

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Lifton, West Devon	National Grid Reference: SX 3820 8695	Number:
Subject: Archaeological building recording and monitoring at Wortham Manor, Lifton, Devon.		Photo attached: Y
Planning Application no: 12124/2008/TAV	Recipient museum: Plymouth Museum	
OASIS ID: exeterar1-70721	Museum Accession no: AR.2010.2	
Contractor's reference number/code: EA7152	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 11/01/10, 12/01/10 and 18/01/10	
<p>Description of works: Wortham Manor (Fig. 1) lies north of the village of Lifton and is listed Grade I. The manor of Wortham passed by marriage from the Wortham family to a cadet branch of the Dinhams in the late 14th century and became the principal seat of the Dinhams when the main branch of the family died out in 1501. The house is a remarkable medieval survival of what appears to be an open hall house. The house was remodelled and substantially modernised at an unusually early date for Devon, in the early 16th century. It was considered possible that archaeological features and/or artefacts might be exposed during the works.</p> <p>Results: The groundworks for the central heating involved the excavation of two trenches (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was located immediately to the east of the manor house, and was approximately 50m long, 0.3m wide and 0.5m deep. Trench 2 was located behind an existing barn, approximately 20m north of the house, and was 4.5m long, 3m wide and 0.5m deep. Both trenches revealed heavily disturbed soil profiles resulting from landscaping, with 0.3m of mid brown yellow silty clay with frequent inclusions of shale directly overlying natural shale.</p> <p>The wooden flooring in the northeastern first floor bedroom (Fig. 3) was pulled up to install central heating and electrical wiring. This permitted a closer inspection of the floor joists. This revealed that although they were in a fairly bad condition all the original joists were still in place and that the main beam was also original. The joists consisted of sawn oak timbers with suffit tenons to connect them to the central beam. Each timber was numbered, with equivalent numbers on the main beam, suggesting that the timbers had been prefabricated. The timbers also showed signs of horizontal cracks, which might indicate that there were problems with damp penetration. What is more, all of the joists showed faint traces of limewash. This would suggest that they were originally exposed and that the ceiling of the kitchen occupying the northeast corner was a later addition. A small cleat was added to one of the joists. This would have allowed a timber to be securely fixed and could have been used for a range of purposes in the kitchen, such as suspended racks or a spit jack.</p> <p>Conclusion: No features, deposits or dating evidence were found to indicate archaeological activity within the two trenches. Rewiring work on the building allowed inspection of a number of joists on the first floor of the Manor House showing that they were all original.</p>		
Recorder: MFR Steinmetzer (Exeter Archaeology)		Date sent to HER: 22/01/2010