

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Stokenham, South Hams, Devon	National Grid Reference SX802 429	Number:
Subject: Excavation & recording of four 1x1m test pits in the playing field of Stokenham Primary School, Stokenham		Photo attached? YES
Planning Application no: N/A	Recipient museum: N/A	
OASIS ID: southwes1-130577	Museum Accession no: N/A	
Contractor's reference number/code: EPS12	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 11/07/12	

Description of works.

Archaeological test pitting was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) as part of a community out-reach project in collaboration with the Friends of East Portlemouth Church. The work was carried out in accordance with a Project Design drawn up by SWARCH in consultation with Graham Tait, Archaeology Officer of Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES). The work was supervised by Dr. S. Walls and Mr. J. Bampton.

Four c.1x1m test pits were excavated on land to the rear of Stokenham Primary School by pupils, monitored and directed by professional archaeologists from SWARCH and a teacher from the school. This followed the methodology pioneered and outlined by the CORS (Currently Occupied Rural Settlements) project and in accordance with the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation 1994 (revised 2001 & 2008)* and *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief 1994 (revised 2001 & 2008)*.

The test pits were located in respect of the local landscaped and natural topography and foliage. The locations of the test pits were recorded in relation to existing boundaries (see Figure 2). Once the turf was removed the Test Pits were excavated by hand by the children in c.0.1m spits. All the Test Pits went to a depth of c. 0.35-0.4m, and with the exception of Test Pit 3 revealed the undisturbed natural subsoil. All the soil was sieved for finds, which were recovered and cleaned on site and used in a presentation to the school children.

No archaeological features were discovered and only a small number of finds were recovered. However, these did cover an interestingly broad date range. The finds have been returned to the school with a copy of this report.

FINDS

Test Pit 1:

Spit 1 contained: 3x sherds of white refined wares (1x possibly an English white bone china) (2g); 1x sherd of 19th century earthen ware (10g); 1x small fragment of bituminous coal (1g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (81g), quartz (352g), other stones (90g) and a single large nodule of a conglomerate rock (210g).

Spit 2 contained: 1x sherd of white refined ware (flower print pattern/decoration on both sides) (3g); 1x Fe Fragment (broken square nail) (5g); 2x small fragments of Anthracite (5g); 1x small fragment of Coke (1g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (121g), quartz (941g), other stones (454g) and pebbles (39g).

Test Pit 2:

Spit 1 contained no archaeological finds.

Spit 2 contained 2x small fragments of bituminous coal (1g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (557g), quartz (691g), other stones (203g) and a single pebble (15g).

Test Pit 3:

Spit 1 contained 3x sherds of white refined wares (3g) (1x with blue print decoration); 2x fragments of glass (4g) (1x clear, 1x rose tinted); charcoal (4g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (284g), quartz (45g), other stones (18g) and pebbles (62g).

Spit 2 contained 2x scraps of Early Medieval/pre-historic pottery (1g); 1x sherd of Medieval pottery of a

Totnes type ware (4g); 1x sherd of white refined ware (1g); 1x sherd of 19th century earthen ware (4g); charcoal (1g); 1x fragment of anthracite (2g) and 3x small un-worked flint flakes (4g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (228g), quartz (256g) and pebbles (60g).

Test pit 4:

Spit 1 contained 2x sherds of 19th century earthen ware (tin glazed)(5g); 1x possibly notched piece of slate; charcoal (2g); 2x possible waste flint flakes (largely from the exterior of the stone)(30g) and a single un-worked flint flake (2g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (57g), quartz (574g), other stone (321g) and pebbles (84g).

Spit 2 contained 1x sherd of medieval pottery (4g); 1x piece of coal (2g); 3x sherds of glass (2x clear, 1x green) (3g). Natural rock was also recovered and included; slate fragments (74g), a conglomerate rock of degraded slate and mineralization (412g) and a quartz pebble (16g)

DISCUSSION

Stokenham village lies within a broad and agriculturally rich valley in the South Hams. The cropmarks of Iron Age or Romano-British enclosures are known from the north of the parish. The church is noted for its unusual dedication (St. Humbert) and may be the minster church of Coleridge Hundred. Recent excavations have uncovered the remains of a known 14th century manor house in the field adjacent to the church, as well as earlier, perhaps Bronze Age, field ditches.

Stokenham Primary School is located to the west of the historic centre of Stokenham village, in land categorized as 'Barton Fields' – large regular enclosures laid out between the 15th-18th centuries. The field names as recorded in the tithe apportionment of 1843 (Higher and Lower Holebrook) are generally uninformative. This part of Stokenham remained open until after 1907, and the school was constructed between 1963 and 1972. The southern part of the field to the rear of the school has been terraced to provide a level playing field.

While the volume of genuine archaeological finds recovered from the site is quite small, some pieces of note were unearthed representing the whole of the Medieval period. 2x tiny scraps of early Medieval pottery (11th – 12th century) were recovered from Test Pit 3. These were very fine and degraded and could be prehistoric, but not enough of them survived to be sure. Test Pit 4 revealed a sherd of early to middle Medieval South Devon ware. Its grey fabric is similar to Totnes type wares but it was probably made in Kingsbridge (Dodbrooke) by potters in the 14th-15th centuries using more locally available tempers (things to help the clay when its being baked). The middle to late medieval period (15th-16th century) was represented by a single sherd from Test Pit 3, which had a red and grey fabric due to an uneven firing process (when the wet molded clay pot is baked to harden it up). It has a green glaze that both sealed the fabric to make it more water proof and decorated it.

The small assemblage of flint flakes (some of which is un-worked) also suggests a 'background' of prehistoric activity on or near to the site.

The possibly notched piece of slate found in Test Pit 4 may represent some of the local building material, which has been used traditionally and is still used today. Other fragments of the recovered slate may have originated from a building, but are more likely simply naturally occurring. The presence of so many small rounded pebbles within each of the test-pits is probably the result of the fields having been fertilized with seaweed.

It was claimed by a local resident that the area of investigation was once possibly a marsh. The naturally occurring degraded slate and mineralized conglomerate rock that was found in Test Pit 4 represents an area of standing water or perhaps a level at which the water table once sat. The process of mineralization occurs when the minerals in the rock and soil are leached out by water in the ground and so this may represent the level of the land when it was formerly a marsh.

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: J. Bampton

Date sent to HER: 18/07/2012

Please email completed form to: 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: Area assigned for Test Pitting in relation to Stokenham Primary School & the A379.



Figure 2: Measured location of 1m test pits from the north-east corner of the site boundary.



Figure 3: Test Pit 1 South Facing Section.



Figure 4: Test Pit 2 South Facing Section.



Figure 5: Test Pit 3 South Facing Section.



Figure 6: Test Pit 4 South Facing Section.



Figure 7: Area of Test Pits 1 & 2. Looking North.



Figure 8: Area of Test Pits 3 & 4. Looking North.



Figure 9: 'Men' (and woman) at work. Test Pit 1.



Figure 10: Digging away. Test Pit 2.