



Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

News-sheet, May, 2009

1. The 2009 AGM

The annual general meeting 2009 was held at the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple and was well attended. A major item on the agenda was a proposed change of the Society's name to include the word 'historical'. In the ensuing debate it emerged that such a change was not popular with the attending members, but it was agreed that the Society's purpose – which inevitably includes historical research - should be expressed in a strap-line added to the NDAS logo – See above! The words are taken from the Society's founding constitution of 1959.

At the meeting Bob Shrigley was voted Vice-Chairman. All other officers as well as the general committee were reconfirmed in their positions. However, since the meeting, James Coulter has regrettably resigned as Treasurer and Membership Secretary and has left the NDAS Committee. At the committee meeting held on 8th April it was agreed that until such time as a permanent appointment can be made, Margaret Reed would carry out the duties of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. We owe thanks to James Coulter for the efficient way in which he has worked on the Society's behalf during the last two years.

2. The NDAS Committee

The NDAS Committee consists of subscribing members plus representatives of related and interested bodies. Until recently the membership has been represented by 15 Committee members, but the number is now down to 12. In order to ensure that decisions are taken by a sufficiently representative quorum of members, it is desirable to keep the number up. **The Committee needs new members who are dedicated to the Society's objectives. If you are one of those or you know someone who is, then please propose yourself or get someone to propose you or nominate a member (with their consent) who you think would do a good job.** Pass your nominations to Margaret Reed 01271 325276 or email margaret.reed@talktalk.net.

3. Marking the 50th Anniversary

You will notice that your new membership card celebrates the 50th birthday of NDAS which held its first meeting at South Molton in the spring of 1959. We are marking this significant anniversary in two ways.

During the summer we are aiming to publish a small volume of articles on the archaeology and history of North Devon. This is not an academic publication, but a selection of well written and illustrated pieces on a variety of topics ranging from an account of a recently discovered Iron Age settlement near Witheridge to a light-hearted 'romp' through 150 years of reporting of archaeology in the North Devon Journal as well as contributions on local historical themes. All paid-up members will receive a free copy, and then it will go on sale to the general public. This will probably be the first such publication dedicated entirely to North Devon.

As the 50th Anniversary of NDAS coincides with the 50th birthday of North Devon AONB we are together organising a day-conference in October. The day, entitled 'Time and Tide', will be

dedicated to the archaeology and history of the North Devon coast and will be a first for North Devon. The date is Saturday 24th October, the place the Landmark Theatre at Ilfracombe. We have lined up five main speakers who will talk on themes ranging from environmental change in the Bristol Channel to the North Devon Coast in the Second World War. It is hoped that the day will be introduced by Mark Horton (you will have seen him on *Coast* on TV), who is an AONB 'Champion'. **Priority for bookings will go to NDAS members up to 30th June.** It will then be advertised to the general public. See the details and booking slip included with this mailing.

4. Recent Events:

On Sunday 5th April a number of NDAS members turned up at West Yeo Farm near Witheridge at the invitation of the owner Kate Palmer to be introduced to the history and current developments at the farm and to be conducted on a walk around the land by Kate herself. The afternoon finished up with an excellent cream tea in the farmhouse dining-room. West Yeo, earlier known as Fremaniscot and apparently as Ratdon, is probably of pre-Conquest origin. The late medieval house was burnt down in 1870. The present farmhouse is around 130 years old and lies immediately to the north of the earlier site. The farm is run on organic lines with a pedigree herd of Devon red cattle. Kate is carrying out a programme of restoring lost field boundaries and is very interested to learn more of the farm's history. We can help her with this. See item 5 below.

On Saturday 16th May, 12 members met in the Henry Williamson Room adjacent to the Local Studies Library for a training day. The subject was the use of documentary sources to trace the history and evolution of a place (house, farm, village, parish, etc.). In the first half of the morning Margaret Reed gave an overview of the published and unpublished sources held by the Local Studies Library, the Athenaeum and the Record Offices. This was followed by a Case Study presented by Terry Green, showing how the history behind a barn at Clawton near Holsworthy had been unravelled. In the afternoon members carried out researches of their own; then finally Tim Wormleighton provided a tour of the library and the document stack. The day was enjoyed by all and we owe Tim our thanks for turning up to guide us on his day off.

5. A New Project

Recently Dr Chris Carey from Birmingham University involved children from schools in Braunton as well as volunteers from the village in a geophysical survey of the hilltop enclosure at Knowle. Following the survey, Chris Carey was keen to encourage NDAS members to take on more widespread survey work in the north of the county where there are 'hundreds' of sites about which very little is known. If a local society such as ours could develop a programme of integrated surveys it would greatly advance the understanding of North Devon's archaeology. Derry Bryant, who took part in the survey at Knowle, is keen to set up a pilot project based on West Yeo Farm using the Society's earth resistance meter. To start the ball rolling Chris has recently provided us with two sessions of tuition in the principles and practice of geophysical survey at Pilton Community College, and it is now intended that we should begin a survey at West Yeo Farm, Witheridge in June. Ideally such a survey would bring together a wide range of resources to clarify and complement the results of geophysical survey. This work has the potential to initiate a long-term programme of survey in the North Devon area. This is something that is needed and requires the active support of NDAS members. Survey at West Yeo will begin in the week beginning 15th June. If you wish to become involved contact Derry Bryant on 01769 572963 or email derrybryant@tiscali.co.uk.

6. Things to do this summer

On the afternoon of Sunday 7th June Stephen Hobbs will be available to guide a party of NDAS members (+ family members) round Hartland Abbey. Stephen is extremely knowledgeable about the Abbey and its history/archaeology and it is a privilege to be guided by him. The cost is £7 per head, a discounted rate for NDAS members (minimum number in party 10, maximum 20).

Stephen would like us to meet at 1.00pm at the Abbey in order to look at external features - the probable location of the remains of the medieval abbey - before visiting the house. After the visit you are able to buy a cream tea, walk around the grounds, stroll down to the coast. If you wish to be included, please contact Alistair Miller on 01598 740359 (or email alistair@mrmiller.orangehome.co.uk). Pay through Alistair on the day.

Heather Adams, PhD student at Plymouth University needs the help of volunteers with fieldwork that she is conducting this summer on Exmoor, where she is investigating the potential of small valley mires to provide palaeoenvironmental evidence of Exmoor's past. New volunteers could be involved in identifying and assessing the condition of mire sites, vegetation survey, or coring for palaeoenvironmental samples. No experience is necessary, as all fieldwork will be organised and accompanied, and full training will be given on site. Dates of fieldwork are very flexible, and no long-term commitment is necessary! If you would like to be involved in the project, or would like details of what will be involved in the surveys, please contact Heather Adams by email at heather.adams@plymouth.ac.uk, or by phone on 07736944722.

On Saturday 27th June the Devon History Society is holding its Summer Meeting at Mortehoe. As NDAS is affiliated to the Devon History Society NDAS members are invited to attend the day at a cost of £2.50 per head. The meeting will take place in the Village Hall and will begin at 10.15. During the morning there will be talks on the history of Mortehoe followed by lunch, either bought for £4.00 in the hall or taken at one of the local pubs. During the afternoon there will be a talk on *Church and Chapel in Mortehoe Parish* with a visit to the church. The day will conclude with a cream tea. For details and to book contact Miss E.H.Maycock, 2 Bicton Place, Exmouth EX8 2SU or phone 01395 272755.

Rolle Canal Society has a programme of summer walks on 21st June (from Torrington Station), 12th July (from Velator Quay), 26th July (Bude Canal Basin) and 23rd August (from Rosemoor Gardens). For details of the programme and for information about the Rolle Canal Society call 01237 473801 or email anthonybar@gmail.com.

18th and 19th July at Arlington Court, as part of National Archaeology Week, you can hear talks on the history of Arlington and join a guided archaeological walk around the grounds. In the second half of July there will also be events at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon including an exhibition by NDAS.

In addition, Nick Duncan who lives at Taddipport, Torrington is working on the site of a cottage (next door to the reputed site of the leper hospital) that fell down many years ago. He is finding very large quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery and would welcome help with sorting and cleaning his finds. Any volunteers please phone Terry Green on 01271 374429.

7. Winter programme

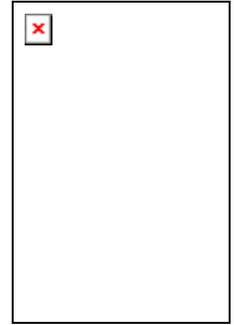
Having just got into the better weather, it's a shame to start thinking about next winter. However, you will need to know that as from October 2009, the NDAS winter talks will no longer take place on Mondays at Pilton, but will take place on **Tuesdays** at the **Castle Centre**, Castle Street, Barnstaple. The programme should be with you by September.

8. Membership

Your membership of NDAS is helping to 'promote awareness of the archaeology and history of North Devon'. If you haven't already renewed your subscription, may we remind you that annual subscriptions became due on 1st April (single membership £16, couples at same address £24, students and juveniles £5). Subscriptions should be sent to Margaret Reed, 58 Littabourne, Barnstaple EX31 1PU. Please help the Society to advance the cause by encouraging others to join.



Promoting awareness of the archaeology and history of North Devon



‘Time and Tide’

A day of talks on the archaeology and history of the North Devon coast, to mark the 50th anniversary of NDAS and North Devon AONB,

Saturday October 24th 2009, 9.30am – 4.00pm at the Landmark Theatre, Ilfracombe

Provisional Programme:

- 9.30-10.00: Arrivals.
- 10.00-10.30: Introduction
- 10.30-11.15: Frances Griffith (Devon County Archaeologist): *The archaeology of the North Devon landscape from the air.*
- 11.15-11.35: Break
- 11.35-12.25: Vanessa Straker (English Heritage): *Mud, Mud, Glorious Mud: environmental change in the Severn Estuary and coastal levels in the last 10, 000 years.*
- 12.25-1.10: Nicholas Orme (formerly of Exeter University): *The Medieval Church in North Devon*
- 1.10-2.15: Lunch (Buffet lunch or make own arrangements)
- 2.15-3.00: Peter Claughton (Exeter University): *Coal, Ore and Metals: the coastal mining landscape of North Devon*
- 3.00-3.15: Richard Bass (Military historian): *Friendly Invasion; The North Devon Coast 1943-4.*
- 3.15-4.00: Questions and Conclusion

To: Margaret Reed, 58 Littabourne, Barnstaple EX31 1PU

Please Reserveplaces at £12.00 (including buffet) / £5.00 (without buffet) for ‘Time and Tide’ on 24th October. I enclose my cheque for £..... Payable to NDAS/NDRA.

Name(s):

Address:.....

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Telephone:..... Email: