



Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

Newsletter, Spring 2010

In the September 2009 newsletter, the last one you received, we made much of the 50th anniversary of the Society's foundation by Hugh Brooks and Charles Whybrow. The celebratory event, the *Time and Tide* day conference at Ilfracombe, went off extremely well and our anniversary book has been well received. Sadly we heard from Hugh's daughter in March that Hugh Brooks had died at the age of 90. Some of you may have seen the notice that was posted in the North Devon Journal. We sent our condolences to Hugh's family and at the AGM members stood briefly in silent tribute to our founder's memory. We also have to report that Dr Alison Grant, a long-standing member of NDAS and local historian died at the beginning of April. Alison had suffered a stroke some years ago, but recovered sufficiently to complete her second publication on North Devon pottery, her area of expertise, as well as a history of Instow. The loss of two of the Society's oldest members closes a chapter, but marks a point from which to look forward.

The NDAS Committee:

At the 2010 AGM Terry Green stood down as Chairman after 10 years in the post and was succeeded by Malcolm Faulkner. The Officers of the Society are now Chairman: Malcolm Faulkner, Vice-Chairman: Derry Bryant, Secretary: Margaret Reed, Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Bob Shrigley. Alistair Miller, Stephen Hobbs and Judy Parker have resigned from the Committee. We owe each of them our thanks for their individual contributions to the running of the Society. At the meeting John Bradbeer and Patrick Moore were elected as new Committee members; Pat Hudson has been proposed for co-option onto the Committee.

Subscription Reminder:

The Treasurer and Membership Secretary would like to remind you that annual subscriptions (£16 single membership, £24 joint, £5 juveniles and students) became due on 1st April. If you've not yet renewed your membership of NDAS, cheques (made out to NDAS/NDRA) should be sent to Bob Shrigley, 20 Skern Way, Northam, Bideford EX39 1HZ.

Summer and Winter Activities 2010-11:

The major activity this summer will be the continuation of the West Yeo Project, which is reported below. It has been decided that as the projected field-work at West Yeo Farm represents a substantial programme of activity for the summer, there will on this occasion be no formally set up summer programme of visits. However, members may like to be aware of events in North Devon and Exmoor that can engage their interest.

1. The weekend 28th - 30th May is a heritage weekend at Combe Martin parish church where the rood-screen is currently undergoing conservation. There are guided tours on the Saturday and Sunday at 11.00 am as well as exhibitions on all three days.
2. On Tuesday 8th June Rob Wilson-North, under the auspices of the Exmoor Society, is leading an archaeological walk starting from Larkbarrow Gate (SS82764177). The walk will cover about 8km. Wear suitable outdoor gear and bring a picnic. (Further information on 01398 323335)

3. On Thursday 20th July there is a walk entitled *On the Edge of Dumnonia: Iron Age Dunster*, visiting Bats Castle, Gallox Hill and Grabbist Hill. Meet in Dunster Steep carpark (SS993439) at 11.00 am equipped with outdoor gear and a picnic plus a dog if you wish. (Further information on 01398 322289).
4. On Friday 23rd July a walk will lead off at 11.00 am from Goat Hill Bridge (SS724403) exploring ritual and burial monuments in the Exmoor landscape from Pinkery to Chapman Barrows. Walking boots, outdoor gear and a packed lunch required. (Further information on 01398 322289).
5. On Saturday 17th July there will be the 10th Annual Exmoor Archaeological Forum. The subject this year is Iron Age and Roman Exmoor and the venue is Moorland Hall, Wheddon Cross. For a full programme of the day and a booking form contact Sue Parkman on 01398 322211. Admission is by pre-booking only.
6. **Finally and very importantly, NDAS will be digging at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge from 19th to 30th July with an open weekend in the middle. The aim will be to locate the foundations of the former farmhouse which burnt down in the 1880s. Volunteers are required! Call Derry Bryant on 01769 572963 for details.**

Just a suggestion:

In April John Allen of Exeter Archaeology gave us a splendid talk entitled 'Breton craftsmen in Tudor Devon'. If you fancy seeing for yourself some of the distinctive woodwork that he illustrated, then you might like to visit the churches at Brushford, Coldridge, Colebrook, Holbeton and Swimbridge.

Looking ahead to the autumn and winter, we have dates for your diary. The NDAS winter programme will kick off at 7.30pm on Tuesday 19th October at the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple with a talk by Lee Bray entitled *Exmoor and Empire: the Context of Roman Iron Production on Exmoor*. Other dates to note are 23rd November, 8th December (annual dinner at the George Hotel, South Molton), 18th January, 15th February, 15th March (AGM) and 19th April. Details of the talks will be in the autumn newsletter.

Timberscombe:

Near the village of Timberscombe on the Somerset side of Exmoor, excavation on a (possibly Iron Age) hillslope enclosure (NGR SX95724139) is planned by Exmoor National Park Authority for May and July 2010. Unfortunately this will not reach you in time for the May campaign, but if you can make yourself available for a couple of days or a week between 26th - 31st July and would like to join in the excavation, contact Jessica Turner on 01398 322289 or email jturner@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk. Volunteers from NDAS are welcome.

Oral Histories:

The Exmoor National Park Historic Environment team is also looking for volunteers to record the 'oral history of Exmoor', recording memories of Exmoor life that otherwise would be lost to future generations. If you are able to help – suitable recording equipment would be made available – contact Faye Glover on 01398 322273 or email fklover@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk.

Other News:

1. The definitive report of the NDAS excavations at Holworthy Farm between 2002 and 2005 is to be published in *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* this year. The Society is contributing £250 towards the costs of publication.
2. The books, documents and photographic records held by the North Devon Athenaeum are in the process of being catalogued and entered on a data-base. This valuable resource (the recording of which is still ongoing) can be accessed on the web through <http://hda10.co.uk>.

3. Sales of the NDAS anniversary book *Bronze Age to Bottle Seals* are going slowly, but hopefully will pick up with the tourist season. The book - together with Chris Preece's Field Guide to the Archaeology of the Taw-Torridge Estuary - will be promoted at the Exmoor Archaeological Forum and at the Appledore Book Festival on 2nd October, where NDAS will have a stall.

NDAS at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge: Recent and Projected Activities

Derry Bryant

Causeway Planning 15/16 March, 2010:

We began this season's work by spending two days planning the 'causeway' down to the river Little Dart. In good weather six intrepid members measured and plotted a profile and a plan of the 'causeway' (79m in length). Thanks are due to Terry Green for his supervision and Brian Fox for spending time showing members how to use the dumpy level for finding levels. We now have a good plan and profile drawing to include in the archaeological record. We also probed the "road" surface and found evidence of a stone layer, which appears to be metalling. At a future date we need to uncover an area to ascertain the nature of the buried surface.



Surveying the causeway at West Yeo

We also crossed the river to look for a continuation of the track on the other side, and in fact found some evidence of a track on the far bank leading towards the village.

Fieldwalking in New Close, March, 2010 :



Field walking in New Close

This was a continuation of the field-walk which we had started last year. Over a period of eight days in pretty awful weather, twenty-one people joined us, including four members from TAG (Tiverton Archaeological Group), one from the ALF (Adult Learning Forum) and three new NDAS members joining us for the first time. Ages ranged from 9 yrs to 70+! We also had enquiries from some students at Exeter University, and it is hoped they may join us for the dig in July.

Find: Once again, we have a collection of flint pieces, some Mesolithic blades, several cores and a large flake of greensand chert (possibly

from Blackdown Hills?). There was very little pottery. The work was cut short by very heavy rain and we need to return to finish the final third of the field. Meanwhile the flints are being examined, sorted and recorded with the help of Ann Plummer.

I should like to thank Bob Shrigley for being there every day and for his meticulous setting out of the grids, and to say thank you to members for turning up in wet weather. It was a really good effort.

Geophysical survey 12 -16 April, 2010:

Over five days we carried out earth-resistance survey of four grids in the meadow in front of the house on the site of a former barn and cottages. We also undertook a high resolution survey of a "drain" feature that we had picked up last year. In addition we surveyed a platform that had been observed opposite the quarry between the house and the river. High readings here may indicate a wall feature. All these results are currently being interpreted and recorded.

We were very glad to be able to use the laptop purchased for the Society with the grant from the CBA for surveying purposes. We put up the newly acquired tent on the lawn, plugged into the electric supply in the farmhouse, and lo and behold! were able to download data from the survey straight onto the laptop and view the results within a few minutes. We are grateful to the CBA for their help with our survey equipment."

Thanks again to members who took part, including new members from Tiverton Archaeology Group, and to Kate Palmer and Robert James again for their hospitality.

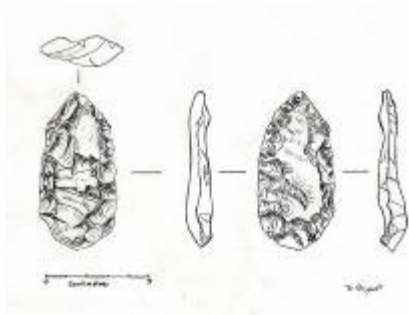
Next step:

- Oral recordings of a previous farmer, farm workers and family who lived on the farm (May/June)
- Excavation in the garden of the farmhouse: from 19th July for 2 weeks. Part of Festival of British Archaeology. Middle weekend 24/25 July: open days with guided farm tours and cream teas. Looking for foundations of previous farmhouse, destroyed in late 1880's. Diggers required!

For any further information on this project and the excavation days, please contact Derry Bryant on 01769 572963.

A Flint Knife from Northam Burrows, Westward Ho!

In Spring 2009 Martha Mills, a resident of Northam, near Bideford, found a flint tool on the pebble ridge at Northam Burrows, whilst walking her dog. The weather had been stormy, with a high tide which had washed some of the pebbles away in patches, revealing smaller stones underneath. Martha left the flint in her garden and forgot about it for 9 months, until she had a discussion with Derry Bryant in December 2009 and told her about the find. Derry asked to see the flint and Martha's husband went into the garden that night with a torch, to find it!



On examination Derry realised the flint was a rare find, and showed it to Ann Plummer, who, some of you may remember, gave Society members a "flint identification day" several years ago, with her late husband, Martin.

Ann was very excited by the find and immediately identified the flint material as being from Orleigh Court, the only location in North Devon where flint occurs naturally. It has a characteristic "khaki" colour, with a shiny lustre. Ann informed John Newberry, (DAS Proceedings No 60 2002 *Inland Flint in Prehistoric Devon: Sources, Tool-making Quality and Use*). Ann and Derry visited John in Paignton with the flint, for further discussion, and he identified it as a knife. The knife was drawn by Derry and photographed by Brian Fox. The information was sent to Professor Nick Barton at Oxford. The flint appears to be a knife, from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, and may form

part of the story of Westward Ho! Beach which includes peat layers, submerged tree stumps, and deer prints (ref. *Studies in palaeoeconomy and environment in South West England*, BAR British Series 181 1987, *Prehistoric and Romano-British Sites at Westward Ho!*, *Archaeological and Paleo-environmental surveys 1983 and 1984*, Balaam, Bell et al).

The flint knife is being written up for the Historic Environment Record (HER) in Exeter and will go on display at North Devon Museum in the near future.

Adult Learning Forum - History Hunters:

By bringing together the cultural sector (museums, coast and countryside services, record office & theatres) and support services (NHS mental health services, children's centres), the aim of the ALF project was to 'create an accessible culture of informal learning in Northern Devon'. Part of this broad-based scheme was the 'History Hunters' project in which members of NDAS participated. Under this heading four separate activities running through February and March were set up by Alison Mills of the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon.

A geophysical survey by ground-penetrating radar of the Barnstaple High Street area. This was directed by Dr Chris Cary of Birmingham University and Oxford Archaeology. The aim was to try to ascertain whether there are in fact tunnels running beneath the High Street as some believe. As well as geophysical survey, the cellars of properties in the vicinity of the Guild Hall were visited and features recorded. No evidence of tunnels was found and the cellars appeared to have originated as wine-stores. Archaeologically the (potentially) most satisfying finding was evidence of the town-ditch running beneath the Boutport Street end of Butchers' Row.

A geophysical survey by gradiometer and earth resistance metering of the promontory fort at Hillsborough, Ilfracombe. This striking and important feature of the North Devon coast has never been given modern archaeological attention and the ALF project provided an opportunity. The geophysical survey was preceded by an indoor session including talks by Steve Reed (DCHER) and Dr Chis Carey and then a (cold and wet) walk-over of the site in order to identify potential survey sites. Final analysis of the results has not yet been received, but at the moment it looks as if erosion may have removed any signs of structures within the promontory fort.

An investigation of the supposed sites of the 9th century battle of 'Cynuit' at which Hubba the Dane was defeated by the men of Devon and Alfred's kingdom was saved. Nick Arnold, a historian resident in Appledore, has come up with a carefully reasoned argument placing the battle at a hitherto unconsidered site, Castle Hill between Beaford and Torrington. After an indoor session discussing the nature of historical and archaeological evidence, the group visited Windhill at Countisbury, Kenwith Castle, Abbotsham and Bloody Corner, Northam to compare the topography of these sites with the documentary evidence. Finally, the group visited Castle Hill together with members of ACE Archaeology from Winkleigh to survey the site, once again using the geophysical skills of Chris Carey who was joined by Ross Dean. The case for Castle Hill is persuasive, but results of the survey have yet to be studied.



Considering Windhill

Survey and recording over four days of a deserted farm at Moistown near Broadwood Kelly. Clearing and investigation of this site is an ACE Archaeology project in which 'History Hunters' were invited to join. Participants learnt to use survey equipment and to locate the site using GPS.



The benefits of this scheme have been twofold: People who were interested in archaeology as onlookers were enabled to experience archaeological investigations at first hand, and an opportunity was provided to use geophysical survey to pursue, if not to resolve, a number of outstanding questions in North Devon's archaeology.

Survey at Moistown

Devon Archaeologists in Libya

NDAS member Chris Preece has been teaching in Libya over the last year or so, but doing some archaeology on the side. He has written the following for us.

When I was asked to write a short piece on a site I've been working on in Libya, it left me in a quandary. Where was the 'hook' which would prevent readers from murmuring "How interesting", looking briefly at the photographs and then turning to the next (more local) article? Then it occurred to me: I would highlight the achievements of the accomplished Devon archaeologist, Richard Goodchild (Fig.1). Subsequently, by clinging leech-like to his coat-tails, I could benefit from some reflected glory. (Astute readers will soon realise that apart from sharing the same hometown and both living a number of years in Libya, the parallels thereafter are fairly tenuous. Goodchild's volume of work was prodigious; mine... well, fairly miniscule.)



Fig.1: Richard Goodchild

Whilst a number of renowned archaeologists are known for their association with Devon (Max Mallowan, Aileen Fox etc.), it is perhaps surprising that one who actually grew up here has received so little recognition within the county. Richard Goodchild was born in Exeter in 1918 and a year before his untimely death in 1968, was appointed to the prestigious post of Professor of the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces at the Institute of Archaeology, London. This appointment was just reward for his pioneering work in Libya.

An early interest in archaeology had been fostered by Exeter's Roman remains and he began digging as a schoolboy, continuing as an undergraduate at Oxford. After service in the Royal Artillery in the Second World War he was well placed to become the Antiquities Officer for Libya, under the British post-war administration. Although this involved care of the better known sites such as Leptis Magna and Cyrene, it was his energetic work mapping the Roman road system and lesser known inland sites which marked this period of his work. In 1948 he joined the British School at Rome but his interest in Libya continued, culminating in his appointment in 1953 as Controller of Antiquities in Cyrenaica, the eastern province of Libya, a post he held for eleven years.



Fig.2: *Planning a grave cut, Boreum*

least two wrecks (C1 AD and Byzantine) which, with the permission of the Department of Antiquities, I spent week-ends surveying and later writing up.

The Director of the Department, Ibrahim Tuwahni, also encouraged me to look at Boreum, a walled Byzantine site published, coincidentally, by Goodchild in 1951. As it was located inside the oil company compound it was subject to tight security, making it difficult for even the Department's head to access! Here though was an ideal opportunity for me to enthuse my students with a 'hands on' approach to History. We made field trips where we identified some new extramural structures, recorded other features using photography and scale drawing (Fig. 2) and sampled some pottery sherds. The latter were reconstructed by the children in the classroom (Fig. 3) and were the first published ceramic evidence from the site.



Fig.4: *Author examining amphora stopper*

During this time he was responsible for excavation at four of the five cities of the Pentapolis: Cyrene, Tocra, Apollonia and Ptolemais. At the same time he understood the importance of lesser status sites and conducted survey inland as well as monitoring any threats from development. He is sometimes rather unfairly criticised (given his early death and a remit which involved responsibility for a huge area) for omissions in publication or pottery analysis. The Society for Libyan Studies published a 350 page volume of select papers by him which highlights his achievements in Libya. The four pages of his bibliography show how prolific, in fact, his publication record was.

My association with Libya is altogether more mundane. In 1995, I took a post as a teacher for an oil company school in Marsa-el-Brega. As I socialised within the expat community, I began to notice a number of amphora fragments on the mantelpieces of houses there. The beach nearby was in fact the western side of a headland anchorage and underwater survey revealed at



Fig.3: *Pottery Reconstruction.*

Fast forward to 2009 and escaping the recession, I find myself teaching in Libya again, this time in Tripoli. As the weather hots up I find the nearest beach and detect what looks like another headland anchorage (these gave the option of shelter either side of the headland depending on the wind direction).

I snorkel offshore and soon spot amphora fragments. I liaise with the Department of Antiquities and they agree to a scoping survey (to determine the extent and date of the material). Week-ends are spent with site familiarisation and

finally sampling a limited number of ceramics for identification (Fig. 4). The beach and a large area to landward encompassing the anchorage are due to be developed as part of a large tourist complex. During my weekly walk to the beach, I monitor the

groundwork (old habits die hard after 7 years of commercial archaeology!). One day, some interesting circular structures are revealed quite close to the eastern anchorage. I suspect they are kilns and with the wonders of e-mail attachment, I'm able to get expert confirmation. Surface finds suggest these were producing ceramics in the first century AD. Six kilns in total are located, as well as a rectangular building.

Although Tripolitanian amphorae were shipped all over the Roman Empire, few kiln sites have been located. Goodchild himself recorded one at Ain Scersciara inland from Tripoli. They are particularly important as they source fabric and forms. The Department of Antiquities has since requested that the developers preserve them and at the time of going to press they had been fenced off.

The results of the scoping survey are still being analysed but suggest (unsurprisingly) C1AD material (or earlier), much of it neo-Punic. There are also a number of Byzantine vessels including amphorae and cooking pots. It is hoped that the site will be published in 2011.

Figs. 1 is reproduced from 'Libyan Studies, Select Papers of the late R.G. Goodchild' (ed. Joyce Reynolds) 1976.

Fig. 4 Photo by James Fyfe.