

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK AND HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
AT 94A/94B SIDWELL STREET, EXETER**

Prepared on behalf of Elliott Build Ltd

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Exeter Archaeology

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Summary

Archaeological recording at 94A/94B Sidwell Street, Exeter (SX 9277 9329) was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology between June and August 2007, prior to and during the redevelopment of the site. The work comprised a desk-based study, building recording, the machine-excavation of six evaluation trenches and a watching brief.

The site is located at the northeast end of Sidwell Street, at the junction with Blackboy Road and Old Tiverton Road. Sidwell Street is known to be of Roman origin, and the route is likely to have continued to the northeast along the line of Blackboy Road and/or Old Tiverton Road. The earliest historic maps indicate that buildings were present on the site during the late 16th century, although these may have been cleared along with other buildings during the Civil War.

The site had been rebuilt by the mid 18th-century and continued to be occupied until the present day by a building probably incorporating parts of those constructed following the Civil War.

Terracing associated with later changes to the building had removed any deposits of earlier date from the site area.

No cut features other than those associated with the building were present.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of archaeological investigation and historic building recording carried out at 94A/94B Sidwell Street by Exeter Archaeology (EA) between June and August 2007, as part of a programme of work laid out in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared for Elliot Build Limited (EBL) by EA in June 2007. The work was a requirement of condition 4 attached to the grant of Planning Permission (No 06/0780/03), and condition 2 of the Conservation Area Consent (No 06/0792/14) for the demolition of the existing structure and subsequent redevelopment of the site.

1.1 Site and geology

The redevelopment area (Fig. 1) is located at the northeastern end of Sidwell Street (SX 92779329), at the junction with Old Tiverton Road and Blackboy Road. The site occupies an area of 0.02ha on the north side of Sidwell Street, opposite St Ann's Almshouses. The current land-use comprises houses with gardens to the rear. The site is located on a ridge of Permian marls of the Whipton Formation, overlooking the Longbrook valley to the west, and that of the Shutebrook to the east.

2. AIMS

The aims of the archaeological investigations were:

- to undertake a rapid desk based study of the site;
- to record the historic building fabric prior to and during demolition and alteration;
- to determine the presence, extent, character and date of any archaeological deposits or features of historic architectural importance that will be disturbed or removed by the proposed redevelopment through evaluative excavation. This will be achieved through the excavation of trial trenches on the site of the new build and other areas of proposed ground reduction; and
- to excavate as appropriate any remains identified and to monitor all works associated with the development in order to identify any surviving archaeological deposits or architectural features and to preserve these remains through record before the continuation of the works.

3. METHOD

The work conformed to a brief supplied by the ECC Archaeology Officer (ECC AO)¹ and a subsequent WSI prepared by EA (June 2007).

3.1 Desk based study

The desk based study was undertaken in parallel with the building recording due to the short timescale for demolition of the building. The study focused on the specific historical development of the site and its potential to contain remains of all periods. The study included a rapid appraisal of relevant material held by the City Historic Environment Record, Devon Record Office, Westcountry Studies Library and any records held by the owner of the site.

3.2 Building survey

¹ Pye 08/05/2007.

Recording of the existing structures was undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidelines presented in Levels 2 and 3 of *English Heritage 2006 Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices*, and comprised a visual survey of the building in the form of manuscript notes, and a photographic record of the building in both digital and black and white print format. Existing architects' drawings of the property were annotated to show the development of the building and the location of fixtures and fittings of importance. The recording work was carried out during the 'soft strip' immediately prior to the demolition of the building.

3.3 Evaluation

Evaluative trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed new build. The trenches were excavated by machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket, and under the direct control of the site archaeologist. Trenches were excavated to the formation level for the proposed foundations, or the top of any significant archaeological deposits, whichever was higher. Any archaeological deposits exposed were excavated and recorded by hand. The excavation, by the contractor, of two small trial pits in the rear (modern) extension were monitored.

All features and deposits were excavated and recorded using the standard EA recording system, comprising context record sheets and individual trench recording forms. Sections and plans for each trench were drawn at 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. A detailed black and white print and colour digital record was made. Registers were maintained for photographs, drawings and context sheets on *pro forma* record sheets.

3.4 Watching brief

In light of the results of the trial trenching and engineers test pits it was agreed with the Client and the ECC AO that a watching brief would be maintained on any further groundworks

4. HISTORY OF THE SITE *by A.G. Collings*

4.1 Introduction

Nos 94a & 94b Sidwell Street are located in what was the ancient parish and manor of St Sidwell's. They occupy a frontage of some 12m on Sidwell Street extending back 34m towards St James Close. The manor was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, although they owned only a minority of the actual properties, which they normally leased out on 31-year terms. This particular site comprised two properties both owned by them until presumably transferred to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England in 1869. One lay along the Sidwell Street frontage and the other, to the north-west, was an L-shaped field of some 3½ acres extending back to Well Street.

4.2 The Sidwell Street frontage property

The earliest depiction of the general area is the late 16th-century map of the Bounds of St Sidwell's Fee which suggests that the built-up street frontage by then extended out from the City as far as what is now St James's Road, previously Cake Lane opposite the mid-16th century St Ann's almshouses and chapel (Fig. 2).² A rental for

² The original is in the 'Manuscript Book' of John Hooker, Dean and Chapter MS 3530, between ff.37 & 38.

1603 has survived and it is possible that the entry ‘One tenement by St Anne Chappell graunted to the widdow Periam now in the tenure of Richard Heale’ at a rent of four pence refers to this property.³ It is believed that during the Civil War, prior to the two sieges, there was widespread destruction of property to provide a field of fire for the defenders, and that this extended that far, with the almshouse buildings being ‘greatly ruined’,⁴ and it is highly likely that the adjoining buildings were also demolished, it being claimed that the total destruction amounted to a loss of annual rents to the Dean and Chapter of over £110.⁵

It has not been established when rebuilding occurred, but the earliest post-Civil War map to extend out that far was produced by John Rocque in 1744 (Fig. 3). It showed the property to have been restored, clearly identifiable by the abrupt change in the building line to the south-west that prevails today, and at that date was actually greater than the width of what became Old Tiverton Road. In 1764 the Dean and Chapter resolved that their surveyor, at that date John Tothill, was to make a plan of each property for attachment to the lease,⁶ and the earliest to survive for this property appears to have been made in 1797 by John Tothill, when George Bryant was the lessee (Fig. 4).⁷ The rent was a very modest six pence, with no doubt the real economic value being reflected in the entry fine paid. The plan shows the property to have then consisted of two dwellings, then occupied by Mrs Fortescue and Mrs Hudson. The combined frontage was of some 16m and the property extended back some 38m to what was then Cake Lane. Some of the ground floor rooms were identified. The more north-westerly property included two parlours and a kitchen with a wash house at the rear, while the other, alongside the street – then ‘Road to Mincin Lake’, included a parlour, kitchen and larder, with a brew house and coal house at the rear. Just 14 years into the lease the property adjoining the street was separated off and leased to a Mr Wilson.⁸ In 1819 John Coldridge mapped the city at the scale of 12 chains to a foot, the largest thus far, the map showing the two properties more symmetrically disposed than the 1797 plan (Fig. 5).

In 1825 George Bryant’s holding was leased to John Molland while John Wilson obtained a renewal of his lease. In 1834 the Chapter resolved to transfer the latter property to the Improvement Commissioners to allow the street to be widened on the lease’s termination,⁹ which would normally have been in 1856. But this seems to have happened much earlier, since a particularly detailed valuation of the city, made in 1838, refers to only one house. The entries for that side of Sidwell Street begin with an unoccupied Dean and Chapter property described as ‘a back cottage, with a walled garden in front and back’, valued at £25 per annum, and ‘a front dwelling house and garden’ valued at £48, said to be owned and occupied by John Molland, although he presumably owned only the lease on it.¹⁰ 1838 was also the year in which St James’ parish was carved out of St Sidwell’s and this was to have implications for the

³ Dean and Chapter reference 3918.

⁴ Jenkins 1806, 346.

⁵ Stoye 1994, 71.

⁶ Dean and Chapter Act Book 3570, 101, entry for 3 3.1764.

⁷ Plan by John Tothill transferred to an 1825 lease to John Molland, property No. L7, Dean and Chapter reference 46/76190.

⁸ Plan by Robert Cornish transferred to an 1825 lease to John Wilson, property No. L8, Dean and Chapter reference 46/76194.

⁹ St Sidwell’s Rental, Dean and Chapter 4025/1, *sub* L8.

¹⁰ 1838 Valuation, 78.

property. The tithe survey of 1842 led to the production of a 1:2376-scale map and while the plot number is unfortunately illegible the map does suggest that by then the Wilson property had been removed and also that the end of John Molland's garden had been removed to allow Cake Lane had been widened to become St James's Road (Fig. 6). A Dean and Chapter rental, amended up until the 1860s, refers to the John Molland property under the year 1846 as 'now in occupation of Revd Phillip Carlyon Curate of St James's during pleasure of the Chapter he paying £1 additional rent from Michaelmas 1845'.¹¹

An Exeter Water Rate Book of the mid-1860s shows his successor, the Revd Buckeridge occupying St James parsonage, valued at £35 per annum, with another part being sub-let to a Robert Knight, valued at £17.¹² In 1876 Exeter was surveyed at 1:500 scale, and the resulting map identifies the property as the parsonage, by then possessed of a much larger garden that extended north-west over what had been a field of the Dean and Chapter (Fig. 7).¹³ The city was re-surveyed in 1888, the resulting map showing the terrace of three houses to have been built by then in the original garden.

4.3 The field

This appears to have been much more poorly documented. Very little can be said about it prior to 1766 when a map of it was produced by John Tothill on the occasion of a lease being granted to Richard Stephens, the property having previously been held by John Grant (Fig. 8).¹⁴ The north-east boundary was Cake Lane and the north-west boundary was 'Way leading from St Sidwell's Well'. Lands of Richard Lathy and Elizabeth Saunders then formed the south-west boundary while that of the south-east was shown, incorrectly, as the street. In 1803 when the Land Tax was redeemed the property was described as 'Fields part of Fishers' and the lessee was 'Mr Wilcocks late Stephens Esqr'.¹⁵ Around this date, when an invasion by Revolutionary France was feared, the field became an ammunition ground.¹⁶ Alexander Jenkins, the historian of Exeter, referred to 'proper magazines, guard-house, &c, having been purposely erected'.¹⁷

In 1816 a lease was granted to John Hutchings and the Dean and Chapter rental records that it was not to be renewed, although no reason was given, and it expired in 1837. The tithe survey of 1842 showed the field to have been divided into three parts and was no longer L-shaped, the site under investigation extending a little way into the field given the No. 79, all three being said to be 'Town Lands' and occupied by John Heal. However, there is no indication of any such property listed under St Sidwell's in the 1848 Schedule of City property.¹⁸ The 1:500-scale map of 1876 shows that field to have become part of the parsonage garden (Fig. 7). Map evidence indicates that it remained undeveloped until at least 1967.¹⁹

¹¹ St Sidwell's Rental, Dean and Chapter 4025/1, *sub* L7.

¹² Devon Record Office, original number 1544, page 304.

¹³ Ordnance Survey 1:500 map sheet Devonshire LXXX.6.9; Dean & Chapter property L25.

¹⁴ Plan by John Tothill transferred to an 1816 lease to John Hutchings, property No. L25, Dean and Chapter reference 46/76297.

¹⁵ Exeter City Archives Book 168.

¹⁶ John Hayman's 1805 map of Exeter.

¹⁷ Jenkins 1841 edition, 233.

¹⁸ Exeter City Archives Book 212.

¹⁹ Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map sheet SX9293-9393, 1967.

5. THE BUILDING SURVEY *by R.J. Parker*

5.1 The exterior

The site of the house lies on the northern side of an important fork in the road out of Exeter; at the point where Sidwell Street divides to become the Old Tiverton Road and Blackboy Road; the main routes to the villages and lying to the north-east of the city. On the opposite side of the road stands the medieval St Anne's Chapel and almshouses, which effectively marked the north-eastern limit of the built area of the city until the early 19th century.

The house stood in an unusual position in relation to the adjoining properties, projecting for a considerable distance at right angles to the adjoining terraces fronting Sidwell Street and facing south west directly down Sidwell Street. The house is shown on late 18th-century deed plans as a pair (Fig. 4), the south-eastern property being later demolished early in the 19th century to widen Old Tiverton Road. Prior to the demolition of this property the anomaly in the street pattern would have been still more pronounced. This offset in the street frontage would normally suggest the presence of a market or fair in the wider part of the street, though no such reason is known in this case for the unusual configuration of the buildings. John Hooker's Map of St Sidwell's Fee, drawn in 1590, shows a strange circular feature in the middle of the road immediately to the west of St Anne's Chapel (Fig. 2). This may represent either a well, the remains of a market cross, or possibly a platform for public proclamations.

The main elevations of the house were modest, largely because they had been robbed of architectural interest by successive and unsympathetic alteration. The south-western front was a tall, rendered façade with a parapet, rather unusually arranged with pairs of windows on each storey at the centre of the façade, flanked by large areas of blank wall. The lower floor had been destroyed to create a shop front, and no trace of the original windows or entrance door remained. The north-western part of the façade, which was partly concealed by an adjoining building, was clearly of timber-framed construction as it jettied oddly at second-floor level. There was no cornice and above the parapet a single dormer remained.

The south-eastern front was more elaborate, with restrained classical detail. This front was added in the 1830s after the demolition of a considerable part of the building for road widening; even so, its present appearance is the result of alterations. The façade is of three bays with groups of three windows, or blind recesses on each storey. The fenestration was surprisingly irregular, with narrower windows at the centre and a large, square blind panel to the north-east at second-floor level. All of these openings showed anomalies when examined from within, and most had been narrowed appreciably. The façade stops at eaves level and is then offset backwards. Above this is a gable with crude acroteria on each side and a central arched window crowned with a false chimney.

The north-eastern façade is entirely timber framed, with pronounced string courses marking the floor levels and a rendered surface. This façade has windows of peculiarly broad proportions that seem to be derived from the mullion-and-cross-type popular in the late 17th and very early 18th centuries. All were fitted with 19th-century casements.

The rear, or north-western, elevation was tall and gabled, with a half-hipped roof. Much of the lower part, including two probable windows, was obscured by a large single storey structure occupying much of the former garden area. Above this the

façade rose, without any divisions at the level of the floors, for an extra three storeys. All the windows were 19th-century or modern replacements, though one was of wide proportions suggestive of the mullion and cross type.

5.2 The interior (Fig. 9)

5.2.1 Ground floor

Prior to the demolition of the adjoining property, the early deed plans show that the house was entered by a door in its south-western façade, opening upon a short corridor leading to the foot of the stairs, flanked on the north-west by the principal ground floor room. At the time of the recording this layout had been much altered and the entire south-west half of the ground floor was dominated by the shop. This encompassed the site of the original entrance passage, the main ground-floor room and a smaller room to the north-west. The shop was bounded on the north-east by a passage or spine corridor running the length of the building; this is an unusual feature of a house plan of this period.

The shop was probably created after the house ceased to function as a parsonage, following the construction of a new parsonage for St James' Church in the 1870s on the Old Tiverton Road. The original passage and front room were amalgamated at this time and a floor of highly decorative Minton tiles was laid, defining the shop floor and the position of the counters. At a later date, probably during the 20th century, the north-eastern wall and chimney of the original main room were removed and the shop was extended into the north-western room. No original features had survived in this area. The covered passage to the south and west of this room was defined by a curving wall which appears to have been rebuilt in the early 20th century, but was clearly an earlier feature of the site; this wall probably accounts for the unusual angle and timber-framed construction of this part of the south-western wall.

To the north of the spine corridor the plan of the house was better preserved. The staircase at the eastern corner was arranged around a narrow open well, with an open string and a continuous handrail supported by columnar newels and stick balusters. Under the base of the stairs, in the north-eastern wall, was evidence of a small doorway which must either have communicated with the garden or with a row of outbuildings. This was betrayed not only by the door frame, which was boarded over after the doorway was abandoned, but also by a small rectangular recess in the wall designed to receive the handle of the door as it swung inwards against the wall. Beneath the stairs a small two-panelled door opened upon a stair cupboard. There was no cellar.

As the staircase rose through the house it crossed windows and contained anomalies in construction which suggest that it was not the primary staircase. It may have been altered or inserted in the 1830s when the adjoining house was demolished, or during an earlier phase of improvements. In the 1870s, following the conversion of the ground floor to a shop, a new entrance was created in the south-eastern gable, at the foot of the stair, providing access to the residential parts of the building independent of the shop.

Beyond the staircase there was formerly a corridor running to the north-west, dividing the front and rear rooms of the house and originally with doorways on both sides. On the north side of the corridor, to the north-west of the stairs, was a small room approached by an opening closed by a modern door. This room was formerly lit by a large window in the north-eastern wall, now completely obscured by an adjacent

garage. The room had a prominent chimney breast in the north-western wall, featuring a large 19th- or early 20th-century fireplace with a cast-iron insert and grate. This fireplace had clearly supplanted an earlier one.

The room to the north of this may have originally been the kitchen, as there were the remains of a very large fireplace in the south-eastern wall. This had been narrowed, probably to accept a kitchen range, and was finally wholly blocked in the 20th-century. The original arch or lintel appeared to have been destroyed before the fireplace went out of use, and a flimsy timber lintel had been inserted and the wall above rebuilt; unfortunately this may have removed dating evidence for the fireplace. The wall opposite also contained a large projection; following stripping it was established that this part of the wall was of cob, with a void within it, possibly a window opening. As the rest of the building was either entirely of timber framing or brick construction there is a possibility that the cob wall was one of the earliest parts of the house, possibly retained from an earlier structure on the site.

To the north-east of the kitchen a large rectangular opening in the wall may have represented a further window or a doorway communicating with demolished outbuildings. A later doorway opened upon a small lean-to scullery, with a mono-pitch roof supported on moulded purlins. This structure probably dates from the late 19th century; after the construction of the adjacent houses in the former garden of the parsonage.

The large flat-roofed extension to the north-west of the property was entirely of modern construction, and was partially terraced into the rising ground; this building contained no features of interest and had quite conceivably destroyed archaeological deposits through terracing.

5.2.2 First floor

The first floor was laid out around a spine corridor running the length of the building. The architraves to the doorways were broader and more ornamental than on the other floors and it is clear that this was the main residential floor. The doors had six moulded panels with marginal fillets defining central fields. The doors are of late 18th- or early 19th-century character and are probably replacements.

At the north end of the corridor the northernmost room had been divided to form a shower room and kitchen. This was lit by a casement window at a surprisingly high level in the north-eastern wall and by a more reasonably sized one in the north-western wall. The otherwise inexplicable position of the north-eastern window might conceivably relate to the position of an earlier staircase, though no evidence to confirm this conjecture was recovered before the demolition of the building.

The chimney breast in the south-eastern wall contained a simple flat architrave for a fireplace opening, bricked up. A glazed, rectangular fanlight over the door provided borrowed light to the corridor. The room opposite this retained a six-panelled door and an early 20th-century fireplace and picture rail, but no cornice. The walls of this part of the house at this level, including the south-western wall and the north-western wall, were entirely timber framed.

The central room on the north side of the corridor was heated by a magnificent early 19th-century fireplace with a marble chimneypiece dating from *c.*1820. The chimneypiece was constructed from slabs of grey and pink marble with corner blocks carved into roundels and grey marble fillets framing the pink panels. The opening was infilled by an early 20th-century cast iron insert with red tiles and a domed hood. On either side of the chimney breast were tall cupboards formed by the addition of doors in front of earlier bookshelves. These shelves retained scalloped leather dust guards.

The room retained a six-panelled door and was lit by a large casement window in the north-eastern wall, which is of timber-framed construction.

The main room on the first floor was the large southern room, lit by four windows, all of which were aluminium replacements of the original timber windows. The windows in the south-western wall were set in deep reveals decorated with fillets forming four unequally sized panels; those in the south-eastern wall had no panels, and were presumably later, added after the adjoining house had been demolished. As the mouldings of the windows closely matched those of the doors it may be argued that the house had already been refurbished prior to the demolition of the adjoining building. The plaster cornice was probably of the same period and was extremely delicate with a trailing floral motif; the picture rail below was a later introduction. The fireplace and chimneypiece had been, unfortunately, entirely removed.

Following the stripping of the room aspects of the construction became clear. The chimney was constructed of large, hand-made bricks bonded with a pink mortar containing large flecks of lime. The ceiling joists proved to be unsquared plank joists of relatively slight scantling. The south-western wall was of red brick, bonded with mortar similar to that of the chimney and probably of the same period. The south-western wall was not bonded with the south-eastern wall, which was also of brick, but amazingly crudely constructed. Running through the south-eastern wall, and conflicting with the positions of the windows, were the remains of a timber-framed structure with vertical studs and diagonal braces. It was clear that the brickwork of this wall had been added against an earlier timber-framed wall separating the two original houses. When the south-eastern house was demolished the lath and plaster surface of the timber party wall was removed, exposing the lath work of the interior of the neighbouring house. The new elevation to the street was then constructed against the wall without disturbing the adjoining dwelling, using the studs and braces of the earlier timber frame as a key to tie the house and the wall together. In places the timber frame had subsequently rotted away and the resulting gaps had been infilled with later brick.

The new façade was originally provided with very large, squarish window openings of an unusual size for sashes, and it is possible that the earlier type of window, of the casement form, suggested by evidence found elsewhere in the house, was duplicated in the original rebuilding. The window openings were subsequently narrowed in the late 19th century to accept more conventionally proportioned sash windows.

5.2.3 Second floor

The second-floor, like the first, was divided by a spine corridor running the length of the house. The western room was approached by a doorway hung with a plain two-panelled door; the original hinges of which had been replaced. The room was heated by a fireplace containing a small early 19th-century hob grate. The chimneypiece was earlier, however, consisting of a broad, moulded architrave typical of the 18th century augmented by a secondary mantelshelf. Within this room a further door opened into a cupboard under the attic stairs; this also retained an original two-panelled door. The timber-framed north-western wall was constructed of squared vertical studs of small scantling with diagonal braces, covered both internally and externally with lath and plaster. The south-western wall of the room was also timber framed but had been largely rebuilt in the 20th century.

On the opposite side of the corridor the northern room was also heated by a small fireplace with an 18th century architrave serving as a chimneypiece. Removal

of the blocking showed an early 19th-century cast-iron hob grate set within an earlier segmentally-arched opening. The door to the room was of 19th-century date with four panels and the window had also been replaced by a casement at this period. The adjoining central room on the same side of the building was entered by a plain two-panelled door and lit by a large window with 19th-century casements. Close examination of the window, however, showed that it had formerly had a central mullion in addition to a transom and was therefore originally of the mullion and cross type, popular in the late 17th and very early 18th centuries, but soon afterwards superseded by the sash window.

The fireplace had a chimneypiece of the same plain type previously described, but with an added mantelshelf and a small early 19th-century cast-iron hob grate with curved cheeks. The chimney was flanked with two cupboards, the doors of which had unfortunately been removed. At ceiling level was an unusual circular ventilator with a cast-iron frame surrounding a circular door operated by brass levers. The function of this is uncertain; it may represent a patent device designed to improve the draught of the chimney.

The large southern room on this floor was heated by a fireplace in the north-western wall. The chimneypiece was of the type previously described. The room was lit by four large windows, though only the two in the south-western wall were original, the others having been created after the demolition of the adjoining house in the early 19th century and the erection of a new façade to Old Tiverton Road. The south-eastern wall had been erected against an earlier timber-framed wall, as described above, and extensive remains of the original structure remained, though in an advanced state of decay. The windows had all been replaced and their original form was not clear. The ceiling of this room had two levels of joists, none of which were well squared. These were covered in laths and thick lime plaster featuring quantities of animal hair.

5.2.4 Third floor

The third floor was approached by a tightly curving newel stair entered from the north-western end of the second-floor corridor by a two-panelled door with large, plain panels. Over the doorway was a pierced ventilator panel cut with two small baluster-like shapes.

The third floor was contained partly within the roof space and was divided into two rooms, one larger than the other, by a timber-framed wall. The doorway to the south eastern room was closed by a simple door constructed of two planks held together by battens, hung on hand-made iron strap hinges with expanded ends and retaining the original latch mechanism. The smaller room was unheated and comprised a single bay of the roof structure. Both rooms were lit by windows in the gable ends, but there was clear evidence that there were formerly at least three dormer windows in the south-western side of the roof; only one of these remained at the time of the demolition of the building.

5.2.5 The roof

The roof was supported by three tie-beam trusses, dividing the roof structure into three and a half bays; the half bay at the north-western being half-hipped. It may be assumed that the roof had been truncated to the south-east in the early 19th century when the adjoining house was demolished, and it is probable that the roof structure was continuous over both properties. The three surviving roof trusses were supported on large tie beams concealed within the third-floor structure. The principal rafters

being notched and tenoned into the upper surface of the tie beams and secured with two, large, square pegs, which were left protruding. The principal rafters were crossed and pegged together at the summit, again with protruding pegs. The collar beams had halved joints applied to the trusses and secured with spikes; however it was evident that these timbers were later additions. The purlins were roughly chamfered, trenched into the backs of the principal rafters and crudely staggered in each bay. There were diagonal, straight wind braces on the north-eastern side of the roof. The character of the roof, and its carpentry suggests a date for the construction of the houses in the early 18th century, perhaps even the late 17th century.

5.3 Discussion

At the time of its demolition the building resembled a heavily altered house of the period around 1800 to 1830. Many of the more obvious historic features within the house were of this date, particularly in the lower storeys. Closer examination, however, showed that the house contained much still earlier fabric, from the remains of cob walling on the ground floor to the remains of a modest series of 18th-century fixtures, including doors and fireplaces, all with simple moulded architraves.

The late 18th-century lease plans show that the house was one of a pair, one of which was demolished for road widening in the 1830s. The layout of the houses were unusual, with an unequal division between the properties; the smaller house had a conventional plan for the period with front and rear rooms and the staircase rising alongside them. The larger house reflected this plan, but had a further series of rooms extending to the north-west, which necessitated a long spine corridor on each floor. Had the staircase been set at the centre of the building, rather than adjoining the neighbouring house, all the rooms in this property might have been larger and directly accessible from the stair. This may suggest that the 18th-century houses were themselves a replanning of an earlier building.

Anomalies in the construction of the staircase, in the fenestration of the building, in its fixtures and in the plan of the tenements as recorded in the cartographic evidence all suggest that the existing layout was a modification of a modification, and that the house may have been an earlier structure which was refurbished in the late 18th century. As it was clearly built as a single structure, it is possible that the subdivision of the property took place at this time and that the building had begun its existence as a single, large dwelling. The character of the roof, with its pegged construction, the timber framing, the evidence of mullion and cross windows and the character of the bricks used in its original construction suggest that the house may have been constructed in the early 18th century, or possibly even the late 17th century. An appropriately-shaped property is shown upon Rocque's map of the city of 1744 (Fig. 3), and it seems certain that this may be identified with the building under discussion.

If the house was indeed of such an early date it may well have been constructed on a site which had been laid waste during the turmoil of the Civil War, and could represent one of the dwindling number of examples of late 17th-century suburban reconstruction in which the city suburbs were formerly so rich.

6. TRENCH EVALUATION & WATCHING BRIEF

6.1 Trench 1

Following demolition of the standing building on site, it was apparent that the existing concrete floor slab in the rear half of the plot had been laid on a base of hardcore, which directly overlay the top of the natural substrate. The slab and base materials were removed by machine under archaeological supervision, and a 2.4m toothless grading bucket employed to clear a strip 10.10m long in the centre of this area. No archaeological features or deposits were present; the building had been constructed within a terrace cut into the top of natural deposits (50.93m a.O.D).

6.2 Trench 2

A 1.1m wide trench was excavated along the southwestern side of the development area, extending parallel with the edge of the site for 7.5m before turning north for a further 4m. Beneath the demolition debris was a layer of mortar, 30 to 40mm thick, which had been laid within a terrace cut into the top of natural deposits (top of natural: 49.94m a.O.D). The southeast limit of the layer was observed 2m from the edge of the site and was defined by a line of coarse rubble infill, which extended beyond the end of the trench. A line of disturbance, probably representing the line of a former wall, defined the northwestern edge of the mortar layer. The total length of mortar layer observed was 4.5m. Fragments of 18th century pottery were found in the soil infill between the northwestern edge of the terrace cut and the back of the wall.

6.3 Trench 3

A 1.10m wide trench was opened slightly to the northeast of the central axis of the plot and extended back from just inside the frontage for 8.5m. The deposits exposed in Trench 2 were also recorded here. Within Trench 3 the northwest edge of the mortar layer abutted a more substantial (undisturbed) wall foundation, which measured 0.9m wide and composed predominantly of large, but slightly rounded breccia blocks bonded with ash mortar. Similar soil infill to that present in Trench 2 lay within the terrace cut to the rear of the wall. Natural ground was recorded at a height of 49.99m a.O.D. in Trench 3.

6.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 measured 0.7m wide and extended from the wall of the existing building (No. 2, Old Tiverton Road) on the northeastern side of the redevelopment area, to meet the northwestern end of Trench 3. A slight and shallow-footed brick wall aligned NW-SE was exposed 2.5m from the northeastern end of the trench. This overlay a large feature infilled with red sand that had been cut through the infill of the terrace located behind the breccia wall noted in Trench 3; a quantity of ceramic soil pipe was recovered from debris in this area and the feature may be associated with a toilet or outhouse. The height of natural ground at the northeast end of Trench 4 was recorded at 49.99m a.O.D.

6.5 Trenches 5 and 6

Two small test pits were excavated down the outer face of the wall on the northeastern boundary of the site (No. 2, Old Tiverton Road) approximately 11m (Trench 5) and 18m (Trench 6) back from the frontage. These pits showed that the

present building is constructed on poor rubble footings founded on the surface of the natural, rather than within a trench.

6.6 Watching Brief

The watching brief was maintained during all subsequent ground works on site (30th July-2nd August 2007). The mortar layer was seen to extend between the former locations of Trenches 2 and 3, together with the line of a former wall along the northwest edge of the layer. The only additional archaeological feature was a 1.7m long section of breccia wall foundation, located at the southeast edge of the site, equidistant between the ends of Trenches 2 & 3. The wall extended only 0.25m along the edge of the site and was similar to that found within Trench 3.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The results of both the documentary assessment and the building survey suggest that the earlier elements of the building that formerly occupied the site had done so since at least the first half of the 18th century, with the possibility of a late 17th century origin.

The suggestion of a refurbishment of some scale that occurred in perhaps the mid-18th century appears to be supported by the scant collection of pottery sherds (nine in total) that were recovered either from the infill of the terrace to the rear of the wall-line noted in Trenches 2 and 3 and from the overburden during excavation of the trenches. All the sherds are from South Somerset coarsewares, which, with one exception (an abraded 17th century type) date from the first half of the 18th century. The absence of later transfer printed wares, Staffordshire salt-glazed stoneware, and creamware appears to support this, rather than a later, date (G. Langman, *pers. comm.*).

Both the building itself, and the modern concrete apron to the north-west, had been constructed within terraces cut into the natural substrate, and no deposits of a date earlier than the mid-18th century had survived anywhere within the development area. No archaeological cut features were present other than those associated with the building.

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Reproductions of the Hooker map of St Sidwell's Fee, John Rocque's & John Coldridge's maps.

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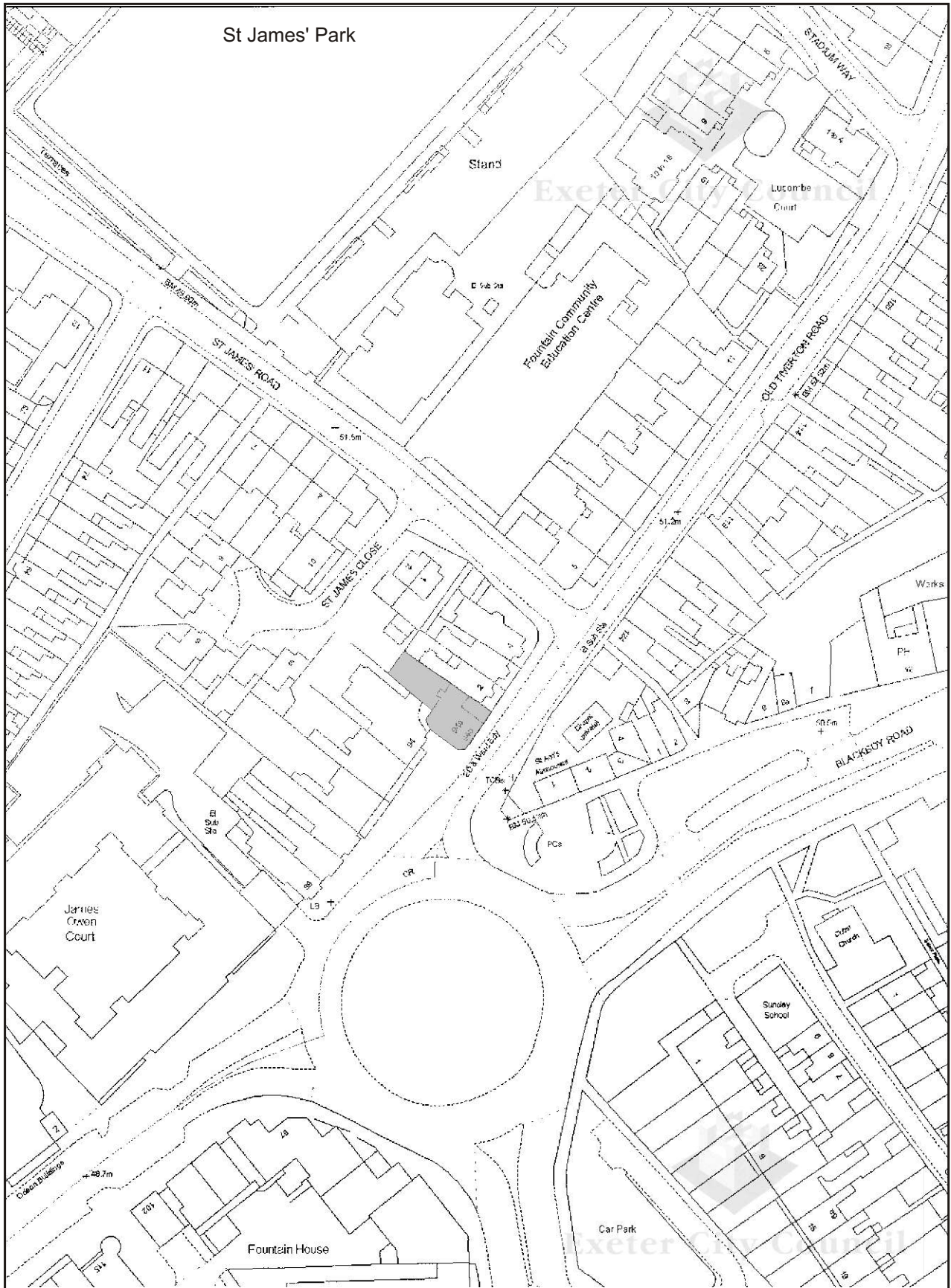


Fig. 1 Location of site (shaded). Scale 1:1,250. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Exeter City Council 100025345.

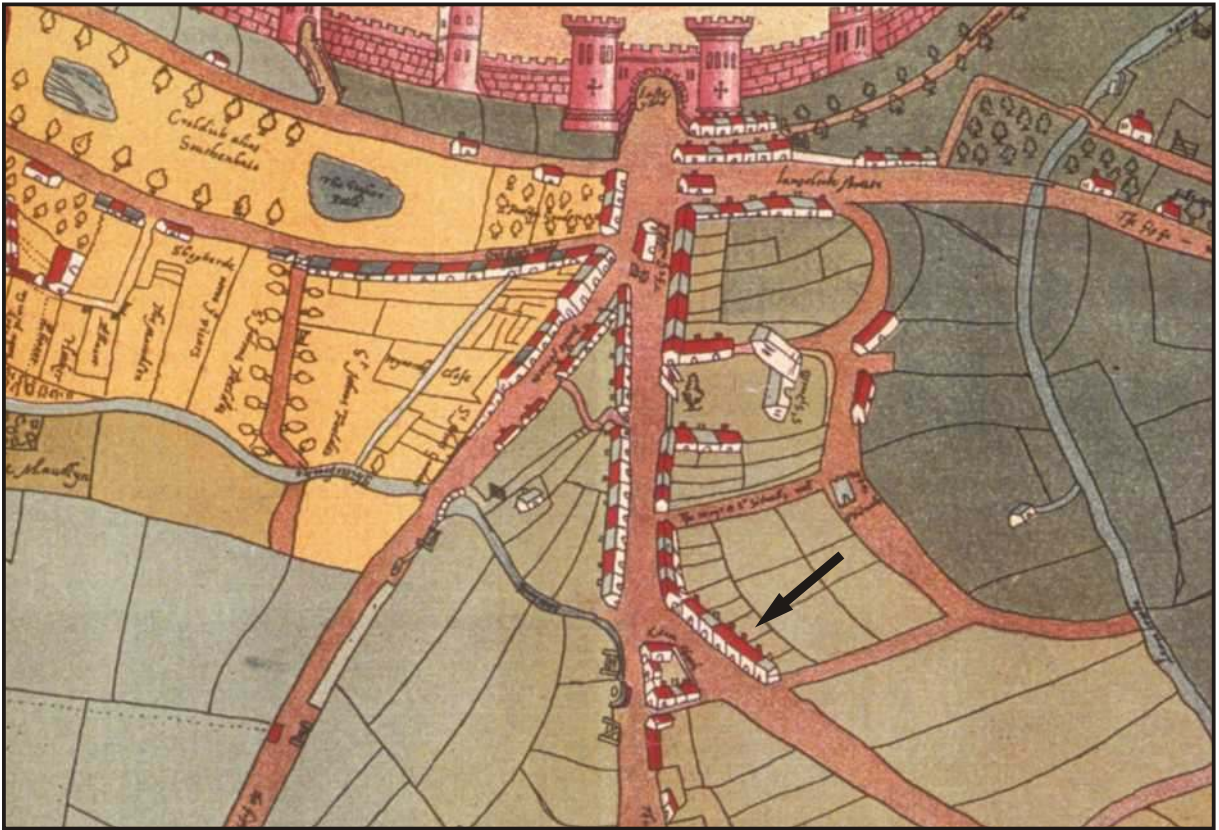


Fig. 2 Extract from John Hooker's late 16th-century map of the bounds of St Sidwell's Fee.

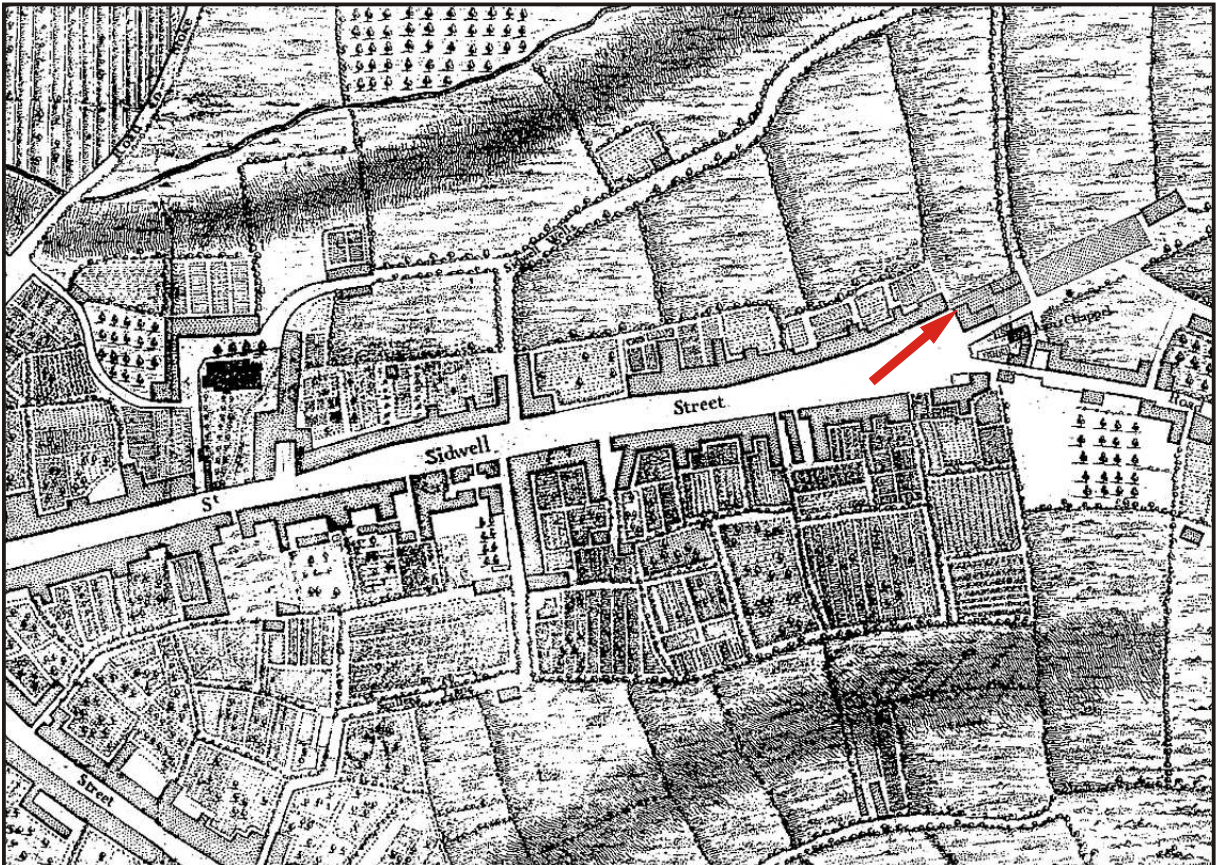


Fig. 3 Extract from John Rocque's 1744 map of Exeter.



Fig. 5 Extract from John Coldridge's 1819 map of Exeter, enlarged to 1:500.

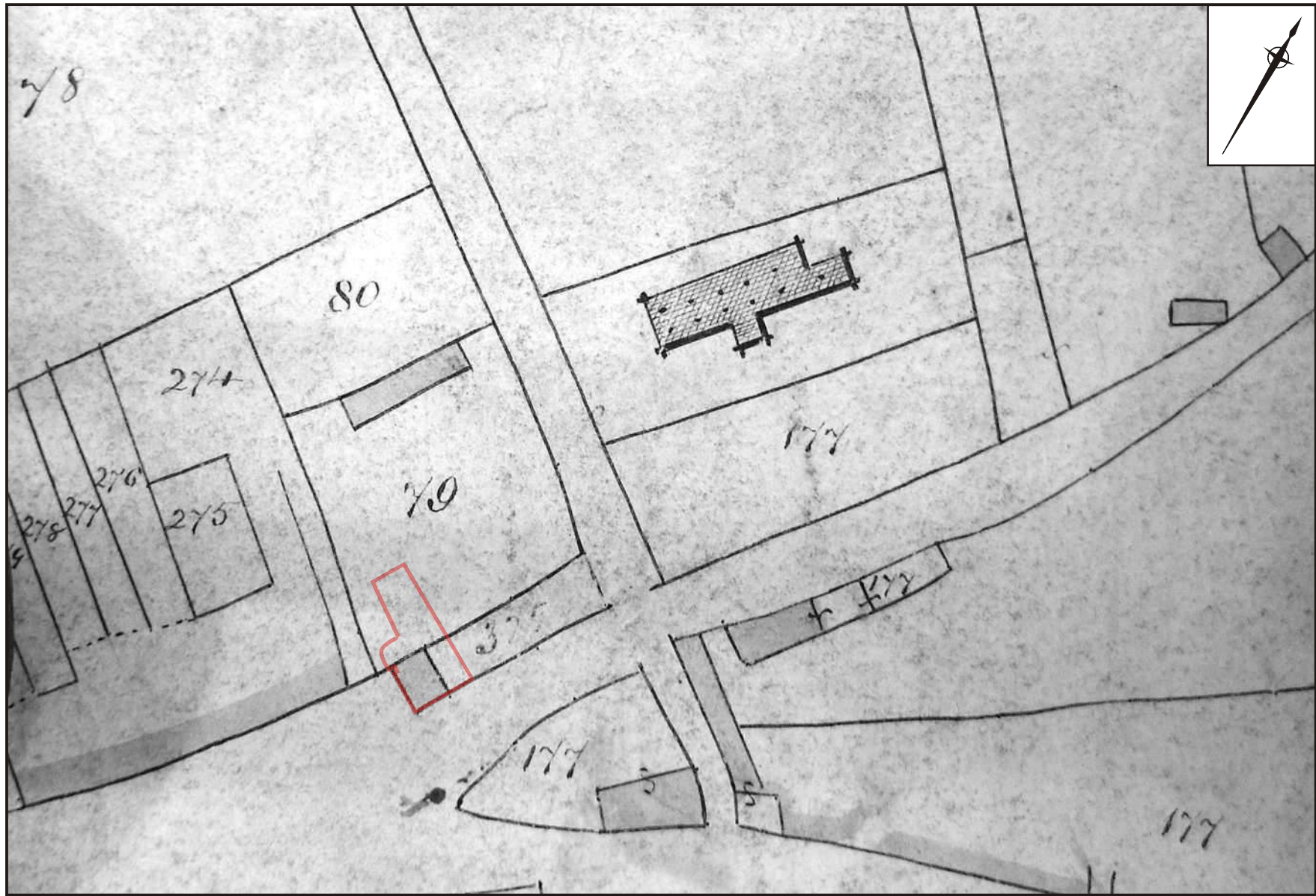


Fig. 6 Extract from the 1842 St Sidwell's Tithe Map, enlarged to 1:1000, showing the recently-widened St James's Road.

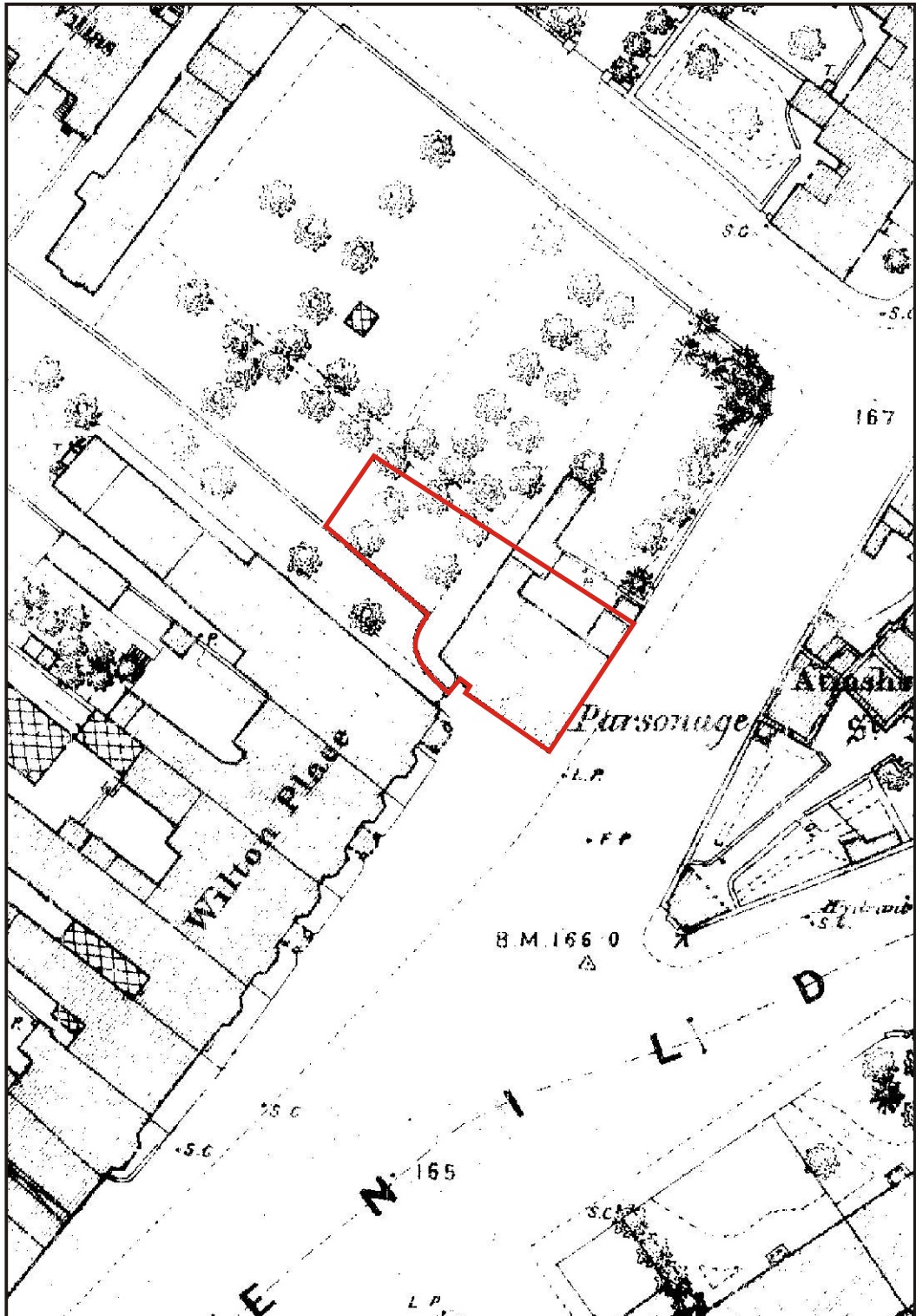


Fig. 7 Extract from the 1876 Ordnance Survey 1:500 scale map sheet Devonshire LXXX.6.9.

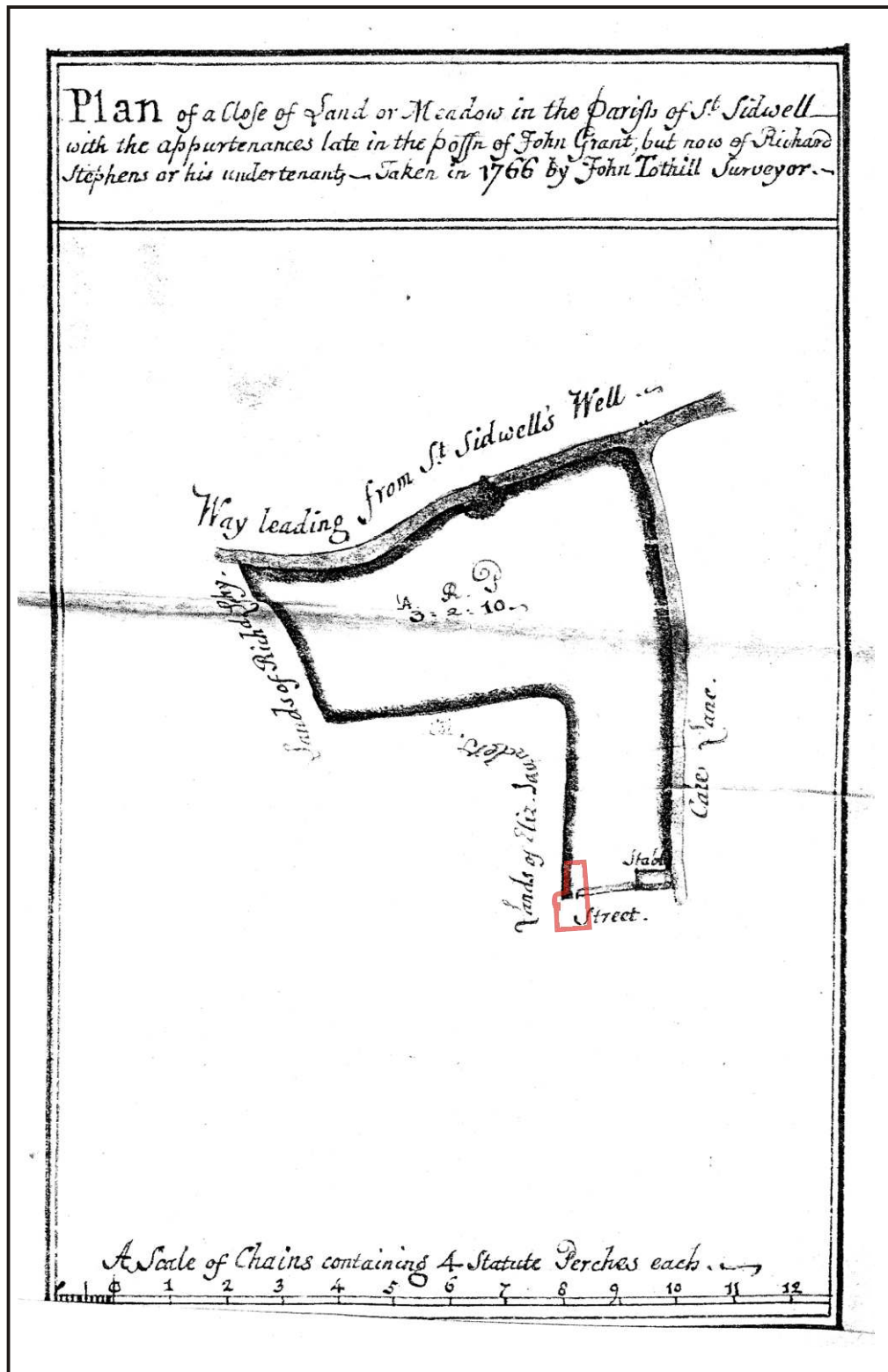
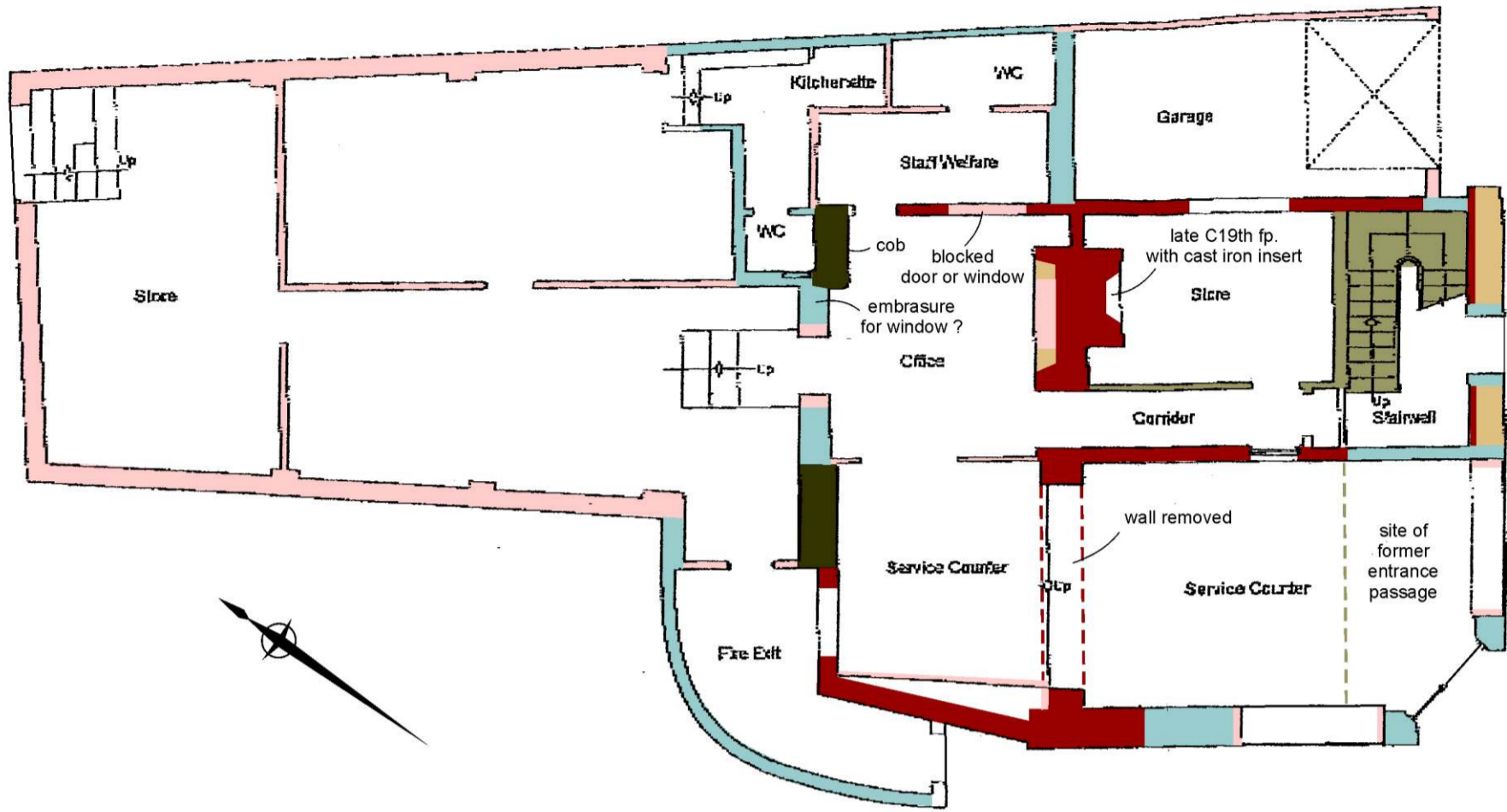
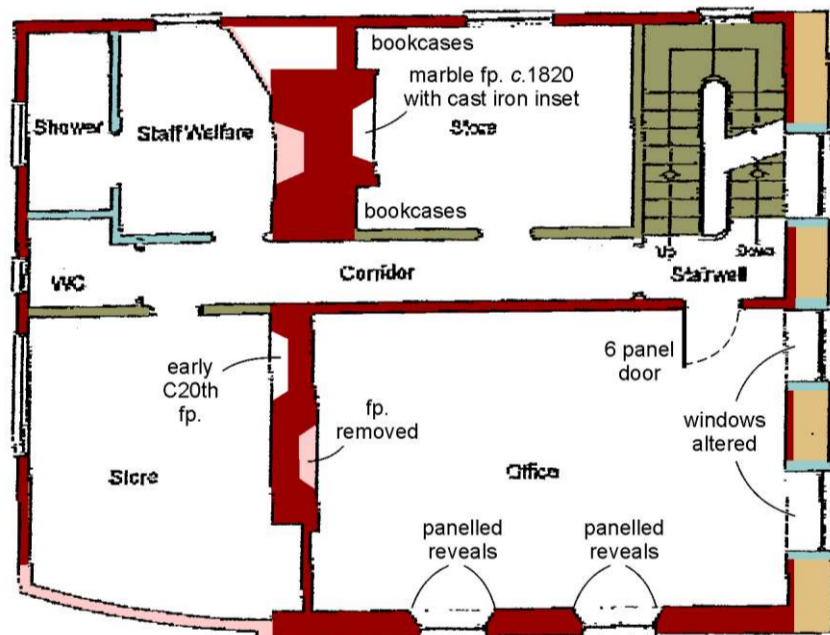


Fig. 8 John Tothill's plan of the property granted to Richard Stephens in 1766. Reproduced by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, reference 46/76297.

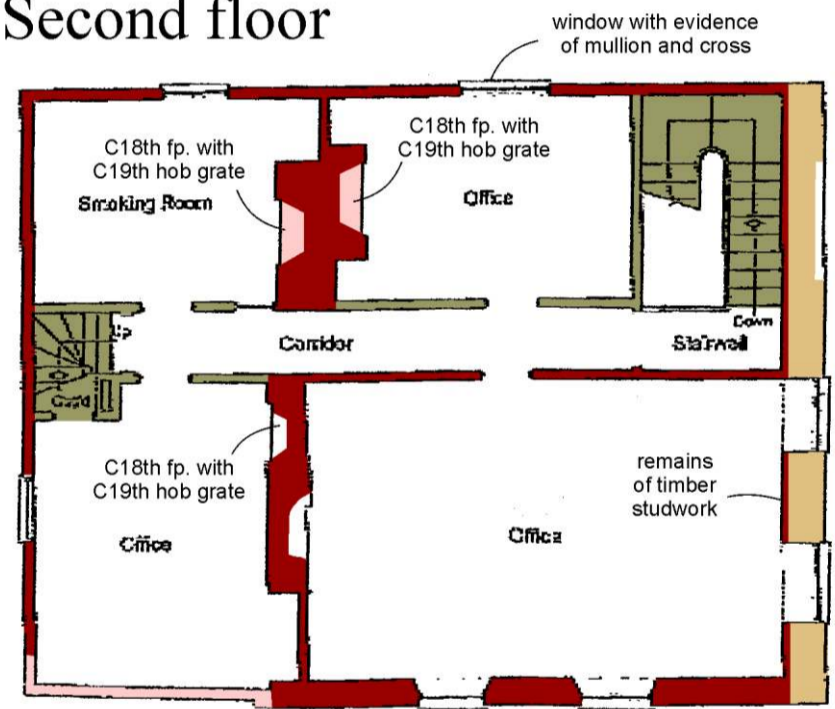
Ground floor



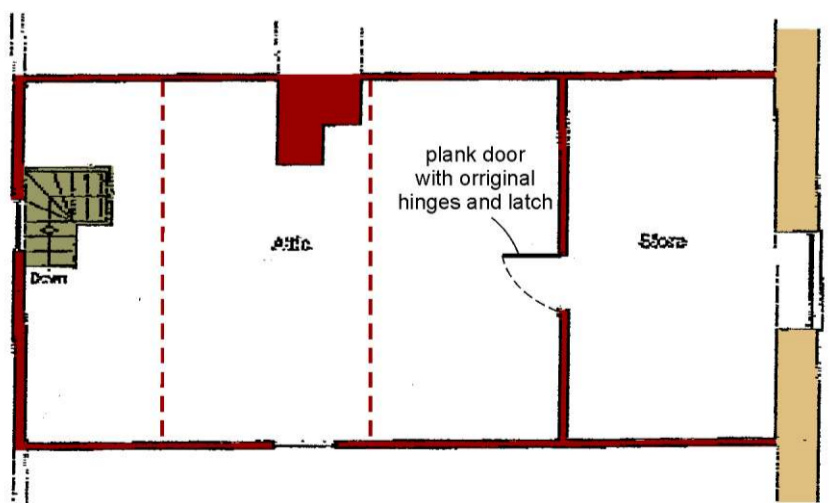
First floor



Second floor



Third floor



- cob- ? predating building
- early 18th century
- late 18th century
- c. 1830
- c. 1880 - 1900
- modern

0 10 metres

Fig. 9 Plan of the building, based on architects' drawings, with suggested phasing.

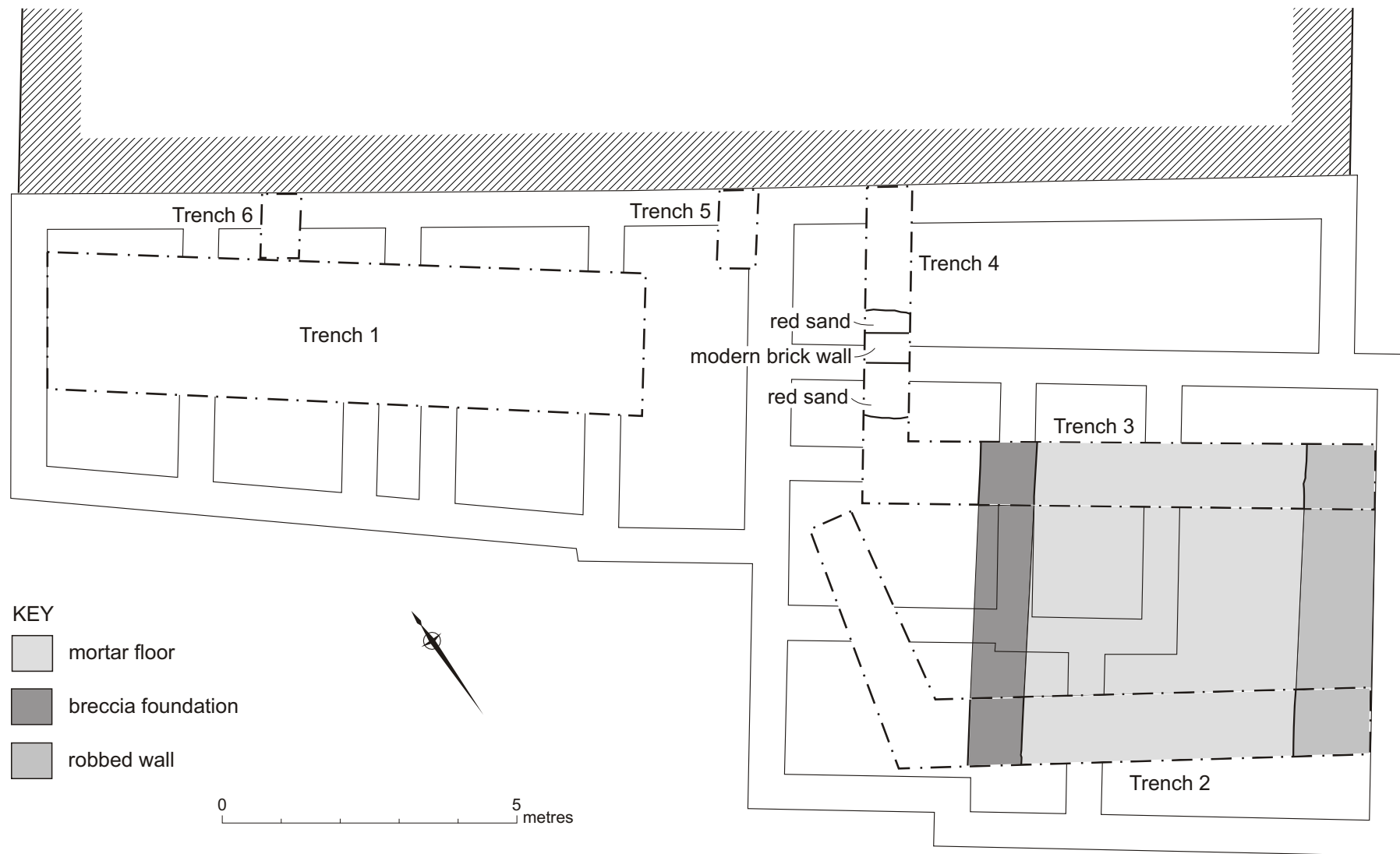


Fig. 10 Plan of foundation trenches, evaluation trenches and features. Scale 1:100.