The Bishop's Palace, Paignton, Torbay

NGR SX 0240 5920

Results of historic building recording and test pit excavations

Scheduled Monument number 1020764; Listed Building entry id. 1208109

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Summary

Historic building recording and the excavation of test pits was carried out by AC archaeology between February and August 2012 at the Bishop's Palace, Paignton (SX 88612 69774). The work was carried out as a grant of Scheduled Monument Consent for consolidation and repair works to parts of the north and east boundary walls.

The excavation of the test pits identified the presence of early soils beneath the earliest upstanding masonry of the curtain wall. No dating evidence was recovered, but these are likely to be of medieval rather than earlier date.

During the recording of the curtain wall, three main phase of masonry were identified. The earliest is undated, and other than a row of three putlog holes contains no obvious architectural features to indicate whether it was a curtain wall or formed one side of a building.

The next phase is represented by a major rebuilding. Again, there are no surviving datable architectural features, but it may well be of (later) 13th-century or perhaps early 14th-century date. The surviving masonry includes a length of east-west aligned wall and the stub of a north-south wall, the latter incorporating a doorway between two buildings or rooms. The western portion of the wall incorporates a row of joist sockets for a first floor, whilst at its eastern end jambs forming one side of a window survive.

The present circuit walls were rebuilt in the mid-14th century and this clearly involved substantial demolition of existing structures. The only significant architectural features within the recorded elements of the new curtain wall are two loopholes. There are no other features to indicate that medieval buildings were present on or attached to the inside of the wall.

Later alterations are generally confined to the 19th and 20th centuries, and include the infilling of the gaps in the circuit after a path though the site went out of use, as well as the building of the crenelations on the east wall, and more recent repairs and capping and the punching through of the entrance to the Church Hall.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 Archaeological excavation of trial pits and recording of the present boundary walls of the Bishop's Palace, Paignton (SX 88612 69774; Fig. 1) was carried out by AC archaeology between February and August 2012. The work was commissioned by Torbay Council and was required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (S00026938, granted 11 January 2012) for consolidation and repair works to parts of the north and east boundary walls. Guidance on the requirements was provided by the Torbay Council Senior Historic Environment Officer (TCSHEO).
- 1.2 The Bishop's Palace is situated within the Conservation Area of Old Paignton, next to the parish church of St John the Baptist. It is a Scheduled Monument (National Heritage List no. 1020764), and the boundary walls are Grade II* listed.
- 1.3 The consolidation and repair works took place to the north and east boundary walls surrounding part of the Vicarage and the Church Hall grounds. The site generally lies on level ground at around 12m aOD, although there is a drop in level between the

grounds of the Vicarage/Church Hall and Church Path to the north. In addition, the Church Hall has been terraced into the hillside, and is situated on the site of a former tennis court. The underlying geology comprises Permian conglomerate, breccia and sandstone.

- **1.4** The archaeological works comprised the following:
 - A watching brief during the removal of vegetation along a 30m length of the internal elevations of the north and east walls;
 - Recording of the same sections of wall following removal of vegetation, as well as prior to and during consolidation; and
 - The excavation of five test pits within the flower beds at the base of the north wall.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Bishop's Palace is first documented in 1258 and the earliest surviving fabric is of 13th- and 14th-century date (Bishop 2012). This appears to have been the period when the palace was most heavily used; John Grandisson, Bishop from 1327 to 1369, is known to have stayed there ten times, including a period of three months in 1329. By the 15th century use of the palace had declined, with Bishop Lacy staying on only three occasions, the last known visit is believed to have been in 1447.
- 2.2 At the Reformation Bishop Veysey was subjected to severe pressure from the Crown to part with his more valuable manors and in 1549 he granted Paignton to Sir Thomas Speke. By this time the palace was said to be ruinous. In 1577 Speke conveyed the manor to Sir William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke (*ibid*.).
- 2.3 The later history of the palace site has recently been published by Bishop (*ibid.*). The 1841 Paignton tithe map depicts the palace as a rectangular enclosure with a diagonal track or path running southeast from the end of Palace Place. By 1864, when the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the area was published, land to the east of the palace had been developed for housing, serviced by new roads and alleys. The earlier path, depicted on the tithe map was replaced by a new path running along the north side of the enclosure, having been taken out of the churchyard. The southern limit of the former path was marked as a boundary. The map also shows the area occupied by the present (1910) vicarage as being enclosed.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The palace was investigated by Colonel Ridgeway of Blackawton in the late 19th century. He is said to have uncovered remains of buildings, although his work was not published and unfortunately the whereabouts of any records he made is unknown.
- 3.2 In 2001 an architectural investigation of the palace walls was carried out by English Heritage (Jones 2001). A plan of the site, along with a profile of the Coverdale Tower, was prepared. The walls were described and a phasing of the masonry put forward. Further recording of the Coverdale Tower was carried out by Exeter Archaeology in 2007 prior to repairs being carried out. This confirmed Jones' observation of the tower being lit by a series of 14th-century windows, some of which had been replaced during the 15th century.

- 3.3 In 2003 a building within the southwest corner of the churchyard was excavated by Exeter Archaeology. This had previously been referred to as a 'chapel'. However, the building was reinterpreted as the ground-floor remains of a two-story lodging block with attached garderobe block (Passmore 2004). Later observations made during the relaying of a gas pipe in Church Path identified the presence of a north-south aligned wall linking the lodging block with the palace enclosure to the south.
- 3.4 In 2003 an archaeological evaluation was carried out by Exeter Archaeology around the Church Hall (Whiteaway and Stead 2003). This demonstrated extensive modern truncation, and no medieval archaeological deposits were exposed.
- 3.5 In 2012 the history, architecture and development of the Palace was reviewed by Bishop. As part of his analysis of the site he reinterpreted the lodging block as an early hall or chamber block of mid-late 13th-century date, with the garderobe being a 14th-century addition (Bishop 2012).

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 The main aims of the work were to provide a detailed record of the wall prior to repair and consolidation, and to establish if there were any below-ground evidence for remains associated with the scars and other historic features visible within the perimeter wall.

The following specific objectives were identified:

- To gain a fuller understanding of the construction method of the perimeter wall via detailed recording and excavation at its base;
- To establish the presence/absence of any associated features or structures associated with a building as indicated by the wall scars and features;
- To identify evidence of phasing, such as earlier features/land surfaces, as well as subsequent remodelling; and
- To compare the results with those from earlier investigations.

The investigations also had the potential to aid fulfilment of the following research Aims in the South West Archaeological Research Framework:

- Aim 8: Utilise the survival of Medieval and later artefacts and buildings to their full extent.
- Aim 32: Investigate and identify the locations of early medieval religious buildings, monuments and landscape.
- Aim 36: Improve our understanding of Medieval and later urbanism.
- Aim 47: Assess the archaeological potential for studying medieval economy, trade, technology and production.
- 4.2 The investigations were undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2012), and in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (revised October 2008) and Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (revised October 2008)

Initial vegetation clearance was monitored to ensure no damage to the wall occurred. At the request of the TCSHEO elements of vegetation clearance was carried out by AC archaeology personnel.

A 30m length of the north and east internal perimeter walls of the palace was recorded at a scale of 1:50. The corresponding exterior elevation of the east wall was also drawn. A written record was made using context sheets allocated to each phase of masonry and individual or groups of features. This was accompanied by a detailed (where feasible) overlapping digital photographic record of the whole wall, and a more detailed general and detailed record of individual features of lengths of wall.

A total of five trial pits were excavated against the inside elevation of the north wall. Their positions and sizes were determined by the TCSHEO and on-site conditions, such as tree roots and buried pipes. All excavation was undertaken by hand and in stratigraphic order. Structural remains were recorded and left *in situ*; other features were excavated to establish their function and date. All artefacts, deposits and features were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's General Site recording Manual, Version 1.

5. THE PALACE WALLS (Figs 2-4; Plates 1-8)

5.1 The north boundary wall (early phases of masonry)

Wall F600 (Plates 1 and 9)

The earliest fabric in this wall is a 12.5m length of limestone masonry (F600) that incorporates some mid grey breccia, bonded in a soft buff slightly gravelly lime mortar. The wall was constructed on clay-bonded limestone and breccia rubble footings (F114/F204/F403/F500). In places this projected 0.10m out from the wall above, and it is possible that it had been partially removed during later landscaping. The footings were laid onto earlier deposits; these are described in section 6 below. At a height of 1.1m above the present ground surface the masonry incorporates a pair of putlog holes.

Wall F303 (Plates 1-6)

Wall F303 forms a rebuild of wall F600, and forms an eastward continuation of the present north boundary wall from F600. It is constructed of breccia with some limestone and is bonded in a lime mortar, and incorporates a fragment of a contemporary north-south aligned wall. Excavation at the base of this wall exposed well-constructed breccia and limestone footings (F304). The faced west edge of these was exposed. The base of the footings was not uncovered. The western end of F303 appears to infill a large void, possibly a window opening, within the earlier fabric 600.

The wall incorporates a large number of features, which are described from east to west. The masonry at its east end, along with the stub of the wall returning to the south, contains two significant architectural features. At ground-floor level are the remains of a doorway in the north-south wall. The surviving masonry comprises seven courses of chamfered sandstone jambs set into splayed stonework. These incorporate a rebate for the door, which opened to the east. There are holes in two of the jambs, one possibly associated with a frame, the other for a lock or latch. The surviving masonry above the doorway is slightly arched. Above the doorway is a void, possibly representing a socket for a lintel. Above this, on the south face, the wall has a ragged break, but on the outside face there are eight red sandstone jambs forming the western side of a former first-floor window opening (see also Bishop 2012, fig. 22a). The window is at different height to the ground-floor doorway and the first-floor

level to the west (as described above) being at an intermediate level between the two. The implications of this are discussed in section 7.3 below.

To the west of the doorway, at a height of 1.25m above the ground is a row of three putlog holes, one of which is blocked. These are approximately at the same height as the three lower sockets noted in wall F600, although this relationship is probably coincidental. These features must represent putlog holes since any permanent timbers within them would have been lower than the doorway to the east, and therefore below ceiling level.

A further single blocked putlog or beam socket is present, further to the west, situated some 0.50m above the lower putlogs.

At a height of 1m above the lower row of putlogs is a row of 10 sockets, five of which have been blocked. These are generally closely-set, being only 0.40m apart, although there is a gap of 3.4m between the eastern sockets. Their closeness, and height in the wall in relation to the eastern doorway, must indicate that these are joist sockets for an upper floor rather than a further row of putlogs. Further sockets are almost certainly obscured by 20th-century repairs and consolidation of the voids and adjacent voids (603). This as executed mainly in very small fragments of breccia, limestone and cobbles bonded in dark grey cement with coal and minute CBM fragments.

Above the row of sockets is a pair of truncated tapering blocked openings (601 and 602) measuring 1.70 and 1.80m wide by up to 0.90m deep. They are filled with limestone with some breccia (and sandstone in 602) bonded in cream/yellow gravely lime mortar (601) and cream gravely cement (602). These could represent a pair of first-floor doorways, but the cement used in the blocking of 602 may indicate that they simply represent 20th-century repairs.

The top of the wall has been extensively repaired in the 20th-century, using limestone and breccia bonded in various materials including grey lime mortar, red gravely lime mortar, coarse light grey cement, and coarse mid-grey cement. The masonry incorporates three putlog holes, two of which have open tops. The eastern voids are partially set into the upper courses of F303. (A fourth putlog is partially set within the later masonry 605 to the east (see below), and could form part of the same group.) It is not clear whether these are medieval or more recent features replicating the earlier putlogs.

Masonry 608

This is a rebuilding of the west end of the surveyed wall using breccia and limestone bonded in cream/yellow gravelly lime mortar. It a contains a low-level blocked putlog, on the same level as those in F600 and F303, and at its top is another socket, although this is slightly larger than most within the whole palace complex, and may have been rebuilt. The masonry's relationship with F600 is obscured by plaster – the presence of the low putlog may indicate that there is some repointing only (rather than rebuilding) at the lower level. It postdates F303, and given the similarities in build, it may be contemporary with 601 and 602.

5.2 The north and east boundary walls (the later phases of masonry

Wall F605 (Plates 4 and 5)

The east end of wall F303 has been truncated and replaced with a later wall F605, which forms the eastern circuit of the walls of the palace. This masonry is

constructed of breccia bonded in a hard white lime mortar. The breccia is much coarser than that used in the earlier walls and contains distinctive large grey sandstone inclusions. As noted above, at ground-floor level, the wall underpins earlier masonry F303, but at first-floor level infills a window opening. Here only a 1.6m length of wall survives before it is truncated by the mid 20th-century entrance to the Church Hall. The fabric contains a single putlog hole.

Wall F607 (Plates 7-8)

To the east of the entrance to the parish hall the masonry continues (as F607) for a further 4.40m before it turns to the south and forms the east boundary of the palace. The wall contains a low-level putlog and a further pair of higher level putlogs that flank a splayed looped opening. On the inner face, the lintel has been removed, but its position is discernable through a rectangular socket. Above this there is a relieving arch, into which two shallow sockets associated with the roof of a later building have been added. The opening below had been partially infilled with an arched brick opening (610); this was removed during the consolidation works. To the east of the opening, at the corner of the wall is a shallow socket that also extends into the north-south return. At the top of the wall are further putlog holes, a corbel, and a blocked opening that may represent an infilled merlon. The top of the wall has been consolidated (604), and material associated with these repairs infills the possible merlon.

A 9-10m length of the north-south aligned east elevation survives before it is truncated by the former pathway running through the site. The masonry incorporates a single splayed looped opening as present in the north section of wall. It has been blocked on the outside, and is partially blocked on the inside (as 613) from which a sherd of 19th-century Staffordshire grey glazed ware was recovered. Other features include two putlog holes, one of which is blocked, and a shallow socket. There is a further pair of sockets, presumably putlog holes higher up the walls. At this level there is a horizontal chase for a roofline of a former building. This was a summerhouse and was depicted on the early 20th-century 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps.

On the inside elevation the full extent of the 19th-century repairs following the closure of the path through the site is not visible. A roughly vertical break is visible at the base of the wall, but further up the masonry has been heavily repointed in cement and the break in build is not visible. The rebuilding (611) is in breccia and limestone, bonded variously in soft pink mortar and hard white lime mortar. The wall is topped with three crenels (612), into which two corbels have been incorporated. The crenels have tapered sides rather than the coursed and stepped masonry of the medieval south wall of the palace; they are known to be of more decent date since they are not depicted on an 1830 print (Bishop 2012, fig. 8). The merlons have been partially infilled with tapering masonry.

On the outside face a roughly vertical break delineating the medieval and 19th-century masonry is visible from the road level to the base of the crenels. A possible horizontal break is visible below the crenels, which continues across the infilled path opening. This probably indicates that the crenelation was added as a second phase of repairs.

6. THE TEST PITS (Figs 2-3; Plates 9-10)

6.1 Introduction

A series of 5 test pits was excavated against the north precinct wall. Due to post-medieval landscaping within the site, a construction trench for the wall was not visible. The wall could have been cut through the recorded underlying layers, but any surviving evidence of these deposits above the wall had been removed and replaced with garden soils associated with post-medieval landscaping and the present Vicarage garden.

6.2 Pit 1 (Plates 9-10)

This pit was located at the west end of the main length of medieval fabric (including F600). The wall footings (114) comprise unfaced clay-bonded sub-angular mixed limestone and breccia with rare water-worn stones. It had been constructed onto (or into) a friable light red sandy clay containing occasional mortar fragments and flecks (112). This deposit was a redeposited subsoil, possibly a levelling layer. It overlaid a thin friable mid-red sandy-loam with rare mortar fragments (113). This is possibly a buried soil and overlaid the natural subsoil (116).

A series of small pits (F108, F106 and F102), partially exposed within the test pit, had been cut into Layer 112. Their fills (109, 107 and 103 respectively) contained crushed breccia and lime mortar. A single fish vertebrae was recovered from 103, and two sherds of 18th- or 19th-century grey stoneware were found within 109. The presence of construction or demolition debris within their fills may indicate that these pits were associated with the rebuilding of the palace wall to the west in the 19th century. A deeper pit (F104) had been excavated through pit F102. Finds from two of its fills included sherds of flower pots and a fragment of 19th- or 20th-century blue transfer-printed industrial china. The pit was sealed by modern garden soils (100 and 101).

6.3 Pit 2

The wall footings (204, equivalent to 114) were constructed onto a friable mid-dark brown silty sand containing common small sub-angular stone, frequent mortar flecks and occasional larger mortar fragments (201). This overlaid a very similar deposit (202) that contained rare charcoal fragments and less mortar than 201. This overlaid a soft mid red-brown sandy silty clay containing rare sub-angular stones, and rare mortar flecks and fragments (203). These deposits are all interpreted as medieval levelling layers. No dating evidence was recovered, but a very small assemblage of animal bone and shell was recovered from 201 and 202. The only other feature was a pipe trench (F206), which was sealed by the modern garden soil (200).

6.3 Pit 3

This pit was located at a junction in the north curtain wall F303 with a demolished north-south aligned wall, and the later rebuild F605. The breccia footings of F303 were flush with the upstanding masonry and are integral to the wall, whereas the footings (304) of the demolished north-south wall projected out from the threshold of the doorway above. They were cut through a soft mid red silty clay containing frequent slate and mortar fragments. It was not established whether the curtain wall was also cut through this layer. The footings were sealed by garden soils and post-medieval and modern levelling (300-302).

6.4 Pit 4

This was located between pits 1 and 2, and was excavated to expose the wall footings (403; equivalent to 114 and 204). The underlying deposits were not exposed,

although a possible earlier deposit (402) was present below the garden soils (400 and 401).

6.5 Pit 5

This was located between pits 2 and 3, and was excavated to expose the junction of the upstanding walls F600 and F303. The earlier footings (500) of F600 were exposed overlying 502 – the same soil as 201. The footings of F303 were flush with the upstanding masonry (as recorded in trench 2) and continued below the base of the trench. Footings 500 were overlain by garden soil 501.

7. COMMENTS

- 7.1 The excavation of the test pits identified the presence of early soils beneath the earliest upstanding phase of curtain wall F600. No dating evidence was recovered, but these are likely to be of medieval rather than earlier date.
- 7.2 The detailed recording of the north curtain wall has now identified three main phases of medieval masonry. The earliest, F600, is not securely dated. It contains a row of three putlog holes; further putlog holes in the later masonry (F303 and F605) are at the same level, which may imply that the ground level remained fairly consistent throughout the medieval period. The wall contains no other obvious architectural features to indicate whether it was a curtain wall or formed one side of a building, although a rebuild at its western end may represent infilling of a window.
- 7.3 The next phase is represented by a major rebuilding (with F303) of F600. Again, there are no surviving datable architectural features, but it may well be of (later) 13thcentury date or perhaps of early 14th-century date (see below). The surviving masonry includes a length of east-west aligned (curtain wall) and the stub of a northsouth wall. The north-south aligned wall (which includes a doorway) divides two buildings or rooms. The western portion of the wall incorporates a row of closely-set joist sockets situated at a height (in relation to the doorway) that indicates they supported a first floor. Above these, masonry 601 and 602 may represent a pair of infilled doorways, although this interpretation is very much speculation. The doorway within the north-south wall opened to the east, which would indicate that it opened into another building or room (as opposed to opening from an outside space into a building to the west. The height of the window in the north wall would indicate that this eastern room was of two-storey height but only contained one floor. The functions of these rooms are unknown, although Bishop (2012, 181) concludes that the masonry represents an early 14th-century hall.
- 7.4 It is generally agreed that in the mid-14th century the present circuit walls of the Bishop's Palace were rebuilt, and Bishop (2012, 181-2) has put forward a date of the mid 1330s to the late 1340s. The rebuilding clearly involved substantial demolition of existing structures. The only significant architectural features within the recorded fabric (F605 and F607) are the two loopholes. There are no other features to indicate that medieval buildings were present on or attached to the inside of the wall. This fits with Bishop's (ibid., 181) conclusions that the palace ceased to be a major residence after the 1330s.
- 7.5 Later alterations are generally confined to the 19th and 20th centuries, and include the infilling of the gaps in the circuit after a path though the site went out of use, as well as the building of the crenelations on the east wall, and more recent repairs and capping and the punching through of the entrance to the Church Hall. There is also evidence for a summer house attached to the northeast corner of the circuit walls.

Contemporary features, in the form of pits, were found in test pit 1. Earlier alterations may include the infilling of the voids (?openings) 601 and 602.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1 The recording was commissioned by Torbay Council, and thanks are due to their Senior Historic Environment Officer, Hal Bishop, for his advice and comments whilst on site. Thanks are also due to the stonemason Keith Baker for is assistance and cooperation on site. The fieldwork was carried out by Simon Hughes, Richard Sims, Andrew Passmore and Paul Jones. The report was written by Andrew Passmore and the illustrations were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai and Sarnia Blackmore.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

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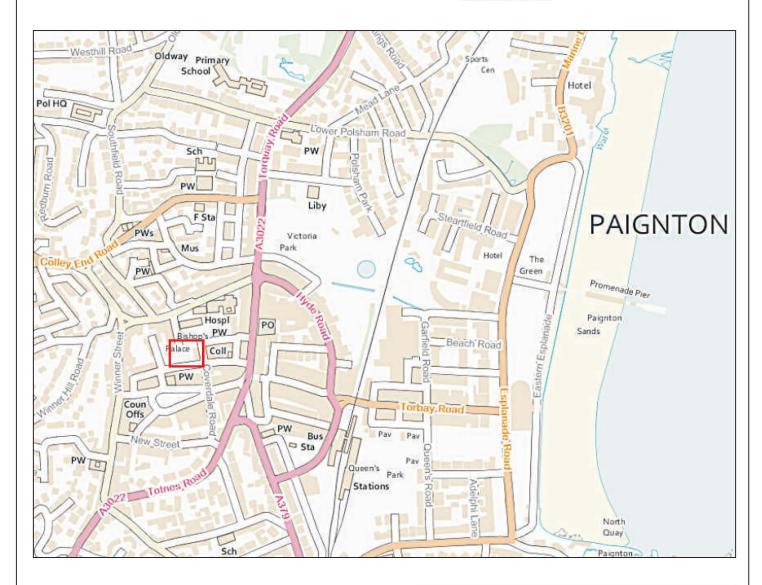
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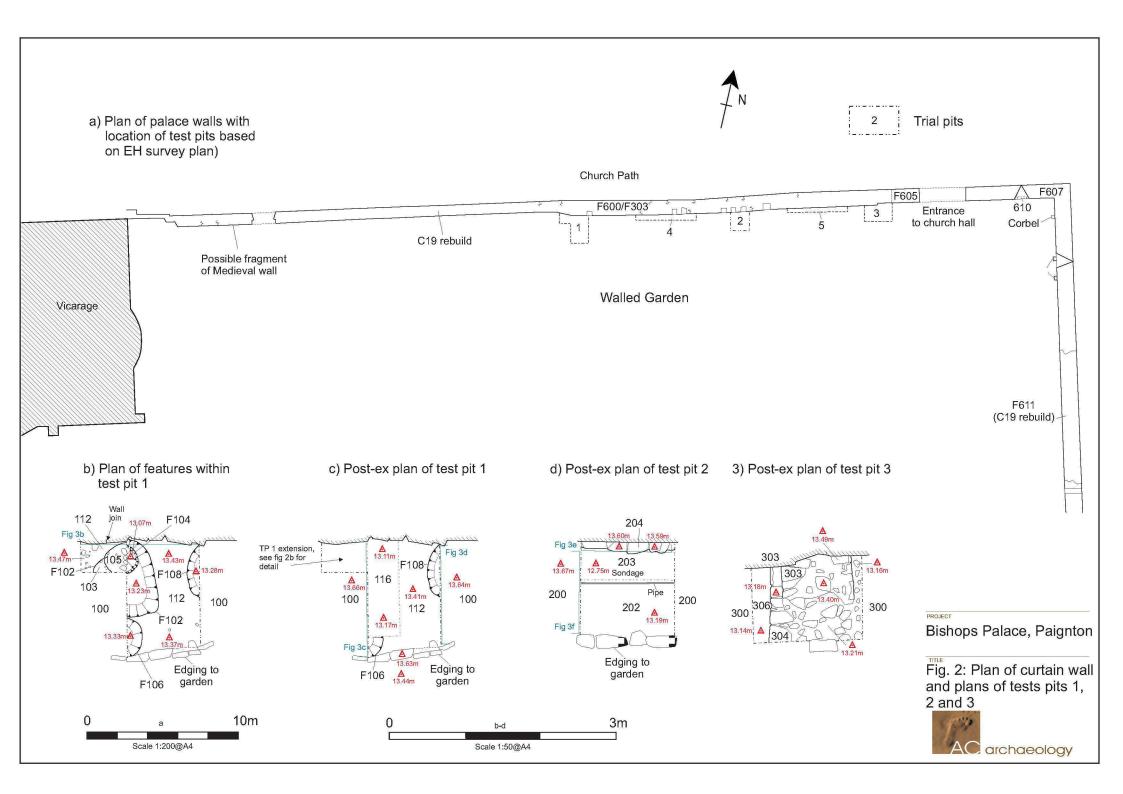
Bishop's Palace, Paignton, Devon

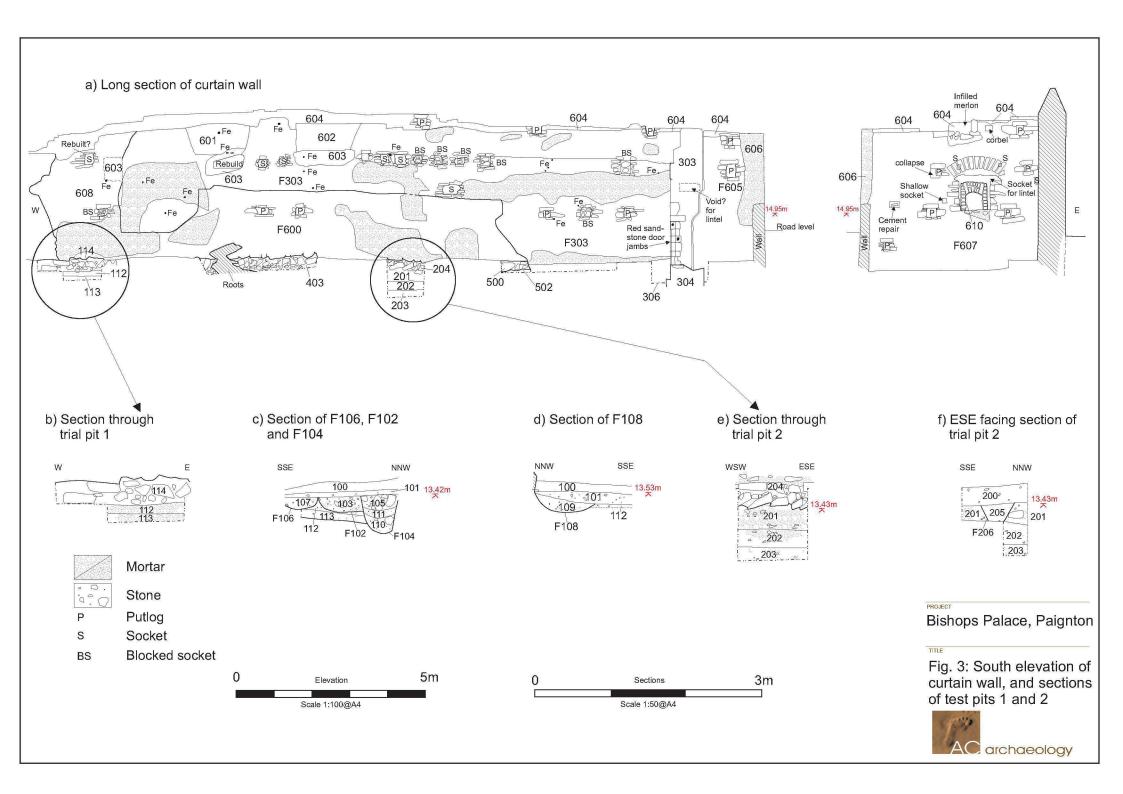
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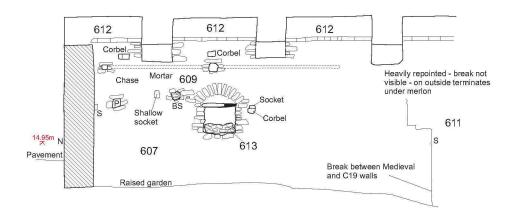
Fig. 1: Location of site



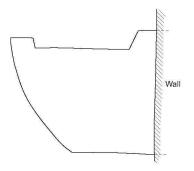




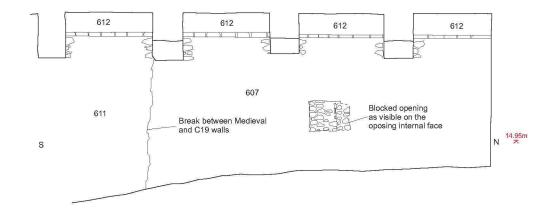
a) East wall, internal elevation



c) Profile of corbel



b) East wall, external elevation



Bishops Palace, Paignton

Fig. 4: Internal and external elevation of east curtain wall



1m 5m Profile Elevations Scale 1:100@A4 Scale 1:4@A4



Plate 1: North curtain wall showing F600 with F303 above, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 2: Flush footings of F303 to right, overlying rougher footings of F600, viewed from the southwest. 1m scale.





Plate 3: Doorway in wall F303, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 4: Footings 304 of doorway in F303, with later wall F605 beyond, viewed from the southwest. 1m scale.



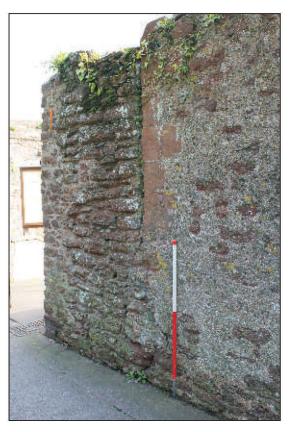


Plate 5: North curtain wall, external elevation showing sandstone jambs of window opening in F303, with later wall F605 beyond, viewed from the northwest. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Joist sockets of first floor in F303, viewed from the southwest.

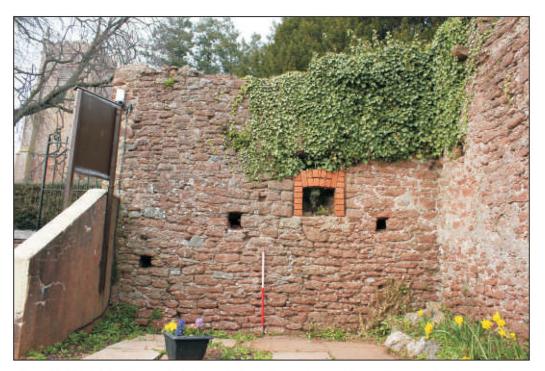


Plate 7: Wall F607, south internal elevation, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 8: Wall F607, east internal elevation, viewed from the west. 1m scale.



Plate 9: Test pit 1 showing features F102, F104, F106 and F108, viewed from the east. 1m scale.



Plate 10: Test pit 1, post-excavation view showing footings 114 of wall F600 and 19th-century infilling to left, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



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