

# NDAS

NORTH DEVON  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



**ISSUE 10 AUTUMN 2005**

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Council for British Archaeology (York): 01904 671417

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## Subscriptions

By the time the next edition of the newsletter appears another subscription year will have passed. We hope you will not mind being reminded, therefore that membership subscriptions for 2006 - 2007 become due on 1st April.

The subscription is £16 per year per individual, £24 for couples and £5 for students and juveniles. The subscription covers the production of two newsletters a year, insurance, speakers' expenses and the hire of a lecture room, costs incurred in the Society's projects, general running costs and occasional financial support for individuals or groups making a contribution to preserving the heritage of North Devon.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Membership Secretary, Jane Green, 5 Chambercombe Park Terrace, Ilfracombe EX34 9QW from whom standing order mandate forms can also be acquired.

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*Cover picture: Holworthy Farm 2005,  
Fanny Hall helping Brian Fox with the  
recording of a feature in Trench 3.*

*The printing of this Edition of the NDAS newsletter is  
supported by Southwest Archaeology*

## Editorial

### How well are we doing?

Let us consider the stated objectives of the Society. These were quoted at you in the last editorial (Spring 2005), so please excuse the repetition. Our aims are:

*To promote awareness and interest in archaeology and history with particular reference to northern Devon.*

*To encourage field survey, recording and research.*

*To promote the preservation and interpretation of ancient monuments and antiquities in the region.*

*Where appropriate and necessary, to excavate to professional standards and to publish the results of research.*

How far are we achieving these objectives?

In early October we had another Local History Day. In terms of objective number one, this event was a success, but could be made even more successful in future by strong promotion through the media. Our programme of winter talks is also open to the public at large, and we get a number of visitors on most occasions, so there too we are fulfilling our aim. Although there are bodies such as the National Park, the National Trust and the recently formed AONB organisation whose job it is to inform the public about the sites of which they have charge, there is probably more that we could do to ensure that people are informed about the historic sites in their neighbourhood. On the other hand, when we have an energetic soul such as Trevor Dunkerley setting up a website to publicise the archaeology and history of North Devon, it is clear that there are new and innovative ways of promoting awareness.

"Field survey, recording and research" is well represented by the fishweir survey which is now complete and, in the hands of Chris Preece, is

approaching publication. Survey is the mainstay of many an archaeological society, for the very good reason that it represents non-intrusive data gathering on which further work can be based. It takes many forms: recording of standing buildings, the recording of field-boundaries, field-walking, map work, documentary research, and, if you have the equipment (as we do), geophysical survey of known or suspected sites. Survey is, above all, something in which all members can participate. It is essential groundwork which may represent an end in itself or the basis of further, more specialised investigation. How good are we at it? Well, the fishweir survey represents successful completion, while the conduct of geophysical survey is on the rising side of the learning curve; there is still work to do on the field-boundary survey at Parracombe and the survey of standing buildings has hardly got off the ground.

As for promoting the preservation and interpretation of ancient monuments and antiquities in the region, we have made representations to NDDC on heritage aspects of the Local Plan and have had some success in getting it adjusted. Interpretation takes us back to "promoting awareness", and there is more we could do to see that local people and visitors are provided with information.

Finally there is excavation which comes at the end of the list. The vast majority of the general public would probably put it first, since the idea of archaeologists as primarily diggers is fostered in literature and the media. Most professional archaeologists will tell you however, that excavation, being basically destructive, is a last resort. In the case of Holworthy Farm, excavation has come about as part of the "Parracombe Project", but primarily because hillslope enclosures have been crying out for investigation, there being no other way of getting to grips with their function and chronology, and we were in a

position to take it on. We have worked to professional standards with thorough preparation, clearly stated objectives, financial arrangements in place, full recording, commissioning of specialist reports and a plan for publication. We are committed to this standard wherever we have occasion to excavate.

In considering our successes and our shortcomings, it is important to remember that we are a voluntary organisation and that we do what we can. Nevertheless, we have already set a standard which we hope to maintain. The various contributors to this edition of the newsletter have each in their own way fulfilled one or more of the Society's objectives. They are the strength of the Society, and as our membership steadily increases, we would hope and expect to achieve more and to consolidate our position in this part of Devon.

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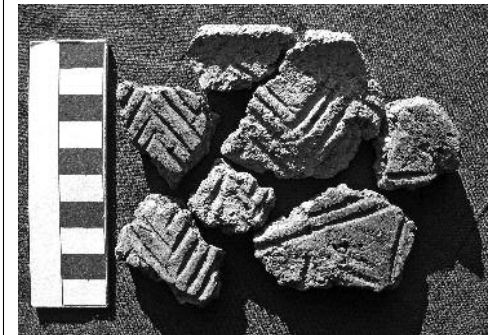
Email: derrybryant@hotmail.com

## Holworthy Farm Excavation, July - August 2005 Terry Green

Following the very successful NDAS Holworthy Farm excavation of 2004 – reported in previous newsletters - it was decided early in the year that in 2005 we should follow up by locating the remainder of the apparent roundhouse, exploring some of the interior of the enclosure and examining features highlighted by Ross Dean's geophysical survey.

Permission and approval were obtained, as before, from Phil and Julie Rawle, Rob Wilson-North; and DEFRA/ESA, while Fred and Sue Rawle once again allowed us to access the site across their land. The excavation was again supervised by Dr Martin Gillard who brought three students from Exeter to supplement the volunteers from NDAS and from TAG. We also had a volunteer from Gloucester who had seen the dig advertised in the Current Archaeology handbook.

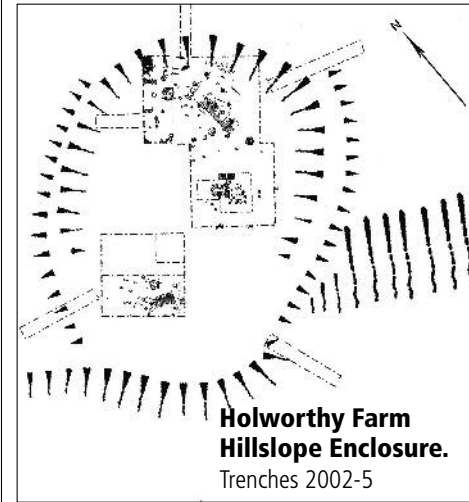
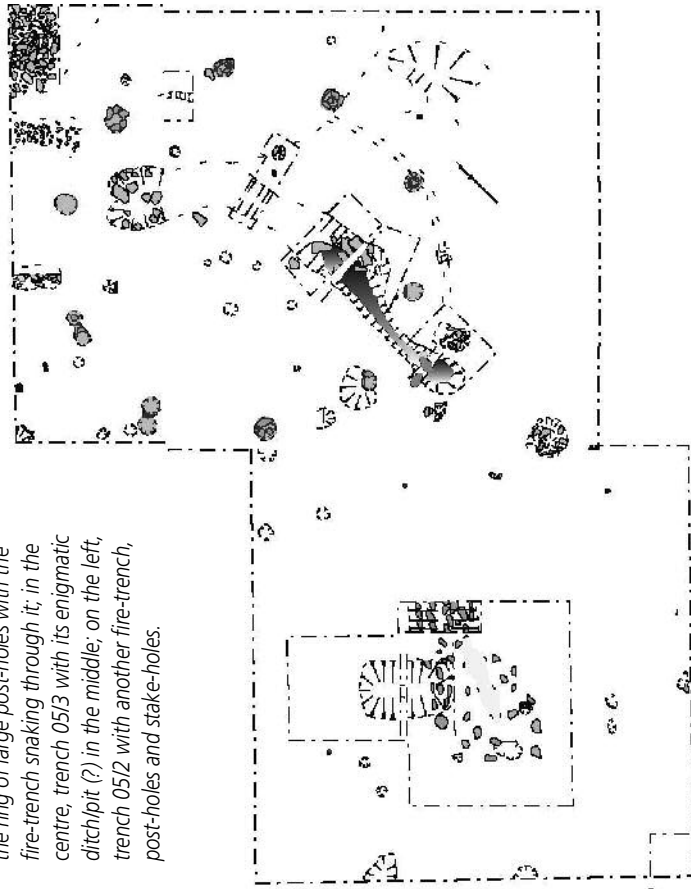
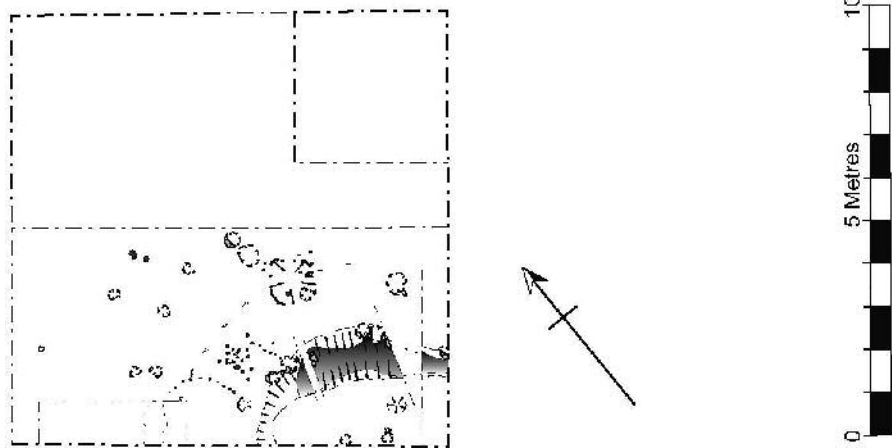
Derry Bryant took charge of funding, and was able to raise a total of £2,000 from The Royal Archaeological Institute, the Council for British Archaeology and North Devon District Council. We are grateful to these bodies for their support and must also thank RMB Chivenor once again for the loan of tents. Special mention must be made of Jim Knights who was a logistical Mary Poppins, always seemingly able to come up with just what was needed!



Sherds of pottery with chevron decoration from the "fire-trench" in Trench 2.

**Holworthy Farm Hillslope Enclosure.**  
Features exposed in the main trenches 2004-5

Combined drawing of the major trenches 2004-5: on the right, trenches 0412 and 0511 combined showing the ring of large post-holes with the fire-trench snaking through it; in the centre, trench 0513 with its enigmatic ditch/pit (?) in the middle; on the left, trench 0512 with another fire-trench, post-holes and stake-holes.



**Holworthy Farm Hillslope Enclosure.**  
Trenches 2002-5  
*All trenches from 2002-5 superimposed on the original RCHM earthwork survey of the enclosure. The ring of post-holes – the roundhouse - is on the north of the enclosure.*

The excavation was set for the two weeks from 4th to 17th July 2005. There was to be an open day on the final Sunday, 17th July. A barbecue was arranged for volunteers on the middle Saturday at Walner Farm., and we are once again grateful for the hospitality of Phil and Jean Griffiths.

**The Excavation:**

The site was prepared during the last week of June, when three trenches were pegged out. Trench 1 was laid out 10.0m x 4.0m immediately to the NW of Trench 2 of 2004. Trench 2 was laid out 10.0m x 10.0m in the SW quadrant of the enclosure. Trench 3 was laid out 10.0m x 10.0m on the S side of the enclosure adjacent to Trench 2 of 2004. Ross Dean surveyed the trenches into the overall site plan.

When the excavation began on July 4th the team was initially divided between Trenches 1 and 3, work on Trench 2 not beginning until the ploughsoil had been hand-stripped from Trench 3 and it was ready for first recording. Removal of the ploughsoil in Trench 2 proved more arduous than had been expected and so at the end of the first week it was decided to reduce the area of this trench by 50%.

This proved to be a good decision, but inevitably at the end of the fortnight there was still work to do and digging continued intermittently with a reduced team of NDAS members until 17th August. The site was finally closed down on Friday 26th August.

**Initial Results:**

**Trench 1:**

The major post-holes located in 2004 were regularly enough spaced to allow us to calculate that there should be another three and to suggest their positions. Gratifyingly, the theory was borne out by excavation, three major post-holes emerging where predicted. We now have the full circumference of a structure which we are interpreting as a roundhouse with a diameter of about 9 metres. In the N corner of the trench a pile of large stones was uncovered, which appear to represent a slump of the surrounding stone bank. About a metre to the SW of this was a band of small flat stones which we have interpreted as a path. Within the "roundhouse" the termination of the 2004 fire-trench or gully was identified. Three of the major post-holes appear to have been recut, one of the earlier cuts containing large amounts of charcoal with a central "pipe" which may represent the charred remains of a post. All of the major post-holes, which were cut into a more or less level surface of red/orange subsoil, were stone-lined and apparently blocked after the removal of the post.

**Trench 2:**

The stated purpose of Trench 2 was to locate and examine the context of a large geophysical anomaly identified in Ross Dean's magnetometry survey of 2003. The initial plan to excavate 100m<sup>2</sup> was trimmed back largely because of the unexpected depth of the ploughsoil in this part of the site. By reducing the area by 50% efforts were concentrated on the SW half of the area. In the deep, relatively humus-rich overburden of ploughsoil, two sherds of Iron Age pottery were found, though there was no further evidence of similar date. When the red/orange subsoil was finally reached, there was an arc of dark material in the S corner of the trench. This turned out to represent a shallow, curving gully filled with

charcoal and charcoal impregnated soil very similar to the fire-trench or gully that we had seen in Trench 2 of 2004. Excavation of part of the fill revealed a deposit of pottery (some 80 sherds from 7x5cm down to 5x5mm), clearly of a similar fabric to the pottery vessel found in 2003, but with good incised chevron decoration (Plate 1). In the side of the gully were five large post-holes, two of which appeared to be re-cuts. It appears that the cutting of the gully may have truncated previously existing post-holes. Within the arc of the curving gully the subsoil rose to the beginnings of a platform. Beyond the gully to the north were further post-holes on a similar curved alignment, and on a further parallel arc was a shallow groove similar to a groove feature seen in Trench 2 of 2004. To the NW of the gully was an arc of stake-holes. A number of the post-holes were D-shaped or roughly triangular suggesting the use of split logs. At the point where Ross Dean had confirmed the location of his geomagnetic anomaly was a post-hole surrounded by stake-holes. The density of features in this trench was all towards the S corner and there is clearly more to be discovered in this direction.

### Trench 3:

This trench, the purpose of which was to see what might be happening in the centre of the enclosure, turned out to be relatively devoid of features, but presented some puzzles. There were a number of holes which might have been post-holes, but nothing that showed any discernible pattern. The centre of the area was characterised by an irregular jumble of stone, rather like we had seen in Trench 4 of 2004. Here a band of pale grey material presented a mystery. This light, gritty material, sometimes with flecks of charcoal in it, may have been an artifact, but it so far defies identification. The same material was also seen concentrated in other parts of the trench as well as in Trench 2. In order to try to understand this confusing area, a section was dug across it revealing a soft, gingery soil which, when excavated appeared to be the fill of a ditch. However, the fill showed none of the normal characteristics of a ditch-fill, and when the feature was pursued, it terminated quickly. This may be a geological feature.



*Ann Todd working on part of the stone enclosure bank exposed in Trench 1.*

Around 50 large and small soil samples were taken, most of them containing organic matter which we hope will provide additional dating and/or environmental evidence. To date the examination of the "flot" resulting from flotation has identified a substantial number of cereal grains together with fragments of chaff which suggests processing on site and probably the growing of grain nearby. Identification of other organic remains awaits specialist attention. There is a lot more work to be done on the samples. Anyone wishing to volunteer their assistance, please phone David Parker on 01271 865311.

**We may conclude at this point that we have identified this hillslope enclosure as a Middle Bronze Age settlement surrounded by a substantial stone bank within which there was at least one major building. Cereal crops were grown nearby. The settlement was abandoned around 1000 BC. The features of Trench 2 offer a tantalising glimpse of activity and it is tempting to pursue the evidence in the direction of the enclosing bank, in the shelter of which most activity on the site appears to be concentrated. For the present however, it is necessary to consolidate what has been achieved.**

## The NDAS Local History Day, 8th October

On Saturday 8th October, NDAS held its second Local History Day. It had been suggested that, since the aim was to draw in local history researchers from across the region, the venue should be moved around. So this year, it was held at the RHS Rosemoor Gardens near Torrington. Thirteen groups took part, putting on well constructed displays of their work. Represented were:

*ACE Archaeology (Winkleigh), Chulmleigh Old Fair Archive, Combe Martin Silver Mines Research Group, Filleigh Historical Society, NDAS, North Devon Museums, Parracombe Historical Society, Rolle Canal & North Devon Waterways Society, South Molton & District Archive and Historical Society, Great Torrington Museum, Tawstock History Society, Torrington Historical Society, Weare Giffard Historical Society*

The day was well attended both by NDAS members who had bought tickets in advance and by members of the public, a number of whom had come to visit the gardens, but found themselves drawn in. As on the previous Local History Day at South Molton in October 2004, the programme included three talks. These were held in the log cabin. The speakers were Sean Hawken of the Community Landscapes Project, Peter Christie, the well known local historian and Tony Barnes of the Rolle Canal and North Devon Waterways Society. Sean spoke about the achievements of CLP in involving local people in researching their own parts of Devon, including areas as diverse as the Blackdown Hills and the Hartland Peninsula. He spoke about his hopes for the future of the project and the need for support from local people. Peter Christie spoke very entertainingly about the folklore of North Devon drawing his material from 19th century editions of the North Devon Journal. Tony Barnes outlined the work of the Rolle Canal group in preserving and restoring the remains of Lord Rolle's early 19th Century enterprise to



*Gordon Fisher of Ace Archaeology Club talking to visitors at the NDAS Local History Day.*

extend the commercial navigation on the Torridge upstream as far as Great Torrington. Unfortunately the venue for the talks was quite small, so the number of tickets was limited, which left a number of people disappointed. This is something to be addressed on any future occasion.

The aim of these days has been to provide local historians with a forum in which to catch up on each other's work and to exchange ideas and information. Certainly there was a buzz of conversation throughout the day, so hopefully this is what was happening. The other aim this year was to provide local historians with a window in which to display their work to the public at large. It has to be admitted that attendance by the general public was limited, and it was suggested that on another occasion, more should be done to publicise the event. Finally, the ultimate aim should be to spread the organisational load by involving members of local history groups in the organisation. If the event will bear annual repetition, then any future committee should be set up on this basis.

The Society owes its thanks to Derry Bryant, Harry Cramp and Ann Mandry for organising this successful event.

## The Skills Database

Jenny Yendall

At last year's NDAS Local History Day, I proposed the formation of a local history skills database. This would be a list of people in the area of northern Devon who have knowledge or skills in the field of local historical and archaeological research and who would be willing to share their expertise for the benefit of others. In the autumn 2004 NDAS newsletter there was a volunteer form and a number of people responded, sending me their details.

Now things have moved on. I have got together with Sean Hawken at the University of Exeter, where he fosters community archaeology,

to add into the CLP (Community Landscapes Project) website links and contacts based on the information that was sent to me. The website address is [www.projects.ex.ac.uk/devonclp/](http://www.projects.ex.ac.uk/devonclp/). As a result of our combined efforts, the CLP website now hosts information relating to Devon's archaeology societies, groups and archaeology projects. At present the list/database is short and rather simple. It is hoped however that over time, with more groups and project leaders providing information, this web-based database will become a superb one-stop link for archaeology enthusiasts to find out more about active archaeological groups in the region. The aim is to create a network for archaeology groups in Devon (and eventually Cornwall and Somerset) to get in contact with other groups so each group may support the other with skills, knowledge, labour and equipment. If you have access to the Internet, do try the website address above. You will find NDAS featured there as well as reports of the CLP project based in the Hartland area.

Additionally I can report that in my new job running South Molton Museum, I have been fortunate enough to secure a Heritage Lottery Fund award of £45,000, part of which is to be dedicated to installing computer equipment. Having this equipment will enable the museum to act as a filter station for information that will be sent to Sean at the university. I and my volunteer helpers are happy to meet visitors to the museum who wish to share their knowledge and skills and have their information recorded and put onto the database.

This is a marvellous opportunity for information to be gathered which will benefit so many organisations. South Molton Museum will reopen March 2006 and it is hoped that systems will be in place to take this project forward.

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## A Year with the Resistivity Meter

Jim Knights

In the spring 2004 newsletter, Trevor Dunkerley reported on the first outing of the N.D.A.S. resistivity meter at Malcolm Faulkner's Welcombe Farm (Charles). The article gave a flavour of the learning curve we were just about to start on, but I have to say that after many outings with the meter we are still on the curve. We now have records for 13 sites, and have mastered the mechanics of the survey, but there is still a lot to learn about the computer manipulation of the data and its interpretation. I shall not be allowed to forget the tucking mill leat suggested as adjacent to Rack field at Combe Martin, which turned out to be a leaking 5 ins. copper pipe!

The equipment we have is excellent, but the software originally did not meet the standard of more expensive equipment. The latest version of free software shows some promise and is much

more user-friendly, but it is only a Beta version and may have bugs. Surveyed grids are relatively easy to down-load, and stitch together. The filtering of the data is perhaps where the skill comes in - or is it trial and error?

We have had some promising results, but until the surveyed sites are dug, we can't be sure what they represent in the ground. At Higher Holworthy Farm we managed to identify precisely the corner of a lost building which is shown on the tithe map, and to prove it with a test pit. A privy in my garden, and land drains in an adjacent field were also positively tested. At High Bray we located some areas of high resistance, and we later dug test pits to discover the stones producing the high readings. We suspect they were part of a rabbit warren but we would have to dig much bigger trenches to be absolutely sure.

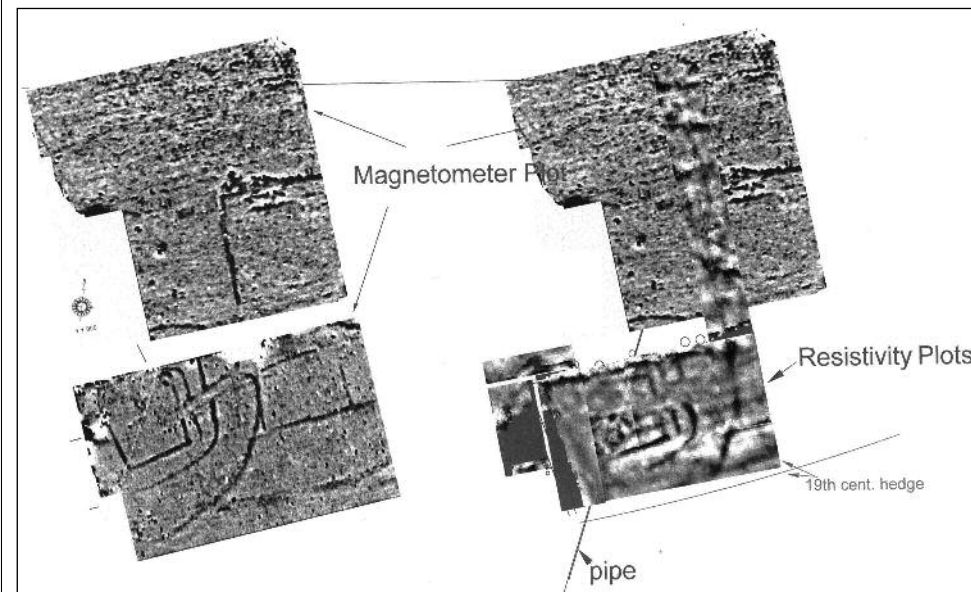


Fig. 1: Welcombe Farm: Comparison of the Oxford Archaeotechnics magnetometry plot (left) with the resistivity plot (right). (Reproduced with the permission of Oxford Archaeotechnics)

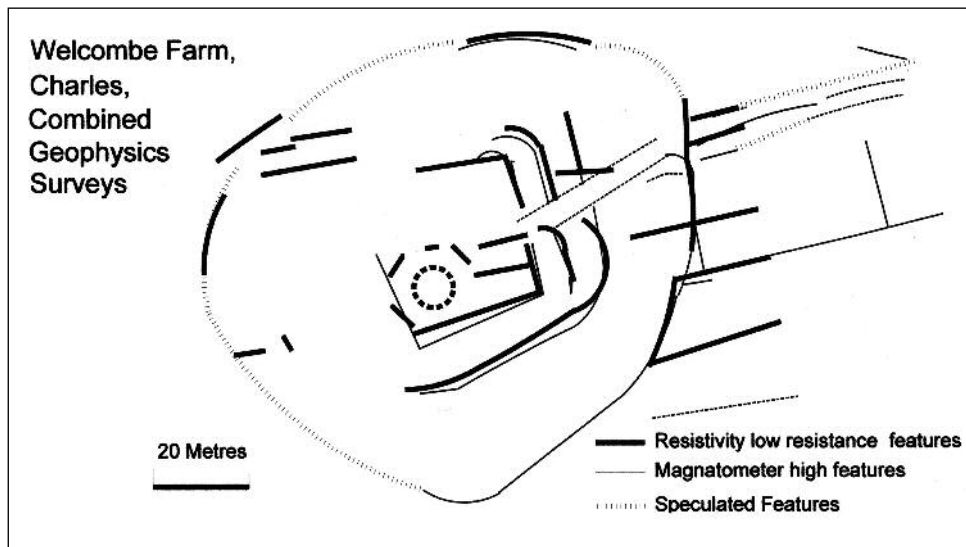


Fig. 2: Welcombe Farm: Transcript of the magnetometry and resistivity plots.

At the Holworthy dig this year, we did identify the stone bank in the north corner of trench 1, but the postholes did not show in our survey, even though they turned out to be more or less precisely where the draughtsman had speculated.

Ten members have kindly worked with me during the last eighteen months (at Holworthy, Holwell Castle, Whitechapel Manor, Mine Tenement as well as Welcombe Farm) and are confident of setting up grids and logging resistivity readings. It is a time-consuming task, and once you start, it is wasteful not to complete

an area. So together we have suffered rain, wind and sunburn this year: our sites always seem to be exposed to all the elements.

The most promising unproved results have come from where we started, at Welcombe Farm. Here we have the bonus of working with existing professionally obtained magnetometer results and it has been interesting to combine the two technologies.

In Figure 1 the left hand pair of images shows the magnetometer results obtained by Oxford Archaeotechnics (survey commissioned by Hanson



Plate 1: Members of NDAS conducting a resistivity survey of the motte of Holwell Castle, Parracombe. (Photo: Martin Blunt)

Aggregates plc), who concluded in their report that the site included "a probable defended settlement site comprising a square enclosure some 30m. in width approached by a ditched trackway and defended by at least three concentric outer ditches. Their relationship suggests a composite ground plan possibly of a single phase of occupation. Insufficient detail was recovered from the interior to indicate the geometry of any internal structures".

The right-hand pair of images in Figure 1 shows, to the south, the results of our resistivity survey, and to the north our survey superimposed on the northern section of the previous magnetometer survey. The presence of 20th century metalwork placed constraints on the original magnetometer survey, but did not affect our resistivity survey, so we were able to extend the southern part of the survey area. Therefore our result shows more of the northern ditch of the "square enclosure". It also shows more features within the enclosure and some additional areas to the north and west, these areas being outside the brief of Oxford Archaeotechnics. Both surveys show a light line cutting diagonally across the site

which is recognised to represent a 20th century pipe.

The features from both surveys have been digitally traced and placed on top of each other in Figure 2 (Combined Geophysics Surveys). Many of the features correspond remarkably well, considering that our survey made no allowance for the sloping land, whereas the Oxford Archaeotechnics survey was laid out using G.P.S.. The features within the enclosure are intriguing but we can only speculate on what they represent. It appears that there may be at least one roundhouse within a rectilinear inner enclosure accessed by way of an incurved entrance. This looks Iron Age in style, though in this area it could well be of the Romano-British period. There is at present no evidence for the date of this site, or even if it represents a single period.

We do intend to return in the New Year, when additional land will be released for survey. Eventually this site will have to be dug, since most of it is due to disappear in quarrying. Until then, we can try to squeeze more information from it, but only speculate on what it means.

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## A New Survey Technique?



Brian Hummerston surveying the Holworthy Farm site with ground-penetrating radar. (Photo: Terry Green)

During the last year we have been contacted by Brian Hummerston, who lives at Woolacombe, to ask whether we have any use for ground-penetrating radar as a survey technique. It came as a surprise, because this is not something that is

usually available to amateur groups. Basically the technique involves shooting a radio pulse into the ground which then bounces off solids and produces a trace in the same way as radar "sees" aircraft. It is usually used for detecting

underground hollows and cavities such as cellars, mine shafts, etc., but can also be used to detect the interfaces between solids or between disturbed and undisturbed ground and can also detect buried metal objects. The equipment can ordinarily penetrate up to 18 metres into the ground and in the right conditions can detect caves or cavities at up to 40 metres depth. It will provide a "real time" read-out on a laptop, so the user can walk around and "see" beneath the ground; and in addition there is a magnetometer facility which gives an audio-signal when an anomaly is detected.

On the weekend of November 12th and 13th there was a chance to see what could be done with the technology, when Brian accepted an invitation to bring his equipment to the Church of St Peter ad Vincula in Combe Martin. There was a theory that the chantry chapel in the north-east corner of the church might conceal a crypt beneath its floor. The equipment which Brian brought was surprisingly compact, since when ground-penetrating radar first came on the scene it involved a machine like a small road-roller. Obviously miniaturising technology has been at work. Brian and his partner Lis set up their laptop on the grand piano, and proceeded to scan the floor of the chapel with something like the wand that they use at airports to detect concealed weapons on your person.

The results were available remarkably quickly. Within ten minutes of completing the scan, Brian was able to show on the computer screen that there did in fact appear to be a void beneath the floor. It did not, however, look like a crypt, but more like a pit. Whether there will ever be any chance to check this result against physical evidence is highly debatable!

Impressed with what we had seen, we invited Brian to come to the Holworthy Farm site and see what the equipment could tell us there about the

unexcavated parts of the enclosure. We met there on the morning of 15th November in an icy north wind for a brief demonstration and again on the 16th in beautiful November sunshine for a more thorough survey side by side with a more familiar resistivity survey carried out by Jim Knights. At the moment of writing, the results are still being processed, but when we compared the results of the two surveys on site it did appear as if Brian might have detected a pit just inside the south-western edge of the enclosure and just beyond the limit of the 2005 excavation.

Brian is still at an early stage in learning to use the equipment and to interpret the results, but we shall keep in touch because this looks like a useful extra technique to have available.

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## Six Acre Farm, Caffyns

Mary Houldsworth, Roger Ferrar and Terry Green

Six Acre farm, at Caffyns near Lynton, came to the notice of historians in 1913, when the Rev. Chanter discovered a stone inscribed in Latin dating from the 6th century AD. At that time, the stone was serving as a gatepost near the farm entrance. It bears the inscription CAVUDI FILIUS CIVILIS: "(the grave of) Cavudus, son of Civilis". It belongs among a class of post-Roman inscribed memorial stones found throughout the Southwest. Other (relatively) local examples are at Winsford and on Lundy. The stone now stands in the garden of Six Acre Farm, and permission to view it has to be obtained from the owners, Liz and John Rodwell.

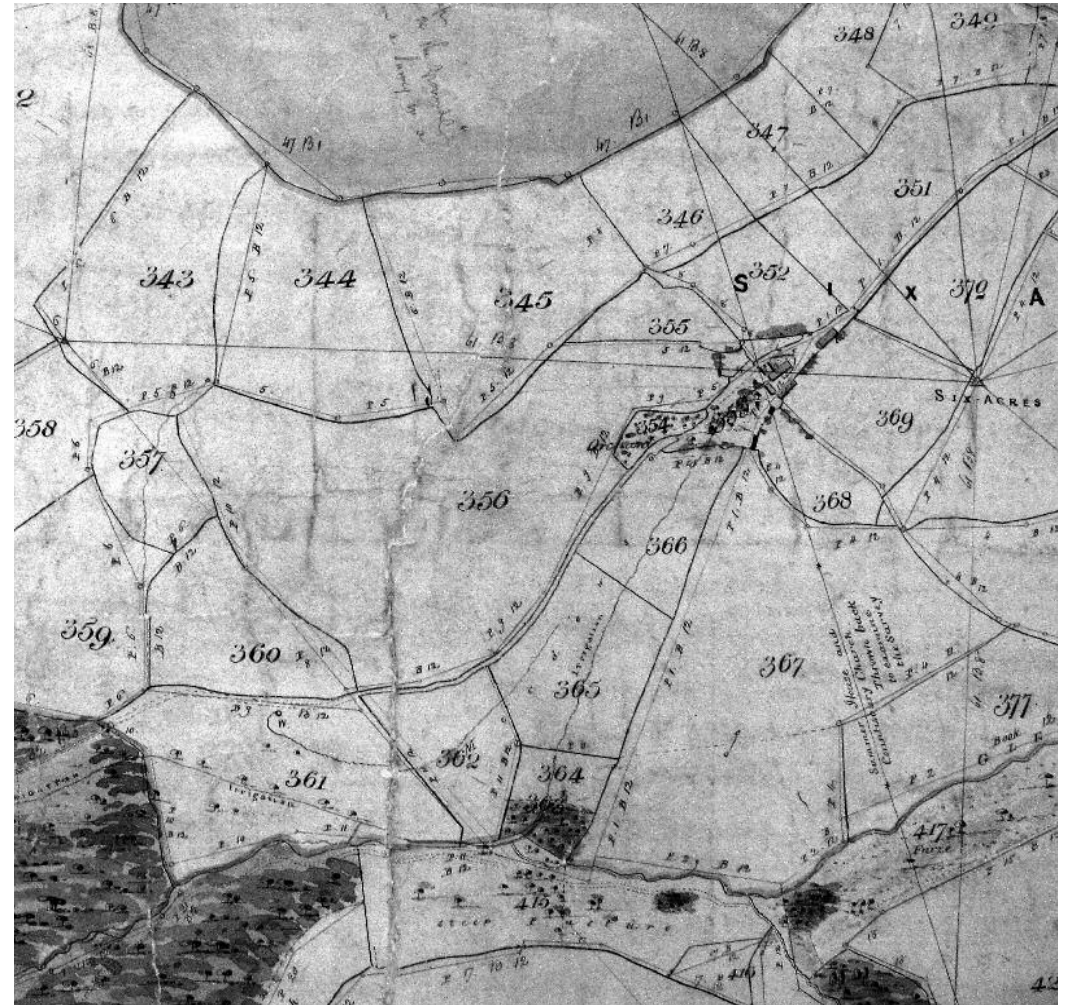
Discussion with the previous farm owner, has revealed that around 35 years ago, her husband uncovered what appeared to be a shallow, seashell lined grave when ploughing a field. It is known that occasionally the Romans lined their graves with seashells, so this information raised the remote possibility that the site might be Roman in origin.

The present owners, are very interested in the farm's history, and organised a farm walk for a few NDAS members on 6th June this year. Nothing was visible at the sea shell site, but it lay next to an obvious cornditch (a medieval arrangement for controlling the movement of stock). The cornditch is about 350 metres in length and encloses an ovoid area, which the map reveals to be a primary enclosure with five other field boundaries radiating from it. The cornditch has recently been renovated, interestingly turning up seashells, and pieces of medieval pottery. Inside the enclosure is a platform from the edge of which David Parker removed a little turf and had a scrape with his trowel revealing a large horizontal stone, which could possibly be part of the wall of a building. The possibility of a geophysical survey was discussed which Liz and John enthusiastically welcomed.

Research in the Record Offices has turned up a lot of interesting detail regarding Six Acre and Caffyns. Both of these farms descend from the Domesday manor of Hantona ('at the high farm'), later known as Caffyns Heanton (the family of Caffyn or Coffin is prominent in the history of North Devon.) Very interestingly, the ovoid enclosure discussed above, number 357 on the 1839 Lynton tithe map (Plate 1), is named in the Lynton tithe award "Henton or North Meadow". This strongly reinforces the idea that there may be an abandoned medieval settlement here and that it may actually be the Domesday "Hantona", the name of which has since migrated.

Unusually there is medieval documentation referring to this manor. In the reign of King John, the Manor of Lynton and Countisbury, of which Heanton was a part, was granted to Ford Abbey in Dorset. In 1282, Richard le Pronote of Ford Abbey, unjustly dispossessed the farmer William Coffin of his "commons of pasture in Lynton which pertains to his free tenement in Heanton, namely 500 acres of hill and heathland for every kind of his livestock throughout the year." When the case was brought to court, the jurors found in favour of William who recovered the rights and received compensation. (*Cartulary of Ford Abbey*, page 432, Somerset Record Society)

This site is interesting in a number of ways. The inscribed stone quite clearly indicates habitation somewhere nearby in the 6th century, the ovoid enclosure is a primary element in the historic landscape and there is a medieval documentary link to a settlement that may have stood within it. Interestingly the name of the neighbouring farm to the west, Croscombe, also part of the manor of Lynton, conceals the name of a Briton, "Caradoc" who could well have been a descendant of Cavudus. There is much to engage our attention here.



Extract from the Lynton tithe map of 1839. (Courtesy of Devon Record Office)

The buildings of Six Acre Farm are to the right; field number 357 to the left is a clear ovoid with boundaries radiating from it, a good indication that it is a primary element of the historic landscape.

## Post-medieval Earthenware Relief Tiles of North Devon

Cynthia Cramp

*William and Wendy Underwood, NDAS members living at Vielstone near Buckland Brewer have spent many years renovating a fire damaged Devon farmhouse. In the course of the work they discovered a bricked-up bread oven and among the rubble stuffed into it, they found three glazed tiles with Tudor rose and fleur-de-lis designs. Cynthia Cramp, who has made a study of such North Devon tiles, and is about to publish her findings in the DAS Proceedings, has written the following for the Newsletter.*

A series of North Devon relief tiles was published in 1969, listing 64 designs and naming the churches where they were found. (Keen, L. 1969 'A series of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century lead-glazed relief tiles from North Devon', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 32, 144-70).

In the autumn of 1993 a few pieces of relief tile were retrieved during an investigation of a kiln waster site on Castle Hill in Great Torrington. One large fragment was soon identified by Dr Alison Grant as matching examples of relief tiles in a nearby church. This was significant as it provided evidence that the local 17th-century relief tiles, known to have been made in Bideford and Barnstaple, were also made in Torrington.

Soon after this Alison accompanied me on a visit to some of the more distant churches in the area, and on finding some of the relief tiles present in a church which did not appear in the previous series, Alison remarked 'we really should be recording these, you know'. After this my interest in the tiles, already kindled, intensified and I did start recording, visiting many churches and building up a collection of rubbings, tracings and photographs of the



*Two of the tiles found in a bricked-up bread oven at Vielstone, Buckland Brewer. Photos: Cynthia Cramp.*

designs found in them, also researching contemporary church and local records for further information.

These relief tiles are unique to North Devon, their manufacture following that of the medieval inlaid designs. Often overlooked in churches today, sometimes few in number and difficult to locate, their distribution reaches beyond the north of Devon to places as geographically diverse as West Anstey and Lustleigh, as well as to many churches in the less developed west of the county. It is apparent that tiles were formerly present in many more churches than those where tiles remain today. Tiles were sometimes used to cover or surround graves within the church where the initial use of 16th-century inlaid tiles would have given way to the later relief designs. Some of the tiles were reset during 19th-century restoration, many others were discarded. In at least two instances a number were found beneath the church floor. Frequently worn and damaged, some however retain their glaze and the designs are individual, often variants on known designs.

The subject is fascinating and continuing interest is provided by the occasional finds of tiles, broken or complete, rescued from gardens or from among rubble left after interior alterations to buildings which date from the 17th-century, as, for example, at Vielstone, Buckland Brewer.

## More Slag!

Trevor Dunkerley



*Plate 1: Sample of copper slag from Bampfyld.*

*Plate 2: Charcoal lodged in a piece of copper slag from Bampfyld.*

*(Photos: Trevor Dunkerley)*



For me, probably the most exciting archaeological news to come out of North Devon in recent years is the discovery of copper smelting slag at Bampfyld, just north of Heasley Mill in the parish of North Molton. Bampfyld was the largest British copper mine in the 19th century, but there is no definitive documentary history of copper being smelted at this site or in the district around.

Roger Burton, who has been investigating the area, provided me with a sample of the slag and a subsequent river and field walk led to the discovery of further samples both from the river and dry land (see plate 1). *In situ* charcoal was required to try to date the material and by a stroke of complete luck, Norman Govier of North Molton Historical Group, during a later river walk, found a piece of slag which contained charcoal.

The piece of charcoal (see plate 2) embedded

## The Exmoor Iron Project

The Exmoor Iron Project, known as ExFe and led by Dr Gill Juleff of Exeter University, is drawing to a close, after having examined Romano-British and Medieval iron working sites at Brayford, Sherracombe Ford, Blacklake Wood and now this

year at Shircombe Slade. This year no NDAS members were involved, but nevertheless a small group of us paid a visit to the site on the Open Day, 4th September.

The site is about a kilometre up the Barle

Valley from Marsh Bridge to the north of Dulverton. Some years ago Gill Juleff showed the site to a group of NDAS members when we still had a programme of summer visits. We were shown low mounds under the trees beside the

within the slag was enough for the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Group to carry out an AMS C14 dating. The cost of the dating was partially paid for by North Molton Historical Group, The Exmoor Mines Research Society, and North Devon Archaeological Society. The balance of the cost was provided by Dr. Peter Claughton.

The Radiocarbon Age BP (Before Present, ie. conventionally before 1950) was determined as, on average, 415 +/- 35. This was determined from the following scale of probabilities:

### 68.2% probability

1430AD (63.5%) 1490AD  
1600AD ( 4.7%) 1610AD

### 95.4% probability

1420AD (80.1%) 1530AD  
1570AD (15.3%) 1630AD

The more probable 15th/16th century date makes this an important site for the history of smelting in England!

Copper slag looks very similar to iron slag to the naked eye. We wonder if this means that sites where iron slag has been discovered in North Devon now have to be revisited in the light of this important discovery?

Early in 2006 a river/field walk is to be organised along the length of the River Mole and Long Wood by those organisations who contributed towards the cost of the radiocarbon dating. It is hoped this exercise may provide information regarding the geographical location of the smelting site.

*Trevor Dunkerley has set up a "blog" on the internet in which he posts archaeological news from North Devon. To view this online magazine, go to <http://Ndology.blogspot.com>. You can make your own contributions to the site by emailing Trevor at [trevordunkerley@waitrose.com](mailto:trevordunkerley@waitrose.com)*



Excavating one of the structures at Shercombe Slade.

(Photo: Terry Green)

## A Walk Round Baggy Point

river and fragments of iron slag. At a point where there was a fairly wide flood plain, there were slight earthworks, suggesting buildings. This is where the ExFe team has excavated this year.

Before excavation three heaps of slag were clearly visible as well as the earthworks suggesting buildings. At least two buildings were initially identified. The excavation revealed earth-bonded rubblestone masonry representing three structures. Two of these were three-sided buildings (the open sides facing each other) containing the remains of stone-built furnaces and partly covered with slag heaps. They did not appear to be domestic, but were probably involved in the smelting process; one of these structures produced medieval pottery. The third building was a very roughly rectangular structure that contained little or no industrial or domestic material. However, the floor of this building was much lowered and may have been thoroughly cleaned – thereby removing any archaeological material. Such a pattern has been seen in a domestic context at such sites as the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy in Yorkshire.

Unlike the nearby Blacklake Wood site, which has now been radiocarbon dated to the later Roman period, this site appears therefore to be medieval. On the face of it, the scale of operation was quite small, though there are other sites along the Barle which, taken together, may add up to a moderately extensive industry.

Archaeologically it is very important to understand the geology of the area in which you're working, most particularly in order to distinguish human artefact from natural, geological feature (a problem that we have occasionally encountered at Holworthy Farm). So it was very welcome when Ann Mandry arranged, as the first event of the NDAS autumn/winter programme this year, a geological walk around Baggy Point. The walk took place on Sunday 25th September when NDAS members met up with Dr Paul Madgett, retired professional geologist, to take a walk – or rather an amble – over Croyde beach and around the point. Baggy Point has local archaeological importance for two very different reasons: it provides widespread and plentiful evidence of quite intense use in the Mesolithic (say 7,000 – 5,000 BC) and at the other end of the scale, it has numerous monuments of the period during WW2 when American forces trained here for the D-Day landings. It was good however, on this occasion to get a different, geological perspective.

Paul started us off in the national Trust carpark, explaining a few basics and then leading us onto the beach where we immediately came upon rocks of the Pilton beds and we learnt about dip and strike and cleavage and the role that ancient tectonic movements had played in forming the geology of North Devon. Then we crossed the beach towards Downend where there was evidence of changed sea-levels and the effects of glaciation in accumulations of head material exposed in the low cliff.

From Croyde beach we made our way slowly along the south side of Baggy Point, looking at remnants of raised beach, and learning about the processes by which the local rocks had been formed and the conditions that must have prevailed at the time. At one point we scrambled down to sea-level to examine a cave from which the 19th century inhabitants of the former Baggy

House used to bathe. Emerging from the cave we viewed an erratic – a boulder transported from Scotland by glacial movement - and under a sudden downpour we ploughed on to the end of the point, where the geology reveals itself most spectacularly.

It was a long day made very enjoyable by Paul's enthusiasm and his willingness to answer

informatively the many questions that were put to him. Paul has now joined the Society, adding to our count of geologists, and although he is a busy man (typical retiree!), it would be good to get him to walk us around a few more parts of North Devon – Hartland Quay, for example – in order to provide the geological perspective.



*Paul Madgett (centre with hat and beard) explaining geological processes at Downend, Croyde. (Photo: Hazel Parker)*

## Researching Exmoor's Past

your Chance to help  
Rob Wilson-North

*Do you want to be involved in finding out about Exmoor's past?*

A 2 year project is underway to investigate the settlement of southern Exmoor, and it needs your support. The Settlement of Exmoor is a Victoria County History (VCH) 2 year project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund which, with professional historians at Somerset County Council and Exmoor National Park Authority, is writing the history of 11 parishes in southern Exmoor. We are looking for volunteers to help in the recording and interpreting of settlement and many other aspects of the historic landscape. You are needed to help in the rapid recording of farm buildings in particular, but also to help us complete a series of projects (including map research, excavation, survey and

fieldwork) which will illustrate and explain the history and archaeology of this part of Exmoor.

The volunteer projects will formally begin on 1 March 2006 with training sessions and will continue with research and fieldwork through the summer and autumn of 2006. The projects will culminate in a conference in May 2007 at which the projects will be presented. A publication *The Settlement of Exmoor* will be published by the University of London in 2008.

If you are interested in being involved in the project or would like to talk about it in more detail, please contact Rob Wilson-North at Exmoor National Park Authority: [rwilson-north@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:rwilson-north@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk) ; 01398 322280 ; 0781 294 5152



*Willingford Cottage, a remote Exmoor settlement. Could you help to research its origins?*

## Portable Antiquities at the Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon

Alison Mills

Since Nicki Powell left for a new job with the Museum of London, the Devon Portable Antiquities Scheme has been treading water. Our North Devon voluntary coordinator, David Grenfell, moved away to Dorset at about the same time, so the work of the scheme has slowed a little. However, Ruth Spires, Collections Officer at the Museum, has been continuing the regular first Tuesday of the month drop-ins for finders, ably assisted by Jim Knights – many thanks to Jim for this.

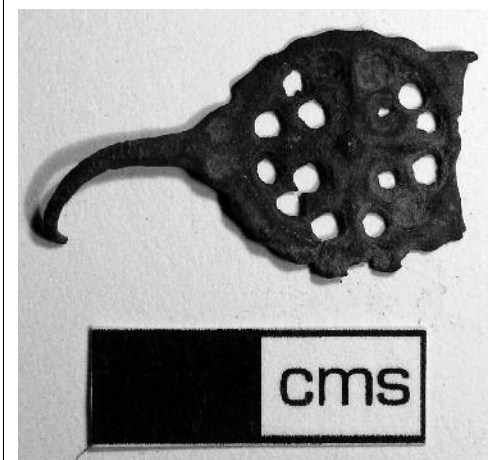
Now, a new FLO (Finds Liaison Officer) has been appointed to take over where Nicki left off. She is Danielle Wootton, who has moved down from Gloucestershire. Danielle is still finding her feet at the moment, but expects to be able to resume normal activity in January.

North Devon finds can now be seen on the schemes website at [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk). This site is a handy place to identify your own items too, with a constantly updated range of metal, ceramic and lithic objects.

Some of the finds reported to Nicki are now making their way through the Treasure reporting scheme. We have had five items declared treasure so far - from Barnstaple, Torrington and South Molton - and local museums have expressed interest in all of them. This means that, once the Valuation Committee at the British Museum has set a value, the museums will have the opportunity to buy the objects for their collections. Items like metal detectorist Rob Bennett's silver whistle, recently featured in the North Devon Journal, should soon be available for all to see.

We hope that more and more people will continue to bring their finds to the sessions at The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon every Tuesday from 10 – 1pm. We are also looking for people to help administer the scheme by volunteering to record items and enter data onto the scheme's website. Anyone interested in

helping should contact Ruth Spires at the Museum on 01271 346747, or drop into the next Finds Day on Tuesday December 6th.



*Objects recently brought in to the Finds Days at the Museum of North Devon.*

## News from the North Devon Record Office

Tim Wormleighton

Two new public access computers have recently been installed in the North Devon Record Office searchroom. In due course, these will be able to offer access to electronic versions of the Record Office catalogues to collections, as well as to a restricted selection of archive related websites, including Access to Archives (A2A) and the National Archives, much as they do in the new Devon Record Office in Exeter.

The North Devon Record Office contributed to the recent Trafalgar celebrations in Devon by sending the original parish register for Ilfracombe, which includes the baptism entry in 1770 for Lieutenant John Richards Lapenotiere (Captain of HMS Pickle), down to the Exeter Record Office. There it was to form part of the display shown to the party retracing Lapenotiere's journey through the South West taking the news of Nelson's victory and death to the Admiralty in London.

Preparations are under way for another Family History Open Day to be held in the Henry Williamson Room, Barnstaple Library in conjunction with the Devon Family History Society early next year to tie in with the new run of the BBC genealogy series 'Who Do You Think You Are?'. Last year's event was a great success and we are hoping for even better this time, when we shall be offering tours of the North Devon Record Office and Local Studies Centre and showing visitors how to access the historical records they need for their research.

This year's national Archive Awareness Campaign is now gathering momentum. The theme this time is 'Beginnings', which offers plenty of scope for imaginative displays and events, with the overall aim of spreading awareness of our documentary heritage and attracting new users. There is also a short-story competition, Victorian Voices, for Key Stage 2 schoolchildren, and we shall be producing resource material and information to support participating schools.

## Learn how to Trace your Ancestors

During the last few years there has been a huge growth in the number of people attempting to trace their ancestors. If you are interested in finding out how to go about this, then Parracombe Historical and Archaeological Society can get you started. An introductory course will be hosted by the society at Parracombe School on Thursdays 24th November, 1st December and 8th December 7.30 till 9.30 pm. There is no charge, but you will need to register your interest, in which case, telephone Teresa on 01598 763359 or Karen on 01598 763296.

## New Book

Steve Hobbs of the Hartland Archive has published a book. It is based on the seating plan of St Nectan's Church in 1613. It provides an overview of the church and the abbey together with a commentary on the people who sat in the church and on the seating.

300 pages

with photos, charts and diagrams

price £12, but to to NDAS members  
£10 + £4 p & p.

Numbers are limited.

Enquiries to Steve Hobbs on

01237 441450,

email: artonarchives@btinternet.com

## Dates for Your Diary

### North Devon Archaeological Society

#### Monday 17th October

*Deltas, Mountains, Deserts and Ice*, Dr. Paul Madgett. Pilton Community College, 7.30pm.

#### Monday 21st November

*The Baron's Wine Cellar*, with Polly Thompson. The investigation of an eighteenth century French plantation site in St. Lucia. Pilton Community College, 7.30pm.

#### Wednesday 7th December

Giovanni's Restaurant, Barnstaple, Annual Dinner. 8.00 pm (Details from Derry Bryant)

#### Monday 16th January

*Unravelling the Story of a Landscape: Recent Research in the Somerset Levels*, Dr Steve Rippon, University of Exeter. Pilton Community College, 7.30pm.

#### Saturday 11th February

*NDAS Training Day*, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm, Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon (See insert in this newsletter).

#### Monday 13th February

*Barnstaple and the Civil War*, Margaret Reed, local historian. Pilton Community College, 7.30pm.

#### Monday 20th March

*Annual General Meeting*. Pilton Community College, 7.00pm.

#### Monday 24th April

*The Fish Weirs of the Taw/Torridge Estuary*, Chris Preece, NDAS. Pilton Community College, 7.30pm.

### In Addition:

#### Tuesday 17th January

*Field visit looking at stone settings on Exmoor* conducted by Rob Wilson-North, ENP Archaeologist. Packed lunch and suitable footwear and clothing (for Exmoor in January!) If the weather is doubtful, phone June Aiken on 01598 763316. This is arranged by the Parracombe Historical and Archaeological Society. Charge of £2.00 to non-members.

### Devon Archaeological Society

*DAS lectures* are held in the Art Gallery, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter at 8.00pm. (contact details on the website: [www.wx.ac.uk/das/courses.htm](http://www.wx.ac.uk/das/courses.htm) or email [dasmal@dasonline.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:dasmal@dasonline.wanadoo.co.uk))

#### Tuesday 6th December

*Skamby and Ships: Digging a Viking Boat Grave*, Dr Howard Williams, University of Exeter.

#### Thursday 19th January

*War in the Bronze Age*, Prof. Anthony Harding, University of Exeter (a joint Prehistoric Society/DAS lecture with wine reception at 7.15.)

#### Thursday 9th February

*Breton Craftsmen in Tudor Devon*, John Allan, Exeter Archaeology.

#### Tuesday 21st March

*The Neolithic Landscape of Stonehenge and Avebury*, Dr Joshua Pollard, University of Bristol.