

NORTH DEVON IN THE GREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

REPORTS COVERING NORTH DEVON DISTRICT 2000-2007

Table 1 sets out the reports filed with ADS relating to the period 2000-2007. The reports are then discussed in a little more detail, in alphabetical order of parish. A brief synthesis of the findings completes the document.

Table 1: Summary of reports for 2000-2007

Parish	Site	Grid Ref	Report Producer	Type of Report	Year of Report	Nature of Development
Barnstaple & Tawstock	Barnstaple Western Bypass	2558 1314 (S end)	Wessex Archaeology	Trench evaluation	2004	Construction of road
Braunton	St Brannock's Church	4890 3710	English Heritage	Tree ring analysis	2004	None
Brayford	Bray Valley Quarries, Churchtown Barton	6865 3325	Oxford Archaeometrics	Magnetometer survey	2002	Expansion of quarry
	Bray Valley Quarries, Charles	6874 3324	Exeter Archaeology	Recording & excavation	2005	Expansion of quarry
& Challacombe	Shoulsbury Castle	7054 3908	English Heritage	Earthwork survey	2005	Management of site
Chittlehamholt	Cobblestone Court	6493 2095	SWARCH	Recording	2007	Construction of dwelling
Combe Martin	Loverings Garage, Borough Road	5785 4705	Exeter Archaeology	Watching brief	2007	Construction of dwelling
	Marcliffe, Comers Lane	5894 4615	SWARCH	Trench evaluation	2006	Construction of dwelling
(Brendon & Countisbury)	Cosgate Hill	7920 4880	English Heritage	Archaeological survey	2002	Management of site
Molland (& three other Exmoor farm sites)	Lyshwell	8370 3060	Keystone Historic Building Consultants	HBR*	2007	None
South Molton	Gullacombe Valley	7150 2630	Stratascan	Gradiometer survey	2006	Residential development

	Mole Valley Farmers, Station Road	7165 2600	SWARCH	Archaeological assessment	2005	Redevelopment of site
Westleigh	Ashbridge	4941 2721 to 4991 2657	Exeter Archaeology	Monitoring & recording	2007	Cable laying

*HBR - Historic Building Recording

Between 2000-2007, 13 site reports were posted on the ADS website in 11 parishes. A total of 6 commercial organisations were involved, with Exeter Archaeology producing 3 reports, South West Archaeology producing 3 report, and Wessex Archaeology, Stratascan, Oxford Archaeometrics, and Keystone Historic Building Consultants 1 report each. Three reports were produced by English Heritage, two of them on behalf of Exmoor National Park Authority.

1. Barnstaple & Tawstock parishes: Barnstaple Western Bypass

This report describes the Stage 2 evaluation trenching carried out on the southern half of the Bypass in 2004, from Sticklepath to the A39 near Lake. The majority of the trenches revealed mainly field boundaries, drainage ditches and occasional post-holes. However, three trenches towards the southern end, in the vicinity of Little Pill Farm revealed separate subsoil layers containing a scatter of Late Mesolithic worked flint, quantities of medieval pottery, and a substantial hollow-way crossing the proposed route containing 17th century pottery. The fill of a relict east-flowing tributary of the River Taw was also recorded and sampled. An abraded sherd of Bronze Age pottery was recovered from one deposit in this area.

The report links these finds with the nearby place names. Both Lake and Pill indicate a stream or creek. A topographic survey augmented these areas of archaeological potential, with the Mesolithic flint working evidence apparently focused on a slight terrace overlooking the relict watercourse, whilst the medieval pottery was recovered on higher ground towards a slight knoll within the proposed Bypass route. In addition, the hollow-way clearly extended eastwards across the proposed route, before it turned to the south down to the former riverbank.

2. Braunton: St Brannock's Church

Following a disastrous fire in 2003, tree-ring dating was carried out on timbers from the nave roof and fire-damaged pew ends in St Brannock's Church in 2004. The tree-ring results indicated that timbers felled between AD 1388 and AD 1413 were present in the nave roof and timbers felled after AD 1475 were present in one of the pews.

3. Brayford: Bray Valley Quarries, Churchtown Barton, Charles

A magnetometer survey was carried out on three fields to the north of Charlestown Barton in 2002. The wider area has known archaeological remains and the survey area was considered to have significant potential for further discoveries. In the event, most of the area yielded only late agricultural features such as field boundaries, except for evidence of one small ring form which appeared to represent a ploughed-out ring ditch from a Bronze Age burial mound. This lay about 120m south-west of a similar burial mound found in previous survey work and may indicate settlement activity of that period in the area.

Subsequently, in 2005, a watching brief was carried out during the stripping of topsoil from the northern half of the field immediately to the east of the 2002 survey site, to the rear of Gards Pit where the quarry was due to be extended. No archaeological features were observed in this area.

Monitoring and recording of trench excavation were also carried out in the southern and eastern part of the site. The ring ditch identified previously was uncovered. Its fill clearly took place over time rather than in a single event. A few sherds of prehistoric pottery were found; these could have been Neolithic or Bronze Age.

To the south remnants of a structure, taking the form of a residual terrace, were discovered, along with Romano-British pottery charcoal and burnt stone and bone fragments and two Romano-British quern stones. The structure is believed to have been ephemeral, but may have been associated with a known late Iron Age/Romano-British enclosure to the south, as part of a settlement.

4. Brayford & Challacombe parishes: Shoulsbury Castle

This is a report of fieldwork carried out by English Heritage, in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority. Shoulsbury Castle is a large multi-vallate hill fort on the western edge of Exmoor, probably dating from the late Iron Age. At 460m AOD it is one of the highest in England. It was surveyed fully for the first time in 2005 and the majority of this report is a detailed description resulting from this survey. It comprises a rampart and ditch with an outer rampart and ditch on three sides. It appears to be incomplete and the discussion section of the report comments on this, in the landscape context of the site. It also compares this site with three other Iron Age hill forts on Exmoor.

Also surveyed and described is a stone setting comprising six stones to the north of the hill fort. This was newly discovered during the survey. It was considered to be Neolithic or early Bronze Age in date.

5. Chittlehamholt: Cobblestone Court

This report is of the recording of a site where a near complete dwelling had been built. This limited the possible work to recording the area to the rear of the dwelling where it had been terraced, recording of hedgebanks and looking for finds and the collection of pottery sherds from the site. Nothing pre-dating the 19th century was found.

6. Combe Martin: Loverings Garage, Borough Road

This watching brief monitored the construction of a new service trench at the site of a dwelling under construction. The deposits comprised modern made ground and a buried tarmac surface. No features or deposits could be attributed to any former mining activity on the site. No finds were recovered.

7. Combe Martin: Marcliffe, Comers Lane

Four evaluation trenches were dug on a site in Comers Lane. The archaeological evaluation was required because the site lay close to a possible mediaeval manor to the west and within 50 m of known mine workings. A considerable spread of building debris was discovered as fill material. However, there was no direct evidence of the former manor house, nor trace of mine working, either in terms of structures or waste deposits. The report concluded that any archaeological features were likely to lie beneath modern buildings to the west of the site. Unfortunately, the illustrations, including the site plan were not lodged with the ADS to accompany the text of the report.

8. Countisbury: Cosgate Hill

This is the report of fieldwork carried out by English Heritage, in partnership with Exmoor National Park Authority, at a group of features on Cosgate Hill just south of the A39 near the County boundary with Somerset. It describes in some detail the features that were surveyed and sets them in the context of the Royal Forest of Exmoor, close to whose border they lie.

The earliest of these monuments are three groups of Bronze Age barrows in an east-west line across the Hill. In the mediaeval period Cosgate formed one of the boundaries and a gateway to the summer grazing in Exmoor Forest. In the post-mediaeval period, the hill was enclosed and improved for farming, but this enclosure was abandoned later

and the area reverted to moorland. There is a former toll house and gate alongside the A39 that has latterly been used as a visitor centre.

9. Molland: Lyshwell Farm

The Victoria County History commissioned historic building recording of a set of four groups of traditional farm buildings on Exmoor. Lyshwell Farm was one; the others were in Somerset at Ashway, Dulverton, Stetfold Rocks, Cutcombe and Stone, Exford. On the evidence of historic maps, all four farms were created in the mid to late 19th century.

Lyshwell is a small farm on the north edge of Molland parish, just to the south of the County boundary that is here formed by Danes Brook. The farmstead comprises a house, threshing barn, horse engine house, implement shed, stable and shippon, calves house, wagon lodge, and a small cattle-shed. All the farm buildings are described in detail. Of the four farms, Lyshwell is the only one with a consistent layout, suggesting a single phase of building, although there have been later alterations.

10. South Molton: Gullacombe Valley

This is a report of a gradiometer survey carried out in advance of residential development on a site on the north side of South Molton. Unfortunately, the plans and drawings that accompanied the report were not lodged on the ADS website. The survey concluded that large magnetic variations probably indicated metal objects and features of modern origin, such as service trenches. Other linear magnetic disturbances were probably evidence of ploughing. One set of cut features could represent archaeological features, but they were obscured by the many strong magnetic anomalies, so further interpretation was difficult.

11. South Molton: Mole Valley Farmers, Station Road

This report provides an assessment of the Mole Valley Farmers site, in the context of the development of South Molton. The larger part of the assessment is a desk-based assessment from documentary sources, carried out by Terry Green for SWARCH. It concludes with a description of the site and a summary of the history of the town. The report provides a valuable overview of the history of the town.

12. Westleigh: Ashridge

Monitoring and recording were carried out during cable trenching between pylons at East Ashridge on the eastern edge of Westleigh parish. No archaeological features were exposed and no finds were recovered.

Discussion

Of the thirteen reports posted during this period, several contained findings of note. The three English Heritage reports added to our understanding of significant historical and archaeological sites, at St Brannock's Church, Shoulsbury Castle and Cosgate hill. The stand-out reports were undoubtedly those for the Barnstaple Western Bypass and at Bray Valley Quarries, Charles. The first provided evidence for pre-historic occupation of this part of the Taw Valley, the second provided further evidence of the remarkable continuity of settlement at Charles, from the Bronze Age, through the Romano-British and into the West Saxon periods.

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