

# LAND AT THE REAR OF 44 FORE STREET, TOTNES, DEVON

(NGR SX 80374 60333)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning Ref. South Hams District Council 56/1465/14/F

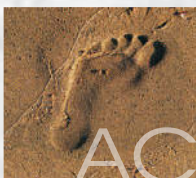
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Prepared by:  
Stella De-Villiers  
and Kerry Kerr-Peterson

On behalf of:  
Harrison Sutton Partnership

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AC archaeology

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2014 at the rear of 46 Fore Street, Totnes, TQ9 5RP (NGR SX 80374 60333). Fore Street connects the late Saxon burgh and crossing point of the River Dart to the west, and is formed from a series of medieval burgage plots. Previous archaeological investigations within Fore Street have produced evidence for medieval and post-medieval settlement.*

*The archaeological trench evaluation recorded no significant archaeological features or deposits, with only two medieval pits being partially exposed. The deposit sequence was broadly similar across the site, comprising modern, post-medieval and medieval soils layers. It is therefore concluded that the site has low archaeological potential and the proposed development will have no significant impact on any exposed and any hitherto undiscovered archaeological remains.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1; Plates 1-2)**

- 1.1** This document has been prepared in support of a planning application (South Hams District Council planning reference 56/1465/14/F) for the construction of a house on land at the rear of 46 Fore Street, Totnes (SX 80374 60333; Fig. 1), and presents the results of an archaeological trench evaluation carried out by AC archaeology on 28 and 29 July 2014. The works were requested by the local planning authority on the advice of the Devon County Council Archaeologist, and were commissioned by Harrison Sutton Partnership.
- 1.2** The site covers an area of approximately 0.07ha, was formerly used as gardens. It comprises two plots divided by a stone wall attached to which is a small shed. In the southern plot are the bases and foundations of several former greenhouses. The site lies at a height of approximately 13m aOD. The north plot drops slightly to the south, whilst the south plot drops to the south. The underlying solid geology comprises Devonian Mudstone, Siltstone, Limestone and Sandstone of the Nordon Formation.

### **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** The site is within the historic town of Totnes, which was established as a Royal fortified town in the first half of the 10th century. The line of the town defences are fossilised in the present street pattern, with South Street forming the southern side of these. The defences would initially have comprised an earthen bank and ditch, which were replaced, probably in the 12th century, by a stone wall. Archaeological investigations at land to the rear of 54 High Street and opposite at 17 South Street identified a section of the medieval town wall extending under the modern South Street frontage and an upper section of the town ditch associated with 13th to 15th-century pottery. Observations during works at land to the rear of 48 High Street recorded medieval features, potentially relating to the town defences, also extending under South Street (Dyer and Allan 2004).
- 2.2** The site is one of a number of medieval burgage plots occupying the south side of Fore Street and stretching back from the main street almost to the enclosing boundary of Victoria Street. An archaeological evaluation was undertaken prior to the construction of a new nursery building in the southern part of the Mansion House site,

Fore Street site (Humphries 2004). This identified evidence for archaeological activity on the site dating from the 11th century to the present day, including a significant medieval and post medieval pottery assemblage (Allan and Tyler 2006). More recent work on part central part of this property identified that this area had been heavily disturbed and the only exposed feature was a late 19th- or 20th-century water tank (Farnell 2014).

- 2.3 An archaeological evaluation of the rear of the adjacent 44 Fore Street was carried out prior to the construction of a new house (South West Archaeology 2005). This identified a series of soils but no features other than a 19th- or 20th-century stone wall. A small pottery assemblage was also recovered.
- 2.4 As part of the proposed development a Heritage Statement has been prepared by Josephine Brown (2013). Detailed mapping is only available from the late 19th century onwards when the Ordnance Survey maps were produced. Other than the shed attached to the central wall, and a group of small structures attached to the southern boundary wall, until the 1950s when the greenhouses were first shown, the site is depicted as an open plot.

### 3. AIMS

- 3.1 The principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains, and to record their character, date and survival. The results of the work as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation.

### 4. METHODOLOGY (Fig. 2)

- 4.1 The excavation was undertaken in accordance with a trench plan approved by the Devon County Archaeologist. The excavation of three test pits was proposed, positioned to target the footprint of the new house and the entrance courtyard. Building debris including probable asbestos fragments was encountered in test pit 3, and this pit was abandoned. A fourth pit was subsequently excavated within the footprint of the building. Each pit measures 1m<sup>2</sup> and was excavated manually using hand tools
- 4.2 All deposits and features revealed 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 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections or plans were produced at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum and were recorded using a Leica Viva CS10 GPS unit.

### 5. RESULTS (Figure 2; Plates 3-6)

#### 5.1 Test pit 1 (Fig. 2a; Plate 3)

This test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.10m and augured to a maximum depth of 1.64m. From this level it was not possible to auger any deeper because of the compaction of the ground; this is considered to be the depth of the natural.

Test pit 1		Length 1m	Width 1m
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation
100	Dark grey silt loam, firm, with occasional small sub angular shale. Frequent finds of china, clay pipe, glass and brick, and occasional FE nails and bone.	0-0.36m	Modern topsoil
101	Dark brownish grey, silt loam, firm, occasional small sub angular shale. Moderate china, clay pipe, brick and bone.	0.36-0.64m	Post-medieval soil layer
102	Mid orange brown, silt clay, firm, very frequent small to large angular shale. Rare pot.	0.64-1.64m	Medieval soil layer

Table 1: test pit 1 contexts

No archaeological features were located in the test pit. The deposits found consisted of modern topsoil overlying earlier soil layers.

## 5.2 Test pit 2 (Fig. b-c; Plate 4)

This test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.20m.

Test pit 2		Length 1m	Width 1m
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation
200	Mid grey silt loam, very friable, heavily bioturbated, with rare well sorted gravels (>20mm). Frequent finds of modern cbm, glass, china, and slate fragments.	0-0.26m	Modern topsoil
201	Dark brownish grey, silt loam, friable but slightly compact, bioturbated, with sparse well-sorted gravels (>20mm). Frequent modern material especially glass.	0.26-0.52m	Dumped deposit of modern material
202	Pale yellow grey, silt loam, friable but slightly compact, rare sub angular shale (>40mm)	0.52-0.67m	Post-medieval soil layer
203	Pale orange grey, silt loam, friable, common poorly sorted sub angular mudstone (>100mm).	0.67-0.84 m	Medieval soil layer
204	Partially visible feature, the shape of which was not clear in the limited space of the trench. Sides moderate too steep with a convex base.	0.84-1.10	Feature cut
205	Pale orange brown, silt clay loam, soft and slightly adherent, common moderately sorted angular mud stone (>150mm), rare charcoal..	0.84-1.10	Fill of F204
206	Pale brown yellow, silt clay, with common small to large angular mudstone with no consistent bedding planes or consistent colour matrix.	0.84-1.10	Natural

Table 2: test pit 2 contexts

The only feature recorded in this test pit was F204, which was only partially exposed. It was cut into the natural (206) and was sealed by 203. The feature was excavated to a depth of 0.26m but not bottomed and contained a single fill 205, which contained



pottery and animal bone in it. The deposits found consisted of topsoil overlying a dump of modern material overlying earlier soils.

### 5.3 Test pit 3 (Plate 5)

This pit was excavated to a depth of 0.40m. At this level contaminated ground with possible asbestos was encountered and excavation ceased.

Test pit 3		Length 1m	Width 1m
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation
300	Dark grey brown, silt loam, friable, with frequent angular sandstone, cobbles and slate (>150mm). Frequent modern material including glass, Fe material, plastic.	0-0.40m	Dumped deposit of modern material

Table 3: test pit 2 contexts

### 5.4 Test pit 4 (fig. 2d; Plate 6)

This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.30m.

Test pit 4		Length 1m	Width 1m
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation
400	Dark grey, silt loam, friable, with rare moderately sorted sub angular gravels	0-0.60m	Modern topsoil
401	Dark brown grey, silt clay loam, friable, with rare moderately sorted sub angular gravels. Common charcoal and coal fragments.	0.60-0.88m	Post-medieval soil layer
402	Mid brown, clay loam, friable, with very frequent small to large angular shale.	0.88-1.28m	Medieval soil layer
403	Pale brown yellow, silt clay, with common small to large angular mudstone with no consistent bedding planes or consistent colour matrix.	0.94-1.30	Natural
404	Cut of small pit in the NE corner of the pit, but not fully exposed or excavated.	0.88-1.30	Cut of pit
405	Mid brown, silt clay loam, friable, very rare moderately sorted sub angular gravels (>10mm). Had a slightly sticky consistency and may contain cess material.	0.88-1.30	Fill of F404

Table 4: test pit 4 contexts

The only feature recorded in this test pit consisted of a possible pit F404. This feature was cut through the medieval dumped deposit 402 and was sealed by deposit 401. The feature was excavated to a depth of 0.42m but not bottomed and contained a single fill 405 that contained pottery and animal bone. The overlying deposits consisted of topsoil overlying a post-medieval soil, which sealed feature F404.

## 6. FINDS, by Kerry-Kerr Peterson

**6.1** All finds recovered on site have been cleaned and then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage has been scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented, with this information briefly discussed below. All finds dating to after AD 1750 have been discarded unless they have an intrinsic archaeological value. The assemblage consists almost exclusively of post-medieval material, apart from four sherds of medieval pottery. All of these are residual apart from two pieces from pit fill context (405). Finds totals by material type are given in Table 5.

Context	Iron		Glass		Clay tobacco pipe		CBM		Mortar		Plaster		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Animal bone		Shell		Worked bone	
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
100	3	64	9	16	4	8	3	962	1	5					34	519	6	53				
101	1	9	1	4	7	22	1	160							29	669						
102													1	27								
200			4	15	1	1									12	56						
201	2	23			19	35									42	420	1	1	1	37		
202			2	10	7	14									8	75	3	24				
203	4	117			5	7							1	2	2	8	9	55				
400					1	6	1	13							4	67						
401			2	15	6	26					1	22			11	147	1	56	1	18	1	8
405													2	11			2	5				
Total	10	213	18	60	50	119	5	1135	1	5	1	22	4	40	142	1961	22	194	2	55	1	8

Table 5: Finds quantification by material type. Weights in grams (g).

### 6.2 The Pottery

There are 146 sherds of pottery (2,001kg) from ten contexts. This includes four pieces of pottery dating to the medieval period, two of which are Upper Greensand Derived pottery, produced in the Blackdown Hills region and dating to AD 1250 – 1400. Two sherds of a late medieval green glazed jug were recovered from the fill 405 of pit F404.

The majority of the pottery is post-medieval and modern, dating broadly to the 17th – 20th centuries. There are five sherd of wares made in the Totnes region and ten from South Somerset including one sherd of a sgraffito ware dish. There are some imports from Staffordshire and one from the Hampshire/Surrey border, all dating to the 17th – 19th centuries. Most of the wares are industrially produced white wares or transfer printed wares dating to 19th – 20th century. There is overall a surprisingly limited amount of wares produced in the Totnes region within the assemblage.

### 6.3 The other finds

There are 50 pieces of clay tobacco pipe (119g) from eight contexts. These are almost entirely made up of plain stem pieces which are not closely datable. There are pieces of stem which have glazes – a green-glazed piece was recovered from context 203 and a yellowed-glazed fragment from context 201. Waster pieces were recovered from context 401 which has the pin still in place that was used to create the hole.

A total of five pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighting 1,135kg were recovered from three contexts. These are mostly industrially produced brick fragments, with two hand made brick fragments recovered from context 100 dating to 18th century. One piece of white lime mortar (5g) was recovered from context 100

and a piece of white lime based plaster (22g) came from context 401. These are likely to be post-medieval in date.

A total of 18 pieces of glass (60g) were recovered from five contexts. They are all post-medieval in date, ranging from the 18th – 20th centuries. They include pieces of green and clear hand-made and moulded glass bottles and clear window glass.

A total of 22 fragments of animal bone (194g) came from six contexts. Two pieces were recovered from the fill 405 of pit F404, context which are late medieval in date; these are undiagnostic. The rest come from post-medieval contexts and include pieces of domestic animals such as sheep, horse and a fish vertebrae. Several pieces have evidence of butchery in the form of saw marks. Two pieces of shell (55g) were recovered from two post-medieval contexts. These are both common oyster shells.

There are 10 pieces of iron (213g) from four post-medieval contexts. These are all hand made iron nails of varying lengths apart from a circular base from context (100).

A single worked bone object (8g) came from context (401). This is an octagonal elongated object with a hole drilled through the centre. It tapers at one end and has been dyed green at the wider end. There is also a small hole at this end which has a small copper alloy pin, now bent, sticking out of the end. The function of this object is uncertain but it is likely to be the handle for a utensil.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

- 7.1** The site is located within an historic area of Totnes, and previous archaeological investigations indicate that the development site is located within an area with high potential for buried deposits and features (containing artefacts assemblages) of medieval and post-medieval date.
- 7.2** The evaluation has provided a good sample of the site, though the exposure of contaminated ground with possible asbestos in test pit 3 prohibited investigation of this part of the site
- 7.3** The deposit sequence within the site was generally consistent, comprising modern topsoil, post-medieval and modern soils overlying a distinctive stony medieval deposit present on top of the natural bedrock. A probable pit and a second possible pit, both of medieval date, were exposed. One was dated to the 14th or 15th century and had been cut through the medieval soil layer, whilst the other was sealed by the soil layer.
- 7.4** The finds assemblage is relatively small, with few medieval finds being present; only four medieval sherds of pottery were recovered from stratified deposits. The post-medieval finds have a wide range of sources.

## **8. STATEMENT OF IMPACT (Fig. 2e)**

- 8.1** The proposed development will be constructed using small diameter micro piles capped with a ring beam that will be excavated to a depth of approximately 600mm. Due to the gradient of the site the drainage excavations will also be shallow, with the drain run following the slope of the land.



- 8.2** In general, the medieval soil layer and features were exposed at depths greater than 800mm from the surface. It is therefore unlikely that the main groundworks (for the ring beams of the house and the drainage excavations) will impact on the known medieval archaeology.

## **9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 9.1** The paper, finds and digital archive is currently stored at the Devon office of AC archaeology. It will be retained until it is known whether further investigations are required. It will be dealt with in accordance with the accession policy of the royal Albert Museum, Exeter.
- 9.2** An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique entry identifier 186272, and includes a digital copy of this report.

## **10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 10.1** The evaluation was commissioned by Harrison Sutton Partnership, and was managed for then by Jon Capel and for AC archaeology by John Valentin and Andrew Passmore. The fieldwork was carried out by Will Smith, Paul Cooke and Chris Caine. The report figures were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

## **11. SOURCES CONSULTED**

Allan, J. and Tyler, K., 2006, *Assessment of the Medieval and Later Finds from The Mansion House, Fore Street, Totnes 2005*, Exeter Archaeology report no. **06.65**

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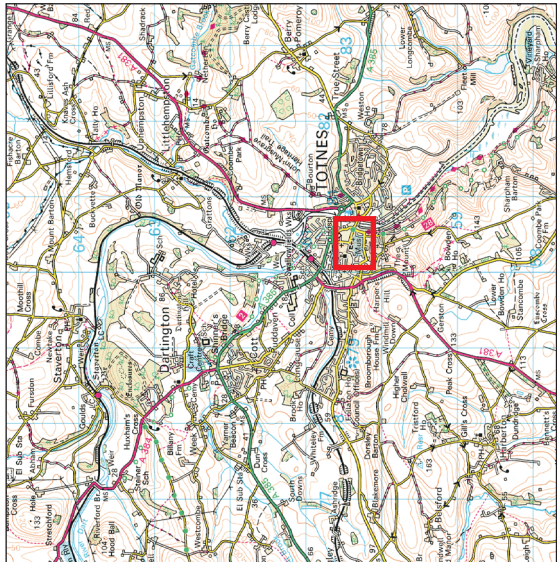
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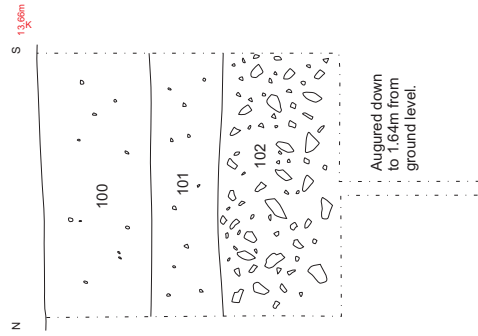


PROJECT  
 46 Fore Street, Totnes

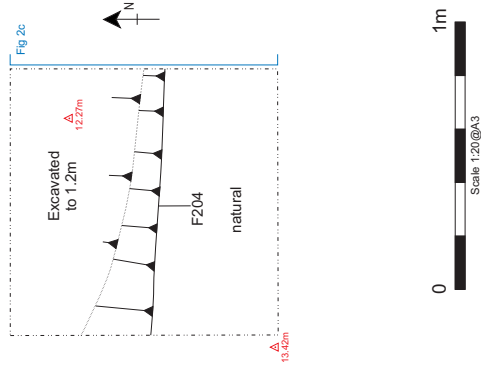
TITLE  
 Fig. 1: Site location and plan of test pits



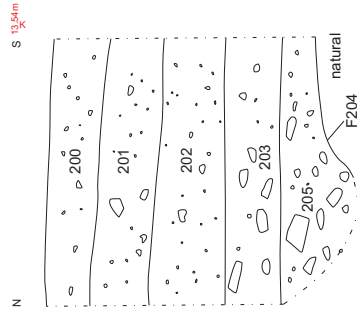
a) Section of Test pit 1



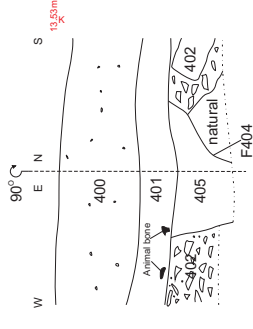
b) Test pit 2, plan



c) Section of F204



d) Section of F404



e) N-S profile through the house plot

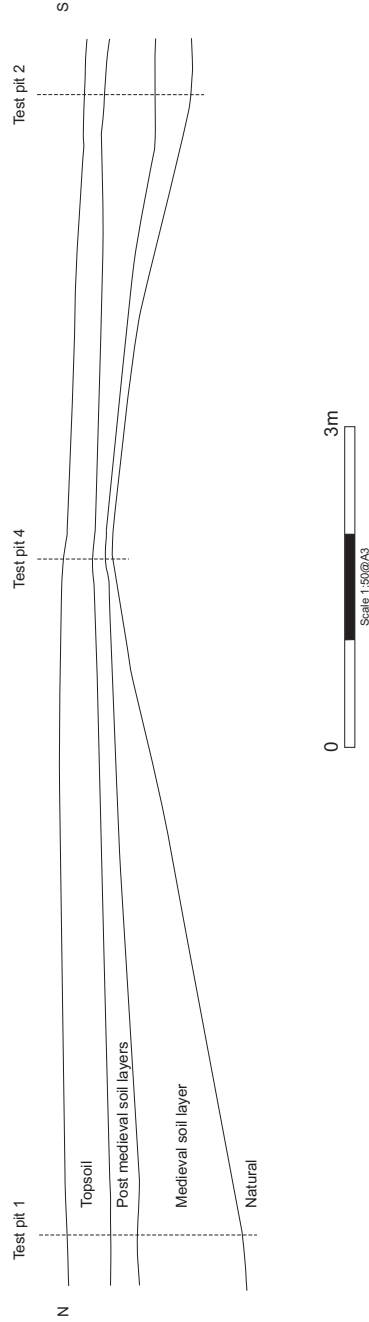






Plate 1: View of site  
from the north



Plate 2: View of the garden  
end of the site, view from  
the north



Plate 3: Test pit 1,  
view from the north.  
1m scale





Plate 4: West-facing section of test pit 2, view from the west. 1m scale



Plate 5: Test pit 3, view from the south. 1m scale



Plate 6: Test pit 4, view from the south. 1m scale



### Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops  
Bradninch  
Nr Exeter  
Devon  
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

### Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Manor Farm Stables  
Chicklade  
Hindon  
Nr Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581  
Fax: 01747 820440

[www.acarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.acarchaeology.co.uk)