



Promoting awareness of the archaeology  
and history of North Devon

## News-sheet, September, 2009

### **NDAS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:**

You should all be aware by now that this year we are celebrating 50 years of the North Devon Archaeological Society. You will have received your copy of 'Bronze Age to Bottle Seals', our celebratory publication, and hopefully will have found it an absorbing and enjoyable read. Our thanks must go to Alison Mills of the Museum of North Devon for taking on the responsibility of publication and making it possible to commission Aiken Graphics to do the lay-out work. Bruce Aiken was as helpful as he has always been (with the newsletter); his distinctive style has become the NDAS house style and his meticulous care and advice are greatly appreciated. Printing was paid for by the Society out of our reserve, and it is intended that money spent on production should be recouped through sales of the book to the general public. Copies are available for sale at – among others - the Museum in Barnstaple and there is an order form on the NDAS website ([www.ndas.org.uk](http://www.ndas.org.uk)) – why not give one as a gift for Christmas? It would be good to think that in the not too distant future we can publish a follow-up volume – or volumes - highlighting current research in North Devon. Providing a means by which the unfolding story of North Devon's past can reach an interested public seems a worthy objective for NDAS.

The other celebratory event, of course, is the day conference marking the joint 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NDAS and NorthDevon AONB to be held at the Landmark Theatre, Ilfracombe on 24<sup>th</sup> October, and about which you were informed in the May news sheet. Themed around the archaeology and history of the North Devon coast, the day has received the title 'Time and Tide' and is being advertised to the general public across North Devon. You will have received a flyer and application form with your copy of the book and there is one attached to this news sheet. If you have not yet booked, then I urge you to do so soon.

### **The Winter Programme 2009-10:**

*May we first remind you that as from this October, the winter meetings, including the AGM, will take place at the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple on Tuesdays at 7.30 (AGM 7.00).*

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30 pm:** *The NDAS West Yeo Project – Report on progress and plans for future work* with Derry Bryant and Bob Shrigley

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30 pm** – *Roman Devon* with Tom Cadbury of the RAM Museum, Exeter

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December, 7.30 pm** – NDAS Annual Dinner at the London Inn, Molland.

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January, 7.30 pm** – *Lost Settlements of Exmoor* with Rob Wilson-North, Exmoor National Park Archaeologist.

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 7.30 pm:** – *Understanding Farm Buildings* with Isabel Richardson formerly archaeologist with the National Trust

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 7.00 pm** – The NDAS Annual General Meeting.

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30 pm** John Allen of Exeter Archaeology – *Subject to be announced.*

#### **The NDAS Annual Dinner:**

Note that the venue this year – the London Inn at Moland – is a little out of the way, but has an excellent reputation. The cost per head will be £17.50. Details are available from Derry Bryant (01769 572963, [derrybryant@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:derrybryant@tiscali.co.uk)). The menu will be available in October.

#### **Other Dates for your Diary:**

The Appledore Book Festival is imminent and includes in its programme talks which may well be of interest to you. These are:-

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September, 8.00pm, St Mary's Church, Appledore:** Julian Richards *Meeting the Ancestors: Bringing the Past to Life.* (£6)

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 4.00 pm, St Mary's Hall, Appledore:** Dr Miles Russell (Bournemouth University) *The Truth about King Arthur* (£4)

Full details of the Appledore Book Festival can be found at the festival website:  
<http://appledorebookfestival.co.uk/pdf/2009brochure.pdf>

#### **The West Yeo Project:**

This new NDAS project is now well under way under the guidance of Derry Bryant and Bob Shrigley. West Yeo Farm, near Witheridge has developed out of a Domesday manor and is located within an area of apparently quite intense Bronze Age activity. The post-medieval farmhouse burnt down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and when a new house was built, the farm was recast on 'model farm' lines. The result is that the farm includes high quality 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings which need to be recorded. The remaining buildings of the old farm were demolished in the 1950s, but their foundations remain beneath the turf and represent an opportunity to explore the origins of a medieval settlement. The farm owner, Kate Palmer is very keen to see a full landscape project unfold on her land, and there promises to be a considerable period of NDAS involvement here with many opportunities to gain experience and training. So far there have been two major spells of activity. The first was taken up with several days of geophysical survey which not only began to reveal buried features, but provided an opportunity for NDAS members to learn some of the skills and techniques of geophysical survey. The second extended visit comprised 5 days of field-walking as a result of which it became apparent from the flints recovered that prehistoric activity, already apparent from numerous finds on neighbouring land, extended across the land of West Yeo. Most of the material is debitage, suggesting a working area rather than chance losses. The flints are to be examined by Ann Plummer. This promises to be an absorbing and rewarding project in an area of Devon which has seen little archaeological exploration. (But see pages 33-39 of your *Bronze Age to Bottle Seals* for a report on an Iron Age settlement nearby.)

*Stop Press: The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) has granted NDAS £500 to help finance the West Yeo project; this will mainly be used to purchase a laptop computer in order to process the downloads from the earth resistance meter.*

If you wish to become involved contact Derry on 01769 572963 or Bob on 01237 478122.

### **Taddiport:**

A site at Taddiport (Great Torrington) was mentioned to you in the May news sheet. Just to remind you, Nick Duncan who lives at Taddiport has been clearing the site of a cottage which either fell down or was burnt down in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has found truly enormous quantities of pottery ranging from medieval North Devon gravel tempered ware to late 19<sup>th</sup> century white china and including some high quality imported late medieval Portuguese material. The site is situated next to the reputed site of the Leper Hospital. The site is worthy of a professional investigation, but failing that, we can help out by at least assisting Nick with his pottery. During August four NDAS members went to Taddiport to help with cleaning and identification of the pottery. Doing this sort of thing is a very good way to become familiar with pottery styles and types. Nick was very appreciative of our help and will welcome volunteers any time. Expect further calls for assistance to go out !

### **Hulks in the Estuary:**

Chris Preece, the Society's marine archaeologist, has had a meeting with a representative of English Heritage to discuss recording the rapidly decaying hulks of vessels abandoned at various times in the Taw and Torridge estuary. EH is willing to put money into this and the suggestion is that a professional body should tackle the task with volunteer assistance such as can be provided by NDAS. There will be more information on this, but if you think you might be interested, contact Chris on 01237 475368 or email [chrispreece@btinternet.com](mailto:chrispreece@btinternet.com).

### **Hillsborough:**

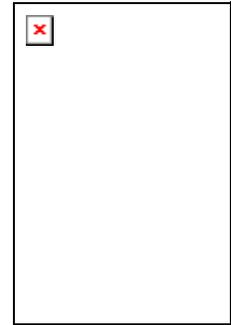
There is the possibility that a group will be formed to survey the promontory fort or cliff castle on Hillsborough, Ilfracombe. Hillsborough is a prominent feature of the North Devon coast, but very little is known about it, in fact it is not really understood at all. Any effort made to gain some understanding will be welcome and potentially very interesting. Information on the project is limited at present, but if you would like to know more, then contact Alison Mills at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon on 01271 346747.

### **Keeping up to date:**

This news sheet will be sent out by email to all those members who have email addresses. If you have received this through the post, but in fact have an email address, could you *please* let Margaret Reed know ([margaret.reed@talktalk.net](mailto:margaret.reed@talktalk.net)) your current contact details.



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## ‘Time and Tide’

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

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

### 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

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

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

Name(s): .....

Address:.....

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Telephone:..... Email: