



Promoting awareness of the archaeology
and history of North Devon

Autumn Newsletter 2013

From the Chairman, Derry Bryant:

Wow! What a summer! Fabulous sunny days! Hope you all got a chance to get out and enjoy the views.

Thanks to Chris Hassall and Terry Green for the guided walks of the Rolle Canal and Clovelly Dykes during the summer.

Also, thanks go to Chris Preece for directing the excavation at Little Potheridge, Merton in May, and all the volunteers who took part in the hunt for a clay pipe kiln. Philip Collins and Dave Lock did a great job of preparing the building on site as our "Villige Hall" – an excellent base for the dig, with a tarpaulin roof extension and excellent tea making facilities. What luxury! We had an excellent 2 weeks, with lots of clay pipe sherds, some new bowl forms, and more evidence of a kiln in the form of "muffle" fragments. The actual kiln is still elusive but we hope to return to continue the search next year. *For more detail, see the report from Chris Preece below.* Next step will be a magnetometry geophysical survey, possibly in October, by South West Archaeology. The survey will cover the area already surveyed with earth resistance equipment, plus the small field North and East of the site. The magnetometry will hopefully show up any heating events.

Funding for Little Potheridge:

NDAS was granted £1000 towards the excavation by Devon County Council. Our thanks go to Bill Horner for his continued support and for arranging this funding.

West Yeo:

The final reports have been completed and printed. A digital version is being prepared for onward transmission to relevant bodies. Next step: to archive the finds from the project – pottery etc from the excavation, and the flint collection and stone tools. Finds will be deposited at the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon. There may be a requirement for helpers to sort through and box up finds into smaller boxes, etc.. Watch this space!

An exhibition of the West Yeo project was held



Derry's team of little helpers at the West Yeo exhibition

on 27 July at Witheridge Parish Hall as part of the CBA Festival of Archaeology. Thanks to all who took part on the day. The event was funded by the CBA Challenge Funding grant of £500, which was also awarded towards the printing of the reports. On the day, Kate and Robert of West Yeo Farm kindly offered a cream tea and farm walk after the exhibition. Grateful thanks to both.

A general word on funding:

Whilst we are sometimes able to obtain grants for activities of an important archaeological nature, our excavations, field walking activities, lecture programme etc all have associated costs. If anyone has any fundraising ideas, the Committee would be pleased to hear about them, small or large. Coffee mornings/boot sales/sponsored sky dives, anything would be of help in raising money for our society. We still need to sell lots of copies of our Society publication "Bronze Age to Bottle Seals", our 50th anniversary book containing details of our Bronze Age excavation of a hillside enclosure near Parracombe. It makes a great Christmas present, contact Bob Shrigley if you want a copy.

With best wishes.

Derry Bryant, Chairman

Editor's note: Derry deserves the Society's sincere thanks for all the dedication and hard work that she has put into the West Yeo Project.

Little Potheridge Excavation (11th - 26th May 2013)

Chris Preece

After several years of liaison with interested parties, NDAS got the opportunity to work on a site near to Merton known to have been used for clay pipe production in the 18th century. What made this site exciting was that whilst a number of C17 and C19 kilns have been found in the UK, evidence from the C18 is scarce. In addition, if found, this would be the first clay pipe kiln site of any era to be discovered in the South West. The evidence was promising. A large number of different clay pipes had already been found as well as parts of the vessels/accoutrements used when firing the pipes. Documentary evidence suggested a family of pipemakers in the area by the names of Pardon/Pearn (the C18 pipes found also had makers' marks suggesting this family). Cartographic study suggested that an extant building as well as some structures recently demolished nearby might be associated with the Pardons.

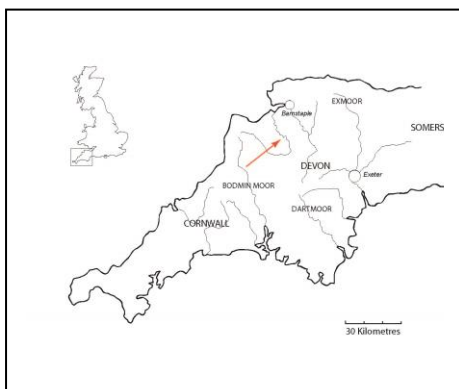


Fig.1: Location of Little Potheridge, Merton

Permission was kindly given by the Clinton Estates and the farmer, Rob Nancekivill, for both geophysical survey and excavation of a limited area to minimise loss of crop revenue.

The geophysical survey results were promising. Not only were the missing buildings from the early maps evidenced, but there appeared to be two sub-circular features whose dimensions matched known examples of kilns.

Bearing in mind that kilns could be free-standing, lean-to or inside an existing building, it was obvious that a number of

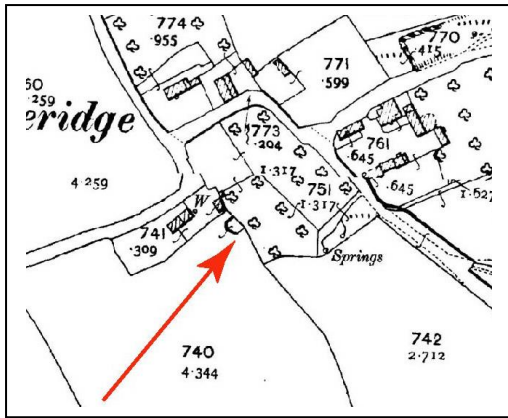


Fig.2: Extract from the OS 1:2500 map of 1905. The excavation area is north of the arrow tip

south from the arch. Inside the arch, the upward slope too was suggestive of discharge rather than stoking.



Fig.3: Possible medieval wall footing

The wall and the foundation cut on the south side suggested a rebuild. This was confirmed by a particularly interesting find sealed at the base of the fill: a sherd of a Bellarmine jar with the face of the Cardinal himself (Fig. 4). These date to the seventeenth century and were commonly used as witch jars (i.e. to ward off evil spirits). This usage would accord with the sherd's location.

Although remnants of a fossilised medieval field system at Little Potheridge had suggested earlier occupation of the site, two sherds in context had confirmed this.

evaluation trenches would be needed. Previous test pits had also indicated some interesting areas for potential investigation.

So, on the first Saturday, two trenches were opened. The first, T1, was addressing a small area south of a lean to on the east side of a small barn. The lean to had an arch at ground level. This was suggestive of a stoke hole although the brickwork looked later than C18. However, this could have been a rebuild and only excavation would reveal the original function.

Unfortunately, it related most probably to bodily functions and the interpretation following excavation suggested a rather basic toilet with a channel sloping

The west end of the second trench, T2, was intended to locate the footings of the southern extension of the truncated extant building (a small barn which became the site hut). Its eastward end would investigate the two circular features revealed by the geophysics. As anyone who has watched Time Team will know, geophysics can throw some curved balls and excavation of the east end revealed no traces of sub-circular features at all. At the west end of the trench however, was revealed an east/west wall (Fig. 3). The width was immediately suggestive of medieval origins but excavation of the foundation trenches was particularly revealing. On the north side the fill was dated by North Devon medieval coarse-ware but there had evidently been alterations to the



Fig.4: The face of Cardinal Bellarmine

The next trench to be opened up was T3, the inside of the lean to. Excavation here revealed a number of floors from concrete through to cobbles with a gulley at the east end running north/south and beam slots in the east wall. This correlated with the interpretation of a toilet which would emerge when excavation of T1 was completed.

To the east of the extant hut another trench was put in to relocate the test pits which had revealed pipe clay and a concentration of clay pipe fragments. Although the topsoil was fairly rich in clay pipe bowls and stems, the layers evidenced in the test pits were not located and no features presented in this trench.

A small trench, 2m x 1m (T4) was then located north of the extant hut as here too there was formerly a building before it was truncated. A lot of modern agricultural rubbish was in the topsoil here along with clay pipe material, C19 pottery and spent shotgun cartridges – sealed by this was a disturbed yellow clay layer with again a few finds of varying date. Beneath this there was no trace of a surface such as might have been expected inside a building.



Fig.5: Excavating in the area of the pond.

spreads identified. The semi circular feature (on the OS map) had been cut by a modern drainage ditch but a sondage adjacent to the west side of the trench revealed a depth of grey silty clay, clearly alluvial, and the feature can be interpreted as a pond (Fig. 5). The north/south stone feature is being



Fig.6: Muffle fragment

tentatively interpreted as the revetment of a field boundary. To the east of the modern drainage ditch was a spread particularly rich in pipe material. From here came the 'star find', a large muffle fragment (a muffle is a vessel which contains and protects the pipes during firing) with two buttresses and reinforced with pipe stems. This along with other fragments of kiln furniture from T2 (Fig. 6) was beginning to suggest that the kiln might lie to the east of the pond (towards the end of the excavation we examined another concentrated spread of clay pipe waste quite some way to the east, on the other side of the road).

Once the overburden had been removed, the area was cleaned back and the features and

spreads identified. The semi circular feature (on the OS map) had been cut by a modern drainage ditch but a sondage adjacent to the west side of the trench revealed a depth of grey silty clay, clearly alluvial, and the feature can be interpreted as a pond (Fig. 5). The north/south stone feature is being tentatively interpreted as the revetment of a field boundary. To the east of the modern drainage ditch was a spread particularly rich in pipe material. From here came the 'star find', a large muffle fragment (a muffle is a vessel which contains and protects the pipes during firing) with two buttresses and reinforced with pipe stems. This along with other fragments of kiln furniture from T2 (Fig. 6) was beginning to suggest that the kiln might lie to the east of the pond (towards the end of the excavation we examined another concentrated spread of clay pipe waste quite some way to the east, on the other side of the road).

Despite the disappointment of having not yet found the kiln, a number of important finds were made and with the involvement of

South West Archaeology, who are going to carry out a magnetometer survey this autumn, there is reason to hope that next year we might find the actual kiln structure (assuming it hasn't been completely robbed out, of course!)



Fig.7: General view of the site looking north-west.

Acknowledgements

The two people most instrumental in bringing this site to the attention of NDAS and therefore excavation, were Phil Collins and Heather Coleman. The permission of Clinton Estates and Robert Nancekivill was essential and the excavation could not have taken place without a generous grant from Devon County Council HES. The enthusiasm of NDAS members and local community participants was remarkable (some 33 people volunteered altogether; an average of 11 people on site every day) and all of the above are gratefully thanked. Finally a big thank you to supervisors Derry and Bob for all their support and suggestions.

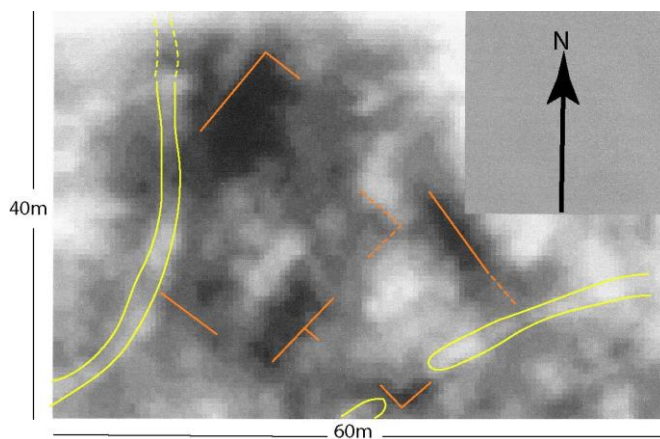
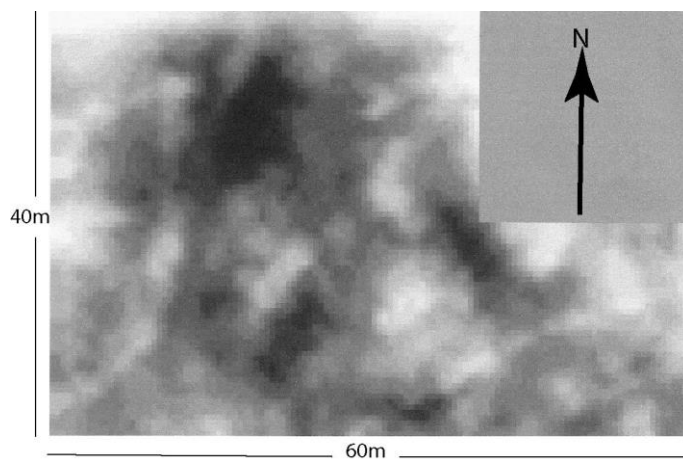
Archaeology at Arlington Court:

Ben Warren and Terry Green

Long-standing members of NDAS may recall that in the mid-1990s members of the Society were invited to join with students from Exeter University in examining a long trench across the paddock at Arlington Court. The trench had been dug by machine some years before in order to create a drain. Colin Humphreys and Terry Green, who were volunteering for the National Trust at the time, had noticed that the trench had cut through features that very probably related to the original Arlington House which until the beginning of the 19th century stood beside the church. They proposed to Shirley Blaylock, National Trust Archaeologist for Devon, that it would be worthwhile to clean up the

sides of the trench thus creating a long section across the field. A week of enthusiastic digging revealed that the trench had cut through garden features as well as clipping the corner of a slate floored building. Pottery recovered suggested a sequence ceasing in the early 19th century, the period when the old Arlington House was abandoned and the new – present – house was completed and occupied.

Since the mid-1990s a number of people have interested themselves in the archaeology of Arlington Court, culminating in a full archaeological survey being carried out on behalf of the National Trust by Dr Nick Berry. It emerged from the survey, which was completed two years ago, that the original settlement of Arlington had apparently been swept away when a ‘picturesque’ landscape was developed to provide a setting for the new house in the 1820s. Examination of available maps suggested that there had been buildings in the area of what is now the front lawn to the east of the house.



Earth resistance survey:

Above: Combined plot.

Below: Interpretation – orange, possible buildings, yellow, possible ditches.

It so happens that the recently appointed second gardener at Arlington Court, Ben Warren is nearing the end of his six years studying for a part time degree course in Archaeological Studies at Bristol University. As he moves into his final year he has started to write his dissertation, for which he has chosen to research Arlington Court’s past. Nick Berry’s report had highlighted areas of archaeological interest and had given management recommendations, declaring the area of the front lawn to be ‘archaeologically sensitive’. The area has never been subject to archaeological examination, either geophysical survey or excavation. However a watching brief (someone watches and checks for archaeology during the digging process) was carried out during the removal of rhododendron from the site in 2007, which revealed a compacted lime mortar floor (NT SMR no. 104512). Ben Warren has chosen to map the archaeology of this archaeologically sensitive area for his dissertation. In February 2013, with permission of the National Trust and the support of Martin Papworth, National Trust archaeologist, he carried out an

earth resistance survey on one part of the site to start mapping what remains there may be beneath the lawn.

What he found in an area measuring 60m x 40m surprised all involved: interpretation of the results appears to indicate the remains of two buildings lying less than 50cm below the surface. One is estimated to be 30 metres long by 10 metres wide with another building beside it measuring perhaps 10 x 10 metres. These buildings appear to be flanked on two sides by ditches which seem to funnel towards the south. The interpretation suggests perhaps a barn with a farmhouse beside it. The ditches are not necessarily contemporaneous with the buildings. Dating these features is impossible without excavating them. No excavation is currently foreseen, but more earth resistance survey is planned for the first week in November. This will cover the area of lawn in front of the service wing and move east to meet up with what has currently been surveyed. It is hoped that more buildings will be found thus adding to the possible area of settlement. Ben also plans to survey a small piece of lawn between the churchyard and the track up to the stables, this area being the location of the old house. Watch this space for the results.

Parracombe Archaeology and History Group Update:

Linda Blanchard

History Amongst the Headstones

It's been a busy time for our small group. Earlier this year the group were approached by the Christchurch PCC who lacked a plan of the graveyard and we agreed to help out. Bruce and June Aiken steered the project and produced a master plan and recording form. On a hot, sunny Saturday in July a team of around a dozen local people turned up brandishing sunhats and clipboards and, with the help of tea and cakes provided by the PCC, completed the recording in an afternoon. The survey is now being typed up for use by visitors to the church and there are plans by a couple of group members to use the information collected to enhance the family histories we already have for the village.

A Celebration of Farming in Parracombe



Sheep shearing on a Parracombe farm in the 19th century.

Mean-time Linda Blanchard has been taking a good look at the amazing amount of research carried out by NDAS members, especially Margaret Reed, a few years ago. It is hard to believe that there is so much documentary evidence surviving for such a small village and another major project is to analyse it. However there is a considerable amount of information relating to farming and landholdings which is of great interest. We will be presenting selected highlights of this research alongside our Harvest Festival at Christchurch from the 11th to 13th of October (10 am to 5 pm daily) using the Celebration of Farming as a theme. Folders

containing transcriptions and copies of some of the original material will be available for people to

browse through. Included in the information available will be some of the photographic record of the NDAS Holworthy Farm dig (2002-5). The event will enhance the flower and produce displays which grace the church at this time and we will also present photos of farming past and present and local artefacts related to 19th/20th century farming in the area. Produce and refreshment will be on sale and entry is free.

Longstone Landscapes



The Longstone on Challacombe Common

opportunities for training and practical work, e.g. Field survey, walkover surveys, geophysics, excavation, map regression and finds identification, all depending on the final budget and the enthusiasm or interest of the volunteers. The more trained helpers we get the more we will learn about this evocative and important prehistoric landscape. There will be opportunities for local schools and residents to join in and we are very keen to include NDAS members at all stages.

We will hold a launch and volunteer recruitment evening on Wednesday 6th November 2013 ready to start work in 2014. At this meeting we will start to firm up details of where, when and what we will be doing.

Volunteers needed.

At the end of September/October you have the chance to get involved in some hands-on archaeology in Barnstaple. The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon has recently acquired 96 boxes of North Devon pottery collected from the area of Swansea Bay. The museum is now calling for volunteers to help sort and process the pottery. There will be one morning and one afternoon session on the same day once a week, held in the museum library. Volunteers do not need to

Members of our group were delighted to be approached recently by Faye Balmond of the Exmoor Moorland Initiative and Rob Wilson-North Conservation Manager for the Exmoor National Park about proposals to study and survey the moorland lying between Parracombe and Challacombe. The PHAS committee have agreed to support the project and hope that members of NDAS as well as residents of Challacombe will be equally enthusiastic. There is some money available but we hope to enhance this with a funding bid which might allow for some excavation.

Following the 'Dig Porlock' model, work will be guided by a combination of research priorities and local interest. Currently the committee are keen to look at Chapman Barrows, a possible mortuary enclosure near the Longstone, and the medieval settlement at Radworthy –subject to permissions from landowners and English Heritage where appropriate. There will be

commit to every session. If you are able to help or would like to know more, then telephone South West Archaeology Ltd on 01769 573555. Or email mail@swarch.net.

An A-Z of North Devon's Archaeology:

Among the Society's stated purposes is the aim to raise awareness of our area's archaeology and history. In the interests of fulfilling this purpose, we are proposing to compile and publish a guide to some of the major archaeological and historical features of northern Devon – hence, an 'A-Z'. The geographical area of coverage will be the two districts North Devon and Torridge with the odd foray into West Devon, North Cornwall and West Somerset. It won't be exhaustive – we can't cover everything – but it will attempt to have something for every letter of the alphabet, though currently Z is a problem and we only get X in by cheating slightly. The entries are being compiled by Society members with some contributions by experts from elsewhere. The aim is not to be academic and technical, but to inform as accurately as possible drawing on the most reliable sources. We hope to have the work ready for publication by the middle of next year.

Dendrochronology at St Nectan's Church, Stoke, Hartland.

Stephen Hobbs.

Establishing the construction date for most churches has proven extremely difficult. The documentary evidence is very sparse for churches that are pre 17th century and we rely on a variety of disparate information collated together to try and form a probable date sequence. In Devon and Cornwall we have an extended history of the transition into Christianity, the hagiography of Westcountry Saints and the physical reference points of the buildings themselves.

The church at Stoke, Hartland dedicated to St Nectan is fortunate in having a fuller history than most thanks to the likely cult of St Nectan that transformed into a fully-fledged monastic institution through patronage at the highest levels. Susan Pearce writing in the 1980s promoted the idea of an early Lan in the vicinity of the present church, but it is true to say that there is no documentary or archaeological evidence to fully support the construction of a church or series of church buildings on the site.

The present building is one of the largest churches in north Devon. It shows no evidence of a Norman building or indeed anything earlier. The present font is styled as Norman and is portrayed as being a relic of an earlier building, but this may be conjecture. Churches in the immediate vicinity frequently display such as the Norman door arch or similar - St Nectan's is bare of such.

We can gather small snippets of information on the earlier period of the church from the 12th century founding of the Abbey from the archive of the Dynham family held at Cornwall R.O. and also the Exeter Cathedral Archive. The primary evidence for the building today rests with a seating plan dated at 1613 which shows the church layout and it being fully seated at that period. My investigation of this plan and those whose names are recorded is one of very few such investigation undertaken in England. This was supported by Francis Kelly of English Heritage and, as the church recently has been the subject of a possible re-ordering, then establishing the provenance of the seating and indeed the building has become important.

English Heritage commissioned a dendrochronology survey of the seats and elements of the building structure from Robert Howard & Alison Arnold of Nottingham. A total of 103 samples were taken and analysed. The resulting information now gives some definition to the construction of the present building and its fittings.

The roof timbers of the Pope's Chamber, The Vestry and the South Porch give a date range of 1438-1460: 1487-1512: 1499-1524 respectively. The wooden decorative panels now visible in the Nave roof give a date of 1467. The Pulpit sections which are stored in the museum to 1591. The pews cover an extended date range, as is expected from my researches and the church accounts, but fall within the range indicating that all seats identified on the seating plan still exist within the church today; date range 1584-1605 with later dates for additional seats installed in the 18th century.

This suggests that the construction, or possible remodelling of an early structure, was nearing completion in the mid-late 15th century which provides now a slight revision to previous construction dates .

The full Dendro report can be viewed at:

<http://www.hartlandforum.co.uk/Downloads/Dendro%20at%20St%20Nectans.PDF>

The NDAS Winter Programme of Talks 2013-4:

The new season's programme has a distinctive character. You will note that the first two talks have a recent historical twist, the third deals with post-medieval archaeology, while the remaining three talks take us back into prehistory with a particular emphasis on Exmoor.

All talks take place at the Castle Centre, Castle Street, Barnstaple. Talks are free to NDAS members, visitors £2.50.

Tues.15th October 2013, 7.30: Richard Bass - *The Americans in North Devon, 1943-4: History and archaeology of D-Day preparations on the North Devon coast.*

Tuesday 19th November 2013, 7.30: Alison Mills – *Shapland and Petter: A North Devon Icon and a Landmark Building.*

December: – *Annual dinner, date, venue etc to be announced*

Tuesday 21st January 2014, 7.30: Chris Preece – *The NDAS Excavation and Survey at Little Potheridge, Merton: Results and Plans in the Search for an 18th Century Pipe Kiln.*

Tuesday 18th February 2014, 7.30: Henrietta Quinnell - *Trevisker Pottery and the Distinctive Bronze Age of Devon and Cornwall.*

Tuesday 18th March 2014, 7.00 pm: North Devon Archaeological Society AGM, to be followed at 7.30 by a talk from Rob Wilson-North – *An Exmoor Update: New Findings and New Projects*

Tuesday 15th April 2014, 7.30: Lee Bray - *The Exmoor Mires Project and the Historic Environment: Recent Work*

General Notes:

1. A further event for your calendar is a talk to be given in the Henry Williamson Room, Barnstaple Library at 2.00pm, Saturday 19th October. The talk, by Sadie Green, is entitled: *North Devon Pottery in the USA: A Transatlantic Journey*. Tickets: £3 to include refreshments Contact 01271 388724 for ticket availability.
2. Oxford University Institute of Archaeology is proposing a national hillfort survey. This is a 'Citizen Science' project based on local volunteers. For full information go to www.arch.ox.ac.uk/hillforts-atlas.html
This is something that we could well take up. If you think you may be interested in participating, speak to John Bradbeer on 01237 422358.
3. The Society is in need of a new 'webmaster' as Andy Woodcock, who has taken care of the NDAS website for several years now, has moved away. If you are able to help or you have a friend or relative who might take this on, please let us know. Phone John Bradbeer on 01237 422358 or email johnbradbeer@btinternet.com.
4. IF YOU HAVEN'T YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2013-4, PLEASE DO SO!
Subscriptions (£16) should be sent to Bob Shrigley, 20 Skern Way, Northam, Bideford EX39 1HZ. If you don't wish to renew, Bob would like to know. You can phone (01237 478122) or email (rvs1120@gmail.com).

Terry Green, Editor.