

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Ottery St Mary, East Devon	National Grid Reference: SX 4568 8611	Number:
Subject: Archaeological evaluation at St Mary's, Ottery St Mary, Devon.		Photo attached: Y
Planning Application no: Faculty	Recipient museum: n/a	
OASIS ID: oakforda1-377511	Museum Accession no: n/a	
Contractor's reference number/code: OA1542	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 02-04/12/2019	
<p>Description of works: An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in December 2019 by Oakford Archaeology for Mrs Sophie Ledgard (benjamin+beauchamp architects ltd) on behalf of the Ottery St Mary PCC at St Mary's, Ottery St Mary, Devon (SX 4568 8611). The work was undertaken in support of an upcoming application for the conversion of the existing ground-floor of the north porch into a kitchen. The site (Fig. 1) is part of the grade I listed church, re-founded in the 14th century by Bishop Grandisson as a collegiate church. The work was therefore required by the Diocese Advisory Committee (DAC), advised by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor (DAA).</p> <p>Results: Three trenches were excavated (Fig. 2, pls. 1-3); Trench 1 was located within the north porch itself adjacent to the doorway leading to the north aisle. Trench 2 was located against the footing of the west wall of the porch and Trench 3 against the footing of the east wall.</p> <p>Due to the presence of the existing tiled floor Trench 1 was triangular in plan, measuring approximately 0.4m long, 0.3m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.2m. It revealed the top of the stone footings (103) of the north wall of the north aisle at a depth of c.0.2m. These were overlain by a 0.15m thick layer of light-yellow mortar and sub-rounded stone rubble (102). This was sealed by 0.025m thick layer of concrete bedding (101) holding the current tiled floor (100).</p> <p>Trench 2 measured c.1.5m long, 0.5m wide and 0.8m deep. It revealed the lower elevation of the porch wall, consisting of irregular projecting blockwork (204) bedded on rubble (203), and set in mid brown sand at a depth of c.0.72m. This was overlain by a deposit of mid yellowy brown silt sand (202) with rare small sub-angular sandstone and sub-rounded pebbles extending to a depth of c.0.52m below ground level. This in turn was overlain by a layer of light yellow-brown silty sand (201) containing rare brick, slate, subangular sandstone. Four fragments of disarticulated human bone were also recovered from this deposit. Finally, this deposit was sealed by a brick surface (200), set within concrete to a depth of c.0.14m.</p> <p>Trench 3 in contrast exposed ashlar masonry (308) to a depth of c.0.63m, set on rubble foundations (307) bonded with mid-brown silt sand. The foundations were cut through a mid-yellow-brown silt sand (306) containing rare sub-angular red sandstone fragments. This was overlain by a light yellow-brown silt sand deposit (305), with fragments of sub-angular sandstone, and truncated to the east by a grave (302). At the western end (305) was in turn partially overlain by a layer of small to medium waterworn cobbles (304) set in a silt sand with pockets of clay to a depth of c.0.28m. Overlying these was a second layer of cobbles (300) set in concrete to a depth of c.0.17 with a c.0.03m thick lens of dark brown silty sand topsoil (301) sealing the remainder of the sequence.</p> <p>Finds: by John Allan</p> <p>A total of seven pottery sherds and nine floor-tile fragments were recovered from the works. The pottery</p>		

consisted of a single ridgetile sherd (15th-16th century), one sherd of Beauvais yellow glazed whiteware drinking jug (1480-1550), and 5 sherds of South Somerset 18th century redware representing 4 vessels incl. one with slip and copper green glaze and one with trailed slip.

In addition, nine floor-tile fragments were also recovered, representing the remains of three different late medieval lead glazed pavements. The floor tiles consisted of two different types of plain red earthenware tiles. Type 1 consisted of three sherds and was a thin plain tile with copper green glaze, large scoops and oblique fine stabbing on the back (14th-early 16th century). The fabric of Type 2 was similar to Type 1, although it had no scoops on the back and had fine vertical stabbings. One sherd had dark green lead glaze, while the single fragment recovered from test pit 1 had evidence for decayed slip on the top (14th-early 16th century). Finally, two fragments of Normandy white ware floor-tile (early 16th century) with a vibrant green glaze were recovered from Test pit 3. One of these had an oblique cut on the underside and had clearly originally been intended as an edge tile.

Conclusion

Although the excavation was somewhat limited in scope, the trenching has nonetheless provided new information on the level of the original floor in- and around the north porch. It is likely that the original ground level at the time of the construction of the north aisle and porch in the early 16th century is represented by the top of deposit (202/306). Although any evidence for earlier flooring inside the porch has been removed by the insertion of the current late 19th or early 20th century tiled floor, this is likely to have been located immediately above the projecting foundations of the north aisle. This would coincide with the external levels and correspond to the assumed height of the late medieval floor inside the north aisle and nave.

Externally the ground has clearly been raised over successive centuries by continued inhumation within the graveyard, phases of alterations and repairs to the external fabric and windows of the church and episodes of reordering and landscaping within the graveyard. The latter is represented by an earlier line of cobbles located against the east elevation of the north porch and perhaps associated with the work undertaken by the architect William Butterfield in the 1840's. These were subsequently buried by an extensive concrete plinth with inset cobbles extending as far as the east end of the church and associated with an extensive layer of landscaping. This level coincides with the tiled floor inside the porch, the latter perhaps representing late 19th or early 20th century renovations and alterations requiring the insertion of a new step immediately in front of the door leading to the north aisle and the nave beyond.

Finally, the identification of additional floor-tile fragments shows that even small-scale observations in areas of high disturbance are useful in furthering knowledge about the history and development of the former medieval pavements inside St Mary's.

Project archive and OASIS entry

Due to the limited nature of the findings a project archive will not be produced. A summary of the investigations has been submitted to the on-line archaeological database OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological InterventionS).

Recorder: M Wootton (Oakford Archaeology)	Date sent to HER:
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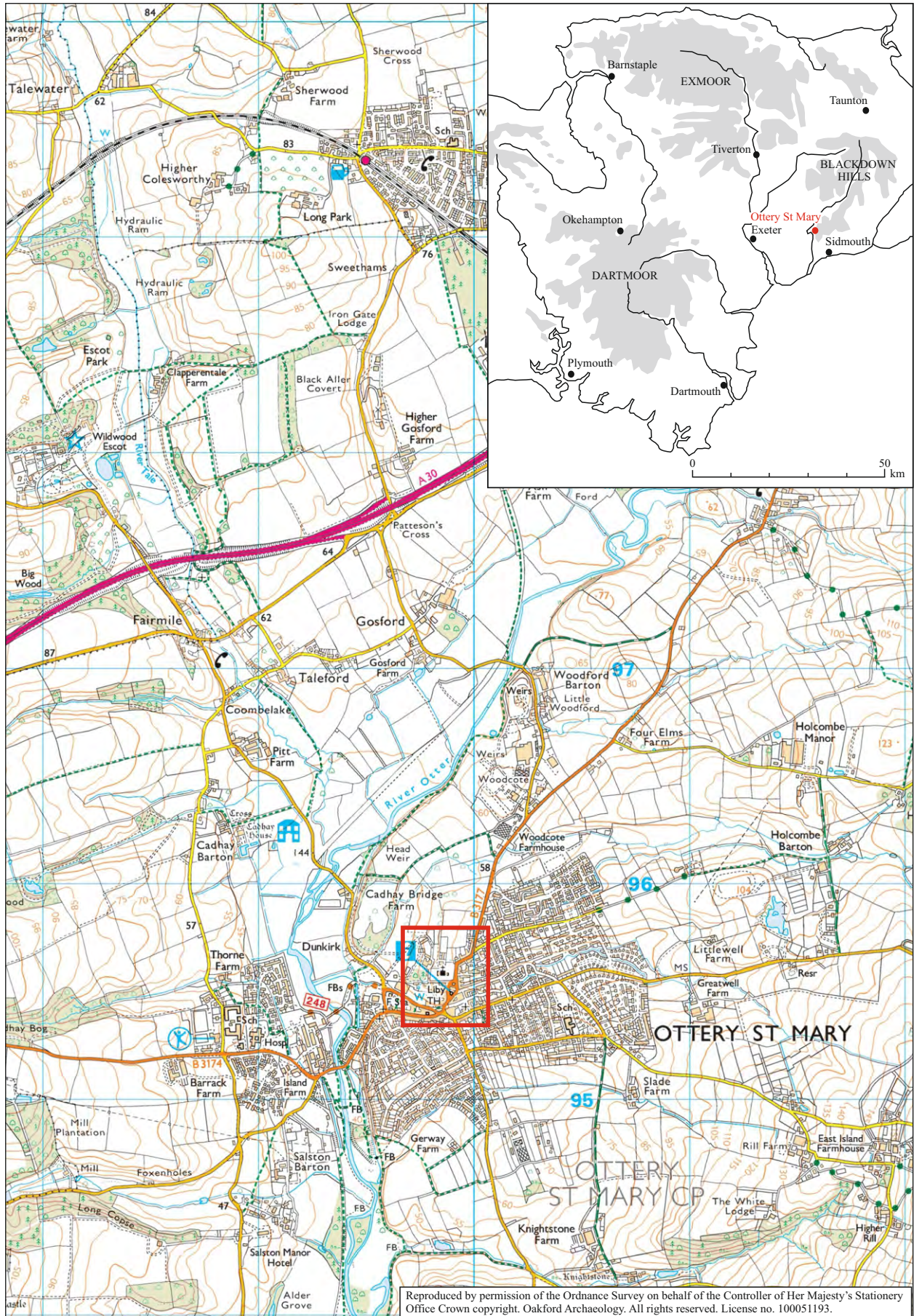


Fig. 1 Location of site.

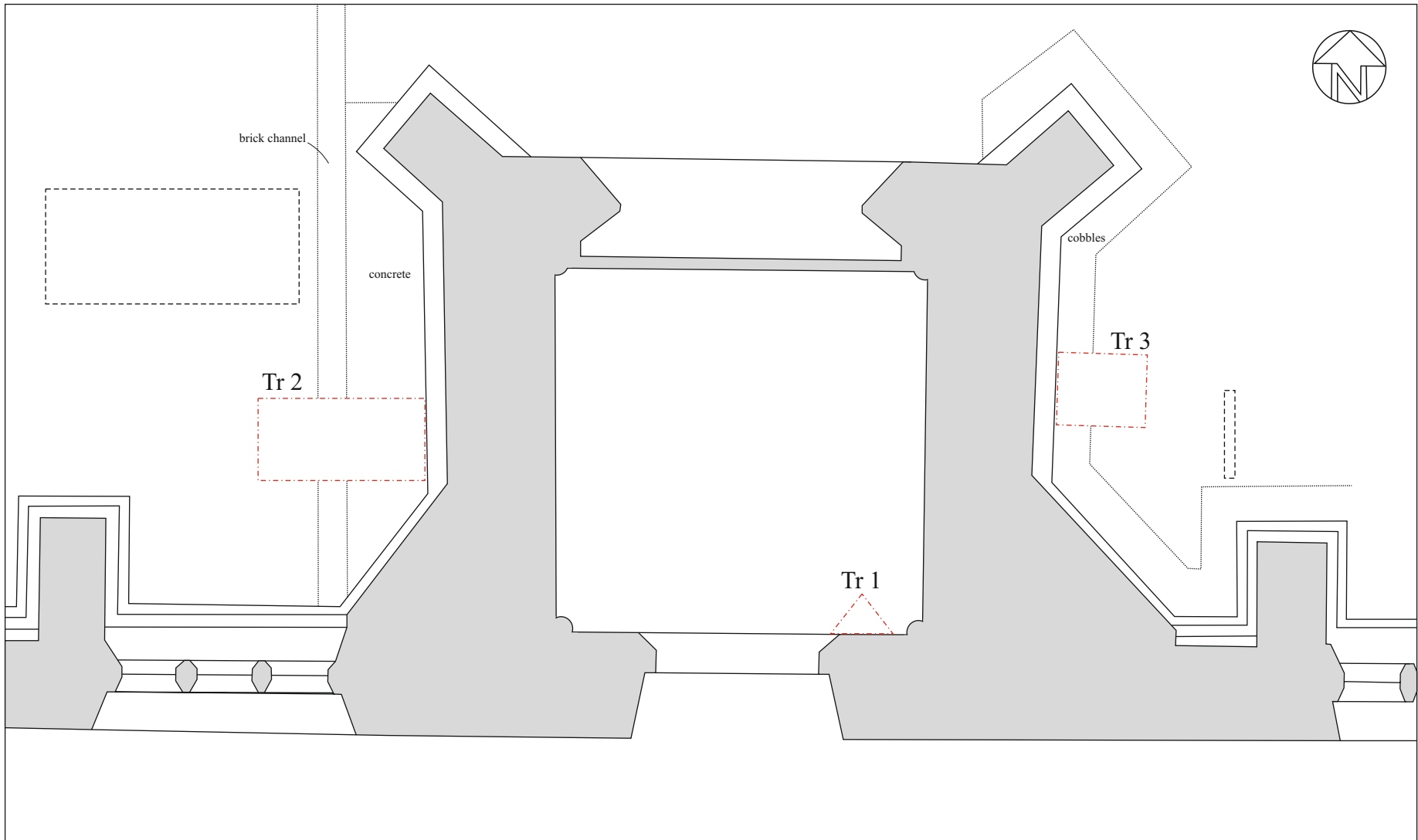


Fig. 2 Plan showing location of observations.



Pl. 1 General view of Trench 1 showing projecting footing (103) of north wall of north aisle. 0.25m scale. Looking southeast.



Pl. 2 General view of Trench 2 showing irregular masonry (204) above footing (203). 0.5m scale. Looking east.



Pl. 3 General view of Trench 3 showing regular masonry (308) above rubble footing (307). 0.5m scale. Looking west.