

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING SURVEY
OF PARADISE COTTAGE,
TOTNES, DEVON**

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Exeter Archaeology

Report No. 07.63

Project No. 5939

August 2007

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(Plates 1 and 2 provided courtesy of Casper Holst, Sustainable Design Collective).

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by Sustainable Design Collective and presents the results of a programme of historic building recording carried out by Exeter Archaeology (EA) at Paradise Cottage, Totnes, Devon during 2007. The work was required on the advice of Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (HES) as a condition of the grant of planning permission for alterations to Paradise Cottage (application ref: 56/1689/06/F).

2. THE SITE

Totnes is an ancient settlement, which has grown to encapsulate a stretch of the River Dart. The town grew from a Saxon burh, which overlooked the river from its western bank. Archaeological evidence for pre-Saxon settlement of the area includes prehistoric flints, Iron Age pottery and Roman ceramics found in and around Totnes indicating occupation which stretches back into the Neolithic period.

Paradise Cottage is located at NGR 8028 6034 (Fig.1), within an area of medieval expansion of occupation beyond the limits of the original burh. The cottage sits behind Totnes Museum, a former merchant's house of 16th/17th century origin. The latter was the principal building of a burgage plot running southward from Fore Street. The museum is located at the front of its plot, with most of Paradise Cottage stretching back from the centre. The remainder of the premises are located in the adjacent plot to the west. The premises are entered at the western end, through the adjacent burgage plot, via a covered way off Presbytery Street (the road running off the juncture between High and Fore streets).

3. PROJECT BRIEF

A brief for the recording project has been supplied on behalf of the local planning authority by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (HES). The principal requirements of the brief were:

- Rapid documentary, cartographic and archival assessment.
- Investigation and recording of historic building fabric/architectural detail exposed, removed or obscured by the development.
- Investigation and recording of archaeological deposits and features exposed during groundworks.
- Production of a report (this document) and a project archive.

4. METHOD

A rapid desktop assessment was carried out to examine any documentary and cartographic evidence concerning Paradise Cottage and its environs. Unfortunately most of the centre of Totnes is poorly represented in the available map evidence. Part of the town was not tithable and Paradise Cottage is not depicted on the 1842 tithe map. Its first distinct appearance is on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1887).

The survey of involved a written and photographic record of the buildings in digital format. Annotations were made to plans and elevations supplied by Sustainable Design Collective to provide a description of the buildings and form the basis of this report.

The site was also subject to an archaeological watching brief to observe earth-moving activity, including the digging of foundation and service trenches within the property bounds.

5. BUILDING SURVEY

Paradise Cottage (Fig. 2, plates 1-2) is chiefly a two-storey building with an L-shaped plan. The building is multiphase and consequently quite irregular in appearance and layout. Its construction is such that it has the rather disjointed look of several separate units. For the benefit of this report, the building has been divided into its three principal components. These consist of a rectangular eastern wing, a tall central section and a small single-storey western wing.

This report was compiled during the renovation of the building and following the completion of all intended intrusive excavations and building work affecting the historic fabric. The building is therefore described as it then currently appeared and any subsequent alterations which may effect its appearance will not be discussed here.

5.1 Eastern wing

The eastern wing is a long rectangular two-storey build with a low-set hipped roof. It is aligned north-south, respecting an ancient property boundary or burgage plot behind Totnes Museum. Internally it measures about 6m x 17m.

Materials and construction

The walls are chiefly constructed of Devonian slate, although bricks have been used in some of the alterations.

Northern elevation

This elevation faces the back of the museum and contains three openings within its exposed stone finish: two on the ground floor and a small window on the first floor. The first-floor window is only about 0.6m wide and has a rendered sill. Below it is a 1.5m wide doorway, which has been reduced to half its width by the infill of its western side. A break in the masonry defines the position of the original western jamb, and the wooden lintel still continues across it. The ground floor window also shows signs of alteration and contains several bricks inserted into its jambs amid 20th century cement. The window also features a modern slate sill. Despite its modern appearance, the window is based on an earlier opening as evidenced by a burnt historic lintel on its inner face.

Eastern elevation

This elevation (Fig. 3) also has an exposed stonework finish and contains a number of features; a doorway, a blocked ground floor window, numerous first-floor windows and sundry breaks within the masonry.

A short window stood above the doorway at the southern end of the elevation. Some wooden cladding separated it from a first floor window. The jambs of the doorway show signs of disturbance and include the occasional brick in their composition.

A horizontal break in the wall, 2.4m from ground level, runs 11.8m from the doorway toward the north. There is a vertical break at its northern end. This break appears to run up the entire height of the building, although it was interrupted by the insertion of a ground floor window (later blocked) and coincides with the southern jamb of the northernmost of three half-dormer windows.

There is no clear limit to the southern extent of the break, save the northern jamb of the doorway, which is not an original feature. A 2m tall break is located about 1.5m from the northern doorjamb. There are quoins on its northern side; they may represent the earlier phase. The break does not extend as far as the horizontal break, but instead it stops at a line of mortar (the scar of a former roofline).

Two further vertical breaks are visible at first floor level. Both appear to have extended to the eave of the roof, although the southern break coincided with the southern jamb of a window. This was another of the three 0.95m wide dormer windows housed under a common monopitch roof and associated with six shorter windows sitting on the top of the wall. The last of the first floor windows was set away from the others and measured 0.6m in width.

Southern elevation

The southern elevation was finished in stucco, scored to imitate ashlar. The elevation contains two openings: a small first-floor window, offset to the east, and French windows in a bay on the western side. It may be noted that the internal width and position of the bay window is comparable with the doorway in the northern elevation, as it appeared prior to its alteration.

Western elevation

The southern half of the elevation had been obscured by the abutment of the central section. Prior to recent changes the exposed section of the elevation had irregular fenestration. A wide garage doorway was positioned near the centre; its southern jamb corresponding with a break in the opposing eastern wall, suggesting this was the former northern limit of the building. A 1m wide window was located centrally above it and a half dormer was offset to the south. Below it, on the ground floor, was a 0.7m wide window. A further 0.9m wide window was located against an extension to the adjoining central building section.

Interior

The plan was rather irregular, being part domestic and part utility. It had a small northern room (only 1.5m wide) and a garage to its south. A corridor ran along down from the garage along the eastern side of other rooms.

The northern room was created by the insertion of a stone wall which ran off the eastern exterior wall (plate 3). The stonework was supplemented by concrete blocks and bricks, stepped in 0.13m from the northern edge of the wall. The room contains a large baulk of masonry in its north-western corner (plate 4), the purpose of which is unclear. It does not extend to first-floor level.

A flight of steps, with a large trap door, was added against the western wall when at least part of the wing was used as a flat.

The northern part of the garage floor at least was cobbled. The garage was entered via a short flight of steps and a doorway through a thick load-bearing wall from the adjoining utility room to the south. In addition to the wide doorway, also bore the locations of the ground floor window in the west and the blocked window in the east.

The 2.2m-wide corridor, which ran down to the doorway at the southern end of the eastern wall, occupied over half of the length of the building. It was separated from a utility room and a dining room by thin wall insertions. That of the dining room also contained a fireplace with a chimneybreast, which projected into the room. The dining room also featured a small cupboard in the corner with glass shelves and a doorway back into the utility room. This doorway was located in a load-bearing wall and had a moulded architrave.

The western wall of the utility room was broken by an opening into a small galley kitchen within the extension along the back of the central section. The southern corner of this opening was tapered. This was a later alteration and contained fragments of air brick. The wall continued from this point as 19th century brick, built up in English bond.

The first floor is split level, being accessed via a flight of steps at the back of the central section of the house. The stairs rose up to a short landing, from which a bathroom was accessed to the left via a step down and a gallery, leading to another room, to the right (via a step up). Another flight of steps then descended from the landing into a larger landing encompassing almost the entire south-eastern quarter of the first floor. A doorway in the northern landing wall led into another large room with further doors leading off to a bathroom and other smaller rooms.

Roof

The hipped slate roof was supported by nine trusses: five historic and four 20th century. The historic trusses consisted of re-used marked timbers. As the roof was partly removed before any archaeological recording was carried out, only one of these trusses could be photographed and can be remarked upon here. This truss was an A-frame with a collar beam. Both horizontal beams were bolted onto the southern face of the principle rafters. There are also signs of earlier bolt holes, which suggests the form is not original. The use of bolts also indicates post-1800 work.

The highest number observed was XXIII, in prominent V-cut Roman numerals (plate 5). Since these timbers were from re-used roof trusses, the numbering suggests they were taken from a significantly larger building, of at least 23 bays, and therefore at least 30m length, perhaps a warehouse or other industrial building.

5.2 Central section

The central section of the building is its tallest part, towering awkwardly over the adjacent wings. It is a one up, one down structure with a chimney rising from its

eastern wall and a two-storey lean-to addition at its back. The lean-to had a slight overhang to create the impression of a jetty.

Materials and construction

The walls are chiefly constructed of Devonian slate, although bricks have been used in some alterations.

Northern elevation

The northern elevation was occupied entirely by the jettied lean-to addition. The structure was timber framed, finished with an external coat of render. It featured a plain timber framed first floor window and two uPVC ground floor windows.

Eastern elevation

Most of this elevation is hidden by the eastern wing. A former gabled roofline was noted extending down from the level of the eaves. The scar was still coated in pink paint when it was observed and no further information may be noted.

Southern elevation

The southern elevation contained two large windows, one on each level, along the centre of the elevation. The upper window has fake external shutters and the lower window is about 2m in height.

Western elevation

The western elevation was adjoined, on the ground floor, by the western wing. There were no other features of note.

Interior

The ground floor is entered from the west via the lean-to at the back and the western wing. Both staircase and living room are accessed via the western wing. The wall to the north of the stairs was a thick stone wall. The staircase and the living room are separated by a brick wall. A partially blocked doorway is situated at the eastern end of the wall, the architrave of which is visible in the living room. This doorway now contains a smaller two-leaf doorway of a large brick safe under the staircase (plate 6).

The living room also contains a tall, 1.9m wide, recess in the western wall, comparable with the opening for a large bay window. The eastern wall features a central fireplace, projecting into the room, and a doorway to the adjacent dining room.

The first floor contains a bedroom over the living room and a bathroom in the lean-to at the back. Both are entered via the top of the staircase. The bedroom contains a chimneybreast in the centre of the eastern elevation. The wall is rebated either side to create tall alcoves. The western wall contains a tall alcove comparable with that in the living room below. A two-leaf doorway at the western end of the northern wall led into a walk in cupboard over part of the staircase.

Roof

The roof was hipped and based on two nailed tie-beam trusses with yokes for the ridge piece. Queen posts have been nailed onto the northern elevations of each truss.

Due to the nature of their addition, it cannot be determined whether they are original, or later additions.

5.3 **Western wing**

The western wing was built onto a property boundary wall. This wall runs through the former burgage plot to the west and was presumably erected when Paradise Cottage became separate premises. The wing has been built on the southern side of the boundary wall – effectively projecting into the neighbouring garden. It is of only a single storey and irregular in shape.

Materials and construction

The walls are currently rendered, but are presumably stone-built.

Northern elevation

This wall appears to be part pre-existing property boundary, as evidenced by a curved edge along the upper third of the wall where the masonry sweeps back. A rounded addition at the eastern end of the elevation curves around to adjoin the lean-to at the back of the central section, incorporating a small entrance porch. This feature has the appearance of a projecting turret staircase; it is unlikely to be of great age. A small flat roof awning, supported by two posts, spans the front door.

Beside it, the stub of an old chimneystack rises a short distance above the eaves of the roof. Further west again is a small window.

Western elevation

This elevation projects entirely into the adjacent premises and has not been viewed.

Southern elevation

This wall has only been seen from inside. It has two windows and the easternmost part (against the central section) is slightly angled, suggesting some form of infill.

Interior

The interior of the wing is composed of a small porch, a lobby area, with three doorways and the foot of the staircase and a small room.

The porch is entered from the front door and gives access to a small 20th century toilet to the east and the lobby to the south. A small cupboard-style opening into the rounded structure is passed en route to the lobby. The other doorways lead to the living room to the east and into the rest of the western wing on the other side.

The main room in the western wing measured about 2.6 x 4.4m. Its only notable features are both in the northern wall: the fireplace and a two-leaf doorway into a cupboard within the rounded wall projecting into the courtyard.

Roof

The roof is chiefly a south-facing monopitch, although there is a short return on the northern side to cap the wall. The return continues further over the rounded feature at the eastern end.

6. GROUNDWORKS

A series of trenches was excavated in the interior of the property, across the large east wing. The trenches were for footings for partition walls and interior features. The trenches were excavated on both north to south and east to west alignments and measured 1.3m wide.

The trenches were excavated to a depth of 1.00m throughout and exposed the following stratigraphy facing west along the east wall (Fig. 2, trench 1):

- 0-0.15m. Modern concrete render floor.
- 0.15-0.26m. Mixed moderate sized lumps of limestone and brick fragments. Make-up layer for floor surface.
- 0.26-0.46m. Large, rectangular natural stone blocks. Foundations.
- 0.46-1.00m. Dark grey brown, moderate to firm compaction, fine to coarse sand/clay (30%: 70%). With frequent stone and slate shards, and occasional charcoal fragments and oyster shells. Levelling material.

An east to west aligned section (Fig. 2, trench 2), approximately halfway across the east wing, exposed the following stratigraphy:

- 0-0.08m. Modern concrete render floor surface.
- 0.08-0.20m. Earlier brick surface.
- 0.20-0.44m. Dark grey, friable, layer of slate shards, off-white lime mortar and occasional brick fragments. Make-up material for above.
- 0.44-0.80m. Mixed layer of mainly mid brown, friable, sand/silt. With occasional brick fragments, slate shards, moderate sized, angular stones. Levelling material.
- 0.80-1.00m+. Natural subsoil.

The final excavations observed within the interior of the building was a service pipe trench aligned north to south, issuing from the northwest corner of the east wing. The trench (Fig. 2, trench 3) measured 6.80m long by 0.50m wide. The excavations exposed the following stratigraphy:

- 0-0.08m. Modern concrete floor surface.
- 0.08-0.18m. Earlier brick surface.
- 0.18-0.42m. Mid grey brown, friable, silt/clay (30%: 70%). With frequent brick fragments, slate shards, small stones of various description and some crushed mortar. Levelling material.
- 0.42-0.60m+. Natural subsoil.

Halfway along the trench the remains of a brick built drainage channel was exposed, just below the concrete surface. It descended to a depth of 0.60m and had levelling material in it due to damage.

Several finds were retrieved during the groundworks. These included pottery, glass, tile and clay pipe. The unstratified, surface finds were dated from the 17th century to the 19th century, and the finds from the levelling layer, [500], from the 15th to the 16th century.

Through observations on the trenching it was possible to determine that the natural subsoil sloped gently from north to south. The ground level had then been raised at

the south end to create a level base upon which the south end of the east wing could be built

7. DISCUSSION

The building almost certainly originated as an outbuilding for the house now occupied by Totnes Museum. The eastern wing follows the alignment of the burgage plot and is perhaps the most substantial of the elements of the house. It is unclear whether it was contemporary with the merchant's house or a later addition to the site, due to an absence of datable features within the earliest construction phases. The datable artefacts from the levelling material within the wing indicate the earliest possible date for its construction was during the 16th century.

The wing is clearly multiphase and extended from a smaller structure, perhaps single storey, as evidenced by the vertical and horizontal breaks in the masonry of the eastern wall. Further alterations were made following the enlargement of this building and it was probably at this point that the (now blocked) window and the wide first floor opening were added. It is equally likely that the wide ground floor opening at the northern end of the building was also contemporary with this work. The terminus of the northernmost partition wall and the bay window in the southern wall coincide with the alignment of this opening. This raises the possibility of some form of passage along the western side of the building. These second-phase openings are the indicator that the building served as an outbuilding for the 16th/17th century merchant's house (museum).

The re-used trusses along this wing were probably added during this phase, the nature of their numbers (running up to XXIII) suggesting they were removed from another structure with a much larger roof, perhaps a warehouse.

The relationship between the eastern wing and central section cannot be determined as no exposed stonework could be inspected along the join of the building. Scarring at first floor level of the central section suggests that it was formerly finished with a gabled roofline (at least on the eastern side), which ran east to west. This roofline suggests that the central section was originally single-storey. The chimneystack is offset to the south of this apex and it is likely that it is contemporary with the alteration to the roof outline. This implies that the central section was also initially constructed as an outbuilding rather than a dwelling.

The next phase of activity was the conversion of the building into a dwelling incorporating all of the elements. Map evidence indicates this to have taken place before the OS survey of 1887 (Fig. 4). The tall ceilings and architraves suggest a 18th or 19th century conversion. This is also the latest period that Paradise Cottage could have been separated from the burgage plots it straddles, and access allowed through the covered way from Presbytery Street.

Further alterations were made during either the late 19th or early 20th century, as evidenced by the insertion of the brick safe, which would logically follow the insertion of the staircase. Once the staircase had been placed in situ, the doorway surrounding the safe would have become unusable, lest it contained a two-leaf door.

The final major phase of activity prior to recent renovation work was the insertion of five early 20th century trusses at the northernmost end of the building. It may be mere coincidence that these trusses were inserted in this part of the building, which appears to have suffered a fire, which damaged a ground floor window lintel.

8. CONCLUSION

The complex evolution of Paradise Cottage is owed, in part, to the premises' creation from multiple burgage plots. The main part of the building probably originated as a small outbuilding – perhaps only single storey – for the merchant's house facing onto Fore Street. The building was enlarged to create either a larger two-storey warehouse, or some form of service or industrial building. This in turn appears to have been enlarged with two extensions to the west. The first of these extensions was later raised in height and it was probably at this stage that the building was converted to a dwelling. Some areas of stonework were not exposed and if these were to be investigated in the future, further interpretation may be possible.

9. FINDS LISTING

The finds recovered during the watching brief have been listed in the table below.

Context	Material	Quantity	Date	Comments
Unstratified	Clay pipe	1 fragment	17-19th Century	Stem mouthpiece, plain, abraded.
	Glass	1 fragment	c.1650-80	Green bottle,
	Tile	2 fragments	16-17th Century	Ridge tile, coarse Totnes-type fabric, unglazed, with incised lines.
	Pottery	2 sherds 2 vessels	16-17th Century	Totnes-type handles, one ?cistern and one jug
500	Post-medieval pottery	1 sherd 1 vessel	Early 16th Century	North Devon gravel-free ware, cup
		1 sherd 1 vessel	15-16th Century	Totnes-type, unglazed bodysherd

10. ARCHIVE

The archive relating to this project is currently held at Exeter Archaeology's premises prior to deposition at Plymouth Museum.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by Sustainable Design Collective and carried out in accordance with a brief supplied by the HES. The fieldwork was carried out by J.S. Bell, R.W. Parker and C.S. Wakeham (EA), with an initial site visit by J. Allan. The report was prepared by J.S. Bell and C.S. Wakeham. It was edited by J. Allan. Documentary research was carried out by M. Neophytou. The drawings and illustrations were prepared by J. Read. The finds were dated by J. Wheeler (EA). The project was administered by J. Allan (EA) and by Graham Tait (HES). Casper Holst of Sustainable Design Collective kindly provided some images of the property as it stood prior to the enhancement work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Maps

Tithe map of the parish of Totnes, 1842.

OS 1: 500 1st edition Devon CXXI 5.24, 1888 (surveyed 1887).

OS 1:1250 2nd edition Devon CXXI 5.24, 1906 (revision of 1904).

OS 1:1250 Devon CXXI 5.24, (revision of 1933).



Fig. 1 Location of site.

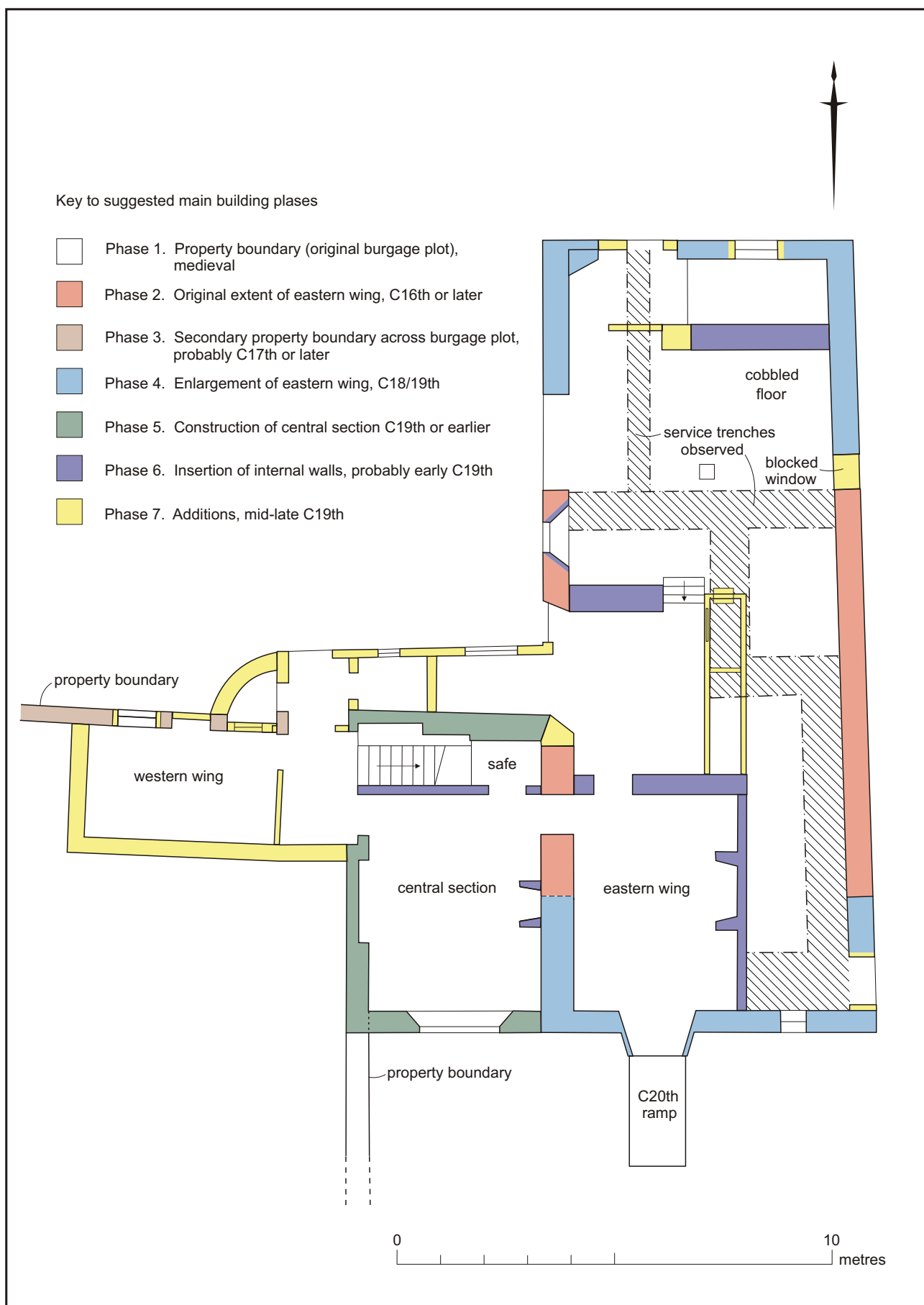


Fig. 2 Ground floor plan of Paradise Cottage with suggested phasing, based on restricted observations and ground works. Adapted from plan supplied by Sustainable Design Collective, Totnes. Scale 1:125.

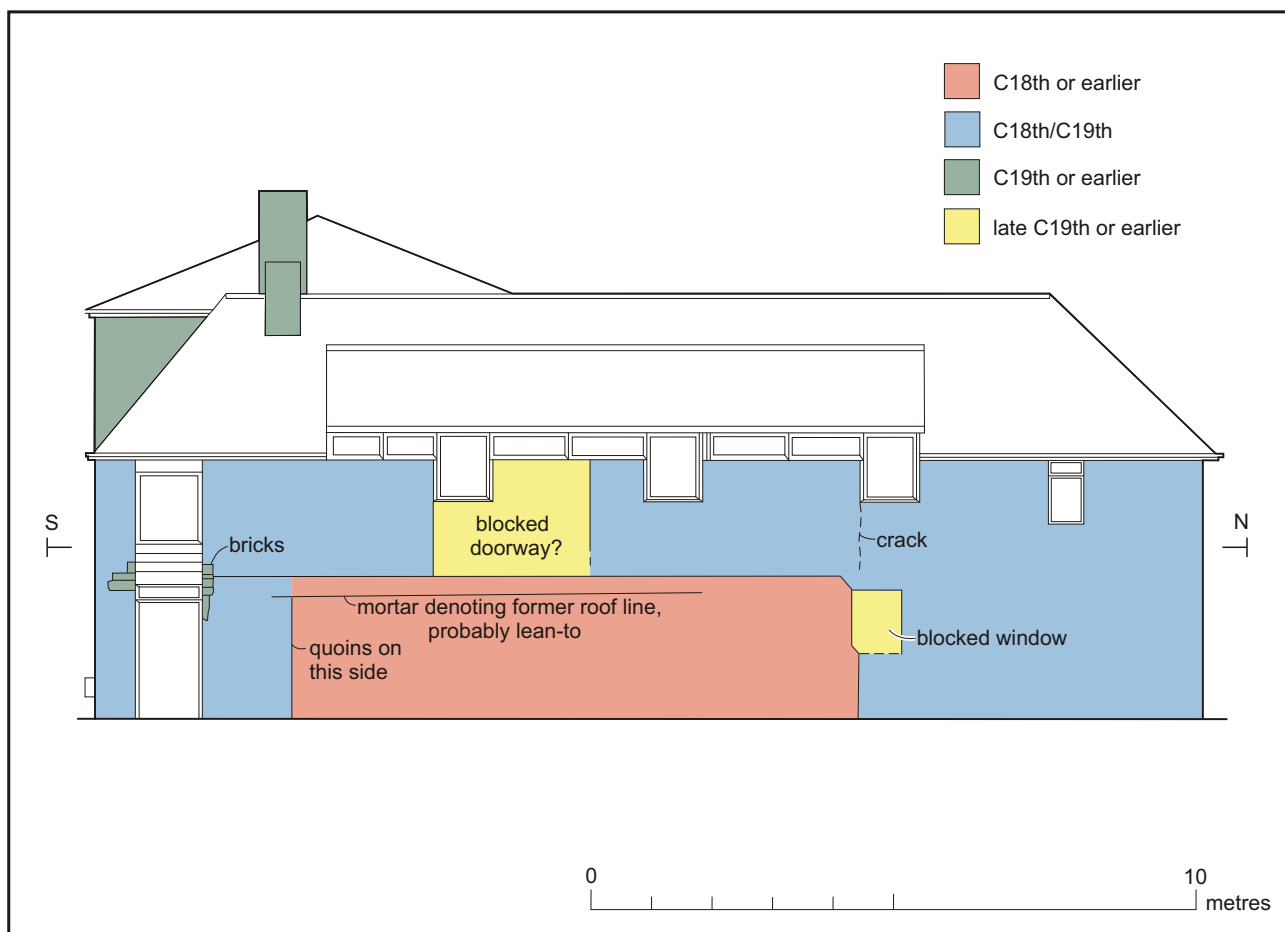


Fig. 3 Eastern elevation of Paradise Cottage showing features and masonry construction phases. Based on elevation supplied by Sustainable Design Collective, Totnes. Scale 1:125.

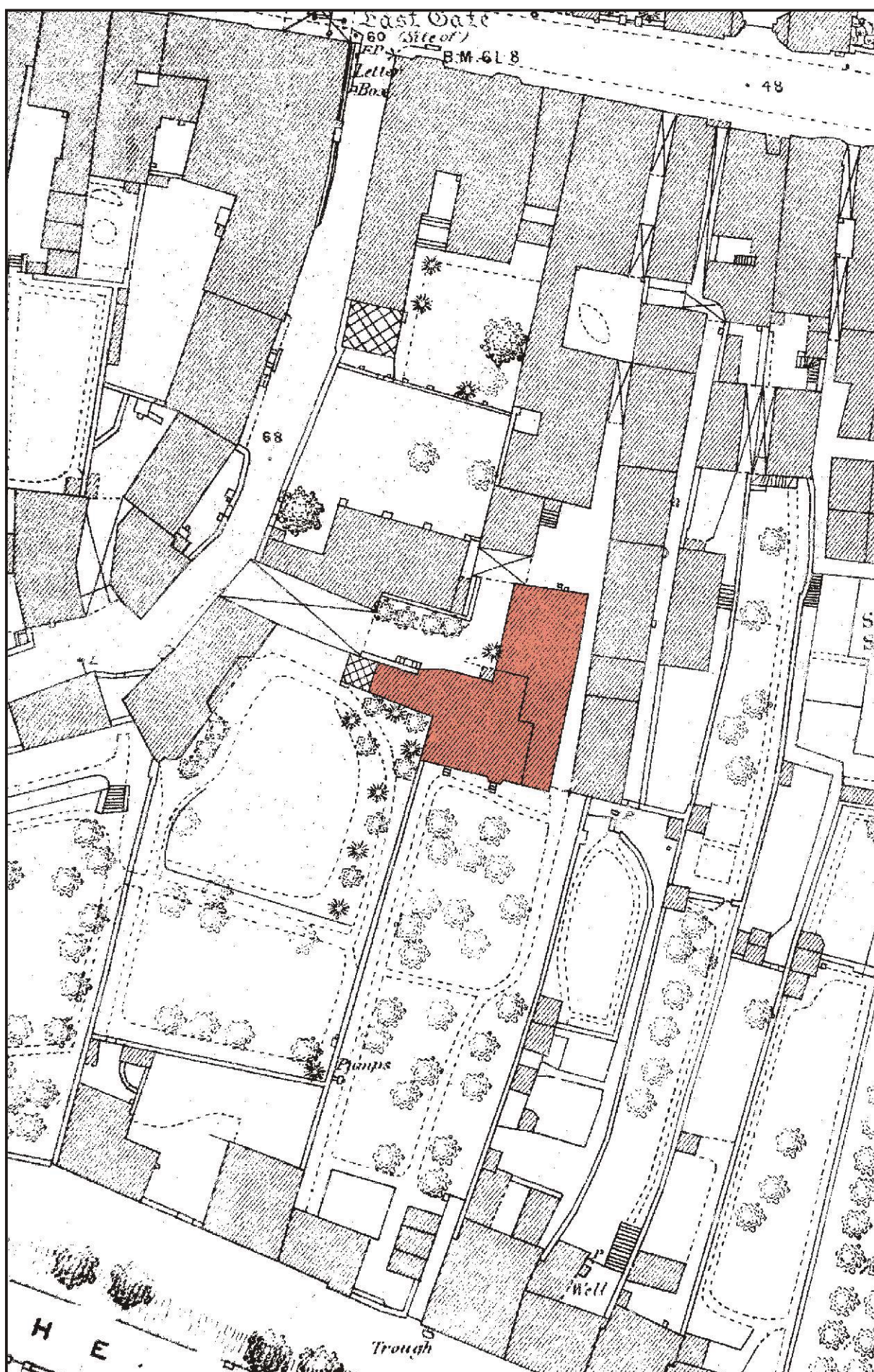


Fig. 4 The site in 1887 (Ordnance Survey 1:500 map sheet CXXI.5.24, published in 1888).



Plate 1 Southern elevation of Paradise Cottage, clearly showing the central and eastern sections of the building. The western section is obscured from view by the garden wall on the left. Photograph provided courtesy of Casper Holst, Sustainable Design Collective.



Plate 2 Western elevation of Paradise Cottage. The eastern section is in the background whilst the curved wall of the western section is visible on the extreme right. Photograph provided courtesy of Casper Holst, Sustainable Design Collective, Totnes.