

**Archaeological Watching Brief  
and Documentary Research**

*at*

**St NICHOLAS' CHURCH, RINGMORE,  
SHALDON, DEVON**

*By R.W. Parker*

For The PCC of St Peter's Church  
with St Nicholas, Shaldon



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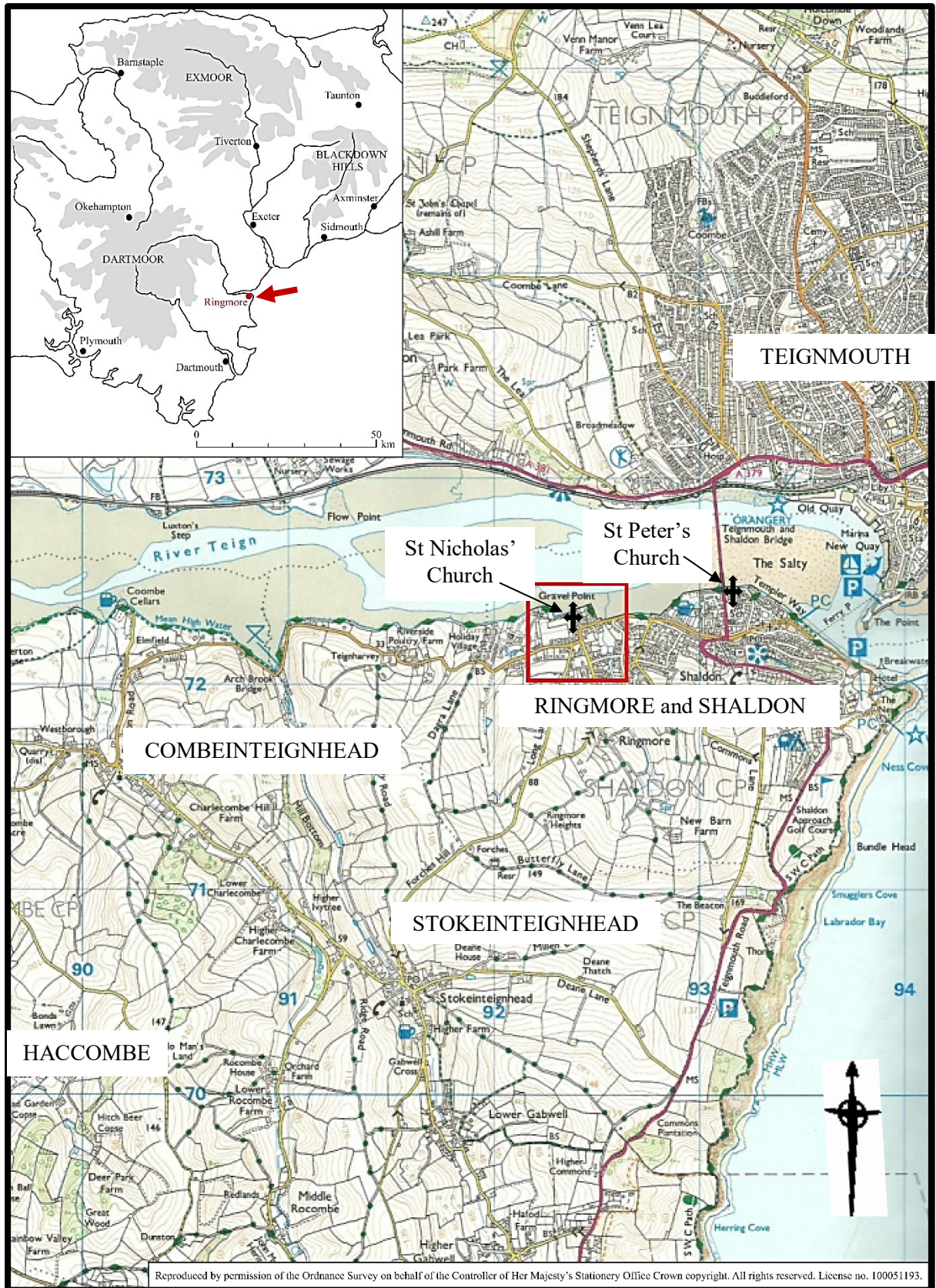
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Fig. 1 Location of St Nicholas' Church, Ringmore on the south side to the Teign Estuary, west of Shaldon bridge, in relation to the modern Parish Church of St Peter and the village centre.



Fig. 2 General view of the church from the south east, looking north west, showing the simple rectangular form of the building, the densely-occupied churchyard, the fine group of 13th-century lancet windows at the east end and the 18th-century vestries at extreme right.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief and documentary research undertaken by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation in association with Oakford Archaeology at St. Nicholas' Chapel of Ease, Ringmore, in the Parish of Shaldon, Devon (SX 92395 72315).

The building is a small medieval church lying on the south bank of the Teign estuary at Ringmore, in the Teignbridge district of Devon (Fig. 1). The church is a Grade II Listed Building and currently consists of a single cell, incorporating a nave and chancel under one uninterrupted roof, with a porch extending to the south and a small vestry on the north side. The walls are constructed of local rubble masonry and preserve evidence of 13th-century fabric, especially at the east end, where the group of five graduated lancets forming the east window is considered to be one of the best surviving examples of this type of architectural composition in Devon (Fig. 2).

The church formerly served as the parish church of the hamlets of Ringmore and Shaldon, but by the end of the 19th century, due to the rapid growth of Shaldon as a resort town, the church was replaced by a modern church in the larger settlement, dedicated to St Peter. The new church occupied a constricted urban site, so the old cemetery was retained and extended, to serve as the parish churchyard. After functioning for a period as a mortuary chapel the medieval church was recommissioned in the 20th century for regular use as a chapel of ease within the parish of St Peter's, Shaldon. The church occupies a large graveyard full of modern graves and grave markers, many of which lie in close proximity to the church building. Although most of the existing grave markers are modern, these are presumably the successors to much earlier monuments marking graves dating back to the foundation of the church in the Middle Ages.

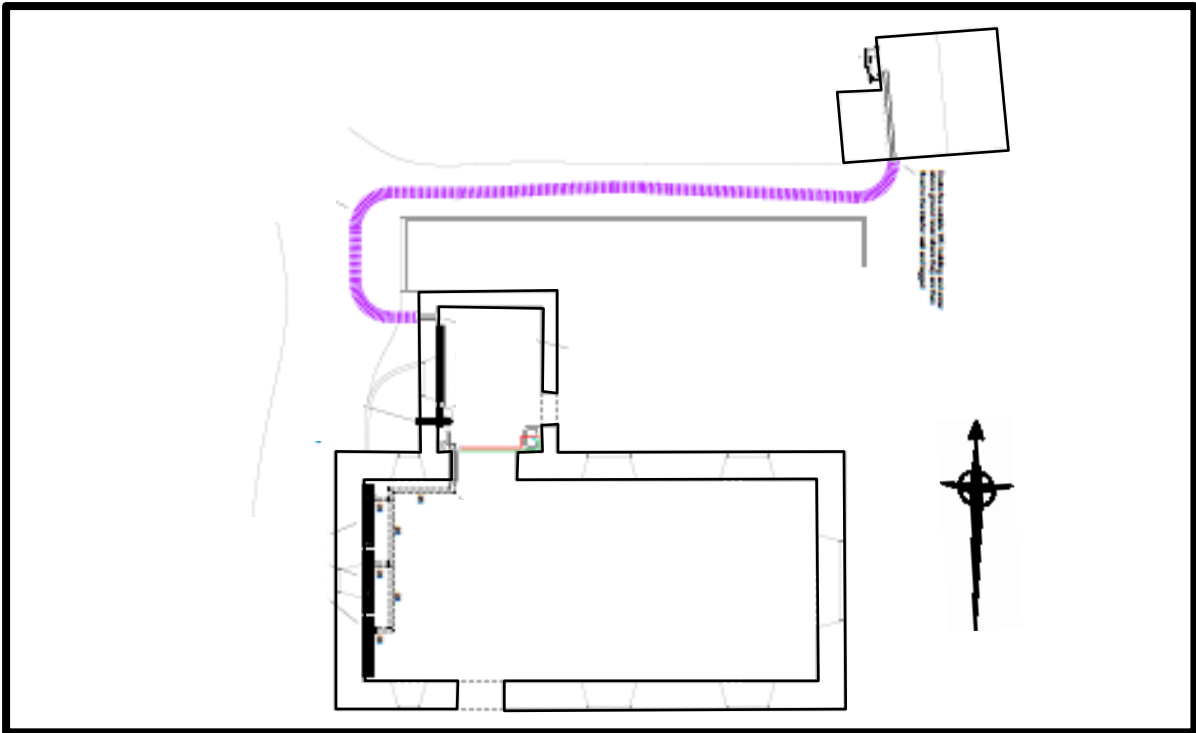


Fig. 3 Contractor's drawing showing the proposed course of the heating system through the churchyard from the church to the shed.

## 1.2 Aims of the project

The archaeological works described in this report were carried out as a condition of planning Permission (16/00813/FUL) and a Faculty for the installation of a hybrid heat pump unit to replace the existing heating system at the church.

The works involved the replacement of the late 20th-century heating system, consisting of high-level, wall-mounted heaters, with new heating units fixed to the interior of the west wall of the church. The pipework for these units was to run under a suspended floor into the 20th-century vestry to the north west of the building, breaking through the west wall at low level and, from thence, below ground, following an 'U'-shaped course through the churchyard to a small building lying to the north-east of the church, where a Daikin Altherma Hybrid Outdoor Unit was affixed to the west wall (Fig. 3).

The aims of the archaeological recording were:

- to investigate the church building and record any buried archaeological deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the development,
- to outline the development of the church and report on the results of the project.

## 1.3 Method

### *Documentary research*

Prior to the commencement of the building works a programme of documentary research was undertaken by Lucy Browne, with a particular emphasis on the study of surviving historic maps and plans of the church. This was undertaken in order to identify areas of archaeological potential which might be affected by the works and to establish the documented structural history of the church and its development. The research aimed to identify any changes to the footprint of the building made as a result of 18th- and 19th-century schemes for enlargement, and also by the subsequent reduction of the church to its present size in the late 19th century.

### *Watching brief on the excavations*

During the installation of the new heating system a watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks at the site. This involved observation of the excavation of a shallow pipe trench running from the vestry on the north side of the church, eastwards through the churchyard along the north side of the church, and beyond to the small building at the north-eastern corner of the churchyard. The trenching passed through areas believed to have been occupied by demolished parts of the church building and also through areas which are highly likely to have contained historic medieval and post-medieval burials. For this reason, the trenching was monitored during the excavations to establish the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and to record any deposits revealed by the works.

## 2 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Early history

St Nicholas' Church at Ringmore lies close to the banks of the River Teign, approximately half a mile west of Shaldon Bridge (Figs 1, 3). The hilly country of the area is characterised by its rich red soil based on decayed Permian sandstone and conglomerate rocks. These form high cliffs on the coast to the south and north of Teignmouth and Shaldon but, within the mouth of the estuary, the land slopes gently down to the river's edge and the site of the church is practically on the beach. Some of the land to the north and to the east of the church, in the area of the Strand, may have been reclaimed from the river, possibly as early quays.

The Domesday Book records that a Saxon landowner, Britric, held Ringmore before 1066 but that it passed at the Conquest to Baldwin, presumably Baldwin, Earl of Devon, and thence to Stephen of Hacombe (Thorn & Thorn 1985 16. 111). A reference to a church of '*Nicholai de Pola*' in 1186 may well refer to a 12th-century church at Ringmore (Orme 1996, 198). The foundation of the church may of course pre-date this reference and the possibility of a Saxon church on the site cannot be ruled out.

The parish, formerly known simply as 'St Nicholas', was one of the parishes included within the Hundred of Wonford. This was one of the principal administrative districts of Devon and may have originated in the Saxon period as a royal estate. Although much of the hundred lay to the west and north of Exeter, St Nicholas parish, together with the neighbouring parishes of East and West Teignmouth, Stokeinteignhead, Combeinteignhead, and Hacombe, formed a detached part of the Hundred at the mouth of the Teign.

The remains of several important archaeological sites near the estuary of the Teign show that this area of Devon was once of great wealth and significance. Near Ringmore, the churches of East and West Teignmouth, Bishopsteignton and Combeinteignhead all retain notable 12th- or 13th-century fabric, including remains of doorways, fonts and carved corbel heads. Further to the south, Hacombe church is also of unusual status, having been re-founded in the early 14th century as a collegiate church served by six priests, under an 'Archpriest'. It was, thereafter, a peculiar of the Archbishop of Canterbury independent of the authority of the Bishop of Exeter.

At Kingsteignton, at the head of the Teign estuary, 20th-century archaeological excavations have identified Roman pottery, glass and tiles, and boundary ditches probably dating from the 7th to the 11th centuries. The centre of Kingsteignton occupies a circular earthwork, possibly a Saxon fortification or *Burb*, and the church there has been interpreted as a Saxon minster serving a large surrounding area (Weddell 1991, 19, 21). The church building at Kingsteignton may incorporate parts of a monastic church with evidence of a cloister and claustral ranges (Parker 2015, 14; 15); however, the establishment does not appear to have survived the donation of the tithes of the church to Salisbury Cathedral, to fund the so-called 'Golden Prebend' of Teignton-Regis, in 1122 (Pugh & Crittall, 1956). Thereafter, Kingsteignton decreased in importance through the



competition of the new town of Newton Abbot, a property of the Abbot of Torre. A similar situation may have pertained at Ringmore, where the modest size of the church building, with little evidence of later medieval development, may imply that the income of the church had been diverted elsewhere.

The survival of a most unusual baptismal font (Fig. 4), probably of 12th-century date, with a tall, deep bowl of local conglomerate stone on a modern base is clear evidence of an early church at this site and, moreover, provides evidence that the church possessed the rights of baptism. It was not, therefore, merely a 'chapel of ease', but probably functioned as a parish church in its own right. The church also retains a vaulted porch covered with a pointed stone barrel vault of red sandstone (Fig. 5). Sadly, this cannot be closely dated, but might well have been constructed in the 13th or 14th century. These features, together with the five graduated lancet windows of the east end, dating from the 13th century, show that, though small, this was still an ambitious church with architectural features of some pretension.

The history of the church in the later medieval period is obscure; however, it does not appear to have prospered. Many Devon churches show a sequence of development from a very small core of a nave and chancel alone, by a series of accretions, to a fully-aisled plan. This process was usually characterised by the addition to the early core of the building of an enlarged chancel and transepts, north and south aisles, side chapels and, very often, a western tower. Even the smallest and least well-endowed church was usually provided with larger mullioned windows with bar tracery, especially at the east end. At Ringmore, by contrast, the early building remained largely unaltered, retaining its simple rectangular form until enlargement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Fig. 6). There is some evidence of a large window, now replaced by a modern lancet, near the south-east corner of the chancel (Fig. 7), nonetheless the complete absence of late-medieval additions at Ringmore is remarkable.

The reason for this curious lack of development is not known, but it may suggest that the church, if indeed it had once had parish church status, did not long retain this. It is possible that the income of the church was appropriated to serve the Collegiate church at Haccombe when that institution was founded in 1335-7 (Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 464; White 1850, 197). The church at Ringmore would have continued in use, but most of its parochial functions would have been transferred to Haccombe and, without substantial endowments or the pressure of a large resident population, there may have been no necessity to alter and enlarge the church to accommodate parochial functions, chantries or guild altars.

Alternatively, the church may have found a specific use as a wayside chapel. As it is situated very close to the river bank it may well have been connected with a river crossing, probably a ferry. It was usual in the medieval period for chapels to be provided in association with potentially dangerous river crossings, both of fords, ferries and bridges. Offerings at such a chapel might also provide an useful income for the maintenance of the river crossing. Several lanes converge on Ringmore from the villages on the south side of the estuary and there are further lanes coming down to the water's edge at 'The Lea' from Bishopsteignton to the north. Since, until Shaldon Bridge opened in 1827, the nearest river crossing was at Teignbridge, six miles upstream, it is quite conceivable that there was at one time a ferry crossing here, linking Bishopsteignton with Stokeinteignhead and Combeinteignhead via Ringmore.

## 2.2 Post-Medieval documentary history (based on research by Lucy Browne).

Early writers describing the church often allude to its antiquity, but their comments suggest that there were few surviving records on which they could base their conclusions. Perhaps the earliest known description of the church is preserved in a parochial questionnaire sent out in the mid 18th century by Jeremiah Milles, Dean of Exeter. Milles sought to collect information from the incumbents of Devon parishes about their churches and communities, including whether other religious denominations operated in their parishes. The questionnaire asked not only for basic



Fig. 4 The unusually tall, goblet-shaped font, probably of 12th-century date, recovered from the churchyard and re-erected in the 19th century.



Fig. 5 The stone barrel vault of the porch, which with the graduated lancets of the east end may be the best surviving 13th-century fabric in the building.



Fig. 6 The church from the north west, showing its simple un-aisled plan, as restored in the late 19th century, and the modern vestry attached to the north-western corner of the nave.

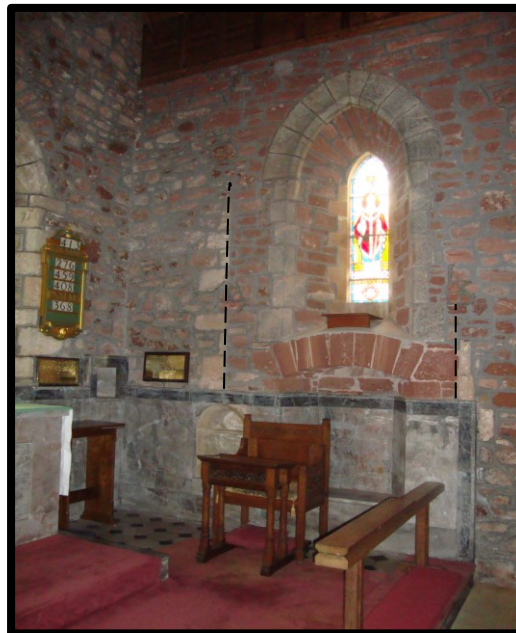


Fig. 7 Part of the south-west wall, internally, showing (dashed) the jambs of a large, blocked late-medieval window which was probably removed in 1822 to create an entrance from an external stair.

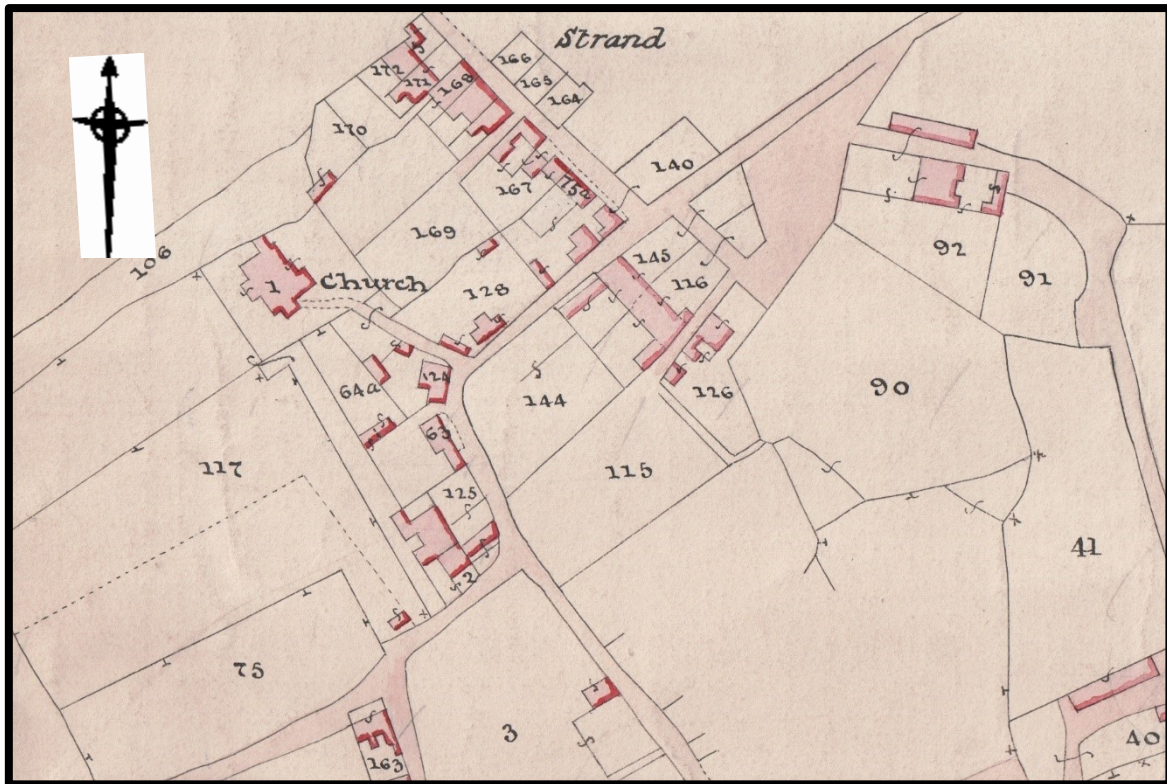


Fig. 8 Extract from the Tithe map of St Nicholas Parish, surveyed in 1843, showing the square footprint of the church following the additions to its north of 1790 and 1812, which trebled the size of the original building.

information about the state of repair of local churches, but also for descriptions of the buildings, their construction and state of repair and any other antiquities in the parish. The response for Ringmore records that: “The little chapelry called St Nicholas, situated near ye western bank of ye Ting...is a small edifice with a gallery at the west end and 5 small windows at ye east end which have the appearance of some antiquity” (Milles’ Parochial Questionnaire 1753 – 5). The account is interesting in that it seems to pre-date any additions to the building and describes the church much as it survives today.

In 1793, Richard Polwhele visited the church and described it just as it was succumbing to what must have been its first major alteration. He wrote: “This structure is supposed to have been built about one hundred and twenty years since by the ancestors of Sir Thomas Carew of Haccombe. It is said to have been beatified (*sic.*) in 1745. It measures about 44 feet by 14. In 1790 was just laid the foundation of a new aisle running out from the north-side of the chapel, 31 feet by 16.” (Polwhele, *The History of Devonshire*, 1793 – 1806, Volume 2, p.145). No material pertaining to the reported 1745 ‘beatification’ has been identified in the preparation of this report, nor are there references to the 1790s extension in the Churchwardens’ Accounts, which run from 1778.

It is clear that, despite the dedication of the whole parish after the church, the origins and status of the church had been so entirely lost by this date that it was believed to be a 17th-century foundation. This was perhaps on the basis of the font which then stood in the church and was dated 1639). This narrative was not really challenged until *c.*1900, despite the survival of the 13th-century east window. At the beginning of the 20th century the notable historian Beatrix Cresswell noted:

“That the chapel of St Nicholas was of early foundation has been proved by architectural evidence of the original building, brought to light during recent times. It had however, no parochial existence, but must have been a chapelry for

the tenants of the manor. The dedication to St Nicholas suggests that it was a votive chapel specially intended for the local fishermen. Polwhele ascribes its erection to the Carews. This is not improbable, though, so far, no records of a licence have been met with in the Bishop's Registers... The foundation of the chapel is probably earlier than the period assigned by Polwhele. As the Archpriest of Hacombe had six priests under him in pre-reformation times, one of these may very likely have served a chapel in this hamlet." (Devon Churches – Deanery of Ipplepen, p. 212 from original notes 1903, with revisions and additions 1917).

While listing contributors to the annual Church Repair tax, the 18th-century church accounts give scant details of actual work on the church, apart from "To Mr Hamleyn as pr. Agreement between the Parishioners and him for a new chancel door and window over the communion table and repairing the ceiling over the Gallery the sum of 2d for beer for the masons on securing the roof of the Chaple: 3s,6d." (1528A/PW/1/a/1: Churchwardens accounts with minutes of vestry meetings 1778 – 1836: Disbursements for 1790). The extension of the church noted by Polwhele is, however, recorded in a Faculty Cause for 1790, which provides the first documentary reference to any extension of the church:

"The humble petition of Henry Manning, Clerk, Minister and James Drewe Church or Chapel Warden of the Parish of Saint Nicholas in the County of Devon... That whereas the said church or chapel of Saint Nicholas is at present so very small as not to be able decently and conveniently to contain all the inhabitants of the said Parish to set and hear Divine Service and whereas your Petitioners (by and with the unanimous consent and approbation of all the Principal inhabitants of the said parish) have agreed to erect and build on the north side of the said church or chapel an ayle to contain in Length twenty Eight Feet or thereabout and in Breadth seventeen feet or thereabout, and also to erect and build seats and pews and also a gallery therein for the use and accommodation of the Inhabitants of the said parish to sit and heare Divine Service – Your Petitioners therefore humbly pray your Lordship .. Licence or Faculty for permitting them to erect and build the said ayle ... and also the seats and pews and also a gallery .... Henry Manning, Minister, James Drew, Chapel Warden, St Nicholas 10<sup>th</sup> February 1790." (Faculty Causes, Shaldon St Nicholas, No.1. North aisle and gallery 1790).

It appears that this 'ayle', was added to the north-east part of the church, creating an L-shaped building with, effectively, two naves focussed on a large pulpit standing against the east wall. Despite the fact that this addition more than doubled the size of the building, it was clearly inadequate to solve the problem of the cramped conditions and the church was soon enlarged again (Fig. 8). At the beginning of the 19th century a second 'aisle' nearly equal in size to the first was added in accordance with a "Citation with Intimation and Petition for Inlarging St Nicholas Church" of 14<sup>th</sup> March 1812. The Faculty petition states that:

"Ralph Barnes Master of Arts, official principal of the Episcopal Consistional Court of Exeter lawfully constituted to all ... Rectors, Vicars and Curates lawfully appointed within the Diocese of Exeter Greeting. Whereas the Minister, Church or Chapel Wardens and Principal inhabitants of the parish of Saint Nicholas ... have humbly represented with us that the said Church or Chapel is at present so very small ... and that it was agreed ... to erect and build on the North side of the said church or chapel an aisle to contain in Length thirty three feet or thereabouts and in breadth twenty-two feet and a half or thereabouts and able to erect and build seats or pews and likewise a gallery...Wherefore they have prayed our Licence or Faculty to inable them to erect and build such aisle gallery and seats ... we therefore hereby charge ... you

jointly or severally that on Sunday next ... you do publish or cause to be publish in the parish church ... “ [this last carried out on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1812]. (Faculty Causes, Shaldon St Nicholas, No 2, North aisle and gallery 1812

This aisle seems to have been added alongside and to the west of the earlier aisle, on a similar north-south alignment and enlarged the church to a rectangular plan nearly three times the size of the original building. The west wall of the 1790s aisle was removed and three pillars or posts added to support the roof. This resulted in a church of almost square plan, with external gallery stairs to the south east and the west. Two vestries were provided to the north east. (Figs 9, 10).

Even this did not address the need for church accommodation and, in 1822 a third Petition recorded the decision “of the Rev Thomas Westcott, Vicar, Nicholas Wilking, Churchwarden and William Fox, John Rendell and William Luckem Row, three of the principal inhabitants of the Parish of Saint Nicholas in the County of Devon, and your Lordship’s Diocese of Exeter, Herewith ... to erect a Gallery against the South wall of the said church to contain twenty one feet in depth or thereabouts and seven feet and a half in width or thereabouts and to consist of six seats or pews which might altogether accommodate fifty persons with sittings in the said church...” This Intimation was “duly read and published” on 9<sup>th</sup> June, with a Faculty granted 6<sup>th</sup> July 1822. (Faculty Causes, Shaldon St Nicholas, No 3, South Gallery 1822).

The gallery stairs to approach this new seating area appear to have been made through the opening of the wide late-medieval window on the south side of the chancel. The access to the earlier western gallery was by a stair in a western projection to the church, which formed a small tower and was crowned by a spire. The church was now probably enlarged to its fullest extent, extending to the northern limit of the churchyard. It retained this form until c.1900.

### 2.3 Victorian visitors and proposals for the rebuilding of the church

The church in its enlarged form was capable of holding a large congregation but was unlikely to appeal to the taste of 19th-century ecclesiologists since its medieval origins, except for the east window, had been more-or-less completely disguised; even the external walls being covered with plaster. William White, in his Directory of Devonshire, echoes Polwhele, and records that the church “was rebuilt by the Carew Family about 180 years ago... it is a small plastered building with a tower containing one bell and crowned with a short wooden spire” (White 1850, 197). Another 19th-century visitor, filling out a form of ‘Rough Notes’ for the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, made the following observations in c.1845 – 1850:

“Deanery of Kenn: Ringmore, Ringmore, St Nicholas:

**Nave** – 31’ x 14’; **North East Aisle or Transept**, 31’ x 16’. Date **1790**. **North West Aisle or Transept**: 31 x 16, **1812**; Tower – a western bell turret; Font – Octangular of Purbeck stone. P.S. 1639 inscribed on it. In the middle of the transept aisles - South Porch. Peculiar features – this church appears to have been built by the Carews, for a hamlet of Haccombe? It was “beatified” in 1745, but little of this remains.” (DHC sx726.5/WES/EXE “Rough Notes, for correction, of churches”)

James Davidson visited in 1846, and he, too, was not impressed with the results of the rebuilding:

“The remote little church being too small for the increasing number of inhabitants has been considerably enlarged but without any pretensions to architecture, beauty or effect.”... “The only apparent vestige of the ancient building is the chancel window formed by five lancet lights of three unequal heights without cusps and which may be assigned to the 13<sup>th</sup> century” (Church Notes of South Devon, p. 353, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1846).

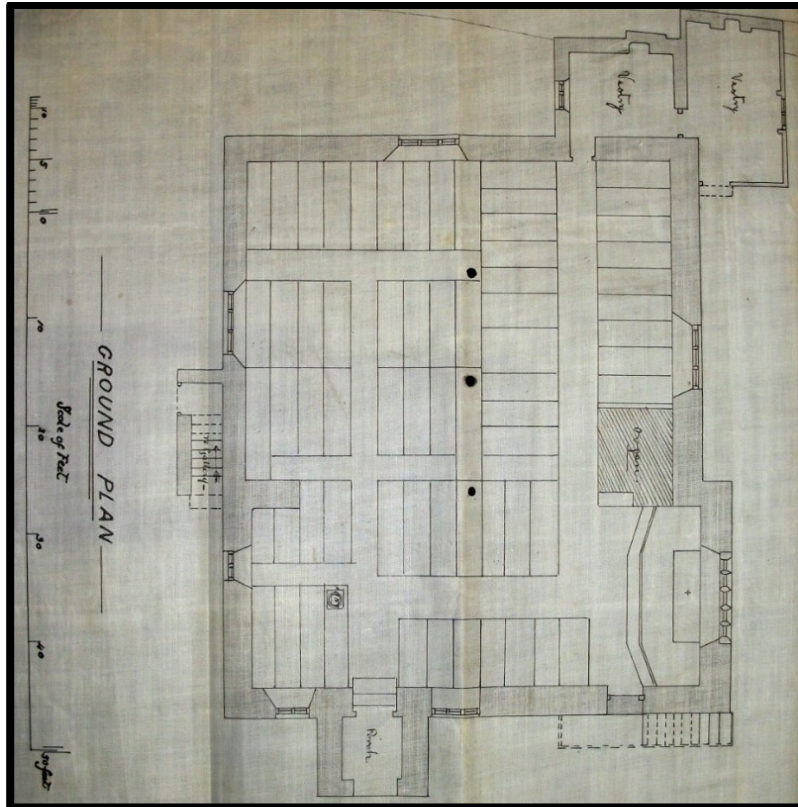


Fig. 9 Ground plan made in 1880-81, showing the plan of the building after the addition of the aisles of 1790 and 1812 (SWHT: Shaldon, St Nicholas, Faculty Petition 2).

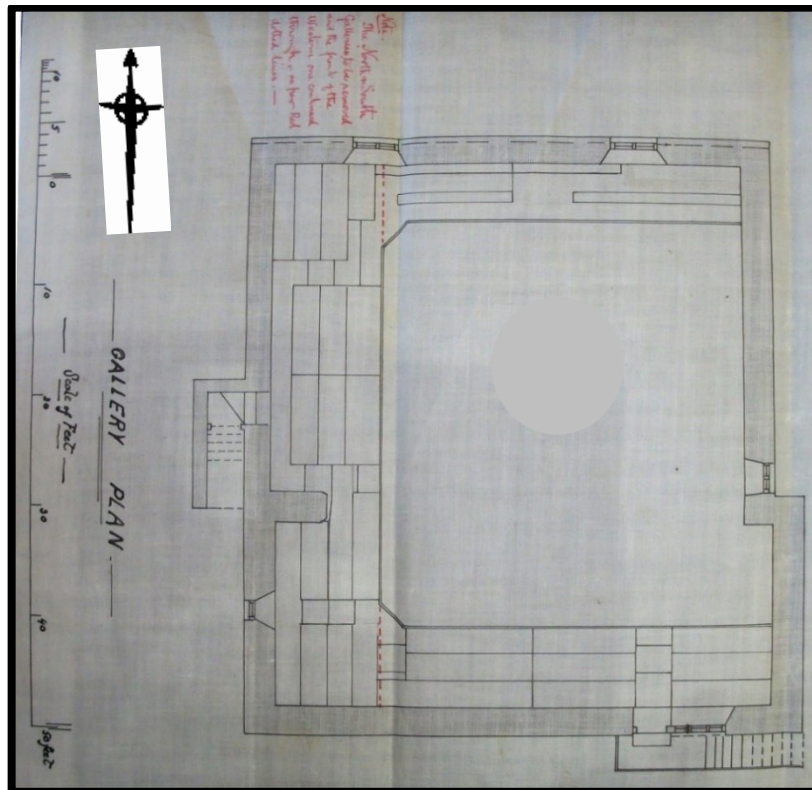


Fig. 10 Gallery plan of 1880-81, showing the south gallery added in 1822, accessed by an external stair, and the earlier galleries to west and north (ibid.)



Fig. 11 Photograph of the interior in *c.*1875 prior to restoration, showing the church as enlarged in 1790-1812 with the south gallery of 1822 still in place and both open benches and box pews (Photograph held by the PCC of St Peter with St Nicholas Shaldon).

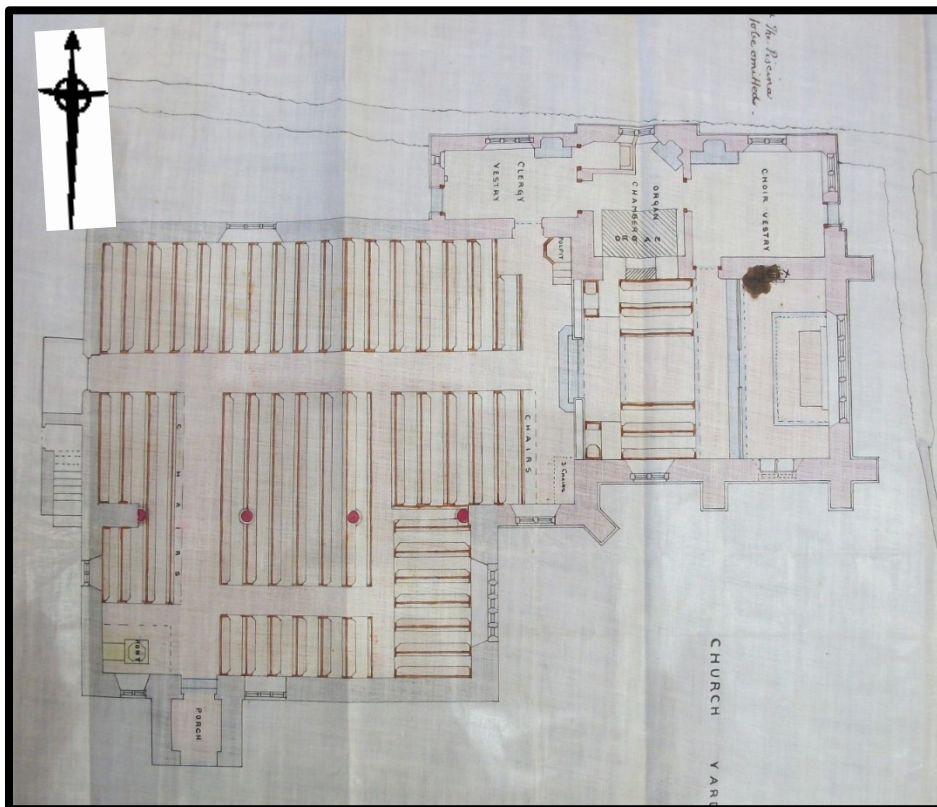


Fig. 12 Proposals for the enlargement of the church made by J. W. Rowell in 1880-81, showing the proposed addition of a new chancel and the creation of a new arcade defining the old church as an aisle (SWHT: Shaldon, St Nicholas, Faculty Petition 2).

A photograph of the interior, taken prior to the restoration of the church to its medieval form in c.1900 (Fig. 11) shows the building as enlarged, looking east, with the altar still in its medieval position beneath the original east window, and a high, three-decker pulpit against the east wall, lit by an enormous bull's eye window or oculus. This photograph probably dates to c.1875; it shows open benches with book desks in the body of the old church, probably for the accommodation of the poor of the parish and casual visitors, and box pews for richer families paying pew rents just visible in the 18th-century aisles to the north. The three-decker pulpit against the east wall was later replaced by an organ, as shown on the later 19th-century plans (Fig. 9). The location of the pulpit after this alteration is not known.

Opinion as to the merits of the 18th-century alterations declined during the 19th century and, by the 1880s, the wealth of the local community was such that an even larger, more prestigious and more church-like structure was considered desirable. Plans for rebuilding were sought from local architect J. W. Rowell of Newton Abbot. Rowell had been active in the area since the 1850s and was an accomplished architect who had worked for many high-status clients, including the Earl of Devon (Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 692). Rowell had undertaken church restorations at Powderham in 1857, Kenton in 1861, Chagford in 1862 and Trusham in 1865; He had sensitively extended earlier buildings at St John's, Bovey Tracey, in 1862 and at St Leonard's, Newton Abbot, in 1876. He had also been commissioned to design entirely new churches at Leusdon in 1863 and Collaton St Mary in 1864, in addition to a great deal of domestic and secular work in Torquay and Newton Abbot.

Rowell's proposals (Fig. 12) involved the retention of much of the 18th-century fabric, but the entire replacement of its roof. The ancient church would be redefined as an aisle of the modern church, which would be extended eastwards by the addition of a new chancel, organ chamber and vestries. The whole church would be re-seated with open benches which do not appear to have been segregated by social class. The western gallery seems to have been identified for retention. In the second volume of Churchwardens Accounts on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1881 it was moved by General Lucas as follows:

“That Mr Rowell's recommendation respecting the improvements of the interior of the present church by removing the north and south galleries and substituting chairs or low benches for the present high pews, having been considered by this meeting; and also his plans for an extension of the present church eastwards by prolonging the nave and building a new chancel and vestries etc, it be resolved that such plans and recommendations are approved by this vestry and that the vicar and churchwardens be requested to obtain a faculty for carrying out the same. The motion was carried.” (1528A/PW/1/a/2: Churchwardens accounts with minutes of vestry meetings. p342)

In the collection archived as “Faculty Petitions, Shaldon St Nicholas No.2: Enlargement and reseating”, rough notes are included to the effect that:

“A Faculty is desired for the following work to be accomplished:

- 1<sup>st</sup> The removal of the North and South Galleries and reseating the interior of the present Church with low benches or chairs: - changing the position of the organ: and for the general restoration the original church
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lengthening the Church Eastward and forming a new chancel, with organ chamber and vestries
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Putting a new roof on the present church
- 4<sup>th</sup> Widening and improving the path from the church-yard gate to the church porch



A Faculty Citation dated 21<sup>st</sup> May 1881 in the same collection reads “...that in order to further improve the said church and to afford better ventilation (which latter was greatly needed) it was proposed to remove the north and south galleries and to continue the front of the western gallery in a straight line from the north to the south wall of the Church ... to remove the organ from its then position in the nave to the organ chamber proposed to be built as aforesaid and to replace the pulpit and font in the respective positions shewn on the said plan marked No. 3 ... in size and comfort, the seating would be most materially improved.”

The 1880s plans for the church were not universally approved and, in the end, were not executed. Letters of objection were received from W. Rendell of 44 Grosvenor Road, Highbury New Park, London N, whose ancestors were buried under the proposed site of the easterly extension. Letters were also received from Mary Mortimer Rendell of Ringmore in the parish of St Nicholas (probably for the same reason, as Mortimer ancestors of W. Rendell were amongst the affected graves) and Henry Stephens of Shaldon who also had family graves in the area.

Other objections may have been due to liturgical controversy. The incumbent of the time, William Henry Wrenford, was possibly a “high churchman”; his harvest festival had been reported in the *Western Times* of 5<sup>th</sup> October 1880, noting that the previous vicar had been “what might be termed Low Church” and that this service, under Rev W H Wrenford was the opportunity for the introduction of “several novelties” such as the carrying of a Cross in front of the choir, and more candles on the altar (WT 05.10.1880). The plans proposed by Rowell, though perfectly in keeping with contemporary ecclesiology, included elements which upset at least one correspondent. W. J. Phillpotts of St. Eluvias Vicarage, Penryn, Cornwall, wrote in May 1881: “It appears from the plan before me that it is intended to erect a piscina on the choir vestry side of the chancel – such piscina is an illegal “ornament” being intended for a rite not recognised by our present Book of Common Prayer. If the parties concerned consent to the removal of the piscina from the plan, I will sign the citation.” Rowell’s drawings reflect this in the annotation ‘the piscina to be omitted’, in the area north of the proposed new choir vestry (Fig. 12, top right).

Evidently the objections among influential families were so persuasive that the scheme for the rebuilding of the church was abandoned as, shortly afterwards, alterations and refurbishments of the existing building were undertaken and this is unlikely to have been the case had a drastic rebuilding of the church still been planned. In 1881, for example, according to Kelly’s *Directory of Devon for 1887*, Henry and Josephine Lowther Chermerside had the font, described as “work of a very early and rude Norman character ... found embedded in the churchyard...” restored to its position in the church. Presumably the early 17th-century font (which would be an object of great interest today) was disposed of at this time. It may yet survive, perhaps acting as a birdbath or ornament in a local garden.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1884 the *Exeter Flying Post* reported: “Shaldon, St Nicholas Church: The centre light of the east window of this church has just been filled with stained glass. The subject – the Crucifixion - has been creditably executed by Mr Drake of the Cathedral Close, Exeter. The funds available for the purpose only admitted of the insertion of one light, but it is intended as soon as further means are obtained to place a figure of the Virgin Mary in one side and that of St John on the other. For this purpose, and to insert another window of like design on the south side, a social tea and sale of work and a grand concert will shortly be held” (*Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post*, 7.1.1884, 7d).

In 1883, Kelly’s *Directory* described the church as a “small unpretending structure, built of rough stone [which] consists of a nave, at the east end of which is an altar, and an addition on the north side; there is a west gallery, organ, ancient font, south porch and a low square tower containing 1 bell”. This may suggest that the external plaster noted by White in 1850 had been removed. In the 1887 edition of the same directory it is clear that Wrenford’s plan to replace the pews had been carried out; the writer notes that “the church is seated with chairs for 400 persons” Presumably the galleries had also been removed.

Wrenford died in the autumn of 1889, leaving his successor and former curate, the Rev Richard Marsh Marsh-Dunn to execute his own plans to create a new church nearer to the main centre of population, which had become concentrated in Shaldon. Marsh-Dunn may have chosen to rebuild on a new site specifically to avoid objections such as those which had stymied the earlier scheme. For the time being, however, and perhaps reflecting some local objections to a new church, St Nicholas' church continued to be improved by additions and refurbishments. The *Western Times* of 13<sup>th</sup> May 1890 (page 7) reported a meeting to discuss repairing the church tower and removing the skylights in the middle of the roof. There was only a small attendance, but it was agreed to open a subscription list. Bigger plans, however, were already afoot.

On 19<sup>th</sup> August, a meeting, chaired by Marsh-Dunn, was held (and reported in the *Western Times* two days later) to discuss "building an iron church to be used in the place of the present one" on land behind Hunters Lodge in Fore Street, at the centre of the modern village, given by Colonel Grexam. It was resolved to accept the plans of the iron church presented by the Vicar until more ambitious plans for a new, permanent church could be realised. This was not long in coming. Between 1892 and 1895 a new permanent church, designed by the Arts-and-Crafts architect E. H. Sedding, was constructed at the head of Shaldon Bridge. This new church was on a most ambitious scale and with furnishings of spectacular richness. This building remains one of the highlights of modern ecclesiastical architecture in Devon and was so much admired by contemporaries that it is one of the few modern churches to be illustrated in John Stabb's 'Some Old Devon Churches' (Stabb 1911, 155, Pl. 139).

An "Application to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England for a substitution under the Act 8 & 9 Vict. c. 70 of a New Church for the old Parish Church of the same Parish" was made, with a Petition for licensing the new building "designated hereafter to be the parish church for divine service" dated 13<sup>th</sup> June 1894. The petition on a printed form "sheweth that the parish church of Saint Nicholas aforesaid is about to be under repair and is on such account to be disused for public service and it is desirable ... Divine Service should be performed in the new building designed hereafter to be the Parish Church ..." The printed form has been filled in with the notes "the new building designed hereafter to be used as the Parish Church of St Nicholas".

A collection of correspondence, forms and plans of the new permanent parish church, later dedicated to St Peter, is archived under "Faculty Petitions, Shaldon St Nicholas, No. 4: Substitution of new for old church 1902 – 1903" from which can be traced the progress of the new church at Shaldon. The correspondence begins on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1902 regarding "Proposed substitution of new Church for old Church", Arthur Burch Esq from the Diocesan Registry sending necessary forms" and culminating with the transcription of a letter – author not noted – dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 1903, suggesting that the new church substitute the old before compliance with suggested works on the new, as "the old church is very dilapidated and I believe absolutely unfit for Divine Service and cannot be reverted to again as the Parish Church and on technical grounds, it would perhaps be better the order should be made without further delay. The present building is used under a licence originally issued on the grounds of the Parish Church being closed for repairs but there is no intention of now repairing the Parish Church..."

The *London Gazette* of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1904 (page 339) reported "Instrument substituting the New Church of Saint Peter, situate within the parish of Saint Nicholas, in the county of Devon and in the diocese of Exeter, for the Old Church of Saint Nicholas, situate within and hitherto being the parish church of the same parish... Whereas a new church has lately been built at Shaldon within the parish of Saint Nicholas .. and has been consecrated and dedicated to Saint Peter ... we the said Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England ... hereby declare that the said new church of Saint Peter ... shall be and the same is hereby substituted for the said old parish church of St Nicholas ... as fully ... as if the said new church ... had been originally the parish church of the same parish". [All endowments etc were also transferred].

Repairs to the "old" Parish Church of St Nicholas were certainly made at this period, but these were probably made in the context of the reduction of the building to its medieval size by

the demolition of all the 18th-century additions except the vestries, ready for the future use of the building as a mortuary chapel. The churchyard had been considerably extended in 1862 and remained the sole burying place for Anglicans in the village (Fig. 13). Chips Barber transcribes an unnamed newspaper extract dated 21<sup>st</sup> October 1895 which describes the demolitions, and refurbishment of the medieval part of the church with new fittings and stained glass:

“The quaint little parish church, which for many years has been a source of considerable attraction and interest from an archaeological point of view ... will soon, as regards its original shape and form, be a thing of the past... About 70 years ago, this interesting little church was completely destroyed by the pulling down of the north wall and the erection of a hideous structure in its place. Since the opening of the new church in the Bridge Road in July 1894, the old church at Ringmore has only been used as a mortuary chapel ... and for an early celebration of Holy Communion on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month. Some months ago... an anonymous donor [offered] to restore the church to its original condition... The alterations to be made consisted of pulling down the modern additions and throwing the ground on which they stand into the churchyard and inserting three new windows to match the present St Nicholas one, and adding a west door. The chapel is 42ft long and 17ft wide and the floor is covered with Belgium diagonal black and white tiles. There are eight coloured windows, including a large beautifully stained one, over the altar representing the Crucifixion, and two smaller ones near the east end containing the figures of St Nicholas and St Agnes. The chapel will accommodate about 60 persons. The work will be completed about Christmas and when finished will be one of the prettiest mortuary chapels in the diocese.” (Barber 2005, 12, 13)

The Exeter & Plymouth Gazette reported, on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1895 (page 11), that “The Rev R M Marsh-Dunn having returned from abroad, on Tuesday conducted service in the old parish church of St Nicholas Ringmore. The building has been considerably renovated, and has been put in its old form, one of the wings having been taken away. It is proposed to hold service there once a month.”

According to the 1897 Kelly’s Directory of Devonshire, St Nicholas Chapel had been “until lately a small and unpretending edifice of rough stone consisting of nave, south porch and a low western tower containing one bell, but in 1895 it was restored at the cost of a private benefactor under the direction of the Rev Gerard H Ball BA, chaplain of St Raphael’s Home, Torquay: two stained windows have been presented by the restorer and by Mr and Mrs Davies ... the chancel retains a piscina.” Later editions of Kelly’s note that another stained window was presented in 1900 by Mr and Mrs Deey Spedding in memory of their son Arthur Deey Spedding. The footprint of the church had now returned to its 13th-century form, with the exception of a new vestry added to the north wall of the church. The only survivor of the Georgian additions was the earlier vestry, which remains today as an entirely separate building, up against the churchyard wall, (Fig 14). It retains its external render and may give an impression of the appearance of the church as it stood from 1812 to the 1880s.

The old parish church of St Nicholas continued work through the twentieth century, its burial ground being the only one for the parish. The Torbay Express & South Devon Echo reported the consecration of an addition to the churchyard on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1949, the church was still marked as a mortuary chapel on the Plan Map SX 9272 of 1955, and the church website informs readers that burials continue to take place today.

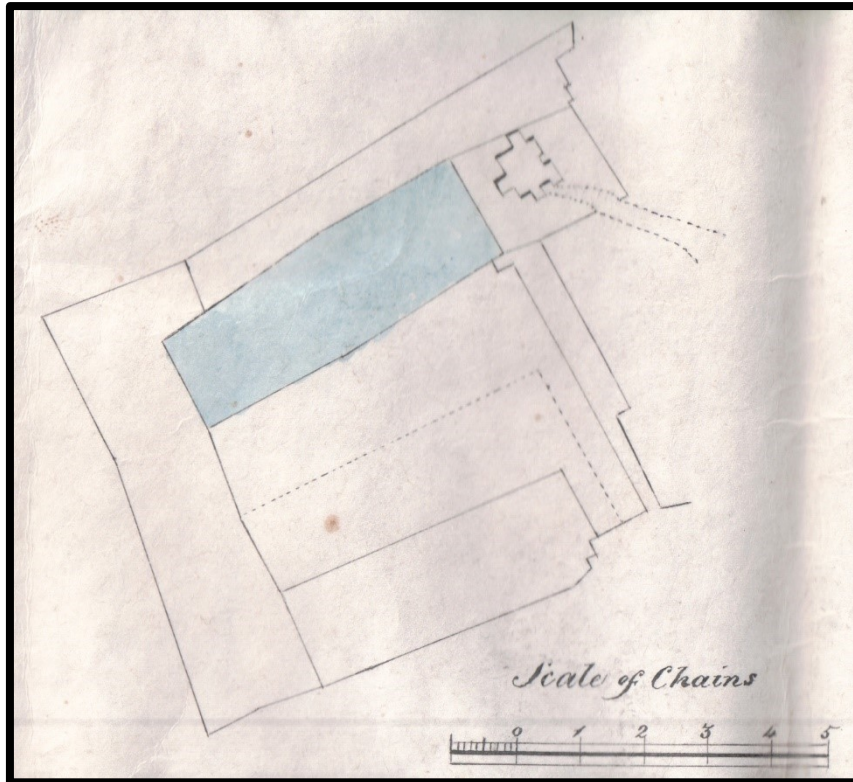


Fig. 13 Plan from sentence of consecration of new burial ground 14th August 1862 showing the enlarged church (SWHT: 1528A/PB/5/a/1).

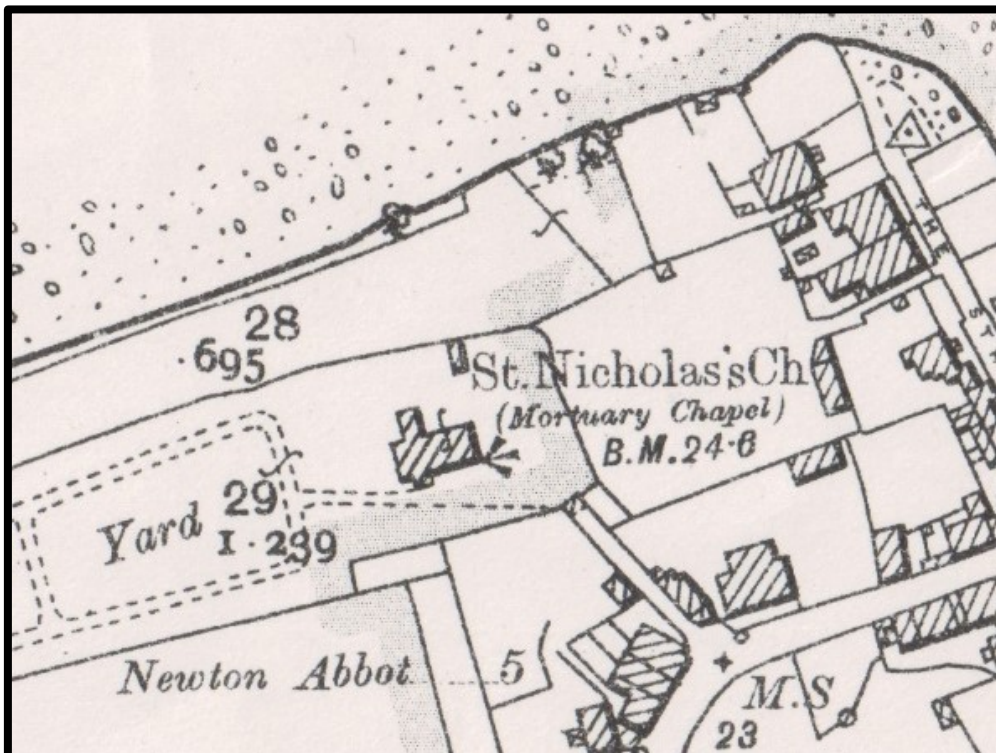


Fig. 14 Extract from the OS County Series 2nd Edition Sheet CX.10 1.25inch (1905), showing St Nicholas' Church following its restoration to its medieval form.

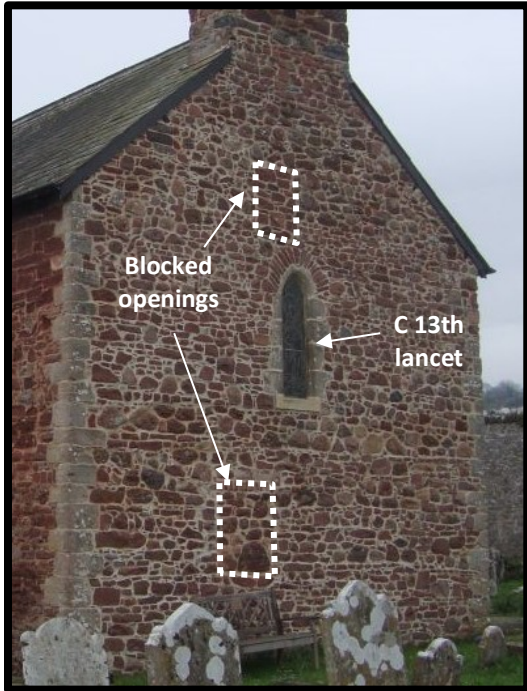


Fig. 15 The west end of the church showing typical 13th-century masonry (compare with Fig. 19) and blocked openings of post-medieval date (dashed).

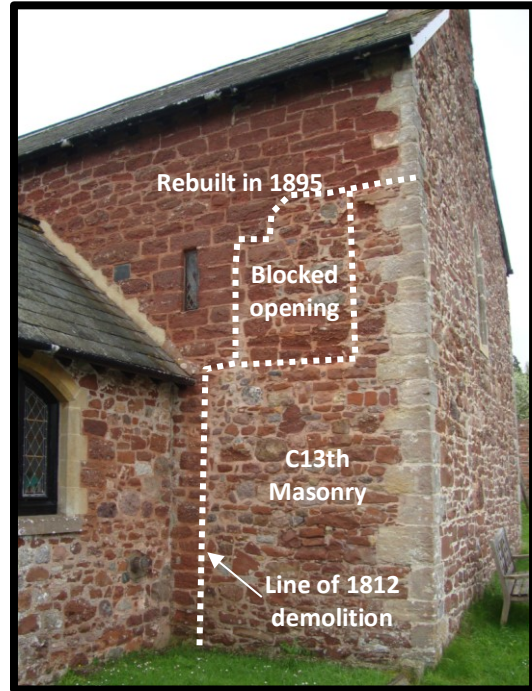


Fig. 16 The west end of the north wall showing early masonry west of the vestry and a blocked window or gallery entrance cut by the rebuilt north wall to the east.

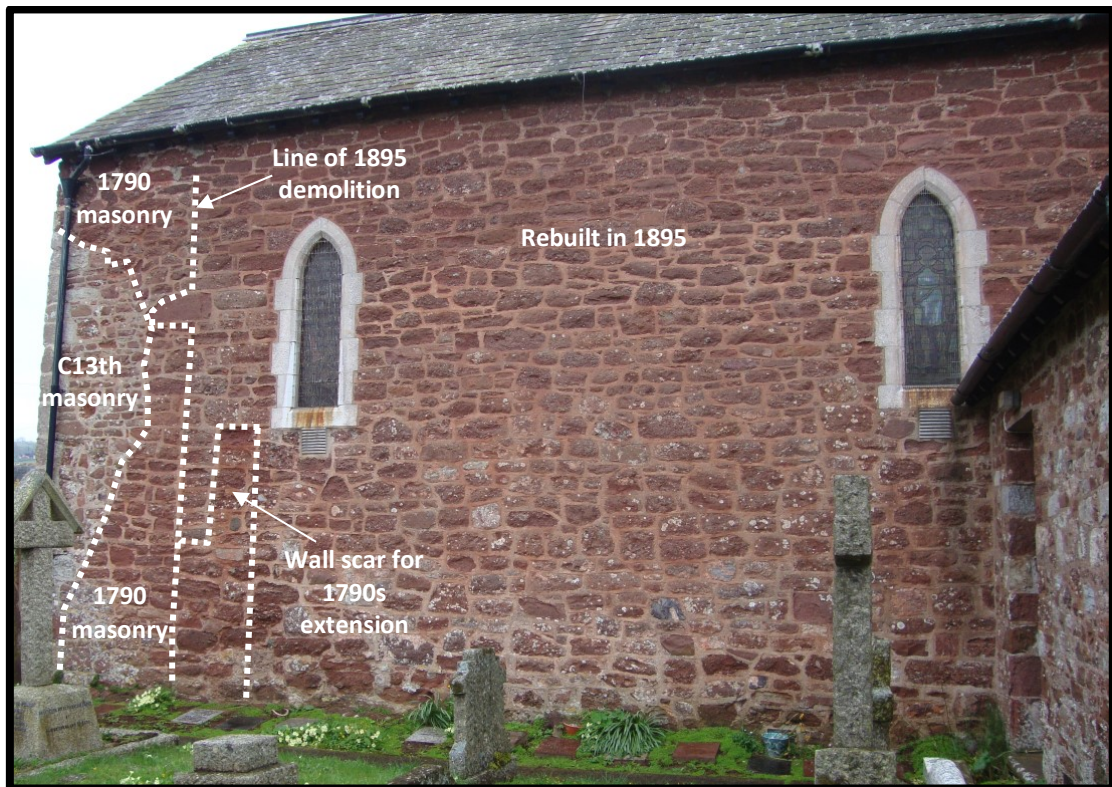


Fig. 17 The eastern part of the north wall showing the stump of 13th-century walling cut by the fabric of 1790, which is in turn cut by the fabric of 1895.

### 3. RAPID BUILDING SURVEY

#### 3.1 Geology

The church is constructed out of local breccia and sandstone rubble, the earliest parts of which consist of smaller pieces of unsquared rubble, with broad masonry joints giving, overall, a paler colour than the areas of later masonry, which are a darker red in colour. The external dressings of most of the earlier openings are of a purple-grey volcanic trap which has weathered to a very attractive silvery colour. Inside the church some of the openings appear to have dressings of a paler stone, perhaps a limestone such as Beer, which may be indicative of a later medieval date but, since all the stylistic evidence has been lost, it is difficult to be certain of the date of these interventions.

Later areas of masonry employ larger blocks of red breccia, and imported stones for dressings, including a grey limestone possibly quarried near Chudleigh, Ashburton or Plymouth. The main areas of this masonry are at eaves level and around the modern windows, and also the north wall which had to be almost entirely rebuilt following the demolition of the late 18th- and early 19th-century aisles. The following description is based on a rapid visual analysis of the fabric and may need to be revised in the event of further archaeological or documentary study of the building.

#### 3.2 The west wall

The best-preserved areas of early masonry are at the east and west ends of the church where, despite all the later alterations, the 13th-century masonry seems to be very well preserved. At the west end the quoins at both the north-western and south-western corners are preserved to within a metre of the roofline, above which, the quoins have been renewed when the roof was rebuilt. It is probable that the new aisle of 1812 was simply constructed to butt against the earlier masonry and that no attempt was made to tie the walls together. The central lancet of the west wall, which provides the main dating evidence for this phase also seems to be well preserved, with dressings of buff stone and red sandstone voussoirs above the window head. This window was perhaps blocked in the 17th or 18th centuries, as its internal jambs and splays seem to have been extensively rebuilt at the time of the late 19th-century restoration, probably as a consequence of the removal of the western galleries.

After it was blocked the window seems to have been replaced with two small rectangular openings, lighting the gallery and the area below it. These openings can still be traced as disturbances in the masonry. They appear on the late 19th-century plans of the building (Figs 9 and 10), the lower one of two lights and the upper of one light only. These windows were probably inserted to serve the gallery noted in Dean Milles questionnaire in the mid 18th-century and it is likely that they were of late 17th- or early 18th-century date, with wooden window frames and mullions, though they may conceivably have been earlier, perhaps with stone dressings, since it appears that J. W. Rowell was willing to retain them in his proposed rebuilding (Fig. 12).

#### 3.3 The north wall

The north wall has been rather extensively rebuilt following the demolition of the 18th- and early 19th-century aisles in 1895; however, some areas of possibly early masonry remain. The principal area of such masonry is at the west end of the north wall, in the lower part of the elevation (Fig. 16). Although much patched, this masonry appears consistent with the masonry of the west wall and the quoins and thus may be of 13th-century date. It appears to have been retained after the rest of this section of the wall was demolished in 1812 to act as a support for the centre of the new western gallery. The masonry rises to the nearly the height of the late Victorian vestry

alongside it and, above this, is an area of masonry of quite a different kind incorporating much red breccia. This might represent a blocked window in the original north wall of the church, but as it is rather larger than an early window, another possibility is that a doorway existed in this position, opening onto the late 17th- or 18th-century gallery and approached by an external stair. This was a common arrangement in post-medieval churches, especially where a gallery was reserved for a particular group of individuals, such as charity school children, musicians, wealthy local gentry families, or, simply, the poor of the parish, who may have been required to use a different entrance and seating areas well segregated from their more affluent neighbours.

The blocking of this doorway or window appears to have survived above the level of the early 19th-century gallery (Fig. 10) and may, perhaps, have been utilised as a pier to support the small timber turret and spire constructed in around 1812, which must have stood in this area. Above this the rest of the masonry is of red breccia and must date from the rebuilding of the north wall following the demolition of the Georgian and Regency aisles in 1895.

Beyond the late 19th-century vestry the greater part of the north wall is of larger, rounded and randomly coursed blocks of red breccia and must have been entirely rebuilt in 1895, to fill the void left following the demolition of the 18th- and 19th- century extensions. Both the small lancet windows in this part of the wall have dressings of grey limestone and must also be of late 19th-century date, representing two of the 'three new windows' inserted in the 1890s 'to match the present St Nicholas one' (see above p.14). Their reconstruction in this form in 1895 was no doubt entirely speculative, though it seems to have been based upon the character of the surviving western lancet window which was also restored at this time. Nothing is known about the location or character of any earlier openings; these must have been destroyed at the time the church was extended.

At the extreme east end of the wall a few fragments of earlier masonry are visible. Part of the wall consists of smaller pieces of red sandstone in comparison with the late Victorian work to the west and terminates at a vertical building break. This may represent the consolidation of the stump of the demolished north wall in 1790. Earlier, probably 13th-century masonry survives to the east, consisting of still smaller blocks of stone with rather wide mortar joints, giving this part of the building a paler colour. Part of a possible wall scar for the east wall of the 1790s aisle is also visible, low in the wall, with the rebuilt wall of 1895 extending above it (Fig. 17).

### 3.4 The east wall

The east wall of the church is the best-preserved part of the building and is almost entirely of 13th-century date (Fig. 18). It is constructed of small blocks of local sandstone rubble with very wide mortar joints, and the dressings to the quoins are of a silvery-grey stone, possibly volcanic in origin. There are no signs of significant restoration or alteration except immediately below the roofline, where a very shallow course of later masonry must represent rebuilding associated with the replacement of the roof. The earlier gable was perhaps reduced in height a little at some period, but the present pitch of the roof may closely follow the original, which seems to have been only marginally steeper. The outstanding feature of this elevation is the fine series of five graduated lancets with un-cusped lights contained beneath a single relieving arch, without hood moulds. This window, which seems largely unrestored, is one of the only five-light lancet windows of this kind surviving in Devon, where most surviving 13th-century work, as at Bere Ferrers, Broadnymet or Denbury, usually incorporates bar tracery or basic plate tracery and rarely extends to more than three lights. There may have been many more windows of this type, but most seem to have been replaced with larger traceried windows in the 15th and 16th centuries. The best comparisons for this window are perhaps the 13th-century three-light windows at Sampford Peverell, the magnificent group of lancets at St Lawrence, Crediton, those in the aisle at Milton Damarel, in the nave at Broadwoodwidge, and the early 14th-century lancet groups in the transepts at Ottery St Mary.



Fig. 18 The east wall of the church showing the best-preserved area of 13th-century masonry and the fine group of graduated lancets.

The small circular oculus low in the east wall appears to be a modern intervention, though it may perhaps have survived as a blocked opening at the time of the late 19th-century restoration and was perhaps re-opened as a curiosity. Circular windows were certainly used in 13th-century church architecture in Devon; a blocked example of similar size survives on the north side of the chancel at Denbury to this day. The Denbury window appears to have been a conventional aperture for lighting; however, the function of such an opening in this low position in the east wall at Ringmore is a puzzle. If a lamp were displayed within the opening during the night, it is conceivable that it may have been intended to serve as a guide for shipping on the Teign, or perhaps as a guide for



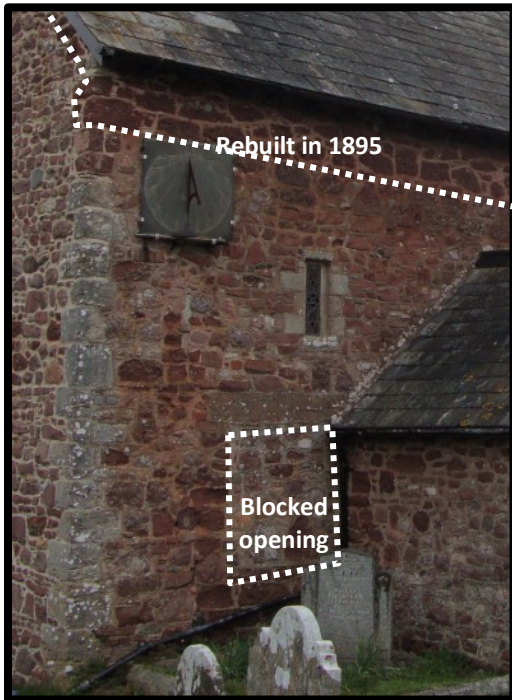


Fig. 19 The west end of the south wall showing an early slit window, a blocked post-medieval opening and the rebuilt eaves line.



Fig. 20 The slit window seen from the interior showing the medieval jambs and vault to the embrasure.

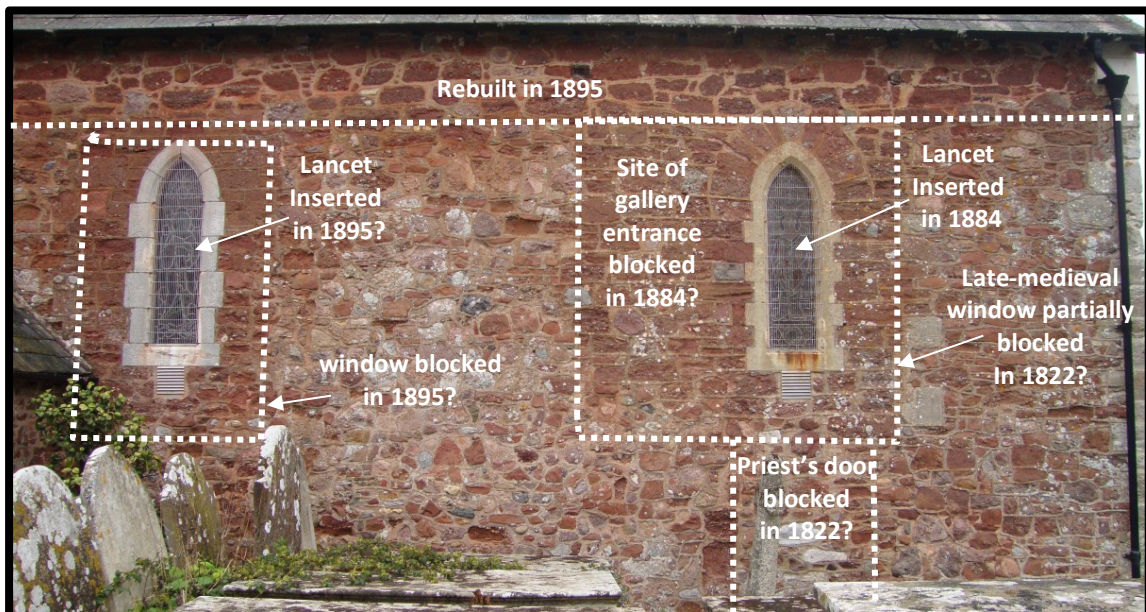


Fig. 21 The eastern part of the south wall showing two large blocked windows, possibly of late-medieval date, replaced by 19th-century lancets of two different periods, and a blocked doorway, possibly representing an earlier priest's door.

a ferry crossing from Bishopsteignton. The absence of any dressings makes it unlikely that this opening could ever have been a medieval window and an alternative explanation might be that the opening should be interpreted as the void left by an ‘acoustic jar’, built into the wall of the church with its mouth facing into the church. The void may have been rediscovered and misinterpreted as a window aperture at the late 19th-century restoration.

The incorporation of acoustic jars into the fabric of chancels, or beneath the choir stalls in larger churches, was a practice known from medieval England and France, which was believed to have improved the resonance of the building for singing. A collection of ceramic jars built into the chancel at Ashburton, and interpreted as acoustic jars, were recorded in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* in 1873 (Amery 1873, 203-205). Though it is perhaps unlikely that such a small church as Ringmore ever required much enhancement of its acoustics, and no record of the discovery of a jar within the opening is known to the author, this conjecture might provide at least some explanation for the survival and retention of such an unusual opening at the reconstruction of the church in the 1890s.

The small, circular window is completely unrelated to the enormous oculus which was once a feature of the east wall of the 1790s extension of the church (Fig. 11) and which was itself an unusual feature of the building. Large oculi were sometimes incorporated into 18th-century church buildings, as at the late 18th-century Roman Catholic church of St Nicholas in Exeter, which had three. The presence of this large oculus at St Nicholas at Ringmore remains unexplained except as a means of lighting the pulpit, though why a circular rather than a rectangular form should be chosen for this feature remains unknown.

### 3.5 The south wall

The south wall, west of the porch, is surprisingly complex and may be of early date. This area features a low, blocked window opening immediately to the west of the porch, which was perhaps inserted to improve the lighting in the area under the western gallery (Fig. 19). The window appears as a small two-light opening on Rowell’s plans of the church (Fig. 12) and it appears that he intended to retain it to light a baptistry area around the repositioned font.

As the window seems to have been associated with the gallery it seems likely that it was of post-Reformation date. Unfortunately, no evidence for the dating of the opening remains. In 1895 the window was removed and blocked, probably because an earlier slit window had been discovered higher in the wall, just above it and, in order to reinstate this fully, it was necessary to block the lower window. The small slit window is so plain that it is difficult to date, but it appears from the splayed jambs, vaulted embrasure and other details visible on the interior (Fig. 20) to be an original feature of the 13th-century building, reopened rather than completely rebuilt at the restoration of the church. A small slate sundial remains fixed to the wall above this window and the upper part of the wall, below the eaves, has clearly been rebuilt (Fig. 19).

To the east of the porch the south wall seems to be remarkably well preserved and much of the fabric may be of 13th-century date, though none of the windows are ancient. The two lancet windows in this part of the wall have dressings of different materials and are presumably of different dates, though both are clearly 19th-century restorations (Fig. 21). The eastern window has buff limestone dressings and radiating breccia voussoirs. It contains the stained-glass figure of St Nicholas, and thus appears to have been inserted in *c.*1884 following the fundraising activity recorded in the *Exeter Flying Post* (EFP 7.1.1884, 7d). The window may have replaced a very large rectangular window, possibly of late-medieval or early post-medieval date, the embrasure of which can still be traced internally. This window appears on the 19th-century survey plans of the church (Fig. 10), though it had clearly been altered by that date, having been partially cut away to accommodate a doorway opening onto the southern gallery, served by an external staircase. These alterations were probably made in 1822 when the gallery was inserted. A small opening beneath this window, the jambs of which are still visible, may perhaps be interpreted as a former priest’s

door. This may also have been blocked at the addition of the gallery as it is shown shaded in the 19th-century survey drawings, though there are clear indications of a door frame (Fig. 9). Although this might represent a medieval opening it is also possible that it was an entrance to a private pew. Doors to these facilities were often of very modest size.

The western of the two lancets appears to be contemporary with the two late 19th-century lancets in the north wall and has grey limestone dressings forming a sharply-pointed head, without radiating voussoirs. This lancet replaces a further large window of uncertain date, which appears on the 19th-century survey plans (Fig. 9) and also on Rowell's plan for the rebuilt church. In the event, the window was removed, and a new lancet substituted during the restorations of the 1890s. The window had three lights separated by mullions and may have been of quite respectable antiquity, since Rowell clearly intended to retain it, unaltered. It did have a square, rather than a splayed embrasure, however, which may suggest that it was an enlargement of an earlier lancet of approximately the same dimensions as the present one. These two windows in the south wall are perhaps the only evidence that the church had been subjected to late-medieval remodelling.

#### 4. THE WATCHING BRIEF

During the excavation of the trench for the heating system a watching brief was maintained. The trench was *c.*1.8m long, 0.3m wide and 0.6m deep and revealed a simple deposit sequence across the whole length of the excavation.

The trench was initially opened at the west end of the church and then dug eastwards, by hand, towards the small building at the northern edge of the churchyard (Fig. 22). The trench thus passed through an area of the churchyard which was likely to have been used for both medieval and post-medieval burials, and also through the sites of both the new aisle of 1812 and the earlier aisle of 1790. The line of the trench seems to have missed the west wall of the 1812 aisle by a fraction but passed straight through the line of the east and west walls of the 1790s aisle. One might therefore expect to encounter the foundations, or robber trenches betraying the position of the former foundations of the Georgian additions (Fig 23) and possibly also footings for gallery posts, since these are also likely to have had deep footings. The internal areas of the building may well have been used for burial vaults, which were usually laid out to reflect the configuration of early seating schemes and family pews. Such evidence is an important source of information for the layout of long-vanished church furnishings. The site thus had considerable potential for revealing archaeological deposits with a date range encompassing the entire history of the building.

The excavated deposits consisted of a 0.55m thick mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional slate, breccia and local limestone fragments. This was interpreted as the backfill of an earlier water pipe, the top of which was visible at the bottom of the trench. The topmost layer consisted of an 0.05m thick dark brown silty clay topsoil containing no charnel material. At the full depth of the excavations, no features, deposits or dating evidence were found to indicate archaeological activity within the area of the development. There can be little doubt either that the trench for the water pipe on the same line as the new trench had cut through and removed any earlier deposits to a depth below the present excavations, or that the ground level around the church had been raised, burying any archaeological deposits relating to the medieval churchyard and the post-medieval aisles at a lower level.

Following 19th-century restoration schemes, historic churchyards were often landscaped to remove mounds of charnel earth threatening to bury the church and solve the concomitant problem of damp (CCS 1841, 6; Webster (ed.) 2003, 198). Although some regretted these interventions- as memorably described in Thomas Hardy's 1882 poem 'The Levelled Churchyard': "We late-lamented, resting here, are mixed to human jam"- landscaping of this sort was considered desirable in order to tidy the churchyard and to create a picturesque setting for the quiet contemplation of mortality and the encouragement of reverent, rather than worldly behaviour by those visiting the church (CCS 1841, 14; Webster (ed.) 206).

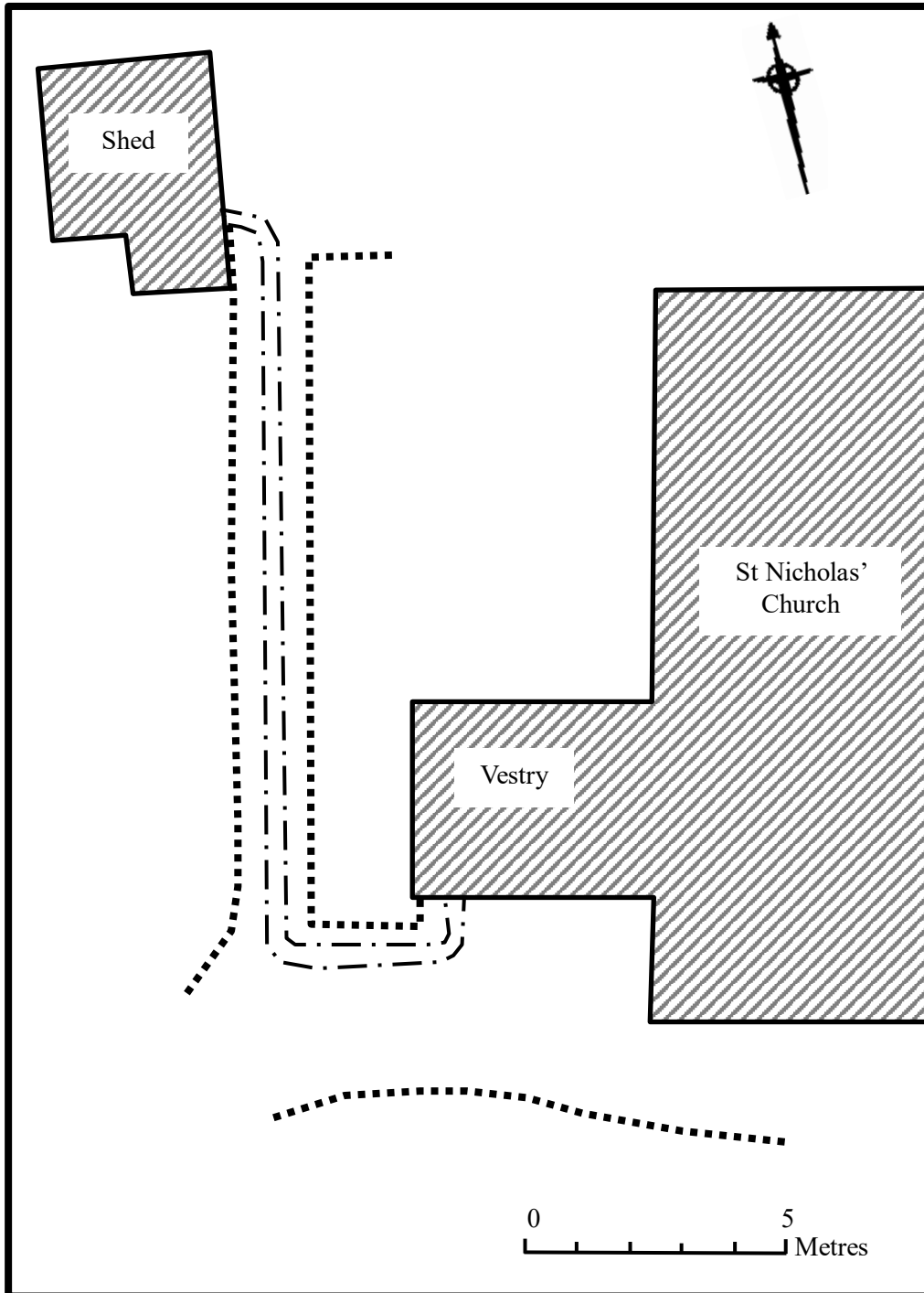


Fig. 22 Plan of the trenching in relation to existing buildings and pathways, based on plans supplied by the contractors.

At Ringmore the absence of charnel material in the excavated deposits suggests that the cemetery at Ringmore was 'levelled up' in the 1890s by the addition of imported topsoil, rather than being dug out and cut away to level the ground. It may perhaps be suggested that the medieval cemetery had sloped gently away to the water's edge, and that the present levels represent levelling up of the site either at the time of the Georgian additions to the church or, more probably, subsequent to their demolition. This may suggest that the archaeological potential of the site remains undisturbed by either the pipe trench or the recent excavations.

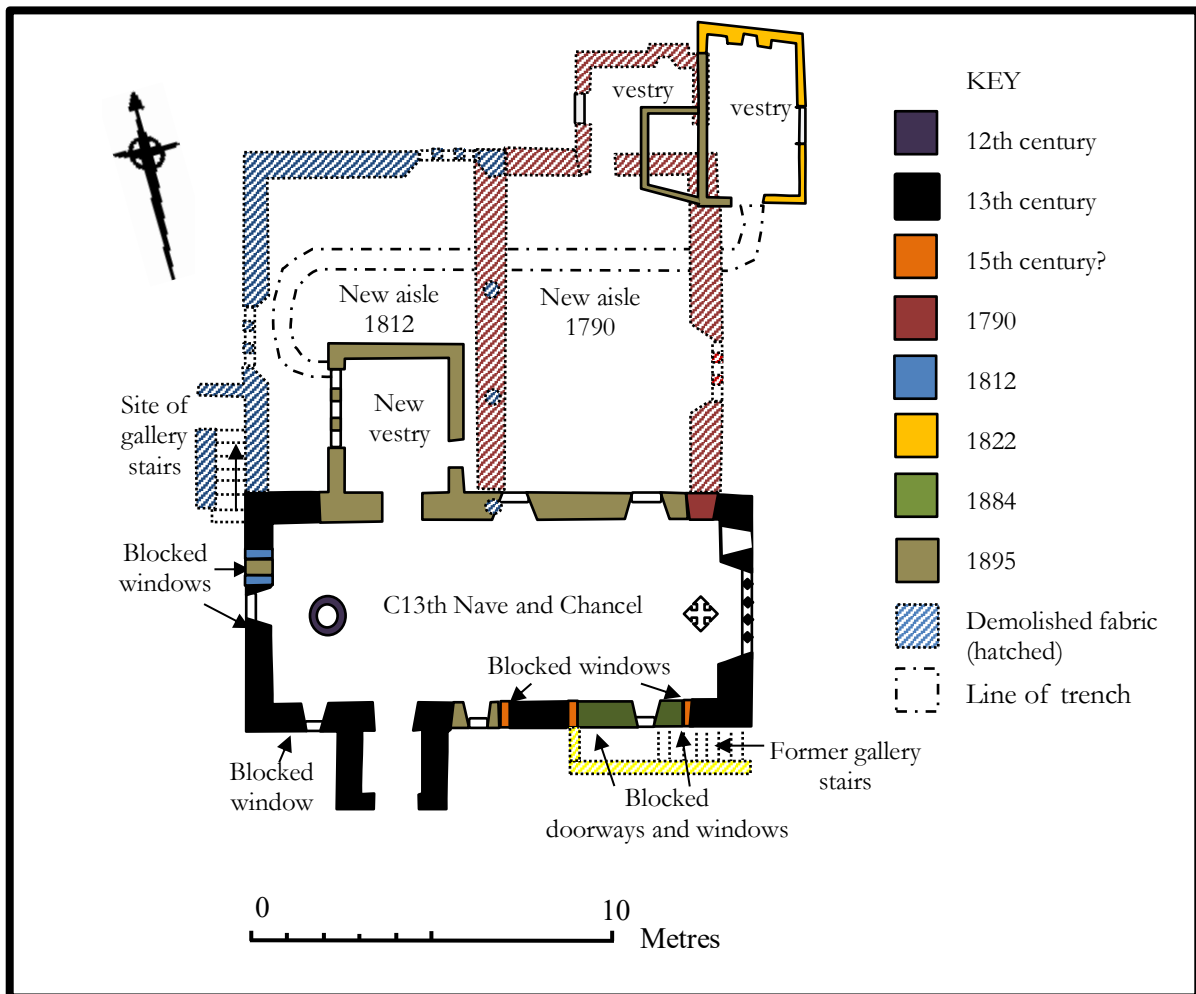


Fig. 23 Plan of the site and buildings, based upon the historic plans, showing the suggested phasing of the existing and demolished fabric and the route of the trenching through the site (scale approximate).

## 5. CONCLUSION

St Nicholas' church at Ringmore, although much restored in the late 19th century, is a remarkable survival, preserving the appearance of a small 13th-century parish church to an extent uncommon elsewhere in Devon. The site of the church is unusually close to the water's edge: most Devon churches serving coastal settlements, as at Dawlish and at Brixham, were sited either some way inland or high on cliffs above the water, where they were protected from coastal raiders, though there are notable exceptions at Wembury, near Plymouth and, of course, the early church site at St Michael, East Teignmouth. The Teign estuary seems to have been a particularly wealthy and significant part of Devon during the 11th and 12th centuries, no doubt because of the ease of transport links by water with the rich agricultural country east of Dartmoor and the stannary towns on the moor. A settlement on the banks of the river Teign is likely to have been a very desirable and potentially lucrative possession for a Saxon or Norman Lord and this may have prompted the development of a church and settlement at Ringmore.

There is some possible evidence of a planned layout to the settlement. This shows especially in the layout of Higher Ringmore Road, with its right-angled bends in the village and the cross lanes at right angles to it linking it to Brook Lane at Home Farm (now lost, though part survives as Brookvale Orchard) and at Lambert's Lane. These define large, sub-rectangular plots lying to the east and west of Higher Ringmore Road, which differ from the much longer and

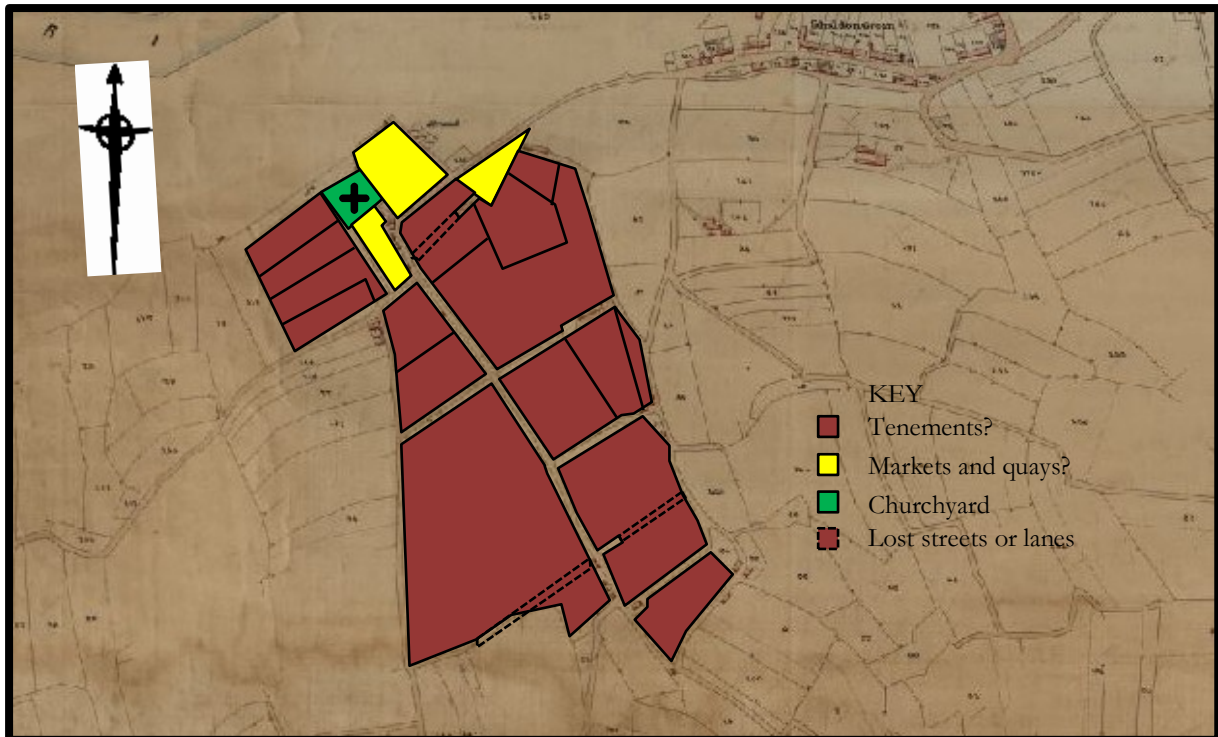


Fig. 24 Extract from the Tithe map for St Nicholas' parish showing the grid layout of a possible 12th- or 13th- century planned settlement at Ringmore.

narrower strips in other parts of the parish, such as those immediately west of Long Lane, which are reminiscent of medieval strip fields. (Fig. 24). The tithe map does not record many recognisable burgage plots, but these may perhaps have been lost due to later developments. This conjecture needs further research, but it is certainly possible that Ringmore was laid out as a planned settlement by a late 11th- or early 12th-century landowner aiming to exploit its good river and land communications as a source of income. The settlement might have been developed by Baldwin of Devon after he succeeded Britric following the Conquest, or perhaps by Stephen of Haccombe, a little later. Ringmore may well have seemed a more propitious location for a new town than the obscure site of Haccombe further inland.

It seems likely that the early settlement was focussed on early quays in the area of the Strand and near Ringmore House, where a triangular area may well represent a public open space. There may also have been a possible market place to the south-east of the churchyard, now built upon. A church on the site seems certain to have existed by the 12th century, when it is mentioned in documentary sources, but the present building is probably of 13th-century date

St Nicholas certainly developed parish status, since it possesses a 12th century font, which demonstrates that it must have enjoyed the rights of baptism. It is also set within a clearly defined, square churchyard (Fig. 8) and it seems probable, therefore, that it had also enjoyed the right of sepulture, though no evidence of early burials was encountered in the trenching. The naming of the entire parish 'St Nicholas' after the church is also an indication that the building was formerly of higher status than it now appears, exercising its own parochial functions. The establishment of the parish system in England 'emerged only in the 12th century and was not completed until the 13th' (Higham, in Allan, Higham & Young 2008, 104). Local churches seem generally to have been founded earlier than this and the pattern of such foundations is considered to be related to earlier patterns of religious observance, relating to holy sites, centres of population and manorial properties (ibid., 102). Some chapels are sufficiently ambitious and liturgically equipped to be interpreted as churches which for some reason did not develop parish status and which ended by serving instead as manorial or wayside chapels. This is probably true of the late 13th-century chapel at Fardel, in Cornwood, near Plymouth, (ibid., 109) and may also be true of the chapel of

St Loye in West Wonford, near Exeter (Fig. 25). Like St Nicholas, these chapels retain their 13th-century fabric and simple one-celled plans to a degree unusual in Devon, where later medieval development of churches in the 'Perpendicular' style has usually eclipsed the earlier fabric.

Although St Nicholas clearly did succeed in establishing a parish, the lack of later-medieval structural development of the church may imply that the church had suffered some form of setback soon after its 13th-century rebuilding. The most likely setback of this kind would be the diversion of some of its income to support another foundation, possibly the Collegiate Church founded at Haccombe, nearby, in the early 14th century. This college was founded by a member of the Archdeacon family, then owners of Haccombe, whose property later transferred to the Courtenays and thence to the Carews. Following this intervention by its patrons the church at St Nicholas may not have had the resources for major rebuilding until the growth of the population in the parish in the later 18th century. The attention of the patrons seems to have switched to Haccombe, where they installed a formidable array of monuments and brasses during the later 13th, 14th and 15th centuries.

Diversion of the resources of the church elsewhere certainly seems to have put an end to the importance of the ancient burh at Kingsteignton, and it is not unlikely that the putative settlement at Ringmore failed to prosper for the same reason. The settlement may also have failed as a result of competition with Teignmouth and the twin market towns of Newton Bushell and Newton Abbot which came to dominate the area. After this the character of the settlement at Ringmore seems to have remained rural, and its population small, until the growth of Shaldon in the 18th century. The small parish church of St Martin at Broadnymet in mid Devon provides a comparable example of a parish church which has remained unaltered since the 13th century due to poverty. Broadnymet was a very small parish and its church struggled through the Middle Ages, the Reformation and the 17th and 18th-centuries on the slenderest of resources, only to finally close for public worship and fall into dereliction in the 1830s. Like the chapels previously described, the fabric of the church at Broadnymet is almost entirely of 13th-century date though, unlike these, and unlike St Nicholas, it retains its medieval roof intact (Fig. 26). The appearance of St Nicholas in the late Middle Ages may not have been dissimilar to that of Broadnymet, though one must imagine it appropriately furnished and decorated. The chapel at Ayshford in Burlescombe parish, near Tiverton (Fig. 27) provides another parallel for the appearance of St Nicholas before the Reformation, and this church retains a late-medieval chancel screen of simple type, without a loft. As St Nicholas has evidence of a priests' door in its south wall, its interior is highly likely to have been divided by a chancel screen, presumably of a similar simple kind without a loft. For much of its existence the church seems to have been regarded as a chapelry of Haccombe, and it is not unlikely that it also served as a wayside chapel for a ferry crossing to either Bishopsteignton or Teignmouth.

The medieval origins of the chapel appear to have been entirely forgotten by the late 18th century, since Polwhele and others attributed the foundation of the church to the Carews of Haccombe, and dated this to just over a century before. No documentary or physical evidence has been found for the reconstruction of the church in the 17th century, nor for its alleged 'beatification' in 1745, but it seems likely from the description of the building in Dean Mille's questionnaire that the church had been substantially repaired before 1750, that any medieval furnishings had been cleared away and that the church had been re-seated and reordered, with the addition of a western gallery, in one of these interventions. The only medieval feature which seems to have remained visible was the fine east window, which may always have been admired as unusual, thus ensuring its preservation.

The most drastic alterations to the building were undertaken in the 1790s by the addition of a new 'Aisle'. Unlike conventional medieval aisles, or those additions influenced by Victorian 'ecclesiology', this was not added parallel to the existing building but at right angles to it, producing an 'L' shaped building with limbs of approximately equal size, focussing on the pulpit positioned



Fig. 25 The ruined chapel of St Loye at West Wonford, showing an almost unaltered 13th-century church of single-cell plan, comparable to St Nicholas.



Fig. 26 The derelict parish church of Broadnymet in mid Devon, also a single-cell church of 13th-century date, but retaining its medieval wagon roof intact.



Fig. 27. The small, single-celled chapel at Ayshford, Burlescombe, Devon, showing features which are likely to have existed at St Nicholas, including a plain medieval rood screen, without a loft, and a wagon roof. The open benches shown are of 19th century date, but benches were in use in Devon from the 13th century.

so as to be visible from both vessels. The significant issue of such additions was that the focus was the pulpit, and not the altar, which often remained out of the direct sightline of the new seating, in the chancel. Additions of this type were not uncommon in the late 18th and early 19th-centuries, often, as in rural Ireland, allowing for the segregation of the sexes to ensure reverent behaviour during the celebration of the sacred mysteries and during long sermons. Many churches



thus ended up with a ‘T’-shaped plan. Examples of lateral aisles of this type in Devon formerly existed at Brampford Speke and at Otterton, but both have been demolished. The proposals for an ‘aisle’ of this kind, dated 1820, survive in the Lambeth Palace Library collection for Southleigh, Devon (Lambeth Palace Library, ICBS 003249), but this seems never to have been built. The only surviving example today seems to be the curious transept added to the north side of Hatherleigh church in north Devon, now housing the organ.

The rapid growth of the community at Ringmore and Shaldon, as discussed above, necessitated the addition of a second aisle immediately west of this in 1812, and subsequently the addition of and refurbishment of the galleries to create even more space. It is likely that the medieval roof of the church was removed either at the addition of the eastern aisle or, more probably, at the addition of the western aisle. At the same time any remaining furnishings from the medieval church are likely to have been removed.

The reinstatement of the church to its medieval form appears to have begun in the 1880s with the repair of the east window and the lancet in the south wall, the reinstatement of the ancient font and the replacement of the box pews with chairs. These acts show that the architectural qualities of the church, despite its modesty, were already appreciated. J.W. Rowell’s proposals for the enlargement of the church, by the addition of a chancel to the east of the Georgian building, converting the older building to an aisle, would also have been archaeologically sensitive, since it allowed for the preservation of almost all of the medieval and Georgian fabric, together with many of its post-medieval window openings. In the event this proposal was not adopted and an entirely new parish church was constructed in 1893-1902 at the head of Shaldon Bridge.

The old church was then restored to its original dimensions, probably under the direction of E. H. Sedding. This seems also to have been a highly sensitive work. Sedding was careful that the building could still be read archaeologically- his additions are quite distinct in terms of their geology from the surviving, very carefully restored medieval lancets and the earlier 1880s lancet in the south wall. The floor levels appear to have been raised slightly, at least in the sanctuary, since the medieval piscina and aumbry are now at a very low level in the wall and a new credence shelf has been provided at a more convenient height in the east wall. Sedding re-seated the church with open benches of a modern type characterised by an inverted ‘Y’ shape. These were formerly common in urban churches in Devon but are now increasingly rare. The roof, too, is frankly modern and the new furnishings, including marble paving, sanctuary panelling and a stone altar, are of a sumptuous Edwardian character which is characteristic of Sedding’s works and of the elegant and seemly churchmanship of the early 20th century. Surprisingly, the post-Reformation Holy table was also preserved, now relegated to the vestry. Its simple, turned baluster legs and painted graining are a moving survival, among all this marble, from the ‘unpretending structure’ of the Georgian St Nicholas.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by the Parochial Church Council of St Peter, Shaldon. The attached WSI (below) was approved by Christina Dove, Planning support Officer for Teignbridge District Council. The site recording was carried out by Richard Parker of Richard Parker Historic Building Recording and Interpretation and the watching brief by M. Steinmetzer of Oakford Archaeology. The documentary research was carried out by Lucy Browne. Mr Parker is grateful to the Building Contractor, Mr Jeremy Mole for assistance during the building works. We are also grateful to the PCC of the Peter’s, particularly the church and chapel wardens, Frances Commander and Lesley Bill at St Peter’s and Geoffrey Cook at St Nicholas’ for commissioning the work and for their patience during the preparation of this report.

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## APPENDIX

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 01392 423233

### WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT ST NICHOLAS' CHAPEL OF EASE, RINGMORE, IN THE PARISH OF SHALDON, DEVON.

*Prepared on behalf of the PCC of St Peter's Church, Shaldon*

*by*

***Richard Parker and Marc Steinmetzer.***

Location: St Nicholas Church, Ringmore, Devon.

Postcode: TQ14 0ET

Parish: Shaldon.

District: Teignbridge.

County: Devon.

NGR: (SX 92387 72316).

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter were contacted for an Accession Number on 11/11/2016

This WSI is based upon documents approved by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET) for comparable projects.

## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

- 1.1 This document has been produced by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation in association with Oakford Archaeology to outline the methodology to be used during an archaeological watching brief at St. Nicholas' Chapel of Ease, Ringmore, in the Parish of Shaldon, Devon. The building is a small medieval parish church lying in the Teignbridge district of Devon at (SX 92387 72316). The document represents the 'Written Scheme of Investigation' (WSI) outlining archaeological works required as a condition of planning Permission (16/00813/FUL) and a Faculty for the installation of a hybrid heat pump unit adjacent to the existing building and trenching across the churchyard to an outbuilding in the vicinity of the church. The works are to serve an air source heating system to replace the existing heating system at the church.
- 1.2 St Nicholas' Church is a small medieval building lying very close to the banks of the Teign, a short distance west of the Victorian parish church at the head of Shaldon Bridge. The church is a Grade II Listed Building and currently consists of a single cell, consisting of a nave and chancel under one uninterrupted roof, with a porch extending to the south and a small vestry on the north side of the building. The church is constructed of rubble local masonry and preserves evidence of many 13th-century lancet windows, especially at the east end, where the group of five graduated lancets is considered one of the best surviving examples of this architectural composition in Devon. The church was much enlarged in the 18th century as a result of the growth of the settlement at Shaldon to the east. The church was nearly doubled in size by the addition of a very large north aisle, involving the removal of a large part of its north wall. Galleries were then added on the south side and further galleries to west and north in the 19th century. After the construction of the new parish church at the head of Shaldon Bridge in 1893-1902, the church was restored to its original dimensions, probably under the direction of E. H. Sedding. The present north wall was reconstructed at this time and the site of the 18th-century extension returned to use as part of the churchyard. The furnishings of the church are largely of 19th- and 20th-century date, with the exception of an unusual Norman font.
- 1.2 The works involve the replacement of the existing heating system which appears to consist of high-level, wall-mounted heaters. The replacement heating units are to be fixed to the interior of the west wall of the church building and served by pipework running under a suspended floor within this part of the building. After passing into the 20th-century vestry to the north the pipework will break through the west wall of the vestry, dip below ground and follow an 'U'-shaped course through the churchyard in a 0.6m deep trench, measuring 0.3m wide, running for 20m eastwards to pass into a small WC block lying to the north-east of the church, where a Daikin Altherma Hybrid Outdoor Unit will be affixed to the west wall.

## 2. AIMS OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1 The aims of the archaeological recording will be:
- to investigate and record any buried archaeological deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the development,
  - to report on the results of the project.

## 3. METHOD

- 3.1 A watching brief will be undertaken during the groundworks at the site and monitoring will take place on any excavations considered likely to expose archaeological deposits, such as trenching either within or without the building.

### *Groundworks*

- 3.2 The archaeological contractor will liaise closely with the main contractor on site, the PCC's professional advisers and the Diocesan Archaeological Adviser prior to the commencement of the works, to ensure that an appropriate site presence is maintained. The main site contractor will be expected to inform the archaeological contractor of their programme of works and allow time in the programme for the adequate investigation and recording of any archaeological deposits.
- 3.3 All machining will be carried out under direct archaeological control, using a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Machining will cease if archaeological deposits are exposed, in order to allow

those deposits to be investigated, excavated and recorded. This may cause localised delays to the groundworks programme, although every effort will be made to keep any such delays to a minimum. If no such deposits are present then, once natural subsoil has been confirmed, or formation/invert level reached, across the whole of the development area, archaeological monitoring will be terminated. Similarly, if it can be demonstrated that there has been significant modern truncation, then archaeological monitoring will be terminated in these areas.

- 3.4 If archaeological features are present, then hand-excavation will normally involve:
- The full excavation of all features and structures to formation level;
  - The examination of spoil for the recovery of artefacts.

Additional excavation may also be required for the taking of palaeo-environmental samples and the recovery of artefacts.

### ***General project methods***

- 3.5 Environmental deposits will be assessed on site, on site by a suitably qualified archaeologist, with advice as necessary from Allen Environmental Archaeology (AEA) or the Historic England Regional Science Advisor, to determine the possible yield (if any) of environmental or microfaunal evidence, and its potential for radiocarbon dating. If deposits potential survive, these would be processed by AEA using the English Heritage Guidelines for Environmental Archaeology (EH CFA Guidelines 2002/1), and outside specialists (AEA) organised to undertake further assessment and analysis as appropriate.
- 3.6 Initial cleaning, conservation, packaging and any stabilisation or longer term conservation measures will be undertaken in accordance with relevant professional guidance (including *Conservation guidelines No 1* (UKIC, 2001); *First Aid for Finds* (UKIC & RESCUE, 1997) and on advice provided by A Hopper-Bishop, Specialist Services Officer, RAM Museum, Exeter.
- 3.7 Should artefacts be exposed that fall within the scope of the Treasure Act 1996, then these will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner according to the procedures relating to the Act. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.8 Should any articulated human remains be exposed; these will initially be left *in situ*. If removal at either this or a later stage in the archaeological works is deemed necessary, these will then be fully excavated and removed from the site subject to the compliance with the relevant Ministry of Justice Licence, which will be obtained by the archaeological contractor on behalf of the client. Any human remains will be excavated in accordance with Institute of Field Archaeologist Technical Paper No. 13 (McKinley and Roberts 1993). Where appropriate bulk samples will be collected.
- 3.9 The project will be organised so that specialist consultants who might be required to conserve artefacts or report on other aspects of the investigations can be called upon (see below).
- 3.10 Health and Safety requirements will be observed at all times by archaeological staff working on site, particularly when machinery is operating nearby. Personal protective equipment (safety boots, helmets and high visibility vests) will be worn by staff when plant is operating on site. A risk assessment will be prepared prior to work commencing.
- 3.11 The Diocesan Advisory Committee and the Devon County Historic Environment Team will be informed of the start of the project, and will monitor progress throughout on behalf of the planning authority. A date of completion of all archaeological site work will be confirmed with the DAC, and the timescale of the completion of items under section 5 will run from that date.

## **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING**

- 4.1 The standard Oakford Archaeology recording system will be employed, consisting of:
- (i) standardised single context record sheets; survey drawings, plans and sections at scales 1:10, 1:20, 1:50 as appropriate;
  - (ii) colour digital photography;

- (iii) survey and location of finds, deposits or archaeological features, using EDM surveying equipment and software where appropriate;
- (iv) labelling and bagging of finds on site from all excavated levels, post-1800 unstratified pottery may be discarded on site with a small sample retained for dating evidence as required.

## 5. REPORTING AND ARCHIVING

5.1 The reporting requirements will be confirmed with the DAC on completion of the site work. If little or no significant archaeology is exposed then reporting will consist of a completed County HER entry, including a plan showing location of groundworks and of any significant features found. The text entry and plan will be produced in an appropriate electronic format suitable for easy incorporation into the HER, and sent to the DAC within 3 months of the date of completion of all archaeological fieldwork.

5.2 Should significant deposits be exposed the results of the archaeological work will be presented within one summary report within six months of the date of completion of all archaeological fieldwork. Any summary report will contain the following elements as appropriate:

- a location plan and overall site plans showing the positions of the groundworks and the distribution of archaeological features;
- a written description of the exposed features and deposits and a discussion and interpretation of their character and significance in the context of the known history of the site;
- plans and sections at appropriate scales showing the exact location and character of significant archaeological deposits and features;
- a selection of photographs illustrating the principal features and deposits found;
- specialist assessments and reports as appropriate.

5.3 A .pdf version of the report will be produced and distributed to the Client and the DAC on completion of site work. A copy of the report and .pdf version will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

5.4 An ordered and integrated site archive will be prepared with reference to *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991 2nd edition) upon completion of the project.

The archive will consist of two elements, the artefactual and digital - the latter comprising all born-digital (data images, survey data, digital correspondence, site data collected digitally etc.) and digital copies of the primary site records and images.

The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) within 6 months of the completion of site work, while the artefactual element will be deposited with Royal Albert Memorial Museum (*ref. number pending*). The hardcopy of the archive will be offered to the RAMM and if not required will be retained by the archaeological Contractors

The Archaeological Contractors will notify the DAC upon the deposition of the digital archive with the ADS, and the deposition of the material (finds) archive with the RAMM.

5.5 A .pdf copy of the updated summary report will be submitted, together with the site details, to the national OASIS (Online Access to the Index of Archaeological investigationS) database within three months of the completion of site work.

5.6 A short report summarising the results of the project will be prepared for inclusion within the “round up” section of an appropriate national journal, if merited, within 12 months of the completion of site work.

5.7 Should particularly significant remains, finds and/or deposits be encountered, then these, owing to their importance, are likely to merit wider publication in line with government planning guidance. If such remains are encountered, the publication requirements – including any further analysis that may be necessary – will be confirmed with the DAC, in consultation with the Client. The archaeological contractor will then implement publication on behalf of the Client, in accordance with a timescale agreed with the Client and the DAC. This will be within 12 months of the completion of all phases of archaeological site work unless otherwise agreed in writing.

## 6. CONFLICT WITH OTHER CONDITIONS AND STATUTORILY PROTECTED SPECIES

- 6.1 If topsoil stripping or groundworks are being undertaken under the direct control and supervision of the archaeological contractor then it is the archaeological contractor's responsibility - in consultation with the applicant or agent - to ensure that the required archaeological works do not conflict with any other conditions that have been imposed upon the consent granted and should also consider any biodiversity issues as covered by the NERC Act 2006. In particular, such conflicts may arise where archaeological investigations/excavations have the potential to have an impact upon protected species and/or natural habitats e.g. SSSIs, National Nature Reserves, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar sites, County Wildlife Sites etc.

## 7. COPYRIGHT

- 7.1 The archaeological contractors shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in this document.

## 8. PROJECT ORGANISATION

- 8.1 The project will be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced archaeologists, in accordance with the Code of Conduct and relevant standards and guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (*Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*, 1994, revised 2008), plus *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* 1994, revised 2008). The project will be managed by Richard Parker and Marc Steinmetzer. Oakford Archaeology is managed by a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

### ***Health & Safety***

- 8.2 All monitoring works within this scheme will be carried out in accordance with current *Safe Working Practices (The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974)*.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### *Specialists contributors and advisors*

The expertise of the following specialists can be called upon if required:

*Bone artefact analysis:* Ian Riddler;  
*Dating techniques:* University of Waikato Radiocarbon Laboratory, NZ;  
*Building specialist:* Richard Parker;  
*Illustrator:* Sarnia Blackmore or Tony Ives;  
*Charcoal identification:* Dana Challinor;  
*Diatom analysis:* Nigel Cameron (UCL);  
*Environmental data:* Hayley McPharland (Historic England);  
*Faunal remains:* Lorraine Higbee (Wessex);  
*Finds conservation:* Alison Hopper-Bishop (Exeter Museums);  
*Human remains:* Louise Loe (Oxford Archaeology), Charlotte Coles;  
*Lithic analysis:* Dr. Linda Hurcombe (Exeter University);  
*Medieval and post-medieval finds:* John Allan;  
*Metallurgy:* Gill Juleff (Exeter University);  
*Numismatics:* Norman Shiel (Exeter);  
*Petrology/geology:* Roger Taylor (RAM Museum), Imogen Morris;  
*Plant remains:* Julie Jones (Bristol);  
*Prehistoric pottery:* Henrietta Quinnell (Exeter);  
*Roman finds:* Paul Bidwell & associates (Arbeia Roman Fort, South Shields);  
*Others:* Wessex Archaeology Specialist Services Team

Richard Parker and Marc Steinmetzer, 11th November 2016.