

**Gas Main Replacement  
Plymouth Road  
Tavistock  
Devon**

Programme of Archaeological Works

*for*  
**Grontmij**  
*on behalf of*

**Wales and West Utilities**


CA Project: 3793  
CA Report: 12320

November 2012

Gas Main Replacement  
Plymouth Road  
Tavistock  
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CA Project: 3793  
CA Report: 12320

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Date	29 November 2012
Issue	01

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## SUMMARY

**Project Name:** Plymouth Road  
**Location:** Tavistock, Devon  
**NGR:** SX 4817 7435  
**Type:** Programme of Archaeological Works  
**Date:** 10-24 September 2012  
**Location of Archive:** Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery  
**Accession Number:** AR.2012.23  
**Site Code:** PTV 12

A programme of archaeological works was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with gas main replacement at Plymouth Road, Tavistock, Devon.

The remains of the western wall foundation of the western claustral range were identified together with one possible grave and two probable pits in close proximity, while a series of possible demolition layers were uncovered in the area of the eastern range. The partly robbed remains of the southern wall foundation of the eastern end of the Abbey Church were also identified.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2012 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out a programme of archaeological works for Grontmij on behalf of Wales and West Utilities (WWU) at Plymouth Road, Tavistock, Devon (centred on NGR: SX 4817 7435; Fig. 1). The majority of the works were located within the notification area of Scheduled Ancient Monument Devon 1020401 (Tavistock Abbey).
- 1.2 Discussions were held between WWU and Phil McMahon, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage (EH) and Bill Horner, County Archaeologist, Devon County Council to discuss the necessary archaeological mitigation and consents required for replacement of the existing gas main. An application for Scheduled Monument Consent for the works within the Scheduled part of the site was subsequently submitted, together with a supporting Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) compiled by CA.
- 1.3 A letter (ref. S000033442 dated 22 May 2012) from Mr Adam Tyson, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and acting on the advice of Phil McMahon, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, EH, granted Scheduled Monument Consent for the gas main replacement works (to be undertaken under a programme of archaeological works). Trenches 1, 3, 4 and 5 were located within the Scheduled part of the site. Trench 2 was located to the south-west of the Scheduled part of the site.
- 1.4 The programme of archaeological works was carried out in accordance with the WSI produced by CA (2012) and approved by Phil McMahon, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage (EH) and Bill Horner, County Archaeologist, Devon County Council. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 2008), the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991), the *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MORPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006). It was monitored by Phil McMahon, including site visits on 13 and 20 September 2012 and Bill Horner on the 11 September 2012.

### ***The site***

- 1.5 The works comprised the excavation of five trenches, for insertion of a replacement gas man within Plymouth Road. This part of Plymouth Road is located immediately to the north of the Bedford Hotel, in the area formerly occupied by the claustral complex and abbey church of the Benedictine abbey of St Mary and St Rumon (Fig. 2).
- 1.6 The site lies at approximately 81m AOD and the underlying solid geology of the area is mapped as St Mellion Formation, Interbedded Sandstone and Argillaceous rocks of the Tournasian to Arnsbergian periods. This is overlain by Alluvium of the Quaternary period (BGS 2012). The natural substrate was not encountered during groundworks.

### ***Historical and archaeological background***

- 1.7 The site lies on the site of the former Benedictine abbey of St Mary and St Rumon, founded in AD 974, and given its foundation charter by King Aethelred in AD 981. Destroyed by the Danes in AD 997 the abbey was subsequently rebuilt and by the late 11th century was the richest religious house in Devon. The presence of the abbey provided the impetus for the development of the town, located as it was at a convenient crossing of the River Tavy where routes from Okehampton, Plymouth and Cornwall converged. By 1105 the abbey received permission to hold a market, followed in 1116 by a three day fair for the feast of St Rumon. In the medieval period the town's fortunes lay mainly in the tin trade. Tavistock was one of four stannary towns of Dartmoor. This wealth was augmented by the manufacture of woollen cloths, particularly in the period after 1400.
- 1.8 Following the dissolution of the monastery in 1539 it was granted to Lord John Russell, later Earl of Bedford. The Abbey church survived as a ruin until 1670 when it was demolished. The merchant Jacob Saunders is thought to have demolished much of the remainder of the abbey when he constructed 'Abbey House', later part of the Bedford Hotel, in the early part of the 18th century (Radford 1929, 85 and 72-3). The remainder had largely disappeared by the 19th century when Plymouth Road was built (EH 2012).
- 1.9 Archaeological works within the abbey precinct have been minimal and primarily comprise excavations by Mrs G. H. (later Lady) Radford in the western end of the Abbey Church (Radford 1914 and 1929) and excavations by Exeter Archaeology

during sewer improvement works and pedestrianisation of Bedford Square (Stead 1999). The latter identified walls and a floor make-up layer associated with the eastern end of the Abbey Church. Three stone-lined monastic graves were also identified within the north aisle of the Abbey Church. Two of these graves contained chalices and patens (one had probably been robbed in antiquity), one contained a silver coin dating to 1281-1282 and fragments of vestments were also identified. It is thought that Grave 1 was that of a bishop or mitred abbot, whilst Grave 2 may have been that of an abbot.

- 1.10 Evidence for post-medieval development was also identified, including the remains of the Bedford Inn, formerly located at the intersection of Plymouth Road and Bedford Square (Stead 1999).

### ***Methodology***

- 1.11 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2012). However, following an initial camera survey the scope of the works was amended. The amendments comprised additional trenches (Trenches 1 and 4) and an extension to Trench 5. The variations were approved by Phil McMahon (EH) at a site meeting on 13 September 2012. The open cut trench, located to the west of the Scheduled part of the site was not required as the gas main in this area had already been replaced.
- 1.12 All of the works were undertaken under archaeological supervision. Modern overburden was removed by machine. Hand excavation (where required) and recording of significant archaeological deposits was then undertaken.
- 1.13 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual* (2007).
- 1.14 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Kemble and will be deposited with Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery under accession number AR.2012.23. A summary of information from this project will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.



## 2. RESULTS (FIGS 2-3)

- 2.1 This section provides an overview of the archaeological results; detailed summaries of the recorded contexts and finds are to be found in Appendices A and B respectively. Details of the relative heights of the principal deposits and features expressed as metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) appear in Appendix C.
- 2.2 The natural geological substrate was not encountered during the programme of archaeological works. All of the trenches were located within the existing service trench. Minimal archaeological excavation was required in Trenches 1 and 5 to attain the required formation level. Works primarily comprised cleaning and recording archaeological deposits which had been truncated when the gas main was originally constructed.

### ***Trench 1 (Fig. 3)***

- 2.2 The principal medieval feature identified in Trench 1, at a depth of 1.20m below present ground level (bpgl) (80.10m AOD), was a north-west/south-east aligned wall foundation. This consisted of a lower course of slate rubble, 1004, bonded with light to mid reddish brown clay and occasional lime mortar, and overlain by a course of roughly squared slate slabs and rubble, 1005, bonded with light yellow-white lime mortar.
- 2.3 Wall 1004/1005 was truncated on the western side by a possible north-east/south-west aligned grave 1012. Two fragments of disarticulated human bone were present in fill 1013 but were not recovered. Fill 1013 consisted of mid to dark grey silty clay with occasional mortar, charcoal and slate inclusions.
- 2.4 Deposit 1006 was located to the east of wall foundation 1004/1005 and comprised mid yellow brown silty clay with frequent mortar flecks and fragments. This deposit appeared to represent a make-up layer for a floor surface and was cut by two probable possible pits, 1008 and 1010. Pit 1008 was aligned north-west/south-east, was approximately 1.0m wide and filled with a mid brown silty clay 1009 containing frequent slate rubble fragments. A total of 10 fragments of disarticulated human bone were present in fill 1009 but were not recovered. Pit 1010 was 0.4m in width and was aligned north-west/south-east. Fill 1011 comprised mid brown silty clay containing frequent slate rubble fragments. At the eastern end of the trench deposit



1006 was overlain by a deposit, 1007, which largely comprised degraded slate fragments.

### **Trenches 2 and 3**

- 2.3 No features, finds or deposits of archaeological interest were identified within these trenches which were located entirely within the existing service trench.

### **Trench 4 (Fig. 3)**

- 2.4 A light to mid reddish brown silty clay 4007 containing occasional mortar flecks was identified at the maximum depth of excavation (1.2m bpgl; 80.13m AOD). This deposit was overlain by a 0.15m thick layer of decayed slate fragments, 4006, possibly comprising a post-Dissolution demolition deposit at a depth of 1.0m below present ground level (80.33m AOD). These deposits were sealed by post-Dissolution soils 4005 and 4004. Deposit 4005 consisted of mid grey silty clay, 0.30m thick and containing occasional charcoal and mortar flecks, and slate rubble and roof slate fragments. This was sealed by 4004, a 0.4m thick deposit consisting of light to mid grey silty clay and containing occasional charcoal and mortar flecks, and slate rubble and roof slate fragments. Fragments of floor tiles dating to the 13th to 14th centuries AD were recovered from the fill, 4002, of the existing service trench, 4003.

### **Trench 5 (Fig. 3)**

- 2.5 Wall foundation 5004 was identified in Trench 5, at a depth of 1.08m below present ground level (80.15m AOD). It was aligned north-east/south-west and consisted of large slate rubble bonded with light yellow-white lime mortar. A single re-used medieval architectural fragment was uncovered in the fabric of the wall. The wall was partly truncated by robber trench 5005. The fill of the robber trench, 5006, consisted of mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional charcoal and mortar flecks and slate rubble and roof slate fragments.

### **The finds**

- 2.6 The finds assemblage recovered from the watching brief is summarised in Appendix B. Fragments of ceramic floor tile and a fragment of architectural stonework were recorded. The assemblage was retrieved from two stratified contexts and could be dated to the medieval and early post-medieval periods. The level of preservation was poor with all of the material in an abraded condition.

- 2.7 The tile assemblage consisted of fragmentary floor tiles recovered from deposit 4002. This includes fragments from plain glazed rectangular tiles and square, inlaid floor tiles. The majority of tiles exhibit substantially worn upper surfaces, suggesting an extended period of exposure to footfall traffic prior to disuse. The majority were made from well mixed clay fired to a reddish orange colour. A single fragment is characterised by coarse sandy buff fabric, belonging to a different tradition, and is discussed separately below.
- 2.8 None of the tiles featured full dimensions, though the rectangular tiles have a slight chamfer, a maximum width of 40 to 45mm and thickness of 17 to 19mm. Two joining fragments from a rectangular tile have keying to the base that appears to have been formed by pressing a thumb into the surface. A fragment from a square tile has keying formed by twisting a knife into the base. Where glaze remains it is of a plain translucent lead type, in the case of the decorated tiles over inlaid white clay. All of the decorated tiles can be paralleled with examples recovered from archaeological investigations at Tavistock Abbey in 1997-99 (Stead 1999). These included type 5 and type 8 forms (Keen 1999) as well as an Exeter (series 1) T67 (Allen and Keen 1984). All are probably of late 13th to early 14th-century date (Keen 1999).
- 2.9 The tile in the buff fabric consists of a decorated fragment, 19mm thick. The decoration is unusual in that the upper surface is solidly glazed, with a yellowy green background glaze over a white slip. This has substantially crazed prior to the application of the glaze which was possibly brushed on. The detailed decoration, a possible stylized vegetal or zoomorphic design, appears to have been achieved through removing the white slip and applying a pale olive green glaze into the resulting recess. The overall visual effect is similar to graffito techniques as applied to pottery during the early post-medieval period.
- 2.10 An architectural limestone fragment, in the form of a partial column segment, with an approximate diameter of 140mm and remaining height of 190mm was retrieved from deposit 5004. The base retains a cylindrical socket for locating the piece to another segment, base or capital. The fragment also has mortar adhering to the break surface indicating it has been used as structural masonry after breakage.

### **3. DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The watching brief identified the remains of features and deposits associated with the Benedictine Abbey. The works confirmed the presence, and identified the location of features, known from historical sources and previous excavations.
- 3.2 To the south-west of the abbey church, Trench 1 exposed the truncated remains of the west wall of the western claustral range and floor make-up material associated with it. Two probable pits were identified within the western range. It is possible that a grave identified immediately outside the western wall was contemporary with the monastery.
- 3.3 At the eastern end of the Abbey Church the truncated remains of the south wall were exposed in Trench 5. A single architectural fragment, belonging to an earlier phase of monastic building, was recovered from this wall foundation. This suggests that this wall is secondary and probably represents the wall of a chapel added to the south side of the original choir.
- 3.4 A number of demolition layers were identified in Trench 4. This was located in the area of the eastern range and probably related to various phases of monastic building clearance, known to have taken place once the abbey passed into private ownership following the Dissolution.

### **4. CA PROJECT TEAM**

Fieldwork was undertaken by Marc Steinmetzer. The report was written by Marc Steinmetzer. The illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The finds report was compiled by Ed McSloy. The archive has been compiled by Marc Steinmetzer and prepared for deposition by James Johnson. The project was managed for CA by Laurent Coleman.

### **5. REFERENCES**

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**APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS****Trench 1**

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
1000	Layer	Tarmac			0-0.10m	
1001	Layer	Concrete			0.1-0.40m	
1002	Fill	Service trench fill			0.40-1.3m	
1003	Cut	Service trench			0.4-1.3m	
1004	Structure	North-west/south-east aligned wall foundation	n/k	1.6m	1.3m+	
1005	Structure	North-west/south-east aligned wall foundation	n/k	1.4m	1.2-1.3m	
1006	Layer	Floor make-up – mid yellow silty clay and lime mortar	n/k	n/k	1.3m+	
1007	Layer	decayed slate	n/k	n/k	1.3m+	
1008	Cut	North-west/south-east aligned grave	n/k	1m	1.3m+	
1009	Fill	Fill of grave [1008]	n/k	1m	1.3m+	
1010	Cut	North-west/south-east aligned grave	n/k	0.4m	1.3m+	
1011	Fill	Fill of grave [1010]	n/k	0.4m	1.3m+	
1012	Cut	North-east/south-west aligned grave	n/k	n/k	1.3m+	
1013	Fill	Fill of grave [1012]	n/k	n/k	1.3m+	

**Trench 2**

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
2000	Layer	Tarmac			0-0.1m	
2001	Layer	Hardcore			0.1-0.4m	
2002	Fill	Service trench fill			0.40-1.2m	

**Trench 3**

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
3000	Layer	Tarmac			0-0.1m	
3001	Layer	Hardcore			0.1-0.4m	
3002	Fill	Service trench fill			0.40-1.2m	

**Trench 4**

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
4000	Layer	Tarmac			0-0.1m	
4001	Layer	Hardcore			0.1-0.4m	
4002	Fill	Service trench fill			0.40-1.2m	
4003	Cut	Service trench			0.4-1.2m	
4004	Layer	Post-dissolution garden soil – light to mid grey silty clay	n/k	n/k	0.3-0.7m	
4005	Layer	Post-dissolution demolition deposit – mid grey silty clay	n/k	n/k	0.7-1m	
4006	Layer	Dissolution demolition deposit – decayed slate	n/k	n/k	1-1.15m	
4007	Layer	light to mid reddish brown silty clay	n/k	n/k	1.15m+	

**Trench 5**

No.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
5000	Layer	Tarmac			0-0.1m	
5001	Layer	Hardcore			0.1-0.4m	
5002	Fill	Service trench fill			0.40-1.08m	
5003	Cut	Service trench			0.4-1.08m	
5004	Structure	North-west/south-east aligned wall foundation	3.28m+	n/k	1.08m+	Med.
5005	Cut	Robber trench	1.9m+	0.93m+	1.08m+	
5006	Fill	Fill of Robber trench [5005] – mid grey brown silty clay	1.9m+	0.93m+	1.08m+	

**APPENDIX B: THE FINDS**

Context	Description	Ct.	Wt.	Date
4002	Ceramic building material: glazed and decorated floor tiles; ?Normandy decorated tile	10	618	Early post-medieval
5004	Stone architectural fragment: column	1	2503	Medieval

**APPENDIX C: LEVELS OF PRINCIPAL DEPOSITS AND STRUCTURES**

Levels are expressed as metres below current ground level and as metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), calculated using the benchmark located on the tower of the parish church of St Eustachius (81.97m AOD).

	Trench 1	Trench 4	Trench 5
Current ground level	0.00m (81.30m)	0.00m (81.33m)	0.00m (81.23m)
Top of medieval deposits	1.2m (80.10m)	1.15m (80.18m)	1.08m (80.15m)
Limit of excavation	1.32m (79.98m)	1.20m (80.13m)	1.13m (80.10m)

Upper figures are depth below modern ground level; lower figures in parentheses are metres AOD.

**APPENDIX D: OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project Name	Gas Main Replacement, Plymouth Road, Tavistock, Devon	
Short description	<p>A programme of archaeological works was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with gas main replacement at Plymouth Road, Tavistock, Devon.</p> <p>The remains of the western wall foundation of the western claustral range were identified together with one possible grave and two probable pits in close proximity, while a series of possible demolition layers were uncovered in the area of the eastern range. The partly robbed remains of the southern wall foundation of the eastern end of the Abbey Church were also identified.</p>	
Project dates	10-24 September 2012	
Project type	Programme of Archaeological Works	
Previous work		
Future work	na	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
Site Location	Plymouth Road, Tavistock, Devon	
Study area (M <sup>2</sup> /ha)	c. 13.8m <sup>2</sup>	
Site co-ordinates (8 Fig Grid Reference)	SX 4817 7435	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Brief originator	None	
Project Design (WSI) originator	Cotswold Archaeology	
Project Manager	Laurent Coleman	
Project Supervisor	Marc Steinmetzer	
<b>MONUMENT TYPE</b>		
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS</b>		
<b>PROJECT ARCHIVES</b>		
	Intended final location of archive (museum/Accession no.)	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone etc)
Physical	Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery	ceramics, architectural fragment
Paper	Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery	Context sheets, trench sheets, photo registers, permatrace drawings, black and white photographs
Digital	Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery	Digital photographs
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		

CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2012 *Plymouth Road, Tavistock, Devon: Programme of Archaeological Works*  
CA typescript report **12230**





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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Plymouth Road, Tavistock  
 Devon

**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Site location plan



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**PROJECT NO.** 3793      **DATE** 19-10-2012  
**DRAWN BY** LG      **REVISION** 00  
**APPROVED BY** PJM      **SCALE@A4** 1:25,000

**FIGURE NO.**  
**1**



- route of gas main
- area of observed groundworks
- archaeological feature
- modern feature
- scheduled monument
- approximate location of previously identified remains of Tavistock Abbey in the vicinity of the proposed groundworks (incl. monastic graves, as labelled)
- approximate location of Tavistock Abbey after Stead and Blaylock 1998



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**PROJECT TITLE**  
 Plymouth Road, Tavistock  
 Devon

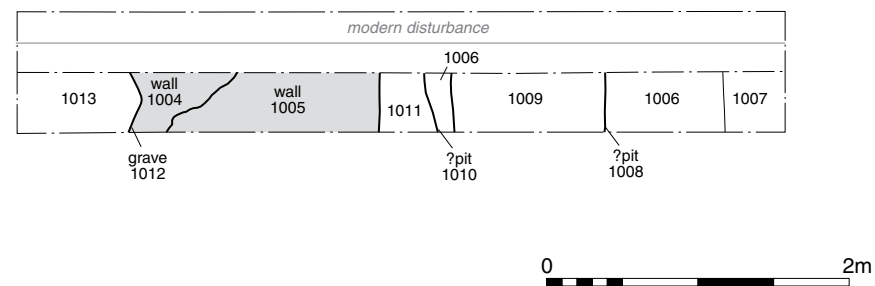
**FIGURE TITLE**  
 Trench location plan, showing  
 archaeological features

PROJECT NO. 3793	DATE 22-11-2012	FIGURE NO. 2
DRAWN BY LG	REVISION 00	
APPROVED BY PJM	SCALE@A3 1:500	

P:\3793 plymouth road\_tavistock\_cas\illustration\Drafts\3793 Tavistock Gas Fig 2.dwg

743 SX

Trench 1; plan



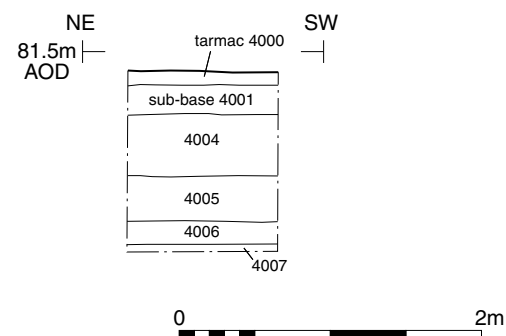
Trench 1; view of walls 1004 and 1005, looking north-west. (Scale 0.5m)



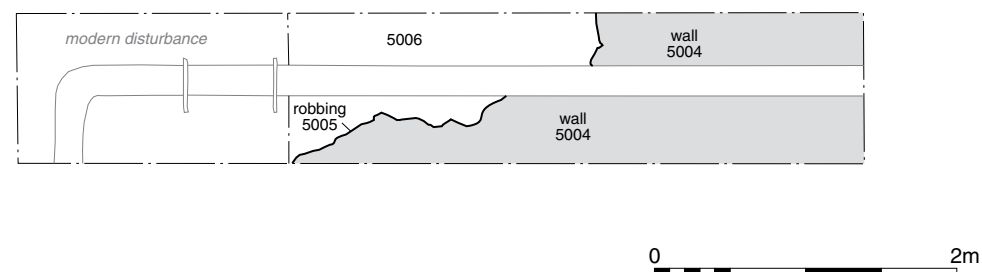
Trench 1; view of possible graves 1010 and 1008. (Scale 0.5m)



Trench 4; section AA



Trench 5; plan



Trench 5; view of wall 5004 and robbing 5005, looking south-west. (Scale 2m)



Trench 4; view of deposits 4004 and 4005, looking south-east. (Scale 1m)

