

BUCKFAST METHODIST CHURCH ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



**STEWART BROWN ASSOCIATES
FEBRUARY 2014**

METHODIST CHAPEL AT BUCKFAST ABBEY, DEVON ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, DECEMBER 2013

SUMMARY

Works associated with the laying of a new path surface and replacement of steps outside the Methodist chapel built in 1881 uncovered part of a wall footing which probably belonged to a small building, possibly a cottage, shown standing on the tithe map of 1843. The works were limited in depth and extent.

THE PROJECT

An archaeological watching brief was carried out in December 2013 during works associated with the replacement of the path surface and step to the east of the chapel. The scheduled area at Buckfast Abbey includes the chapel's porch but not the walled garden and paved pathway to its east. The watching brief was required by English Heritage and Dartmoor National Park Authority since the ground works extended into the porch, and the whole area affected by the works lies within the grounds of the former medieval abbey.

The trench excavation for the new pathway (Trench 1) was 0.36m deep at maximum. It had two small holes dug 0.2m deeper through its bottom to seat supports for new handrails (Trenches 2 and 3). The excavation produced only one find – a small fragment from a clay pipe stem from context 6. The context dates from the mid or late 19th century. The clay pipe stem was not more closely datable than from the 18th or 19th century and was discarded on site. The findings of the exercise were limited by the shallow depth of excavation. They are of meagre archaeological interest. In view of these circumstances, this brief report is regarded as an adequate record of the watching brief and no site archive has been prepared.

A WSI (written scheme of investigation) for the project was compiled in April 2013 (Appendix 2 below).

DESCRIPTION (Figs. 1 and 2)

The slate flagstone path which was taken up in December 2013 (1) was laid to the porch doorway of the chapel so must date from after 1881. The flagstones overlay a make-up deposit of clay mixed with limestone chippings (2). Beneath the make-up deposit was a disused cast iron water pipe which probably once carried away gutter water from an existing downpipe at the NW corner of the chapel's porch. The pipe overlay a patchy yellow clay deposit which in turn overlay a patchy deposit of broken local slate stone (4 and 5). Beneath these was a demolition deposit comprising limestone and slate rubble mixed with light brown clay and lumps of light brown lime mortar (6). This latter deposit was left largely unexcavated since the 2013 works didn't extend down deep enough to remove it.

At the NE corner of the trench, part of a wall footing (7) protruded through the demolition deposit 6. The footing extended W-E and almost certainly belongs to the small building shown standing on this site on the tithe map of 1843, although which part of the building it represents is unclear. The footing was faced on its south side. Its north side lay beyond the limit of excavation.

A poorly constructed wall footing was uncovered beneath the present gateway through the east wall of the chapel's walled garden (8). This cuts across the east end of wall footing 7 so must be later in date. The footing is continuous in construction with the present garden wall to each side and bonded with the same hard off-white cementaceous mortar. It therefore forms part of the foundations for garden wall erected after construction of the chapel in 1881, even though it underlies what must have been the original gateway into the garden. It is a fairly common feature throughout all periods for foundations of walls to be continuous where it is intended to construct openings above ground level.

Trenches 2 and 3 each measured 0.2m x 0.25m and were 0.2m deeper than trench 1. Both trenches exposed light brown clay beneath demolition deposit 6. The clay was mixed with much broken shillet and some charcoal flecks (10). It was probably an initial levelling deposit dumped on the site of the demolished 18th-/19th-cent small building.

DISCUSSION

Wall footing 7 is very likely to belong to the small building shown on the tithe map of 1843. Whether the footing was for an external wall or internal partition is uncertain. It is difficult to be certain about the precise position of the building since the tithe map was not surveyed to the same high degree of accuracy as modern surveys. The building may have been a cottage and is likely to date from the 18th or early 19th century, but might possibly be earlier. Its light brown mortar is much poorer in quality than the white lime mortar containing river gravel aggregate generally used for buildings in this vicinity in the medieval period.

The building was demolished sometime between 1843 and 1881 when the chapel was built. Demolition deposits from the building were used to level the site before the construction of the chapel and creation of its walled garden. The cast-iron waste water pipe and stone-flagged pathway almost certainly date from soon after 1881, although the irregular pattern of stone flags existing before the works of 2013 appeared more modern in date and may represent a relaying of the surface in the mid or late 20th century.

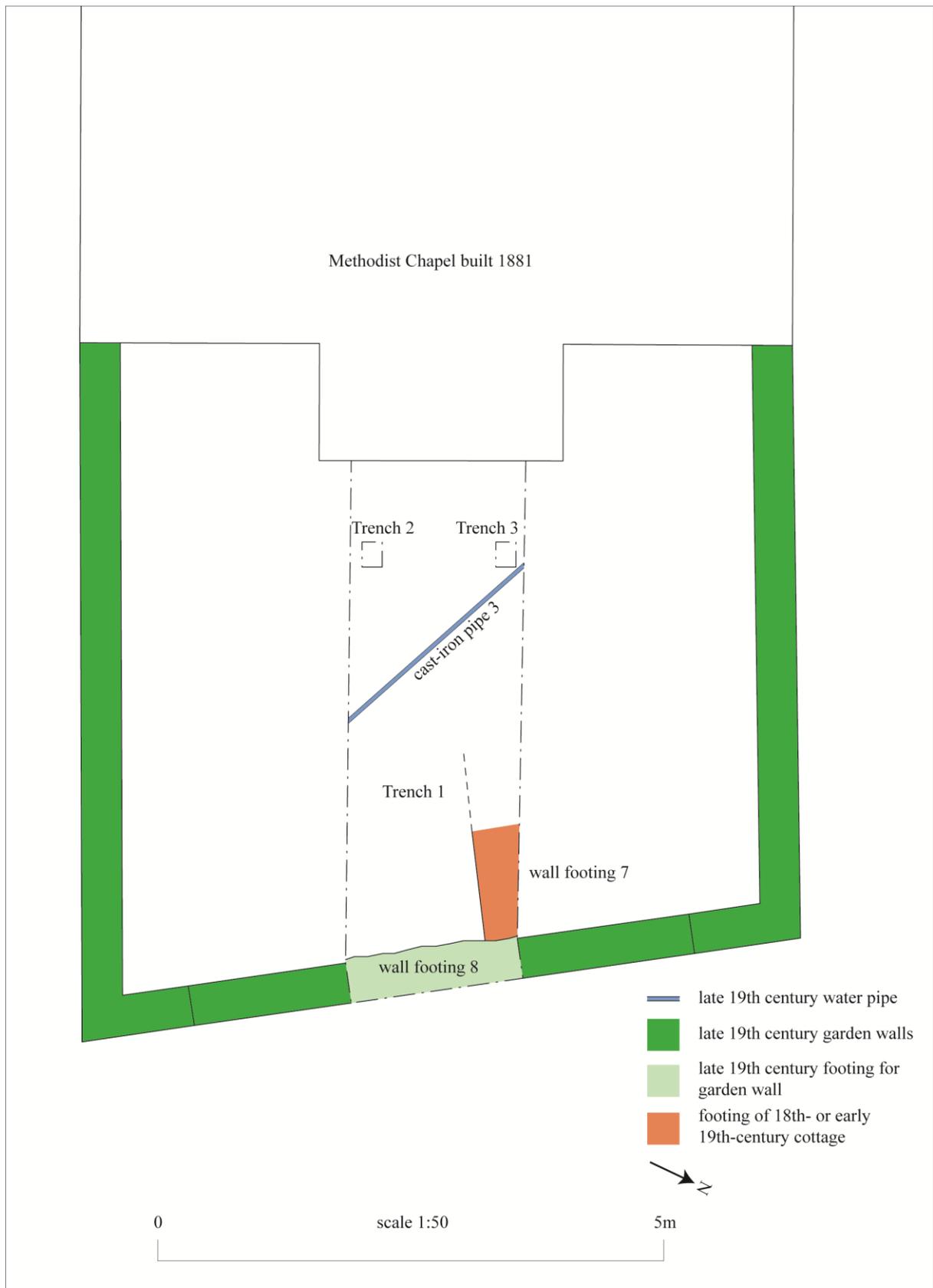


Fig. 1 Plan showing excavation and wall footing of 18th- or early 19th-century cottage.



Fig. 2 The excavation showing wall footing 7 to right, looking southwest.

APPENDIX 1
CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context No.	Description
1	Slate flagstone path surface existing before works began in December 2013. Over 2.
2	Dark grey limestone chippings and soil, 20 th cent. Make-up for 1. Under 1, over 3 and 4. 5-10cms thick.
3	Cast-iron water pipe. Disused. Probably once carried away roof gutter water from an existing downpipe on the N side of the chapel's porch. Under 2, over 4.
4	Yellow clay deposit, 19 th /20 th cent. Small patches. Under 2, over 5. 1-2cm thick.
5	Broken local slate stone (shillet). Patchy. 5-6 cms thick. Under 4, over 6.
6	Demolition rubble. Limestone and local slate stone rubble with some river cobbles, lumps of light brown lime mortar (mortar mixed with earth), in loose light brown clay. Not fully excavated since the 2013 works didn't extend down to its base. Under 5, over 7, cut by 8.
7	Wall footing, 18 th or early 19 th cent. Limestone and local slate stone rubble with some cobbles set in light brown lime mortar. Only a small length of the footing's uppermost course was uncovered at the NE corner of the trench. The footing may have extended further to the W but the lower, unexcavated part of layer 6 covered this area. The wall was not dated by finds but almost certainly belongs to the building shown standing on the site in 1843 (tithe map – see WSI below). Under 6.
8	Wall footing. Very rough footing for garden wall 9. Local slate stone rubble bonded with hard off-white cementaceous mortar. Probably contemporary with the chapel, ie 1881. The footing was carried across the gateway opening in the garden wall. Under 1, cuts 6 and 7.
9	Existing garden wall. Limestone and local slate stone rubble set in hard off-white cementaceous mortar. Over 8.
10	Light brown clay with much broken shillet and some charcoal flecks (no mortar). Deposit revealed in the two small trenches dug for supports associated with new porch step Trenches 2 and 3). Under 6. Probably an infilling deposit dumped on the site of the demolished 18 th -/19 th -cent building.

APPENDIX 2

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF DURING PATH RESURFACING OUTSIDE THE METHODIST CHAPEL AT
BUCKFAST ABBEY, DEVON

Stewart Brown Associates, April 2013

Location: Methodist Chapel, Buckfast Road, Buckfast Abbey
Parish: Buckfast
District: Teignbridge
County: Devon
TQ11 0EA

1. INTRODUCTION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 This WSI has been prepared on behalf of the Methodist church with regard to an archaeological watching brief which is to take place during resurfacing works to the pathway leading to the chapel's porch. The WSI forms part of an application to English Heritage for Scheduled Monument Consent for the works.

1.2 The ground beneath the chapel and its porch is scheduled (Fig. 1). The ground falls within the scheduled area known in the National Heritage List for England as 'The North Gate and part of the precinct area of Buckfast Abbey' (Monument number 1266782; NGR SX 7412 6738). The standing structure of the chapel is not listed.

1.3 The principal objective of the programme is to make a record of any significant archaeological deposits and/or features exposed during the works.

1.4 The proposed ground works which might uncover archaeological features and/or deposits are shown in drawings by Allen Van der Steen Hall Architects (Fig. 2). The present paving of the path leading to the porch (Fig. 3) is to be taken up and replaced with granite sets. The present step inside the porch is to be lifted and replaced at a higher level.

1.5 Excavations in 1982 uncovered medieval building remains 12m to the NW of the chapel's porch at depths of more than 0.5m below present ground surface (Fig. 4; and Brown, S.W. 'Excavations and Building Recording at Buckfast Abbey, Devon', *Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.* 1988, Plate 1). The deposits above the medieval remains comprise largely garden soils which were imported to the site in the 19th century. The tithe map of 1844 shows an orchard and garden in this area, together with a former small building standing immediately to the east of the chapel (Fig. 4).

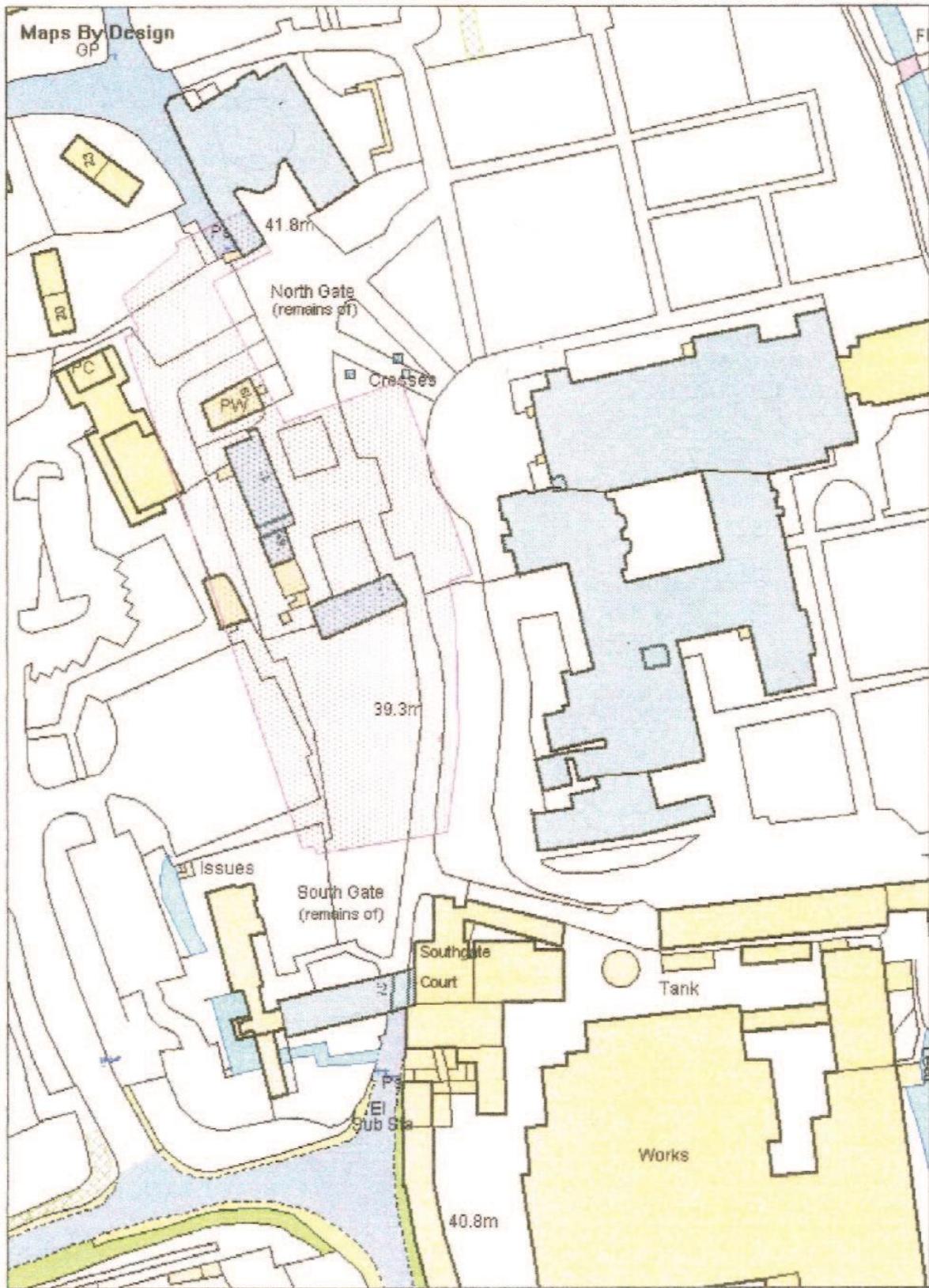


Fig. 1 Plan showing scheduled area (source Dartmoor National Park).

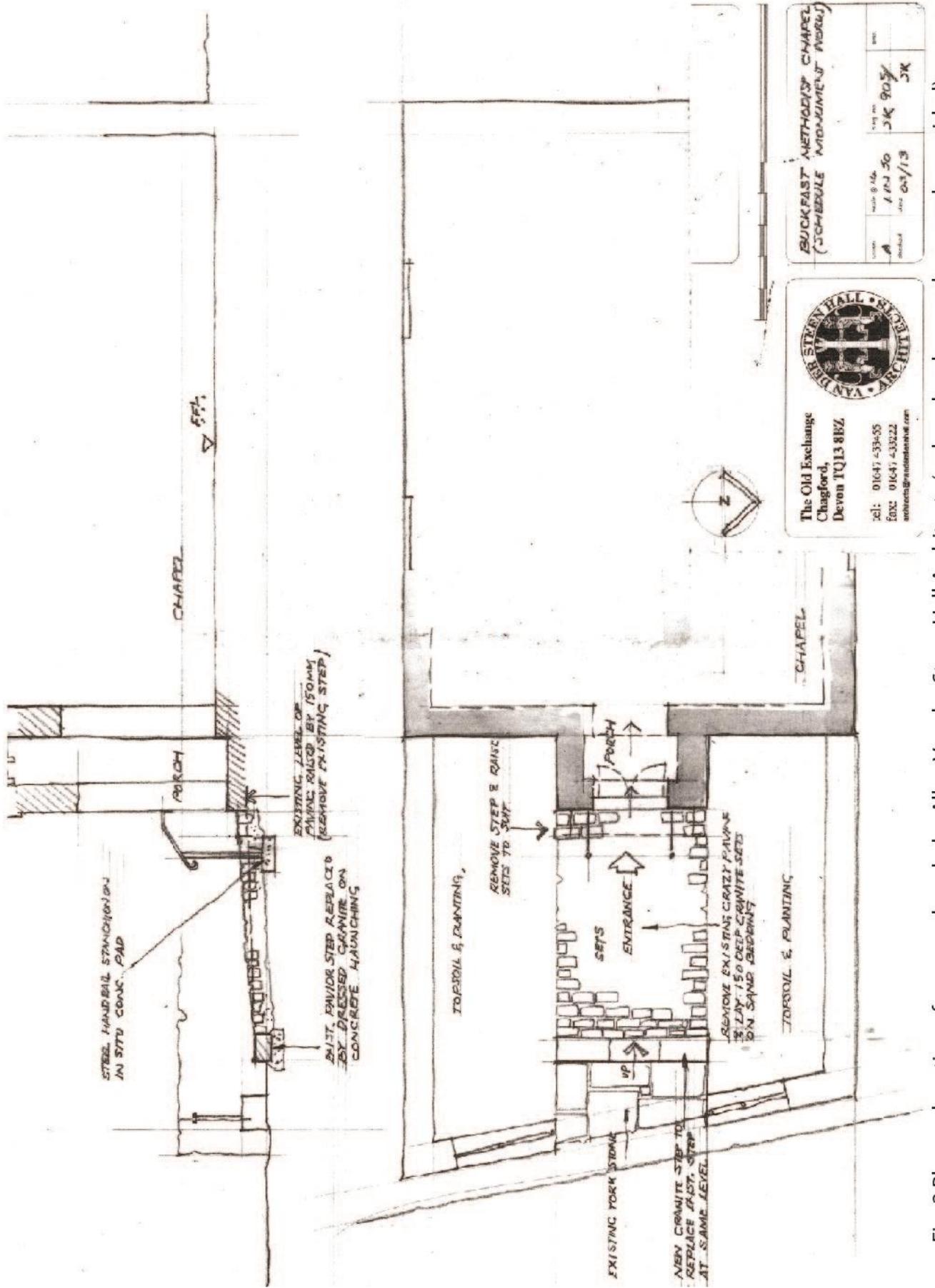


Fig. 2 Plan and section of proposed works by Allen Van der Steen Hall Architects (reduced scale - see drawn scale provided).



Fig. 3 The Methodist Chapel showing present paved path, looking west.

2. PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

3.1 Watching brief

A watching brief will be maintained during groundworks in accordance with the IFA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, 2008. Archaeological features which are uncovered will be cleaned and excavated by hand, recorded and fully recorded by context. All features will be recorded in plan, with sections where appropriate, at a scale of 1:20.

3.3 A digital photographic record will be made. The drawn and written record will be made on appropriate media for archiving.

3.4 Should significant archaeological remains be exposed by the works, English Heritage and Dartmoor National Park Authority will be informed immediately.

4. REPORTING.

4.1 A written report on the findings will be prepared within three months of the completion of fieldwork. The report will include written, drawn, and photographic records of any features of archaeological significance uncovered during ground works. An overall interpretation will be made.

4.2 Digital copies of the report will be circulated to EH and DNP. One hard copy and one digital copy of the completed report will be supplied to Devon County's HES, on the understanding that the report will be made available for public reference in the HER and on a future web-based version of the HER.

4.3 An online OASIS form will be completed and a digital copy of the report uploaded to the OASIS database.

4.4 Should few or no remains of archaeological significance be exposed, a short report will be prepared to that effect and circulated to EH, DNP and Devon's HES, followed by an OASIS entry.

5 PERSONNEL

The field recording work and reporting will be carried out by Stewart Brown who is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Ceramic finds will be identified by John Allan.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Unless specifically agreed otherwise, the Methodist church or their agent Allen Van der Steen will be responsible for general safety on the site, checking for live underground services, and for preventing access by unauthorised persons to the area of excavation.

7 SITE ARCHIVE AND DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE AND FINDS

A site archive will be prepared only if the works uncover significant archaeological features and deposits. The material (finds) archive will be deposited with Exeter Museum. A reference number will be sought from the museum's curator in advance. The museum's guidelines for archive preparation and storage will be followed. It is usual practice for ownership of the finds to pass into the hands of the museum in order to guarantee permanent safekeeping (the museum cannot accept the finds unless ownership has been transferred; written permission for transference of ownership will be requested from the Methodist church). A digital archive comprising all born-digital data and digital copies made of the primary site records and images will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

8 LIST OF SPECIALISTS WHO COULD ADVISE OR CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROJECT IF REQUIRED:

Medieval and post medieval finds - John Allan;
Roman finds - Paul Bidwell (Arbeia Roman Fort);
Prehistoric lithic finds - John Newberry;
Prehistoric ceramic finds - Henrietta Quinzel;
Bone artefacts - Ian Riddler;
Clay tobacco pipes – David Higgins;
Coins and tokens - Norman Shiel;
Finds conservation - Exeter RAM Museum Conservation Service (contact Alison Hopper-Bishop);
Environmental sampling - Vanessa Straker (English Heritage, Bristol);
Faunal remains - Southampton University Faunal Remains Unit;
Plant remains - Julie Jones (Bristol);
Geological identification and mineral analysis – Roger Taylor (Exeter Museum).

9 INSURANCE

9.1 Stewart Brown Associates has insurance cover in the following areas: Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity, All Risks, and Personal Accident.

9.2 Stewart Brown Associates will not be liable for any damage caused to the site which unavoidably results from archaeological site operations being carried out within the agreed scope of works.