



# BRISTOL & WEST ARCHAEOLOGY

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The Former Masonic Lodge, Portishead

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## Standing Building Survey Report

Project Ref: 13/2466

Client: Morgan Design Studios Ltd

28 January 2014

# Bristol & West Archaeology

**Planning Authority:**

**North Somerset County Council**

**National Grid Reference**

**Centred on: NGR ST 4754 7748**

**Author: David Etheridge**

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**The Former Masonic Lodge, Portishead****Standing Building Survey Report****CONTENTS**

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2 BASELINE SURVEY .....	2
3 CONCLUSIONS .....	6
4 REFERENCES .....	7

**FIGURES**

Figure 1: Location of the study area (indicated in red). Scale 1:25,000 at A4. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2014.....	9
Figure 2: Detail of the study area, outlined in red. Approximate scale 1:1250 at A4. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright 2013 all rights reserved. Licence No. WL1005476. ....	10
Figure 3: A survey of the exterior after Island Surveys (2007), reproduced by permission of Morgan Design Studios Ltd. Photographs referred to in the text are indicated by red arrows that show the location and angle of the camera. Adjacent labels indicate the plate number. Approximate scale 1:200. ....	11

**PLATES**

Plate a. A view of the study area looking northwest. ....	12
Plate b. The east face of the lodge, looking northwest. ....	12
Plate c. View of the eastern face of the Lodge, looking SSW from the walkway. ....	12
Plate d. Detail of the western side of the main roof and chimneys, looking southeast from the adjoining footpath. ....	12
Plate e. The east face of the Lodge, looking southwest; scale 2m. ....	12
Plate f. The east face of the Lodge, looking north; scale 2m. ....	12
Plate g. The first floor fire escape against the east face of the Lodge, looking north; scale 2m. ....	13
Plate h. The southern extension and passageway, looking WNW from outside the boundary fence, no scale. ....	13
Plate i. Southern extension and access to external toilet, looking northwest; scale 2m. ....	13
Plate j. South face of the southern extension, with passageway enclosed by retaining wall. Looking northwest, scale 2m. ....	13
Plate k. The north face of the lodge, looking west; scale 2m. ....	13
Plate l. The north and part of the west face of the Lodge, looking SSE; scale 2m. ....	13
Plate m. Detail of the ground floor west face of the Lodge and adjoining outbuilding, looking south; scale 2m. ....	14
Plate n: Detail of the first floor west face of the Lodge, with steel walkway, looking southeast; scale 2m. ....	14

## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In line with current government guidelines and national legislation, the Archaeology Service of North Somerset County Council has asked for an English Heritage Level 2 Standing Building Survey Report on The Former Masonic Lodge, Portishead, BS20 7HG. The study area occupies a 596m<sup>2</sup> irregular polygon of land (centred NGR ST 4754 7748) located just south of the seawall, between the former pier and the Royal Hotel. The Standing Building Survey Report was requested in advance of a proposed planning application to convert the study area into a new lifeboat station for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

The results of this assessment are set out in the following report and summarised here. The present building was constructed by the Great Western Railway (GWR) as a terminus station, serving passengers for the pier ferry. There would originally have been a platform and rails, but these have been removed. This service had ceased by 1922 when the building was acquired by the Portishead Masonic Lodge, who occupied it continuously until 1994. No record could be found of subsequent use.

The surviving building consists of a single rectangular two-storey brick built structure, aligned roughly north to south, set in a narrow plot of land partly raised above the level of the adjoining marina development, but mostly terraced into the side of East Wood hill. The main frontage of the building faces east, with a single ground floor entrance. Two fire escapes, one on the first floor, appear to have been added later. The rear (west) face has an entrance at first floor level connected to the adjoining coastal footpath by a steel walkway.

The interior of the building was not available for inspection and recording, while the rear (west face) was difficult to access and record.

As a result of this project a record has now been made of the former Portishead Masonic Lodge building. The associated documents, plans and digital media will in due course be deposited with the North Somerset museums service for long-term curation and public access.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Bristol and West Archaeology Limited wish to acknowledge the assistance given by the following in the production of this report: Simon Morgan of Morgan Design Studios Ltd together with Vince Russet, Archaeological Officer, and the staff of North Somerset Council planning department.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project background**

- 1.1.1 North Somerset County Council has requested a Standing Building Survey Report of The Former Masonic Lodge, Portishead, BS20 7HG (centred NGR ST 4754 7748). This work was requested in advance of a proposed redevelopment of the study area as a new lifeboat station for the RNLI. The project was commissioned by Simon Morgan of Morgan Design Studios Ltd.

### **1.2 Site Location, Topography and Land Use (see Figures 1 and 2)**

- 1.2.1 The study area is located on the northern edge of Portishead, where it is bounded by the Severn Estuary/Bristol Channel. The study area is located at approximately c. 9.8m aOD, at the eastern base of East Wood, a hill sloping down from c. 58m aOD to c. 9m aOD in the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 1.2.2 In plan the study area is an irregular polygon, approximately 30m long north to south by up to 21m east to west; it encompasses 596m<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2.3 At present the study area consists of a disused and boarded up building (described below), occupying a plot of land not much larger than the building footprint, with a short level area of grass and vegetation at the front (east side) and a steep overgrown bank to the rear (west side). There is a narrow tract of land above the bank with a short footpath across giving access to the rear first floor via a steel walkway.
- 1.2.4 A trawl of the North Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates the study area lies in the East Wood, Portishead, Conservation Area and stands adjacent to the listed building curtilage of the Grade II listed Royal Hotel, the main buildings of which are located some 62m to the west, and uphill of the study area.

### **1.3 Geology**

- 1.3.1 The study area lies on Black Rock Limestone of the Carboniferous Period (BGS 2014a; BGS 2014b), at the foot of East Wood hill, just above an area of tidal flat deposits of the Holocene (BGS 2014c; BGS 2014b), overlying Mercia Mudstone of the Triassic Period (BGS 2014b). Immediately to the north lie deposits of the Pennant Sandstone formation, also of the Carboniferous Period (ibid.).

### **1.4 Methodology**

- 1.4.1 In compiling this Standing Building Survey Report the standards and guidelines of the IfA, NPPF, and English Heritage were followed as appropriate (DCLG 2012; DCLG, DCMS, and EH 2010; EH 2006).
- 1.4.2 The author visited the study area on 10 December 2013, during which digital still photographs and black and white negatives were taken. The position of the photographer, the direction of view and the frame number of each photograph were recorded on pre-printed scale plans of the study area.
- 1.4.3 This document was compiled using MS Word 10, references were compiled using Mendeley 1.10 following the current *World Archaeology* (Harvard) style. Figures were produced using QGIS 2.01, TurboCAD 19, DraftSight 2013 and Paint Shop Pro 8. Photographs were taken with a Fuji Finepix HS10 digital SLR camera and a Pentax K1000 35mm SLR using Ilford 400ASA black and white negative film.
- 1.4.4 On completion of the project the archive will be deposited with the North Somerset museums service who will subsequently issue an accession number.

## **2 BASELINE SURVEY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2.1.1 The author undertook the EH Level 2 walkover and photographic survey on the morning of 10 December 2013. The weather was relatively mild for the time of year and slightly overcast, but dry.

2.1.2 As agreed between the client and the North Somerset Council planning department, only the exterior of the building was surveyed. Windows had been boarded up and the doors had been padlocked, so it was not possible to gain interior views, with the exception of one outside access toilet.

### **2.2 Background Research**

2.2.1 In order to better understand the structures to be recorded, a limited historical background survey has been undertaken.

2.2.2 The study area lies in the Portishead East Wood Conservation Area, established in 1993 (North Somerset Council 2014) and lies immediately adjacent to the curtilage of the 1830 Grade II listed Royal Hotel (EH 2014). There are no scheduled ancient monuments or registered parks and gardens in the vicinity. A study of available historic OS mapping suggests this area was part of the railway pier head terminus, established by the 1880s. A letter to the Bristol Post, dated 4 June 2013, outlines the history of the study area (Wilson 2013). By 1865 a railway connected to the adjacent pier, the present Lodge building was thought to have been constructed as a passenger station, complete with platform, c. 1880 (ibid.). The building was occupied by the Lodge from 1922 to 1994 (ibid.).

### **2.3 Survey of the Exterior (see Figure 3)**

2.3.1 The study area comprises a narrow plot of land measuring approximately 30.5m north northeast by south-southwest and approximately 20.2m wide. The bulk of the study area is a part raised, part terraced platform, c. 9.8m aOD. The surrounding land to the north and east, heavily paved and landscaped, is 9.3 to 9.6m aOD, with a step up to c. 10.40m aOD located towards the southwest corner of the study area. The western and south-western sides of the study area are surrounded by a steep bank, while the eastern side is enclosed by a wooden featherboard fence (Plate a).

2.3.2 The study area is occupied by a single two-storey rectangular brick-built building with gable ends and extensions (Plate b). The building measures 21.96m long, on a roughly NNE-SSW alignment, and 8.14m wide (Island Surveys 2007). In height it measures 5.85m from ground level to the eaves and 8.17m from ground to the ridge (ibid.). First floor level is approximately 3m above external ground level (ibid.).

2.3.3 There is a two-storey 'extension' to the rear (western) face of the Lodge (Plate c), which appears to be part of the original design. The extension measures 6.58m NNE-SSW by 2.42m, rising from 4.77m high on the west face to the same height as the eaves on the main part of the building. The roof is a continuation of the main roof; it appears to be at the same pitch and of similar materials. As the interior could not be inspected, the exact purpose of this feature could not be determined.

2.3.4 The roof is covered with slates, probably Welsh, though this could not be confirmed. The internal roof support structure could not be viewed. The moulded ridge tiles are in a matching colour. There are two rectangular brick-built chimneys (Plate d) with moulded ceramic pots and a soft metal flashing, located on the central ridge, towards the centre of the northern end of the building, at approximately 6.3m and 9.6m south of the northern gable. Below the ridge on the south and eastern side of the roof is a single skylight (Plate b), which appears to be a relatively modern addition. This is located approximately 6.7m north of the southern gable. No equivalent was observed on the western side.

2.3.5 Entry to the eastern and southern sides of the study area was through a padlocked plywood gate at the northern end of the fencing. The presence of the fencing made it

difficult to obtain photographs that were not either extremely up close (and therefore wide angle) or extremely oblique.

- 2.3.6 As far as could be ascertained, the east face of the structure was almost entirely brick-built, of one construction phase. Bricks towards the northern (seaward) end were noticeably more weathered (Plate e and Plate f). No clear phasing could be distinguished, so it is suggested that unless this part of the building was built with inferior quality or reused bricks, then the weathering is entirely the result of their seaward location.
- 2.3.7 The lowest courses of brick, below damp proof course (DPC) level (c. 395mm above ground level) are rendered with a grey sand/cement mix (Plate e and Plate f). The rendering is not continuous, with a slight break at the northern end of the building (not illustrated). The east face exhibits four string courses, picked out in bricks which differ in colour from the main face (Plate f). Bricks of the latter are mid-reddish brown, with individual variations in shade, laid in an Old English bond (alternating rows of headers and stretchers). Where exposed the original mortar appears to be light grey lime based cement with grits and flecks of coal.
- 2.3.8 The lowest string course is located about 845mm above ground level (Island Surveys 2007), and consists of a single row of Staffordshire Blue stretchers running the length of the main building. The top of this row marks the external sill level of the ground floor windows. This row fits in with the Old English bond scheme; it was observed that at the northern end of the building these bricks were noticeably less weathered than the surrounding bricks (Plate e). The next string course up is located approximately 2.22m above ground level, with the top of the course forming the springers for the segmental arched windows and door. This string course consists of two rows of brick; the lower one is a lighter shade, almost yellow, while the upper is in Staffordshire Blue. The rows follow the bond scheme, with the lower in stretchers and the upper in headers. The third string course up is a single row of Staffordshire Blue headers, laid along the sill level of the first floor windows, approximately 3.52m above ground level. The final and least accessible string course consists of a second double row, with the lower in yellow headers and the upper in Staffordshire Blue stretchers. These are located c. 4.97m above ground level, with the blue course forming the springers for the first floor window arches.
- 2.3.9 There are two entrances to the main building from the east face. There is one at ground floor level located towards the northern end of the wall, 3.26m south of the north east corner (Island Surveys 2007). The doorway measures 2.37m tall by 940mm wide (ibid.) and is topped by a double row segmental arch in Staffordshire Blue headers. The frame is in black painted wood, while the door, which is in white painted wood with a low central doorknob, measures approximately 2.07m by 930mm (ibid.). The upper part of the frame is occupied by a plain glass transom. The door was presumably glazed too, with the glazed portions boarded over (Plate e).
- 2.3.10 The second entrance is located at first floor level. This leads out to a steel framed fire escape with steps running parallel to the wall, surmounted by tubular steel guard and handrails (Plate g). The doorway measures 2.10m tall by 940mm wide; the door is of vertical wooden planks, painted white. Above the door is a double row segmental arch in Staffordshire Blue bricks, from which is suspended an external light. The fire escape is probably of 20<sup>th</sup> century date; therefore the doorway could have been a converted window, though nothing was indicated in the surrounding fabric to confirm this.
- 2.3.11 There are seven windows at ground floor level, all of the same shape, size and design. They measure 1.46m tall by 940mm wide, and are located 845mm above ground level (Island Surveys 2007). At first floor level there are six windows, measuring 1.61m tall by 940mm wide (ibid.), located 3.52m above ground level. All windows in the east face are topped by a double row segmental arch in Staffordshire Blue headers. All ground floor windows and the three first floor windows are boarded up. The northernmost three windows have white painted frames with four rectangular panes each. The northern



window, above the front door, does not appear to open, but the remaining two appear to have a louvre style upper opening.

- 2.3.12 The window spacing differs between floors, indicating a different room layout between first and ground floor. At ground floor level the northernmost window is located 2.82m south of the door, with a window directly above it at first floor level. At first floor level the northernmost window is located above the ground floor door. At ground floor level the second window is located 2.59m to the south of the first, with a first floor window directly above it. The third window is located 705mm south of the second, while the fourth is 823mm south of the third. Fourth to fifth window measures 705mm while fifth to sixth measures 823mm. There is then a gap of 1.11m between the sixth and seventh windows. At second floor level the first four windows northward mirror the location of the ground floor door and first three windows. Thereafter the spacing from north to south runs thus: 1.65m, 1.65m, then 1.11m to the fire escape.
- 2.3.13 The exposed southern face of the main building has been rendered in a grey sand/cement. There are no openings. At ground floor level there is a lean-to style extension measuring 2.99m north to south by 7.97m. This is slightly narrower than the main building, which appears to project outward slightly on the eastern face (Plate g). A fire escape punctuates the eastern face. This appears to be a later addition, cut through an earlier window with a double row segmental arch in Staffordshire Blue headers, now bricked up (Plate i). The bricks in the lower eastern face of this extension appear to be worn or reused. A white lime based mortar had been used throughout, though in places repointed with sand/cement. The original bond appears to have been Old English, though this has been disrupted in places by the insertion of the fire escape.
- 2.3.14 The south face of the southern extension is again in red brick, using an Old English bond. Heavy traces of a pinkish red bonding material between the joins suggest the face was once rendered or plastered. This was overlain by heavy traces of whitewash, suggesting any render had been deliberately removed before the addition of the wash. There are two apparent openings in the southern face. At the far end of the access passageway is a doorway leading into a covered toilet cubicle, at the far western end of the extension. The wooden door is unlocked. The toilet is a later 20<sup>th</sup> century design; the walls and ceiling are plastered and painted white. The floor appears to be in pennant sandstone flags, with a raised plinth to the rear. It is surmised the present toilet is a replacement.
- 2.3.15 A rectangular wooden board pinned to the wall and adjacent (east) of the toilet suggests a small window opening has been sealed up. A single column of bricks projecting out from the southern face of this extension (Plate j) suggests a wall, now demolished, once adjoined. This feature would have been contemporary with the construction of the extension, which itself appears to have been contemporary with the construction of the main building.
- 2.3.16 The steep bank to the south of the passageway is held back by a curvilinear brick-built retaining wall c. 2.12m high. Old English appears to have been the original bond, but in places the wall has been repaired or extended upwards using a headers only bond in lighter coloured bricks. Towards the western end the wall curves round to join onto the southwest corner of the extension. From this side of the building there does not appear to have been external access to the western side.
- 2.3.17 The northern face of the Lodge looks onto a level stretch of the adjoining coastal footpath above the seawall. It is rendered and painted white throughout, punctuated by two windows at ground floor level and three at first floor level (Plate k and Plate l). The relatively narrow space to the sea wall made all but the most oblique photography impossible. Against the western side of the face is a sewage pumping system (Island Surveys 2007) enclosed in two grey painted sheet metal casings. Where the roof overhangs the northern gable end of the lodge, the bargeboards appear to be missing. They have been replaced by rectangular panels of wire mesh to prevent birds from roosting and nesting.

- 2.3.18 The lower two windows in the northern face are boarded up, sills are picked out in black; they are located 1.16m and 3.48m along from the north eastern corner, with a spacing of 1.16m between them. The first floor windows follow the same arrangement, with the third window located 1.16m to the west of the second. All windows in this face are 1.61m tall by 1.16m wide. The upper windows are not boarded; the sills are more retracted but still picked out in black. The westernmost appears to be of two panes in a UPVC frame; the upper pane is a louvre opening. The remaining two windows appear to be divided into four rectangular panes each, with no obvious opening, in wooden frames.
- 2.3.19 It was not possible to photograph the western face of the Lodge in its entirety due to the topography and adjacent private properties. No photographs could be obtained that adequately illustrated the southern portion of the western face. This face is surrounded by a high, steep, overgrown bank, behind an overgrown retaining wall and overhanging trees. The bank rises between 13.18m and 16.39m aOD. The gap between the Lodge and the retaining wall varies from 650mm to 1.79m.
- 2.3.20 At ground floor level physical access to the exterior is via an open gateway on the north side of the study area, from the coastal footpath. This gives access to a concrete paved passage between the west face and the retaining wall, which ends at a small ground floor extension or lean-to outbuilding, measuring 3.71m north to south by 1.79m by c. 3m high (Plate m). An entrance in the north face of the outbuilding is boarded up. The outbuilding is rendered and painted; the roof is tiled.
- 2.3.21 At first floor level physical access is gained by a short footpath across rough grass leading from the coastal path to a steel walkway across the passage below. The walkway leads to a door at first floor level, located in the west face of the Lodge, 4.51m south of the northwest corner (Plate n). The doorway measures c. 2m by c. 940mm and is surmounted by a double row segmented arch in red brick headers.
- 2.3.22 Because of the topography it was not possible to accurately survey the windows of the west face, a problem also experienced by previous surveyors (Island Surveys 2007). South of the first floor doorway are two windows of similar form and proportions to those of the east face, but surmounted by a double row of segmental arches in red brick headers (Plate c). At ground floor level below are three smaller lancet style windows, each surmounted by a single segmental arch in red brick headers. The windows are c. 900mm tall by c. 400mm wide, with sills in sandstone. The three windows are grouped together, c. 1.4m above ground level, with the northernmost located beneath the walkway. They appear to be equally spaced, c. 500mm apart.
- 2.3.23 Two other windows, both in the westward extension, could be glimpsed; one at first floor level and one at ground floor level. No further details could be gained.
- 2.3.24 A brick-built projection on the west face of the western extension could be a chimney. If so it no longer projects above roof level and no evidence was seen for chimney pots.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1.1 A historic standing building survey has been undertaken of c. 596m<sup>2</sup> of land located of Pier Road North, Portishead, North Somerset (centred NGR ST 4754 7748) at about 9.8m aOD. The study area comprises an irregular plot of land largely occupied by a single building. This standing building survey has been undertaken at the request of the office of the North Somerset County Council Archaeology Service, as a preliminary to a proposed scheme to redevelop the study area as a new lifeboat station for the RNLI.
- 3.1.2 The study area is located on the lower east slope of East Wood, a steep hill rising to 58m aOD. The study area lies at the base of the slope, where it meets the levels surrounding the present harbour, docks and marina at c. 9m aOD. The ground floor level is barely above that of the adjoining land to the east, while the western side of the study area has been terraced into the side of East Wood hill. Thus the western side of the study area is surrounded by and partly includes a steep bank behind a retaining wall.
- 3.1.3 It was agreed in advance with the North Somerset planning department that it was only necessary to record the exterior of the structures present. External recording was undertaken at English Heritage Level 2 specifications, employing detailed survey plans, digital photography and traditional 35mm black and white photography.
- 3.1.4 The principle structure of note comprises a roughly north to south aligned brick-built two-storey building, measuring c. 22m long by 8.2m wide. The principal face of note is the eastern, with an entrance and seven windows on the ground floor level. At first floor level there is a fire escape accessed from an external steel staircase, and six windows. All the windows and doors of this face are picked out with segmental arches above in Staffordshire Blue brick. Across this face are four string courses, using alternately Staffordshire Blue brick and Staffordshire Blue brick and yellow brick.
- 3.1.5 The northern (seaward) face is rendered, with two windows at ground floor level and three at first floor level. Against the southern face is a contemporary lean-to single-storey brick-built structure that appears to have been subsequently altered. It contained an external access toilet.
- 3.1.6 The western face proved difficult to record. Much of the surrounding bank was too steep and overgrown to access. Adjoining private properties also made it difficult to obtain external views. There is a contemporary two-storey brick-built extension on this face, of unknown purpose. At least two windows in this extension were visible. At ground floor level there were three small windows in the northern half of the western face, with two larger windows above at first floor level. Adjoining these is a single doorway accessed by a steel walkway leading from the bank and crossing over a short access passage below. The walkway is accessed from the steep coastal footpath leading from the pier to the Royal Hotel, via a short footpath across rough grass on the verge of the steep bank.
- 3.1.7 The roof is covered with slates; there are two chimneys on the northern half of the roof.
- 3.1.8 A review of the available archaeological and historical evidence has indicated there is no evidence for Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval or Post-Medieval activity in the immediate area. The earliest activity dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the construction of the Grade II listed Royal Hotel on the east slope of East Wood, in 1830. During the Victorian era the steamer pier and the extension of the Great Western Railway to serve it were added. It is believed the present study area was constructed c. 1880 to serve as a railway terminus station for ferry passengers. By 1922 the station had gone out of use and the structure was occupied by the Portishead Masonic Lodge from then until 1994. There are no details of any subsequent use.
- 3.1.9 Nothing in this survey was found to contradict the historical sources. The present structure does not in any respect resemble a purpose built masonic temple, but fits well within the broad spectrum of later 19<sup>th</sup> century railway and utility buildings, as indicated by the decorative use of Staffordshire Blue brick.

## 4 REFERENCES

### 4.1 Abbreviations

aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> – year of our Lord, also known as Common Era
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BA	Bronze Age (c. 2,500 BC to c. 800 BC)
BC, BCE	Before Christ, Before Common Era
BGS	British Geological Survey
BP	Before Present
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
EH	English Heritage
GIS	Geographical Information System
HER	Historic Environment Record
Ibid.	See previous reference
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
NMR	National Monuments Record
OS	Ordnance Survey
QGIS	Quantum GIS (mapping software)

### 4.2 Definitions

4.2.1 These suggested dates apply to southern England and may not be appropriate for other parts of Britain and Ireland.

Prehistory	Before AD 43
Pleistocene	Geological time period that partially overlaps with the Palaeolithic (c. 1,640,000 BP to c. 10,000 BP)
Palaeolithic	Old Stone Age (c. 800,000 BP to c. 8,000 BC)
Mesolithic	Middle Stone Age (c. 8,000 BC to c. 4,000 BC)
Neolithic	New Stone Age (c. 4,000 BC to 2,500 BC)
Bronze Age	c. 2,500 BC to c. 800 BC
Iron Age	c. 800 BC to AD 43
Roman	AD 43 to c. AD 410
Early Medieval	AD 410 to AD 1066
Medieval	AD 1066 to AD 1540
Post-Medieval	AD 1540 to c. AD 1837
Victorian	AD 1837 to AD 1901
Modern	1901 to present

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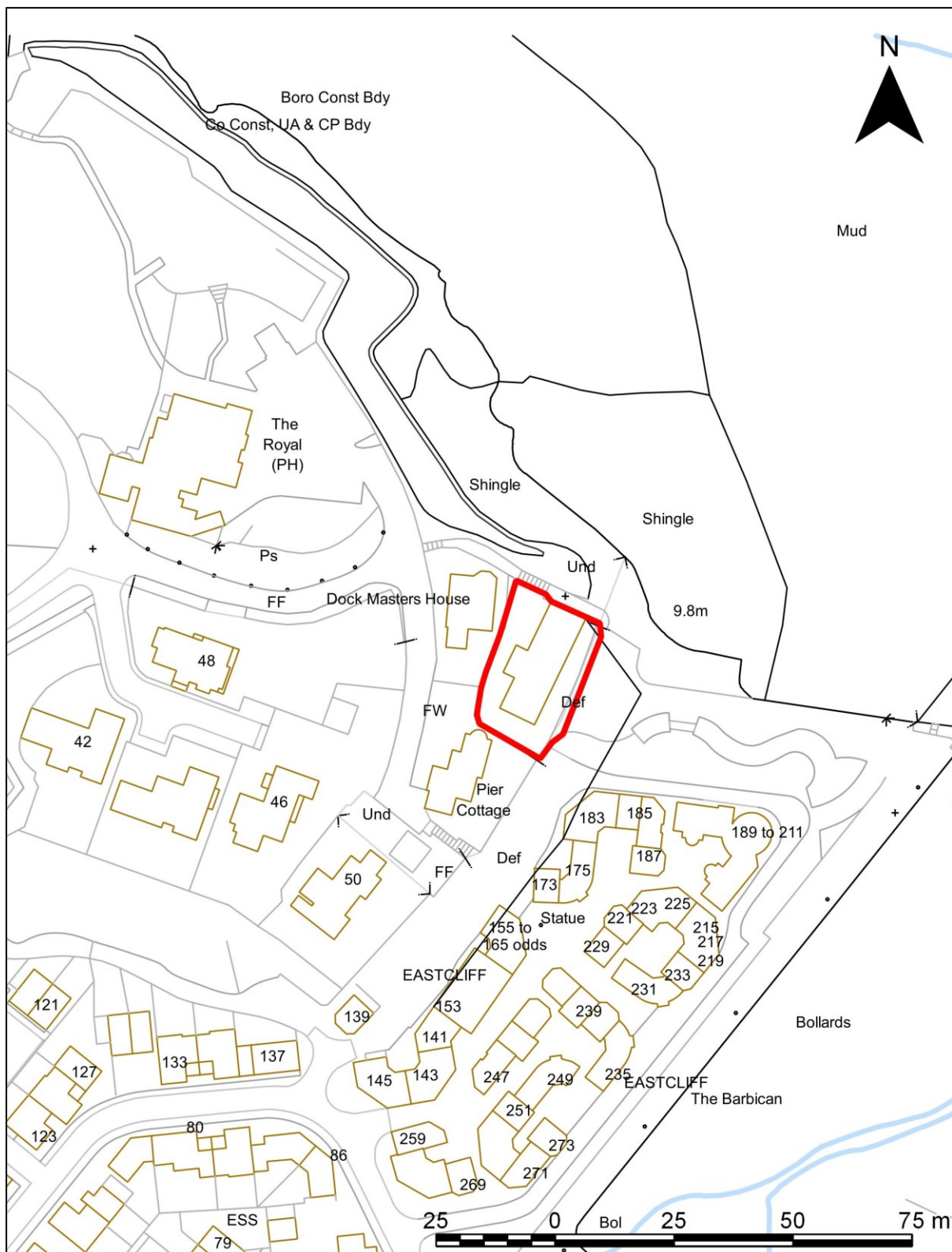
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**FIGURE 1**

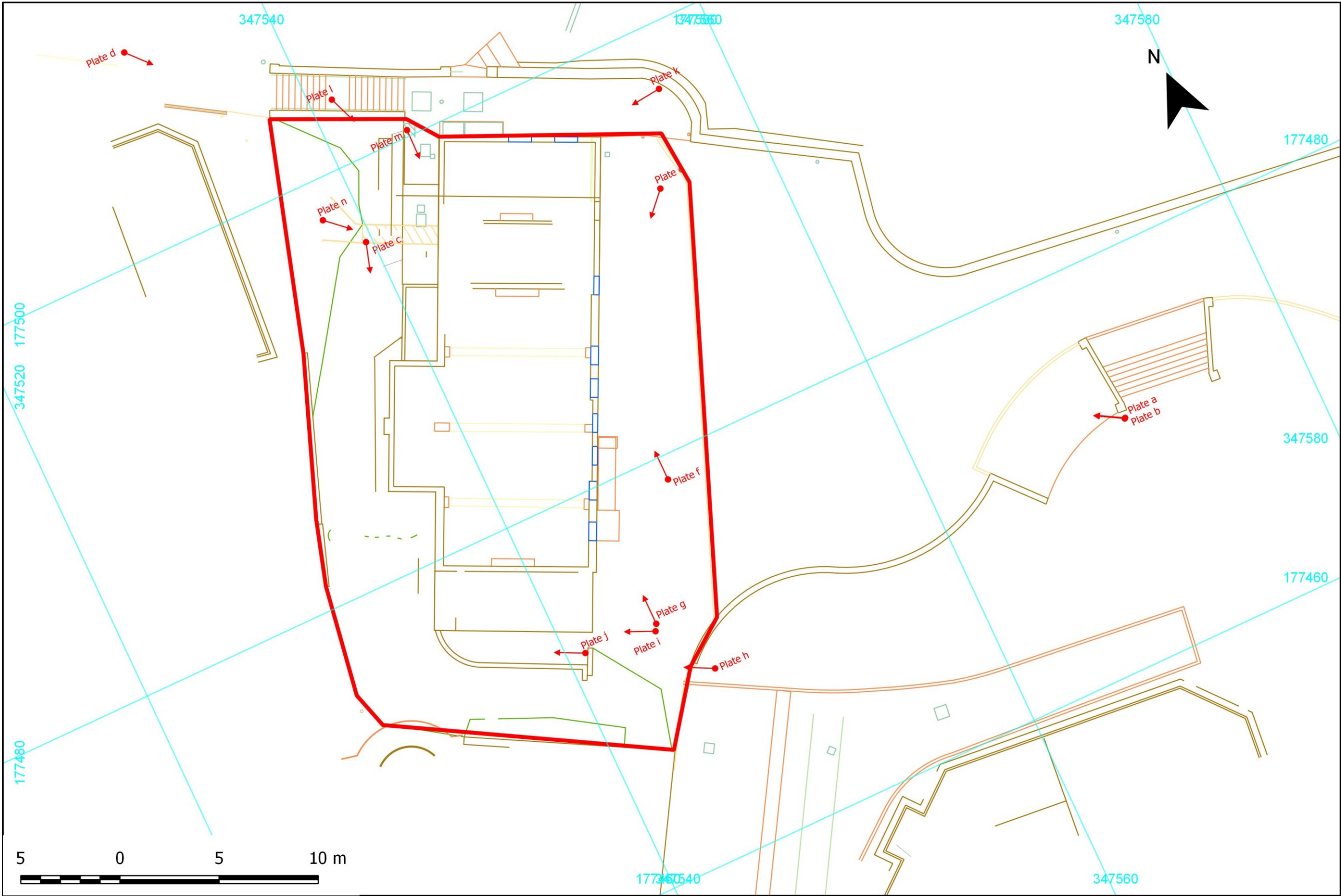
**Figure 1:** Location of the study area (indicated in red). Scale 1:25,000 at A4. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2014.



**FIGURE 2**

**Figure 2:** Detail of the study area, outlined in red. Approximate scale 1:1250 at A4. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright 2013 all rights reserved. Licence No. WL1005476.

FIGURE 3



**Figure 3:** A survey of the exterior after Island Surveys (2007), reproduced by permission of Morgan Design Studios Ltd. Photographs referred to in the text are indicated by red arrows that show the location and angle of the camera. Adjacent labels indicate the plate number. Approximate scale 1:200 at A3.



## PLATES



**Plate a.** A view of the study area looking northwest.



**Plate b:** The east face of the lodge, looking northwest.



**Plate c.** View of the eastern face of the Lodge, looking SSW from the walkway.



**Plate d.** Detail of the western side of the main roof and chimneys, looking southeast from the adjoining footpath.



**Plate e.** The east face of the Lodge, looking southwest; scale 2m.



**Plate f.** The east face of the Lodge, looking north; scale 2m.





**Plate g.** The first floor fire escape against the east face of the Lodge, looking north; scale 2m.



**Plate h.** The southern extension and passageway, looking WNW from outside the boundary fence, no scale.



**Plate i.** Southern extension and access to external toilet, looking northwest; scale 2m.



**Plate j.** South face of the southern extension, with passageway enclosed by retaining wall. Looking northwest, scale 2m.



**Plate k.** The north face of the lodge, looking west; scale 2m.



**Plate l.** The north and part of the west face of the Lodge, looking SSE; scale 2m.



**Plate m.** Detail of the ground floor west face of the Lodge and adjoining outbuilding, looking south; scale 2m.



**Plate n:** Detail of the first floor west face of the Lodge, with steel walkway, looking southeast; scale 2m.