

# HEAVITREE STONE

## I: Heavitree



So why Heavitree Stone? Or 'bullock's blood and gravel' as it is known (can you see why?). The story begins 280 million years ago when, hard to believe, this whole area was an arid desert. Far to the north violent storms raged and the torrential rain led to dramatic flash floods. The fragments of rock and pebbles carried by the floods settled, mixed with the red desert sand and were then compressed over the millennia into a distinctive red stone.

Fast forward to human settlement in Exeter and people needed stone for building. The costs of transporting stone were much higher than the costs of quarrying it, so the nearer to home your supply, the better. There were outcrops of the red stone at Heavitree, and this was quarried from the early medieval period right up to relatively recent times. It is a coarse and rather soft stone, prone to weathering, but you can find all across our city. This leaflet picks out seven examples in Heavitree itself, each with its own history. It is one of a series of three. The other two cover the Quay & St Thomas, and the City Centre. You can follow this as a trail, or maybe just visit the sites that particularly interest you. Once you get your eye in, you will start finding Heavitree Stone all over the place, especially the old walls.

**C** At the top end of Heavitree is **Livery Dole** and **St Clare's Chapel**. Livery Dole used to be used as a place for executions. One of the last people executed was Thomas Benet, who was burnt for heresy in 1531 in the presence of the Sheriff of Devon. The Sheriff's family later built the chapel, apparently as an act of penance for what had been done to Thomas. It was rebuilt in the 1850s but is still an atmospheric little place. If you want to see inside, you can obtain the key by ringing 07974 234562. The almshouses next to the chapel were



built in 1890, replacing much older ones dating back to the 16th century. Down Fore Street, you can spot Heavitree Stone in the wall by the **City Vets** and then odd blocks along the borders on the left.

**M** **St Michael and All Angels' Church** has been rebuilt a number of times. It is one of the oldest Christian sites in Exeter. There has been a church here since at least 1152, and possibly a sacred site for even longer, judging by the age of the yew tree near the church door. (This yew has been designated one of the 50 Great British Trees.) The present church dates to the 1840s. The tower took a little longer and was only dedicated in 1890. However, most of the walls around the churchyard are older and of Heavitree Stone - in fact some of the stones in the wall between the old and new graveyard are thought to be from the old church, thrown together with fragments of old tiles and other materials. Next to the church, beyond the north boundary wall, was the site of the Heavitree Brewery, which only ceased brewing in 1970.





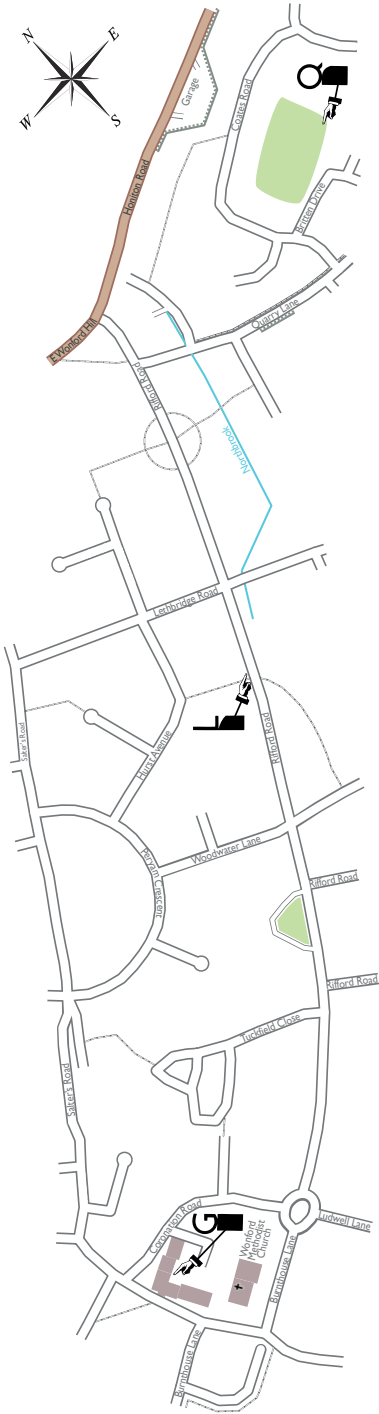
**B The Butts** - Along the west side of the Pleasure Grounds, backing onto the gardens of Roseland Avenue, is a wall of Heavitree Stone. It marks the boundary of three old fields: **Lower, Middle and Higher**



**Butts.** One of the meanings of the word 'Butts' was a place where boys and men had to practise their archery in the days before guns. These fields were long and narrow, just the shape you would want for archery practice! Who knows?



**H Heavitree House** - There is nothing to see of this now apart from the Heavitree Stone walls of the old stable and a blue plaque on the wall, yet it was one of the grandest houses in Heavitree. A writer and traveller called Richard Ford decided to settle here in 1833, bought an old Elizabethan house and rebuilt it in grand Gothic style with Moorish terraces and fine gardens. But later the gardens were sold off and built on, the house fell derelict, and it was finally demolished in the 1950s.



**G** Down where Birch Court now stands, and where the Gardeners' Arms stood until 1998, was an intriguing building called the **Great House**. This shows on old maps made before the mid 1800s but it was only in 2000/01 that an archaeological excavation revealed that it was a moated medieval house, going back to at least the 12th century: maybe the original Wonford Manor House. The house had extensive grounds and an orchard. Stretches of Heavitree Stone wall along Wonford Road and Hope Road are probably the remains of the boundary walls of the house.



**L** **St Loye's Chapel** was built in the 13th-14th century. No-one knows why it was dedicated to St Loye. He was a 7th century French goldsmith who became Bishop of Noyau and was adopted as the patron saint of all metalworkers. It was no longer in use as a chapel by 1607, when part of it was let as a dwelling house and by 1785 it was a stable! In the 1890s, the vicar, Rev. Berkeley, tried to raise funds to restore it, but the scheme foundered and so now



only the ruins remain. Just nearby, on the corner of Peryam Crescent and Woodwater Lane is a pillar box. Nothing special in that, you may think, but this one is marked EVIII R, put there in the very short reign of King Edward VIII. It may be the only one in the whole of Devon.



Finally, the **quarries** themselves. These

would have been extensive, so the land around Quarry Lane may once have been a lot higher! You can see how Quarry Lane runs through a deep cut and find one of the old quarry faces half hidden by trees and



undergrowth just off Quarry Lane, at the back of the grassed area in Britten Drive. From this area came thousands of blocks of the stone used over so many centuries as the foundation of so much of Heavitree and Exeter.

Heavitree Stone leaflets are kindly sponsored by Exeter City Council and are presented by participants in the Heavitree Squilometre project, supported by Interwoven Productions CIC. Photographs © Chris Spinks / Clare Bryden

Other leaflets in this series are  
**2: City Centre** and **3: The Quay & St Thomas**

Q is for Quarries is an A-Z trail for mobiles

For more information go to [heavitreequarrytrails.org.uk](http://heavitreequarrytrails.org.uk)  
or scan the QR code below.

Leaflet design by Eva Design Exeter 01392 668188

