7.00 for 7.30, at 'The Courtyard' (formerly known as 'Zena's') in Market Street, Barnstaple.

Bob Shrigley will be supplying you with menus, prices and any other details in due course.

Archaeological Books for Sale:

In the previous (Spring 2014) newsletter we announced that the collection of books on archaeological topics that the Society has held for some years at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon is to be sold off. Proceeds go towards the Society's funds. Accompanying this newsletter is a list of books that remain for sale together with prices. If you wish to purchase any, either apply to Bob Shrigley by email or phone (rvs1120@gmail.com, 01237 478122) or browse the collection at any of the winter talks.

And finally:

Follow us on Facebook

We have just set up a Facebook page for us to share photos, news, events and ask questions related to the archaeology of North Devon and Torridge. If you are a Facebook member please join the debate by signing up to the North Devon Archaeology Group. Otherwise if you have something to promote or add please email Linda (Blanchard.linda@live.co.uk).