

Devon Historic Environment Record Entry

Parish: South Milton	NGR: SX69804289	Number:
Subject: Archaeological watching brief at All Saints Church, South Milton		
Ref: EA Project No. 5745		
Date: 26-29 November 2007		
Description: <p>A watching brief was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology at All Saints Church, South Milton during the installation of new toilets, a kitchen and associated drainage. The work was commissioned by Heighway Field Associates on behalf of the PCC. A brief for the archaeological work was produced by the Devon County Historic Environment Service.</p> <p>The font, south door, and possibly the nave, are 12th-century. The south transept was added in the 13th century, and the north aisle and tower were built in the 15th century. The porch was added later, possibly as late as the 17th century.¹</p> <p>The church is terraced into a south-facing slope. The north edge of the terrace is marked by a distinct bank around the north side and north-west corner of the building. The south edge of the terrace extends up to 4m beyond the retaining wall along the south side of the churchyard. Ground level is higher inside the wall where the graveyard soil has built up against it. Natural ground level also falls away to the east of the church where it is cut by a small north-south combe.</p> <p><i>New toilet and kitchen</i></p> <p>The new toilet and kitchen were constructed inside the tower against the north wall, and a new maceration unit was built inside the existing boiler house on the outside of the tower. A 0.70m x 0.48m x 0.30m deep pit was excavated in the sunken floor of the boiler house inside the brick housing for the maceration unit. The base of the tower wall and buttress was exposed, resting on horizontal slate bedrock interleaved with red clay at a depth of 0.80m below external ground level. The concrete floor had been constructed at the same level and laid on the same material. Two holes taking pipes from the adjacent toilets to the unit had been drilled through the plinth of the tower wall. This was constructed from narrow, rectangular slate blocks that were dressed from 0.60m above floor level, and undressed below that, probably indicating the level to which the plinth was originally exposed.</p> <p><i>Trench for foul drain (Fig. 1)</i></p> <p>A trench for a new foul drain was excavated from the boiler house around the west and south sides of the church and along the path from the south porch to the main gate. From here it continued along the outside of the churchyard wall and then beside the adjacent tarmac footpath to a new manhole position in the lane. The trench, which was dug by hand, was just over 90m long in total. It was 0.30m wide on average, and varied in depth from 0.45-0.60m.</p> <p>At the north-west corner of the church (Fig. 1, A), <i>in situ</i> subsoil, consisting of yellow or reddish-brown clay and decayed slate, was exposed at a depth of 0.25-0.30m. It was overlain</p>		

¹ English Heritage listing 1967 & 2007

by turf and topsoil.

Along the west side (Fig. 1, B), reddish-brown clay and slate (a) was exposed at a depth of 0.45m. This was either *in situ* subsoil or redeposited subsoil from the construction of the tower. Overlying this was 0.15-0.25m of medium brown clayey silt (b) containing fine slate and gravel and larger pieces of roof slate. This was levelling material, possibly disturbed by the burials that came close to the church on this side. Two pieces of human skull were retrieved from this layer. Above it was a deposit of dense gravel (c) 0.10-0.18m thick from an earlier path surface, and then 0.12-0.15m of turf and topsoil (d). One unstratified sherd from a late medieval jug, in a granite-derived fabric, was found in the spoil from this section of the trench. This will have come from one of several possible sources, including Totnes and the documented kiln at Dodbrooke, near Kingsbridge.

On the south side of the church, two different sequences were identified: one from the south-west corner of the building to the corner of the retaining wall along the west side of the path (Fig. 1, C), and another from here to the gate (Fig. 1, D). In the first, a layer of yellow or reddish-brown clay and slate (a), 0.15-0.25m deep, containing pieces of roof slate and lime mortar was exposed at the base of the trench. At the western end it was overlain by a 0.05-0.10m thick deposit (b) of broken roof slates and lime mortar fragments extending for 3.5m along the trench. Both (a) and (b) are levelling material associated with one or more episodes of church construction. Overlying either (a) or (b) was a layer of dense gravel 0.13m deep from an earlier path surface along the south side of the church, and above this was 0.07m of turf and topsoil.

In the second section, the trench was excavated along the west side of the path immediately beside the retaining wall. In both sides of the trench the lowest deposit (a) was reddish-brown clayey silt containing fine slate and gravel as well as larger fragments of roof (?) slate and lime mortar. It was 0.25m deep and continued below the base of the trench. At the south end only, it was overlain by a layer of horizontal slates of varying thickness (0.03-0.08m) and lime mortar fragments (b). In the west face of the section this was overlain by a 0.10m of small pebbles and gravel (c) that was sealed beneath the retaining wall and was probably an earlier path surface. In the east face either (a) or (b) was overlain by the existing path surface (d), consisting of compacted fine gravel 0.10m deep. This section of the trench had been disturbed by excavations for an earlier ceramic drain and an electricity cable (exposed at the corner of the retaining wall and in the gateway) that had been laid along the path. Deposit (a) was levelling material redeposited as backfill and (b) was a bedding layer for the gravel path.

An east-west footing of clay-bonded slate, on the line of the boundary wall, was exposed in the gateway. It was *c.* 0.30m wide, and extended *c.* 0.12m above the base of the trench. This may indicate that the existing gateway has replaced an earlier boundary wall.

Outside the churchyard, the trench was excavated along the grass verge between the boundary wall and the tarmac path that ran beside it (Fig. 1, E). Beyond the end of the boundary wall it was excavated into the edge of the bank beside the path. The trench was 0.45m deep at the west end, increasing to 0.60m at the east end.

For the first 28m only two deposits were exposed. The lower one consisted of yellow-brown clayey silt (a) with 20% fine natural slate fragments, 10% larger roof slate fragments and 5% lime mortar fragments. In one place a layer of lime mortared slate rubble was exposed within it at a depth of 0.40m. This was a spread of building debris used as levelling material for the boundary wall or the terrace beside it. The deposit was overlain by 0.15m of turf and topsoil (b).

Further east, *in situ* yellow clay and slate subsoil was exposed in the base of the trench. This was overlain by 0.20m of the same levelling material (a), over which was a 0.15m deep layer of buried topsoil (b). Above this was a thin layer (c), 0.10m deep, of redeposited subsoil, and above this 0.05m of recent turf and topsoil.

From 30m onwards the subsoil began to rise and the levelling deposit (a) disappeared. This change corresponded with the fall in the natural slope. At 34m the observed sequence consisted of *in situ* subsoil (0.25m) overlain by buried topsoil (0.20m) that was in turn overlain by redeposited subsoil (0.10) and recent turf and topsoil (0.05).

From 38m onwards the subsoil became increasingly harder and slatier. Beyond the end of the boundary wall the sequence consisted of *in situ* subsoil (0.30m) overlain by turf and topsoil (0.30m).

The levelling deposit (a) contained a high proportion of intact and broken medieval roof slates (Plate 1). Some of these were thick (13-21mm) and heavy and are more probably 12th- or 13th-century in date. Others were thinner (7-12mm) and lighter and could be 14th- or 15th-century, or later, in date. Some still contained peg or nail holes, some had lime mortar adhering to them. Part of a 14th- or 15th-century clay ridge tile in a granite-derived fabric also came from this layer. It was unglazed, with incised decoration, and was made locally in the South Hams.

The levelling deposit (a) contained finds of medieval date, and it is possible that it was associated with the major rebuilding phase in the 15th century, rather than a more recent one. The addition of the porch would have entailed only limited disturbance of the existing fabric. The English Heritage listing description gives no indication of any major restoration in the 19th century, and only identifies two windows on the south side added in the 20th-century.

Client: Heighway Field Associates for South Milton PCC

Recorder: M.J. Dyer

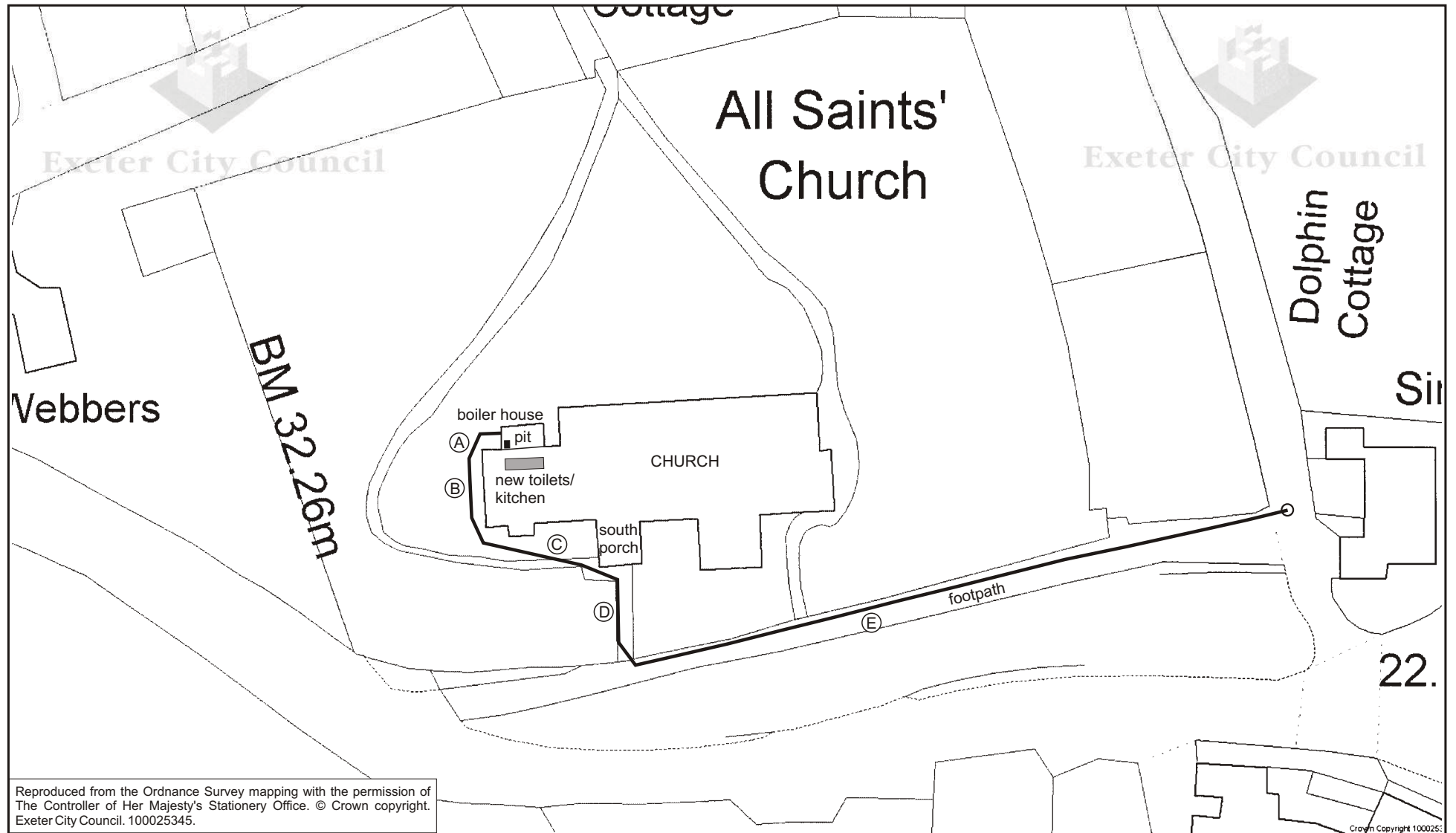


Fig. 1 Location of service trench, pit and new toilet/kitchen area. Scale 1:500.



Plate 1 Medieval roof slates and ridge tile.