

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF
LAND AT THE REAR OF
BARN CLOSE, SHEBBEAR, DEVON**

**Prepared on behalf of
Taffel Enterprises**

Exeter Archaeology

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SUMMARY

The site located within the historic town of Shebbear, which at one time was a Royal Domesday Manor occupies an area of 0.63 hectares and is situated approximately 150m from the parish church of St Michael (SS 4406 0922). In order to provide supporting information for the planning application of a residential development, this document assesses the archaeological impact of the proposed development.

There are no previously recorded archaeological sites within the area of the site but historic sites are recorded within 200m radius of the site. It is likely that the site was on the edge of the medieval settlement within the area of a former open field system. Archaeological activity dating from at least the Neolithic through to the Roman period is evident in the wider area, which may indicate a potential of recovering archaeological remains of a similar nature from the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Exeter Archaeology (EA) on behalf of Taffel Enterprises to assess the archaeological implications of the proposed residential development of land at the rear of Barn Close, Shebbear, Devon (SS 4406 0922). The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.

The proposed residential development will comprise 32 dwellings with associated highway and drainage infrastructure. This is the subject of a planning application to Torridge District Council (Ref: 1/1945/2006/FUL).

1.1 Method

The assessment has been undertaken in compliance with a brief produced by the Devon County Historic Environment Service dated 18 October 2006 (see Appendix). A summary study of the area surrounding area of the site has been undertaken to place it within its historic and archaeological context. A specific assessment area comprising land lying within a 200m radius of the site has been considered (Fig. 1).

The assessment has included consultation of the following sources:

- historic maps and documentary records held by the Devon Records Office (DRO) and Westcountry Studies Library (WCSL), Exeter;
- information held by the Devon County Historic Environmental Record (HER), including aerial photographs;
- Torridge District Council website (www.torridge.gov.uk).
- English Heritage online Listed Buildings catalogue (www.lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk);

A walkover survey of the site was also undertaken.

1.2 The site

The site covers an area of approximately 0.63 hectares and is situated at the eastern edge of the historic core of the village of Shebbear, approximately 150m from the parish church of St Michael. The site lies at approximately 148m AOD and the underlying solid geology consists mainly of sandstone of the Upper Carboniferous period (Institute of Geological Studies 1980).

1.3 Statutory and other designations

There are no listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments within the proposed development site, although a small number lie within the assessment area. Details are presented in section 3 below. The site is not situated within or near a designated Conservation Area.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

No previous archaeological investigations have been undertaken in close proximity to the site. There are no previously recorded archaeological sites within the proposed redevelopment area, although others are recorded in the vicinity.

Evidence of prehistoric activity in the general area is attested by the find of a Neolithic polished stone axe from Rowden Farm approximately 2.8km to the north of the site (HER Parish File, Ackland et al 2000, 1-2). Middle Bronze Age pottery was recovered from excavated features in the vicinity of Henscott Farm approximately 2.2km to the south-west (HER No. 71407; Gent 2004). A simple defensive enclosure, now only evident as a cropmark lies approximately 1.2km to the south-west and a D-shaped defensive enclosure in Castle Wood, known as 'Hengiscot', 1.6km to the south-west are both suggestive of Iron Age activity (HER Nos 11691; 11693). Additionally excavations in the area to the

east of Henscott Farm have produced rare evidence for later Roman settlement activity in north Devon in the form of a hearth feature (HER No. 71406).

Before the Domesday Book of 1086, Shebbear was known as *Sceft beara*, forming into *Shaftebeare* by 1319. It is not until 1425 when it appears in the Episcopal Registers of the diocese of Exeter that it becomes the more recognisable form *Schebbeare*. It is suggested that the name may have referred to a wood, which furnished material for spears (Gover et al, 1969, 107).

The Saxon manor of Shebbear was a royal demesne, set apart for the maintenance of Earl Harold and his family; after the Conquest it remained in the hands of William I. The settlement continued to be granted to a succession of English lords throughout the Middle Ages' as mentioned in various legal documents, such as the Pipe Roll and the Hundred Rolls.

The importance of the manor is highlighted from the grant made by Edward II in 1319 of the estate to his brother Edmund of Woodstock, Earl of Kent, to be held by knights' service at the yearly rent of 3s 2d, the manor being valued at £22. The Earl of Kent became lord of the manor by the mid 14th century and it remained in the family of Nevil Earls of Westmorland until 1557 (Oliver 1948, 159-167). According to one source, Lord Clinton and John Fortescue acquired the land in 1690, and in 1837 the manor was sold to Thomas Kingdon whose son married Elizabeth Fortescue Foulkes, daughter of Peter Foulkes (Ackland et al 2000, vii).

2.1 Development of the site

This section presents evidence from maps and written sources indicating the land use history of the site. (see Figs. 3 - 7). The position of the site boundary is highlighted in red.

It is evident from the historic and modern maps that the immediate landscape within the site has changed little over the last 160 years. The area was probably first enclosed with hedgebanks during the later middle ages. The curving form of the hedge-banks in the area to the east of the village suggests that at an earlier time it may have been farmed as part of an open field system, with individual landholdings represented by narrow strips of land (www.devon.gov.uk/index/environment/historic-environement/landscapes/landscape-characterisation.html).

The Tithe map of 1844 shows the study area is contained within the fields numbered 996, 997 and 1000 (Fig. 3). Details of these fields contained in the associated tithe apportionment are presented in the table below. A large portion of the site is also shown on another 19th century map titled, 'Rough Plan of Shebbear' (Fig. 4). A precise date for this plan is not known. The site incorporates one of the fields named 'South Close', which is shown on both maps.

Field Number	Ownership	Occupancy	Field Name	Land Use	A	R	P
996	Churchland Feoffees of	Rev. Peter Foulkes	Croft	Meadow	0	3	19
997	Mrs Rebecca Tozer	Edmund Edmunds	Strap	Arable	0	2	4
1000	Mary Heysett	William Balkwill	South Close	Meadow	1	1	24

The croft probably represents the 'garden' or paddock attached to the dwelling immediately west of the site, now represented by Myrtle Cottage. A small structure is shown on the north boundary of the site on both maps (SS 44052 09294) but a garden on the north-east boundary is only shown on the rough plan. The field boundary, east-west aligned, which divides the fields numbered 996 and 997, shown on the tithe map, is not present on the 19th century map.

There are no significant changes visible on the first edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1885 or the second edition map of 1906. The small structure shown on the 19th century maps is not depicted on the 1:2500 maps of 1955 or later. The fields 996 and 997 shown on the tithe map had also been amalgamated by this time; hence the boundary is no longer present.

3. SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INTEREST

The following information consists of previously recorded archaeological sites and historic buildings within an approximate radius of 200m around the site and numbered 1-5. Site number 6 is a site not recorded in the HER lists. There are no archaeological sites or historic buildings on the site itself. An examination of the relevant 1946 RAF vertical aerial photograph shows no cropmarks, soilmarks or other evidence for archaeological activity either on the site or in close proximity.

1. **St Michael's Parish Church**, Grade II* listed HER No. 385 SS43840923

The church has Norman origins but was renovated in the period 1875-92. Some early architectural features survive today including the south doorway dated c.1180 along with the nave and chancel dated to the early 14th century.

2. **Gormans Cottage 1 and 2**, Grade II listed HER No. 40053 SS4401309074

This is a pair of two-room cottages of c.18th century date with 19th century additions.

3. **New Inn** HER No. 16844 SS43890929

This is described as an interesting 17th century inn on the village square.

4. **Shebbear Manor** HER No. 16845 SS440-094-

As noted above Shebbear was once the Royal Domesday manor of Sepesberia. Before the conquest the Saxon estate was a royal demesne, held by Earl Harold. After the conquest, the manor of Shebbear was retained as a country land by the king. It is likely that the early settlement was originally established around the parish church, but no definite archaeological evidence has been recovered.

5. **Standing Stone** HER No. 397 SS439-092-

A rounded stone of irregular shape and thickness is located in The Square, under an ancient tree. An ancient custom of the town is carried out annually on 5th November by the bell ringers and involves turning the stone over after ringing. According to Oliver (1948, 167), Rev. Reichel's paper on Domesday churches makes reference to an oratory surviving from pre-Conquest times dedicated either to a little-known saint, or to St. Michael. Oliver suggests Reichel's evidence along with the ancient tree and stone could mean that Shebbear may have been an early 'prayer station'.

6. **Structure** SS4405209294

A small structure, possibly an outbuilding or a barn is shown on the 1844 Tithe map of Shebbear and on the 19th century map as noted above. This structure is also shown on the 1:2500 OS first edition map of 1885 and second edition map of 1906. It does not appear on any maps after 1955.

4. SITE VISIT.

A walkover survey of the site was undertaken in early November 2006. Both fields comprising the site were laid to rough pasture, with the land falling gently to the south towards a small stream.

Hedgebanks formed the boundaries to all sides of the northern field and the northern and southern boundary of the smaller field to the south. In places, the southernmost bank stands to a height of almost 2m, following the slightly meandering route of the stream. The bank bounding the eastern side of the northern field is also reasonably substantial, measuring over 1.3m in height. The east-west hedgebank dividing the two fields also stands to a height of over 1m when viewed from the southern field. This height is in marked contrast to the height of the bank viewed from the northern field, where it is only 0.3-0.4m high. This suggests that cultivation within the southern field over an extended period.

While a hedgebank bounds the western side of the northern field, this is notably less substantial than the other banks, and probably represents a later feature.

5. DISCUSSION.

No archaeological remains or deposits had been recorded within or close to the site prior to this assessment, although this may be a reflection of the lack of previous archaeological work undertaken in the area. The general area possesses evidence of settlement dating from at least the Neolithic period, and there is the potential for archaeological remains to survive within the site below the level of disturbance from historic ploughing. There is no other obvious ground disturbance within the site.

The early medieval origin of the village of Shebbear is evident, although analysis of map evidence suggests that the focus of the village probably lay to the west, around the parish church and The Square, where the north-south and east-west routeways also meet. The development site may therefore be peripheral to the medieval settlement. The field patterns in this area are difficult to interpret and do not obviously point to a medieval origin like those to the north of the road (but see below). The tithe map (Fig. 3) shows the lane from the east opening out into an incoherent rectangular area with a few buildings around and within it. This may reflect the eastern limit of the medieval settlement.

There are two Grade II listed buildings within a 200m radius of the site. These buildings will not be directly affected by the proposed development, and they are sufficiently distant for their immediate settings not to be affected.

The general layout of the field boundaries shown surrounding the site on maps and aerial photographs is indicative of a fossilised medieval system. The eastern hedgebank bounding the site follows the expected line of a surviving remnant of this system, and a medieval date is considered possible for this feature. A similar date is possible for the two east-west aligned banks, one dividing the two fields, the other forming the southern boundary to the site. However the evidence is inconclusive, as noted above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The assessment was commissioned by Taffel Enterprises (TE) and administered by Adam Davis (TE) and Timothy Gent (EA). Documentary research was undertaken by Marina Neophytou, who produced the text with Timothy Gent. The illustrations were prepared by T. Ives. Thanks are due to the staff at the Devon Records Office and Exeter and the Westcountry Studies Library.

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Oliver, B.W., 1948 'Some Notes on Shebbear and Durpley Castle', *Rep. Trans Devonshire Ass.*, Vol. **80**, 159-167.

Institute of Geological Studies (IGS), 1980. *Geological Survey of Great Britain*, 1:50,000 (*one inch*), Sheet 307 and 308, Bude.

Ordnance Survey Maps

1:2500 map Sheets Devon LI2; 1885, 1905.

1:2500 Plan SS4409 1955.

Devon Record Office

Rough Plan of Shebbear Town, 19th century, 2569B/Estate 4/5A.

Extract of Shebbear Tithe Map 1844.

Tithe Apportionment of Shebbear 1842.

Aerial Photographs

RAF vertical aerial photograph 1946, 3G/TUD/UK/159/90 SQDN/5210.

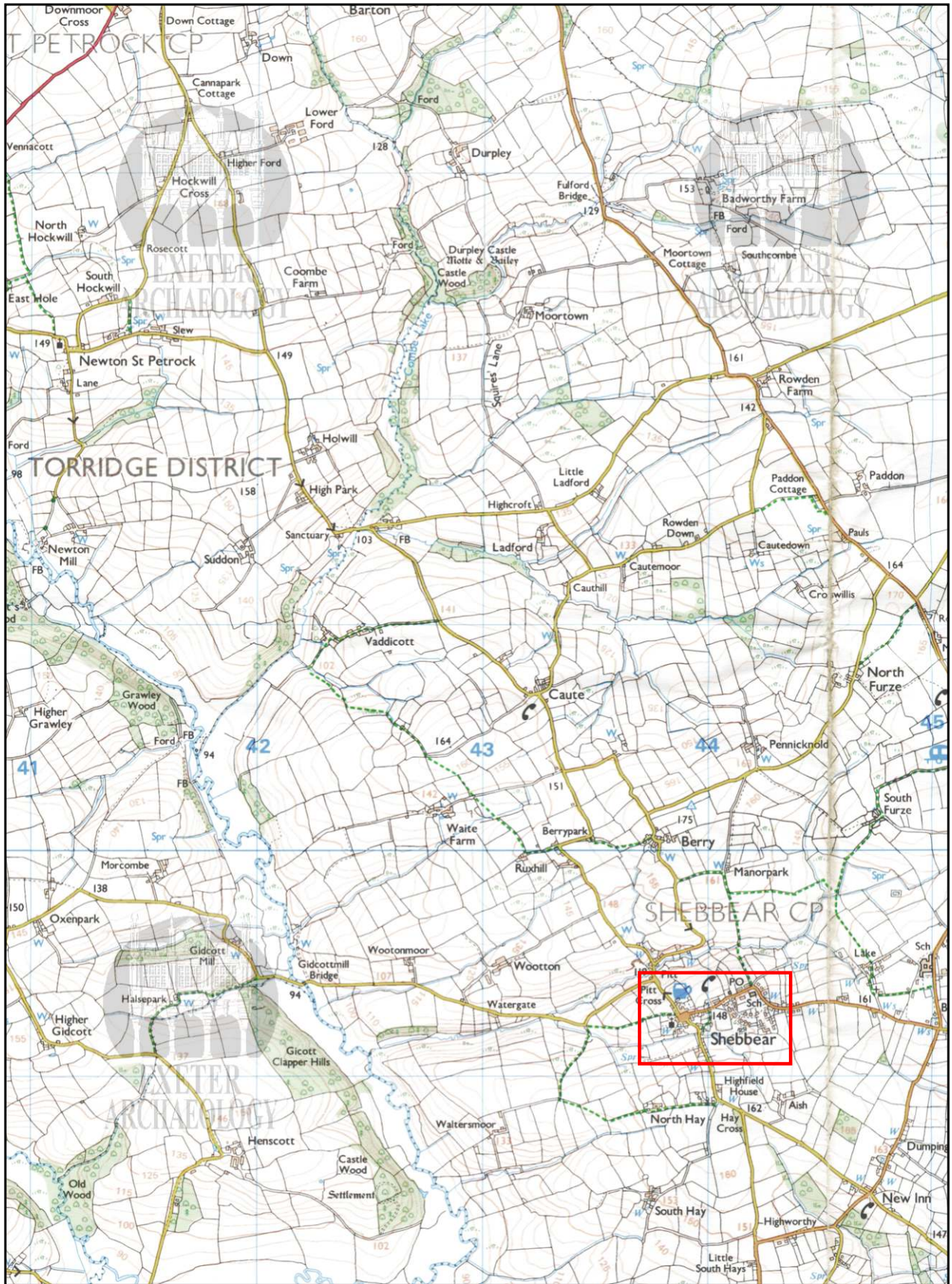


Fig. 1 Location of site. Reproduced from the 1:25000 Explorer 126 by Permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown copyright 1995. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL 100016685.

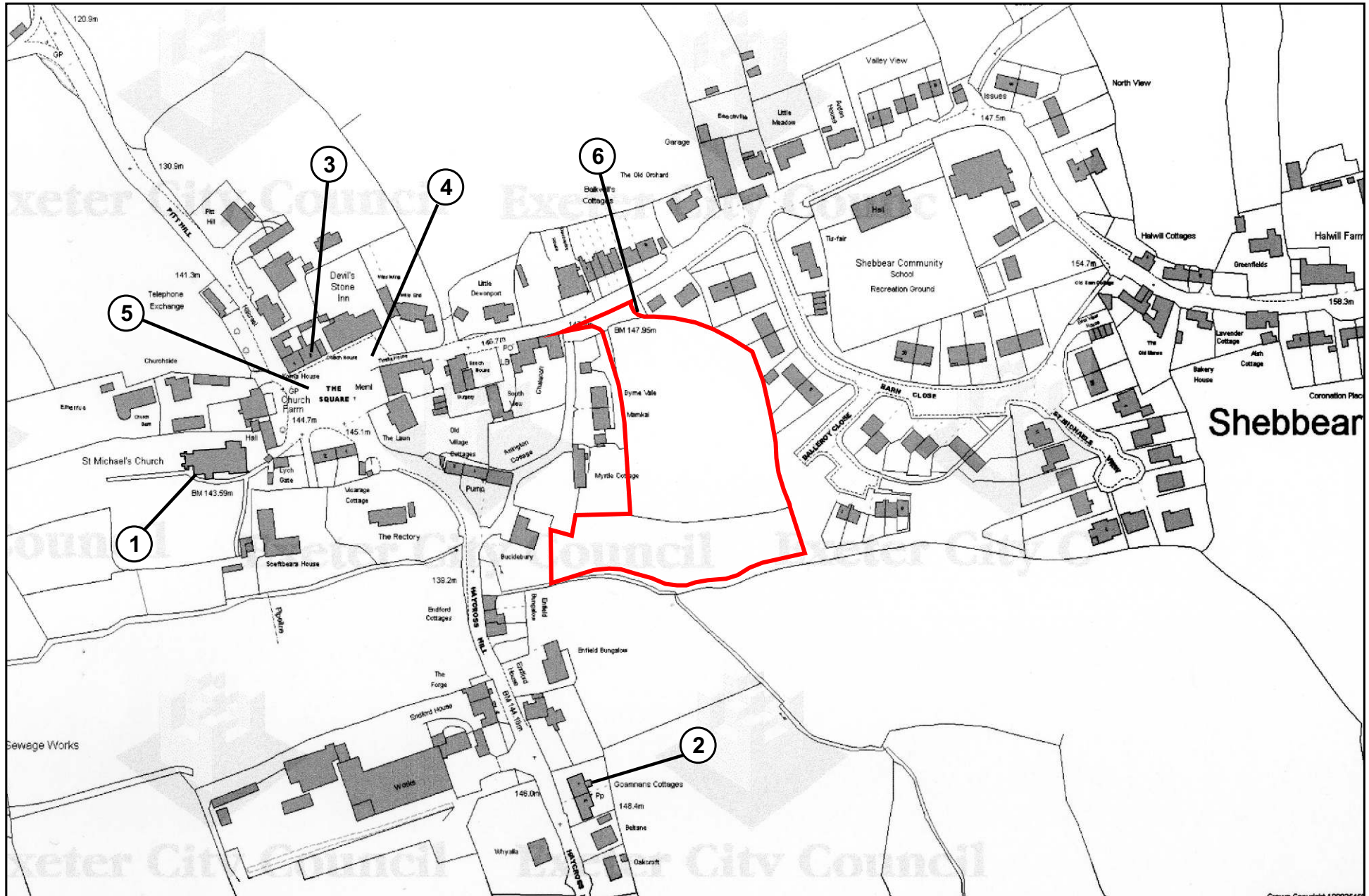


Fig. 2 Location of sites mentioned in Ch. 3. Reproduced at 1:2000 from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Exeter City Council 100025458.



Fig. 3 Extract from Shebbear Tithe Map, 1844.

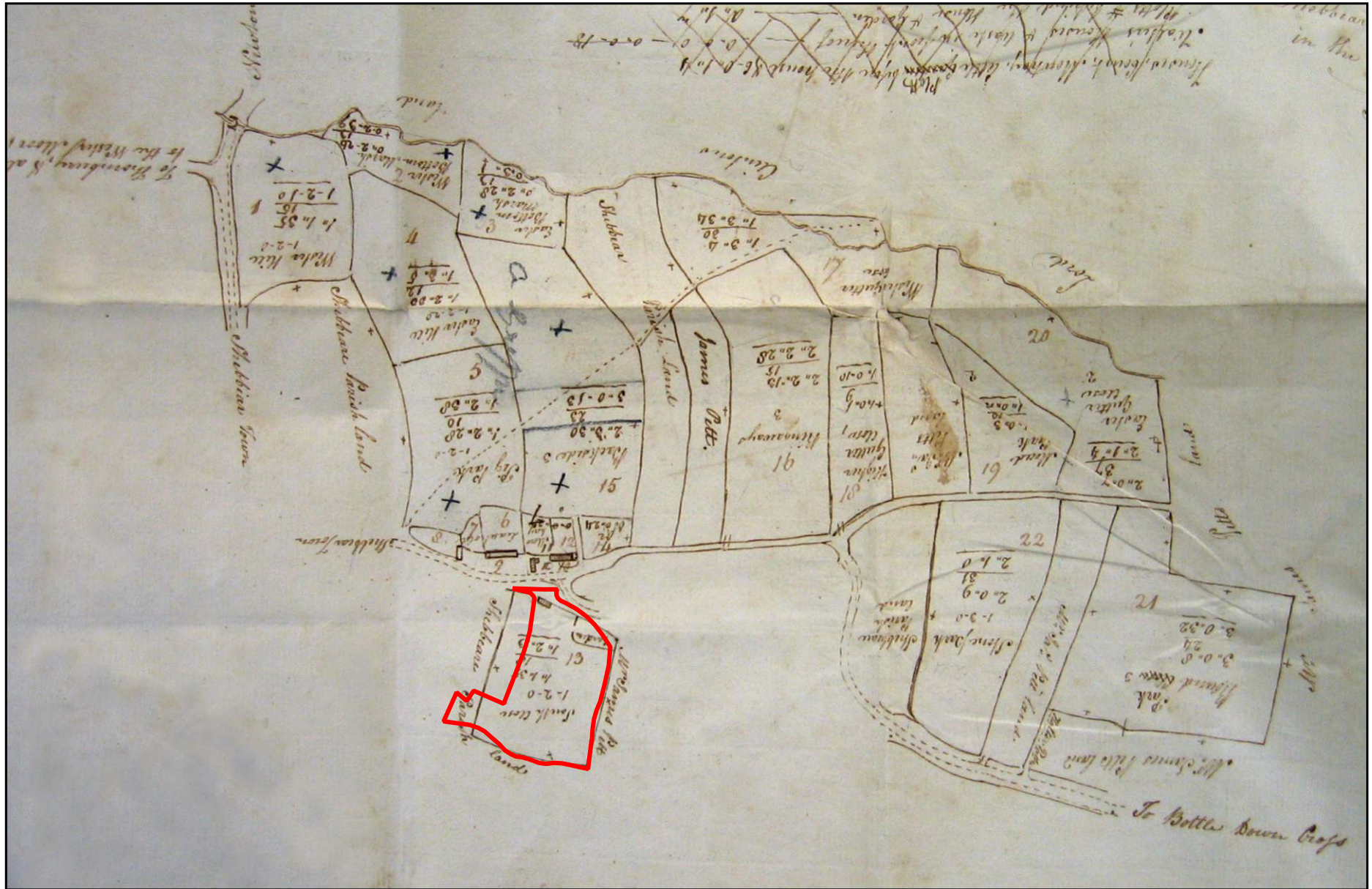


Fig. 4 Rough Plan of Shebbear Town, 19th Century (DRO 2569B/Estate 4/5A).

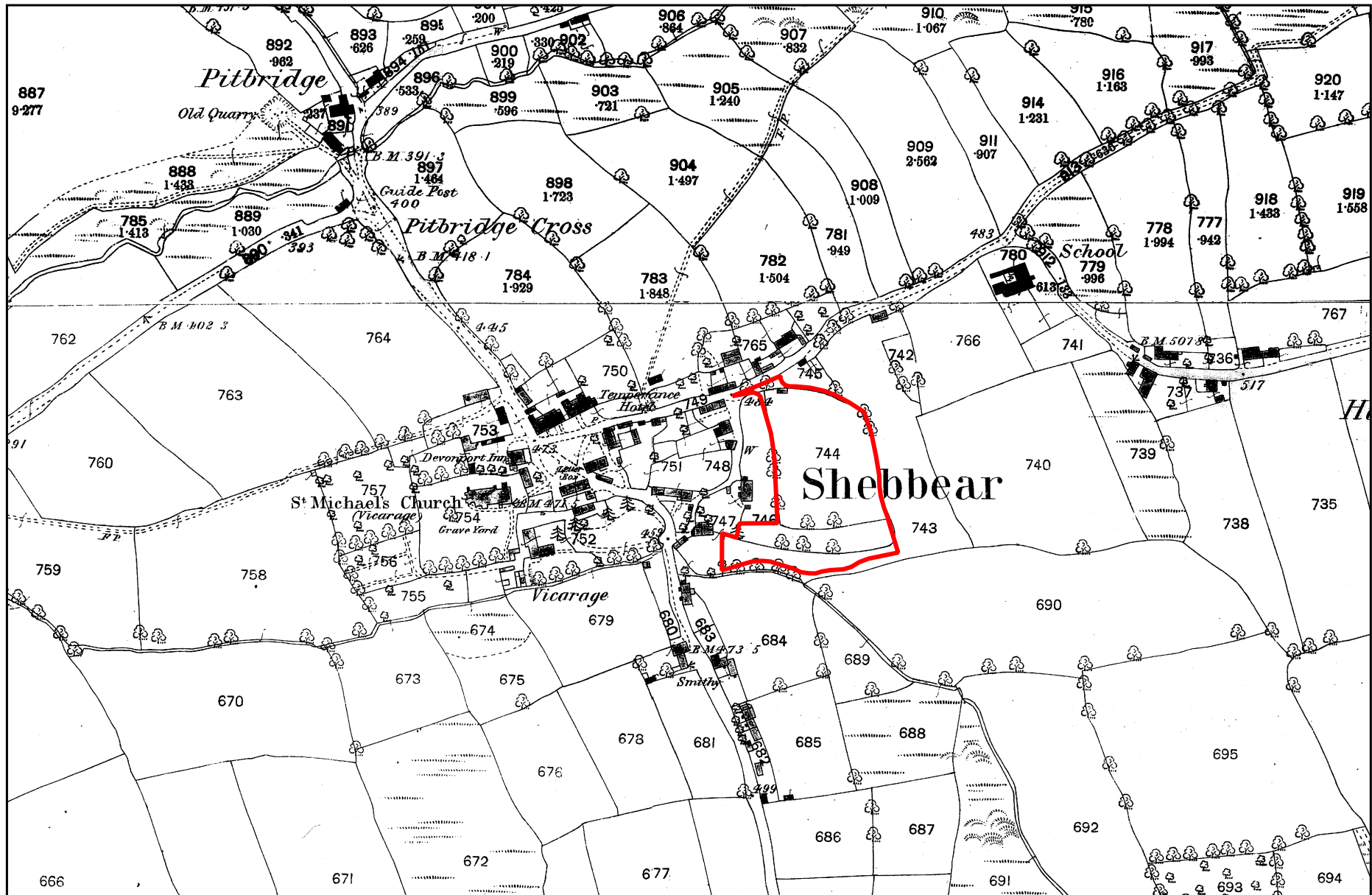


Fig. 5 The site area in 1885. Reproduced from the 1st ed. 1:2500 Devonshire map sheet LI.2 (not to scale).

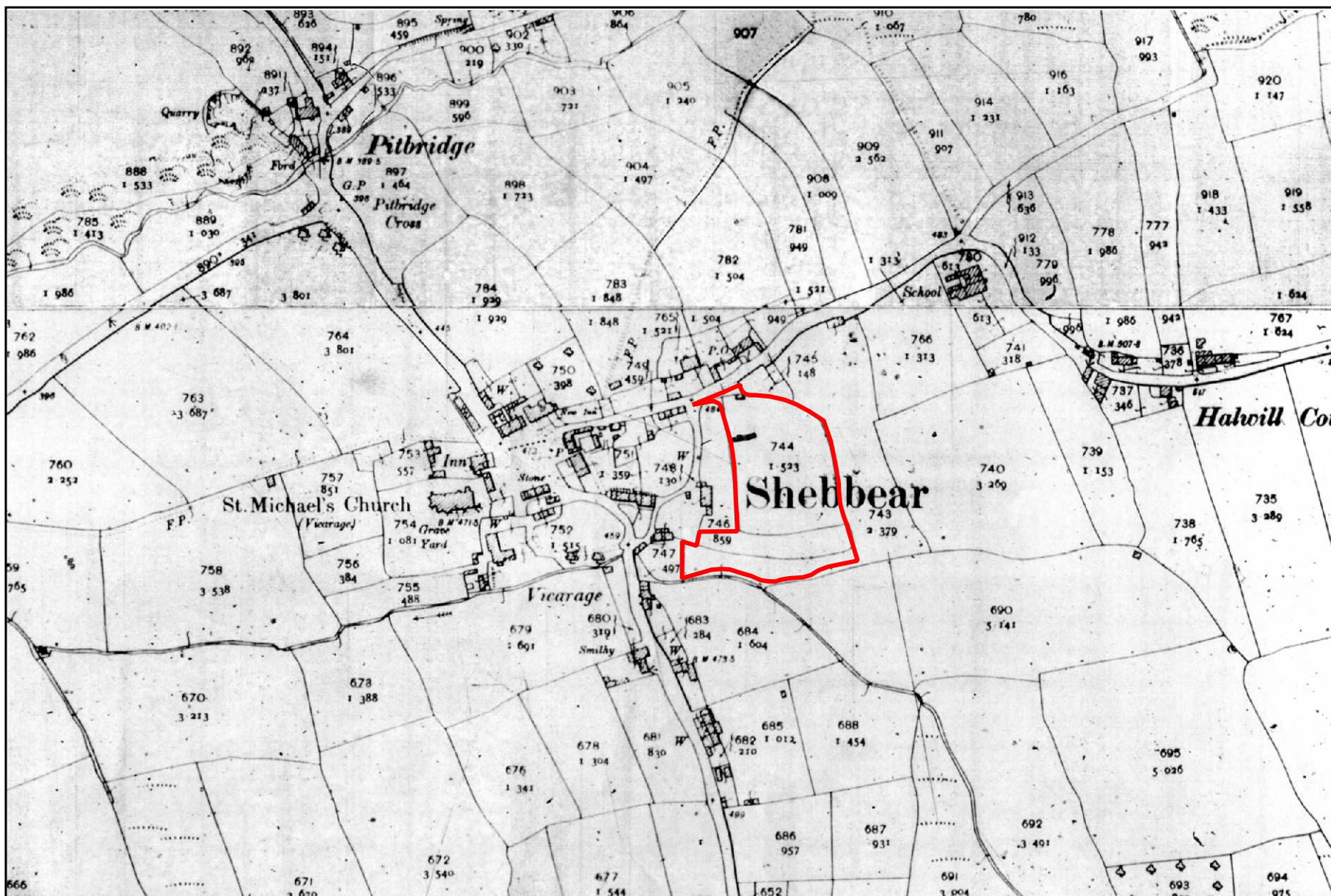


Fig. 6 The site area in 1906. Reproduced from the 1:2500 2nd ed. Devonshire map sheet LI.2 (not to scale).

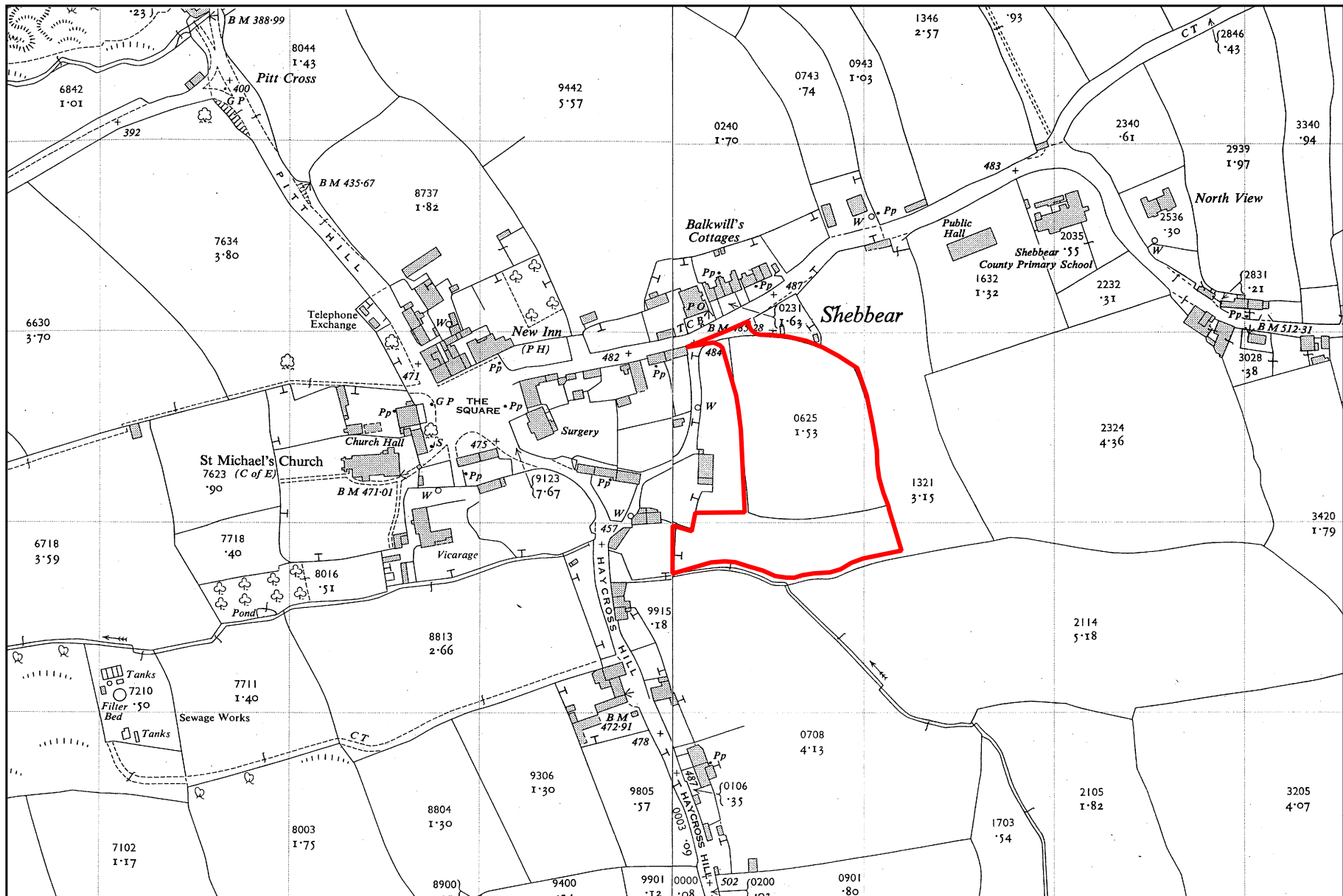


Fig. 7 The site area in 1955. Reproduced from the OS 1:2500 map sheets SS4409 and SS4309 (not to scale).