

14 Teetotal Street, St Ives, Cornwall

Archaeological Recording of Pilchard Cellar Floor

March 2013



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Acknowledgements

The Archaeological Recording was commissioned by the owners of the property, Sarah and Martin Tolliday. Jeanette Ratcliffe, Historic Environment Consultant, carried out the recording work and prepared this report, incorporating photographs previously taken by Eric Berry (Sept 2012). The author would like to thank builders Alan and Simon Cox for facilitating the recording process and Sam Nankervis for providing practical assistance on site.

Front cover illustration: 14 Teetotal St – N wall of cellar, showing the cobbled floor surface with inset timber-planked base/drain on which barrels of pilchards rested during the pressing process

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1 Summary

Following an Archaeological Assessment (September 2012) of Listed Building 14 Teetotal Street, St Ives (an early 19th century pilchard cellar with living accommodation above, undergoing renovation and conversion), Archaeological Recording of the cellar floor was carried out during March 2013. In addition to the two types of pilchard pressing arrangements (pole slots and ledge) previously recorded, an extensive area of cobbled flooring was uncovered, together with a timber-planked base on which barrels of pilchards rested during the pressing process (with runnels for collecting fish oil) and a sunken recess inside the original cellar doorway which appears to be a contemporary loading bay. Later features included post-pads, possible for a bench associated with the cellar's re-use as a store/workshop and a modern drain trench.

2 Background

This report describes the results of Archaeological Recording carried out within the cellar of 14 Teetotal Street, St Ives, Cornwall, TR26 1PH – one of a row of c1830s cottages that together comprise a Grade II Listed Building (DCO12435).

The building is located at NGR SW 52053 40887, in the historic centre of St Ives, within the tight-knit 'fishing village' area of Down'long. Located south of The Island, less than 50m from St Ives harbour, it lies within the estimated medieval settlement boundary. The property has two street frontages – the front opens onto the south side of Teetotal Street; the back onto St Eia Street. (Figure 1)

Carried out during March 2013, the Archaeological Recording within the cellar followed on from an Archaeological Assessment (Autumn 2012), which was associated with Listed Building Consent for alterations to the building.

The Archaeological Assessment included historical research and a full historic building photographic record, and the report also contains a summary of the relevant aspects of the history of St Ives and the local pilchard industry (Ratcliffe and Berry 2012). The Assessment revealed that 14 Teetotal Street was originally an early 19th century fish cellar with living accommodation above (Figures 2-3), built as one of a row of similar properties and sharing its cellar with an adjacent house. One of only two in the row which still had unconverted cellars, No. 14 was considered to be of national significance for its historical association, group value, rarity and survival - with a cobbled floor and two types of pilchard pressing arrangements, and evidence for its subsequent adaptation as a fishermen's store/workshop.

The Assessment recommended retention of key historic features and an archaeological watching brief during the ground works for the development. In the event, the latter were limited to the removal of the existing wooden floor and re-use of modern drains.

3.0 Methodology

The following methodology for the Archaeological Recording was agreed with Cornwall Council Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer (HEPAO), Phil Markham (by email 11.02.13).

- Recording the surviving extent of the cobbled floor, together with the location of service trenches – see *Figure 10*

- Scale drawings (if required) of any trench sections in which underlying layers/features are exposed – *not required, no new trenches dug*
- Black and white film (and digital colour) photographic record to archive standard of the floor surface and any other exposed features – *Appendix 1 & photos at back of this report*
- Short report of the results to be compiled and deposited with the HEPAO and uploaded onto OASIS (for automatic distribution to HER and NMR) - *Done*
- Project archive (including the report) to be deposited with the CRO, together with that from the Archaeological Assessment phase – *Appendix 2*

4 Results

The evidence collected during the Archaeological Assessment (Ratcliffe & Berry 2012) indicated that the cellar had at least two phases of historic construction/use - first as a cellar for preserving pilchards by salting and pressing (with two different pressing walls/arrangements); later as a store/workshop (perhaps for nets and other fishing gear). In addition, the present room (which measures 7.2m x 3.9m internally) was found to be the result of modern sub-division of a cellar originally twice the size.

The key historic features identified within the cellar during the Assessment are shown in Figures 4-9 and summarised below.

- **Back (north) pressing wall;** with a ledge under which pressing-poles would have been wedged (it is unusual in the way it projects out from both the upper and lower wall face – like a shelf, rather than an overhang)
- **Side (west) pressing wall;** with 5 square/rectangular pressing-pole slots, an average of c0.5 metres apart and measuring 10-20cm wide/high
- The two pressing walls (and the south wall of the cellar) were of similar, largely granite, construction (though the stonework of the W wall face was partly obscured by recent, heavy cement pointing); they appeared to be of contemporary date
- **Blocked doorway in NW corner;** in the angle between the two pressing walls; would originally have given access to an adjacent cellar, under No 15 (this interconnectivity was a common aspect of such domestic-scale fish cellars, which were often operated by different members of the same extended family); doorway blocking was mainly large blocks of Elvan stone (with some brick) and was probably related to the changing use of the basement from a fish cellar to a store/workshop
- **Door & window openings (south wall);** originally a wide doorway with a window to the right, the existing arrangement was the result of the doorway having been in-filled to create a small window opening and the original window having been converted to a doorway; modifications to the openings were probably relate to the basement's change of use
- **Concrete-block east wall;** a modern subdivision of the cellar, which originally extended eastwards under the adjacent, end of terrace, house; the north wall pressing ledge continued behind the end of the concrete wall; occupants of both properties would probably have been operating the shared cellar (there was also a blocked connecting doorway between the ground floor of the two houses)

- **Wooden floor;** over the whole of the basement; probably dating to its historic conversion to a store; a cobbled floor underlying the wooden one was visible where floor boards had recently been lifted by the builders (2012); the floor had a distinct sloped downward from west to east
- **Other internal features** within the cellar included: re-used ships timbers (internal lintels of door and window, main beam across centre of cellar, with ships spar as supporting upright); traces of lime wash on internal wall faces

The removal of the wooden floor during March 2013, as part of the conversion of the basement to a kitchen, revealed additional features. A plan and photographs of these (together with photographs of similar features on display in St Ives Museum) are contained in Figures 10-21 and a description is provided below.

Original (1830s) pilchard-cellar features

- **Cobbled floor of blue Elvan pebbles (Figure 11);** this extended over the interior, except where it butted up against contemporary features (located along the north wall and in the south west corner of the cellar), or had been cut through by modern drains; it is similar to floors found in pilchard cellars elsewhere in St Ives and Cornwall (Ratcliffe 1998, 2011, 2012); the cobbled surface continued under the modern concrete-block wall which divided the original cellar in half; the floor sloped down in an easterly and south easterly direction, which appeared to be deliberate and suggested that any sump(s) for run-off was located in the blocked-off half of the cellar
- **Wooden barrel-base/drain along north wall (Figure 12-15);** a timber-planked base on which the barrels of pilchards would have rested during the pressing process, with under-lapping, angled planks either side creating runnels for catching the fish (*traan*) oil which came out of the bottom (and channelling it to a barrel or wood-lined pit set into the cellar floor); the base/drain was built into (its top flush with) the floor, with the cobbled surface butting up against it in a straight line on the south and the bottom of the north cellar wall (with pressing ledge above) along its other side; identical (original and replica) examples of this feature can be seen in St Ives Museum (Figures 16-17); half way along its length the barrel base was formed by lime mortar (over rectangular stones set end to end?), perhaps inserted to replace a rotten plank; although the base/drain had suffered modern disturbance at the point where the concrete-block east cellar wall met the north wall, it clearly extended under the former, into the other half of the cellar
- **Sunken recess (loading bay?) in SW corner (Figure 18-20);** 25cm deep, rectangular in plan, with its north and east sides edged with stone and its west side formed by the western cellar wall; its base was formed by identical cobbling to the cellar floor, suggesting that it was contemporary with the latter and therefore connected to the original use of the basement as a fish cellar; this was further supported by the fact that the pressing beam slots in the west cellar wall respect the recess, stopping short of its north edge; the southern extent of the recess was obscured by an overburden of soil and rubble (dug out of its northern half by the builders); the exposed part measured 1.0m x 1.7m; the feature may have extended up to the cellar's south wall (making it 2.0m long x 1.7m wide); it was positioned inside the (now blocked) original doorway to the cellar and may have been a bay for carts off-loading salt and fish and loading up barrels of cured pilchards; the cobbled cellar floor is ragged-edged around the top of the recess, perhaps because the latter was

originally formed by wooden sleepers (to soften the impact of carts), which were subsequently removed

Historic workshop features

- **Post-pads, for work bench? (Figure 15);** at two places there were later, sub-rectangular cuts in the wooden barrel-base/drain, which were packed with slates and other material; these appeared to be pads for posts, perhaps supporting a work bench (associated with the re-use of the cellar as a store/workshop)

Modern features

- **Modern drains (Figure 18 & 21);** a 0.8m-1.0m wide (back-filled) trench housing modern drain pipes extended across the south end of the cellar; it had been cut down through the floor, removing the cobbled surface in this area; at its west end the drain cut through (and presumably removed) the southern part of the recess/loading bay

No structural remains pre-dating the 19th century, or re-deposited artefacts from earlier periods, were uncovered during the recording work.

According to the builder, the intention was to preserve the historic cellar floor by sealing it below a layer of sand (pers. comm. Alan Cox).

Bibliography

- Ratcliffe, J. 1998. *Treen and Rospletha Cliffs, Penberth Valley and Cove. An Archaeological Assessment*. Report for The National Trust
- Ratcliffe, J. 2011. *Porthmeor Studios, St Ives - Phase 1 Archaeological Watching Brief*. Report for Borlase Smart Trust, March 2011
- Ratcliffe, J., 2012. *Porthmeor Studios, St Ives - Phase 2 Archaeological Watching Brief*. Interim report for Borlase Smart Trust, February 2012
- Ratcliffe, J. & Berry, E. 2012. *14 Teetotal Street, St Ives, Cornwall. Archaeological Assessment*

Appendix 1: Register of black & white photographs (taken after removal of wooden floor 03.09.12)

Photo No.	Subject / direction
1	SE corner of cellar
2	Sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking SW (not N, as it says on board)
3	Sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking W
4	Sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking S (not N, as it says on board)
5	Sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking S (not N, as it says on board)
6	NE corner of cellar, looking E (not W, as it says on board)
7	Wooden drain along base of N wall, looking E (not W, as it says on board)
8	W end of wooden drain, looking W (not E, as it says on board)
9	W end of wooden drain, looking W (not E, as it says on board)
10	Wooden drain along base of N wall, looking W (not E, as it says on board)
11	Wooden drain along base of N wall, looking W (not E, as it says on board)
12	Pressing ledge & drain along N wall, looking N (not S, as it says on board)
13	Pressing ledge & drain along N wall, looking N (not S, as it says on board)
14	Pressing ledge & drain along N wall, looking N (not S, as it says on board)

Appendix 2: Contents of project archive

1. Report (printed in black and white; copied to CD in colour)
2. Plan of cellar floor (1:20 field drawing; 1:40 inked and coloured versions)
3. Index of black and white photographs
4. Black and white photograph contact sheet & negatives
5. Scanned black and white photo prints & colour digital photographs copied to CD



Figure 1. Aerial view & map extract showing location of 14 Teetotal St (St Ives Archive Centre photo P13-001; architect's site location plan)

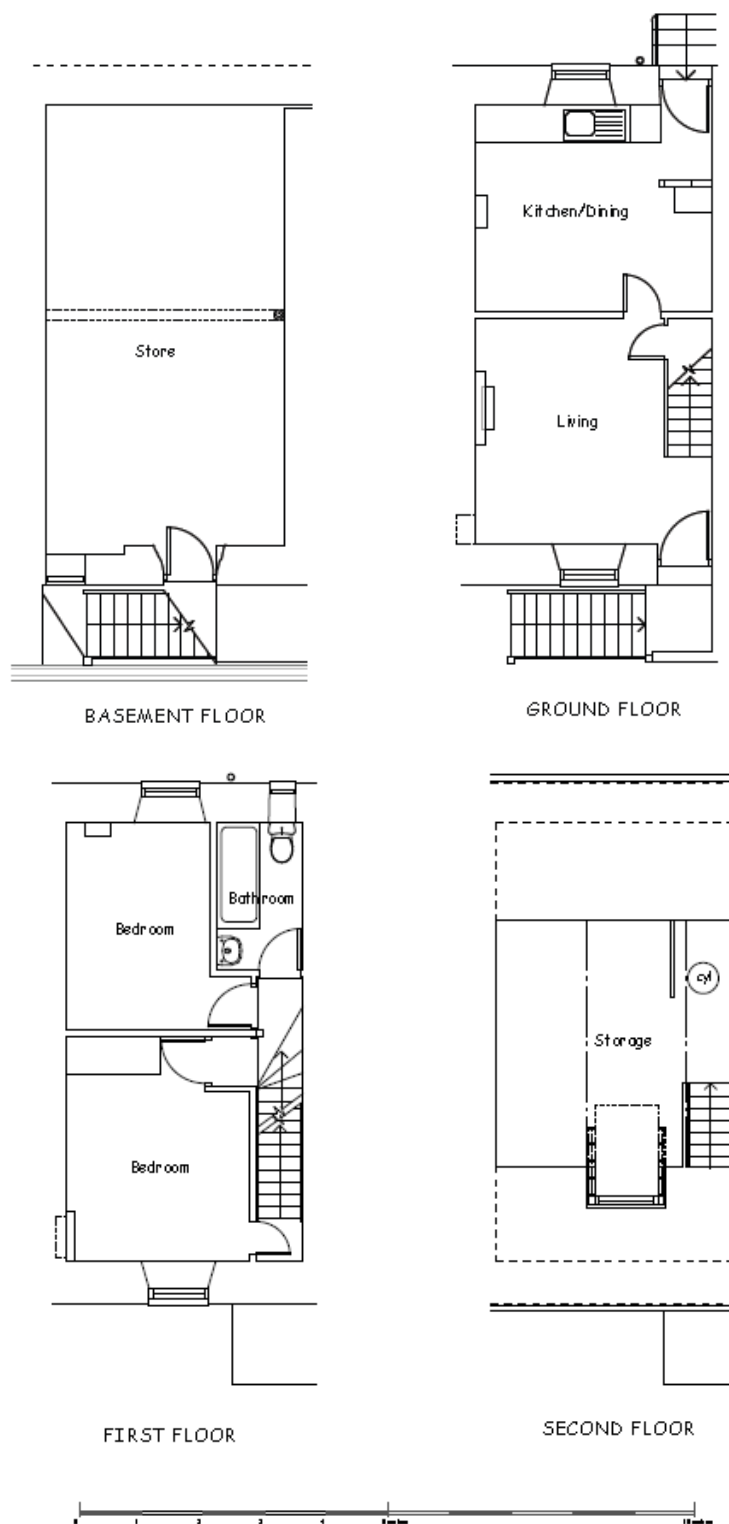


Figure 2. Plans of 14 Teetotal Street, existing (Andrew Williams, Architect, Aug 2011)

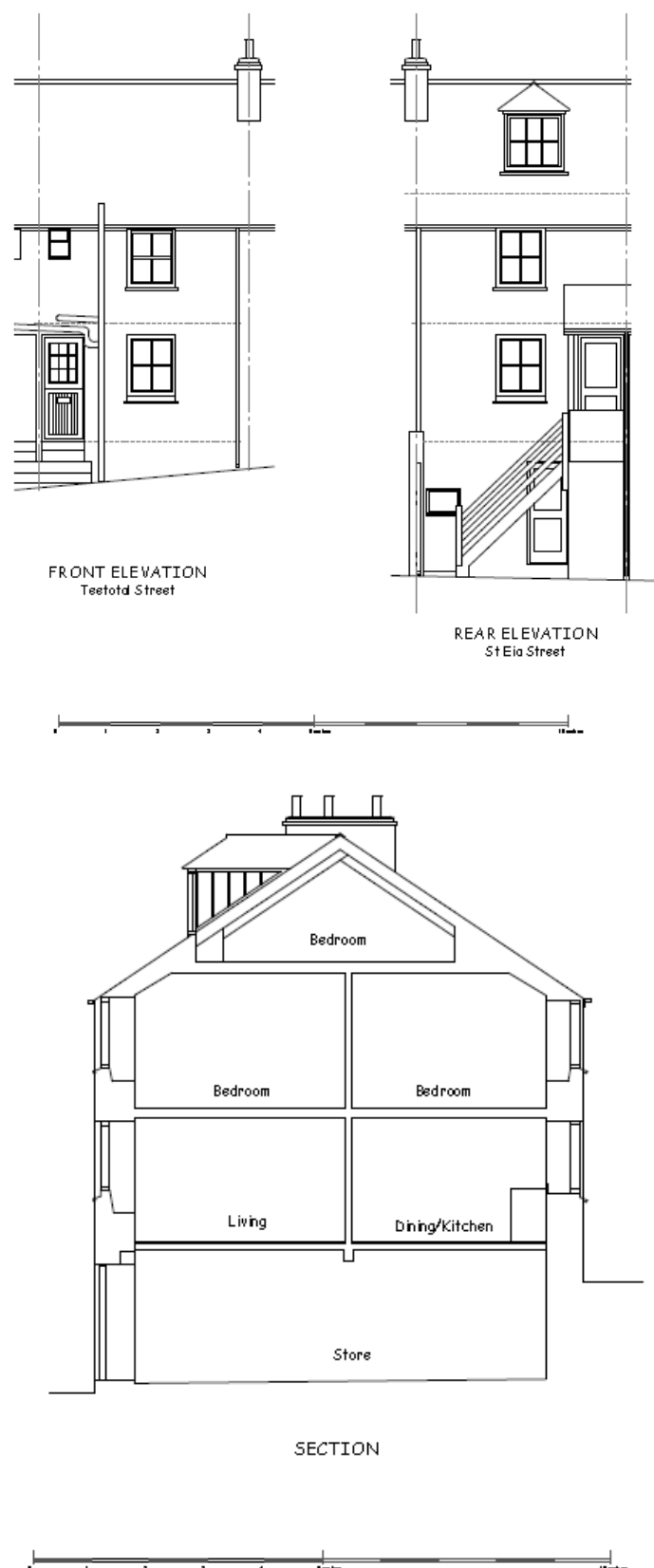


Figure 3. Elevations & section of 14 Teetotal St, existing (Andrew Williams, Architect, August 2011)



Figure 4. Cellar before removal of wooden floor; looking N to rear wall with pilchard pressing ledge (Eric Berry, Sept 2012)



Figure 5. Cellar before removal of wooden floor; looking S to St Eia St entrance; note pilchard pressing pole slots in right hand wall, re-used ships spar supporting large cross beam (Eric Berry, Sept 2012)



Figure 6. Cellar before removal of wooden floor; pressing pole slots in W cellar wall (Eric Berry, Sept 2012)



Figure 7. Cellar before removal of wooden floor; NW corner of cellar, with pressing ledge in N wall, pressing pole slot in W wall and blocked doorway in between (Eric Berry, Sept 2012)



Figure 8. Cellar before removal of wooden floor; pressing ledge of N cellar wall continuing beyond modern concrete block partition wall, indicating that cellar originally extended below No. 16/17 Teetotal St (Eric Berry, Sept 2012)



Figure 9. Cellar before removal of wooden floor; S wall, showing present doorway (originally a window) and window (originally a wide door opening); both have re-used ships timbers as internal lintels (Eric Berry, Sept 2012)

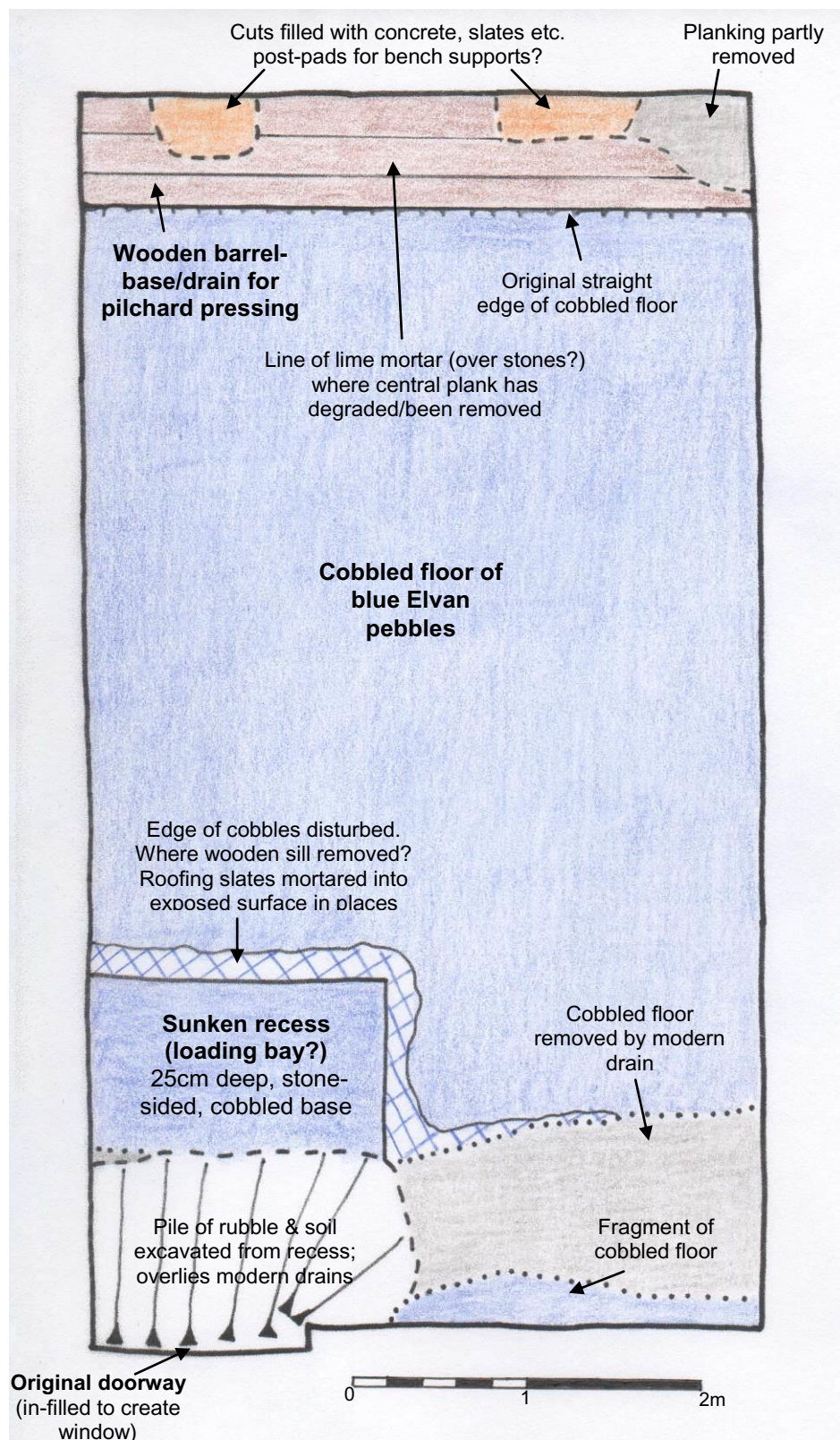


Figure 10. Plan of cellar floor after removal of wooden floor (March 2013)



Figure 11. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; looking N across cobbled floor towards pressing ledge & wooden barrel-base/drain along N wall, and new window opening (March 2013)



Figure 12. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; pressing ledge and wooden barrel-base/drain along N wall (March 2013)



Figure 13. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; wooden barrel-base/drain along bottom of N wall, looking W (not E, as it says on board) (March 2013)



Figure 14. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; W end of wooden barrel-base/drain, looking W (not E, as it says on board) (March 2013)



Figure 15. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; wooden barrel-base/drain along bottom of N wall, looking NE (March 2013)



Figure 16. St Ives Museum (originally a pilchard pressing cellar); original pressing ledge and wooden barrel-base/drain along the bottom of the wall (cobbles and other wooden drains are reconstructions); with Curator, Brian Stevens (2012)



Figure 17. St Ives Museum – replica wooden drain (2012)



Figure 18. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking SW (March 2013)



Figure 19. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking S (not N, as it says on board) (March 2013)



Figure 20. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; sunken recess in SW corner of cellar, looking W (March 2013)



Figure 21. Cellar after removal of wooden floor; modern drain trench cut through cobbled floor across S end of room, looking S; fragment of cobbling surviving in front of doorway (March 2013)