

School House, Michaelstow, Cornwall – Heritage Statement

South West Archaeology Ltd. 01.09.21

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Project Background

South West Archaeology Ltd. was approached by a private client (the Client) to produce a heritage statement for The Old School House, Michaelstow, Cornwall, as part of the planning submission for a the replacement of the slate roof. This rapid appraisal was undertaken in order to determine the heritage value of the site and the effects of the proposed development on heritage assets in the local area.

Site Location

The site is located on a high south-south-west-facing slope at an altitude of c.148m AOD, on the fringes of Bodmin Moor. The soils of this area are the well-drained fine loamy soils over slate or slate rubble of the Denbigh 2 Association (SSEW 1983). These overlie the Trevoze Slate Formation and Rosenum Formation, slates and siltstones, sedimentary rock formed during the Devonian Period (BGS 2021).

Listing Description

The Building is noted on the Cornwall HER (DCO9512) and is also Grade II Listed (UID: 1143534): National school and school house now private house. Circa C18 cottage remodelled as school in 1852 when the school house was erected (datestone). Built by Earl Fortescue. Stone rubble and cob, the school house with granite quoins and lintels. School house on left has a rag slate roof with gable ends and a brick axial stack. The school to right has a rear earlier range with rag slate roof and stone rubble stack on right hand gable end. Second parallel range to front of early C20 with rag slate roof with gable ends. Plan: school originally a cottage possibly of 2 room plan, the right hand room heated by an end stack. In 1852 a school house was erected as a cross wing on the left hand gable end forming an overall 'T' shaped plan. The school house of 2 room plan has 2 back-to-back fireplaces heated by a central axial stack; the parlour probably on the front and the kitchen to rear. In circa later C19 an outshot was added across the rear of the school; the outshot was extended in the C20 and in circa early C20 an extension of 1-room plan was added across the front of the school. Exterior : 2 storey range to school house on left with gable end to front. 4-pane sash on ground and first floor and entrance to right between school house and school. Datestone 'National School, 1852' in gable end. Left hand side elevation with C20 glazed double door to left and 4-pane sashes to right and on first floor. School to right has brick dressings to openings and gable to front in centre. Interior of school house largely complete with stair and simple unmoulded granite lintels to ground floor back-to-back fireplaces. Partly blocked fireplace to school. In 1852, Earl Fortescue granted to the minister and church a cottage and garden enclosure in the village of Michaelstow. This was to be used for the education of children and adults, or children only of labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes in the parish of Michaelstow.

Nb. The two parts are now in separate ownership, so only part of the listing is relevant.

Building Description

The site is located within a small walled garden plot, just below the Church of St Michael in the heart of the churchtown settlement and facing onto the track to the church. A separate gate serves the single storey purpose-built school, of early 20th century date, and the buildings are now in separate ownership. A building, presumably the cottage to which the school is attached, is recorded on the tithe map as a larger linear range to the rear, with outshuts and walled garden, addressing the lane to the church. It is marked as Plot 262, owned by Lord Fortescue and leased by Mary Hockin,

described as 'house and garden'. By the 1881 25-inch 1st Edition OS map, the '1852' school house has been constructed. The school element of the structure is an addition recorded on the 2nd Edition OS map, published in 1907, of single storey, of granite and slate rubble, with a shallow pitched roof with weathered red terracotta ridge tiles and slated eaves to the end gables. The building is fairly rustic and functional with blind gables to east and west but has a presentation front facing the lane access to the church; with brick dressings to two small windows, which are quite fine, with a dual-tone pattern of red and ceramic cream bricks, creating the visual impression of quoins and heavy flat granite lintels. The windows contain four pane sashes. The central gabled door entry has a gothic-arched opening with decorative eaves, barge boards, and moulded doorframe and a fine boarded and framed pair of plank doors; internally these are respected by a timber and glazed weather porch and plank boarded partitions. These partitions form two original rooms, lit by the front windows, likely being separate boys' and girls' classrooms, as this is annotated on the mapping and is typical of the period. Internally, there appear to be panelled shutters to the front windows and further plank boarded vertical panelling typical of the Victorian period with a top rail to at least one of the rooms and some good plank doors with iron thumb latches. It appears the base of the trusses can be seen in the ground floor rooms. The space inside has obviously been divided, as well as extended, with a modern fitted kitchen and modern bathroom, as well as a heavy inserted mezzanine within the roofline pitch, obscuring the original use and layout. Lots of additional features like stained glass panels have been introduced during conversion which makes the interior inauthentic, but visually charming. The primary conservation value burden for this asset is now based solely on the exterior unchanged appearance and unusual overall plan of the building complex. The overall aesthetic contribution to the villagescape is high, with the burden of that value on the eccentric, small, early 20th century range; as well as the form of the building, which indicates its historic function. It has both historical and associational value, although relatively low, due to its former school function and having been built by Lord Fortescue.

Archaeological Potential

The land use history of the site as a dwelling of pre-1800 character, converted into a school, within an undeveloped garden plot, within the historic churchtown settlement of Michaelstow, first recorded in 1279. Situated directly next to the church, the location of the building suggests the potential for occupational deposits of both medieval and post medieval date are high and whilst expected to be damaged and disturbed, there is potential that earlier prehistoric evidence could be uncovered. **High Archaeological Potential**; however, the roof replacement project will not require any groundworks so for this project, the impact is considered to be **Neutral**.

Impact Assessment

It is proposed to replace the current slate roof with a new roof, retaining the style and form of the existing, which is not fit for purpose. The Rectory and Garden Wall to the south-west of the school, across the road are Grade II Listed; the church of St Michael is Grade I Listed and lies just to the east-north-east. The restored cross is even closer, at the church gate, also Grade II Listed, and there is a further Listed granite monolith on the same side of the churchyard. There is also a Holy Well noted in the HER (MCO7026) and the churchtown settlement itself is recorded on the HER as a heritage asset, with documentary evidence confirming its medieval origins (MCO15716). Both the well and cross in the churchyard are Scheduled Monuments, and there are several further listed tombs and gravestones east of the church. A couple of other barns and cottages in the churchtown are of vernacular form/materials and appear on at least the 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping, considered undesignated assets. None of these assets would be physically or directly impacted by the replacement of the roof. There is the potential for visual impact on the designated and therefore more sensitive assets, however, for the church and churchyard group, they are expected to be screened by the mature trees which form the hedge-bank enclosure around the church. Temporary disturbance during the constructional phase is considered to be negligible overall but will frame and

alter the approach views to the church during works. The colour differential of a new slate roof will fade and weather with time, again there is quite a lot of screening between buildings in the village with mature hedges or shrubs between gardens and enclosing the lane. The main concern, the asset known as The Rectory, which does have a line of direct sight, ultimately faces away to the south and west, having two principle garden fronts, the north elevation looking out only onto a service courtyard, so a slight change in views here is not considered to affect the building. The direct effect on the asset itself is of course considerable, with the removal of the roof and refitting of new slates, however, it is unlikely to affect the long-term visuals of the buildings or the appreciation of its late Gothic architecture features on the important south elevation, its principal conservation value and will not affect the interior. There is a need to maximise the retention of as much of the existing roofing fabric as possible for integrity value. The individual value of the buildings is low (local) or medium, except for the church and the magnitude of the change is negligible, as the roof is a like-for-like replacement, so the impact of the change would be **neutral/slight** (with reference to the DMRB/ICOMOS guidance). The scale of the proposals is so minor that, assuming the design and materials are sympathetic to those of the house, as indicated, the overall potential for harm is **negligible**. It is strongly suggested that the weathered terracotta ridge tiles are placed back on the building's roof after slate removal, to soften the visual impact.

References:

BGS geology viewer 2021: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>
 ICOMOS 2011: *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties*. International Council on Monuments and Sites.
 SSEW 1983: *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (a brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*.
 Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) 2021: Volume 11, Cultural Heritage
<http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/DMRB/vol11/index.htm>
 National Heritage List
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1143534>

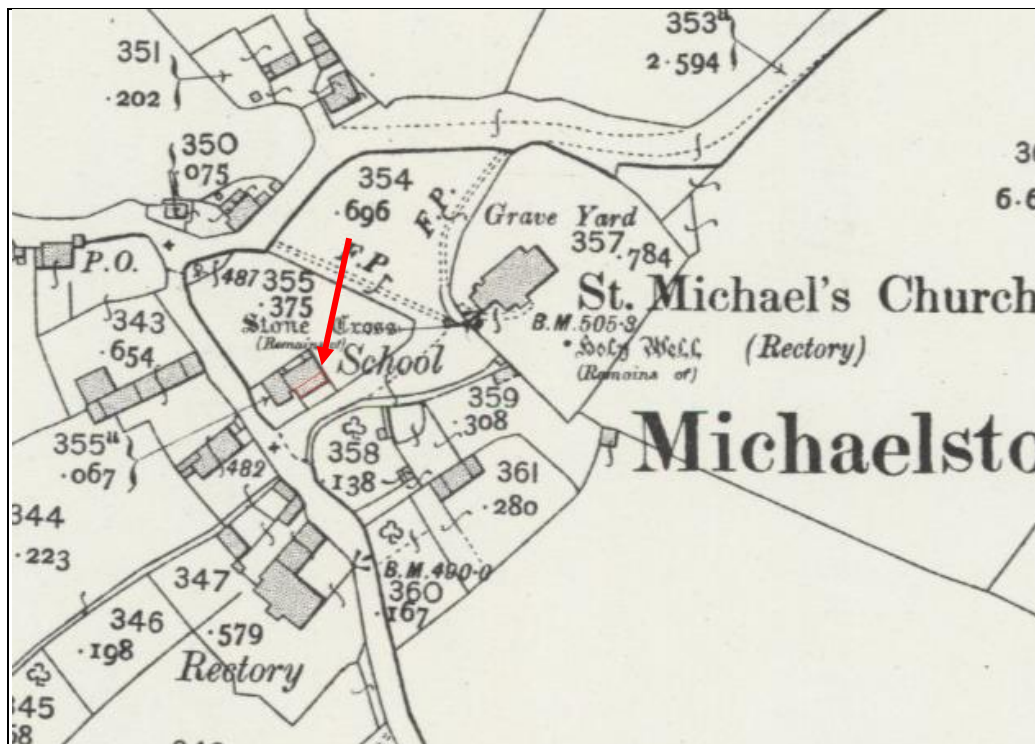


FIGURE 1: EXTRACT FROM THE 2ND EDITION OS 25" MAP, SHOWING THE SCHOOL (CORNWALL SHEET XX.6 SURVEYED 1905 PUBLISHED 1907).