

REPORTS COVERING TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL 2021

Table 1 sets out the reports filed with Archaeological Data Services at York relating to 2021. In 2021 some 12 sites in 11 parishes were the subject of reports. One site in Ashreigny parish generated 3 different reports. A total of 4 contractors undertook this work. South West Archaeology produced 7 reports, Thames Valley Archaeology (South-West) produced 3 reports, A C Archaeology and Oakford Archaeology each produced 2 reports. The reports are then discussed in a little more detail, in alphabetical order of parish, as in Table 1. A brief synthesis of the findings of 2021 completes the document.

Table 1 Summary of reports for 2021

Parish	Site	Grid reference	Report Producer	Type of report	Nature of development
Ashreigny	Coldharbour Farm	SS600 132	Thames Valley (South West)	Geophysical survey	Solar farm
Ashreigny	Coldharbour Farm	SS600 132	Thames Valley (South West)	Archaeological evaluation	
Ashreigny	Coldharbour Farm	SS600 132	Thames Valley (South West)	Archaeological survey	
Ashwater	Fairfield	SX385 952	S W Archaeology	Geophysical survey	None stated
Ashwater	Swingdon Farm	SX375 984	S W Archaeology	Archaeological evaluation	Extension of agricultural buildings
Beaford	Yatton Court	SS553 155	S W Archaeology	Historic building appraisal	Renovation and restoration
Bideford	St Mary's Church	SS454 264	AC Archaeology	Archaeological monitoring and recording	Removal of old steps and construction of new ones and drainage pipe
Great Torrington	South Street Car park	SS493 189	S W Archaeology	Archaeological excavation and evaluation	Residential housing development
Great Torrington	16 South Stret	SS495 190	SW Archaeology	Archaeological evaluation	Dwelling house within plot
Hartland	Pengilly Way	SS264 244	S W Archaeology	Geophysical survey	Residential housing development
High Bickington	St Mary's Church	SS599 205	Oakford Archaeology	Archaeological monitoring and recording	New drainage pipes by the tower
Langtree	The Beeches	SS450 156	S W Archaeology	Archaeological evaluation	Construction of single house
Little Torrington	St Giles's Church	SS491 168	Oakford Archaeology	Archaeological monitoring and recording	Construction of new drainage

Parish	Site	Grid reference	Report Producer	Type of report	Nature of development
Northam	Wooda Road, Appledore	SS460 298	AC Archaeology	Archaeological trench evaluation	Housing development (c 100 dwellings)
Northam	Buckleigh Road	SS433 283	S W Archaeology	Archaeological evaluation	Residential housing development
Parkham	Long Close Cottage	SS386 216	S W Archaeology	Archaeological trench evaluation	Construction of an equestrian arena
Winkleigh	Almshouses	SS6633 080	S W Archaeology	Archaeological assessment	Construction of new drains
Woolsery	Post Office and Village Shop	SS333 210	S W Archaeology	Archaeological monitoring and recording	Building extension

The reports arose from a variety of causes, with many concerning drainage works around parish churches and in churchyards, and others for larger scale housing development and a few for farm buildings. A solar farm generated three reports and possibly the most interesting report was an Historic Building Recording of the former rectory at Beaford, which uncovered a more complex history than previously thought.

1. Ashreigny: Coldharbour Farm (three reports)

A sequence of three reports was produced for this site, which was proposed for the construction of a solar farm. It lies about 3 kilometres north-east of Dolton and a similar distance south-west of Ashreigny. On Riddlecombe Moor, about a kilometre to the south are two Bronze Age barrow, with Scheduled Monument status. The whole site was subject of a geophysical survey, which found three areas of potential archaeological interest, including a circular feature. The second report covers the archaeological evaluation of the site, with 28 trial trenches excavated. The linear features found by magnetometry were presumed to be former field boundaries and a total of 37 shreds of pottery was recovered, with those that could be identified being North Devon Medieval Coarseware and the sooty material on some suggested that these were from cooking pots. Quantities of charcoal were recovered and most of this appeared to be hazel (*Coryllus avellana*) but none was radio-carbon dated. The trenches also confirmed the presence of a low mound and surrounding ditch. The trial trenches were not deepened, so that any surviving archaeology would remain intact. The third report concerned the topographical survey of the circular feature, which has to be presumed to be associated in some way with the barrows on Riddlecombe Moor. The mound survives as a low topographic feature and some depressions in it suggest either later disturbance by agriculture or possible grave-robbing. The mound is approximately 16.7 metres in diameter and surrounded by a shallow ditch about 4 metres wide.

2. Ashwater: Fairfield

The report was of a geophysical survey of a 0.75 hectare site, lying within 150 metres of the parish church and in an area identified as having 'barton fields'. Six geophysical anomalies were detected, most being linear features and a couple being possible pits or tree throws. The site was deemed to have been much disturbed by later agriculture. The linear features did not relate to any field boundaries shown on the early nineteenth century mapping of Ashwater. The report concluded that there nothing meriting further investigation.

3. Ashwater: Swingdon Farm

The report concerned archaeological evaluation, including assessment of two trenches dug in conjunction with the work, which was to extend an existing cattle feed building close to the farm house. Swingdon Farm lies about 3 kilometres north-north-west of Ashwater village and 2.5 kilometres east-south-east of Clawton. There is a cluster of Bronze Age barrows within a kilometre to the north-east. The trenches yielded nothing of archaeological interest, but the report concluded that the area around the farm had great potential for archaeology.

4. Beaford: Yatton Court (the former Rectory)

The report is a detailed examination of the house, which has *Grade 2 Listed* status. The current owners propose a restoration and modification of the house and the removal of some of the unsympathetic features introduced by previous occupiers. The house lies in its own grounds about 600 metres north of Beaford village. The report notes several anomalies in the house and its plan and concludes that the history and circumstances of its building is more complex than as given in the statement of listing. The report sees no reason to see the house as being completed as planned, even though the general ambiance suggests a substantial gentleman's residence. Until the appointment of the Reverend Charles Wood as rector in the 1840s, Beaford had had a non-resident incumbent, with the parish clergyman being a curate. The Reverend Charles Wood was a man with his own means and seems to have determined to build himself a substantial rectory and to this end, the parish glebe-lands were made available and work was under way during the 1850s. There is a pediment in front of the house, and this has blocked windows, which would have been in a basement. The seeming inadequacy of the reception rooms for a proper gentleman's house point to the original plans for the house to have included two further wings. The report notes that no architect is known but suggests that the identity might be revealed in the Diocese of Exeter archives, as the construction of the rectory and conversion of the glebe would have required official approval and the architect's name would probably have appeared in the documentation. Mrs Charles Woods died at some time in the 1850s and it seems that the plans for the grander house were abandoned. Thus, the house is of great interest, not so much for what it is, but for what it never became. It now sits in what the report describes as a 'pocket estate'.

5. Bideford: parish church of St Mary.

The report concerned archaeological monitoring and recording at the church for improvements to access. Old steps were to be replaced and a new entrance with steps and access ramp constructed. Ground works for the new steps and ramp showed that the substrate was all made ground. A drainage trench was dug in conjunction with the work and while this too was largely cut into made ground, two sherds of postmedieval pottery were recovered, one of North Devon gravel tempered ware and one of North Devon gravel free ware. A few fragmented and disarticulated human bones were also found and will be reinterred within the churchyard.

6. Great Torrington: South Street Car Park

The report concerned evaluation trenches dug on the site, which was proposed for residential development. It lies about 200 metres south-west of the parish church and immediately adjacent to the medieval core of Great Torrington. Trenches were dug to cross the extrapolated property boundaries from South Street. The trenches were dug by machine under supervision but only one yielded any archaeology. In this a ditch containing few sherds of 16-18 century North Devon Ware, both gravel-free and gravel tempered, was identified. In the Tithe Survey the site was pasture and later in the nineteenth century it had been used as a market garden. It appears that there was no medieval building on the site and the report concluded that no further archaeological investigation was warranted.

7. Great Torrington: 16 South Street

The report was of evaluation trenching to the rear of the property and on the south side of South Street. Residential infill development was proposed. The site lies about 200 metres south-south east of the parish church and immediately adjacent to the medieval core of Great Torrington. Two machine dug trenches were cut and these revealed a ditch crossing both trenches and a stone surface, probably that of a garden path. The ditch as exposed in both trenches yielded medieval pottery and in volume, these sherds were roughly equal to the modern pottery recovered from the top-soil. The medieval pottery was all North Devon ware and most appeared to be from cooking pots. The site showed no evidence of medieval structures, and the pottery fragments would appear to be consistent with a site that remained undeveloped, albeit within a burghal plot. The report concluded that there was no further potential archaeology likely on the site.

8. Hartland: Pengilly Way

The report was of geophysical survey of three small fields on the eastern edge of Hartland, and about 500 meters from the Square. Housing development was proposed. Most of the geophysical features identified were of modern services or tree-throws. However, other linear features were of field boundaries conforming to those of the medieval field system, whilst others, on a different alignment, suggest an earlier field system. The older field systems underlying medieval fields are now known from many places in northern Devon and probably are the equivalents at lower altitudes of the Dartmoor reeves. Given the probable destruction of any archaeology by the housing development, the report recommends evaluation trenching prior to site works.

9. High Bickington: parish church of St Mary

The report was of a watching brief during the construction of new drains to the west of the tower. The church itself is a Grade 1 Listed Building and had seen renovation work in the early 2010s and a report in 2013. The principal work was the digging of a drainage trench some 62 metres long. The showed at least two grave cuts, but no human bone was found. It was presumed that at least some of the soil was a charnel soil.

10. Langtree: The Beeches

The report was of archaeological monitoring of a site within the village and just north-west of the church. It was occasioned by the proposal to build a single dwelling house on the site. A trench 10 metres long was excavated by machine to a depth of roughly 0.45 metres. This showed that the site had previously seen removal of soil to a depth of some 20 centimetres and no archaeological features were seen in the trench.

11. Little Torrington: parish church of St Giles

The report concerned an archaeological watching brief during construction of new drainage, with a trench some 46 metres long being dug to a depth of 75 centimetres. Six fragments of human bone were recovered, and the context is presumed to be that of a charnel soil. A preliminary test pit yielded an uninscribed and undecorated gold ring and was submitted to the Portal Antiquities Scheme. Lacking any obvious diagnostic features, it is considered to be no earlier than the eighteenth century. A single sherd of North Devon coarse-ware, probably of sixteenth or seventeenth century date and two fragments of clay pipe were also found.

12. Northam: Wooda Road, Appledore

The report was of a series of trial trenches on a site proposed for housing development. It lies about 700 metres south of Appledore and about 1.5 kilometres north-east of Northam church. The existing evidence points to the battle between Eudo and the invading sons of Harold in 1069 lying somewhere between Northam and Appledore. The Wooda Road site had previously seen a geophysical survey and coverage by metal detecting. These earlier surveys had shown geophysical anomalies of potential interest and the trial trenching by machine under archaeological supervision was intended to examine these. A total of 24 trenches was dug (total length c 500 metres) but only one offered a feature other than modern field drains. This was a gully and was presumed to be associated with field boundaries, now removed, that conformed to the general field layout. A few finds in the topsoil were made. There were two sherds of North Devon Medieval coarse-ware and 6 sherds of North Devon ware from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including both gravel-tempered and temperless ware. A clay pipe stem fragment and a variety of nineteenth century debris were also recovered. The significance of this site would appear to be that it is not part of the post Norman Conquest battlefield.

13. Northam: Buckleigh Road

The report concerned evaluation trenching following on from prior geophysical survey of three fields lying to the west of the B3236 Buckleigh Road and just beyond the edge of the current built-up area. The site was proposed for housing development. Six trenches with a total length of 190 metres were machine dug. These established the presence of 6 drains, 2 features that were either natural gullies or field drains and a ring gully about 10 metres in diameter. Only a few fragments of modern pottery were found in the top-soil and nothing was recovered from the ring ditch itself. The coastal strip running south-west from Westward Ho! is rich in Mesolithic and Neolithic flints scatters and so a round house with its surrounding ditch, as discovered here was no unexpected. The report suggested that this feature might merit further closer examination.

14. Parkham: Long Close Cottage

The report was occasioned by archaeological trial trenching on land adjacent to Long Close Cottage, about 300 metres south-west of the church. The land was to be used for a riding arena. Around 35 metres of trench were dug by machine under supervision. An undatable ditch, probably conformable to the field boundaries shown on the Tithe Survey, was identified but no archaeology was found in any of the trial trenches. The top-soil yielded nothing of significance, although a fragment of roof tile and a piece of iron pyrites were found.

15. Winkleigh: Almshouse

The report was an initial assessment of a site within the boundaries of All Saints' churchyard in the heart of Winkleigh. The owners wished to improve drainage and stop moisture ingress to the property from the churchyard, which lies at a higher level, and the report was to inform what if any mitigation measures might need to be incorporated in any work. The report concluded that as the proposed works would lie entirely within the existing modern churchyard soil, no archaeology was likely to be affected, although it did suggest a watching brief should excavation go deeper than this.

16. Woolsery: Village Post Office and Shop

The report was of monitoring prior to building works to take place at the Post Office and Village Stores in the heart of the village, and across the road from the parish church. Four trenches were mechanically excavated under supervision. No archaeology was found, and the site appeared to have seen levelling with some ground being cut away and other raised in height.

Discussion

The reports from 2021 produced very little new information and little archaeology. The investigation at Wooda Road, Appledore in Northam parish perhaps produced important negative evidence, in that nothing was found to suggest that this was the site of the battle between local forces loyal to King William I and the army assembled in Dublin by the sons of King Harold II. Historic Building Recording sometimes throws up unexpected findings and a more complex building history than previously known. This was certainly the case at Yatton Court, the former Rectory in Beaford. This had been given Grade II Listed Building Status, although the survey for this did not cover the interior, which was included in the current report. At first sight, the Rectory looked like a classic 'pocket estate' or the house with a small area of landscaped park, as might have been created for a gentleman. In one sense this was the conclusion of the report, but it also uncovered persuasive evidence that the house as it is now, was to have been

part of a far grander structure, part of which was never started and other never completed beyond the preliminary stage.