

# Archaeological Recording

*at*

**St MICHAEL'S CHURCH,  
KINGSTEIGNTON, DEVON**

*By R.W. Parker*

**For The Parochial Church Committee  
of St Michael's Church, Kingsteignton**



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**REPORT No. 2015.03**

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Fig. 1 General view of St Michael' Church from the south showing the mixture of red sandstone and grey limestone employed in the fabric.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological recording project and watching brief at St Michael's Church, Kingsteignton, a large medieval parish church in the Teignbridge district of Devon (SX 87180 72850). The archaeological works were commissioned by Mark Ledgard of Smiths Gore Property Consultants on behalf of the Parochial Church Council of St Michael's, Kingsteignton, as a condition of the grant of a faculty for alterations to the church building. The alterations involved the demolition of an existing modern boiler house and chimney adjacent to the west wall of the north aisle and the construction in its place of a new boiler house and disabled toilets. In order to connect the new building to the church the lower part of the west window of the north aisle and part of the wall below it had to be removed to provide a new doorway with level access from the church to the new disabled toilets.

### 1.1 The recording project

The archaeological works were undertaken by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation in June and July 2013. The recording included the production of a photographic record of the aisle wall and window and also a drawn record of the elevation, stone for stone, at a scale of 1:20 to show the character of the masonry which it was necessary to remove. The demolition of the wall was then observed and manuscript notes were made describing the fabric. Following the completion of the new building in September 2013 a shallow service trench was dug in the churchyard, extending around the north wall of the aisle and alongside the new boiler house. The trenching was observed and photographed, and measured drawings were produced to show the location of the trench and any features within it. Fragments of disarticulated human remains disturbed during the trenching were collected and reburied by the parish following the end of the works.





Fig. 2 Location of the village at the head of the Teign estuary and (inset) the church within the village.

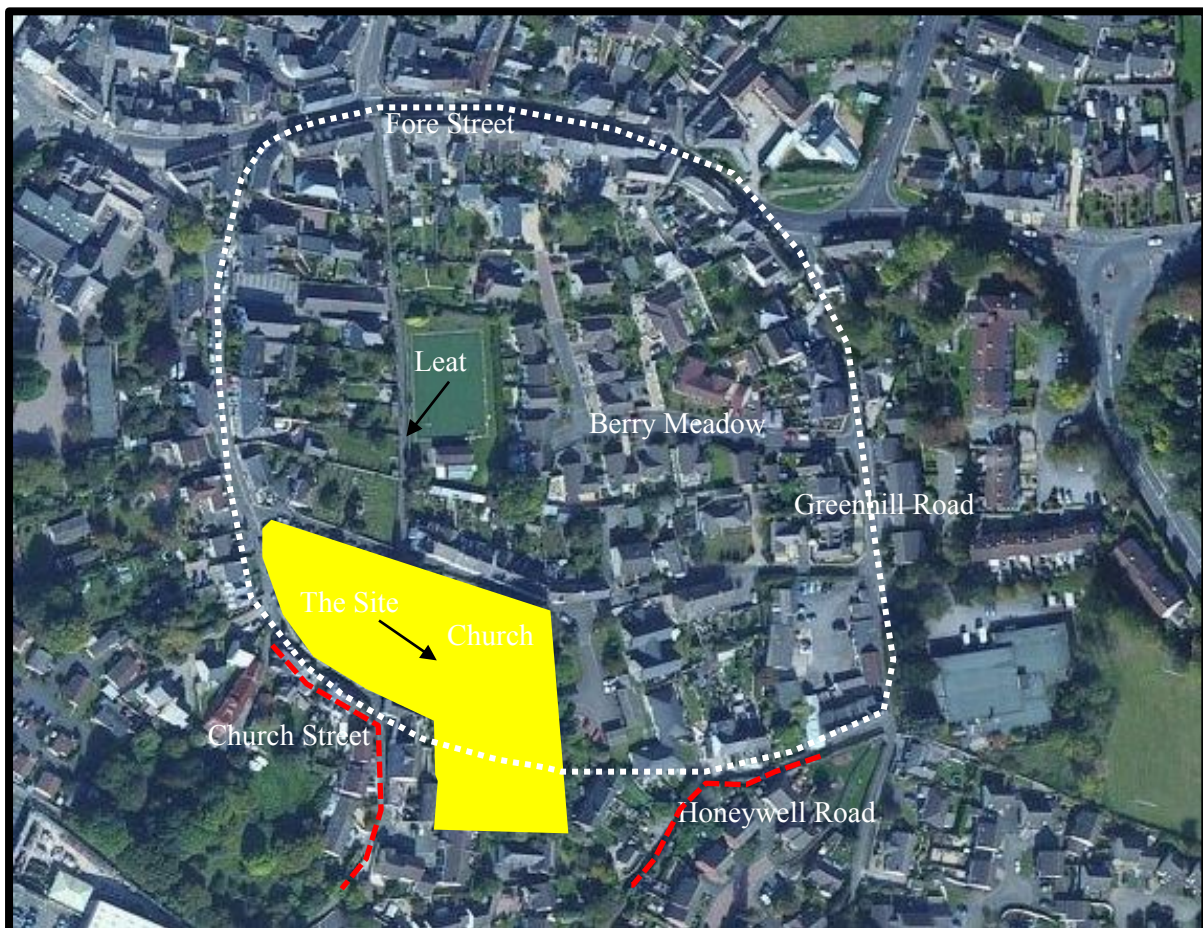


Fig. 3 Aerial view of central Kingsteignton showing the circular outline possibly representing an early fortified settlement or enclosure. The church and church yard (highlighted in yellow) lie close to this boundary in the south-western quadrant. The diversions of Church Street and Honeywell Road (represented by red dashes) away from this boundary, around a sub-rectangular protrusion

of the churchyard, may preserve the outline of lands or precincts pertaining to a Saxon minster church.

## 2 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Kingsteignton is a large village lying to the north east of Newton Abbot, Devon, on the northern side of the estuary of the Teign (Fig. 2). The village is an ancient settlement; excavations in 1985, to the north of the church, have revealed Roman pottery, glass and tiles, suggesting that there was a large Roman structure somewhere in the vicinity, and also post-Roman boundary ditches probably dating from the 7th-11th centuries (Weddell 1991, 19). The layout of the village is also strongly suggestive of an early settlement. The main streets describe a roughly circular pattern (Fig. 3) and it is probable that this preserves the outline of a fortified enclosure. This conjecture is supported by the name 'Berry Meadow' given to a street and a field in the centre of this circular enclosure, north of the church, a name derived from the old English '*burb*', signifying a fortified place (*ibid.*, 20). The church lies very close to the boundary of this relict feature, within its south-western quadrant, the modern churchyard boundary extending across it to the south.

As the name suggests, Kingsteignton was formerly a royal possession, and during the late Saxon period the village is believed to have formed the chief administrative centre for a large area stretching from the mouth of the Teign as far west as Widecombe in the Moor, northwards as far as Moretonhampstead and as far south as Broadhempston. At this period it is likely that the church at Kingsteignton was a minster church (*ibid.* 21-2). Minster churches were the principal church in a locality, housing a community of priests living communally according to a quasi-monastic rule, who would have travelled to serve other churches in the vicinity. Little is known of the communal buildings attached to Saxon minster churches, since none are known to survive. The classic medieval monastic plan with the church and the accommodation for the community arranged in a tightly-planned group around three or four sides of a rectangular cloister is generally assumed to be a later importation, dating from around the time of the Norman Conquest. Such Saxon monastic sites as have been excavated show a much looser arrangement of buildings, sometimes containing several churches in addition to residential and service buildings for the community, often forming groups of detached structures within a walled compound (Gilyard-Beer 1958, 11). All parts of the present churchyard, though no doubt much disturbed by later graves, thus have the potential to house significant archaeological remains.

Other topographical features may preserve evidence of the early church complex and its lands. Church Street and Honeywell Road, (which may formerly have run continuously along the southern edge of the earlier circular enclosure) seem to have been diverted away from this boundary immediately to the south of the church, to avoid a large, raised rectangular area on the south side of the building (Fig. 3). Although this area today presents the appearance of a relatively late addition to the burial ground, it is possible that it had been church property from an early date and thus it may preserve the outline of an enclosure or precinct relating to the minster church, overlying the earlier circular enclosure. This is perhaps the most likely site for the communal buildings of the minster, assuming the northern parts of the churchyard, nearer the centre of the settlement, to have been open burial grounds. Water management is also a characteristic feature of medieval ecclesiastical sites and, at Kingsteignton, the presence of a leat passing through the churchyard immediately to the west of the church tower is of particular interest. Although its main function in modern times has been to power the mill lying to the south west of the church it is conceivable that it also once provided a water supply for the minster community. Further watercourses and springs survive to the east of the church which may also have supplied or drained the conventual buildings.

The putative minster church at Kingsteignton was probably connected with the Diocese of Sherborne, which covered much of Devon and Cornwall from c.700 (Weddell 1991, 21). Along with three other Devon churches, the tithes of the church were later granted to Salisbury Cathedral by a royal servant named Serlo, in c.1122, to endow the 'Golden Prebend' of Teignton Regis (Pugh & Crittall, 1956) though the Vicarage of Kingsteignton was to remain in the patronage of the Bishop of Exeter (White 1850, 474). The early importance of Kingsteignton as an ecclesiastical centre may have been eclipsed in the years after the Conquest by the growth in importance of Salisbury and Exeter cathedrals, and by rich ecclesiastical foundations in the area such as the Premonstratensian Abbey of Torre, whose successful foundation of the nearby new town of Newton Abbot in the 13th century was ultimately to overshadow the older settlement. Bishop Stapeldon is known to have dedicated the high altar of the church in 1318 (Orme 1996, 176), which may imply a phase of rebuilding in the late 13th or early 14th century. By the

later middle ages the church at Kingsteignton was functioning simply as a parish church; however, the early importance and the wealth of the community and the archaeological potential of the site is still clearly reflected in the topography of the village and in the scale and fine architecture of the church.

### 3. OUTLINE ANALYSIS OF THE FABRIC

The present church building is a large structure in the Perpendicular Gothic style, constructed of local red sandstone and grey Devonian limestone. The building consists of a large tower of three stages, standing to the west of the nave and chancel. The nave is flanked by north and south aisles; the east end of the north aisle being terminated by a 19th-century vestry lying alongside the chancel. On the south side the church is entered through a small porch and, on the north, a modern addition, containing lavatories, shelters an earlier north door. Very little visible evidence of early fabric survives; the style of the window tracery throughout the church and of the internal arcades, which have wave mouldings and angle colonnettes in the manner identified by Cherry and Pevsner as 'Type B' (Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 45), implies substantial rebuilding in the 15th or early 16th century. It is, nevertheless, clear from an examination of the fabric of the south aisle that the church is a complex building which has developed over a long period through a series of accretions around an earlier core.

The south aisle is a particularly interesting part of the building and contains the earliest surviving fabric. Although the two eastern bays and much of the western gable are constructed of blocks of squared red sandstone and are probably of late-medieval date, the western part of the south wall, near the entrance porch, is clearly much earlier and contains a number of enigmatic features (Fig. 4). This part of the church is of mixed, random rubble including small blocks of limestone, sandstone and chert, reflecting the extremely complex geology of the area. The main south door of the church has a richly-decorated late medieval archway, but this is crude in outline and appears to be cut from a single block of stone, set within an earlier round-headed opening with a broad internal splay. It is possible that the head of the arch may be cut out of an earlier solid tympanum, which may imply the modification of a Romanesque doorway of 11th or 12th-century date. Within the masonry to the east of the porch are a number of blocked openings, cut by the Beer stone dressings of a large three light window with 15th-century style reticulated tracery (probably representing a 19th-century restoration of a late-medieval window). At ground level, well to the east of the porch, a vertical row of red-sandstone blocks can be seen ending in a curved form which suggests the jamb and curved head of a low archway. This is not large enough to represent the opening to an arcade, but is perhaps another doorway. Unfortunately insufficient evidence remains to show whether this had a pointed or round arch; both are possible. Since no trace of chamfering or moulding remains attached to these blocks, it is likely that the opening had separate dressings within the arch; it may have had several orders of colonnettes or, since there appear to be no voussoirs as such, a solid tympanum surrounded by a raised moulding. This doorway is perhaps also of 12th-century date, and its position towards the east end of the early fabric might suggest a priests' door. The red sandstone blocks forming the jamb are staggered as though to form the quoins of a returning wall, projecting to the south of the present aisle. This might be interpreted as a buttress, or possibly a much larger structure projecting beyond the south wall of the present church, such as a transept or porticus, now demolished.

At a higher level, above the head of the inserted window, the jamb of a further opening is visible above a horizontal string course running across the elevation. This may represent a small window. Its position very high in the wall is also suggestive of an early date, but the most unusual feature is the horizontal string course below it. This appears not to be a decorative feature articulating the elevation, but instead has the appearance of a drip course above the roof of a structure extending still further south beyond the limit of the existing church. This may represent a lean-to aisle, since a few blocks remain to show that it formerly extended to the west of the roof of the porch. A socket in the head of the blocked doorway might have housed a tie connected with this roof structure. The windows above the string course may have been set so high to provide light to the body of the church above the roof of this building. The implications of this will be discussed in the conclusion, but this does show that the ground in the immediate periphery of the church is likely to contain traces of long-demolished buildings for which no visible evidence remains above ground.

Much of the rest of the church is constructed of, or faced with, nicely squared small blocks of red sandstone, and lit by large windows with Beer stone dressings and 15th- or early 16th-century style tracery. This may suggest more or less complete rebuilding in the late-medieval period, which has



obscured much of the evidence for the form of the early building. Some clues remain, however, to show that, despite the apparent homogeneity of the fabric, it was also the product of successive accretions. The two bays of red sandstone fabric forming the east end of the south aisle have fabric and window tracery which initially appear continuous and of a single phase (Fig. 5). Closer examination reveals that this is not the case; there



Fig. 4 Elevation of the west end of the south aisle showing features of possible early-medieval date cut by late medieval windows.

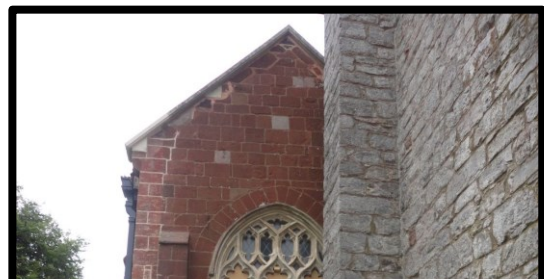




Fig. 5 Elevation of the east end of the south aisle showing evidence of discontinuity in otherwise apparently homogenous fabric.



Fig. 6 Elevation of the north aisle showing apparently homogenous fabric with minor variations in the width of the windows. The easternmost bay represents a 19th-century vestry. The projecting turret for a rood stair might mark the eastern wall of a possible north transept.



are slight differences between the two windows, which are of different sizes and have springers at different heights. This may show that the two eastern bays of the aisle are of different periods. The eastern bay might represent a chapel added beyond the east wall of an earlier southern transept which was later incorporated within a continuous aisle. This conjecture raises the possibility that the church originally had a cruciform plan. The earlier western bays of the aisle may thus be interpreted as a nave aisle added to the west of this putative transept, which would explain the very different character of the fabric in this area, but raises interesting questions as to the nature of the lean-to structure formerly built against it.

Unfortunately the fabric of the north aisle is less instructive: though there are clear differences in the size of the windows, the tracery is of similar character and the western bays are all of red sandstone (Fig. 6), with no helpful indications of earlier fabric or openings. The eastern bays contain a projecting stair turret for the rood stair which marks the position of the late-medieval rood screen. It is possible that this also betrays the position of an earlier east wall of a north transept, with a chapel beyond to the east, now recognisable by a slightly larger window. Inspection of the interior of the church shows no very obvious anomalies in the nave piers and arcades beyond a slight variation in the width and span of the arches and, though this does not preclude a cruciform church with transepts, it certainly provides no evidence unequivocally supporting this conjecture. The two windows in the central bays of the north aisle are of similar character. The north doorway, now concealed by a modern extension containing lavatories, has a plain chamfered two-centred arch. It seems likely that the western four bays of the aisle were all rebuilt at the same period and that any evidence of an earlier aisle or transept preceding it was removed at this time.

The western façade of the church is dominated by the tower (Fig. 7). This is almost entirely constructed of grey limestone, apart from the dressings of the principal west window and doorway, which have granite mouldings and tracery and feature alternating limestone and red sandstone voussoirs giving a very festive polychromatic effect to the heads of the principal openings. The tower is in three stages, divided by sloping string courses and crowned with an embattled parapet with corner pinnacles decorated with crockets. The buttresses are offset from the corners on each face, including the east face, and the very modest belfry windows, each of two small lancet lights, have red stone dressings.

The relationship of the tower with the body of the church, the differences in the building materials and the use of granite for dressings, as well as the stylistic details of the tower all suggest a very late date for the addition of the tower, perhaps in the 15th or 16th centuries. In fact, the very clumsy tracery of the west window, and the curious flat mouldings of the main west doorway may even point to

a date for the tower as late as the 17th century, though it is possible that these features have simply been renewed. The tower may have been constructed to the west of the original west front of the church to replace an earlier tower or belfry. There may even have been a central tower at the crossing of the nave and transepts, like those formerly at Bishopsteignton or East Teignmouth, or the surviving early towers at South Brent, Bratton Clovelly and Hemyock, where the original central tower now stands at the west end of a later church and the sites of the original nave and transepts are now buried under the churchyard.

At Kingsteignton further, detailed, study of the fabric and perhaps excavation would be necessary to show with any confidence how the church building developed but, whatever the details, it is evident from the analysis of the existing fabric that a relatively complex and architecturally ambitious building was gradually remodelled in a process of late-medieval homogenisation to form a classic, three aisled, Perpendicular-style box. There is every possibility that important features of the early building were suppressed in favour of this late-medieval ideal of a great rectangular hall-church with an impressive western tower and large windows. Many of these early elements may have lain within the footprint of the existing building, but that the possibility of projecting structures adjoining the church remains a strong one is clearly shown by the archaeology of the south aisle, with its redundant rooflines and truncated features, as well as by the topographical features and known importance of the site as an ancient manorial and ecclesiastical centre. The church was restored in 1825 (Lambeth Palace Library: ICBS 00596) and in 1865 (Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 523).

#### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

##### 4.1 The demolition of the Boiler House and the recording of the North Aisle Gable

The boiler house at Kingsteignton (Figs 7, 8) occupied the angle between the west wall of the north aisle and the north wall of the tower, and was a low structure with walls of concrete blocks, only the upper parts of which projected above the ground. The roof of the boiler house was a low, shallow-pitched, almost flat roof sloping down to the west from a point just below the sill of the west window of the aisle, which lay at a height of approximately 2.2m above modern ground level. The great majority of the interior of the building lay beneath ground level in a deep brick-lined cellar which had been dug in the 20th century at a distance of about 0.9 m from the base of the north aisle wall and just over 2m from the base of the tower, no doubt in order to avoid possible disturbance to the footings of the church building. The boiler house was vented by a tall, brown-brick chimney built against the aisle of the church alongside a projecting buttress at its north-western corner. This chimney and the entire upper part of the boiler house were entirely demolished to ground level for the construction of the new building exposing the fabric of the lower part of the west wall of the aisle and the lower part of the north wall of the tower.

The brick lining of the lower part of the boiler chamber was not removed during the current works, neither were the footings of the aisle or tower disturbed, so the possibilities for archaeological observations in these areas were limited; however, part of the overbuild against the church wall, above ground level but beneath the roof of the boiler house was dug away. This rose to a height of approximately 0.6m above the level of the church floor internally and was capped by 20th-century concrete (Fig 9) at a level about 1m below the roof of the boiler house. This upstanding baulk of material masked the plinth of the tower and its buttresses but rose just below the plinth of the aisle, and sloped down to the north away from the tower. This may conceivably have represented the level of build-up of the ground around the church prior to modern levelling of the churchyard in the 19th- or 20th century. Unfortunately this deposit was much disturbed by modern pipework and brickwork for the walling of the boiler house and no evidence of archaeological stratigraphy or other features were observed on its removal. The remains of a reused 19th-century slate tombstone were recovered from the walling of the boiler house close to the base of the tower buttress. This was much damaged, but retained the remains of a triangular head with a delicately incised border and bore the inscription as follows (restored):

(in loving mem)**ory**  
(of)  
(?A)NN  
(..) WIFE OF  
(?WA)LTHER HUNT,



DIED 19<sup>TH</sup> OCT. 1866  
 AGED 73  
*BLESSED ARE THE DE(AD)*  
*(W)HICH DIE IN THE LOR(D)*

There was no inscription or mason's mark on the reverse side. It is possible that Mrs Hunt's grave had been disturbed by the construction of the boiler house and that her remains were then reburied elsewhere or, alternatively, that the fragmentary tombstone was recovered from another part of the churchyard when the boiler house was being constructed and built in as a levelling course. In any event, the boiler house cannot possibly predate 1866 and must, presumably, have been constructed long after Mrs Hunt's family and friends had ceased to notice or care for her monument.

Following the removal of the concrete and brickwork the lower part of the wall of the aisle was exposed (Fig. 10). This revealed four courses of red sandstone blockwork beneath the level of the chamfered plinth and five courses above it, below the sill of the aisle west window. The blockwork was of very high quality, tightly coursed and bonded with white lime mortar. It was clearly meant to be displayed and must have been visible above the medieval ground level, which may be assumed to be more-or-less level with the present internal floors of the aisle. The footings of the church were also partially visible, consisting of small, unsquared blocks of red sandstone and fragments of volcanic trap rubble bonded with a very hard and very high-quality white lime mortar.

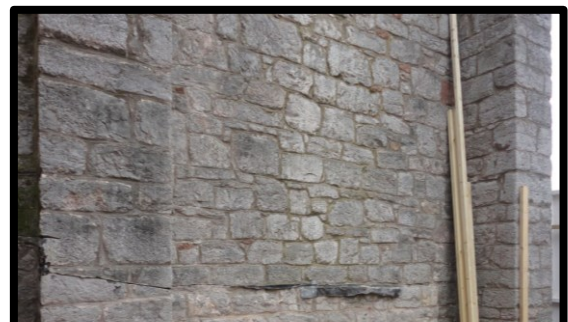
During the demolition of the aisle wall the sill of the aisle west window was carefully removed and a concrete lintel inserted in its place. The wall below the window was then dismantled. The external faces of the red sandstone blocks were very carefully squared, but their rear faces and sides had been left rough, the rear of each block having a somewhat pyramidal form like the root of a tooth, deeply embedded in the mixed rubble and white-lime mortar core of the wall. None of the facing blocks were found to contain carvings, painting or other signs of reuse and it is presumed that the stone for the facework of the building was specially quarried rather than being reclaimed from an earlier structure. The internal walling (Fig. 11)



Fig. 9 View of the underground boiler house showing the brick lining of the room and the concrete capping which may have preserved the height of post-medieval ground levels.



Fig. 10 View of the western elevation of the north aisle during the insertion of a concrete lintel for the new doorway and prior to the demolition of the medieval walling.





the plaster on the lower part of the interior walling had been renewed in the 19th century, perhaps as part of repairs following damage by damp penetration due to raised ground levels externally. The core of the walling was constructed of fragments of red sandstone, white limestone and dark purple volcanic trap, all bonded with hard white lime mortar. Two of the red sandstone blocks recovered from the internal facing proved to have been reused, and plainly originated as treads from a medieval newel stair. The masonry of the lower part of the tower was also exposed (Fig. 12). This had a chamfered plinth and was constructed of randomly coursed blocks of grey limestone. This masonry was left *in situ* and showed no evidence of openings, discontinuities, breaks in build or putlog holes for scaffolding.

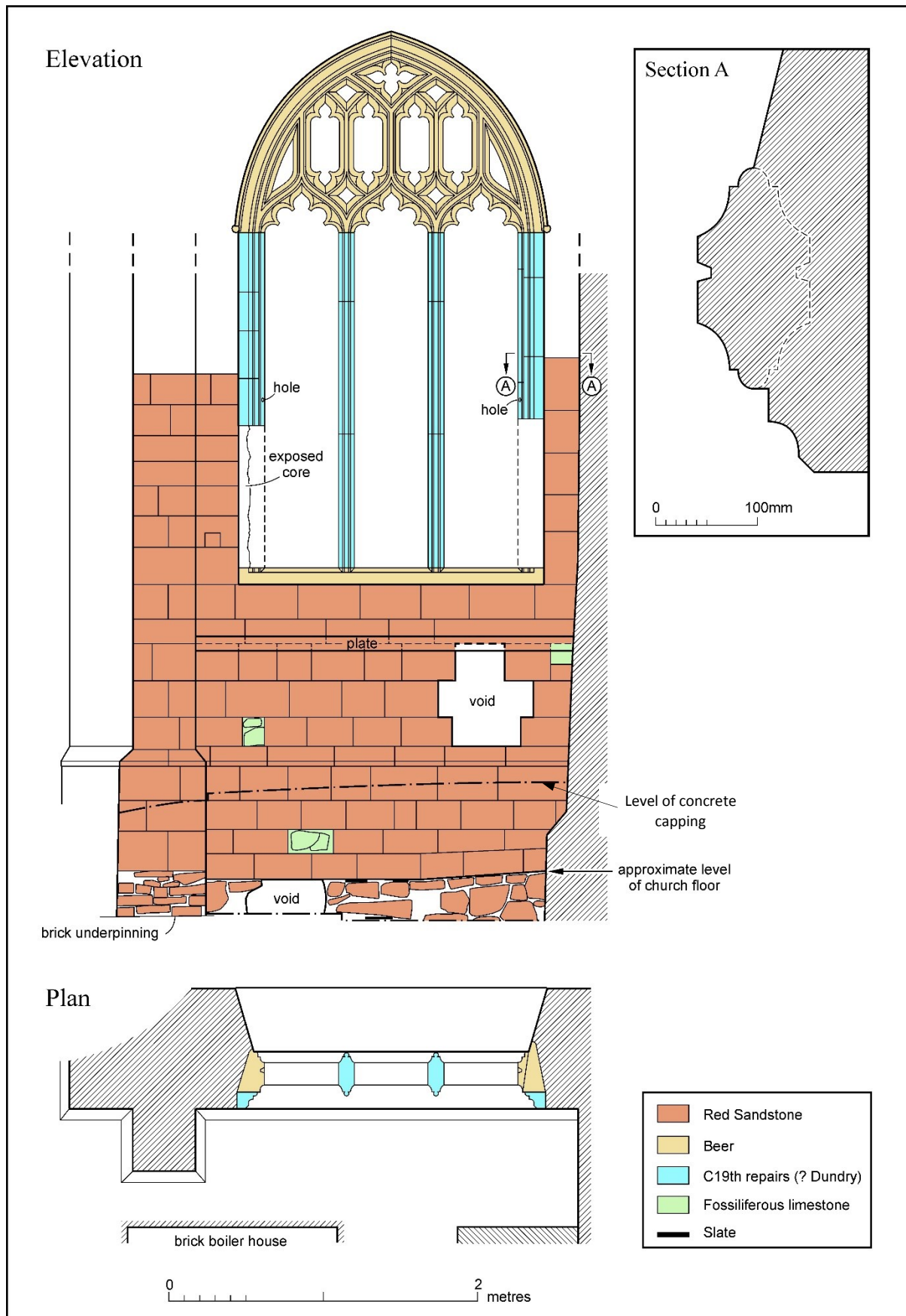


Fig. 13 Elevation and plan of the west wall of the north aisle prior to demolition showing the geology of the masonry and a section of the mullions and jambs.

As the masonry at the base of the tower was not to be removed, but only obscured by the new boiler house, it was recorded photographically, but no drawn record was made due to constraints of time.

The west window of the aisle is of medieval date, though much restored in the 19th century. The window (Fig. 13) has three ogee-headed lights divided by slender stone mullions featuring hollow chamfers both internally and externally, with small semi-circular fillets defining the major reticulations in the traceried head and a deep groove for glazing (Fig. 13 Section A). Each light has a cinquefoil head and the four sub reticulations in the tracery head have trefoils at the head and the base and are crowned by a lozenge-shaped quatrefoil. The whole of the traceried head of the window is of Beer stone and probably of 15th-century date, but the vertical mullions and the outer sections of the north and south jambs had been cut away and renewed in the 19th-century in a white limestone, possibly Dundry stone, probably because the original Beer stone dressings were decayed (Fig. 13, Plan and Elevation). The inner parts of the jambs, within the line of the glazing, and the sill of the window are of Beer stone and probably medieval, though the sill had been repaired numerous times. After the removal of the lower parts of the jambs of the window the construction of the dressings could be observed in section. The northern jamb was originally formed of a single block (though its external mouldings had been cut away and new stonework substituted, as mentioned above). The south jamb was a composite block formed of two separate pieces (again excluding the 19th-century external mouldings) with the mouldings worked on a thin veneer of stone cemented to the face of a plain triangular base block. This sparing or economical use of stone implies that Beer stone for dressings was an expensive commodity and that the builders were concerned to minimise waste, even at the expense of the possible structural integrity of the window jambs.

Above the window head the drip moulding is also of Beer stone and presumably also of medieval date. The dressings of the window are contained within an arch of red sandstone voussoirs and there is evidence, in the form of a clear break below the coping, that the present parapet and coping are a 19th-century addition. Presumably the roof originally had no parapet and was simply capped by slating. Access to this area was not possible and the positions of any purlins or wall ties could not be established with any confidence. As the upper parts of the wall could not be reached and were to remain undisturbed during the works the stonework of the lower part of the wall only was drawn in detail and the jointing of the stones of the window head and gable were not recorded.

The only finds recovered from the walling, apart from a few pieces of slate which had been used for levelling near the base of the wall, were the two worked blocks which had been built into the internal face of the wall. These blocks were clearly derived from a medieval vice or newel stair. One of the blocks (Fig. 14) retained the characteristic 'keyhole' form of the central sub-cylindrical newel and the flaring shape of the tread adjoining. The second block retained only the newel, the tread having been broken off before being reused within the wall. It is likely that the blocks were derived from a stair turret which was demolished at the construction of the present north aisle. This may have served as a rood stair within the north wall of the nave or chancel or, just possibly, the stair of an earlier tower, either at the west end or over the crossing of the early-medieval church building.



Fig. 14 Two shaped blocks recovered during the demolition of the west wall of the aisle, showing the characteristic 'keyhole' shape of the treads of a newel stair or vice.

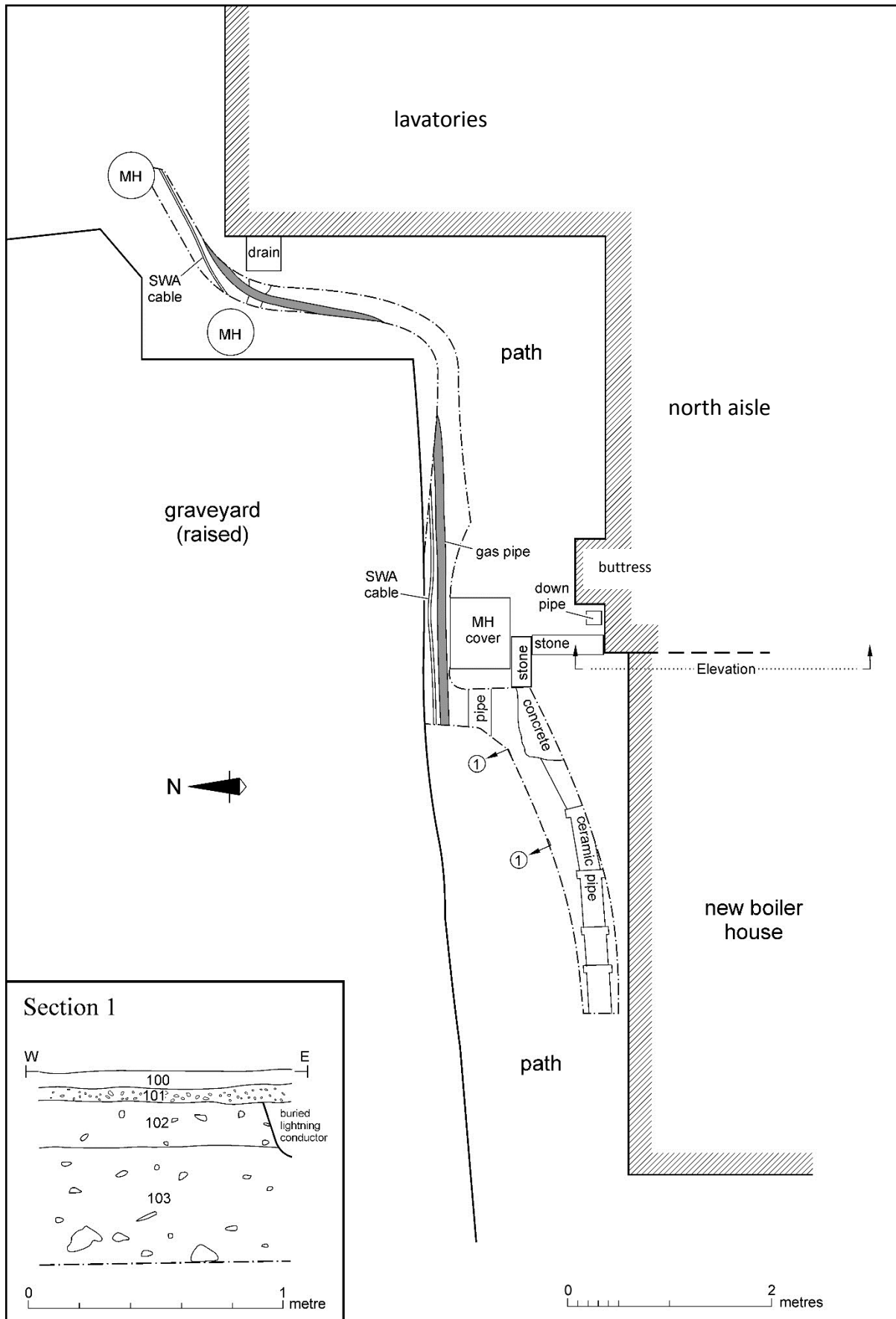


Fig. 15 Plan and section of the excavations for service trenches on the north side of the church.

## 4.2 The watching brief on the trenching

The new boiler house and lavatories required new servicing, within trenches dug by hand through the churchyard to connect with an existing foul water drain to the north of the church. The trench alongside the new lavatories and boiler house was 0.76m deep and 0.3 - 0.4m wide, and extended for 3.5m, as far as the west wall of the north aisle. Beyond this a further trench 0.35m deep and 0.2m wide continued to link with a manhole lying to the north of the earlier modern lavatory extension outside the north door of the aisle. For the most part the trenches followed the course of earlier gas and sewerage trenches which lay beneath a rough path running around the north side church. This aimed to limit the potential for disturbance to the archaeology of the churchyard.

During the trenching, owing to the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site, a watching brief was carried out on the groundworks. This work was carried out on behalf of Richard Parker Historic Building Recording and Interpretation by archaeologists from AC Archaeology (Devon). The site was visited twice, on the 2nd and the 9th of September 2013. The excavation of the trenching by the contractors was observed and the trenching was then planned at a scale of 1:50. A small section of stratigraphy undisturbed by the earlier service trenches was exposed and this was therefore recorded in section at a scale of 1:20. The results of the recording are shown in Fig 15, Section 1.

The uppermost layer of the exposed section (Context 100) consisted of modern turf, to a depth of 0.06m. This overlay a layer of fine, dark grey gravel (Context 101) to a similar depth, which was interpreted as the make up for a path. This overlay a very mixed and loose deposit of dark grey/brown coarse sandy clay (Context 102). This was interpreted as levelling following the excavation of the earlier pipe trenches, perhaps after some reduction in the level of the churchyard close to the walling of the church in the 19th or 20th century. Beneath this was a layer of soft, moist dark grey/brown sandy clay with occasional angular stones (Context 103). The layer was relatively homogenous and well consolidated and contained fragments of disarticulated human bone. This was interpreted as a burial soil, likely to have been dug and re-dug to a substantial depth by the excavation of successive graves over a long period. The bottom of this layer was not seen, the trench at this point being less than a metre deep. The remains recovered from the trenching included a total of 106 fragments of disarticulated Human bone comprising:

- Cranium fragments – 14
- Mandible Fragments – 1
- Hand/foot bones – 10
- Long bone fragments – 37
- Other fragments/ unidentified fragments – 45

These fragments were retained for reburial by the parish.

Owing to the route of the trenching along the line of earlier service trenches, and the shallow depth of the trenches there was little disturbance to the archaeology of the site and no grave cuts, early surfaces, walls, robber trenches or other archaeological features were observed

## 5. CONCLUSION

The building recording and watching brief at Kingsteignton was restricted to a relatively small area at the north and west side of the church. The western part of the north aisle, part of which was demolished during these works, was a late-medieval building, probably of 15th- or 16th-century date, constructed to a very high standard. The window in the west end of the aisle was contemporary with this phase, and the traceried head and the inner parts of the jambs survived intact, though the mullions and the outer part of the jambs had been replaced during one of the 19th-century restorations, probably in 1865.

The core of the walling below the window was of mixed rubble bonded with a very fine white lime mortar and represented undisturbed late-medieval fabric. Although this masonry incorporated some reuse of earlier stonework, including the treads of an earlier newel stair, no dateable architectural fragments, such as grotesques or foliage carvings were recovered. The reused blocks were used for the internal face only, and the external face of the wall was very carefully faced with blocks of red sandstone, so neatly squared and coursed that it is surely beyond doubt that this masonry was intended for display. It is unlikely that such carefully dressed and presented walling was ever intended to be rendered and the



colour contrast between the red sandstone and the white Beer stone dressings of the church must therefore have been valued. The polychromatic voussoirs of the openings in the tower also show that the church must have been intended to display its masonry and that bare stonework, rather than rendered finishes, was not, as is sometimes assumed, simply a Victorian fashion in church building and restoration.

Examination of other parts of the church building has shown that, despite its apparent uniformity, the church building actually developed over a long period, in the usual manner of medieval parish churches, by the accretion of aisles and chapels around an earlier core. The appearance of uniformity was clearly regarded as a priority at Kingsteignton, to the extent that when new elements were added to the church these were either carefully matched to the existing fabric or, potentially, refaced in red sandstone to give the desired unity of effect. The one area which was not remodelled in this way is the western part of the south aisle, which retains a surprising amount of highly instructive early fabric.

The reason for the retention of this part of the church remains unclear, especially as the two eastern bays of the south aisle and the greater part of its western elevation were rebuilt in red sandstone leaving only the western bays of the south wall unaltered. One possible reason for this omission may be that buildings stood against this part of the church throughout the Middle Ages, and that they were only demolished at a relatively late date in the history of the building. These structures, which seem to have included both a lean-to structure against the western bays of the aisle, which is betrayed by the survival of the string course representing a roofline, and a wall or building projecting southwards at right angles to the aisle, might have masked this part of the wall and thus prevented the rebuilding of this area.

The function of these structures remains uncertain. One would normally expect evidence of a roofline, with openings both above and below, to relate to a demolished aisle with a clerestory above lighting the nave. Churches sometimes contracted like this through the loss of redundant elements, to save money on repairs. An example of contraction through the loss of an aisle can be seen at Mariansleigh in north Devon, where the entrance doorway and south west window of the nave are contained within a pair of large arches which formerly formed an arcade to a demolished aisle. This does not appear to be the case at Kingsteignton, however. The remains of the blocked arched opening at ground level to the east of the porch are probably too small and low to have formed a convincing arcade, and in any case these features survive in the south aisle, rather than the nave of the church. It is possible that the present south aisle at Kingsteignton might have originated as the nave of an early, aisled church, and that it was later retained as an aisle when the whole church was expanded northwards, but the absence of an arcade between the nave and aisle makes this interpretation seem unlikely.

In a larger church with a known monastic origin there would be no difficulty in identifying the remains of roofline and doorways in this position as potentially those of a cloister. It was not unusual for the windows on the cloister side of a monastic church to be set high in the wall above the cloister roof, as at Pilton Priory, near Barnstaple, where this arrangement still remains in the north aisle (originally the nave) of a large, formerly cruciform church, originally with a central tower. The roofline of the cloister at Pilton is betrayed by a string course externally, just like that at Kingsteignton, and the eastern limit of the cloister by the remains of a demolished transept. Below the cloister roof small doorways opened from the cloister into the eastern and western parts of the church. At Pilton Priory the western door is still to be seen in the south wall, but the eastern cloister door was in the west wall of the transept, where part of its jamb survives. The usual arrangement was for both doors to open from the south wall of the church, as at Exeter Cathedral, where both the eastern and western cloister doors remain, though the cloister has been entirely demolished.

If this interpretation were applied at Kingsteignton (Fig 16), the blocked doorway to the east of the porch might be interpreted as the doorway to the east walk of a cloister, and the remains of the returning wall alongside it as the west wall of a demolished eastern claustral range, perhaps continuing the line of an early transept southwards. If the present south doorway of the church is also an early opening, perhaps altered in the 15th or 16th century by cutting away and re-carving a solid tympanum, then this might conceivably be interpreted as another cloister door, perhaps opening either into the north walk, or possibly into the junction of the north and west walks, from the western part of the church. Alternatively this doorway might have been created, or reset here in the late medieval period, when the present porch with its characteristically 16th-century spiral mouldings was erected and any earlier structures to the south were cleared away. Rebuilding of the western end of the aisle has obscured any evidence of a wall scar to the west, for the projection of the western claustral range, supposing one ever existed.

If these features do provide evidence for a cloister, it would certainly have been a very small one, with sides only 30ft (9.15m) at least, or at most 40ft feet (12.2m) long. Small or irregularly-shaped cloisters are not unknown and the size of the cloister would have depended on the size of the community as well

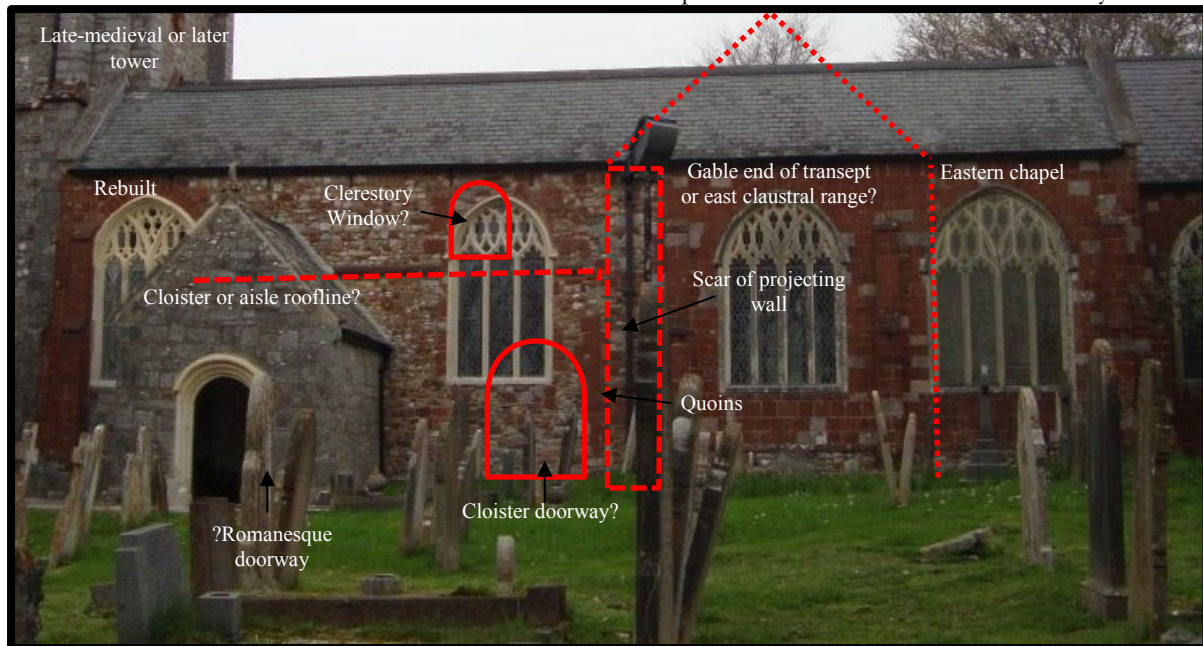


Fig. 16 Interpretation of the fabric of the south aisle at Kingsteignton showing the possible remains of a cloister roof, cloister east doorway, possible transept/east claustral range and the remains of a possible clerestory window above the cloister roof.

as the space available for laying out suitable buildings. As there is no known evidence for a monastic community at Kingsteignton, and as even the presence of a minster church at Kingsteignton remains a conjecture (though a very reasonable one) the presence of a possible cloister here is quite unexpected. There are a number of possible explanations: It is conceivable that the putative Saxon minster church had residential buildings in close proximity to the main body of the church, perhaps arranged around a cloister in imitation of continental monastic churches of the period. These buildings, or at least parts of them, might have survived into the later middle ages, perhaps in use as a priest's house, but were then perhaps cleared away at the very end of the medieval period during a major rebuilding of the church, leaving only these enigmatic traces in the south wall. At this time, perhaps, the present western porch may have been constructed and the main entrance to the church moved around to the south side. Prior to the erection of the present tower and the north aisle, the main entrance to the church may have been from the west or north.

Another possibility is that these remains represent evidence of an abortive attempt to found a small monastic community or collegiate church at Kingsteignton in the early middle ages. No record of such an attempt is known. It is possible that the grant of the tithes of the church to Salisbury Cathedral in 1122, by the Royal Collector, Serlo, may have hindered the development of such a community by diverting its funding to provide an income for the Prebendary of Teignton Regis, based at Salisbury. Unfortunately this remains a conjecture and unless the area to the south of the church is ever excavated under archaeological conditions, the nature and the layout of the mysterious buildings south of the church must remain unknown.

The tower of the present church is clearly a later addition, indeed, possibly a very late addition, and the reused blocks from an earlier newel stair, found within the west wall of the aisle raise the possibility that the present tower replaces an earlier tower or turret. If this is the case, then the admittedly very slight hints in the surviving fabric of a cruciform church with transepts may raise the possibility that the church at Kingsteignton was originally crowned with a central tower like the examples formerly at east Teignmouth and Bishopsteignton. If such a tower existed, it must also have been demolished during late-medieval alterations to the church and has left very little trace. The total disappearance, as late as 1815-16, of the central tower at Bishopsteignton (which has also left barely a trace in the visible fabric, but is well known from 18th-century illustrations) provides a valuable demonstration of the need for caution in

interpreting Devon's late-medieval churches. The ideal of a Devon church in the late Middle Ages appears to have been a large, uniform and many-windowed box with at least three parallel naves or aisles rising to the same height, with roofs continuous from east to west and with a commanding western tower. This ideal seems to have

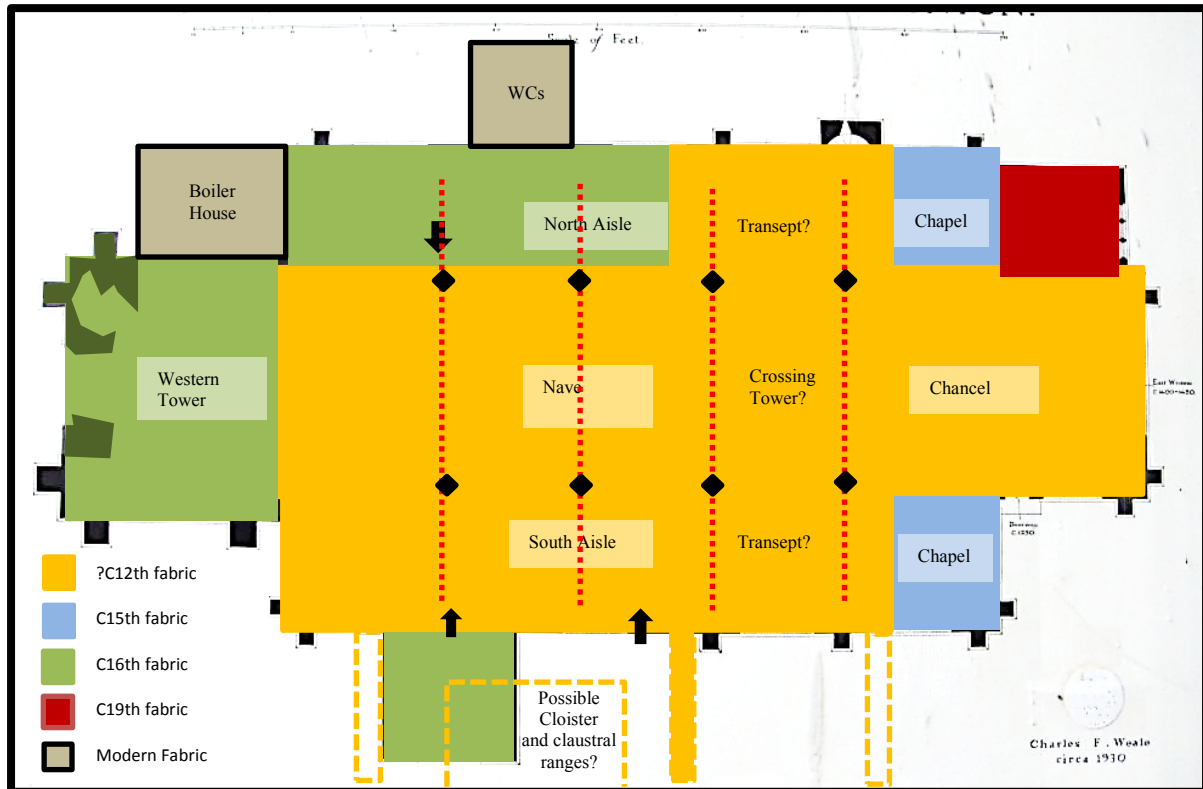


Fig. 17 Plan of the church by Charles Weale, c.1930 (not to scale), annotated to show the possible development of the building. The red dashed lines indicate how the existing arcades respect the 15th- and 16th-century bay divisions but not the earlier openings in the south wall, implying that the late-medieval building was constructed piecemeal around and alongside an older structure with a slightly different layout.





Fig. 18 View of the new boiler house and toilets after completion.

been pursued at Kingsteignton, as no doubt elsewhere in the county, by the suppression and remodelling of much more complicated older structures until only the slightest hints of the long history of slow development and accretion of the earlier buildings remained. At Kingsteignton the layout of the late-medieval piers of the arcades within the church are not on the same alignments as the demonstrably earlier features in the south wall, such as the present south door, the blocked doorway to the east of it, nor even the possibly 15th-century three-light window to the east of the porch (Fig. 17). This suggests that the earlier church building had slightly different geometry and that the late-medieval building was constructed around and alongside it, with the new piers and bay divisions slightly offset from the old, allowing the building to remain in use during the reconstruction. This was a common practice in medieval church building and can be demonstrated in many surviving buildings, as in the nave aisles at Exeter Cathedral and also at North Petherwin in Cornwall, where a late-medieval reconstruction campaign was left unfinished at the Reformation, leaving 16th-century granite piers standing immediately alongside the late 12th-or early 13th-century piers of a formerly cruciform church which would, had circumstances permitted, have been wholly replaced. This process shows that, although many churches in Devon appear, as Kingsteignton does, to have been “entirely rebuilt in the 15th cent.” (Hoskins 1954, 421), the story of most Devon churches is almost invariably more complex than first appears. Even the most apparently homogenous fabric can prove revealing if the opportunity is taken to make archaeological observations during alterations.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned on behalf of the Parochial Church Council of St Michael, Kingsteignton by Mark Ledgard of Smiths Gore Property Consultants. The attached brief was approved by the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, The Revd. Martin Fletcher. The site recording was carried out by Richard Parker of Richard Parker Historic Building Recording and Interpretation and the watching brief by Alex Farnell of AC Archaeology. Figs 14 and 15 were prepared by T. Ives of T. Eye Illustrations, based upon the original site drawings. Mr Parker is grateful to the contractors, Stone and Co. for assistance during the building works, to the clergy and churchwardens of St Michael’s Kingsteignton, to

Andrew Passmore and John Valentin of AC Archaeology and also to Mr M. Steinmetzer of Oakford Archaeology for his kind assistance with the project.

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## CONDITIONS:

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