

# Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

<b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b> Bratton Fleming, North Devon	<b>National Grid Reference</b> SS64293774	<b>Number:</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Archaeological watching brief during the demolition of the boiler house and construction of a new extension and services at St. Peters Church.		<b>Photo attached?</b> YES
<b>Planning Application no:</b> N/A	<b>Recipient museum:</b> Museum of Barnstaple & North Devon	
<b>OASIS ID:</b>	<b>Museum Accession no:</b>	
<b>Contractor's reference number/code:</b> BFSP11	<b>Dates fieldwork undertaken:</b> 03/06/11, 06/06/11, 15/06/11	
<p><b>Description of works.</b></p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by South West Archaeology Limited (SWARCH) at the request of Mark Richmond Architects (the Agent) on behalf of Bratton Fleming PCC (the Client) during the demolition of the boiler house and store, and during the construction of a new extension and services to the northwest of St. Peter's Church, Bratton Fleming (Figure 1). The work was undertaken by Dr S. Walls.</p> <p>The Grade II listed Church is believed to be of 14<sup>th</sup> century origins, with an early 16<sup>th</sup> century tower, that was largely rebuilt c.1702 after collapsing on the nave. The chancel was rebuilt c.1853, and the nave and north aisle c.1861. Most of the existing fabric of the church therefore dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A coal shed was added in 1910 to the north side of the tower to serve the coal stoves installed in 1880 (replaced in 1891), and a new heating system requiring a boiler was installed in 1919, this was housed in a lean-to structure to the north of the store (Cox 2009).</p> <p>The watching brief consisted of recording the demolition of the boiler house and store (Figure 2a) and monitoring the insertion of footings and drainage for the new extension (Figure 2c). In order for machinery to access the site a section was also cut through the northern churchyard boundary hedge, which was also carefully monitored (Figure 2b).</p> <p>The boiler house and store (coal shed) were constructed of roughly coursed and dressed sub-angular stone with a hard light grey cement bonding and pointing. The simple mono-pitch slate roof steeply descended the store onto the shallower pitch of the boiler house. The former store had two openings, the main entrance in the west elevation with a sawn pine plank door, and an opening in the north elevation (into the boiler house) which was blocked with red bricks. The store also had an internal (north-south) partition, which was part of the same construction as the north elevation, which suggests that the current entrance (and western room) were added at the same time as the boiler. The floor of the boiler house was sunk 0.55m below the store and the churchyard level, and was accessed via a corner stair of roughly dressed stone with four concrete steps leading from the blocked opening in the south elevation and the main western opening. The removal of the render and chimney on the exterior of the west elevation of the north aisle revealed no evidence of changes in build, with only a few structural repairs (typically with brick) evident, and these all related to the boiler house and store.</p> <p>The northern boundary hedge bank extends to a height of approximately 1.75m and 2.1m width (Figure 2b), although narrowing and shortening towards the west. The bank was seemingly constructed in three distinct phases, with the latter represented by a mid-brown clay-silt (101), which was heavily root disturbed and included a roughly dressed stone (up to 150mm) northern face (onto the modern Church Close). The roughly dressed face also included occasional large pieces of quartz, which were not seen elsewhere in the bank, suggesting some degree of selection of stone away from the locality of the churchyard and its boundaries. Deposit (101) was probably added to consolidate the bank, most likely when the road and bungalows were constructed to the north of the churchyard in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Deposit (101) overlay (102) a gritty light grey-brown silt-clay with frequent slate fragments (up to 80mm in size), and occasional sub-angular stones (up to 100mm). This material (102) is perhaps consistent with the clearance of debris from re-roofing or rebuilding the church, presumably during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and may relate to the extensive rebuilding of the church in the 1850s-60s. A large sherd of 17<sup>th</sup> century North Devon Sgraffito Ware was recovered from this context (102). The core of the bank was comprised of (103) a loose mid-brown silt-clay with frequent large sub-angular stones (up to 600mm). A large fragment of window mullion/sill was recovered from (103), which suggests that the bank dates to the extensive rebuilding of the church in the 1850s-60s. No ditches were evident on either side of the bank, although only the turf was removed so they may survive <i>in-situ</i>.</p>		

In the area of the proposed extension the 0.1m deep dark brown topsoil (100) was removed to reveal a grey-brown gritty silt-clay (104), which contained frequent slate fragments, sub-angular stones, brick fragments, mortar/lime dust and human bone fragments. Brick fragments were only seen in the area around the former boiler and store, while Slate fragments were particularly prevalent in the area to the north of the north aisle, where the ground rose dramatically. These deposits continued to the west along the length of the proposed drain, but no archaeological features were encountered.

The soak-away trench, measuring 0.4m x 1.4m was excavated to the north-west of the church, close to the churchyard boundary (See Figure 1). This was excavated to a maximum depth of 2m, revealing 0.25m depth of topsoil (100), overlying a 0.5m deep grey-brown gritty silt-clay with occasional sub-angular stones and bone fragments (104). This in turn overlay a 0.4m thick band of loose grey-yellow silt-clay (105), which contained frequent small sub-angular stones (up to 50mm). The lowest deposit revealed by this trench (and excavated to a depth of 0.75m) was a fairly clean grey-brown silt-clay with occasional small sub-angular stones (up to 50mm), and rare lens of gritty grey-buff sand. Unsurprisingly there was considerably less building materials encountered within this trench than in the area around the church, but the deposits do clearly indicate the considerable rise in ground level which has occurred within the churchyard, in part evidenced by the dramatic drop down to the modern houses to the north-west of the church and to the 20<sup>th</sup> century churchyard extension to the west. No finds were retrieved from within these deposits,

The finds (other than the architectural fragment and Sgraffito Ware from the hedge bank) were all recovered from the topsoil (100), and included a relatively large quantity of domestic material given the ritual nature of the location. The finds included 1x sherd of 18<sup>th</sup> century North Devon Yellow Slipware, 1x 18<sup>th</sup> century clay pipe stem, 1x post-medieval floor tile, 5x sherds 19<sup>th</sup> century North Devon Ware, 6x large sherds of post-medieval North Devon Ware, 1x roof slate, 3x small horse shoes, 1x sherd white refined earthenware, and 2x whole 20<sup>th</sup> century clear glass jars. The presence of such domestic waste, predominantly from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, may correspond with the decline of the church which seems to have occurred at this time with the possibility of the rector perhaps residing in part of the church. This is perhaps particularly likely during the incumbency of William Gimingham (1818-1838) who was apparently "not able to keep himself, let alone his church" (Cox 2009: 5).

All fragments of human bone were re-interred within the churchyard.

#### **Bibliography,**

Cox, J. 2009. *The Church of St Peter: Bratton Fleming, Devon. A Study of the Interior for the Parochial Church Council*. Keystone Reports K/767.

**A plan as well as any other relevant drawings must be attached showing the location and extent of site, areas investigated and features exposed.**

**Recorder:** S. Walls

**Date sent to HER:** 12.07.11

Please email completed form to: [archaeol@devon.gov.uk](mailto:archaeol@devon.gov.uk) or post to County Archaeology Service, Environment Directorate, Matford Lane Offices, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW. Information recorded on this form will be added to the Historic Environment Record, and made available to all researchers.

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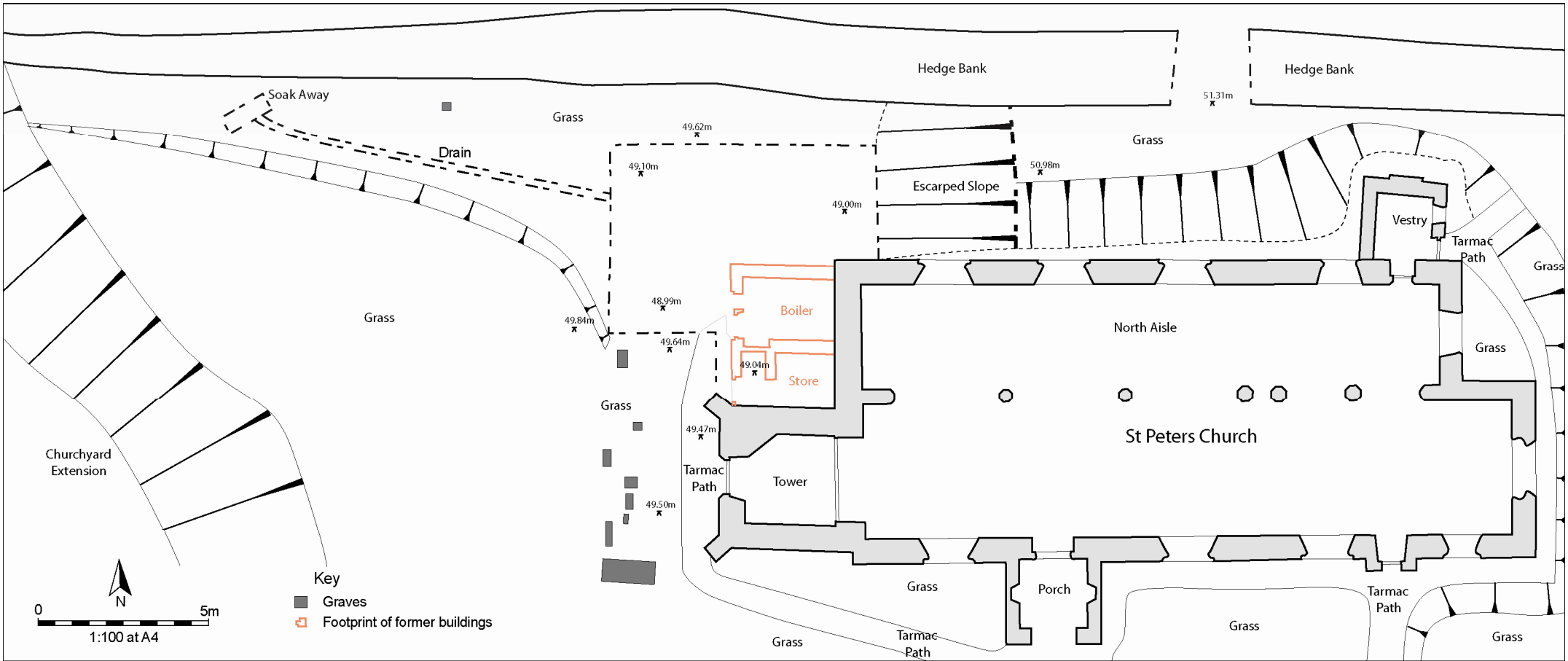


Figure 1: Plan of the excavated areas and demolished buildings.

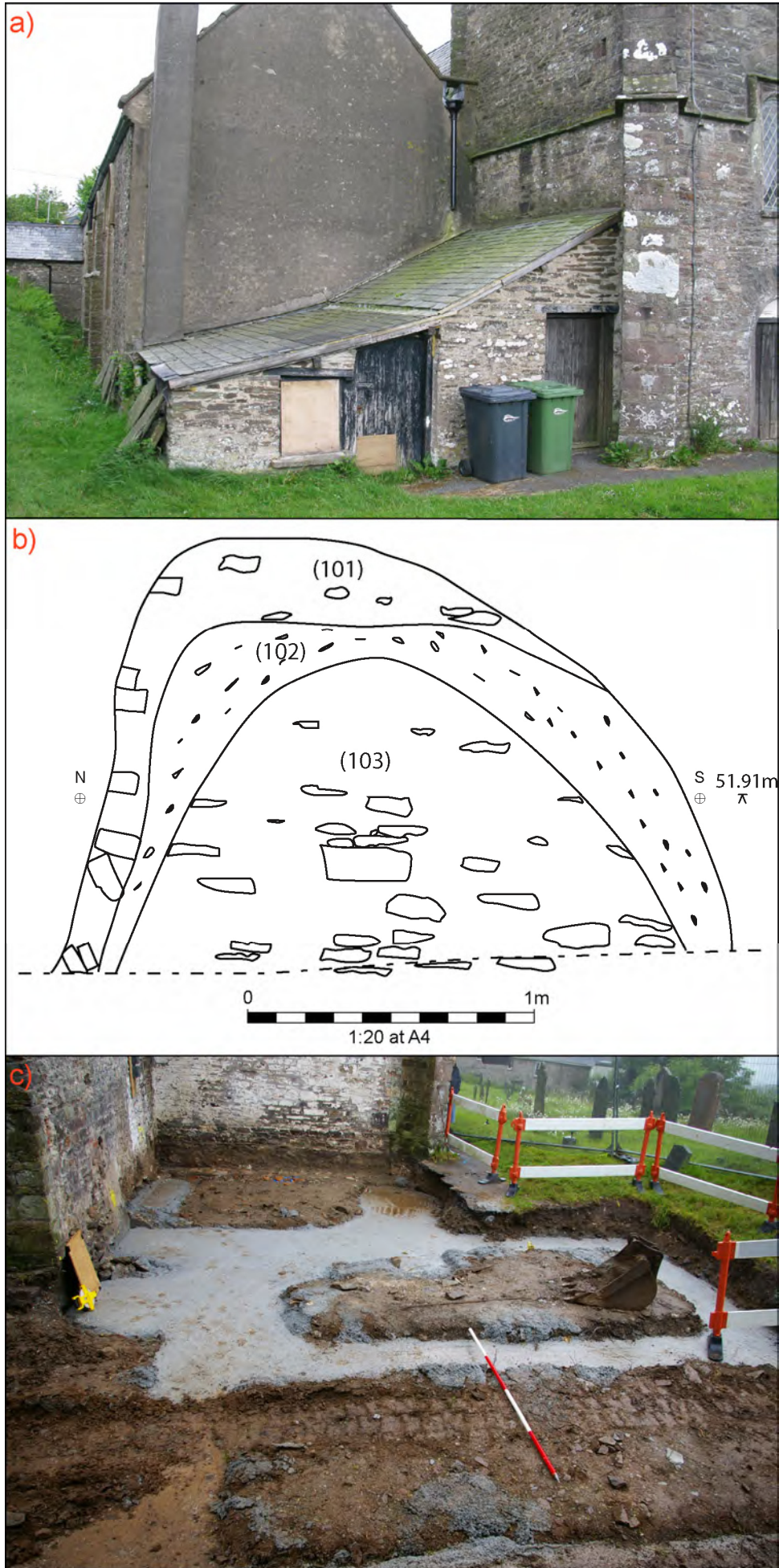


Figure 2: (a) The boiler room and store before demolition, viewed from the west. (b) The west facing section through the hedge bank, and (c) the excavated area of the building footings, viewed from the north (2m scale).