

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Exeter Archaeology (EA) at the request of [REDACTED] to assess the potential archaeological impact of a proposed residential development on land adjacent to 21 Milton Street (to the rear of 19 Milton Street), Higher Brixham (centre SX 91880 55080) in advance of the determination of Planning Application No. 0/0306 OA.

1.1 Aims and objectives of the assessment

The assessment consisted of a desktop survey and field visit, the aims of which were to identify archaeological deposits and features within the application site in order to determine the impact of the development. This is in order that recommendations may be made in respect of any archaeological mitigation.

The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief supplied by the Torbay Council Archaeology Officer.¹

1.2 Method and sources utilised

The desktop assessment consisted of the examination of material at:

- The West Country Studies Library (WCSL)
- The Devon Record Office (DRO)
- The Torbay Sites and Monuments Register (SMR)
- Torquay Library

A brief site visit was also undertaken.

2. THE SITE (approximate centre SX 91880 55080; Fig. 1)

The proposed development site, which has a footprint of *c.* 500m², lies to the rear (north-west) of a large late medieval house, formerly called Black House, on the north-west side of Milton Street. The house is now subdivided into five dwellings and the name Black House is used for only one of the subdivisions. However, for the purposes of this report the name is used to refer to the whole house.

The site is situated in the western part of a disused walled garden formerly belonging to Black House. At the time of the site visit the garden was very overgrown with shrubs and other garden plants; some planted border areas were detectable. No surface features of archaeological significance were discernible, but the ground was much obscured by dense vegetation.

The modern map (Fig. 2) depicts a building, probably a greenhouse, in the north-east corner of the garden; this building was not seen during the site visit. A spread of dumped material/spoil by the wall opening in the south-west corner of the garden forms a rough ramp down into the walled garden from the adjacent garden of Black House, which is at a slightly higher level.

The current access trackway from Milton Street to the rear of Black House and to the walled garden lies on the western boundary of the property, and the plan (Fig. 2) indicates that this trackway will also form the access to the proposed new buildings. To the north of the north-

¹ Bishop 10 April 2003.

west garden wall is an overgrown pathway alongside a stream; this stream, aligned north-east/south-west, runs to the rear of a number of the properties on this side of Milton Street and Drew Street. The stream appears to rise at the site of a well to the west that is marked as Lady Well on the OS 1869 map.²

The underlying geology consists of Middle Devonian Slates and Shales with Recent and Pleistocene Alluvium in the stream valleys.³

2.1 Statutory and other designations

The proposed development site lies within the curtilage of Black House, which is a Listed Grade II building, and adjacent to 21 Milton Street which is also Listed Grade II (see section 4 sites **1** and **5**). Other Listed Grade II Buildings nearby in Milton Street include Nos 23–25 and 9–15 on the north-west side of the street, and No. 18 and the adjoining Norton House on the south-east side of the street.⁴ The site also lies within the Higher Brixham Conservation Area.

2.2 Geotechnical investigations

It is understood that no test pitting or other geotechnical investigations have been undertaken within the site area.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity includes a possible Iron Age promontory fort at Berry Head; a considerable number of Roman coins have also been found here.⁵ In a field to the west of Berry Head (SX 935 566) a scatter of between 600–700 Neolithic flints was found.⁶

The proposed development site lies within the Saxon and medieval historic core of Brixham. The original Saxon settlement, possibly dating to the 7th century, was probably at Higher Brixham, near the present parish church. The settlement lay within a royal Saxon estate, which included the whole of the peninsula south of Galmpton, between the lower Dart and the sea.⁷ The estate had passed out of royal hands before 1066, at which time it belonged to Ulf.⁸ In 1086 the place was known as *Briseham*, possibly deriving from ‘Brioc’s ham(m)’; it is recorded as *Brixaham* and *Brixeham* in 1143.⁹

Archaeological work in the wider area includes that on the Napoleonic fort at Berry Head,¹⁰ housing development at Marina Quay, Brixham Harbour,¹¹ and an assessment of Noss Marina Kingswear.¹²

² OS 1:10560 map Sheet 128 NW.

³ BGS 1976.

⁴ DNH 1993.

⁵ Hoskins 1992, 349.

⁶ SMR SX95NW/28.

⁷ Hoskins 1992, 350.

⁸ Thorn & Thorn 1985, 17.29.

⁹ Gover *et al.* 1932, 507.

¹⁰ Pye 1989; Pye 1990.

¹¹ Gent 1998.

¹² Exeter Archaeology 2002.

4. SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INTEREST (Fig. 2)

1. **Black House, 19 Milton Street** Listed Grade II (SX 91927 55070; SMR SX95NW/63)

The proposed development site lies within the curtilage of Black House, identified as the former town house of the manor, which is now subdivided into five dwellings; the name Black House is currently used for only one of the subdivisions. The dwellings are currently named (west to east) Penrose, Black Friars House, Black House, Friars Pardon and Black Cottage. A moulded scroll on the house frontage records the dates 1457–1913. The latter date records the decoration of the front with cement quoins and window surrounds, however, the significance of the earlier date has yet to be ascertained.

The house is described in the listing as being of 16th/17th-century date or earlier, remodelled in the 17th/18th century and again in the 18th/19th century. Minor additions were made to the front in 1913. The house appears to be a 3-room and cross-passage plan with a cross wing projecting to the left (west) side. There is a rear wing at each end of the main range, with a third wing alongside the left or west wing, behind the cross passage. Subsidiary features include, to the west of the house, a rendered wall with coping, gate piers and iron gates; the larger gate is marked ‘Black House Tradesmen’.¹³

Black Cottage, the eastern wing of the house, which may have been added in the 17th or 18th century, forms a separate listing (Listed Grade II; SMR SX95NW/63/1).

2. **Former building to rear of Black House** (SX 91903 55081)

The Brixham Tithe Map (1838; Fig 3) and the 1864 OS map (Fig. 4)¹⁴ depict a large L-shaped building behind the west end of Black House, immediately south of the proposed development site. The north range of this building was aligned north-east to south-west, seemingly along the (outer) south-east boundary of the walled garden. The 1869 OS map (Fig. 5) shows an additional wing at the south end of the west range, extending westward as far as the trackway leading to the walled garden. The entire building had gone by 1906 (Fig. 6).

The L-shaped building could potentially have been of medieval or early post-medieval origin, and may have incorporated dwellings, a service quarter or other rooms, or even stables. On the Tithe Map (Fig. 3) the plot number 863 is written between this building and Black House, and is listed in the Tithe Apportionment as ‘houses and yards’. The owner of Black House reports finding a cobbled surface approximately 0.15m below ground level in this area. Such a surface may relate to the yard between the L-shaped building and Black House. The area to the west of both buildings is described as a walled vegetable garden on the Tithe Apportionment (plot 864); the current trackway and proposed access road to the development site runs through this area.

3. **Walled garden** (SX 91890 55090)

The proposed development site lies within the western part of a disused walled garden belonging to Black House. The garden walls are *c.* 2.5m–3m high and constructed of slate rubble. There are pointed-arch gateways through the north-east end of the north-west and

¹³ DNH 1993, SX9155 1946-1/6/125 18/10/49.

¹⁴ OS 1864 1:2500 map Sheet 128.6.

south-east walls, and an opening at the south-west end of the south-east wall. It is possible that other garden features survive, which are obscured by the dense vegetation.

The garden is described as ‘walled garden’ on the Brixham Tithe Apportionment (1840; plot 865, Fig. 3), and is depicted on the OS 1864 map (Fig. 4) as containing trees and pathways, and possibly a small structure in the south-west corner. On an early 20th-century plan related to a sale document,¹⁵ the garden is shown as ‘Lot 4 Garden’, and a plot of land to the north of the stream at Polhearn Farm as ‘Lot 5 Orchard’. The plan shows a gateway in the north-east corner of the garden leading onto a road, marked ‘private Road’, which runs north-westward to Polhearn Farm and Polhearn Lane. The plan also depicts steps in the south-west corner of the garden, leading down from the access trackway from Black House garden and Milton Street.

The 1906 OS map (Fig. 6) shows a structure against the centre of the south wall, however, this feature is not shown on the OS map of 1938,¹⁶ which depicts a gap in the wall at this point. A possible gateway is also shown on the sale plan of 1905 (above). A small stone lean-to building was noted in approximately this position during the site visit.

4. Medieval boundaries and tenement plots (SX 919 550)

On the OS 1864 map it can be seen that a number of the tenement plots along Milton Street are long and narrow in form, running back from the street frontage. These boundaries are typical of medieval urban properties that probably originated as narrow strip fields. In some areas in particular it can be seen that the boundaries continue to either side of the road, indicating that they pre-date the road, and appear to represent the enclosure of strips associated with a medieval open field system. The current boundaries associated with Black House and the development area may overlay such early boundaries, and it is possible that evidence of other such boundaries, possibly in the form of banks and ditches, exist below ground level within the development area itself.

5. 21 Milton Street Listed Grade II (SX 91906 55047)

No. 21 Milton Street lies to the west of Black House and bounds the current trackway and proposed access road leading northward from Milton Street to the development site. The house is described as dating from the early to mid 19th century.¹⁷

5. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development site and access road lie within the historic core of Saxon and medieval settlement at Brixham, and are therefore in an area of high archaeological potential. In addition, the site is located within the grounds of Black House, a building of probable late medieval origin, which has been identified as the town house of the manor. It is possible that other former buildings of the manor complex once lay within the development site.

The site area is presently part of a walled garden that has existed since at least the early 19th century, and possibly much earlier. Evidence of former buildings, or cut features such as pits and ditches, may survive beneath the topsoil; such features could potentially be of medieval or even Saxon date. Evidence of early boundaries may also be found beneath the current property boundaries, if they are disturbed, or elsewhere within the site itself.

¹⁵ Plan (not referenced) supplied by client and annotated 1 March 1905.

¹⁶ OS 1938 Revision 1.2500 map Sheet 128.6.

¹⁷ DNH 1993, SX9155 1946-1/6/236 10/01/75.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SOURCES CONSULTED

Unpublished sources

DRO Devon Record Office

Brixham Tithe Map and Apportionment 1838/1840

Torbay Council

SMR Historic Buildings, Sites and Monuments Record

Records for Sheet SX95NW/63 as supplied by the Torbay Archaeology Officer

Plan relating to sale of property supplied by the client and annotated in modern hand 1 March 1905. Shows Black House, Penrose, Black House Garden, Lot 4 (the walled garden formerly of Black House) and Lot 5 (an orchard to the south of Polhearn Farm).

Printed sources

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Fig. 2 Plan of development site showing location of sites of archaeological interest.

Fig. 3 Extract from Brixham Tithe Map, 1838.

Fig. 4 The site area in 1864.

Fig. 5 The site area in 1869.

Fig. 6 The site area in 1906.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
OF LAND ADJACENT TO
21 MILTON STREET
HIGHER BRIXHAM**

prepared for R. Wiggins

Exeter Archaeology

Report No. 03.39

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Fig. 1 Location of site. Reproduced from the 1:25000 (enlarged to 1:20000 and inset at 1:2500) Outdoor Leisure Map 20 (South Devon) by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 1986. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100016685.

Appendix to EA Report 03.39

Archaeological observations of geotechnical test pits on land adjacent to 21 Milton Street, Brixham.

Two geotechnical test pits were excavated by mechanical digger on land adjacent to 21 Milton Street, Brixham.

Test pit 1 measured 2.8m by 0.8m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m. The stratigraphy was as follows;

0.0m–0.34m	Topsoil
0.34m–0.60m	Cultivated soil, brown silty clay with modern inclusions.
0.60m–0.80m	Natural ground, stiff brown clay, occasional stone inclusions.
0.80–1.3m+	Natural ground, soft yellow clay.

Test pit 2 measured 2.3m by 0.8m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m. The stratigraphy was as follows;

0.0m–0.34m	Topsoil.
0.34m–0.60m	Cultivated soil, brown silty clay with modern inclusions.
0.60m–1.3m+	Natural ground, brown clay becoming stiffer towards the maximum depth, occasional stone inclusions.

No archaeological features or finds observed in these excavations, no finds recovered from the topsoil.

TW 27/11/03

Fig. 2 Plan of development site (based on OS map supplied by client) showing location of sites of archaeological interest. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100016685.