

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Dartington, South Hams	National Grid Reference SX 79783 62687	Number:
Subject: Monitoring and recording at the site of the former Church of St Mary, Dartington Hall, Dartington, Devon		Photo attached? N
Planning Application no: (LBC & SMC)	Recipient museum: RAM Museum, Exeter	
OASIS ID: southwes1-39461	Museum Accession no: 281/2007	
Contractor's reference number/code:	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 13.08.2007, 14.08.2007, 20.08.07 and the 27.02.2008	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>South West Archaeology (SWARCH) was instructed by Shane Maddison of Conservation and Design on behalf of the Dartington Hall Trust to undertake archaeological monitoring and recording at the site of the former Church of St Mary, Dartington Hall, Dartington, Devon during groundworks consisting of the excavation of a cable trench and the removal of an existing paved path around the W and S side of the tower. Work on the 27.02.2008 consisted of the hand excavation of a trench to create a French drain running against the N faces of the tower.</p> <p>The Cable Trench This was 0.3m in width and excavated to a depth of 0.5m-0.6m by a swing-shovel type mini digger. The excavation was carried out under close archaeological supervision and spoil was examined for finds. The first part of the trench (T1) ran N-S in front of and 0.5m from the E face of the Tower, crossing the former location of the nave, and extended to the S to the closest part of the boundary wall where an outbuilding extended to the N of the light well retaining wall for the 19th extension of the Hall complex. From there the trench was continued (T2) E-W 17m to the SE to a point against N (upper side) of the light well retaining wall.</p> <p>Within the part of the trench closest to the church tower the stratigraphy revealed consisted of turf (except where the route of trench cut through thin tarmac paths 0.6m-0.8m in width) which overlay 0.6m of mixed demolition rubble including mortar, roof slate and stone rubble in a loose sandy-clay matrix. This deposit extended to 4.1m S of the tower, where its limit was defined by a mortared stone wall or the top of a narrow culvert 0.3m in width that crossed the cable trench at right angles at a depth of 0.5m (marked A on plan). This feature was not disturbed. To the S of the stratigraphy revealed consisted of turf overlying a grey-brown firm but friable clay soil. This soil contained frequent angular shale fragments and occasional bone fragments.</p> <p>Two features were revealed in this E-W run of trench. One (marked B on plan) was a culvert with a slate base, mortared stone side walls and a slate capping slab. It had an external width of 0.6m and internal dimensions of 0.2m width and 0.2m depth. The white lime mortar bonding the side walls contained coal dust and appeared to be of late date. This feature crossed the cable trench approximately at right angles 9.8m from its W end.</p> <p>The second feature (C on plan) was the top of either a narrow mortared stone wall, or a narrow culvert 0.4m wide. This was encountered at a depth of 0.5m, and was located 4.25m from the W end of the trench. It was not disturbed.</p> <p>Around the S and W side of the tower the existing uneven paving slabs were lifted and a level reduction of 0.2m was undertaken. Most of the material removed was sand bedding for the paving, and below that a similar grey-brown firm but friable clay soil similar to that seen in the cable trench was observed. No grave-cuts, tombs or crypts were revealed in any part of the ground works. No structural evidence for walls or surfaces associated with the nave of the church was revealed adjacent to the tower. No articulated human remains were discovered. The only artefacts recovered were one sherd of Totnes-type post medieval coarseware.</p> <p>Conclusion The features and deposits revealed were quite typical for shallow excavation within churchyards. That no structural evidence for the nave of the church was revealed E of the tower suggests that disturbance caused by its demolition or later landscaping of the area extended to a depth of greater than 0.5m below present ground level.</p>		

The French Drain

This work consisted of a trench 0.6m in width and a maximum of 0.8m deep running along the West and north faces of the tower and abutting stair turret, from N of the tower's W doorway around its NW corner and to its NE corner. The trench was dug by hand under close archaeological supervision to a depth below that of the tower's internal floor level. The full depth of the material excavated consisted of a single deposit dark brown humic soil containing abundant stone rubble, mortar fragments and roof slate fragments, and was of 19th to 20th Century date (from ceramic evidence). The trench extended to the full depth of this deposit. This dark soil overlay a mid brown silty clay cultivated soil typical of churchyard soil, encountered at a depth of 0.6m to 0.8m. In places flat slate slabs were present at that level, suggesting that a path or the base of a drain may have formerly existed at that level

Only one significant archaeological discovery was made. This consisted of a wall foundation extending N from the NE corner of the tower. This was of well coursed stone rubble bonded with brown lime mortar, and was 0.6m in width. This footing corresponded with scarring visible on the wall face immediately above. It was therefore certainly the foundation of a wall springing N away from the NE corner of the tower, presumably that of the N part of the W end of the now vanished nave. This wall extended to the full depth of the trench (here 0.65m) and was left in situ as it formed the E terminal of the French drain trench.

No intact graves, tombs or crypts were revealed. A few small fragments of disarticulated bone were recovered for re-interment. The dark soil deposits through which this trench was dug appeared to have occurred as a single incidence of dumping raising the ground level against the N side of the tower. It is likely that this took place at the time of the destruction of the nave of the church.

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

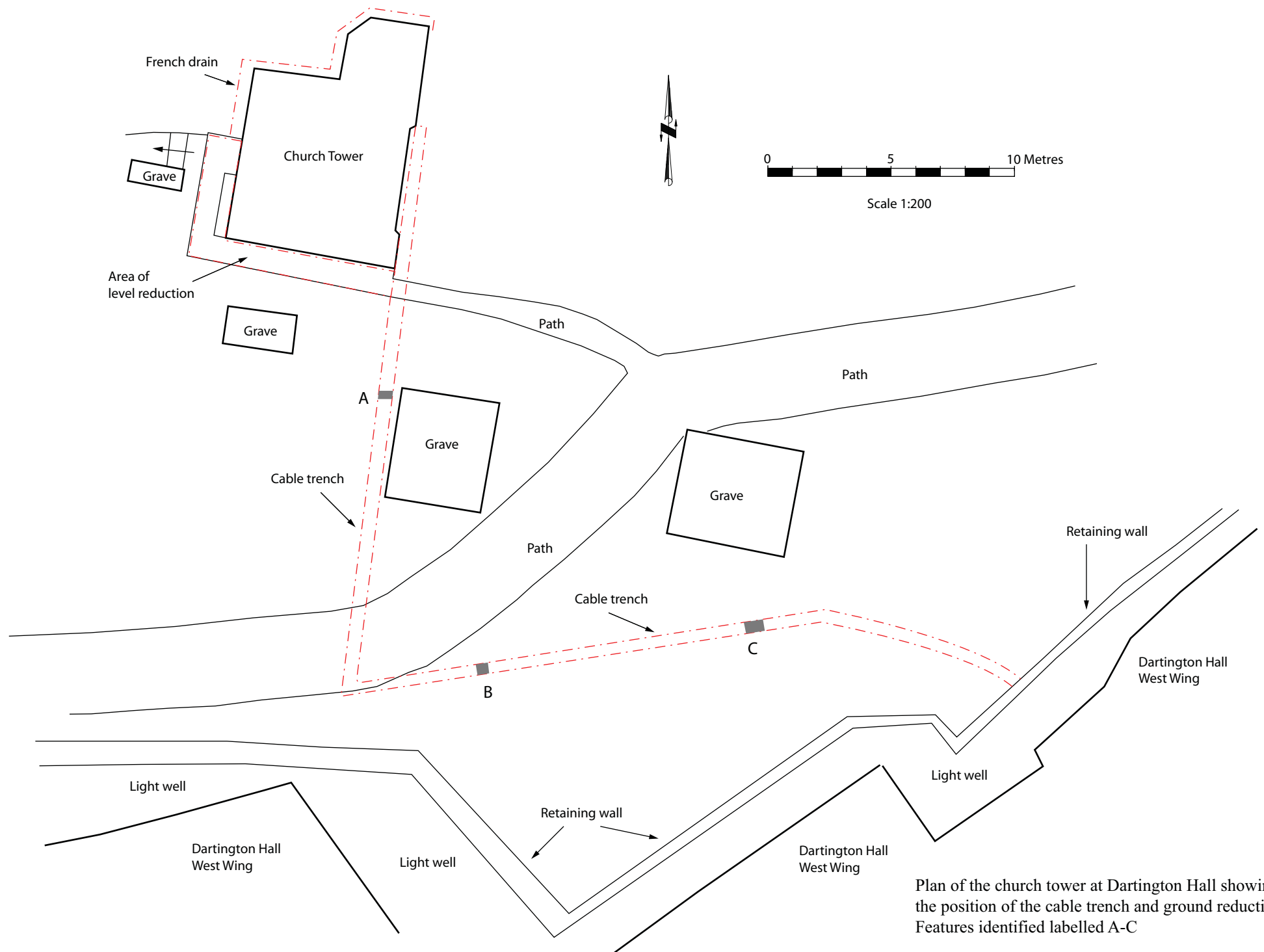
Recorder:

Jon Freeman South West Archaeology

Date sent to HER:

March 2008

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. Any plans or photographs embedded within or attached to this form remain the copyright © of the recorder, and must not be reproduced in any publication without the explicit consent of the copyright holder.



Plan of the church tower at Dartington Hall showing the position of the cable trench and ground reduction. Features identified labelled A-C