

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AT
THE GLEBE, TRUMLANDS ROAD
ST MARYCHURCH, TORQUAY**

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of archaeological recording at The Glebe, Trumlands Road, St Marychurch, Torquay (centre SX 91825 66045). The work was commissioned by Narracotts (Chartered Architects), on behalf of [REDACTED], in respect of archaeological conditions placed upon the granting of planning permission by the Local Planning Authority (Torbay Council) for the construction of a residential property within the curtilage of The Glebe (Applications 02/0797 CA and 02/0799/PA).

1.1 **The site** (centre SX 91825 66045; Fig. 1)

The site consists of a sub-rectangular plot of *c.* 900 square metres located 60m north of St Mary's Church (the parish church of St Marychurch). The site is bounded to the east by Nos 56–58 Trumlands Road, to the south by the Memorial Hall, and to the west by the detached house called The Glebe. The Glebe, church and churchyard all lie within a well-defined enclosure of *c.* 1.5ha formed by Trumlands Road, Church Road and Fore Street. Early maps indicate that this discrete block of land formerly extended further to the west and south.

The geology of the immediate area is classified as Permian conglomerate, breccia and sandstone.¹

1.2 **Project brief**

Due to its location at the historic core of the village (Fig. 1), it was anticipated that archaeological deposits might be present within the site area. A brief for the project was provided by the Torbay Council Archaeology Officer (Bishop, September 2002). The main requirements of the brief were:

- The investigation of available historic documentation relating to the site
- A photographic record of that section of the garden wall to be breached to allow a new site access
- Monitoring and recording during groundworks
- Trial trenching on the site of new foundations
- Production of a report and integrated archive

1.3 **Statutory and other designations**

St Mary's Church is Listed Grade II. The present structure is largely a 1950's rebuild, following serious damage in World War II, on a site that may well have been used for Christian worship since the Saxon period.

Other Listed Buildings in the vicinity (all Grade II except the Roman Catholic Church) are: the Hermitage and Cary Castle in Church Road; the Abbey School, the Chilcote Memorial, a lamp standard removed from the Strand and two K6 telephone kiosks in Fore Street; and the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Denis (Grade II*), and Margaret Clitherow House, an orphanage later used as the priory, in Priory Road.

¹ Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) 1976.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St Marychurch is mentioned in an 11th-century charter preserved in the Bodleian Library,² recording that Bishop Leofric had recovered for St Peter's Minster at Exeter previously alienated lands at Branscombe, Salcombe (Regis) and *sancte Mariae circean*. The latter is identified with the manor of Coombe Pafford, which is said to have been given to the bishop in a now lost grant from King Athelstan c. 927 (although this seems to have been merely inferred from the cathedral's subsequent ownership of it).³

The 1086 Domesday survey provides two entries for St Marychurch. *Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae* was owned by the Bishop of Exeter and its revenues allocated to the support of the Canons; this manor was taxed at 2 virgates (half a hide). *Sanctae Mariae Cherche* was owned by the Count of Mortain and sublet to Richard, son of Thorulf; this was taxed at one hide.⁴

These two manors remained in existence into the 19th century. The larger manor descended via the Lords Audley and the Bouchier Earls of Bath to the Fords of Bagtor from whom it was purchased by the Carys of Torre Abbey in 1595;⁵ the smaller Bishop's holding, identified as the manor of Coombe Pafford,⁶ remained part of Exeter Cathedral's endowment until it was sold off under land tax redemption legislation in December 1804 to John Savery Esq. and re-sold to Sir Laurence Palk six months later, although the Dean and Chapter retained the advowson.⁷ The St Marychurch Tithe Map (Fig. 6) shows the boundary between the Palk-owned property (Coombe Pafford) and the Cary-owned property to the west of the church.

Both place-names (*ecclesia Sanctae Mariae* or *Sanctae Mariae Cherche*) imply the presence of a church of some antiquity,⁸ possibly serving a wider area than the later parish. The fact that St Marychurch was the mother church of the adjoining parishes of Kingskerswell and Coffinwell,⁹ together with its location within a large enclosure, does suggest that it was originally more than an estate church. It may well have served a large Saxon estate that presumably included the later parishes of Coffinwell and Kingskerswell, which had been divided up before the Conquest.

There existed a tradition that St Mary's Church was the first to be founded in the county; this was related by Richard Gough, who augmented Camden's *Britannia*, but he accepted that it was 'on uncertain authority, as no vestige of antiquity remains'.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Revd Reginald Barnes, vicar in the 1860s, suggested that a foundation date between 637 and 690 was commonly held.¹¹ A recent authority has suggested that many minsters date to the period from 669 to 690 when Theodore of Tarsus was Archbishop of Canterbury,¹² and the current authority on minsters suggests that most of the English kingdoms had acquired a framework

² Brownlow 1886, 7, citing the Bodleian Library reference as *Bibl. Bodl. Auct. D. 2, 16*; Gover *et al.* 1932, 519.

³ e.g. Reichel 1939, 338; Pike 1989, 27.

⁴ Thorn & Thorn 1985, 2.8, 15.42; 278.

⁵ Lysons & Lysons 1822, 334; Edmonds 1925, 33.

⁶ Lysons & Lysons 1822, 334; the last reference to the manor found in the indexes to the Dean & Chapter Act Books is to a 21-year lease granted to the existing (unnamed) lessee on 26 July 1800 (D&C 3575).

⁷ Lysons & Lysons 1822, 334; DRO 58/9/Box 129/14.

⁸ Darby & Finn 1967, 278.

⁹ Peskett 1979, 121–2.

¹⁰ Camden 1806 edition Vol. 1, page 52, *sub* Devonshire Additions.

¹¹ Barnes 1866, 4–5.

¹² Raleigh Radford 1975, 2.

of minster *parochiae* (the area over which each community of priests served, equal to between five and 15 modern parishes) by the early 8th century.¹³ A recent list of probable and possible minsters in the county contained 14 in the former category and eight (including Kingskerswell) in the latter.¹⁴

The church was unusual in that the vicarage was not part of the glebe. In the only glebe terrier to be located, dating from around 1601, the vicar Nicholas Marston referred only to two acres of ground with gardens and courts, and a pound ‘for makinge of Sidare’ and two ‘Owlde keves’.¹⁵

In 1821 the vicar Edward Kitson replied to his Bishop’s visitation query ‘I have no Terrier – The Glebe consists only of one Field of about an Acre & two Gardens’.¹⁶ The vicarage was then located ‘in the old road, a pretty picturesque house’.¹⁷ This is presumably the vicarage referred to in the Coombe Pafford Court Baron roll.¹⁸ It was Revd Kitson who in 1824 recovered what he thought was a Saxon font (but probably 12th century¹⁹), carved with figures, up-ended and serving as the base of a modern font.²⁰

In 1827 the Revd George Coleridge succeeded Mr Kitson and he rebuilt the vicarage on a site within the glebe, accessed by a drive from Trumlands Road. The Tithe Map shows another substantial building present to the west, possibly a coach house. The actual site was then within the plot referred to as ‘Garden & Lodge’ (Fig. 6, No. 986).

Changes took place over the next 50 years, with a wall being built to divide the garden, presumably into a lawned area bordering the drive and a kitchen garden, complete with greenhouses and paths bordered by fruit trees (Fig. 7). A north wing was added to the vicarage. In 1882 a faculty was sought from the bishop authorising the demolition of one of two greenhouses in the kitchen garden, said to be enclosed by high stone walls, although it may not have been put into effect.²¹ A very crude drawing of a roughly square area accompanied the faculty, which may have included the site area (two greenhouses appear to be present on the site in 1890; Fig. 7).

By the middle of that century, population growth put increasing pressure on the church, both in terms of number of seats and requirement for burial space. Construction of a larger building began in 1852 under the Revd Alexander Watson and was completed in 1861 under the Revd Reginald Barnes.²² The new building ‘being extended in length from the east fifty feet and in breadth nearly twenty feet’,²³ involved encroachment over the existing graveyard, making an extension essential. In 1849 agreement had been obtained with the Palk family to purchase their land to the south, extending to Church Road, then occupied by three houses,

¹³ Blair 1985, 116, 104.

¹⁴ Orme 1996, 20.

¹⁵ Devon Record Office Glebe Terriers *sub* [Peters] Marland.

¹⁶ Cook 1960, 123.

¹⁷ Brownlow 1886, 27.

¹⁸ Unpublished ‘Potted History’ of St Marychurch by John R. Pike, March 1989, held by Torbay Archaeological Officer.

¹⁹ Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 850.

²⁰ Edmonds 1925, 12.

²¹ DRO Faculty Petitions Torquay St Marychurch 5, 1882.

²² Edmonds 1925, 65.

²³ DRO Chanter 63, Patent Book VII, 227, Sentence of Consecration.

seven cottages, gardens and a bakehouse; the extension was consecrated in October 1863.²⁴ The tower was built in 1872 as a memorial to Bishop Phillpotts.²⁵

By the 1860s the growth of the area was such that traffic along Fore Street was being inconvenienced by the 19-foot (5.8m) width opposite the vicarage. This led to a part of the glebe, with its high boundary wall, being sold to the Local Board to enable widening to take place.²⁶ In 1925 part of the glebe was used for the site of the Memorial Hall, and by 1933 the house called The Glebe had been built towards the north-west corner of the site. In May 1943 the church was destroyed in a daylight raid that led to the deaths of 21 Sunday School children and three teachers.²⁷ Its rebuilding, completed in 1956, is regarded as bland.²⁸ In the 1960s the flats of Champion Court were built towards the north-east corner of the site, over what had been the drive to the vicarage, with Trumlands Road being widened along the frontage. The vicarage has recently been converted to a medical centre.

3. MONITORING OF GROUNDWORKS

3.1 Method

An initial visit was made to photograph the section of boundary wall on the line of the new access driveway ahead of its demolition.

The site was then visited at key stages during the groundworks programme to monitor excavations and to investigate and record any exposed archaeological deposits. The following groundworks were monitored:

- Topsoil removal on site of new driveway
- Topsoil removal within footprint of new building
- Foundation trenches for new building
- Foundation trench for dividing wall between new building and The Glebe
- Excavations for sump

The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with standard EA procedure. Stratigraphic information was recorded on EA watching brief record sheets, which included drawings at appropriate scales. A photographic record was also made consisting of colour slides and black-and-white prints. Post 1800 ceramics from unstratified contexts were discarded on site.

3.2 Results

The ground level within the site was approximately 1m above that of Trumlands Road.

Boundary wall

The boundary wall stands *c.* 4m above the level of Trumlands Road and measures approximately 0.60m wide. It was breached at its north-east corner to provide for a driveway to the new property. The base of the wall was 0.7m below the (internal) turf level, giving a total height of 2.2m. The removed section was built of randomly coursed brick and rubble

²⁴ DRO Chanter 62, Patent Book VI, 668; St Marychurch Tithe Apportionment, Nos 963–986; DRO Chanter 63, Patent Book VII, 306.

²⁵ Griffith 1988, 114.

²⁶ DRO Faculty Petitions Torquay St Marychurch 1, 1867–68.

²⁷ Pike 1992, 146.

²⁸ Cherry and Pevsner 1989, 850.

bonded with a concrete sandy mortar. It appeared to be of 20th-century date and constructed to fill a break or former entrance at the north end of the eastern section of the wall.

New driveway

Ground reduction for the construction of the driveway revealed a simple stratigraphic sequence consisting of an average of 0.30m turf and topsoil/garden soil, containing frequent 19th-century pottery, overlying natural weathered bedrock in the form of red clay, showing evidence of frequent root action. No archaeological deposits or features were found.

New building/sump

Overburden and topsoil were removed in spits across the footprint of the new building prior to the excavation of foundation trenches.

The general sequence of deposits exposed by ground reduction and subsequent trench excavations consisted of 0.30m of topsoil over 0.40m of weathered natural deposits. The latter had again been affected by root action and contained flecks of slate, mortar and charcoal.

Several features were exposed, all of relatively late (19th-century) date. Two wall bases constructed of limestone rubble and brick, bonded with grey lime-mortar, correlate to those of greenhouses depicted on the 1890 OS map (Fig. 7).

4. DISCUSSION

The modern map shows the church with its former glebe occupying a distinct enclosure of *c.* 1.5ha (3.7 acres). Having largely resulted from a mid 19th-century land transfer, this is less obvious on the Tithes Map. However, it is possible that the boundary along Trumlands Road represents the original Saxon boundary to the church estate. The fact that St Marychurch was the mother church of the adjoining parishes of Kingskerswell and Coffinswell²⁹ may well suggest that these three were once part of a large Saxon estate, which had been divided up before the Conquest, and that St Marychurch was the site of the minster church.

As the mother church, burials would have taken place here from over a more extensive area than just the later parish of St Marychurch. The Revd Edmonds recorded a tradition, continuing into the later 18th century, that the people of Coffinswell had the right of burial in St Marychurch churchyard in return for paying for new bell ropes.³⁰

Bampton in Oxfordshire contained a minster enclosure of similar shape. Here the northern part was defined by a curving road. Excavation across its line revealed that it followed a 4m wide ditch that had been filled around the late 11th century.³¹

The results of the recent monitoring programme were disappointing in that no medieval features or deposits were revealed. Only deposits and features of the 19th-century and later were recorded (the date of the wall along Trumlands Road is unknown). The nature of the glebe and its boundaries, and the location and nature of the early church, therefore remains unresolved.

²⁹ Peskett 1979, 121–2.

³⁰ Edmonds 1925, 56.

³¹ Blair 1992, 229, 233.

The earliest identified use of the site suggests that in *c.* 1600 it lay within a cider orchard. This seems to be borne out by the OS surveyors' drawing of 1802–4 (Fig. 5). By 1840 it appears to have been a kitchen garden, with only garden structures present on the site. Two wall bases relating to these structures were recorded during the present project.

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Patent Book VI & VII, Chanter 62 & 63

Kennaway deposit

Schedule of Title Deeds to the Manor of Coombe Pafford 58/9/Box 129/14

D&C Dean & Chapter Archives, Exeter

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