

# Contents

List of Illustrations

List of Appendices

Acknowledgements

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Summary

1.2 Summary of Results

1.3 Methodology

## 2.0 Results

2.1 Trench 1: The North Trench

2.2 Trench 2: The South Trench

2.3 The Finds

## 3.0 Interpretation

## 4.0 Conclusions

## 5.0 Bibliography/References

## List of Illustrations

Cover plate: Extract from the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1888

### Figures:

- 1a. Regional location.
- 1b. Location of site.
2. Plan of site showing position of trenches

### Plates:

1. Trench 1 viewed from the north.
2. Trench 2 viewed from the south.
3. Section of Trench 1.

### List of Appendices:

1. Devon County Archaeological Service brief.
2. Written Scheme of Investigation.
3. List of jpegs contained on CD rom inside rear cover of report.

### Acknowledgements:

Thanks for assistance are due to:  
Mr Marston for allowing unrestricted access to the site.  
Graham Tait, Devon County Archaeological Service.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Summary

**Location:** Rear of 44 fore Street  
**Parish:** Totnes  
**District:** South Hams District Council  
**County:** Devon  
**NGR:** SX80386033  
**Planning No.** 56/1244/05/F

South West Archaeology was commissioned by Mr L.Marston to carry out an archaeological evaluation of a site at Fore Street, Totnes, Devon in advance of proposed residential development. The evaluation followed a brief by the Devon County Archaeological Service (DCAS) which highlighted the possibility of the survival of medieval burgage plot boundaries and earlier Saxon remains on the site.

The excavation was undertaken on the 21st November 2005.

The site consisted of a long narrow plot orientated with its long axis running north-south. At the time of the evaluation the site was in use as the rear garden of 44 Fore Street. The garden was bounded by a wall 1.5m high on the east side, a wall 2.5m high on the west side, the premises fronting onto Fore Street to the north and to the south a wall and gate leading to the rear access area of Russel Court on Victoria Street. The highest part of the garden was its centre, and the site sloped gently down towards Russel Court to the south and Fore Street to the north. Although there was a natural fall of ground from west to east, down fore street, the interior of each property in the vicinity of the present site seemed to have been levelled.

### 1.2 Summary of Results

The parts of the site sampled during the evaluation revealed that in contrast with many sites in central Totnes there was surprisingly little archaeological material preserved. The earliest finds were sherds of Totnes type post medieval coarseware. No archaeological features were observed apart from one stone built foundation of 19th century or later date.

### 1.3 Methodology

The evaluation consisted of trial trenching conforming to the specification agreed with the DCAS. This amounted to a trench of approximately 17m in length in the area of the house plot at the north end of the site (Trench 1). This trench followed the proposed line of the west house wall foundation trench. Although originally intended, it was not possible to excavate a second parallel trench on the line of the eastern house wall, due to the narrow width of the site. It was also not possible to sample the full width of the site at right angles to the first trench due to the restricting nature of the boundary walls, but the southern 4m of this trench was 'dog-legged' to sample the maximum possible width of the site diagonally.

A 6m length of trench (Trench 2) was excavated in the area of the garage development close to the south end of the site. As the garage was to be a timber framed construction it was to be built on a concrete pad rather than deep foundation trenches. Therefore the trial trench in this area was only excavated to 0.5m which was the maximum depth required for that pad.

The trenching was carried out using a swing shovel type mini-digger equipped with a 1.3m wide toothless grading bucket, supervised at all times by an archaeologist. The machining was carried out to the depth where archaeological features first became apparent, or to natural undisturbed geology, or to the maximum depth required by the development, whichever was the less. In places, where appropriate, deeper sondages were carried out by machine in order to check the nature and appearance of deeper natural deposits. Where necessary, potential features identified at that stage were to be subsequently investigated by hand and recorded in accordance with the requirements of Devon County Council.

Archaeological features were to be part-excavated by hand and recorded by written context sheets and drawn to scale in plan and section. The trenches and their location within the site were plotted utilizing hand measurement to the corners and boundaries of the site. Backfilling was carried out by machine after the completion of archaeological recording.

## 2.0 Results of Evaluation Trenches

### 2.1 Trench 1: The North Trench (see plate 1 & 3)

The stratigraphy revealed was relatively simple. It consisted of a friable black, silty clay topsoil (100) overlying a dark grey silty clay subsoil (101). This overlay a very compact deposit of mid-grey dirty clay matrix containing very abundant angular stones of all sizes (102). The dirty appearance of this material did not at first suggest it was natural, however its lack of archaeological material, its compact nature and the arrangement of stones within its matrix, did. 13m from the north end of the trench this deposit graduated into what could be considered natural geological subsoil more typical for Totnes; namely an orange-grey clay matrix containing abundant banded shale, much degraded at its upper surface. This was sufficient to confirm that (103) was indeed natural and geological in origin. It overlay natural bedrock which had a variable and undulating upper surface but was encountered at a depth of between 1.3m-1.6m in some parts of the trench. Each of the layers revealed was of greatest thickness at the north end of the trench, thinning to the south. The topsoil (100) was 0.4m thick at the north end of the trench reducing to 0.2m at the south end. The subsoil (101) tapered from 0.4m to 0.2m in thickness along the same length. Thus the stony natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.8m at the north end, but only at 0.4m at the south end.

Only one archaeological feature was revealed in this trench. It consisted of a built structure at the south end of the north-south part of the trench (103). This structure was not fully revealed but extended beyond the trench to the west and south. It consisted of a mortar-bonded wall foundation extending to a maximum depth of 1m below existing ground level. It was of mixed build incorporating large and medium angular stones, roof slate and 19<sup>th</sup> century brick roughly coursed. The bonding was of a variable hard, dirty, grey-white mortar. Part of this structure was sealed by a thin poured concrete slab.

### 2.2 Trench 2: The South Trench (see plate 2)

At the depth of 0.5m which was the maximum depth of this trench no archaeological features were apparent. The soil profile revealed consisted of 0.2m of black topsoil equivalent to (100) with the addition of the inclusion of abundant bicycle components, overlying a grey brown subsoil of 0.2m-0.3m thickness. At the maximum depth of the excavation, 0.4m-0.5m the first signs of colour change to orange, probably natural undisturbed subsoil was apparent.

## 2.3 The Finds

The topsoil on site (100) and the subsoil immediately below it (101) contained a typically modern range of finds including blue transfer printed china (post 1800), Machine made brick (20<sup>th</sup> century), Totnes type post-medieval coarsewares (16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century), and tobacco pipe stem fragments of uncertain date.

## 3.0 Interpretation

No archaeological features were revealed by the evaluation apart from the stone built structure (103) within the area of the house trench.

Insufficient was seen of that feature to determine its original function. No part of the above ground structure for which (103) was the foundation remained, although quantities of rubble and roofing sheet were present in this part of the garden. In the absence of further evidence it seems likely that this structure was the foundation of an outbuilding of some sort. Although the part of foundation revealed incorporated material in its fabric clearly indicating a modern construction, that does not eliminate the possibility that other parts of the same structure could perhaps have been of earlier date.

## 4.0 Conclusion

In contrast with expectations for Totnes town centre this site showed remarkably little of archaeological significance beyond a few pottery sherds of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Totnes type coarseware. No evidence was seen of medieval structures or pits relating to its use as a burgrave plot. Although the parts of the stone foundations seen were of modern origin there is some potential that other parts of the structure of which they formed part, might be of archaeological interest or significance.

## 5.0 Bibliography

- |                                    |                                                                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DoE.                               | 1990: <i>Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning. PPG 16.</i> |
| English Heritage                   | 1991: <i>The Management of Archaeological Projects.</i>                  |
| Institute of Field Archaeologists. | 1995: <i>Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief</i>  |
| Institute of Field Archaeologists. | 1994: <i>Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation.</i>  |