NDAS
NORTH DEVON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Promoting awareness of the archaeology and history of North Devon

Newsletter, Autumn 2020

Not your usual NDAS newsletter

A bit reminiscent of 'Not the Nine o'clock News', perhaps but with no intention of being satirical and in fact with very little news to report. Basically Covid-19 has shut us down since the spring, when there was enough copy still on hand to produce the substantial newsletter that you rightly expect. So what to do this autumn? We have no idea how things are going to pan out in the next six months at least, so we can make no plans either personally or archaeologically. Therefore with little to report, this autumn newsletter is offered as a notice board for members to post some of their own stories with an archaeological or historical flavour. Together with *some* bits of news and updates, you will find below personal stories, observations and reminiscences contributed by members who responded to the general invitation that went out via the Secretary. In general these personal contributions have been left unedited for word length, so that ironically we end up with a fatter newsletter than usual. On your behalf, I should like to thank the contributors for their efforts.

The 2020 AGM and the NDAS Committee

The AGM, which was supposed to take place in March, had to be cancelled, so that the Society's officers and general committee remain as they were through 2019. The General Committee has managed to hold one meeting by Zoom, at which one new member, Ruth Downie was co-opted and welcomed by the Chairman. The Zoom meeting was followed up with a general email to to put you all in the picture. Here below is the latest from Chris.

An Update from the Chairman

There is at least *some* good news in these rather gloomy times. Many of you may have read in the North Devon Gazette that on the 15th October, Historic England (HE) removed Clovelly Dykes from the 'At Risk Register'. This follows the grant from HE's monument management scheme to the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NDCAONB) team as part of the highly successful Coastal Heritage Project. The improvement in the condition of the monument is testament to the hard work of many volunteers (some from NDAS) who helped remove scrub from the ramparts and ditches. The AONB hope to continue with this maintenance into the future.

We have just 17 copies of the Clovelly Dykes NDAS/AONB report left (and are unlikely to reprint as this is a not-for-profit publication), so if you want one, email me quickly (chrispreece@btinternet.com)! Copies have been placed with DAS, the Devon Record Office and the North Devon Record Office. Feedback has been most pleasing. Professor Barry Cunliffe described the report as 'superb', whilst Professor Steve Rippon said: 'It's an excellent piece of work on a long-neglected site,' so kudos to NDAS, all the contributors and volunteers. It does show that an 'amateur' society can do work to professional standards.

If I was a betting man, I'd say that the chances of live talks this winter are about 100-1 against, given the way the Covid situation is developing. However, as was stated in my earlier email to you, we will delay making the final decision until December. In the meantime however, we are lining up digital talks and (in the event of said venue cancellation) this is the revised programme for 2020/21 so far:
(All online talks will start at 7.30pm)

24th Nov. Henrietta Quinnell: The Tiverton Lithics Project

19th Jan. Chris Preece: Clovelly Dykes – New Discoveries; Research, Survey and Excavation.

16th Feb. Martin Gillard: Bogged Down in the Past; the Exmoor Mires Project.

16th Mar. Bill Horner (County Archaeologist): New Aerial and Crop-mark Discoveries in Devon.

(We may be able to fit in one more should there be demand).

AGM – to be announced.

For all of these talks you will be sent an email with a link. All you have to do is click on the link to access the talk.

Lastly, Derry Bryant is looking to do some field survey for flints. This will involve group size max. 6 with social distancing as per government guidelines, so should be safe. Depending on the number of these surveys, I am planning to do some estuary fieldwork as well. If you are interested in the latter, please email me (see above) and I will put your name down. Same constraints as per Derry's survey. Estuary survey will involve some training (in knowing what to look out for) which will hopefully be usefu,l whenever you walk thereafter in coastal environments. So plenty to keep us busy and hopefully to look forward to.

Finally, a reminder that we are looking for a new secretary come Spring. I'm sure Nigel and/or Rosemary would be happy to talk you through what is involved (fairly minimal at present) should you be thinking of helping the Society out with a little of your time. Let me know and I can put you in touch.

*Following this message, here is **Chris Preece's** own contribution to this Covid -19 era newsletter*

Renaissance Men, the Devonshire Association and Clovelly Dykes in the Early 20th Century

The recent NDAS/AONB project has now demonstrated that the hillfort of Clovelly Dykes was a major tribal centre. So it might seem strange that it was commonly stated in publications and on websites that no excavation had taken place previously. Or had it? In the report we produced this year, we outlined the evidence, unearthed by Steve Hobbs, for a previous dig which had occurred in 1903. It was carried out by two Renaissance men, Robert Burnard and the Reverend Sabine Baring Gould.
There is a detailed obituary of Robert Burnard on the Devonshire Association website (see reference below). He was a remarkable man with many interests – politics, natural history, business and foreign travel, to name but a few. Later in life he became consumed by Dartmoor and prehistory. He was well ahead of his

Robert Burnard

time, having called for Dartmoor to become a country park for some time before his death in 1920 (it only became a national park in 1951). His concern with the 'despoilment' of Dartmoor's hut circles led him to investigate many of these structures, along with Baring Gould. The two must have been close friends, as along with Clovelly Dykes, they also investigated several Welsh camps and Cornish rounds.

Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould

Baring Gould himself was equally accomplished. Most famous for the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers', he too was a man with an appetite for life. He had been a teacher before taking the priesthood and subsequently found time to collect the folk songs of Devon and Cornwall, write several novels (as well as numerous articles – his bibliography is phenomenal) and compose hymns.
In terms of the dig at Clovelly Dykes, Burnard and Baring Gould were evidently disappointed with the results (if only they'd known what they missed!). They did section one of the inner ditches, noting its considerable depth, and found 'firepits' as well as a cache of slingshot pebbles.

Richard Pearce-Chope

Richard Pearse Chope, a notable Devon historian, was also evidently familiar with the site and the excavation, since he wrote an article about it for the Hartland Chronicle in 1908 (again unearthed by Steve Hobbs). All three men would have known each other through the Devonshire Association, in which they were leading lights. Chope was a remarkable man in many ways: multi-talented, he achieved a scholarship to Trinity College Cambridge in 1881, exceptional for a North Devon lad in that era. He then rose high in the civil service in London before retiring in 1922 and devoting himself to all things Devonian. An authority on Devon dialect and folklore, he published numerous articles and the seminal Book of Hartland, in which he mentions the Dykes.

We gain further details of the hillfort from Chope's article in the Hartland Chronicle on Clovelly Dykes: interestingly, he noticed the stone revetment of the third bank to the west (Steve Hobbs and I checked this and photographed it for the report). He also included a recognisable plan of the Dykes and postulated that there were entrances to the north and south. In light of the geophysics to the south he appears to be right. In the north too, the remains of outworks also suggest he was correct in this.

Raleigh Radford

Clovelly Dykes continued to interest local antiquaries. Ralegh Radford (who had moved to Devon and had an enduring love of the West Country) led a visit in 1921 with the Devon Archaeological Exploration Society (later the Devon Archaeological Society) and again in 1931, this time with the Devonshire Association. Radford has been described as a 'solitary and enigmatic character' (British Academy article – see below) but he was one of the most influential archaeologists of his time. He excavated both Glastonbury and Tintagel and it would have been interesting to hear his take on Clovelly Dykes, which clearly interested him.

As well as their obvious interest in Clovelly Dykes, all four men had another thing in common: they were Honorary Presidents of the Devonshire Association. This position was (and still is) conferred on persons of standing. The links below give further details of these intriguing characters.

References:

https://devonassoc.org.uk/person/burnard

https://sbgas.org

https://devonassoc.org.uk/person/chope-richard-pearse

https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/1480/13_Radford.pdf

*One of the respondents to the invitation to contribute personal stories is **Ruth Downie**, published author of novels set in Roman Britain and now an NDAS committee member. She recalls her experiences on a Roman villa site in Northamptonshire.*

Romans in West Northants

For the last seventeen years I've had the pleasure of being part of a Community Landscape and Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP). It involves both a wide-ranging study of the Roman landscape in west Northamptonshire, and the detailed excavation of a single villa site at Whitehall Farm in Nether Heyford (just off the Roman road that's now the A5). The project exists largely because some Romano-Britons chose to farm in an area that would one day be occupied by two sharp-eyed metal detectorists, a professional archaeologist and an enthusiastic landowner.
The detectorists' finds led to a community archaeology project that has involved huge numbers of volunteers, students and researchers over the years, all keen to find out what those Romano-Britons were up to. To the intense satisfaction of many of the team, it turned out that what lay under the modern sheep farm we were digging was… a Roman sheep farm.

What's now called "Whitehall Roman Villa" came in the form of several round houses, a small proto-villa, a third-century Roman-style villa (largely robbed out, and we never did find the elusive east wing) and not one but two bath houses, the later of which was probably used until about 460 AD - a couple of generations after the official "end" of Roman Britain. (This was established by archaeo-magnetic dating, which I understand works because while the Earth's magnetic field moves over time, the magnetic orientation of burned rock is fixed at the point it was last heated. If that's wrong, somebody please correct me.)

Unofficial photo of the earlier bath house. The line slicing diagonally across the hypocaust room in the top right is a later and much-needed drain.

The first bath house was bigger than the later one and built slightly further below the spring line. Perhaps we diggers were just

jaded after a wet summer and many hours of baling trenches with buckets and sponges, but we were convinced that it had been abandoned because of flooding. Still, the wet soil did preserve some large timbers that had been put in to shore up the slope behind the building, so some good came of all that excess water.

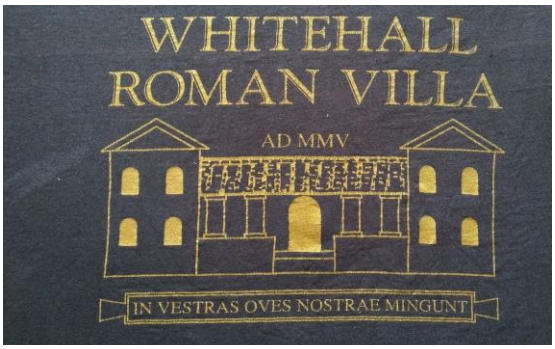
In the years after the Roman occupation a rectangular wooden building was erected across the yard outside the former villa. Presumably the people who built this had no more idea than the villa builders that there was a body under cobblestones of the yard. Modern investigation of a slight dip in the surface revealed the skeleton of a man who seemed to have been buried with scant respect in a pit much too small for him. No cause of death could be determined, but needless to say, this "cold case" led to much excited speculation.

Facial reconstruction of the man under the cobbles

One of the supervisors made a facial reconstruction based on a plaster cast of the man's skull. This was revealed close to his burial place as part of Time Team's "Big Roman Dig" in 2005. (Many of the diggers featured as small specks in the background during this programme. Only one of us had the sense to wear a bright yellow jacket so his Mum could spot him on the television.)

While only one villa has been dug, several others in the area - and there are lots of them - have been explored by geophysics, metal detecting and fieldwalking, and most show a similar pattern of development. Some, like Whitehall, seem to have had roundhouses contemporary with villa buildings, suggesting that the farmers were local people who adopted Roman ways over time, rather than incomers. A find of writing materials at Whitehall tells us some of them were literate. A fragment of a glass with a gladiator engraved on it, also from Whitehall, suggests they were partial to Roman entertainment.

The accumulation of wealth required to build Whitehall villa seems to have come from a new and very much bigger breed of sheep that was imported into the area. On examining the bones of "our" sheep, Dr Naomi Sykes (now Professor at Exeter) declared their superiority in such robust terms that the delighted crew had her words translated into Latin and used as the motto on the following year's dig teeshirt.



The Tee-shirt: If you want to know what it means, you'll have to ask me.

Dr Sykes also commented on the very large numbers of hare bones found on site, which led to speculation about a hunting-lodge, and also confirmed that the enormous jawbone found on site belonged to a wolf. This was especially pleasing because wolf remains from this period are a lot rarer than many of us might expect.

The whereabouts of Whitehall's Romano-British cemetery remains a mystery, but there is a seventh-century cemetery elsewhere on the farm, which is still being investigated.

In addition to local villas, CLASP has helped professional units with extensive survey work on the site of Bannaventa, which was the next Roman town that travellers would reach after travelling north from

Towcester. Bannaventa is now a green field site and geophysics clearly shows its defensive walls, the original line of the road running through the town, and much activity within. One of the detectorists also discovered an Iron Age gold coin on site, but unfortunately none of us had the presence of mind to photograph his subsequent dance around the field.

The extent of CLASP's work has only been possible because it's a long-term community project using volunteer labour and professional (also volunteer) supervision, and there is no time pressure from developers. More information and lots of better photos can be found at https://claspweb.org.uk/

CLASP does not have a museum (soon it won't have a field centre either, so if anyone knows of a farm building to rent in the Weedon area…) but the neighbours at Piddington Roman Villa, just south of Northampton, have some stunning finds on display. Their museum is well worth a visit if you're in the area - opening times are on their website at http://www.unas.org.uk/

Open Day: The Romans return

And to continue the Roman theme, I offer this oddity.

The strangest site I've ever dug

Back in the early 1980s, when I was an active member of the Andover Archaeological Society, one of our members, an eccentric lady called Betty – or Nora, depending – told us repeatedly that she had Romans in her garden. In a 'slack' period between rescuing sites under threat from developers, we indulged her and one Sunday we went to have a look.

Betty's bungalow at Redenham near Andover was situated on a ridge overlooking a chalk valley. The garden was a wilderness of brambles, overgrown shrubs and sapling trees through which Betty had created a rough path along which we followed as she pointed out patches of earth where there were indeed sherds of recognisably Roman pottery lying on the surface. Over the next several weekends we slashed away at the jungle until we had created a roughly square clearing. Following up with two trial trenches crisscrossing the area, we exposed, at the extremities of our trenches, broad bands of very large flint nodules with Roman pottery turning up in the spoil all the time. The only way to make sense of what we were seeing was to go for an open area excavation.

A year or so later – we only operated on Sundays - we had opened up an area roughly fifteen by fifteen metres revealing a ring of large raw flint nodules enclosing an area of about ten metres diametre. After removing sections of the ring it became apparent that the flints were resting on an infilled ditch at the base of which were stake holes. The conclusion was that an orginal ditch and palisade had been replaced with the flint ring cairn. There was no evidence of any central feature.

Excavating the Redenham 'shrine' c.1980 –

The string runs roughly northeast - southwest – north to the right.

TG in checked shirt on the left, Betty/Nora in the middle.

Excavation had also revealed a concentration of Roman pottery outside the ring on the west. This was the next focus of investigation which in the end revealed a pile of sherds with a total excavated weight of around 350 kilograms! Obviously this was the source of the surface sherds, presumably scattered by ploughing. I don't recall a suggested date range, but the mass must have accumulated over a long period of time. It might have been a midden, but in fact the next revelation put that idea out of play. When the mound was dismantled, we found buried beneath it half of a Bronze Age urn beneath which was cremated human bone together with Roman pottery. The tentative conclusion was that the ring cairn had originally been the kerb of a round barrow, levelled in the Roman period revealing a Bronze Age cremation urn, which had then been curated for the ritual deposit either of the original human remains or the ashes of a Romano-British contemporary.

Furthermore, clearing a further small area to the southwest of the ring, we uncovered and quarter-sectioned a large pit, which at a depth of about two and a half metres and with no suggestion of it bottoming out, we abandoned. The Celticist Anne Ross, who came visiting was certain that it was a ritual pit such as are known across southern England, one of which on Salisbury Plain was about 30 metres deep. Then, as if that were not enough, we uncovered on the northeast of the flint ring a low cairn with cremated bone beneath it and on the southwest four large flint capped post-holes set in a slightly skewed quadrilateral. A sight-line taken from the cairn and between the post-holes pointed directly at the mid-winter sunset over the opposite ridge.

This was clearly a multi-period ritual site and the most intriguing that I've ever encountered (Clovelly Dykes excepted of course). It is now rather briefly written up as 'The Redenham Shrine' in a monograph, Threshold Press, *The Archaeology of Andover: The Excavations of Andover Archaeological Society 1964 – 89*.

Responding to my request for copy, ***Keith Hughes*** *chose to recount some interesting finds.*

My Three Finds

This article covers three individual and interesting finds made by myself over the past 20 years. They vary from AD1280 to 1720 and all were found in Weare Giffard, so let's start with the oldest.

Medieval Floor Tiles

'Look vicar, if you want myself and my team to mow your churchyard, then we would like to level the Somme a bit and fill in all the depressions, to make life easier, and keep the volunteers happy'. He turned a blind eye to the rotovator, and with a bit of work and re-seeding we had a level Churchyard. Being a metal detectorist, I not only just listen to the magic 'ping' but also use my eyes, chiefly for non metal objects, so as we were raking flat and filling in sunken graves, I noticed, near the Church porch door, a significant number of red tile sherds. On cleaning them up, there appeared an inlay of a cream slip, and on individual shards I could make out a design - a fish, a lion and a figure. I gathered three full buckets!! Eventually RAMM indentified them to the period 1280-1320, and supplied drawings of the complete tiles:- one was three fishes swimming in a circle chasing each other; three lions on the shield; and the figure turned out to be a bishop with staff and mitre.

The Giffards of Weare Giffard Hall, have a tomb in the Church's Lady Chapel with a smart and boring concrete floor on top, but I suspect that beyond living memory, the tiles had begun to crack up, and the church wardens thought it was time for a new floor. I also suspect that their builder said to Jim Wheelbarrower: *'Wheel these old broken tiles outside boy – and mind you fill in a few of those sunken graves whilst you are at it'.*

An Elizabethan Silver Coin? No!

Whilst metal detecting in 2000, this in a field not far from the local church and hall, and in which field I had previously found a number of coins, musket balls and other less interesting bits of metal, on this day 'ping', and I suspected instantly this was NOT another nail, or ring pull! Around 6" down (in old money - pun!!!), out came a very nice silver coin, in fantastic condition, and as bright as when 'he' lost it. Knowing my trade, I spent several other sessions in this same field and area, but no more came to light. The head was a queen and I thought 'Elizabeth 1st ', but at home, ploughing through my coin book, it was not there. A call to my cousin, a much keener and more knowledgeable detectorist than I, raised the suggestion that I plough back in time with my Queens, and just one back – there it was… Mary 1st, Bloody Mary. A 1553/4 silver groat, with some rarity, as these coins were only minted for some 10 months of her reign.

Yes, it is registered with PAS. Why 'he' dropped it'? Not wishing to lower the tone of this story, but it was close to a well where perhaps the maid, sent by the Lord of the manor to fetch water, was followed!!!?

Here Lyeth the Body…

In 2004-5, with others, I instigated a total survey of all burials in Weare Giffard Churchyard, both physical graves and their stones, but also burials from the registers, thus including all burials from the late 1500s to the present. One stone, propped against the wall (now re-erected) caught our attention: *'Here lyeth the body of Samuel Lake …. who departed this life MAY THE 20TH 1772, aged 64'.*

Underneath this was a second inscription: 'A*lso here lies the body of Anthony, son of the above, who died MAY THE 20TH 1772.*Both on the same day – unusual!? By chance, and we do thank him, the vicar of the day in the burial register, had written in the margin against this father and son, four words that tell their story;- '*Suffocated at Dock Kiln'.* They were lime burners at one of several kilns in the village, and one suspects a choke occurred at the base of the kiln, and the lime could not be raked out. So down went one of the pair and collapsed with carbon monoxide, with the other attempting to rescue the first, also collapsing, and so both died. As a matter of interest, on the reverse of the head stone was a further inscription, no not a third lime burner, but the widow/mother – Katherine, who died 30th August 1807 – 35 years on!! Sad.

Investigating graveyards is one way to occupy your time under lockdown. ***Bob Shrigley and Gwyneth Faye*** *took the opportunity and turned up some curiosities*.

Poking around Graveyards

A visit to a graveyard can be rewarding – a place to go for quiet contemplation and a place to study nature, such as the abandoned cemetery in Old Town, Bideford which has now become a wildlife haven. To others the obvious focal point is the graves themselves.

A few months ago two NDAS members decided to make a photographic study of gravestones in the North Devon area, recording those of particular interest for their design and inscription. The knowledge gained is in its infancy and this is an overview of what has been learnt so far.

Varieties of shape, decorative style and symbols.

Gravestone design varies from simple square headed forms to very ornate design.
Symbols may be incorporated in gravestone design. For example a skull and crossbones (a warning to us all that we cannot avoid death and no matter what our status is in life, we are all the same), intertwined letters IHS (the first three letters of the Greek name for Jesus), clasped hands (indicating the relationship between the person who has passed away and the loved ones left behind).

Lettering can vary too from being engraved or even being made from lead and fixed in place by means of holes drilled into the gravestone. Engraved lettering can also be enhanced with the application of gold leaf.

The inscription on gravestones generally gives the name of the person buried and the date of their death and quite often the age when they died. In some cases a family historian can be rewarded with the name provided of the husband or wife of the deceased. Also the names of the parents may be given in the case where the son or daughter has been buried.

Enhancement through the application of gold leaf

Often several people have been recorded on the same gravestone, presumably all having been buried in the same plot. To date a gravestone recording the deaths of five people has been found.

The earliest gravestone noted so far was 1732 at All Saints' Church, Clovelly Court.

A curious oddity was discovered at St Mary & St Gregory Church, Frithelstock with the date of death being recorded as 4th January 1733/4. Presumably there was some confusion as to whether the Gregorian or Julian calendar should be used.
The name of the stonemason's name is included occasionally, normally tucked away at the bottom of the gravestone. One can speculate that those who commissioned the gravestone received a cut rate price for the stonemason's advertising.

The manner of death is sometimes given – killed in action, accidently killed or drowned for example. Likewise the occupation of the person buried such as merchant, master mariner, pier master, schoolmaster; or even where they died as in the case of Bangalore, India.

One unfortunate soul, Thomas Sydney from Sydney, New South Wales died on a visit to his friends at Clovelly.

There is one last thing that must be said about gravestones. In this country they provide a very important resource for studying lichen. Our own amateur observations make it abundantly clear there are a host of different varieties out there. But that's another article for a different society.

It is hoped that this article has given an interesting insight into the 'world of gravestones' – we have at least found it fun.

***Simon Carroll**, member of our affiliated community group Friends of Bury Castle, writes about the opportunities provided by the generally unwelcome Lockdown.*

Community History

When the Friends of Berry Castle was first formed, one of the objectives was to involve the community. Not just in maintaining the site, but also in creating a space that people could visit, whether it be for historical interest, or just for a pleasurable walk around the site, taking in the views.

Making History and archaeology accessible, is vital to encouraging the community to engage with what you are doing. It's all too easy to give a high-brow response to a question, often forgetting that a simple answer was all they were looking for! Maintaining the initial interest can be difficult. As with anything new, people are curious. After that, the novelty value drops away as does the number of people.

Lockdown has been both a blessing and a curse for many archaeological sites. The good weather and the daily allowance of exercise, meant that we had a greater number of visitors to Berry Castle. This, in itself, was wonderful. However, with larger numbers of people, comes the wear and tear. Stone stacking sculptures sprang up across the site. Visitors obviously inspired by others' handiwork, created their own from the stones on the floor, but also, sadly, from the banks surrounding the site. These were taken down by members of our committee and notices were put up to discourage the budding sculptors. This appeared to work, but the damage has been done.

On a positive note, Lockdown has given people time to investigate the archaeology in their own area. From LIDAR images, more sites have been discovered. With drones, aerial pictures can be taken of crops and markings in the landscape, highlighting possible new archaeology. Examples of trackways and a number of long and round barrows could be seen from above. Something which hadn't been observed before. Most Interesting was the set of wide parallel lines which ran for just over half a mile, through old field boundaries and a stream. With a number of buried stone axe heads nearby, could this be a possible cursus? The Eastern terminal gives a great view of Dartmoor, where *the rising Winter Solstice sun appears to roll up the flank.*

Drone's eye view – a possible cursus? (Photo: Simon Carroll)

An enclosure revealed by lidar. (lidarfinder.com)

The dig at St Petrock's Well, back in 2019, brought the village of Newton St Petrock together. Although only a few villagers took on the digging itself, many others' interest was sparked off. After presenting talks, last year, about the well and also the surrounding archaeology, people took it on themselves to investigate their own gardens and fields.

Field-walkers' finds

On the left, Iron work – a latch? a thatching tool?

On the right, a strange carved stone – any thoughts?

With time on their hands, plenty of gardening seemed to be undertaken. Pottery, flints and lumps of quartz were unearthed. Others took it upon themselves to field-walk. Although the local farmers are not keen for strangers to carry this out, they don't bat an eyelid when it's just the villagers! Again, flint and large rounded lumps of quartz were common, along with a few strange carved stones. Lumps of chalk and other non-native rocks were also found. Photographs and location of finds were sent to me, which I plotted out, on a map, where interesting patterns emerged. The concentration of quartz and chalk, often linked to cropmarks of enclosures, trackways and barrows. Maybe the quartz was used to make the sites stand out in the landscape, similar to Newgrange and other monuments with light coloured walls and banks.

Metalwork was also found whilst metal-detecting inside a cropmark of what is believed to be a Bronze or Iron Age enclosure,. One appeared to be a latch, whilst the other, a thatching tool. Considering that there is no record of any dwellings in the field, could these be from early settlements? All significant finds were logged and reported to the County Archaeologist.

Without any real idea of how the future is looking for digs, I truly believe that engaging the community, in archaeology, is the way forward in these uncertain times.

The request for contributions to the newsletter also included an invitation to state what had drawn members to archaeology in the first place. ***Steve Pitcher*** *has offered the following explanation of his 'journey into the past':*

I have always been interested in history, but not the sort that was taught at my grammar school! That was just about governments and battles, rather than about people and movements. A book that I borrowed from the library as a boy lit me up, however. It was Edward Osmond's *A Valley Grows Up;* it showed the evolution of a village in a valley landscape over thousands of years. It was well-illustrated and well-told and fascinated me. It was published in 1953 and is probably very dated now, but I still have a copy. The only other bit of history that lit me up was the English Civil War and the debates that surrounded it. I loved historic sites and visited them whenever I could with my family, but the interest never turned into anything active.

When I went to college, I studied other subjects and eventually became a town planner, moving to North Devon for my first job. One thing that interested me when I arrived was the settlement pattern in the area; I was curious about its origin. I returned to that subject much later.

Thirty or more years, one family and a very busy career later, I became interested in my family history and after the 1901 Census results were published online, at the beginning of the 21st century, I became interested in the particular form of archaeology known as tracing my family tree. It became something of an obsession!

One person who had previously reignited my interest in archaeology was Linda Blanchard, who arrived in Barnstaple in the mid-80s to conduct excavations in Barnstaple, at a time of intensive development of the town centre. That caught my attention as a town planner.

The rest of my career didn't leave much time for outside interests, although I did become a subscriber to Current Archaeology. When I retired in 2011, I joined NDAS. I enjoyed the talks and found that my town planning experience was useful. It was largely due to this that I agreed to join the NDAS Committee and contribute what I could. I saw it as a very limited role!

Nine years on, I have found myself doing all sorts of things, including my first digs – my knees and back telling me that it was a bit late in the day to take that up! However, I enjoyed the research aspects, including summarising the grey literature reports for North Devon from the ADS (Archaeological data Service) website. That led me to return to the issue that had first intrigued me as a young trainee planner back in 1974 – what was the origin of North Devon's dispersed settlement pattern? I started researching it and, four years later, the resulting extended essay, in which I had been greatly helped by Terry Green, was published on the NDAS website earlier this year.

This has led me to a fascination with historic landscapes, something that I was able to pursue when I was on the AONB Partnership. The crowning achievement of that time was seeing the completion of the report on investigations at Clovelly Dykes, one of Devon's most impressive and least understood Iron Age sites. Our understanding of the site has been enhanced immeasurably under Chris's leadership, but we know there is so much more to do. I hope to do more work on understanding historic landscapes in the coming years.

(Please do look at Steve's very substantial and well researched essay on the website, NDAS.org.uk. – likewise John Bradbeer's two essays on Northern Devon in the Domesday Book and on North Devon trade with Newfoundland.)

John Bradbeer *quite frequently visits Ireland where he has gained a familiarity with the Republic's very rich archaeology which can be strikingly different from the sites and monuments with which we are familiar*

Staigue Stone Fort, Co Kerry, Ireland

Although I have been visiting Ireland for more than fifty years, I had not got down to Co Kerry until the autumn of 2017. I had long known about this stone fort and a family wedding in Sneem, about ten kilometres away, gave me the opportunity of going to see it for the first time. Rather too often, many sites given high praise in the guide-books, turn out to be rather a disappointment when one gets there. I need not have worried about Staigue, even on the gloomy October morning when I reached the car-park at the head of the valley and walked up to the fort. This is a most impressive stone structure, with walls that are up to 5. 5 metres in height and are typically 4 metres thick. The stones are undressed and no mortar was used in their construction. The fort is about 27 metres in diameter and is surrounded by ditch that is 8 metres wide and still some 1.5 metres deep. Access to the interior is through a lintelled doorway and, on opposite walls, pairs of staircases lead to terraces.

As with many archaeological sites in Ireland, there has been little proper investigation and it is hard, on stylistic grounds, to date Staigue and similar stone forts elsewhere in Ireland (Dun Aengus on Inishmore in the Arran Islands is perhaps the most famous). The general consensus is that these are Iron Age structures, but as the Iron Age in Ireland could reasonably been seen as spanning around a thousand years and extending well into the seventh or eighth centuries AD, there is much uncertainty about the age of Staigue. The most commonly given date for its construction is around AD 400, or perhaps at about the time of St Patrick. Its function seems to have been to have acted as a seat of power of a local magnate, who probably had some control over copper resources which are to be found in this part of Kerry. There are many much smaller stone structures right across Kerry, and these do appear to have been family homesteads, but as none have been investigated it is impossible to say whether they were all coterminous either with each other or with Staigue.

An obvious reflection prompted by the site is how completely different Staigue is from Iron Age structures in Devon and Cornwall. We are used to thinking in terms of Barry Cunliffe's Atlantic Europe or the looser notions of the Celtic west, but Staigue serves as a powerful reminder as to Ireland's unique archaeological status. There is nothing like it in South West England, although there are parallels to be drawn with the brochs of the Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetland, which are similarly tricky to date.

Earlier in the year NDAS was invited to take part in the ELMS consultation process on the future of landscapes. ***Steve Pitcher*** *volunteered to represent the Society and reports below:*

The Future of Historic Landscapes in North Devon

Introduction

1. In June 2020 NDAS was invited to take part in the Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme Pilot Area consultation undertaken by the Farming & Wildlife Group (FWAG) on behalf of Natural England. ELM will provide farmers, foresters and other land managers with an opportunity to secure financial reward in return for delivering environmental benefits.
2. Four pilot areas in North Devon & Torridge were identified: Hartland, Torridge Headwaters, Taw Valley and Wistlandpound. Preliminary maps were prepared identifying a range of issues that may need to be included in the scheme to ensure farmers and landowners deliver the right sort of public goods. These included the Historic Landscape. NDAS was invited to comment on this aspect.

The consultation process

3. The consultation process involved three stages. The first was to comment on the Historic Landscape maps for each of the four areas. The second was to take part in an online discussion involving a number of agencies. Both of these stages were run by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) on behalf of Natural England. The third was to respond to a formal consultation questionnaire run by Natural England on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Challenges identified and lessons learned

4. Two challenges emerged from the process. The first is that our Historic Landscapes are very poorly mapped in North Devon. The second is that the value of protecting Historic Landscapes was contested in the online discussion, in the light of future needs for addressing the climate and ecological emergencies and producing food.

5. The following types of historic landscape were suggested in the responses to the pilot study areas:

- Neolithic/Bronze Age ceremonial landscapes
- Iron Age hill enclosures
- Roman sites
- Formal planned landscapes
- Mediaeval sites/landscapes
- Residual field systems
- Other relict landscapes
- Industrial and transport landscapes
- Wartime, military and civil aviation landscapes

6. No attempt was made to define these terms or to consider whether they were sufficiently significant or comprehensive. Only in the Hartland area was there time to attempt to map some of the landscapes.
7. The challenge is to map these landscapes in greater detail, in a way that has not happened before. This could form the basis of a research project.

Future Landscapes: A Role for Historic Landscapes

8. The services we will need our landscapes to meet in future, as we endeavour to both mitigate and adapt to the impacts of the climate and ecological emergencies, include water

conservation and flood prevention, soil conservation, habitat conservation, food production, renewable energy generation, carbon sequestration, and landscape protection.

9. Preservation of the historic environment, and of historic landscapes in particular, could be seen as a retrograde perspective, standing in the way of our need to create future landscapes to meet these demands. There is an opportunity to make a case for historic landscapes contributing to our future needs.
10. At a time when we are trying to decide what future landscapes we need, the approach for assessing these needs might include the following principles: that the role of historic landscapes should be considered on a holistic basis, rather than in isolation, at landscape scale, in terms of their contribution to health and wellbeing, as delivering public goods, including education, and as achieving recognisable outcomes.

*And finally from **South West Archaeology**, our commercial archaeology partner at South Molton, we have received the following report of a site at Ilfracombe.*

Throughout this difficult period commercial archaeology has remained at work, mostly in relation to sites earmarked for housing development. While watching briefs and evaluations stipulated within the planning process often produce negative results, now and again evaluation trenching uncovers substantial remains of historic structures that merit further investigation.

During August 2020 South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Hutton, Langleigh lane, Ilfracombe, Devon. The site is located on the south west of Ilfracombe on the site of a farmstead which was demolished through the late 19th and 20th centuries. A farmstead at Langleigh was first mentioned in 1333, having probably been the home of William de Langleigh. The excavation identified a total of 31 archaeological features including a

Well preserved structure and a fragment of cobble floor.

An area of cobbling and an apparent threshold.

series of structural features associated with the presence of post-medieval buildings on the site. It also demonstrated that much of the site had been covered by demolition deposits which masked the survival of archaeological features, whilst modern disturbance was also identified. While the majority of the features did not produce dating evidence – though unstratified finds in the demolition deposits represented a date range from 16th to 19th century - four main phases of activity (with individual sub-phases) could be identified, including: pre-19th century structures; buildings recorded on the mid-19th century tithe map; later 19th to early 20th century development of the site, and 20th century clearance of the site. The survival of structural remains, particularly at the southern end of trench 01, indicates that further structural remains are likely to be encountered in this area and will require further archaeological mitigation through record prior to or in conjunction with development of the site. The archaeological potential of much of the evaluated area is limited, much of the evidence having been

lost during episodes of demolition. Towards the southern edge of the site, however there is much better preservation, which is likely to justify further work in order to better characterise the identified features and where possible provide more substantive dating evidence for the construction of the buildings.

T.G. November 2020