



Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

Newsletter, Spring 2011

Note from the Chairman

We have had a busy year since the 2010 AGM, undertaking our first excavation for several years, at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge. Events have included fieldwalking, geophysical survey and earthwork survey. Members have also been invited to take part in surveying Hillsborough hillfort at Ilfracombe, pottery washing and sorting with South West Archaeology at South Molton and at the museum in Barnstaple, as well as helping Exeter Archaeology with excavation at Castle Hill, Filleigh and volunteering through the AONB to survey 'monuments at risk' along the coast.

Archaeology is obviously alive and well in North Devon, and we are delighted to have had so many new members join us this year. We hope you all feel part of the Society and assure you that you all have something to contribute, whether by attending lectures, volunteering for practical tasks (eg. washing finds) or just by buying a raffle ticket at an event. Your committee always needs help – and this newsletter needs to hear from you with any articles related to archaeology that you think other people might find interesting – perhaps you have found something ancient in your own back garden, or whilst walking in our lovely county?

We have been very pleased to be able to offer an introduction to archaeology to new members who have never had an opportunity before. It is a fascinating and worthwhile hobby and we are indeed lucky to have such a wealth of historical and archaeological features in North Devon. I hope to see you at one of our events during the forthcoming year, even if you are not able to take part in "digging", you are welcome to come and watch!

Derry Bryant

A Note of Apology

We offer an apology to anyone who turned up at the Castle Centre on 19th April for the talk by Barry Lane. The speaker had been taken ill and although we attempted to get the message out as widely as practicable, inevitably there were some who had missed it. Barry's talk has been rescheduled for next winter.

Progress at West Yeo Farm

In February more earth resistance survey was carried out in Pond Meadow, south of the farmhouse, to extend the area previously surveyed. Results show a marked continuation of the linear feature on the ridgeway; possibly an original hedge boundary or an old trackway. From the tithe map it appears this may have been the southern boundary of an early field system. Further work will establish its exact nature.

Thanks to all who took part, including Janet and Gordon from ACE Archaeology (Winkleigh) who spent a day with us learning how to use the earth resistance equipment, possibly for use with ACE volunteers later in the year.

In March members successfully completed fieldwalking New Close, the northernmost field on the farm, completing the collection of flints from that field. We then started walking a new field, "Mead 2", south of the farmhouse. Once again Mesolithic blades were found, along with some very nice scrapers and cores. Some small burned areas were also noted, but very little pottery, a similar result to the first two fieldwalking sessions in this field. The flints will be washed and recorded, and their distribution noted for density plotting. Thanks to all who took part.



Fieldwalk in Mead 2, March 2011



Alignment of facing stone in T5

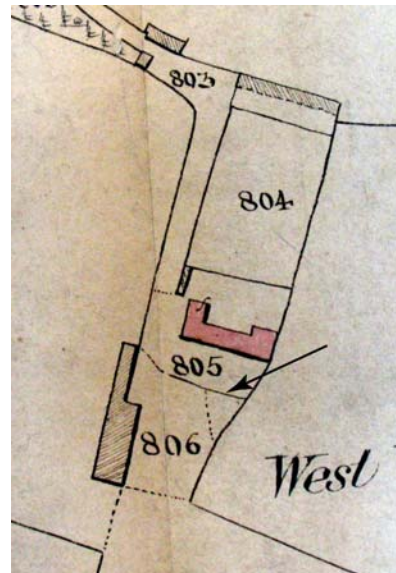
From 8-12 April members undertook further excavation in the garden and meadow south of West Yeo farmhouse, with the aim of investigating the extent of the wall found in 2010. Two 5m² trenches were opened, T4 in the garden and T5 immediately to the south in the meadow. A mechanical digger removed turf and topsoil to a depth of approx 0.5m. The soil removed represented made-up ground and the digger allowed us to reach archaeology quickly. We owe thanks to Chris Preece for his professional supervision of the machine work.

In T5: a feature of large stones on a SE-NW alignment has now been revealed, plus a smaller area of large flat stones in the southern half of the trench. Referral to the tithe map of 1839 suggests the stone alignment may represent the boundary wall of the former court (yard). A post hole was also recorded and excavated, containing small pieces of charcoal. More time is required to establish any dating and the depth of the feature.

In T4 the length of wall revealed in last year's Trench 2 was uncovered, and in the western section of T4, we noted two 'cuts', one representing the line of the former garden wall which we had seen last year in T1; the other is possibly in line with the narrow cut located in T1 last year near the cobbles. Further work during the main digging period in June and July should clarify things.

Several members were excavating for the first time, and were able to undertake section drawings, pot washing, and surveying techniques.

Thanks to everyone who took part, to Bob Shrigley and Brian Fox for help with supervision and to members of Tiverton Archaeological Group who have been regular and enthusiastic supporters. Thanks again to Kate and Robert the landowners for all their help.



1839 tithe map: Arrowed, the boundary of the 'court'. Shown in pink is the farmhouse which burnt down in the 1880s

We look forward to returning later in the summer, when all volunteers are welcome.

During March and April an exhibition of flints and of the work at West Yeo was displayed at South Molton Museum. Our thanks go to Jenny Yendall and her volunteers for helping set up the display and to Brian Fox for photographing the flints in detail. For a reminder of the work we have planned for this summer, see the 'Dates for your Diary' below.

Flints: A Special Note:

Bob Shrigley and Pat Hudson have produced a new publicity leaflet, incorporating an illustration of the Neolithic flint knife found at Westward Ho! by Martha Mills in 2009. The new 2011 membership cards also show a colour photograph of the flint, taken by Brian Fox. It was decided to use the pictures in tribute to the late Ann Plummer, who helped with identification and recording of the flint knife, as well as identifying flints found at West Yeo. Ann will be sadly missed.

Membership:

The Membership Secretary wishes to remind you that annual subscriptions of £16 per individual adult, £24 for couples and £5 for students became due on 1st April. Subscriptions should be sent to Bob Shrigley, 20 Skern Way, Northam, Bideford EX39 1HZ. Taking out a standing order saves the hassle of having to remember – details can be had from Bob (01237 478122.)

The NDAS Committee:

Following the 2011 AGM, the NDAS General Committee now comprises:

Chairman: Derry Bryant

Vice Chairman: Alison Mills

Secretary: Margaret Reed

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Bob Shrigley

Other Committee members are: June Aiken (Parracombe Archaeological and Historical Society), John Bradbeer, Malcolm Canham, Sally Cotton (South Molton Archive), Terry Green, Lance Hosegood, Pat Hudson, Jonathan Lomas, Peter Luxford (Taw-Torridge Metal Detectorists). In addition, Andy Woodcock is NDAS 'webmaster'.

Mary Houldsworth and Patrick Moore have now stood down from the Committee. We thank them for their contributions.

Useful Contacts: Derry Bryant 01769 572963 (NOT 15th-24th May), Bob Shrigley 01237 478122, Margaret Reed 01271 325276

Dates for your Diary, Summer 2011:

19th June: Chris Hassall will take members on a guided walk of about 2 miles along the Rolle Canal. Meet at 2.30pm at the layby/picnic site at Loxdown Cross (SS 475216) on the west side of the A386 between Landcross and the old station at Torrington. Mostly easy walking along the Tarka Trail. No charge.

3rd -12th June and 2nd -9th July: During these two periods we shall be excavating again at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge. All volunteers – however experienced or inexperienced – are welcome. Please let Derry Bryant or Bob Shrigley know when and whether you are able to help. (see 'Useful Contacts above), email: derrybryant@tiscali.co.uk or rvs@r6247.mail1.co.uk

9th July, 5.00 pm onwards: NDAS barbecue at West Yeo Farm. This will be a fund-raising event, tickets, at £5 per adult, £3.50 per child (under 11), can be obtained from Bob Shrigley to whom the tear-off slip at the end of this newsletter should be posted together with money. Numbered tickets will be entered in a draw and the winner will receive free entry. There will also be a raffle – any prizes you can contribute will be very welcome. Bring your own alcohol. In addition, you might like to know about the following:

Hartland: The Hartland Peninsula Society has prepared three guided walks with historical and archaeological interest. You can find these described with notes through their website at <http://www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk/harton-borough-heritage-walk.html>

From the *Exmoor Visitor*:

26th May: *Exmoor's Moorland Archaeology: The Last 10,000 years:* A 6km walk over rough moorland led by Rob Wilson-North seeking out the archaeology of Exmoor's moorlands from prehistory to the 19th century. Meet at Brendon Two Gates SS7652 4322 at 10.30am. Suitable clothing and packed lunch required.

17th July: *The Festival of British Archaeology – West Side Story:* An exploration by minibus of the archaeology and history of the west side of Exmoor. Leaving from Blackmoor Gate at 11.00am, returning about 3.00pm. Includes short walks, so suitable clothing and footwear required. Picnic lunch. Booking essential through 01398 322289.

26th July: *The Festival of British Archaeology – East Side Story.* As 17th July, but on the east side of Exmoor. Start 11.00am and finish 3.00pm at the carpark in Exford. Booking essential through 01398 32289.

6th August: EITHER *The Dark Ages on Exmoor*, a walk from Barna Barrow to Windhill (Countisbury) to explore the reputed site of the battle that saved Alfred's kingdom, OR *A Guided Tour of West Challacombe Manor* (Combe Martin). For the former meet at Barna Barrow carpark (SS752496) at 2.00pm – quite easy walking, 100m ascent. For the latter, tours begin at 12.30pm. Cost - £4 per adult, book through 01598 763402.

3rd September: *History and Mystery on the High Moor.* An 8 mile walk over rough ground taking in various historic and archaeological sites. Good outdoor gear and packed lunch. Meet at Goat Hill Bridge on the B3358 (SS724403). This is an Exmoor Society walk – donation required from non-members.

The NDAS Winter Programme 2011-12:

So far the programme is as follows. The date and venue of the annual dinner in December are yet to be arranged. Unlike in previous years, the March AGM will be followed by a talk. Decisions about April are yet to be taken. All talks will take place in the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple at 7.30pm. The AGM in March will be in the Castle Centre at 7.00pm.

18th October: John Bradbeer: *Northern Devon in Domesday: A Geographer's Perspective on a Well Known Historical Document.*

15th November: Chris Mandry: *North Devon Shipwrecks: A Diver's View.*

17th January: Terry Green: *The Archaeology of North Devon's Place-Names: Interpreting a fragmentary document.*

16th February: (possibly) Barry Lane: *Where Have all the Q-Pits Gone? Lead-smelting in the Mendips* (Postponed from April 2011)

20th March: NDAS AGM plus a talk (yet to be arranged) and a social evening.

Contributions from New Members:

Over the winter, NDAS members volunteered their assistance to Exeter Archaeology in unearthing the remains of an 18th century 'temple' in the grounds of Castle Hill, Filleigh. Among these were new NDAS members Stacey and Callum Pledge. Callum is a very welcome junior member and has written this brief account of his experiences at Castle Hill:

On the 1st December 2010 I had an opportunity to go on an excavation at Holwell Temple, Castle Hill, Filleigh as a volunteer with Exeter Archaeology. My Mum came along to supervise.

After Mum getting lost in Filleigh she telephoned the guys on site and they came down the hill in a 4x4 truck to collect us as it was too steep for our little car to climb. It was really high up.

We got on site around 10am. With the temperature -5°C it was a bit cold! After a quick tour of the damaged temple and an explanation from Exeter Archaeology about the history of the site I was relieved that the task we were given was physical (digging out the fallen rubble) to keep us warm.

The Temple was built in honour of the owner's step-brother and was damaged in a fire some years ago and a successful grant application has seen it becoming restored.

Our task was to excavate the triangle shaped bricks which made up the third column, I was really lucky as half an hour later I found a pristine capital for the top corner of the column. The capital was made from bath stone brick. I had a great day and learnt lots from the guys at the site and was grateful that they shared lots of their knowledge and experience with me.

Many thanks also to NDAS for giving me this opportunity.

Callum Pledge

Lance Hosegood, another relatively new member who has involved himself closely with the West Yeo project, has written the following about his introduction to archaeology:

Taking the 'Roman Route' to West Yeo.

While field walking at West Yeo at the end of March, Derry asked if anyone had any articles for the spring 'newsletter'. Nothing was forthcoming from those assembled so she suggested I might like to do a short piece on my impressions of becoming a new member. "I should think I could" I found myself saying, without having any real idea of what I might put into it. Mulling it over, I began to think about what had got me interested in archaeology in the first place.

It really started about four years ago, when a trip to the South Molton Recycle shop turned up a couple of fascinating books on the origins of the Roman Republic. Later works on the Empire started me thinking about where I could identify the 'coming of Rome' in our local landscape and to be honest the results were pretty sparse! So when, in the spring of 2008, the opportunity arose to take part in the Xarch. Community excavation at the possible Romano-British multivallate enclosure at Welcombe Farm, Charles, I jumped at the chance. I thoroughly enjoyed it, met some like minded people and shortly afterwards went along to do a couple more days excavation at the Warren, Hartland, again with the Xarch team.

The following year I combined my growing interest in ancient history and archaeology by signing up for 'A' level Classical Civilisation through distance learning and then last year took part in geophysics training at Hillsborough, Ilfracombe, via the Barnstaple museum 'History Hunters' initiative. Derry was also there and a month or two later she asked if I would be interested in

doing some field walking at West Yeo. I became a member during the summer in order to take part in the excavation in the garden and again very much enjoyed it. Since then I have been back this year for geophysics, more field walking and further excavation, looking for evidence of the Medieval farmhouse.

My impression, based purely on the practical field work of the society, is that those taking part really seem to enjoy these activities and want to play an active part in adding to the archaeological record of our local area. Derry and Bob have always got things organized and are invariably already there 'in the field' when the rest of us show up. As you might expect care is taken to ensure that the methods we are using are relevant to the task in hand and the type of information we are trying to obtain and though everyone probably has their preferences in terms of 'job' allocations, it is good to see that people are quite happy to help out with whatever needs to be done on the day. So if you fancy a day's excavating at West Yeo in June, do come along, and should you turn up a nice piece of 'Samian' in the process, no one will be smiling more than me!

Lance Hosegood

NDAS Barbecue 9th July 2011:

I/We wish attend the NDAS barbecue at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge on 9th July.

I/We should like to book tickets for adults and children.

I/We enclose £..... (Cheques to be made payable to NDAS.)

Name(s)

Address:
.....
.....

Phone Number:

Email:

Please provide a vegetarian option for people.

To: Bob Shrigley, 20 Skern Way, Northam, Bideford EX39 1HZ