



Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

Newsletter Spring 2013

The NDAS AGM March 2013:

At the annual general meeting of the society held in March Derry Bryant was re-elected as Chair, Alison Mills as Vice-Chair and Bob Shrigley as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Mandy Jones stood down as secretary and is replaced in the role by John Bradbeer. Linda Blanchard was proposed and elected as a new committee member. Mandy Jones was thanked for her work as secretary during the past year. The NDAS Committee now comprises:

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

Please note that Derry Bryant had wished to stand down as Chair for family reasons, but as no-one came forward to take her place, she has agreed to continue in the role for another year, but exclusively to chair meetings. She is adamant however, that she will not stand again. Derry has also been responsible for putting together the winter programme of talks. This responsibility has now been assumed by Colin Humphreys who is well placed to find interesting speakers through his South West Archaeology contacts. However, should you know of someone who could offer an interesting talk within the general field of archaeology, please let the Committee know.

Your main contacts are:

Derry Bryant: derrybryant@tiscali.co.uk 01769 572963

John Bradbeer: johnbradbeer@btinternet.com 01237 422358

Bob Shrigley: rvs1120@gmail.com 01237 478122

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 banker's order, forms available from Bob.

West Yeo – Final Report:

As you will know, the survey and excavation at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge concluded at the end of 2012. The final report on the excavation is now in draft form and selected drawings are being digitised for inclusion. Inevitably the two major open-area excavations provided only a keyhole view of what lies buried and the fact that this very small percentage of the farm curtilage provided evidence of activity stretching over roughly one thousand years (pottery and other material evidence dating from the 10th/11th century to the 20th) means that we walk away wondering what we might have found, had we continued. It was not practical or even affordable to carry on, nevertheless we come away having achieved something very worthwhile, for in fact, it is rare to be able to 'look beneath' a Devon farm and demonstrate archaeologically its continuity and longevity.

Field-walking in the surrounding fields turned up evidence of a much deeper history in this part of mid-Devon. Flint and chert implements and waste (as well as other stone showing evidence of use) dating from the Mesolithic through to the Bronze Age indicates local human activity and by implication long-distance trade connections over thousands of years. All of the lithic material has been gathered together and a lithics report to accompany the excavation report is nearing completion. Recent work has included a closer examination of possibly worked quartz pieces and we are hoping to get an expert opinion on this. We plan to have all reports finalised in the next few months.

West Yeo Exhibition: CBA Festival of British Archaeology 27 July

As part of the CBA Festival of British Archaeology fortnight, we shall be holding an exhibition of the West Yeo project at Witheridge Village Hall on **Saturday 27 July from 11.00 – 3pm**. This will include photos, survey results, a slideshow, maps and artefacts from the project, plus pottery from the excavation and lithics from fieldwalking. We shall need helpers both before the event and on the day, to put the exhibition together. If you would like to get involved, please let Derry know on 01769 572963. In addition, Kate Palmer, the farmer and owner of West Yeo has offered to lead a farm walk, with cream teas at the farm (about a mile from the village hall) after the exhibition closes, say about 3.30pm. Let Derry know if you would like to be walked and fed.

Clay-pipe Kiln at Little Potheridge, Merton:



The possible kiln site

With the permission of the landowner Clinton Estates, and following on from geophysical survey, NDAS has a new excavation going at Little Potheridge near Merton (between Great Torrington and Hatherleigh) where there is artefactual and documentary evidence of clay-pipe manufacture in the 18th century and possibly earlier. The excavation of a clay-pipe kiln is a rare occurrence and the results could be nationally important. The excavation

period is from 11th to 27th May, the dig being led by Chris Preece, NDAS member and professional archaeologist. In essence most of you know this already and will have done your volunteering. In fact, by the time this newsletter goes out, the excavation will probably be at least half over.

Just for your interest and information therefore, here are a few details of what we know at present.



Happy diggers at Little Potheridge

Members of the Merton Historical Society have been aware for some time that in the corner of a field at Little Potheridge, there is a spread of clay-pipe fragments on the surface of the soil. It has also very recently been learnt that a local JCB driver has uncovered, during the course of his work in the area, large quantities of clay-pipe waste. Concentrations of waste suggest manufacture, which in turn means there is very likely to be a kiln. Another substantial pointer to the source of the material is an 18th century document which names John Pardon as a clay-pipe maker and there are other documentary sources which place him at Little Potheridge, a hamlet within the parish of Merton. Many of the broken pipe bowls bear the initials JP and some a fuller, but abbreviated version J PARN. Pipes with this manufacturer's mark found their way as far as Launceston and Totnes.



Some of the material collected from the site

Map evidence from the late 18th century to the present indicates a number of quite substantial changes in the vicinity of the supposed manufacturing site. In 1794 there was a quite extensive group of buildings immediately to the north-west, one of which seems to survive in part today, while the rest have been swept away. There are aspects of this building which are not easily understood, but it remains to be seen whether it has anything to do with John Pardon's pipe manufactory.

Pardon was apparently not working alone in this locality. Other identifications appear on clay pipe waste in the area, probably for the very good reason that the source of white clay which the pipe makers required is local to this part of Devon and was dug at Peters Marland – just down the road - to form the characteristic North Devon yellow or buff 'lavatory' brick seen in so many 19th century buildings.

An Inscribed Stone at West Down:

The recent discovery by a very well informed and perceptive young man (Jack Lawrence) of an 'inscribed stone' at West Down near Ilfracombe is exciting because it is a clue to what was happening in that obscure period known as the 'Dark Age' between the departure of Rome and the



The West Down inscribed stone with name 'GUERNGEN'. (Photo: Ann Preston-Jones)

emergence of Anglo-Saxon England. Both in south and west Wales and in the southwestern peninsula of England, stones bearing inscriptions – principally in Latin – and dating from the 5th to 8th century have been known and studied for some time. In the South West, Cornwall has the lion's share, while the relatively few in Devon are distributed principally around Dartmoor and into the South Hams. Excluding four examples on Lundy, northern Devon has – or had – only the CAVUDUS stone which stands in a garden in Lynton parish, while on Exmoor there is only the CARATACUS stone on Winsford Hill. The inscriptions

on the stones memorialise prominent individuals many with Celtic names as well as some Latin and some Irish (Irish colonists were making inroads into western Britain in the post-Roman period). They are seen as evidence of the spread of Christianity, some of them bearing a cross or a chi-rho (a symbol combining the first two letters of Christ in Greek). The newly discovered stone bears a single name, apparently GUERNGEN. The inscription actually reads GUERNGENI, the final –I representing the Latin genitive ending, ie. (*memorial*) of *Gwerngen*. The form of the name and the script style, which potentially provide dating evidence, are being studied by Oliver Padel, an expert on things 'West British'. It appears that the stone was built into a wall and was set aside when the wall was demolished about 1997. It lay unregarded until Jack Lawrence took an interest and realised there was writing on it. It has now been removed to the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon where it is being conserved and studied. Quite probably there are others built into hedgebanks or used as gate-posts awaiting exposure to the perceptive eye of a keen amateur. In fact very recently another possible example has come to light at Hittisleigh, southwest of Crediton, where it is built into the threshold of the south door of the church.

Research, analysis and publication of the find are being funded by Devon County Council.

Geophysical Survey and Test-pitting at Waytown Farm, Kentisbury:

A recently produced report by Trevor Dunkerley and Jim Knights provides an account of geophysical survey and test-pitting that they have undertaken on a site at Waytown Farm on the boundary between Kentisbury and Combe Martin parishes. Topographical survey carried out by Rob Wilson-North – then of RCHME – in February 1993 identified ditched and banked features on land to the west of Dean Cross on the A399 above Combe Martin. Some while ago the site aroused Trevor's interest and ultimately, with all the necessary permissions and the loan of the NDAS earth resistance equipment (which originated with Trevor anyway), he and Jim Knights set out to survey the most clearly defined feature. Here slight earthworks suggest a rectilinear enclosure with rounded corners measuring approximately 40m x 30m. The geophysical survey confirmed the shape, identified a surrounding ditch and located a possible entrance on the south side. Test-pits were dug at two points, one in the ditch and one on top of the remnant bank. The results suggested that the original

bank had been no more than a metre high and the ditch had been dug to a depth of one metre. Charcoal fragments in the second test-pit prompted an extension which produced evidence of quite intense burning, but no indication of the purpose. Charcoal was sent for radiocarbon dating to a laboratory in Kiev, Ukraine. The result indicated activity in the Romano-British period, most probably in the 2nd-3rd century AD. This all too rare dating evidence for archaeological features in the North Devon landscape is a valuable addition to our understanding and the two gentlemen are to be congratulated.

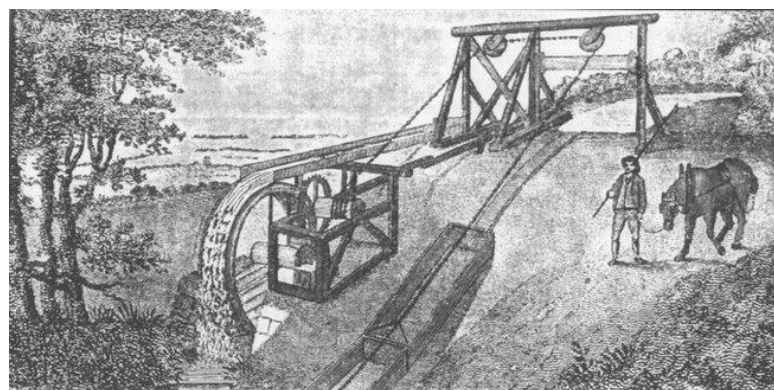
Gunswell Lane, South Molton:

In the last newsletter (autumn 2012) we drew your attention to a planning proposal (Planning Application NDDC 54384) affecting a large area on the edge of South Molton where there was apparently a hilltop enclosure of probable prehistoric date. An archaeological condition was placed on the development proposal and subsequently AC Archaeology (Wiltshire) were commissioned to investigate. During the winter the company completed geophysical survey and dug evaluation trenches on the site. Identified features include a large double ditch and a possible Iron Age round house. A detailed report is available in pdf format which can be emailed to you on request to Derry Bryant (01769 572963). The latest news is that permission for the development of this site has been granted, and in consequence there is the possibility of more extensive archaeological investigation.

Geophysical Survey on the Rolle Canal and an Invitation:

Research on the Rolle Canal is ongoing. NDAS members Chris Hassall, Greg Smith & Bob Shrigley were involved with the North Devon Biosphere Reserve's 'Life's Journey' Project to improve access to parts of the Rolle Canal. This Heritage Lottery Funded project required that an archaeological earth resistance survey be carried out at Beam (SS474207) and at Ridd (SS465221) before any improvement work was carried out. The first earth resistance survey was undertaken in the form of

a limited number of traverses of the presumed route of the canal between the Carriage Drive Bridge, near Beam House and the Tarka Trail. The canal's alignment was determined, but the possibility of a canal basin and lines of any masonry wharf walls were not established. The second earth resistance survey was undertaken in the form of two



Robert Fulton's Illustration of an Inclined Plane 1796

grids set out to cover the presumed lower section of the Inclined Plane near Ridd Cottage. The canal's alignment was determined along with the start of the inclined plane. A small area of slightly high resistance shown on the alignment of the canal may be evidence of a masonry central pier between the two docks leading to the inclined plane. It is also suggested that this may represent the tip of the pier where the base of the bottom pulley wheel axle could have been, which might have required extra deep

foundations. The survey may be followed up with an archaeological excavation to establish the presence of the central pier, pier end or the pulley wheel axle base.

An invitation is extended to NDAS members, courtesy of Chris Hassall, to be taken on a walk to see the latest work together with a talk on Sunday 9th June, meeting and parking at Annery Kiln at 2.30pm. Directions: Go south out of Bideford, on the A386 for 3 miles. Then turn left onto road signed Weare Giffard, reaching Annery Kiln in a ¼ mile. Map Ref. SS 462228

The walk will be along the line of the canal across the meadows to the bottom basin of the inclined plane. Then up the embankment to the Tarka Trail and to the top basin where we will see the wheel pit which housed the operating mechanism for the inclined plane, and then back to Annery Kiln along the Tarka Trail. Length of walk 1 mile with a finish time of between 4.30pm – 5.00pm.

Chris Hassall, an NDAS member who has considerable local knowledge of the area and its history, will lead the walk. Chris also has a particular interest in environmental matters. If you wish to go on the walk, or for more information, please contact Chris by email: hassallc@ymail.com or telephone 01237 425357.

Reports from South West Archaeology Ltd.:

Archaeological Contractor South West Archaeology Ltd (SWARCH) based at South Molton have become a group member of NDAS and are now represented on the NDAS committee. SWARCH undertakes archaeological investigations ahead of developments all over Devon as well as in neighbouring counties. For the first time we are able to include some brief reports (which are now in the public domain) of work that SWARCH has undertaken in North Devon. These are being sent to you in pdf form as a supplement to this newsletter. If your computer is not set up to read a pdf, the reports are also available in *Word* – please let me know if you would like to receive the *Word* version.

National Mapping Programme and North Devon AONB:

The National Mapping Programme (NMP) has been set up by English Heritage in order to collate and extract the maximum information from all the existing aerial coverage of England's archaeology. This includes aerial photographs from the pioneering days of O.G.S.Crawford up to the latest lidar imagery. In the words of English Heritage: *NMP is a key component of English Heritage's capacity to investigate and understand the historic environment at the landscape scale, and underpins other priority projects and programmes. Through a series of linked projects, NMP delivers high-quality baseline information for the management of change in the historic environment through the planning and other statutory systems, and as a basis for further research.*

As a result of this work hundreds of hitherto unsuspected sites have been revealed. In our area NMP has now completed its survey of the North Devon AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) which comprises the coastal parishes from Combe Martin to Welcombe. To the east Exmoor National Park has already been covered and to the west Cornwall has been completed. Elsewhere in Devon Dartmoor has been covered as well as a couple of selected areas of mid-Devon. It is to be hoped that one of these days the whole county will be mapped.

Within the area of the North Devon AONB relatively few new features have turned up, but knowledge of the detail and extent of numerous known features has been increased. At Clovelly Dykes, for example, examination of all coverage has clarified and confirmed an otherwise obliterated extension of the banks and ditches on the south side of the A39. A number of features have added to the knowledge of Civil War activity in the area, and remnants of WW2 defenses and preparations for D-Day have been thoroughly mapped as well as remnants of Cold War activity. Between Mullacott and Berry Down to the south of Ilfracombe, on the south side of the ridgeway road, there is evidence of a prehistoric field-system quite unrelated to the later medieval lay-out and which may be associated with a known hillslope enclosure at North Hill Cleave. Elsewhere evidence of medieval strip field systems has been further accumulated. Barrow cemeteries, warrens, fish-weirs and numerous late prehistoric enclosures as well as possible abandoned medieval settlements have all been picked up by this exhaustive survey which now becomes a tool of landscape management and heritage conservation available to the North Devon AONB.

A Stone too Far?



Large flint nodule found in the River Heddon at Holworthy Farm, Parracombe. (50pence piece for scale)

overlying the local Devonian rock, but it looks nothing like the flint that we see at Orleigh Court, where there is a small, natural deposit of clay with flints (the residue left behind when the chalk matrix has been weathered away). Was it traded into the area as raw material in prehistory? Worth considering., but without pack ponies or wheeled transport a very heavy proposition. On the other hand, in what form WAS flint brought into an area where it is not naturally present? Something to think about.

Between 2002 and 2005 NDAS excavated a (mainly) Bronze Age hillslope enclosure at Holworthy Farm, Parracombe. The farm belongs to Phil and Julie Rawle who have always been very interested in what we found on their land. In the bed of the Heddon River where it flows through Holworthy Farm, Julie Rawle recently came across the large flint nodule illustrated here. It is obviously not from the local beaches, in fact it looks as if it has come straight out of the Wessex chalk with its cortex intact. How did it get here? Brought here in a straw bale? Very unlikely! Dropped here by a careless geologist? Very, very unlikely! On a more serious note, it has been suggested that it represents flint residue from an earlier chalk stratum

And Finally:

The dates for the next season of talks are:

15th Oct 2013

19th Nov 2013

December: Annual dinner – date and venue to be decided, normally during the first week of December as it is always so busy

21st Jan 2014

18th Feb 2014

18th March 2014 (AGM starting at 7pm)

15th April 2014

Subjects and speakers to be announced in due course.

Terry Green, Editor