

# NORTH DEVON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A black and white photograph of an archaeological excavation site. In the foreground, a man in a dark long-sleeved shirt and light-colored trousers is bent over, working in a trench. To his right, a woman wearing sunglasses and a dark jacket is sitting on a small stool, looking towards the camera. In the background, other people are visible working in the trench, which is lined with stones. A large bucket is in the foreground, and another is further back. The scene is set in an open field with a hillside in the background.

ISSUE 5 SPRING 2003

## Useful information

### **NDAS Officers 2003-4:**

**Chairman:** Terry Green

**Vice-Chairman:** Ann Mandry

### **Meetings and Correspondence**

**Secretary:** Alistair Miller

### **Treasurer and Membership**

**Secretary:** Jane Green

**Projects Director:** Colin Humphreys

**Fund Raiser:** Richard Beer

### **Other Committee Members:**

June Aiken, Rosemary Akers, Sally Cotton, Harry Cramp, Janet Daynes, Trevor Dunkerley, Jim Knights, Jonathan Lomas, Alison Mills, Chris Preece, Kes Webb, Rob Wilson-North, Maureen Wood

### **Associate Committee Members:**

Ann Adams, Sue Scrutton, Cllr Derek Spear

### **Publications Committee**

Terry Green, Colin Humphreys, Alison Mills

### **Other Archaeological Bodies:**

Devon County Sites and Monuments Register  
01392 382246

Council for British Archaeology (York)  
01904 671417

National Sites & Monuments Record (Swindon)  
01793 414600

## 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

**Collette Hall** (NDDC Conservation Officer)  
01271 346436

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

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

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

**Deborah Laing-Trengove** (Hatherleigh History Group) 01837 810310

**Alistair Miller** (NDAS Secretary) 01598 740359

**Alison Mills** (Museums Service) 01271 346747

**Jenny Yendall** (Tiverton Archaeological Group)  
01884 255397

**Lyn Walmesley** (Teign Archaeology Group and Secretary CBA South-West) 01392 432184

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

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

# Dates for Your Diary

**10th and 11th May:** Field Boundary Survey at Holworthy Farm, Parracombe.

**17th and 18th May:** Field Boundary Survey and/or test-pitting at Holworthy Farm, Parracombe.

**Also on 17th and 18th May,** if you prefer to be beside the sea, fish-weir survey, meeting at the White House (Braunton Marsh) at 12.00 midday.

**5th June:** Exmoor National Park guided walk at Parracombe: *An Exploration of Exmoor's Hedges - the History and Ecology of Field Boundaries.* 11.00a.m. to 4.00p.m. Meeting in layby at SS669458 (Higher Bodley). Stout footwear and weatherproof clothing. **(This walk arises partly from our field-boundary survey. NDAS members are involved.)**

**17th June:** *Beaches, breaches and Old Cows* - a repeat of last year's popular archaeological walk on Porlock Beach, led by Rob Wilson-North. 2.00p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Meet Porlock Weir car park. Packed lunch and stout footwear. Booking essential 01643 863150.

**21st and 28th June:** Community Landscapes Project: Earthworks Survey at Hartland.

**29th June:** NDAS visit to Cothay Manor, Wellington, Somerset.

**19th July:** National Archaeology Day: 'Roman' displays and demonstrations at Brayford Village Hall. (See local press or phone Museum of North Devon) Plus various events in Combe Martin.

**30th and 31st August:** Fish-weir survey.

**14th to 19th July:** Excavation at Holworthy Farm, Parracombe.

**13th September:** Training Day at the Museum of North Devon: Pottery handling and recognition, 10.00 am

23rd September: 6.00pm, launch of Dr Alison Grant's new book on North Devon pottery. NDAS members are invited, but contact North Devon Museum nearer the time to confirm date and time.

**27th and 28th September:** Fish-weir survey

**For more information phone :**

Fish-weir survey – Chris Preece on 01237 475368

Holworthy field-boundaries – Terry Green on 01271 866662

Holworthy Excavation – Colin Humphreys on 01271 882152

CLP at Hartland – Sean Hawken on 01392 263851

Events in Combe Martin - Trevor Dunkerly on 01271 883833

Events at Museum – 01271 346747)

*Don't forget, we still meet on the second Tuesday of the month at the Chichester Arms, Bishops Tawton, about 8.00pm for informal conversation.*

**The DAS Summer Programme**

**11th May:** CBASW coach trip to Martin Green's Farm, Salisbury Area (Lynne Walmsley 01392 432184)

**18th May:** DAS coach trip to Stonehenge £15 (Janet Cambridge, 20 Devon Terrace, Plymouth PL3 4JD)

**15th June:** DAS coach trip to South Cadbury £12 (Janet Cambridge as above)

**6th July:** Return visit to Leigh Barton £2.50 (Janet Cambridge as above)

**10th August:** Field Visit to Silchester £15 (contact DAS secretary Lorinda Legg 01837 840326)

**19th to 21st September:** Field Weekend on the Isle of Wight £160 (Lorinda Legg as above)

# Using the North Devon Record Office

Tim Wormleighton

Don't forget that, as an NDAS member, you are entitled to free access to the huge range of historical resources available at the North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple Library. This office, part of Devon County Council's archives service, cares for a comprehensive legacy of written heritage stretching back to the twelfth century, and makes these records available for public inspection in its well-equipped searchroom. On your first visit, you will be asked to complete a registration form and your details will be entered on to the Record Office's computer database of users. On showing your NDAS membership card, you will be added to the Society's group ticket and allowed access to a veritable treasure trove of historical information relating to North Devon and further afield. There are comprehensive finding aids, such as catalogues of collections and card indexes arranged by place, subject and personal names, which will readily enable you to identify documents of interest. These can then be requested from the Record Office strongroom for you to look at.

Collections of records held by the North Devon Record Office include local parish records, records of local councils, families, estates and businesses, maps and plans (including the nineteenth century tithe maps for the whole county of Devon), land tax assessments, title deeds, wills and photographs. In addition, the Record Office has combined its resources with Devon Library and Information Services and the North Devon Athenaeum to provide a comprehensive local studies facility in Barnstaple Library. These departments provide access to related sources, such as the nineteenth century census returns,

Ordnance Survey maps, published books and journals and a large number of transcripts and indexes of parish registers and census returns, all under the same roof.

The North Devon Local Studies Centre is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5.00pm (except Wednesday, when it closes at 1.00pm). The Library section of the Centre is also open every Saturday from 9.30am to 4.00pm, joined by the Record Office on the 2nd and 4th Saturday each month (these dates may alter from time to time, so it is best to check before visiting). Original documents cannot be produced from the Record Office strongroom between 12.00 and 2.00pm, although items can be ordered in advance if you will be arriving over this period. It is advisable to reserve a microfilm viewer for certain sources that are available in this format only (telephone 01271 388607 for bookings or advice).

Remember that your NDAS membership card can also be used to access the resources of the Devon Record Office headquarters in Exeter.

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## Editorial:

# NDAS and the 'Big Picture'

With contributions from groups and individuals variously working within the sphere of archaeology and the Historic Environment in Northern Devon, this eclectic edition appears at a juncture where bodies such as Exmoor National Park and Devon County Council are reviewing their strategy for the historic environment. In this process of review we have been asked to make a contribution in the form of comments or suggestions, which is both encouraging and a cue to think about the role and purpose of the North Devon Archaeological Society.

When I first took an interest in the activities of NDAS, the northern parts of Devon represented a puzzling gap on distribution maps and had a low profile in the literature. This was not for lack of archaeology. Frances Griffith's aerial coverage of the whole county showed that prehistoric sites were abundant in the area; while long-standing studies such as those of Hoskins and Finberg and more recently Harold Fox indicated that there was an intriguing story of medieval settlement to be traced in the landscape. Literature was not entirely lacking. There was Grinsell's *Archaeology of Exmoor* and there was Susan Pearce's *The Kingdom of Dumnonia* plus her interesting study of churches in the North Devon landscape. When the *Historical Atlas of the South-West* appeared in 1999, it was refreshing to find detailed distribution maps and some novel studies embracing northern Devon. Then, of course, there was the long awaited and very welcome publication of *The Field Archaeology of Exmoor* (English Heritage).

Now things have moved on in the field too. The recent discovery of Romano-British iron-

working sites at Brayford and Sherracombe Ford is symbolic of that change, but is by no means the whole story. The Exmoor iron-working project is the result of a co-operation between the Exmoor National Park Authority and the University of Exeter. It belongs within a context of new research prompted by both bodies and for which the English Heritage publication *The Field Archaeology of Exmoor* provides a base-line. This, in turn, belongs in the context of the University's Greater Exmoor Project which pushes the area of research out well beyond the National Park boundaries. At the same time, a joint effort by the County Council and the University (with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund) has produced the Community Landscapes Project, which deliberately looks away from from the classic moorland areas and directs attention towards the relatively neglected, but very important surrounding 'lowland'. Currently the CLP is concentrating its efforts on the Hartland area.

It will be evident from this emerging structure that the focus is on broadly based landscape projects which embrace evidence ranging from the detailed examination of peat cores to the consideration of whole field and settlement systems. For the statutory bodies, 'Historic Environment' has become the watch-word and the term serves well enough to embrace the purposes of archaeologists at large. Against this background, local archaeological societies have a newly meaningful role to play. Primarily the special contribution of local societies is that they contain people who know their locality intimately, are dedicated and are in a position to make day-

archives (principally from the North Devon Rescue Unit and Trevor Miles' excavations), and to assess the large quantity of research and writing up already completed. Tim, together with colleagues specialising in different areas, has since been back to assess a selection of the pottery.

The feasibility study will result in a project design for the final publication, and grant applications will have to be made to carry out the work – which may take several years. One important part of the project is, however, already well on track, with Alison Grant planning to publish an update of her book on North Devon Pottery in September this year. Funded through the Tarka Millennium Awards scheme, Alison's documentary research is a crucial resource for anyone studying North Devon Pottery.

Representatives from the Society are part of a support group, which first met last July at the unveiling of the reconstructed Tuly Street kiln, and again in October to hear how the project was progressing. We hope to meet again in late May or early June to hear from Exeter Archaeology about progress on the project. If any members would like to be part of the group, please contact Alison Mills at the Museum.

## **Torrington Museum**

**Brian Cole**

Torrington Museum is a non-themed collection of discoveries and bygones presenting an informal picture of the life of this small Devon town over the centuries. It celebrates some of its more famous visitors and residents through small, carefully selected exhibits and recalls the events of the town's history.

The visitor will find, for example, a Victorian parlour and kitchen complete with harmonium, grandfather clock, iron Bodley cooking range,

wash boiler, great mangle and the utensils we associate with them. From earlier still is a complete clay 'cloam' oven such as is usually found tucked away in a cottage inglenook.

A fine collection of C17 to modern portraits depicts members of the Rolle Family, while smaller exhibits record Sir Joshua Reynolds' visits to relatives in Torrington, as well as the work of the Rev.W.Keble Martin, whose meticulous 'Concise British Flora' has long been an essential reference for botanists and countryside enthusiasts. (An unfinished page of work interrupted by his death, is on display.)

Torrington's working history is represented by collections of equipment linked to the sadly now discontinued dairying industry in the town (clotted cream was regularly supplied to Harrods!); and to the making of gloves – another major local enterprise, now in decline.

A 'favourite son' was Thomas Fowler, a contemporary of John Babbage and his rival in the design of calculating machinery. (Babbage admitted to preferring Fowler's approach). Models of his machine are on display.

Other exhibits record local transport by road and the now defunct railway, the centuries of production of local pottery, the geology of the area and, for the 2003 season, a special exhibition recalling the impact of World War 2 on the town and its inhabitants.

Most importantly, the museum maintains an extensive archive of the families, businesses and buildings of this unusual small Devon market town, and can often help with family trees and ancestor research.

Run entirely by volunteers, the museum is funded only by local authority and charity grants and by visitor donations. Admission is free. A visit between 19th May and the end of September will satisfy the curious!

# Barnstaple Excavations Publication- An Update

Alison Mills

Most members will know that the Society, together with other interested groups and individuals, has been encouraging the publication of the Barnstaple excavations. The most significant material, identified by the Mediaeval pottery Research Group as one of the most important unpublished excavations in the country, relates to the kilns excavated in Tuly Street.

The collection held at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon consists of several

thousand boxes of pottery and other material, and also includes the results of other work carried out around the town in the 1970s and 1980s.

This is a vast project, and Exeter Archaeology have already spent several years agreeing a brief for the Feasibility Stage with English Heritage. Approval was finally given around Christmas, and Exeter Archaeology began work earlier this year.

Archaeologist and potter Tim Gent was appointed to carry out a survey of the excavation



*The reconstructed pottery kiln in the Museum of North Devon. The reconstruction is based on mid-17th century remains found on the site of Barnstaple Library and on experimental firings undertaken by the Bickley Ceramics Project.*



by-day, season-by-season observations not readily available to those working at a 'higher' level. Organised together to conduct long-term projects such as our Parracombe Project or our recording of fish-weirs as well as Winkleigh's 'House Detectives' project, local groups are in a position to provide a level of research which represents detailed groundwork and which ultimately adds up to the 'big picture'. It is a strength of NDAS that we are both able to reach out to a growing number of interested local people and have a good proportion of members with archaeological qualifications who form the bridge between the Society and the academic community. We are in a very favourable position to fulfil the Society's Aims and Objectives:

By pursuing these objectives through focused projects we are helping to expand the data-base for future research and to secure the protection of the historic environment. **Terry Green**

**Nothing gets done without people doing it!**

**Field work volunteers are needed.**

**See the Volunteer Form included with this edition.**

## **Membership subscription**

At the Society's AGM in March, the membership subscription was discussed. At the present level of £8.00 per head, which is low compared with other comparable organisations, we scarcely break even. The scale of the Society's activities has grown in the last two years, so that the subscription now has to cover the costs of producing two substantial newsletters a year, hire of premises for talks, insurance and affiliation fees, a subscription to the North Devon Records Office, officers' expenses and the cost of materials. In addition, if we are to continue to attract quality speakers to our winter meetings, we must recognise that today a fee is often expected (in addition to expenses) in recognition of the speaker's time and effort.

Consequently it was agreed at the AGM that the annual membership subscription should be raised to a realistic level of £12.00 per head with the usual pro rata reductions for joint (£18.00), student and junior membership (£3.75) and for late-joining new members (£6.00). This will be effective from April 2004.

# Fieldwork, Summer 2003:

## Parracombe

The first priority this summer is to continue with our investigation of the Parracombe landscape. At Holworthy Farm, where we began work last year, we intend to conclude our survey by recording the field-boundaries and test-pitting at the abandoned site of Higher Holworthy as well as next to the Holworthy farmhouse itself. During last year Dr Ralph Fyfe of Exeter University took cores from a spring-mire within the farm in order to track changes in land-use over time. And later this year, Chris Carey, also of Exeter University, will be taking soil-samples from the area of the hillslope enclosure for geochemical analysis. During March Ross Dean conducted a magnetometry survey on the hillslope enclosure with very interesting results. These have encouraged us to plan a further excavation on the enclosure this July. By the end of the year, therefore, we shall have data from a variety of surveys as well as from excavation, which will enable us to begin to understand landscape development on this fringe of the parish.

From Holworthy, we shall move to the other side of the parish to West Middleton Farm. Having previously surveyed the field-boundaries of East Middleton, it makes sense to look at the other half of what was probably a single unit until the mid-15th century, a unit which represents the second largest of the Domesday manors of Parracombe.

## This summer, therefore...

The first requirement is to do the field-boundary survey. Since increasing growth of vegetation makes it more difficult, this is now a priority and

will take place during May. The weekends of **10th-11th May** and **17th-18th May** are proposed. Field-boundary survey amounts to a walk in very pleasant surroundings with a clear purpose in mind and clip-board in hand ( a bit like golf, but with a more informative result). The more volunteers we have, the more likely it is that we can complete the boundaries of Holworthy Farm in one weekend, which would mean that on the second weekend we could go on to dig test-pits at the site of Higher Holworthy. As for the 'hillslope enclosure', the results of Ross Dean's recent magnetometry survey encourage us to take a closer look at the features which they suggest. We propose, therefore, to undertake a further excavation on the enclosure this year. This will



*Ross under cover: the mysterious business of downloading data on a bright day in the field.*



*Medieval Barnstaple: A cloth seller in Barnstaple's medieval market. In the background, a mural with a view of Cross Street looking towards the West Gate.*

# News from Barnstaple Heritage Centre

Maureen Wood

Recently the exhibits in the Heritage Centre have undergone many changes. Extensive research and much hard work have gone into the new projects, some of which will continue into the year ahead. The whole of the refurbishment has been undertaken by the centre's Project Manager Julie Parker, ably assisted by the Commercial Manager Denise Teague, and a willing band of volunteers. During the three-week closure of the centre's exhibitions, a Saxon hut and a scene depicting Barnstaple's Mediaeval market were constructed. The building echoed to the sounds of sawing, hammering, and the splish-splash of paint-brushes mingled with the odd mild expletive. Along the colonnade of 'Queen Anne's Walk' great activity took place in a biting wind, with the cutting and bundling of huge amounts of straw that was eventually to be used in the creation of thatched roofing for the dwellings surrounding the market scene. Much of the proverbial midnight oil was burnt, and great credit is due to those who took part for the quality of their achievement and for such rapid progress towards re-opening.

## The New Displays:

The construction of the **Saxon Hut** is completed. The contents will be in place by Easter and, as well as basic furnishings, will include a mural representing Saxon Barnstaple; a text-board referring to the mint at Barnstaple, silver etc.; life-size figures of a Saxon silver worker Byhrsige, and his wife Elgitha with push buttons giving access to their conversation.

In the **Medieval Market** scene, thatched houses line the High Street with market stalls

surrounding the area at High Cross. There is a mural of Croke (Cross) Street looking towards the West Gate and the Quay. This is set behind market stalls and portrays potters and craftsmen. There are figures of market gossip Mistress Joan and a woodcarver. Press-buttons give access to information. A further figure speaking from an upstairs window will be in place by Easter as will many other features and textboards.

## Future Developments:

Plans are already in place to redevelop the merchant ship area. The floor will be planked, there will be background sounds, a cabin boy, additions to cargo etc. All with the addition of push-button information. This development should take place in the next few months. The Civil War Trench is also under review for improvement.

## Footnote:

Much research on Barnstaple Market has turned up some fascinating details. Eventually the Heritage Centre will be producing a booklet detailing some of the facts and history of the Market.

In the meantime, to fully appreciate all the hard work that has been put into the new exhibits please come and visit them at Barnstaple Heritage Centre. You will not be disappointed!

take place during July and will last a week.

Proposed dates are **Monday 14th to Saturday 19th July**, but contact Colin (01271 882152) to confirm this.

Work at West Middleton will begin in late summer. Phone Colin for details..

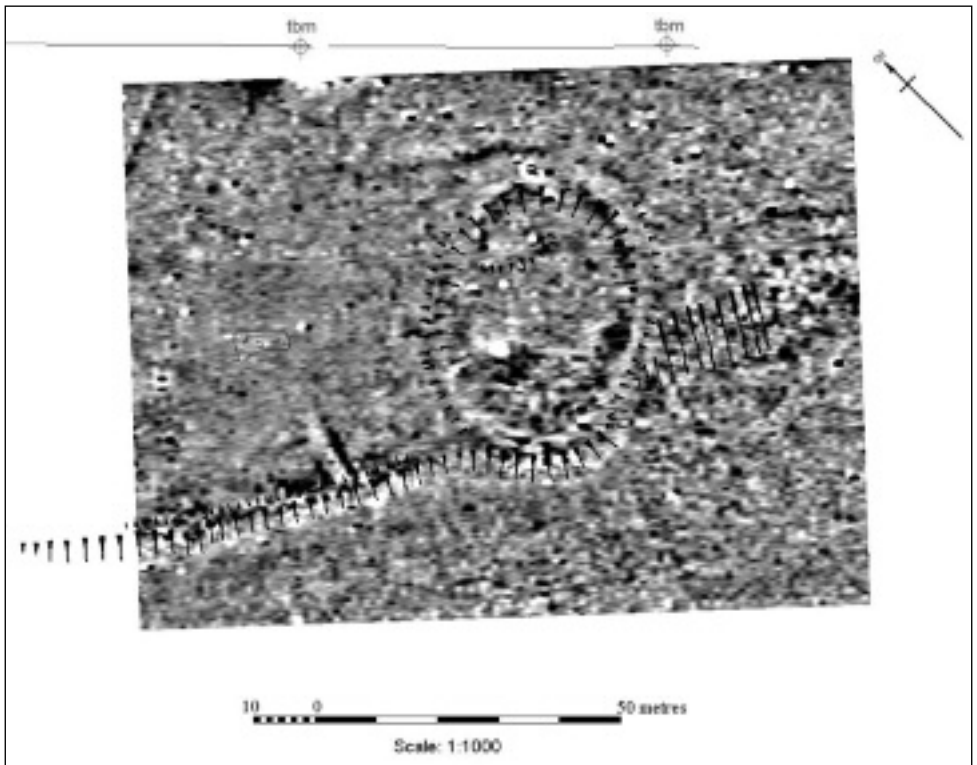
### **Fishweirs:**

Volunteers have been out twice this year with Chris Preece to track down and record remnants of fish-weirs. This is only feasible at the lowest tides. If you are able and willing to help, contact Chris on 01237 475368. (For dates, see Dates for your Diary)

### **Trips:**

Some members have complained that the Society no longer arranges summer visits to places of interest. We stopped doing this because support was embarrassingly poor, but with our now expanded membership perhaps the situation has changed. Ann Mandry has kindly agreed to arrange a visit to Cothay Manor ( a well preserved example of a medieval manor house) near Wellington provisionally for 29th June. This will go ahead if there is sufficient support.

If you would like to join the visit to Cothay Manor, please fill in the form included with this newsletter and return it Ann.



*Holworthy Magnetometry: Preliminary result of the magnetometry survey conducted by Ross Dean on the Holworthy "hillslope enclosure". Overlaid on the plot are the earthworks previously recorded by English Heritage.*

# The Archaeology of some North Devon Place-Names

Terry Green

Our place-names are a record of our ancestors' diverse experience of their landscape and are one way in which they speak to us directly. Most of the place-names that we find on the map were established before the 12th century and because they were coined in Old English and have been distorted by usage, they now appear obscure and sometimes even comical. To those who first spoke them, however, they were clear references to features of the land that they inhabited. And for this reason, an understanding of their significance is a useful tool for the archaeologist. Below are a few reflections on some North Devon place-names. (Interpretations are based on Gover, Mawer and Stenton: *Place-Names of Devon*, 1932)

## Marwood

(DB 1086: *Meroda/Merehoda/Mereuda* representing, probably, Old English *gemære+wudu* 'boundary wood'.)

Marwood stands on a ridge among a small cluster of woodland names on the boundary between Braunton and Shirwell Hundreds. The Domesday record implies that before the Conquest, Braunton and Shirwell were a unit, so that a boundary must at some date have been drawn between them. It is common for boundaries to be drawn through areas of upland grazing or, as in this case, woodland. Nearby runs **Mare Lane** which also seems to contain the 'boundary' element, and just across the parish boundary more or less at the point where Marwood, Shirwell and East Down Parishes meet is **Plaistow** (Old English *pleg-stōw* 'playing place') This name is conventionally interpreted as something like

'sports ground'. It is worth considering, however, that the 'play' involved may in origin have been ceremonial rather than mere amusement. The Cornish *plen-an-gwary* also means 'playing place', but represents the location of traditional seasonal performances. On the hilltop above Plaistow Barton is a ringwork, which may be the 'playing-place' itself, and at this point in the landscape may represent a ceremonial meeting-place on or near to an important boundary.

## Landkey

(First record 1166: *Landechei*)

Like related names in Cornwall, this represents Cornish *lan+de+Cai* 'church of (your) Cai'. Cai was a Cornish saint. The name is one of the small number of surviving purely Celtic names in Devon. The Cornish *lan*, Welsh *llan* has come to mean church, but originally meant a sacred enclosure. The traditional *lan* or *llan* was a circular or oval enclosure reserved for burials and religious purposes. In some cases this shape has been preserved in the boundaries of churchyards. This is not the case at Landkey, but at Parracombe the old church, dedicated to Saint Petrock, another Celtic saint, has a partly curving boundary. There are numerous 'Celtic' church dedications in the North Devon and North Somerset coastal region from Saint Nectan at Hartland to Saint Dubricius at Porlock. We cannot be certain how old these dedications are, but it seems clear that the name of Landkey records a Celtic dedication from a time when Cornish or West Welsh was still spoken in North Devon, and implies that a settlement was present here before the Western Celtic Church had been swamped by Catholic orthodoxy.



*One of the raised, building platforms in need of survey and recording.*

have the support of the Hartland Society, we are always on the look out for more help. For many, this will be a good opportunity to get some hands-on experience of surveying.

The dates we have in mind are **Saturday 21st June** and/or **Saturday 28th June**; the meeting place to be advised. So please come along and join in. If you would like to participate in this survey, then please call the CLP office on 01392 263851 or email me at **s.d.hawken@exeter.ac.uk** (web address: **<http://www.ex.ac.uk/devonclp>**)

In addition, one of the Community Landscapes Project volunteers, namely Doug Hislop, has been

applying his IT skills to the maintenance of the CLP Web site and has also produced the first North Devon Archaeological Society web page! At the moment this is limited to one page, but as further information is supplied to the CLP, then you should be able to access newsletters, find dates for events etc, all with a mouse-click. This is just part of the support offered by the Community Landscapes Project.

To access NDAS's first web-page, go to: **<http://www.ex.ac.uk/projects/devonclp>**, then simply click the button for 'links' to access 'North Devon Archaeological Society'. As things progress, we will create a more direct link, but at least it's

# Community Landscapes Project at Hartland

(plus something new for NDAS!)

**Sean Hawken (CLP Project Manager)**

*In the Autumn 2002 edition of the NDAS Newsletter, Sean Hawken described the Community Landscapes Project and pointed out for the particular attention of NDAS members, that one of the areas singled out for study is Hartland Moors. Work here is now getting underway, and we have received the following from Sean:*

Although the Community Landscapes Project archaeological survey work for the parishes of Hartland, Clovelly and Woolfardisworthy (Woolsery) has yet to get fully underway, we have made a good start on the palaeoenvironmental side of our research. We owe a very big thankyou to Mick and Kath Browne of Clifford Farm Holiday Cottages as they treated Charlotte and me to a lovely stay in one of their cottages, as a result of which we were able to get an early start. We managed to find suitably deep boggy, spring mires in the parishes of Hartland and Woolfardisworthy, and so, within the two days, we collected all three cores required for pollen analysis. We would like to say thankyou to R. Cleave, Leslie and Ann Deadman and Brian and Wendy Heard for allowing us access to their land and the opportunity to take the cores we needed.

Further work is still required and will firstly involve volunteers in the recording of the spring mires from which the cores were taken. Secondly, whilst searching for suitable palaeoenvironmental sites, we stumbled across two previously unknown sites with relic building platforms, possibly representing deserted medieval farmsteads. These earthworks, both in Hartland, will need surveying. We therefore require the assistance of volunteers from North Devon. Whilst this undertaking does

therefore likely to break when bent. The application of heat relaxes the metal again, so that it bends without snapping.

Some of the braver souls opted to make both copper and silver bracelets, and I must say that when they were finished they looked absolutely wonderful. There was a wide range of ages and abilities present on the day and I think that it is a great compliment to Benny's teaching that everybody managed to make at least one item, if not two, in the time available.

On behalf of all those who attended the clip/hack silver day, I should like to thank Benny. We thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it!

*\*Hack-silver (German: Hacksilber) – artefacts of silver plundered and broken up for bullion, recasting, etc. (TG)*



## Parkham

(First recorded DB 1086: *Percheham*. From Old English *pearroc* + *hamm*: a tautology because both elements mean 'enclosure'.)

This is an interesting name from a landscape point of view. A look at OS Explorer Series 126, SS35-20 & 36-20-) reveals at Parkham Ash, about two kilometres from Parkham, a neatly defined cluster of fields which clearly reflect medieval strip cultivation contained within a shape rather like a shoe-print. The fields around the Parkham Ash settlement appear to address the boundary of an oval enclosure on a low spur. In Devon the Old English *hamm*, which elsewhere signifies 'land bounded by water', frequently has the sense of 'land taken in from moorland'. In the case of Parkham Ash, the oval on the spur is shown on the First Edition OS 6' map (Fig.1) surrounded by unimproved grassland; and Ash sits together with Kerswell among blocks of strip fields adjacent to which is Moor Farm. At Parkham itself, on the other hand there is none of this. It is possible to suggest that the oval is the Old English *pearroc*,

while the field system around Ash and Kerswell is the *hamm*, the *pearroc* being older; and that the combined name *Park-ham* has migrated across the landscape to where to the manorial centre and its Norman church now stand.

## King's, Bishop's and George Nympton

(King's and Bishop's Nympton were first recorded in DB 1086 as *Nymeton(a)*, George Nympton as *Limet*, later as *Nimet*. Queen's Nympton is a 19th century creation.)

The Nympton parishes lie adjacent to the River Mole and it is suggested by Ekwall (Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names, 4th edition 1960, 346) that Nymet is an old name for the Mole (Mole being a back-formation from Molton). It appears, however, that the Nymptons together may represent an ancient large land unit from which the river took its earlier name. In the Saxon period this was a royal estate, of which part was granted to the Bishop of Exeter. If all of the Nymptons represent a single large early estate, it would be quite characteristic for it to be named



Fig.1: Parkham Ash, as it appears on the First Edition OS 6" map of 1889. (Courtesy NDRO)

## 'Roman' North Devon in 2002

(a compilation)

from a major topographic feature, so that *Nymet + ton* means 'estate on the River *Nymet*/in the *Nymet* region'.

Both the River Mole and the River Yeo which flows into the Taw at Nymet Rowland (one of another cluster of Nymet names), were once called *Nymet*, the name having very likely been transferred to the rivers from the area through which they flow. It is generally agreed that *Nymet* derives from the Celtic *nemeton*, a widespread place-name element in the Celtic world, meaning 'sacred place', principally a grove or wood (Old Welsh *nyfed*, 'shrine, Old Irish *nemed*, 'sanctuary') The Roman *Nemetostatio* ('tax-gathering station at the sacred grove') is generally identified with North Tawton in which Hundred the Nymets lie. Nympsfield, Glos also contains the element; as does *Aquae Arnemetiae* the Roman name for the spa at Buxton, Derbyshire. It occurs in numerous continental names. A late Roman source, a treatise on pagan practices, speaks about 'de sacris silvarum quae *nimidus* vocant' (of sacred places in the woods which they call *nimidus*) (Rivet and Smith 1979, 254)

The Nymptons and the Nymets lie within an area which, to judge by the place-names, remained heavily wooded until a relatively late date. On the south-eastern edge of this area is Morchard Bishop. *Morchard* (DB *Morchet*) represents British Celtic *mor+ cet* 'great wood'. It seems possible that we have here an area with religious associations from the pre-Roman period. Any such associations remained strong enough to be maintained in the form of a district name despite the otherwise blanket removal of British Celtic place-names from Devon at the West Saxon take-over.

As reported in the *Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Review*, 2002 saw the first full year of activity for the Exmoor Iron Project, a four-year fieldwork programme jointly run by Exmoor National Park Authority, the Archaeology Department of Exeter University and the National Trust with funding and support from English Heritage.

(*The following is a précis of the report of Martin Gillard and Gill Juleff appearing in the Exmoor Historic Environment Review*) The highlight of 2002 was the summer excavation season at Sherracombe Ford. Sherracombe Ford lies near the head of the Sherracombe/Brayford Valley in a context of open moorland, wooded combs and ancient trackways. The site comprises double and single platforms cut into a steep valley-side. Below are mounds of iron-slag, finds from which had already suggested late Iron Age/Romano-British industrial activity. The aim of the 2002 dig was to investigate one of the larger platforms and its adjacent slag-heap to establish the nature of the activity, chronology and to examine anomalies identified by geophysical survey. To this end a rectangular trench was excavated on the platform and a long, narrow trench was dug across the site from the hillside above the platform, across the platform and through the slag-heap below.

On the platform were found the remains of three furnaces all severely truncated. The strongest geophysical anomaly on the platform turned out to correspond to a smithing floor with trampled slag and hammer-scale from the process of forging raw iron bloom into finished iron. Here too were the footings of unmortared stone walls

# An ACE Winter

Janet Daynes

During the winter ACE was very active, mostly with experimental archaeology, which meant that we could be indoors in the warm. The prehistoric clothes that we had made at our November meeting were put to good use at the ACE Christmas party in December. Much feasting was had by all!

Our first meeting of the year in January was organised by Phil Tonkins. For the third year running now he has taken ACE members up on to Exmoor to explore some of the interesting monuments there. This year we went to the Roman Fortlet on Old Burrow Hill, and then on to the medieval settlement at Bagley and the Sweetworthy prehistoric enclosures. It was a very cold day but the sun shone and we all had a wonderful time blowing away the festive cobwebs.

In February we ran a 'clip silver' workshop and even ventured out a couple of times: once to help build the round house at the Cookworthy Forest Centre, and again to do the final (at last) earthwork survey at Stone Barton, Chulmleigh.

We are very pleased to report that our Local Heritage Initiative grant application has been successful. We now have the promise of funding so that we can proceed with our 'House Detectives' project. The money will also help us to feed information into *North Devon on Disc* (accessible at the Museum of North Devon) and to set up an environmentally controlled archive store in Winkleigh.

# ACE hack-silver workshop

Gordon Fisher

On Saturday the 1st of February, ten ACE members were treated to a very interesting and informative workshop on the making of Viking clip/ hack silver\* jewellery.

The day was run by our very own metal man, Benjamin Venn, who had provided a wide range of books on the historical background and ideas for designs. He also provided enough materials for everyone to make at least one copper practice piece and one silver bracelet.

Benny started the workshop with a brief description of clip/ hack silver, its use as a method of payment as well as an adornment. One of the books listed the relative values of silver in the Viking period, and how much certain items would cost. It made entertaining reading!

We then began the actual manufacture of our precious items, the method being very basic: find a punch with a shape that you like, and bop it with a hammer, and away you go! People began fairly hesitantly, but soon became more confident and creative, and the Winkleigh Community Centre was soon ringing to sounds of hammer on punch (plus the odd curse!).

Once you had filled your strip of metal with the design of your choice, it was time to bend it to shape, but before you could do this it had to be heated to soften it (annealed). This was achieved by playing a blowtorch along it, watching very carefully for the change in colours that meant the metal had reached its correct temperature. Then it was into the water to quench it and back to the anvil for the final shaping to fit one's wrist. The reason for the heating is that repeated hammering renders the metal work hardened making it brittle at the point of impact and

# Fish weirs Update

Chris Preece

Taking advantage of the high tides of the 20th March and some unseasonably clement weather, a small but determined group of NDAS volunteers set out to survey weir number 11 on the Taw, namely Allen's Rock. The stakes were first located and marked (with a small piece of masking tape) and then offset measurements taken from a base line. The tape was removed after each measurement thus ensuring that no stakes were omitted in the survey. A total of eighty measurements were recorded and are in the process of being drawn up. Given that the return could not be located (even with the aid of a reluctantly wet-suited surveyor – water temperature 10c) this represents another sizeable structure.

It is hoped that further survey will help to identify the weir most likely to be informative in regard to C14 dating, so please, more volunteers! The next survey dates are in this newsletter. (see *Dates for your Diary*)

The previous day I had managed to locate the elusive weir 9 at Lower Yelland (elusive possibly due to the fact that the proximity of the Boathouse Inn on a prior jaunt had proved more of a draw than further mud-wallowing to the east!) Without Colin to lead me astray this time I persisted and was rewarded with mud-spattered trousers and stakes as far apart as 200 metres. Whether these stakes represent different structures, phases of rebuilding or one large structure is difficult to tell at this stage. Survey again would be beneficial.

This is almost certainly not the weir shown in a watercolour by William Payne in 1795 however, as this is closer to Instow and remains to be found.

Alison Grant surmises it is (or was) near to the cricket ground.

Documentary research in Northam has turned up a reference to Captain Whyte, a fervent abolitionist of fish weirs. An 1842(?) edition of the Gazette refers to his list of the weirs that 'have desisted from fishing and the hutches that have been destroyed on the Torridge, without hardly a murmur'. Colonel Whyte, the Gazette tells us, was anxious that the Taw should be equally free, but, the Gazette continues, 'we would advise him to cease his thankless labours'! However unappreciated Whyte's efforts were at the time, his list, which is quite specific about places, provides further material for research.

and floors of packed stone and slag. Excavation through the slag-heap suggested the periodic creation of working platforms through cutting and levelling of the unstable slag. The impression was of intensive industrial activity over a long period of time. Pottery from the excavation confirmed a Romano-British date. (After MG and GJ, February 2003)

It seems possible that evidence of Romano-British iron-working will be found all the way down the valley from Sherracombe to Brayford. Both excavation and geochemical survey at Brayford in 2001 had already revealed a large smelting area associated with pottery of Romano-British date. In the village of Brayford iron-slag is found over a



*Excavating a Romano-British working platform at Brayvale. (NDAS members working with South-West Archaeology)*

wide area. In 2002 further excavation was carried out by South-West Archaeology at Brayvale with the assistance of NDAS members. Here the digging of a platform for the construction of a patio had initially revealed a substantial collection of Romano-British pottery in heavily charcoal-stained soil. Two spells of controlled excavation and one of rapid salvage excavation during the year produced a large (for North Devon) quantity of Romano-British pottery, a total of 1342 sherds together with the now ubiquitous slag and fragments of furnace-lining. The pottery has been examined by Paul Bidwell and Associates at South Shields who indicate a date-range in the late second to early third century. Most of the material represents local coarse wares, but there is an appreciable quantity of imported fine wares including Samian as well as fragments of amphorae. The excavations suggested working processes similar to those seen at Sherracombe Ford. On the hillside, terraces had apparently been created as working platforms which became deposits for debris as time went on and new terraces were cut. There was plentiful evidence of furnaces, though no identifiable furnace was found. Shallow pits of dark soil contained hammer-scale, evidence of smithing on site.

It has been suggested that the iron-working sites in the Brayford area represent one of the largest known industrial sites from the Roman period. A great deal of further study will be required before we know what to make of it all. It does not mean that there were 'Romans' in North Devon, but now we know that the North Devon area was at least involved in the economy of Roman Britain and was probably supplying iron to a large market. We also know what kind of materials to look out for in field-walking and excavations. There is no known reason why 'Romans' should be confined to Brayford and its environs.

# Brayford children take on 'the Romans'

Chris Preece

Primary school children at Brayford are to be the first to benefit in their education from the recent discoveries of Romano-British iron-working sites in North Devon. An information/educational activities pack is currently in preparation which will add a local dimension to the 'Romans' bit of the national history curriculum. Firstly children will study Roman Britain as a whole with the usual story of invasion, armies, forts and the establishment of Roman cities. In addition they will learn to appreciate aspects of life in the Roman period. They will encounter Roman food, learn children's games, look at houses, clothes and jewellery.

The icing on the cake is that the children will be able to exploit the now very special position of their own village. They will learn how the new sites were discovered and the methods that have been employed to extract information from them. They will go out looking for evidence themselves and will learn to do some elementary surveying. It will be possible to handle some of the pottery that has come from the excavations and the children will see how the shape of whole vessels can be recovered from a few fragments so that their style and origin can be identified. They will learn about the trade routes that may have brought pottery from the Rhineland or southern Gaul to North Devon and about the local manufacture and distribution of pottery. Because the Brayford sites are all to do with the smelting of iron, particular attention will be paid to mining and the extraction of iron from its ore.

As far as possible, the children will be involved in practical activities culminating in an exhibition

on National Archaeology Day, July 19th, in Brayford Village Hall. They will give demonstrations, display their work with maps and mosaic designs, model clothes from the Romano-British period, and give a dramatic presentation. Other possibilities are a Roman army demonstration, a mini-excavation, smelting, a tasting of Roman recipes, etc

This development is funded by the DfES through the Museum of North Devon, who are also providing materials, as part of an initiative to encourage closer co-operation between schools and museums. The education pack is being prepared by NDAS member Chris Preece with the assistance of Moyra Keeting, who is preparing the costumes, and Roger Cole, who is putting together boxes of materials from the museum.

## 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**

# Archaeology in Combe Martin

Trevor Dunkerley

*(In 2001 a limited excavation took place in the garden of Christmas Cottage, Church Street, Combe Martin. This produced fragments of silver-lead slag in what appeared to be a 16th-17th century context and in an area where documents indicate late medieval smelting activity.)*

In 2002 excavations to explore the silver/lead smelting debris in the centre of the old village continued where they had left off in 2001). A further 2x1m excavation on the west edge of Christmas Cottage garden revealed similar results to the eastern excavation. Well defined undisturbed stratification to natural at 1.5m showed a commencement of slag residues in early 16th century contexts, reaching a peak at the beginning of the 17th century and tailing off towards the middle of that century. A large number of recovered and identified clay-pipe bowls were the main date identifying medium. As in the eastern excavation, a distinct gap in human activity was apparent between early medieval pottery sherds just above natural, and the commencement of slag residues and pottery sherds in the early 16th century.

To determine if the extent of residues crossed Church Street, a 2x1m excavation was commenced in the garden of the former Middleton Farm (the property of Dr. Margaret Eames), the possible site of a water-powered smelt-mill. The first 1m of contexts indicated considerable 18/19th century disturbance. At 1.5m much industrial debris indicative of smelting was revealed in complicated but well-defined contexts. The excavation concluded at 2.5m depth having passed through contexts which suggested

an area for mixing lime mortar, a cobbled yard, a stone filled drain, and the base of a robbed out wall. Large quantities of slag were discovered but unlike the previous excavations, only one clay-pipe bowl, making dating of the slag difficult. Early analysis suggests a similar pattern to the earlier excavations.

Probably one of the most important aspects of the Dr. Eames excavation was the discovery of a hammer-stone, which has been authenticated by RAM Museum Exeter. Also slag was discovered in contexts at 2.5m depth in association with Saxo-Norman pottery sherds. If this association is confirmed in further excavations, it will push the date for smelting in the village back much earlier than documentary evidence indicates. The importance of the smelting has been confirmed by the discovery of a sherd of 13th century southwest France Santonge polychrome pottery, probably associated with the first Cluniac Priory established in Barnstaple in 1072. The Cluniac order held lands in Combe Martin, and was responsible for Combe Martin and Berrynarbor Churches after the Conquest.

Thanks to the interest and generosity of Dr. Justine Bailey, English Heritage, Fort Cumberland, the smelting debris is now being analysed by Dr. Sarah Paynter who visited Combe Martin and has taken a profound interest in the excavations.