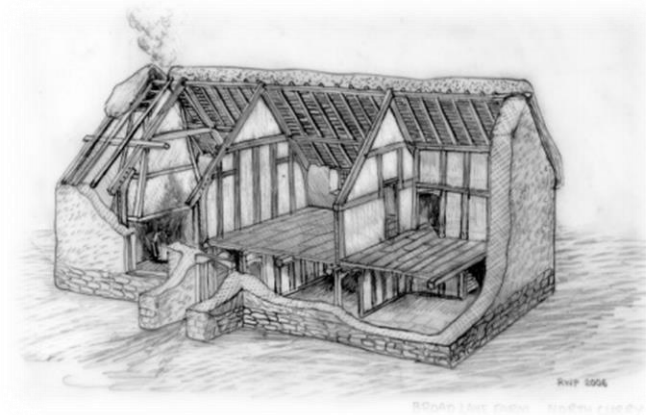


NOTES TOWARDS  
*an*  
**Historic Building Survey**  
*of*  
THE FORMER S' JAMES' NATIONAL SCHOOLS,  
OR 'THE FOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CENTRE',  
S' JAMES' ROAD, EXETER,

*By R. W. Parker*

For Nexus Heritage



**RICHARD PARKER**  
**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING & INTERPRETATION**

11 Toronto Road, St James, Exeter, EX4 6LE.

E-Mail: [rwparker@btopenworld.com](mailto:rwparker@btopenworld.com)

Tel: 07763 248241

01392 423233

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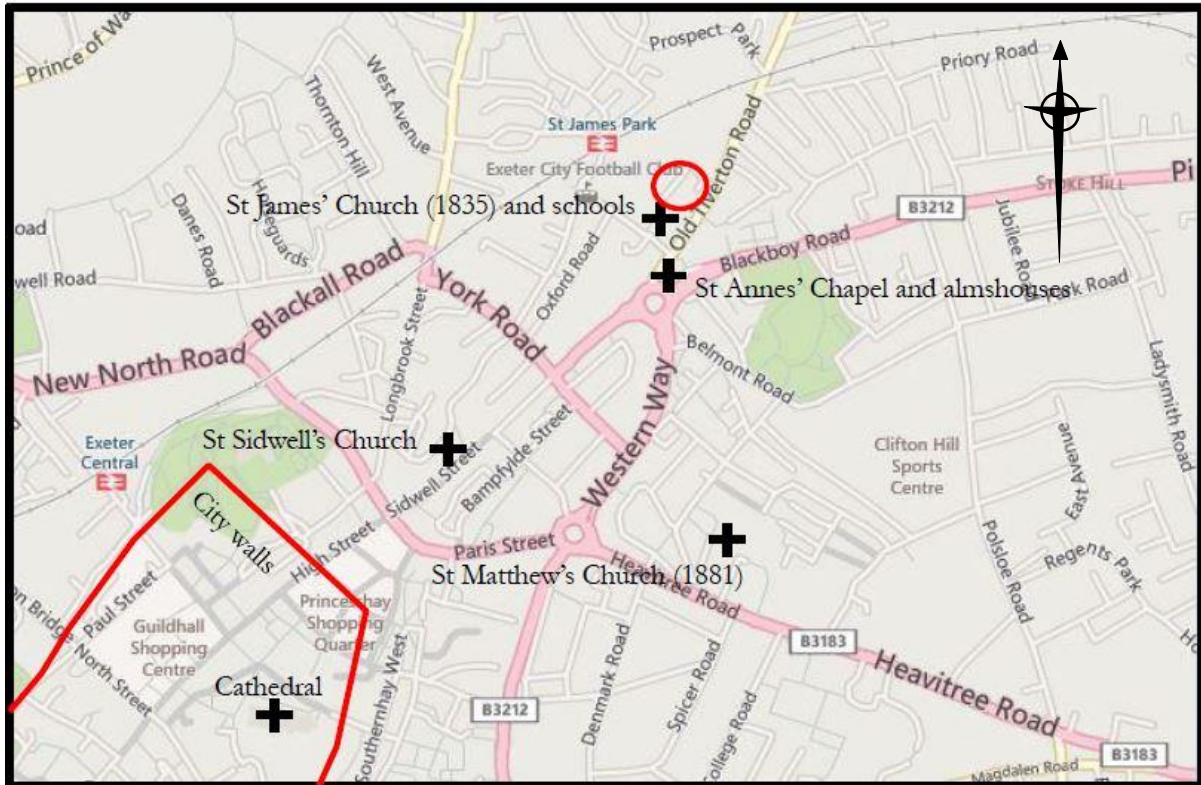


Fig. 1 Location of the site (circled in red), in relation to the walled city, the ancient parish church of St Sidwell, the medieval chapel of St Anne and the 19th-century mission churches of St James and St Matthew, Newtown, built to serve the expanding population of the city suburbs.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a rapid historic building survey undertaken at the former St James National Schools, lately the Fountain Community Centre, St James' Road, Exeter. The report was commissioned by Keith Ray of Nexus Heritage to inform decisions as to the potential redevelopment of the site by its current owners, Exeter City Football Club. The work was undertaken by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation in March 2015 and consisted of a rapid, non-invasive visual and photographic survey of the buildings, aimed at determining as far as possible their date and the sequence of their development.

## 2 THE SITE

The site lies on the extreme north-eastern limit of the historic suburbs, near the junction of the Old Tiverton and Blackboy (formerly Bath) roads, close to the site of the medieval chapel of St Anne and immediately adjacent to the Exeter City football ground at St James' Park. The site lay within the ancient ecclesiastical parish of St Sidwell, a chapelry of Heavitree, and part of the larger administrative area of St Sidwell's Fee.

### *The City Aqueducts*

The fields in the immediate vicinity of the chapel are important as the source of much of the city's water supply; through adits under the present football ground feeding well houses in Well Street, to the west of the site, and also from St Anne's Well on the south-east side of the chapel (Fig. 2). Although many of these wells were tapped during the medieval period, the abundant springs in the area may have been exploited from as early as Roman times, since an unworn coin of Nero (54-68AD) was found on the demolition of the well head in Cistern Field to the west of the present



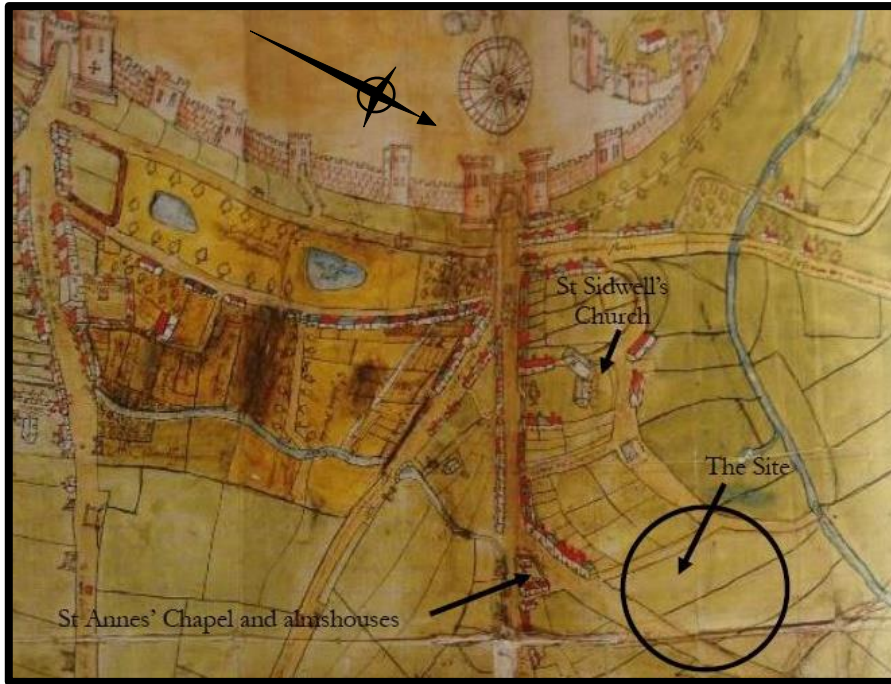


Fig. 2 Extract from John Hooker's map of St Sidwell's Fee showing the site (circled).

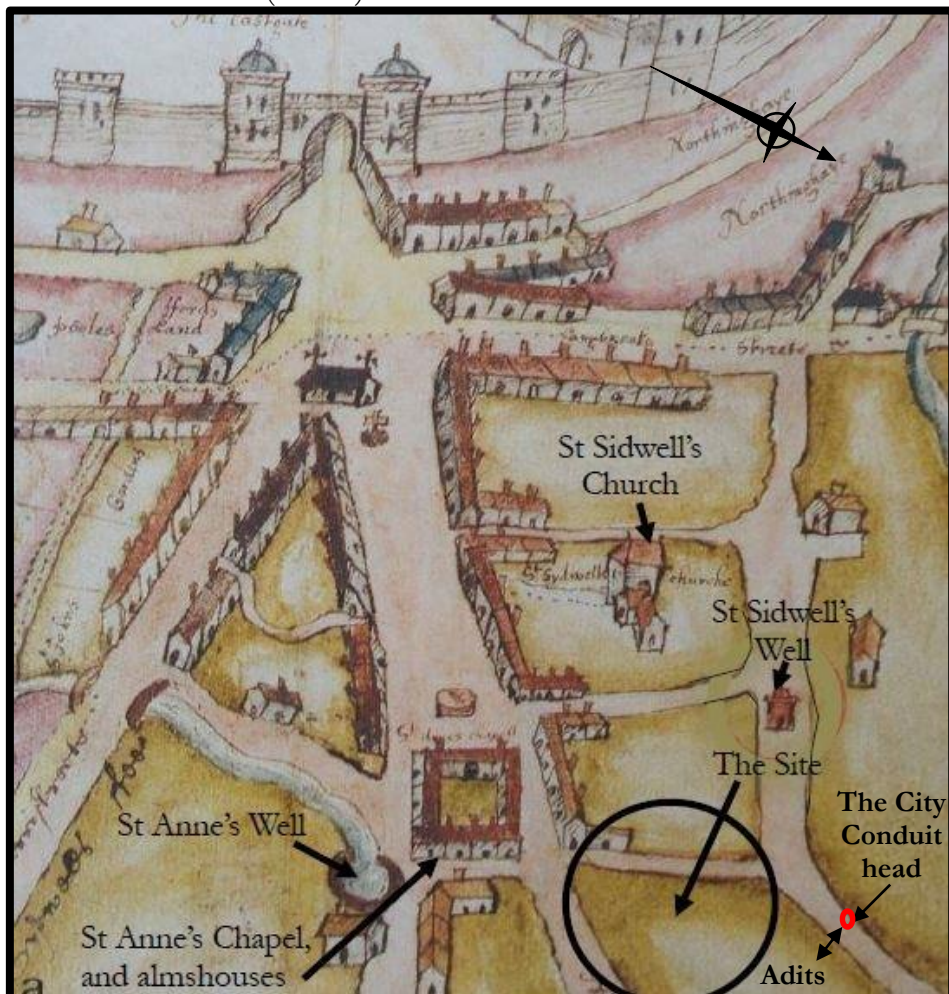


Fig. 3 Extract from another of John Hooker's maps of St Sidwell's Fee showing the site (circled) and the well houses, conduit heads and adits in the vicinity of the site.

site. There is thus great potential for archaeological features relating to Roman and medieval engineering works and aqueducts within the site (Harvey 1986, 16).

The earliest maps of the city to show the extent of the built-up area by the end of the middle ages are the series of maps produced by John Hooker for the City Chamber in the late 16th century (Figs 2, 3). These show the built-up area of the city extending in an unbroken ribbon of development from St Sidwell's Church to the corner of the modern St James' Road, but apparently no further. The frontages of the plot now occupied by St Anne's Almshouses and the chapel are fully built up in a quadrangular form, though this may, of course, be a conventional representation of the complex. The extent of the buildings as far as St James road strongly suggests the possibility that the site may have been fairly intensively used, perhaps for gardens and allotments, during the late middle ages, and these may have left archaeological traces below the present largely 19th-century and modern surfaces.

The proximity of the site to St Anne's Chapel may also suggest the possibility of Civil War-period siege works in or near the present site. During the sieges of the city in the 17th century St Anne's Chapel was converted into a fort or redoubt which was held successively by the Royalists and Parliamentary forces, the latter capturing the fort in January 1646 (Stoyle 1996, 123). It is likely that that at St Anne's Chapel, which commanded an important road junction and stood in close proximity to the city's main water supply, was a particularly strongly fortified site. Although little is known of the form of the outlying fortifications around the city, the unusual configuration of the houses in Wellington Place, North east of the chapel, and oddly shaped building plots and distinctive angled boundaries within the immediate vicinity of the chapel and almshouses suggests the possibility that the Civil-War redoubt took the form of a star-shaped or polygonal earthwork fort, perhaps with projecting angle bastions (see Fig 4). The rough outline of the bastions of the fort may have survived in the form of hedges, ditches or other relict features to influence the layout of the 18th- and 19th-century houses in this area. There is a possibility that the Civil War fort was surrounded by further outworks, batteries and systems of trenching, constructed either to protect or besiege the fort, and evidence of these works might well survive within the present site.

Apart from the medieval chapel and the 16th-century almshouses close to it, this part of the city remained largely undeveloped until a late date. The earliest houses in proximity to the site which have been recorded archaeologically were late 17th-century buildings at Nos 94-5 Sidwell Street, now demolished, which may have been constructed as a pair of houses after the destruction of the city's suburbs during the Civil War (Parker 2007). A short Terrace of two-storey brick houses known as St Anne's Terrace was constructed on the south-eastern side of the site in 1821. These houses still survive. The appearance of the area during the 19th century is shown by an excellent series of maps, though these differ in the amount of detail they show and many are based on earlier surveys. Nonetheless these do give an impression of the development of the site from open ground or pleasure grounds, laid out with tree-lined walks (Fig. 5). Coldridge's 1819 map of the city which is the earliest and most reliable detailed plan of the city and its buildings (Fig 6) shows no buildings or other detail on the site, which may well have been unbuilt, as well as falling near the edge of his map, which may also have encouraged him to leave it unsurveyed. No evidence of any earlier buildings on the site is known, though it is not impossible that below-ground remains of unknown structures may survive. The site appears to have been undeveloped until the late 1830s when it was acquired for the construction of a new proprietary chapel serving St Sidwell's parish.

#### *The construction of St James Church*

The provision of a new church for the expanding population of St Sidwell's parish was perceived as an urgent necessity by the mid 1830s. At a meeting to discuss site of a new church, held on the 23rd April 1835 and reported in the Exeter Flying Post for the 30th of April, two sites were suggested; St Anne's Almshouses, where a possible new church was felt to be desirable to beautify the entrance to the city, and a piece of land known as Lady Clifford's charity field (which is presumably the present site). The Dean and Chapter, as patrons of the Almshouses, agreed to

release the St Anne's site subject to a new site being provided for the almshouses and this solution was proposed by Mr S. Kingdon. The incumbent of St Sidwell's, the Revd Mr Tripp proposed instead that Lady Clifford's field was 'preferable for devotional purposes', besides which, it had already been offered. A large majority agreed to pursue public subscriptions for building on the St Anne's Site, but ultimately the Vicar got his way (EFP 30.04.1835).

Plans for the new church were presented by Messrs Hooper 'of this city builders'... 'and nothing more appropriate to the sacred purpose for which it is intended, or the spot of ground on which it is proposed to erect it can well be conceived'. The church was to be in Gothic style 'and will provide 1300 sittings, 630 of which will be free'. It was a large building, with a height inside of 35 feet in the clear, the altitude of spire at west end being 116-117 feet (EFP 28.05.1835).

Documents held by the Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS) dated 1833-8. include a ground plan and gallery plan showing the church, designed by Henry Hooper of Exeter, Surveyor, but show no details of the site or its boundaries or elevations of the buildings and it is uncertain whether any ancillary buildings were constructed at that time (ICBS 01853 folios 35ff). The 1830s church later became a parish church in its own right and survived long enough to be depicted on the OS 1st edition maps of 1876 (Fig. 4), but in the following year rebuilding commenced and ultimately the entire church was replaced, in three stages (ICBS 08161), with an impressive Victorian Gothic church by Robert Medley Fulford (Figs 11, 12). The expansion of the church may well have necessitated alterations to the school buildings to the rear. This church was further extended by the addition of a Lady Chapel in the 1930s but was subsequently destroyed by incendiary bombs during the Blitz of 1942. The ruins were then demolished and a new parish church provided on a new site on the outskirts of the city.

The account of the Consecration of the building in the *Flying Post* for the 1st December 1836 describes northern and southern galleries, and 'another large gallery at the west, which was, on this occasion, filled with about 300 children belonging to the Diocesan schools, as well as those of St Sidwell's parish, the choir of which occupied the front, and contributed their efficient services in the duties of the day' (EFP 01.12.1836). This implies that, at this stage, St James' had not yet established its own schools. The layout of the buildings shown on contemporary maps, such as Winkle's map of c.1850 and Wood's map of c.1840, shows no other buildings on the site (Figs 7, 8); however later 19th-century maps (Figs 9, 10) show two separate structures to the rear of the church. These are interpreted here as a schoolroom, probably the boys' Schoolroom now represented by the north-western range of the existing buildings, and a smaller detached block to the south east, interpreted here as a Master's House, now forming the easternmost corner of the school complex (See Fig. 23).

No images of the 1830s church are known and the only fabric from this building known to survive are on the site boundary, including the monolithic granite gate piers and low dwarf wall facing St James' Road. The railings have been removed and some of the gate piers have been removed to widen the entrance to the present car park. The walls surrounding the whole of the present site are also contemporary with the first church, with random rubble masonry strengthened by intermittent pilaster buttresses. These walls enclosed the whole area of the church, churchyard and schools. A walled or railed boundary was an essential element of an Anglican church or burial site at this period, since, according to Canon Law the site could not otherwise be Consecrated, a consideration which caused enormous controversy locally at the establishment of the Lower Cemetery in the late 1830s, since the Bishop could not reasonably consecrate the areas set aside for Nonconformists (who objected to his authority and office) whereas to wall off the Anglican areas was seen as an unacceptable segregation of the dead (Brooks & Evans 1993, 42).

It is not known whether burials were made within the site of the churchyard or within the walls of the building, though this seems possible given the date of the building. The closure of the churchyards of the city churches to burials did not take place until the 1850s and most proprietary chapels of the period were at least in part funded by burial fees in addition to pew rents.



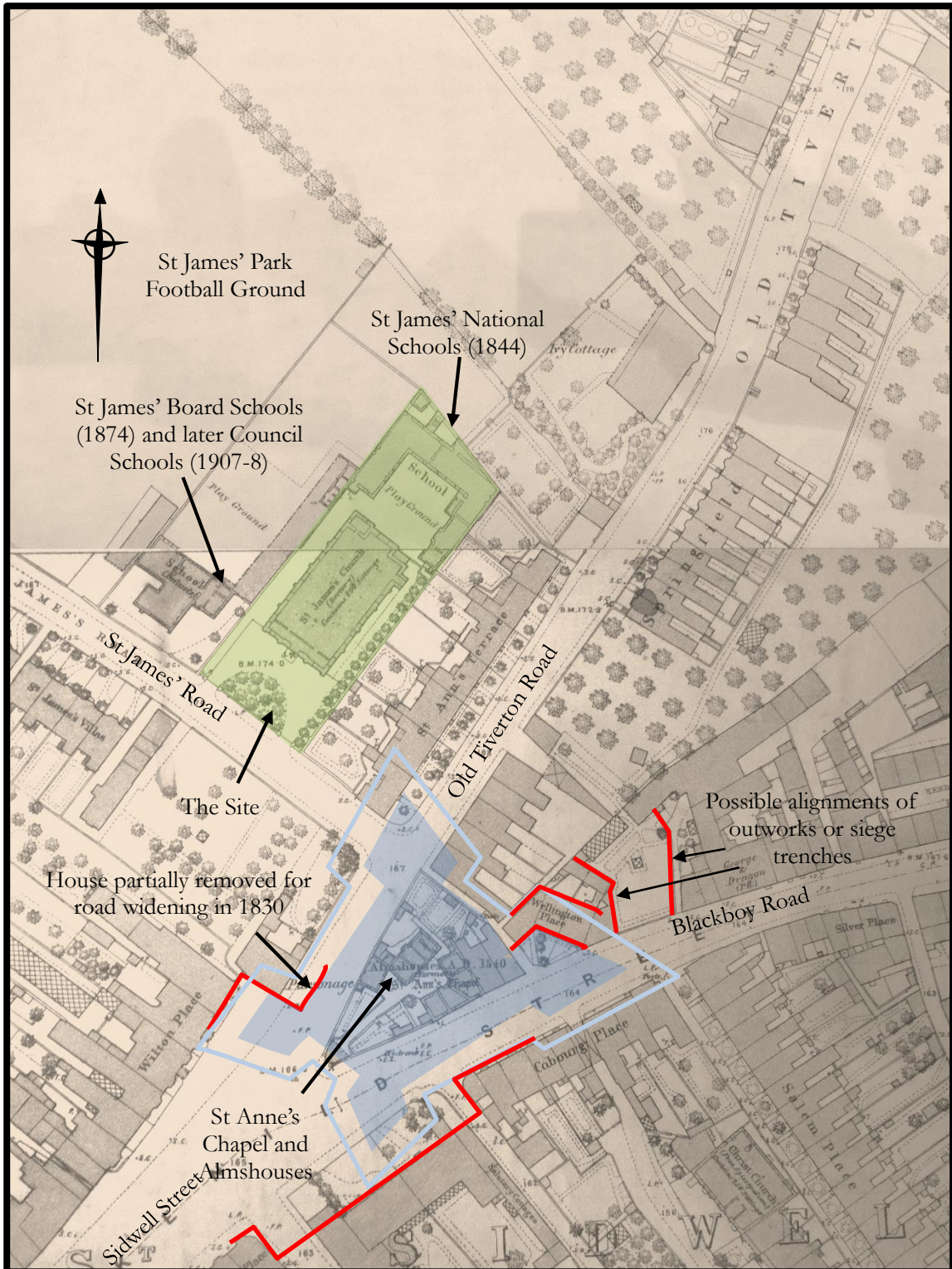


Fig. 4 Extract from the OS 1st edition 1:500 maps Sheets 80.6.9 and 80.6.4, surveyed in 1876, showing the school and church site (coloured green) and the unusual offsets, alignments and oddly-shaped building plots in the vicinity of the almshouses (outlined in red) suggesting the possibility of Civil War-period earthwork fortifications and siege works near the site. The possible outline of such a redoubt with four bastions and ditches is suggested in blue.





Fig. 5 Extract from Hayman's map, c. 1805, showing the site laid out with walks and trees.

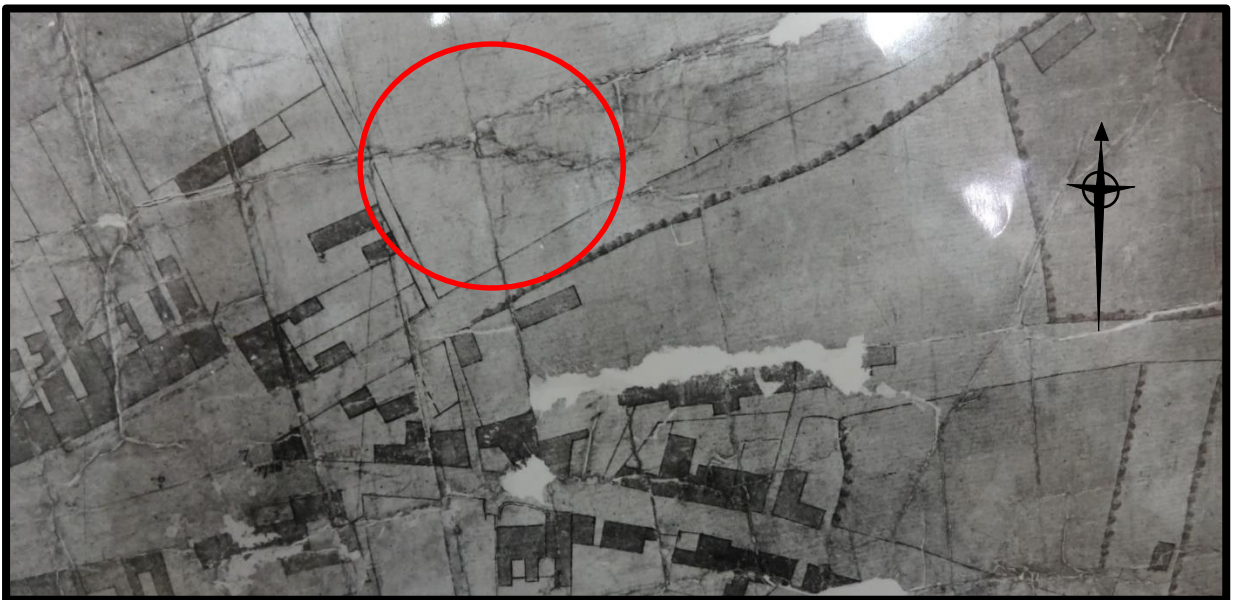


Fig. 6 Extract from Coldridge's map of 1819, showing an undeveloped site.



Fig. 7 Winkle's map, c. 1850, showing the new church of 1835-6 but no other buildings.

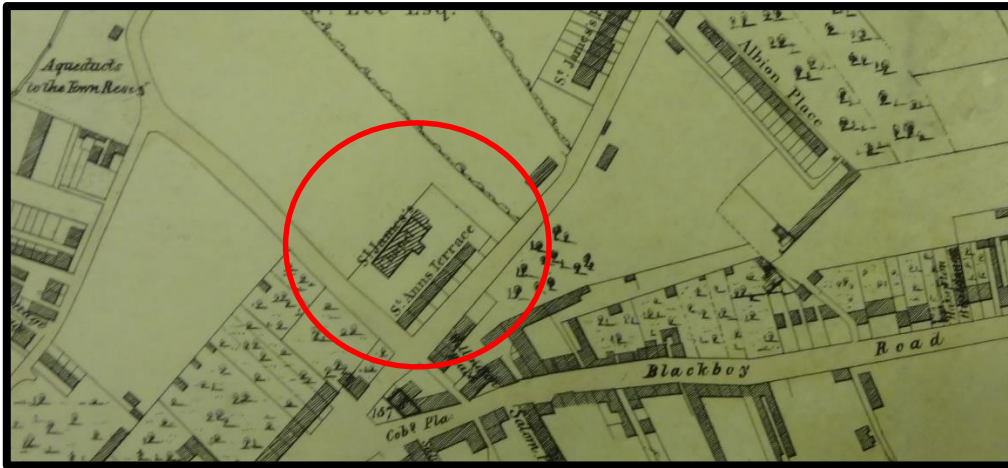


Fig. 8 Wood's map of the church c.1840, showing the undeveloped school site.

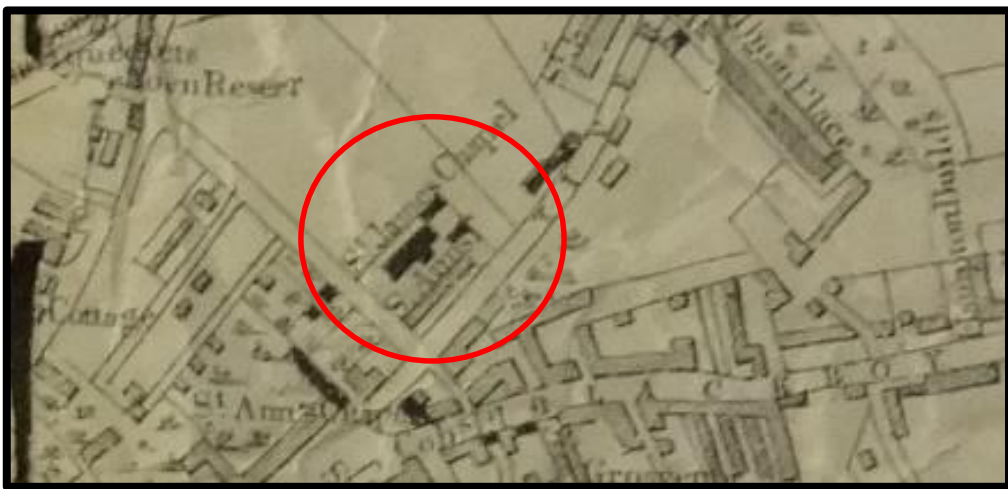


Fig. 9 Besley's map of the city, undated, but c.1840s, showing the school buildings behind the church



Fig. 10 Map engraved by the Devon and Somerset Steam Printing Co., c.1870, showing two separate buildings behind the church. It is likely that this replicates details of an earlier map.





Fig. 11 The interior of the rebuilt church (Devon 19th-century Churches Project).

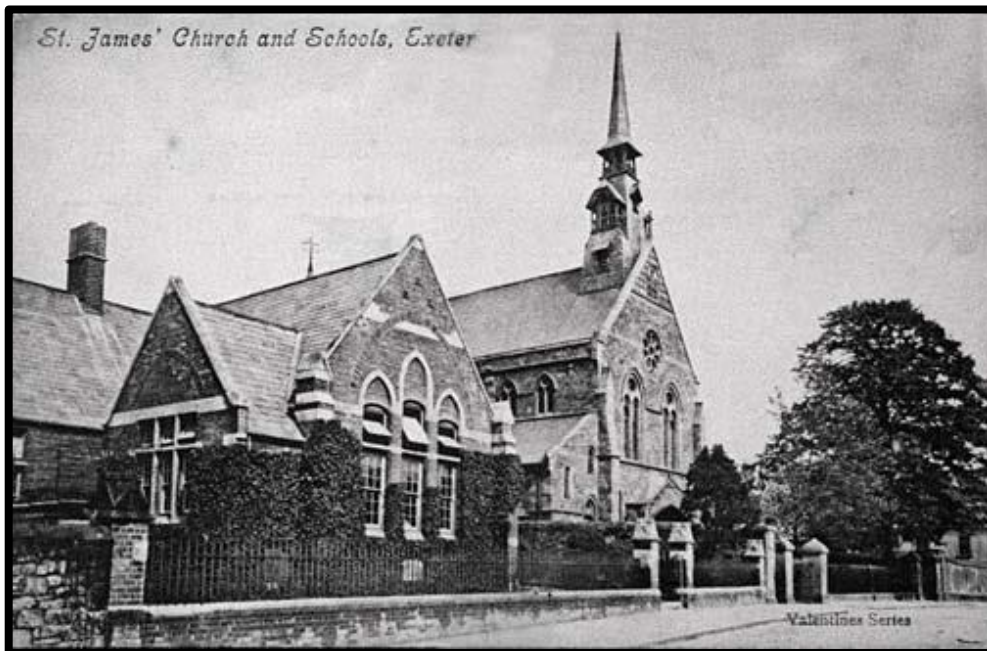


Fig. 12 Early 20th-century postcard (Author's Collection) showing the Board Schools of 1874 and the rebuilt church by Robert Medley Fulford, commenced in 1887, beyond, behind gate piers and railings surviving from the church of 1835-6.

An unusual survival of the original church is the remains of its box pews, reset as a dado on the walls of the south-eastern extension of the former school buildings, probably in the 1870s (Fig. 18). These are important examples of early 19th-century church seating, since they retain the mouldings and panelled external faces of the box pews, rather than the interior faces, as in some of the other survivals in the city, as at St Stephen's church, where the interior faces only were left in place when the seating was stripped out during later 19th-century re-ordering.

### *The St James National Schools*

Church missions and educational expansion in the 19th century were very often spear-headed by the establishment of church schools. The earliest of these were founded by nonconformist groups and became identified as 'British Schools', but the principal Anglican educational body was the *National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Christian Education* or the 'National School Society'. This society was founded in 1811 and aimed to establish a church school in found new schools, which were then funded entirely by the activities of the churches through charitable donations and by a small fee paid by each of the pupils. National Schools were run according to the 'Madras system' devised by the Revd. Andrew Bell; poor children were to be educated to a level sufficient to allow them to 'read the Bible and understand the doctrines of our Holy Religion'. Once a pupil was admitted attendance was compulsory. Because funding additional professional teachers was usually beyond their means, National Schools usually operated a monitorial system utilising 'pupil teachers', who took some of the responsibility, under supervision, for the education of their peers.

The St James' National Schools were located to the rear of the church building in the only space on the site available for their construction. Some of the documents relating to the schools, now held at the Devon Heritage Centre, are so badly damaged by heat (presumably during the 1942 fire which destroyed the church) that they are unfit for production. A trust deed dated 1844 establishes the date of the foundation of the schools beyond doubt (DHC 4316 A add PE3) but this is badly damaged and could not be inspected. The school buildings first appear on maps dating from the mid 1840s and documentary sources quoted by Bovett identified the buildings as erected either in 1840, or 1845. As funding for the schools may initially have been in short supply it is not surprising that the map evidence shows that the school buildings developed through the accretion of smaller elements, resulting in a highly complex, multi-phase structure, each phase of which directly represents either the availability of new funding sources or a change in the administration of the school. This incremental growth is characteristic of many 19th-century school buildings and provides a superb archaeological resource, which is too seldom recognised.

After the 1870 elementary Education Act, for example, when the government finally woke up to the necessity and desirability of providing mass education for the poorer classes, many new schools were founded under the governance of local School Boards. In order to take advantage of the new funding opportunities which this provided, and to fulfil a requirement that regular school inspections should be made to ensure both the quality of education provided and the suitability of accommodation, many former National and British schools voluntarily affiliated to the new system, and were henceforth defined as 'Voluntary Schools'. Many Schools had already expanded to include both, girls', boys' and infants' departments by 1870 and reorganisation after 1870 often involved the provision of new school buildings for the different departments. At St James' Schools a new Board School for infants was provided by the local school board on an adjacent site in 1874 and this was probably a catalyst for the expansion and reorganisation of the National School buildings to provide better accommodation for the pupils. The old school then continued as a voluntary school and, since provision for infants seems to have continued at the old site until 1906 (Bovett 1989, 127), it is probable that the school buildings were altered at this time to improve the accommodation. The south-eastern range certainly appears to have been extended to the west by 1876, possibly by the addition of a covered playground or an infants' classroom (Fig. 4)



The establishment of Local Education Authorities in 1902 abolished the school boards and made local authorities responsible for the provision and monitoring of education. This led to further alterations in the school buildings, which are often clearly revealed in the structures. Typical alterations might be the addition of better lavatory facilities, the addition of extra classrooms and the insertion of extra storeys within existing buildings. These new school buildings were known as Council Schools and often consciously utilised secular rather than ecclesiastical motifs in their architecture, possibly as a reaction against the sectarian infighting which had so dogged the life of the school boards. At St James' Schools, the 1874 Board School buildings on the adjacent site were inspected and found to be incapable of adaption by the addition of an internal floor. Civic pride may also have dictated that a new and impressive building was desirable, and the Victorian Gothic buildings, though only thirty years old, were demolished in 1906-7 and replaced with a new Council School building in the Baroque style, by the architect James Jerman. This building remains one of the most impressive buildings of its type in the city and, since the destruction by fire of the St Thomas Council Schools, the demolition of Paradise Place Schools and the conversion of others to housing, one of the least altered. After 1907 the old National School buildings continued in use as a boy's school until 1929, but after this, in 1937-47, they were sold by the Ecclesiastical Commission to the City Council (DHC 4316 A add PE6-7). A map showing existing surface utilisation in the central area of the city in 1939, included within Thomas Sharp's 1946 *Exeter Phoenix, a Plan for Rebuilding* identifies the site as for public assembly, and the buildings may have been adapted for community use after this date (Sharp 1946, 56-7).

Subsequent alterations to school buildings also closely reflect changes in Government legislation and administration and can often be clearly read in the surviving structures. A classic example of this will be the 'ROSLA' buildings, often still known by that name at many English schools. 'ROSLA' is an acronym for 'Raising of the School Leaving Age' and refers to changes in legislation in the late 20th century, which necessitated extra accommodation for older pupils staying on at school for longer. The need for a quick and cheap response to these changes led to the rapid erection of new buildings and many changes to older ones, often involving prefabricated structures designed for a short life. These alterations certainly affected the quality of the new buildings and many later additions are less sympathetic to the earlier structures than their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors. Nevertheless, ROSLA and other temporary buildings very tangibly reveal the history of changing legislation and provision for education and are no less an important part of the archaeological resource.

### 3. BUILDING SURVEY

The surviving buildings are arranged in an 'U'-shape around a small playground which lay to the east of the chancel of the church building (Figs 13, 14). These ranges are identified here as the former Boys' Schoolroom in the north-western range, the Girls' Schoolroom in the north-eastern range, the former Master's House at the eastern angle, later converted to classrooms, and a possible Infant's Schoolroom in the south-eastern range, later extended by a late 19th-century classroom.

#### 3.1 The boys' Schoolroom

The north-western range represents the early Victorian boys' schoolroom, and consists of a single-storey hall-like building, constructed of purple Pocombe Stone with buff freestone dressings under a steeply-pitched slate roof (Fig. 15). The architectural style is a very simple and attractive Perpendicular Gothic with uncusped four-centred arches to the window and door heads. The rubble masonry is left bare and is clearly intended for display, unlike earlier school buildings in the City, which were often rendered. The construction of the building is displayed throughout; a clear statement of Gothic Revival principles of structural honesty.

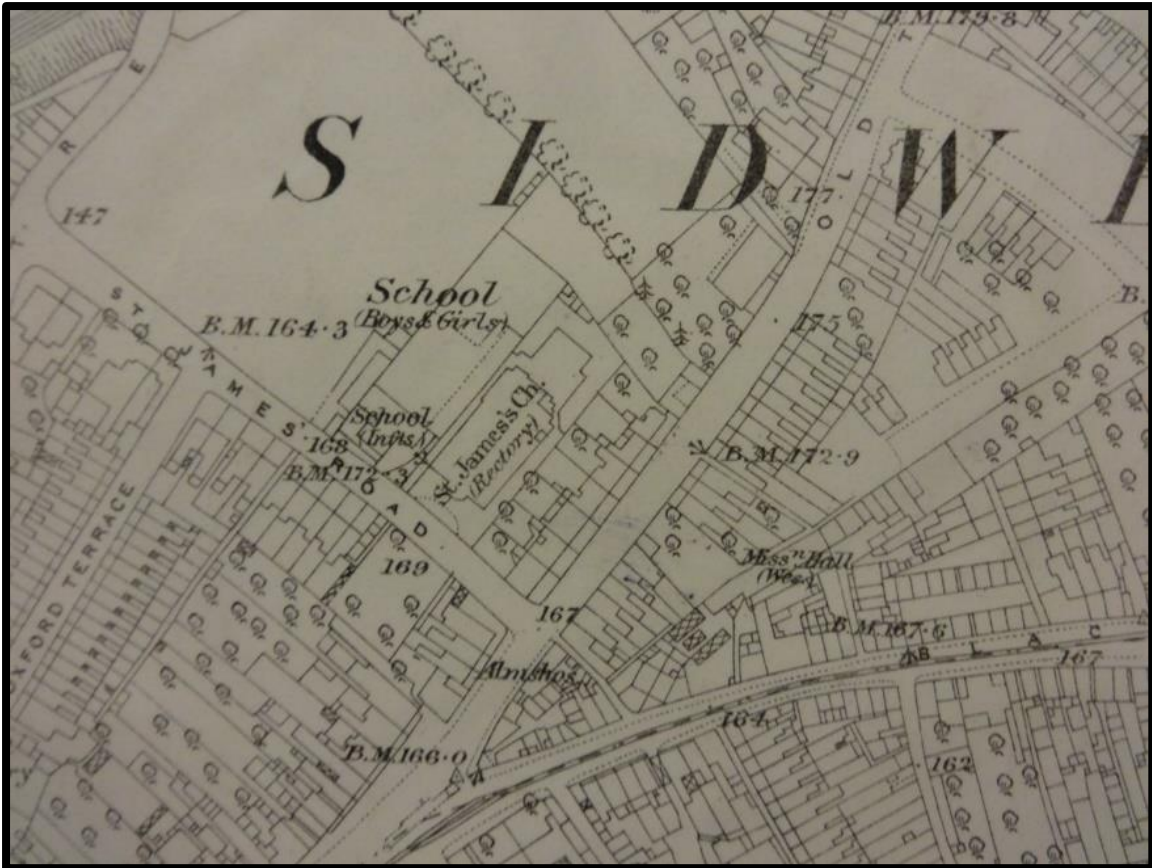


Fig. 13 The OS 1st edition 1:2500 map of 1890 showing the school ranges extending around three sides of the playground and the footprint of the rebuilt church.

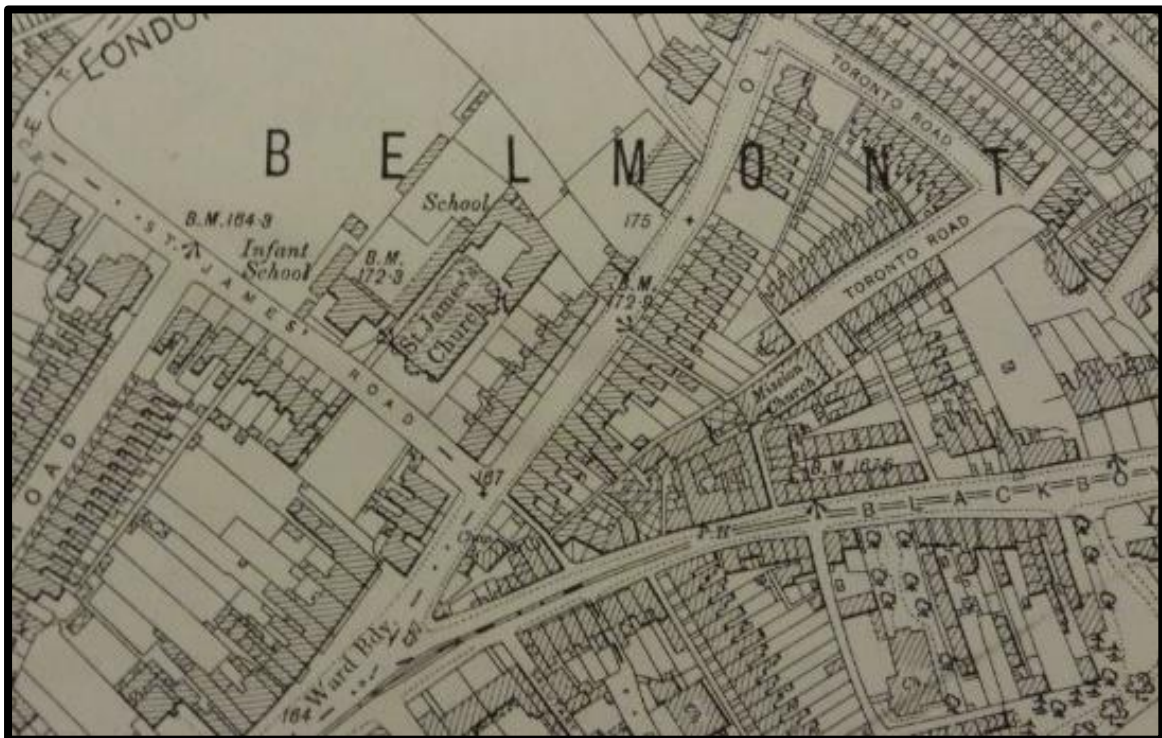


Fig. 14 The OS 2nd edition 1:2500 map of 1905 showing the addition of lavatory blocks and a classroom on the front elevation of the south-eastern range.





Fig. 15 Elevations of the Girls' and boys' schoolrooms from the playground.

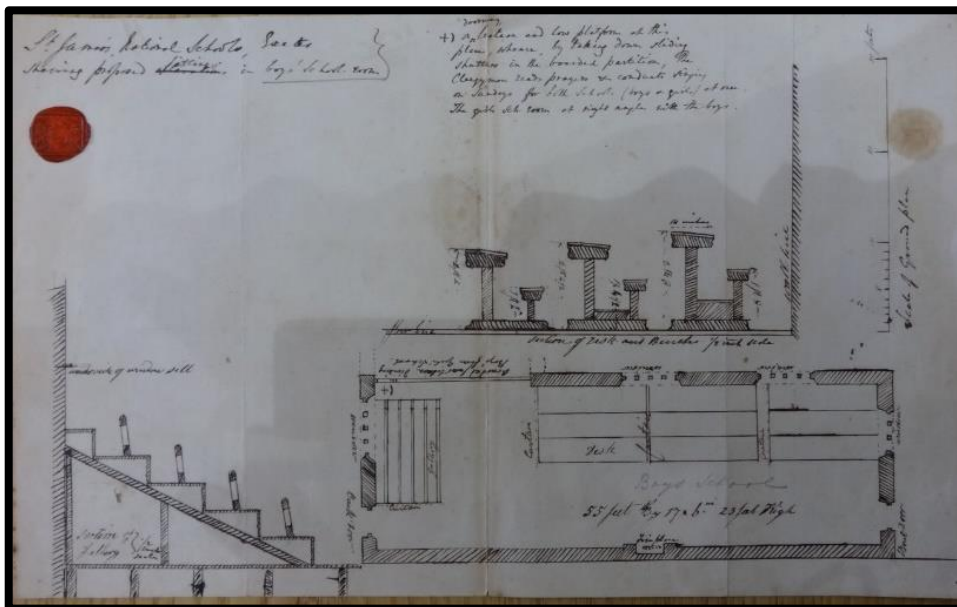


Fig. 16 Detail of a proposal for alterations in the boy's schoolroom showing new seating and a gallery of raked seats (DHC 1473/EB3/53)



Fig. 17 Rear elevation of the Girls' Schoolroom, showing a blocked doorway to the yard and secondary chimney over it.



Fig. 18 Reused early 19th-century box pews from the old church reset in the school buildings.

The school building was entered by a small porch in its south-western gable, the scar of the roofline of which can be seen above a modern structure added against the gable wall. The presence of this small porch necessitated the off-setting of the large south-western window beneath the gable, which gives a very picturesque appearance to this part of the building. Above this is a pivoting ventilator window which retains its original casement. The windows of the main elevations are large, with very tall, narrow lights formerly separated by hollow-chamfered mullions. Many of these have been renewed in timber, with plain chamfers, probably as a result of 20th-century alterations to the fenestration. The original mullions survive at the rear of the buildings and in the south-eastern range. The date of the reinstatement of the mullions is not known but it has been undertaken very sensitively, showing that the visual appeal of the buildings was recognised at the time. The south-eastern elevation of the boys' schoolroom has two very large four-light mullioned windows, now fitted with modern casements. Low down in the wall is a large granite block which resembles a foundation stone but which bears no trace of any inscription; it may never, for some reason, have been carved.

The schoolroom consisted of a large open hall under a high, open roof inspired by medieval examples. This is currently obscured by a modern suspended ceiling and the room has been subdivided by low partitions into smaller rooms. The schoolroom was heated by a chimney in its rear wall, which still survives as a projection internally, though truncated at the roofline. The room may not have had any permanent divisions, the separate classes being taught in different groups in different parts of the room, allowing all classes to be supervised by the master. Many classes in schools of this period were simply separated by curtains strung across the room.

An undated and unsigned plans for alterations in the boys' schoolroom and the provision of new privies survives at the Devon Heritage Centre (DHC 1473/EB3/53). This dates from after the construction of the girl's schoolroom, and reveals that the boys' and the girls' schoolrooms stood at right angles to each other and that there was fixed furniture, including raked seats at the north-eastern end of the building, described as a 'gallery'. At the junction of the boys' and girls' schoolrooms was a lectern and low platform 'whence, by taking down sliding shutters in the boarded partition, the clergyman leads prayers and conducts singing on Sundays for both schools, girls and boys, at once' (Fig. 16). Although the date of this drawing is uncertain it is possible that it was made immediately after the addition of the girls' schoolroom, when additions and alterations to the earlier building became desirable.

### 3.2 The Girls' Schoolroom

The Girls' Schoolroom lies at right angles to the Boys' Schoolroom and seems to have been a slightly later addition, though there is no evidence of a structural break or any change in the design of either building. It was thus probably designed by the same architect, whose name remains unknown, and may have been added at a very early date in the history of the school. This part of the building retains much of the original architectural detail and has not been subdivided. It had a more-or-less symmetrical front towards the playground with pairs of two-light windows flanking a very large five-light window at the centre. At the north-western end of the schoolroom a through passage was provided from the playground to a triangular yard at the rear, which appears to have been provided with at least two blocks of privies serving boys and girls. Both doorways had four-centred arched heads. The north-eastern door was later blocked when this end of the schoolroom was converted into a classroom and a chimney was provided within the embrasure of the former doorway. Unusually, there is no bellcote, this may perhaps have been removed.

The Schoolroom was a single, open hall, heated by a chimney in its north-eastern wall and covered by a handsome arch-braced roof, based on medieval examples, with its arch braces extending to rest on shaped corbels (Fig. 19) There are four, perhaps originally six, unequal bays of this roof, with chamfered trusses, the upper parts of which are now concealed by a modern suspended ceiling, but which seem to survive otherwise intact. The north-western part of the roof



is obscured. At the rear of the Girl's schoolroom a further four-centred arch opened into a long narrow triangular room which may have served as a storeroom or perhaps a cloakroom. This structure has since been demolished along with many of the privy blocks and now only one privy block, constructed in many phases, remains.

### 3.3 The possible Master's House

At the south-eastern end of the girls' Schoolroom, and probably originally separated from it by a solid wall, is a curious area at the junction of the ranges which appears to have been heated by a large number of fireplaces. The presence of two chimney breasts in the south-eastern wall and a high-level window in the north-western wall, under a gabled dormer of chicket (Fig. 20), suggest that this building originally contained smaller rooms than at present; it seems likely that it may have been the Masters' House. This part of the building was possibly at one time of two storeys, separated into two rooms on each floor and was entered by an arched doorway from the playground, perhaps giving upon a central stair. The original limit of the building is clearly shown by a vertical break in both its front and rear elevations, still visible externally, and part of its rear wall is of brick.

The lower part of the main façade is now masked by an early 20th-century cloakroom block, but this replaces a small lean-to, porch-like structure, part of the fabric of which remains. This may represent an earlier cloakroom which may have been added in the 1870s and may have blocked one of the original windows.

The roofs of this building are also clearly separate structures from those of the Girls' Schoolroom, with notched and chamfered truss blades springing from unusually bold corbels set at a much higher level in the wall than those of the adjoining roof. It is unlikely that this structure represents the original roof of the house and it is suggested that the roof was replaced and the interior remodelled in the early 1870s to provide a separate infants' classroom, perhaps following an inspection which had identified the provision for infants at the school as inadequate. An alteration to this range in the early 1870s would fit with the depiction of the interior shown on the 1876 map. It is unclear to what part of the buildings the Masters' House was relocated; documentary evidence suggests that a residence still remained in 1894 (Pollard 1894, 61).

### 3.4 Late 19th-century additions and alterations.

The 1876 OS map also shows that the original range had been extended to the south west before that date by an additional structure, with a central projecting bay and two flanking wings. This survives in part, though now much masked by late 19th-century additions (Fig. 20) and the most south-westerly part of the building has been demolished. The central bay featured a wide four-centred arch, over which, on a carved banner or scroll, was some form of inscription, now obscured (Fig. 21). This opening appears not to have had rebates for doors and may originally have been an open archway onto the playground. This may suggest that the building was originally constructed as a covered playground shelter like the surviving example at the former Hele's School in Hele Road, Exeter. The provision of playground shelters for the children was a common feature of mid to late 19th-century schools

Whatever the form of the building originally it appears to have been converted by 1876 into an additional schoolroom. The arched opening appears to have been enclosed with a timber screen and the south western end is shown divided off by a chimney breast to form a separate classroom.

Later in the 19th century a new classroom of brick, lying at right angles to the original axis of the building and projecting into the playground was added to the front of the building. This handsome structure (Fig. 20) was probably designed by the architect James Jerman and bears the date 1897 on the keystone of a broad arch, with a 'Gibbsian' surround of projecting freestone



Fig. 19 View within the former girls' schoolroom, looking north-east, showing the evidence for a fine arch-braced roof springing from carved corbels.



Fig. 20 View of the façade of the south-eastern range, showing the gabled chicket and high-level window of the former Master's House (left), the gabled extension of the early 1870s schoolroom (centre) and the new classroom of 1897 standing in front of this (Right). The brick cloakroom and lavatory blocks adjoining were added after 1902.



Fig. 21 The archway and scroll in the front gable of the early 1870s covered playground or schoolroom in the south-eastern range.



Fig. 22 View within the 1897 classroom added to the front beyond the arch, showing the carved corbels, high, boarded dado and ceiled roof.

blocks under a gable with some slight Gothic detail to the barge boards. The arch probably framed a large window as well as an entrance door, which may survive in part beneath the boarded cladding. The roofline is quite different from that of the older building behind and this anomaly is unlikely to be accidental. It seems intended to create a picturesque effect. The interior of this classroom has a roof typical of the period with ceiled, A-frame, trusses supported on wall posts resting on corbels carved with small shields (Fig. 22), and retains a boarded dado.

In the early 20th-century the south-western end of the earlier building was demolished to allow the addition of a Lady Chapel to the church building by the architect Harbottle Reed. This was carried out using stone reclaimed from the former church of St Mary Magdalen in Rack Street, which was demolished in 1933, and was carried out in 1937-8 (Devon 19th-century Churches Project). The Lady Chapel was destroyed soon afterwards in the fire of 1942. In order to create space for this new building the south-western classroom was demolished and a new end wall of the truncated building was constructed in brick, reusing the original mullioned window openings from the earlier building and also a very handsome doorway with a segmental arch supported on curved corbels, and a two-paned fanlight with a chunky, muscular, chamfered frame. This doorway probably dates from the 1870s, when muscular Gothic, usually described as having 'Go', was in vogue. The doorway may be contemporary with the new roof over the former Master's House, which has similar, vigorous Gothic detail.

Later additions to the building, undertaken by 1905, included the addition of the cloakroom against the front of the former Master's House and the addition of new lavatory blocks to the north-east of the 1897 classroom. These alterations were probably undertaken after inspection of the premises by the newly formed Local Education Authority after 1902. The closure of the schools in the mid 20th century seems to have protected them from further alteration by the addition of new ranges and classrooms. They have functioned since then as community buildings and any alterations to fit them for this use, including subdivision of the Boys' Schoolroom and the insertion of suspended ceilings are largely superficial and have not significantly damaged the integrity of, though they have obscured the finer details of the buildings.

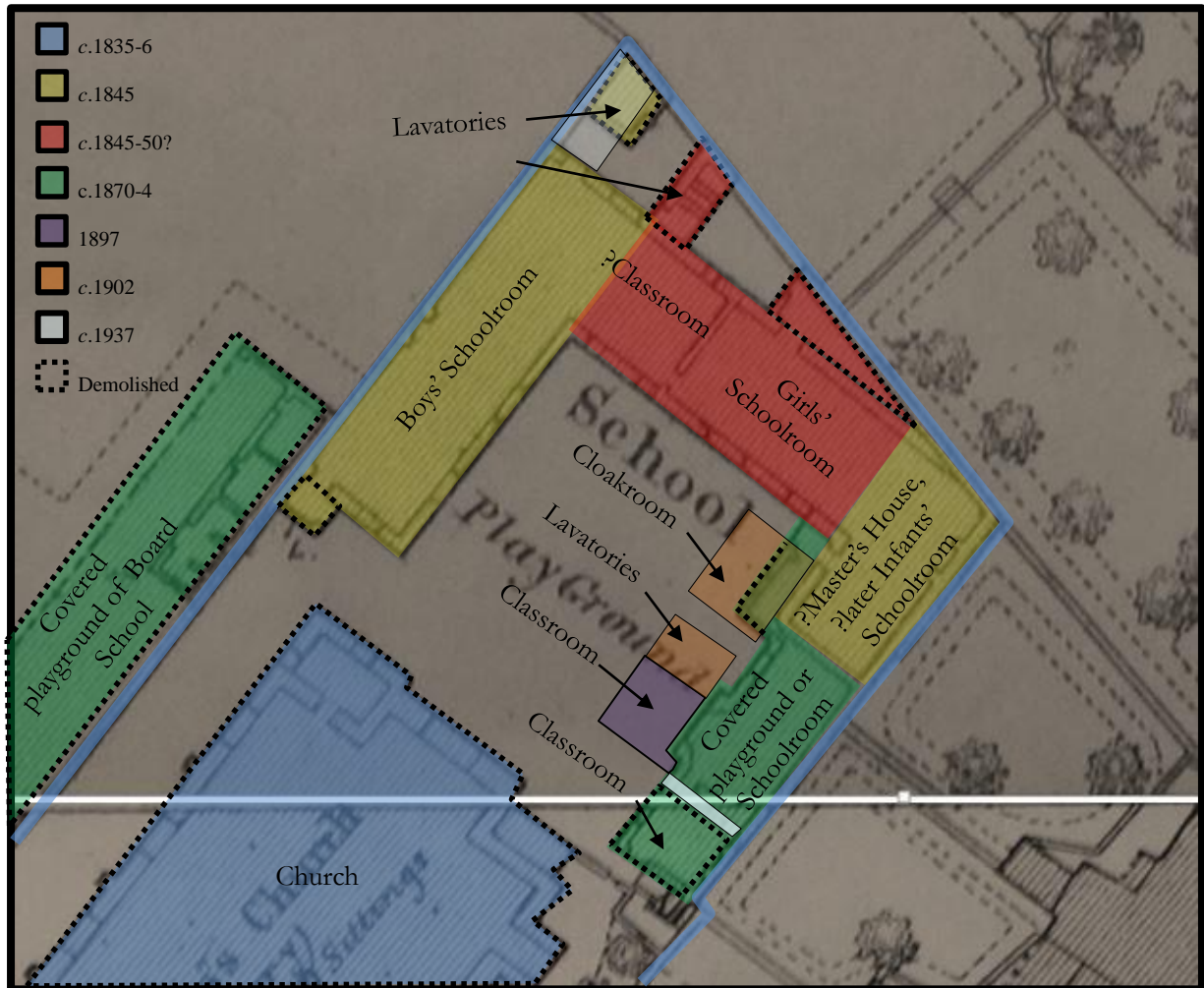


Fig. 23 Extract from the OS 1st edition 1:500 maps Sheets 80.6.9 and 80.6.4, surveyed in 1876, (with later structures added in outline) showing the probable phasing of the buildings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The St James' National School buildings are an early and well-preserved survival of a church school reflecting the principles of the Gothic Revival. Previous charity and church schools had usually taken the form of large blocks arranged on several storeys, like the former Central Schools (demolished) in Magdalen Street (1814), the episcopal Charity Schools in Paul Street (1817-18) and the British Schools in Bartholomew Street (1812)). These buildings generally reflected the late-Georgian vernacular classical tradition, or if they were in the Gothic style, wore this very loosely and in a most un-medieval way, like the schools in Bartholomew Street (Parker & Blaylock 2004, 7, 12, 13). The needs of the National Society were for relatively cheap, flexible buildings in the shape of large single storey halls, each containing one school department, serving girls, boys or infants. The advantage of this system was that the open-plan spaces allowed schools to be split into as many classes as seemed practical, while allowing all the classes to be supervised by the same master. These complexes could easily be enlarged by additional halls and classrooms as and when funds allowed for the establishment of new departments, and fitting into the most awkward sites, as here at St James. Medieval or 'Old English' architectural detail was ideally suited for complexes built up in this loose, accretive way, which resulted in some highly picturesque complexes of buildings. The Gothic or Old English style was also rich in ecclesiastical associations, suiting the origin of church schools and distinguishing them from secular and nonconformist establishments.



The Gothic or Old English Style was also redolent of the great period of expansion of education in the post-Reformation period, when the Bible first became available in English and when so many of Britain's ancient grammar schools were founded. This style also had the advantage of being apparently un-tainted with 'Popery' though, as many 19th-century clergymen were to find, this was a subtlety which was usually lost upon low-church members of their congregation. The opening of the St Sidwell's Parochial Schools in 1854, in handsome Old English style buildings by Edward Ashworth, constructed during the incumbency of the Revd. John Lincoln Galton, was reported in the local papers as a vehicle 'for the dissemination of Mr GALTON's views, embracing midnight communions, flower shows in the church and other imitations of that church (Roman Catholic) to which, as an honest lady, Mrs GALTON was constrained to resort'. (Harvey 1986, 14; quoting EFP 2.11.1854).

The St James' Schools, founded in 1844, were the earliest building of this type to be erected in the city and, despite their situation (tucked away behind the church) and their apparent simplicity, were one of the more attractive in the richness of their Gothic detail. By comparison, the former Countess Weir National Schools (1848), St Sidwell's Parochial Schools (1854, demolished 2006), Exwick National Schools (1859-60) and St Thomas National Schools (1861) are almost unadorned; though all make a virtue of exposed masonry and picturesque planning. The interiors of the buildings at St James are of particular interest in that they employ arch-braced, open roofs of some sophistication, based upon medieval examples, and which were structurally and technologically advanced for the period. As late as 1841 tie beams were regarded as a necessary feature to prevent roofs spreading and, in that year, tie beams were incorporated into the roof of Exwick Church against the wishes of its architect and incumbent. At St James, though the upper part of the roofs are now obscured, it seems that full arch-braced trusses were employed, with very elegant chamfering and carved corbels. These seem to survive intact above the modern suspended ceilings and may provide further evidence as to the phasing of the building.

Victorian and Edwardian schools are unfortunately not often recognised for their archaeological interest. Such buildings, more than any other form of structure, reflect in their accretion of structures and elements of different periods the changing attitudes and increasing concern during the 19th and 20th centuries for the provision of sound education in suitable, healthy and appropriate structures. Each phase of development of a school building such as that at St James can usually be directly related to changes in Government legislation, changes in the administration and funding of the school and, ultimately, the results of school inspections which identified necessary improvements. Usually, later additions to Victorian school buildings respected their architectural character until well into the 20th century and this used to be demonstrable in many surviving buildings. This respect for the appearance of the buildings first broke down in the 1920s and 30s, when a belief in the health benefits of direct sunlight often led to the insertion of incongruous picture windows within existing Victorian structures. This may have resulted in the removal of the mullions from the windows in the boys' and girls' schoolrooms at St James, though these have since been sympathetically reinstated in timber.

Since the demolition of the St Sidwell's parochial Schools the complex of buildings in St James Road are now the only historic church schools to survive in St Sidwell's parish. Of particular interest is the relationship between the National Schools and the Council Schools on the adjacent site, whose solid and handsome Baroque style seems to have been consciously intended to provide a clear ideological separation between the kind of education provided by the Local Education Authority and that of the church and church schools next door. The desire for less obviously churchy associations is also evident in the slightly schizophrenic use of both Classical and Gothic motifs in the 1897 additions to the National School buildings.

The complex of educational buildings in St James' Road thus presents a palimpsest graphically representing the growth of educational provision in 19th-century Exeter and, despite the loss of the associated church, shows fabric of as many as seven or eight different historic

phases. Even though the church has unfortunately perished, the buildings remain some of the most historically significant and architecturally impressive in the area.

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