

25 SOUTH STREET GREAT TORRINGTON DEVON

Results of a
Historic Building Assessment



The Old Dairy
Hacche Lane Business Park
Pathfields Business Park
South Molton
Devon
EX36 3LH

Tel: 01769 573555
Email: mail@swarch.net

Report No.: 140109
Date: 09.01.2014
Author: Colin Humphreys

**25 South Street
Great Torrington
Devon**

**Results of a
Historic Building Assessment**

For

Ian Newman

Of

The Great Torrington Town Lands And Poors Charity

By



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Project Director: Colin Humphreys
Fieldwork Managers: Colin Humphreys
Project Officer: Colin Humphreys
Historic Building Survey: Colin Humphreys
Report: Colin Humphreys; Deb Laing-Trengove
Report Editing: Deb Laing-Trengove; Dr. Samuel Walls
Graphics: Colin Humphreys

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Summary

South West Archaeology Ltd. was instructed to undertake an historic building survey of 25 South Street, Great Torrington, Devon. The building appears to have been constructed around the mid 17th century as a two storey house with a gabled roof similar to others elsewhere in Torrington (e.g. No. 7. The Square). The building mostly occupies a single plot, but a doorway to the right passes through the dividing wall, giving access to part of the neighbouring building and a mid 19th century extension that overlaps the boundary to the rear of the property. This suggests that the adjacent building was in common ownership at this stage in the 19th century.

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1.0 Introduction

Location: 25 South Street
Parish: Great Torrington
County: Devon

1.1 Project Background

Colin Humphreys of South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by David Tithecott of Trewin Design Architects Ltd (the Architect) on behalf of Ian Newman of The Great Torrington Town Lands And Poors Charity (the Client) to conduct a building assessment of 25, South Street, Great Torrington (Figure 1). The work was undertaken to attempt to understand the date, form, function and development of the building from its origins, with the aim of understanding the impact of the proposed development on the historic elements of the building. This report represents the results of a historic building survey undertaken.

Number 25 sits on the north side of South Street, Great Torrington. It was currently unoccupied, and most recently functioned as a shop with accommodation above.

1.2 Methodology

The building survey was undertaken by Colin Humphreys in accordance with English Heritage and IfA guidelines on the recording of standing buildings and structures. The survey was based on a level 2 survey, using architect plans supplied by the client.

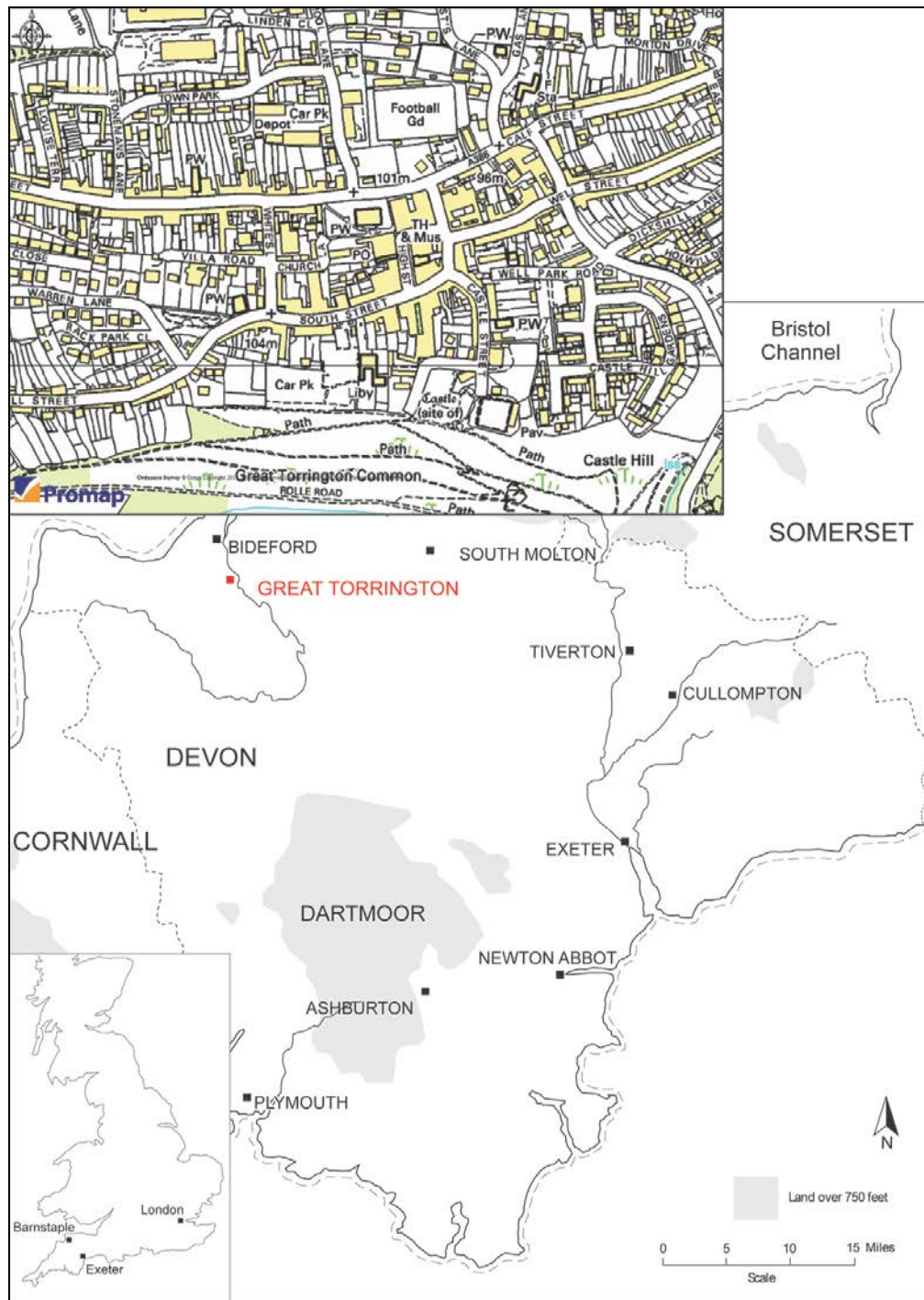


Figure 1: Location map.

2.0 Results of a Desk-based Assessment

2.1 Historical Summary

Great Torrington or 'Torictun' was mentioned in a grant by the West Saxon King Athelstan to the monks of St Petrock's at Bodmin in AD 937. By the mid 11th century it formed part of the estates of the West Saxon magnate Beorhtric. After the Norman Conquest the Beorhtric estates were confiscated and the manor of 'Toriton' was one of six granted by King William I to Odo whose family later took the surname 'de Toriton'. Torrington as a borough dates from the late 12th century, possibly founded by William, Baron of Torrington (circa 1135-94). Typical medieval tenement and burgage plots are evidenced on early maps of the town. The town was the first in Devon to receive a Charter of Incorporation in 1554.

2.2 Cartographic History

2.2.1 Tithe map 1840

The tithe map of Great Torrington (Figure 2) illustrates the rectangular plot of Number 25 with the building set against the road. The tithe map suggests that at this time the building probably only consisted of rooms R1, R2 & R3 (see Figure 6 for room numbers) with a yard to the north and outbuildings to the rear of the plot. The rear of the plot (and the adjacent buildings are accessed from a back lane running from an opening to the east in South Street.



2.2.2 Brown's Torrington Town Map of 1843

This 1843 map shows the property in similar detail to that shown on the tithe (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Extract from Browns Torrington Town map of 1843, the site is indicated.

2.2.3 First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888

The First Edition OS map shows alterations to both the front and the rear of the building (Figure 4). A detail marked on the map on the left hand road side of the building suggests a porch/doorway; if this is the case it is likely to have been inserted when the side passage (R1) was built to give independent access to the rear of the building and the first floor. It also appears that the yard is mostly built over leaving only a small open area at the rear of the building rather than the former yard.

2.2.4 Second Edition Ordnance Survey 1906

The second Edition Map (Figure 5) appears similar to the First Edition with the only change being that part of the access lane, to the rear of the building, has now been built over.

Later mapping does not show any further detail that enlightens the development of the building.



Figure 4: Extract from the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888, the building is indicated.

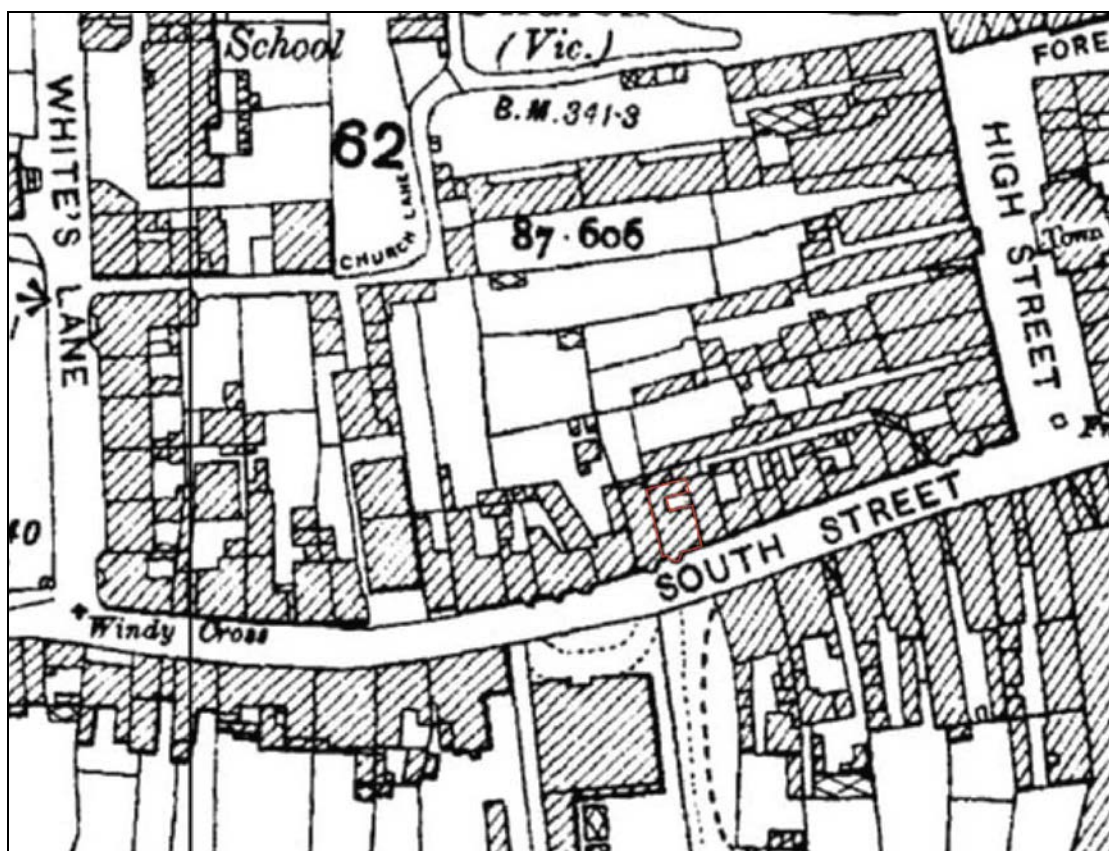


Figure 5: Extract from the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map dated 1906, the building is indicated.

3.0 The Building Assessment

3.1 Exterior Description

The street elevation (south) consists of a mid-20th century shop front with a central door and a second door to the left (west). The first floor is slightly jettied and supported on corbelled side walls with a pair of forward fixed hornless sash windows. Mock quoins have been added to the first floor to left and right (Figure 7). Above, large chimney stacks project from the walls to left and right. The doorway in the centre of the elevation gives access into the shop (R2 & R3), that to the left accesses a passageway that leads to the rear of the building (R1).

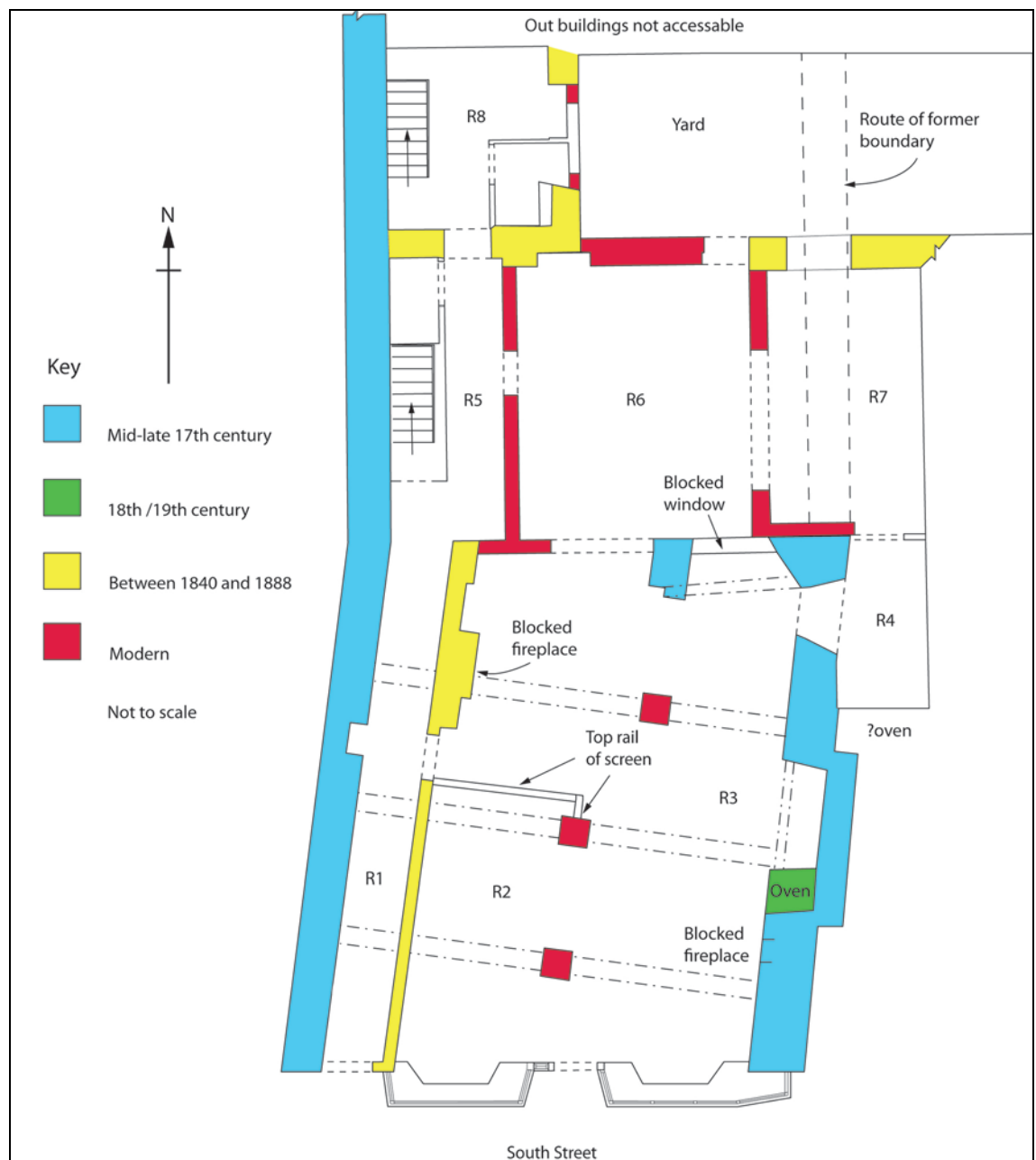


Figure 6: Plan of the ground floor of the building, showing the developmental phasing.



Figure 7: View of the building from South Street.

To the rear (north) of the building is a small yard, to the left (west) of which is a two story extension with a pitched roof (Figure 8). To the right (east) there is another similar extension, but not as deep, that overlaps the former plot boundary (Figure 9). Between these extensions is a more modern two storey build with a flat roof.

Further north, to the rear of the yard, are outbuildings, but these were not surveyed as they are outside the remit of this survey.

3.2 Interior Description

The ground floor shop interior is now a large open space (R2 & R3 - see Figure 6), broken only by a series of modern pillars which support the ends of the heavy timber chamfered and stopped ceiling beams (Figure 10).

To the right (east) is a large open fireplace (Figure 11) and to the left of the fireplace is a doorway, with a cupboard above (Figure 12). The door and the cupboard are of mid 17th century date but are likely to have been reset. The door passes through the original eastern boundary wall, into the adjacent property and to an extension at the rear (north) of the building (R4, R6 & R7). Within R4 is a blocked alcove, with a relieving arch above, set into the left hand side of the chimney stack in R4 (Figure 13)



Figure 8: View of the left hand (western) part of the yard.



Figure 9: View of the right hand (eastern) part of the yard.



Figure 10: General view of the shop interior (R2 & R3) from the street doorway.



Figure 11: The fireplace to the right (east wall) of Room 3 (R3).

Most of this former eastern boundary wall to the rear (north-east) of the shop has been removed, giving access to later extensions at the rear the building and which now form one space (see Figure 6). Beyond these is a small enclosed yard.



Figure 12: The doorway and cupboard to the left of the fireplace in the east wall of R3.

The first floor of the main range is accessed by a stair (R5) located towards the rear of the passageway on the left hand side of the building (R1). Another stair beyond this and to the north, within R8, gives access to the first floor of the rear extension. The first floor level of both areas has recently been heavily modernised, and in this process any remaining features of historic merit have been removed or hidden.

The roof space is accessed by ladder from the passage in the middle of the first floor. The roof structure over the front (south) range is now hipped to the front and rear (north & south) of this part of the building. The roof structure was constructed in the mid 19th century and reuses timbers from an earlier 17th century roof structure.

3.3 The Building Phasing

3.3.1 Phase 1: Mid-17th century

The primary build would have consisted of a two or three storey town house built between two heavy stone walls projecting to the front of the building. The ground floor appears to have been divided into two rooms; left (R1 & R2) and right (R3) formerly divided by a single plank and muntin screen of which the remains of the top rail can be seen running between the floor beams. A parallel plank and muntin screen may have formed a passage between the two rooms however there is no obvious surviving evidence for this. The positioning of the fireplace in the centre of the length of east wall suggests that the right hand (eastern) part of the building was formerly a single room. The left hand (western) part of the building the surviving top rail of a plank and muntin screen runs partially across the building suggesting

that this western side of the floor plan was divided in to two rooms. However this feature may have been reset from elsewhere in the building.

A large chimney stack projecting upward from the boundary wall to the left (west) may indicate that the left hand room was formerly also heated. However, if it was, the evidence has been mostly lost when the passage (R1) was inserted on this side of the building. The stone grate (Figure 14) set into this boundary wall, that vents a closed cupboard/fireplace in the adjoining property, may be indicative.



Figure 13: The arched feature in R4, set into the back of the chimney stack in R3.

The door and frame to the left of the fireplace are of 17th century date, but most likely these have been reset, possibly from elsewhere in the building, as this doorway is forced through the (burgage plot) boundary wall to form a small room in the neighbouring plot to the east.

The first floor is slightly jetted on the road frontage; the bressemer being supported by the stone side walls. However the shop frontage on the ground floor dates from the mid-late 20th century and the wall of the first floor was replaced, or severely remodelled, in the mid 19th century. The first floor would have had a similar layout to the ground floor, probably originally unheated, but substantial alterations and modernisations have removed all evidence of the 17th century build.



Figure 14: The stone grate set into the left (west) boundary wall.

Little remains of the building of this phase in an unspoilt form; the front and rear walls having been wholly or partially removed and all internal partitions replaced. The series of parallel beams that support the first floor all appear to be correct, except that to the rear of the building that has been partly removed and moved. The fireplace in the right hand wall of R3 dates from this phase but formerly with an opening larger than the existing opening.

3.3.2 Phase 2: 18th/19th century

The right hand side of the fireplace in R3 is enclosed, forming a clome oven.

3.3.3 Phase 3: Mid 19th century; pre-1880

The left hand (west) side of the rear yard is enclosed with a two storey extension and a passageway constructed giving private access to the new rear block. A fireplace is built into the passageway partition towards the rear of R2. Slightly later (given the few remaining architectural details) another extension is built to the right (east) of the yard that overlaps the neighbouring property; it is likely that the doorway to the left of the fireplace in R3 is forced through the boundary wall at this point.

Another fireplace is inserted into the rear of the clome oven in R3 from the adjacent property and a new chimney stack added to the 17th century stack. This disables the clome oven and it is likely that at this time the bressemer of the fireplace is reduced in depth; the timber hacked

from the front, allowing the opening to be blocked flush with the line of the wall. To replace this fireplace another, now blocked, fireplace is inserted to the right.

It would appear that a substantial amount of redesigning of the ground floor space happened during this period. Given the rearrangement of the heating of the ground floor it is likely that the space was divided into more than two rooms, some being heated by the recently inserted fireplaces. The events listed for this phase all happened in the period before 1880 and after 1842, however, because of the later removal of datable architectural details the exact order cannot be determined.

It has not been possible to give a function for the alcove with relieving arch in R4, which is set into the left hand side of the chimney stack in R3 (Figure 13). Recent repairs may have removed detail, however it would appear likely that this was part of the 19th century remodelling works.

3.3.4 Phase 4: Modern

The modern build appears to remodel the central part of the rear of the building; the two 19th century extensions are joined and the open space shown in the centre of the building on the early mapping is closed with a two storey flat roofed extension.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 Conclusion

The conclusion of this survey is that 25 South Street is of mid-17th century origin. Later, mostly mid-19th century, alterations have removed a high percentage of the original fabric and in turn 20th century developments have removed details of the Victorian work.

Given these facts it would seem reasonable to protect and preserve in-situ the remaining features that date any of the development phases. These consist of:

Phase: 1 Mid 17th century

1. The series of parallel axial beams that support the first floor all appear to be in their correct position, except that to the rear (north) of the building that has been partly removed and moved.
2. The top rail of the plank and muntin partition screen.
3. The fireplace R3.
4. The door and frame to the left of the fireplace in R3 is of 17th century date that appears to have been reset; possibly from elsewhere in the building.

Phase: 2 Mid 19th century

1. The hornless sash windows in the front and rear of the building.

4.2 Impact statement

The proposals for the new usage of the building do not affect any of the historically sensitive material.

The shop frontage appears to be of mid-20th century date with later repairs and has little historic merit.

Any below ground works should however be archaeologically monitored.

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Appendix 1

Details of the DoE Building listing

SOUTH STREET

1755 (North Side)

No 25

SS 4919 1/68

II GV

Probably late C16 altered. Overhang and corbel to side wall at 1st floor level. 2 storey 2 window front, plastered, rusticated quoins. Flush frame sash windows at 1st floor with glazing bars. Delicate moulded eaves entablature.

Central glazed doors.

Door at left. Interior: massive chop-chamfered beams, very wide stone fireplace with herring bone tile back. House was formerly 3 storey with front gable.

All the listed buildings in South Street form a group.

Listing NGR: SS494911908

Appendix 2

Statement of Significance

25 South Street Torrington

Of the structure that stands, the primary build consists of a 17th century two storey, town house set in a long narrow burgage plot defined by two heavy stone walls that project forward to South Street. The building would have formerly had a jettied first floor to the road carrying a gabled front wall, as others in Torrington (No. 7, The Square). This in turn would have supported an A-frame roof structure. To the rear of the building would have been a yard and to the rear of this an outbuilding. Access to the yard is likely to have been along a back lane accessed from further east on South Street. It is likely, given the position of the building in the town, that part or all of the ground floor was used for trading with the domestic accommodation above.

The ground floor was formerly divided in to two rooms; left and right formerly separated by a single plank and muntin screen of which the remains of the top rail can be seen running between the second and third first floor beams. The room to the right was heated by a large fireplace however a large chimney stack that projects from the partition wall to the left may be evidence that this room was also heated but this feature could have been lost when the passage to the left of the building was inserted in the 19th century.

Formerly the first floor would have been jettied on the road side; the bressemer being supported by the stone side walls, however the mid-late 20th century shop front hides this feature. Above this the front wall of the first floor was replaced, or severely remodelled, in the mid 19th century. The first floor had a similar layout the ground floor but was probably unheated, however no features of the first phase of build survive. The roof structure was remodelled in the mid 19th century; now hipped to the road, re-using timbers from the mid 17th century roof.

Little remains of the building of the first phase in an unspoilt form; on the ground floor the front and rear walls and internal partitions having been wholly or partially removed and the entire street frontage has been rebuilt.

During the mid-19th century the building was extended into the yard in a sequence of extensions and the first floor appears to have been completely rebuilt. Later 20th century modifications have removed or disguised any architectural details that date from this phase.



The Old Dairy
Hacche Lane Business Park
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Devon
EX36 3LH

Tel: 01769 573555
Email: mail@swarch.net