

TANTONS HOTEL BIDEFORD DEVON

Results of a Desk Based Appraisal



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**Tantons Hotel
Bideford
Devon**

**Results of a
Desk-based appraisal**

For

Mal Brown

Of

EMA Ltd (the agent)

By



SWARCH project reference: BTH14

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Summary

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was asked to undertake a desk-based assessment of the Tantons Hotel, Bideford, Devon. The complex is made up of three groups of structures, the main building; Tanton Hotel, to the south Riverside Flats and Hampton Terrace (fig 2).

Tantons Hotel would appear to be an amalgamation of buildings dating prior to 1842 (the date of the earliest mapping) becoming a more unified structure in the mid-nineteenth century. At this time the site of The Riverside Flats was a partially walled garden with one, possible two small outbuildings. In the mid-nineteenth century Hampton Terrace was built in the southern part of this garden abutting the earlier structures.

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1.0 Introduction

Location: Tantons Hotel
Parish: Bideford
County: Devon

1.1 Project Background

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Mal Brown of EMA Ltd (the Agent) to conduct a desk-based study and a building assessment of the Tantons Hotel, New Street, Bideford (fig. 1).

The work was undertaken in order to understand the date, form, function and development of the building from its origins, with the aim of understanding the impact of any proposed development on the historic elements of the building.

Tantons Hotel is composed of three distinct buildings; Tantons Hotel to the north, and Riverside Flats and Hampton Terrace to the south of Lower Meddon Street (fig 2). This report will consider the history of each element.

1.2 Topographical and Geological Background

Tantons Hotel is on the west bank of the River Torridge of the A386 ('New Road'), south of *Bideford Long Bridge* and immediately east of St Mary's Church. The land rises up to the west forming a knoll on which most of the town lies.

The underlying geology is the Mudstone and Siltstone of the Bideford Formation (BGS 2013); the soils have not been surveyed in the immediate area but are likely to be the same as the surrounding area; well drained fine loamy soils of the Denbigh 2 Association (SSEW 1983).

1.3 Methodology

This desk-based appraisal was compiled by Joe Bampton, Victoria Hosegood and Colin Humphreys in accordance with IfA (2008) guidelines.

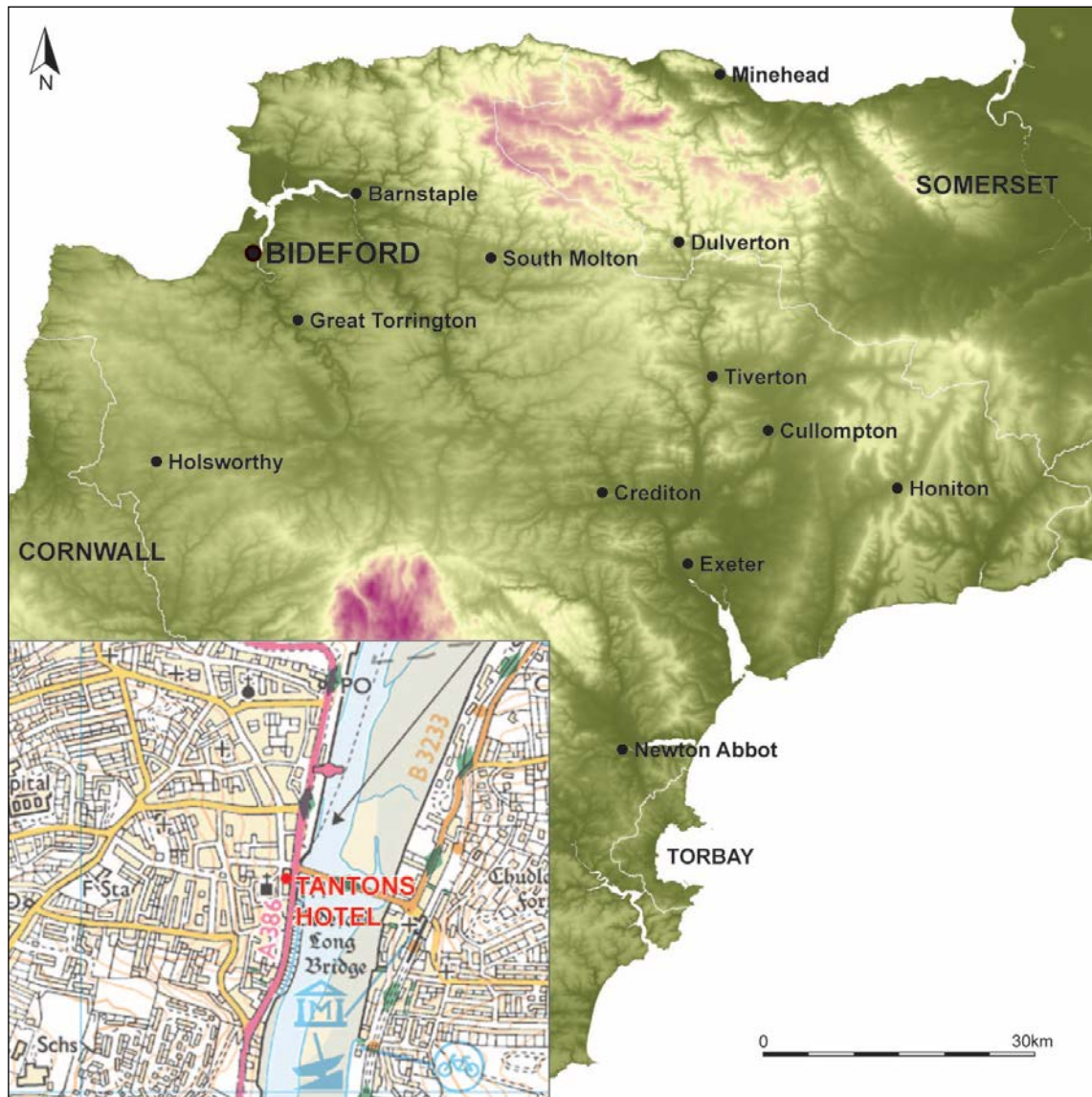


Figure 1: Location map, the site is indicated.



Figure 2: East elevation of the Tantons Hotel

2.0 Results of a Desk-based Appraisal

2.1 Historical Background

Originating at a fording point over the River Torridge, Bideford means 'by the ford'. From the time of William Rufus (1087-1100) until 1744 it was the property of the Grenvilles. Richard Grenville created the borough in the early 13th century and a market charter was granted in 1271, but until the late 16th century, Bideford remained overshadowed by its neighbour Barnstaple.

Sir Richard Grenville enabled the town to receive a charter of incorporation (c.1573), and through his influence a trade with the American colonies was established which brought a prosperity to Bideford which lasted into the mid-18th century. The town was at the height of its prosperity at the end of the 17th century when it had a large share in the Newfoundland trade, sending more ships in 1699 than any other port, with the exceptions of London and Topsham. The major contributor to the success of the Bideford merchants between 1680 and 1730 was the tobacco trade with Maryland and Virginia. During this period Bideford surpassed Barnstaple as the premier trading port of North Devon. However, by the early 19th century the focus of North Atlantic trade had moved away to Bristol and Liverpool, and only coasting trade remained. During the 19th century the town's fortunes revived, as local industries flourished and transatlantic traffic was boosted by Bideford's role as a port of departure for emigrants and the import of timber.

In the 19th century the railway came to Bideford and, along with the rest of North Devon, it profited from an increasing holiday trade. In the 1960s this link with the rest of England was removed; the main motoring routes into Cornwall passed the town by, and further decline set in. It remains, however, the centre of Torridge District and a shopping centre for north-west Devon (The above based on Hoskins 1992, 335-7).

The buildings considered within this assessment face onto the historic line of the former quay, the ground reclaimed in several phases in the 19th and early 20th centuries, forming, 'New Road'. Records note that Tantons Hotel has had a number of different names from 1856 onward, including The Commercial Inn. The North Devon Record Office holds archives pertaining to the three units of Hampton Terrace. As of 1898 it was written in the will of Henry Lee Hutchings, who in the Exeter Flying Post in 1868 had been listed as a bankrupt Grocer and coal merchant, also an auctioneer; to William Stanley Hutchings, Stanley John Short, William Burrow Trick and Harold Trickey. (NDRO: B127-6/660, 1900). In 1953 two rooms under Nos. 1 and 2 were known as 'The Coffee Pot' (NDRO: B127-6/419/1-2 1953; B127-6/2158 1956).

2.2 Cartographic History

2.2.1 Cartographic Sources

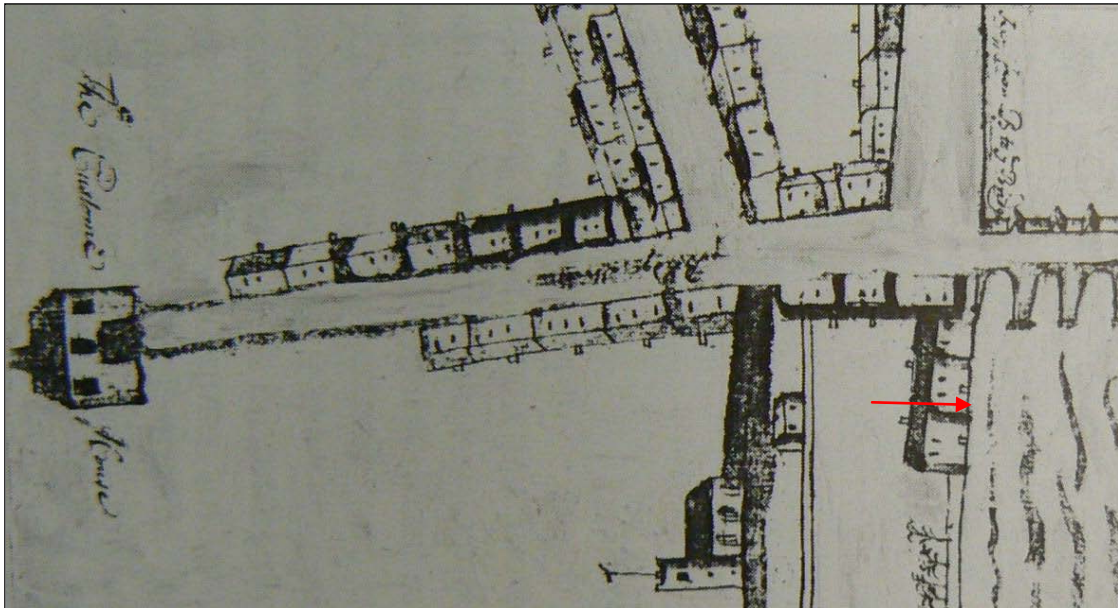


Figure 3: Extract of 1717 map, the probable location of the Tantons Hotel is indicated (NDRO: 2379A/Z7)

The earliest detailed cartographic source for Bideford is a map from 1717 (Figure 3). Although the accuracy of scales cannot be fully dependable, Tantons Hotel may be represented by the housing lining the river.

The Appledore to Bideford map of 1754 (Figure 3) does show developments lining New Road between St Mary's Church and the river. Although it is at too small a scale to provide details, it implies that the site may have been developed by this time. This is supported by a painting from 1760 (Figure 12) which shows wharf buildings corresponding to the later Tantons Hotel. There appears to be a garden, with potential for associated structures, which may be the precursor of the Riverside Flats and Hampton Terrace areas of the modern complex. Benjamin Donn's map of 1765 does not provide sufficient detail at its scale to be of use.

The Parish and Borough of Bideford map of 1833 (Figure 5) clearly shows buildings that may correspond to Tantons Hotel and a structure that corresponds to the Riverside Flats, however Hampton Terrace appears to be absent from this map. Difficulties of scale mean the properties south of Lower Meddon Street may be absent altogether.

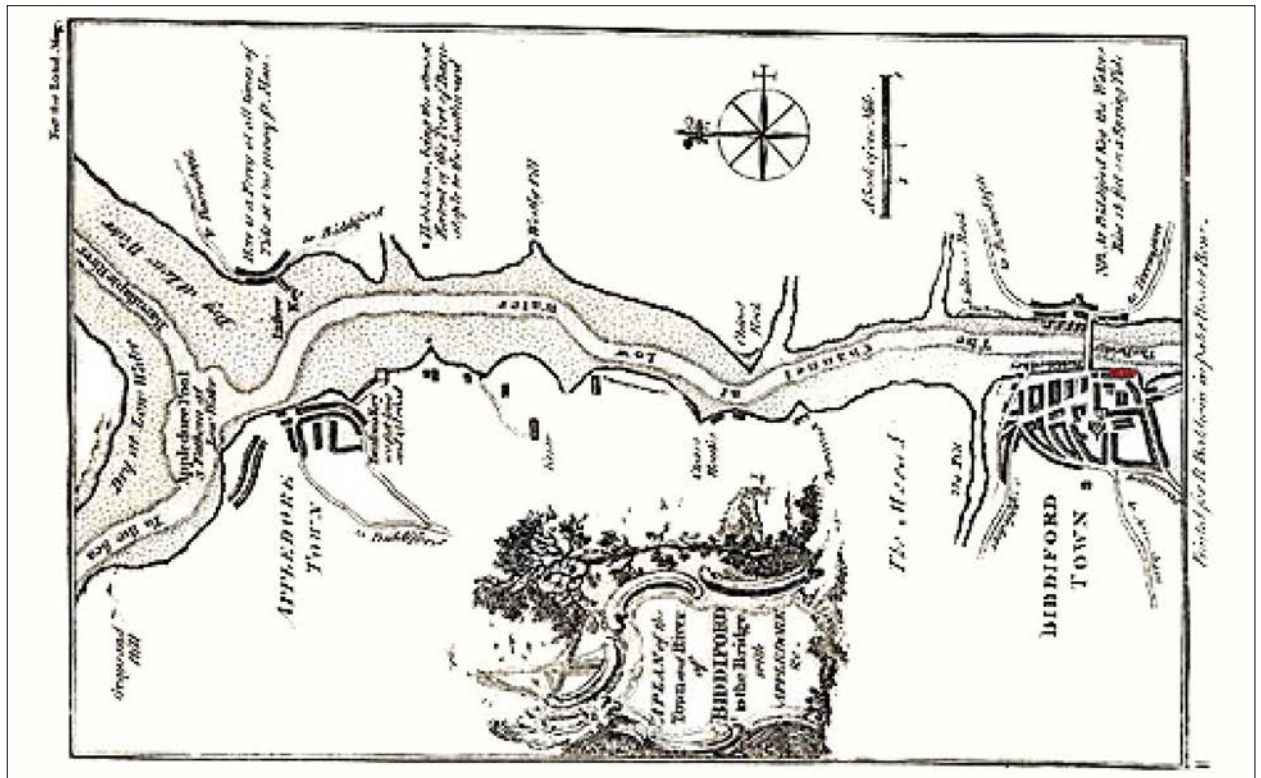


Figure 4: Appledore to Bideford map, 1754, the site is shaded in red

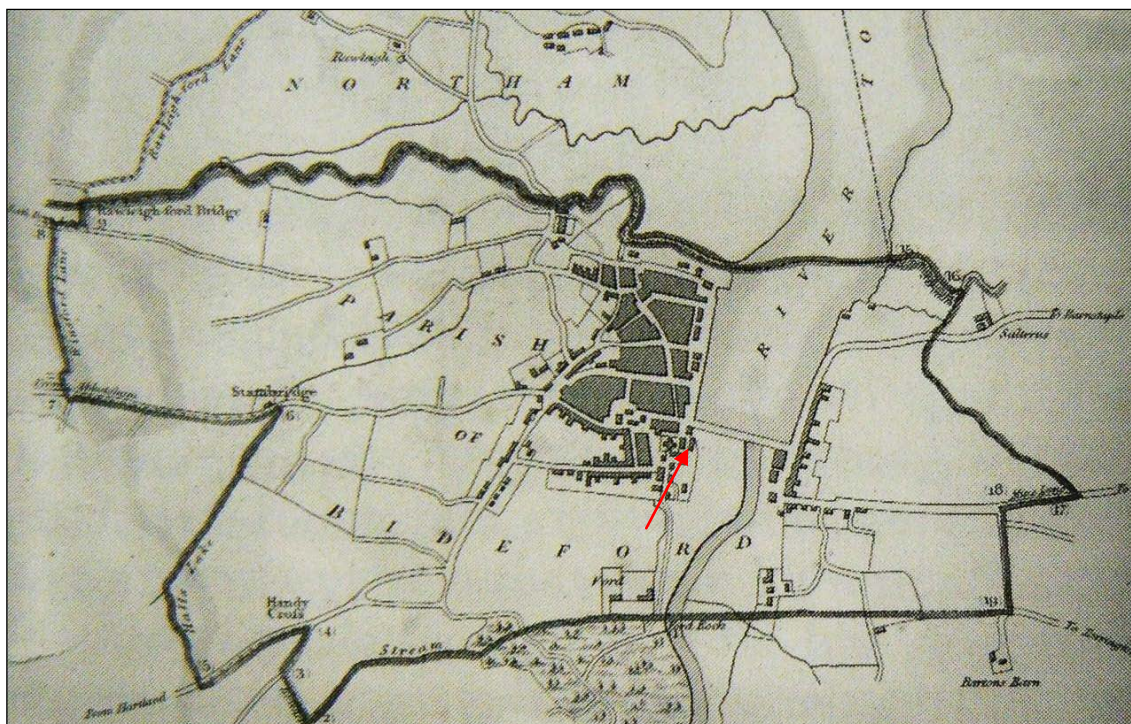


Figure 5: Parish and Borough of Bideford 1833, the site is indicated (NDRO)

2.2.2 Bideford Tithe Map 1841

The tithe map of Bideford (Figures 6 and 7) shows Lower Meddon Street with plots on either side. Details of the plots were not forthcoming given the condition and accessibility of the apportionment records. Structures and plots are clearly in place at this time to represent site boundaries and buildings; although many of the buildings themselves are not depicted. The description of adjacent land (plot 1570 owned by a William Saunders) was described as 'Town' and 'Waste' and similar plots were described likewise. These inadequate descriptions cannot be trusted to understand the situation of the land in these plots.



Figure 6 Extract from the 1841 Bideford Tithe map, the site is shaded in red (source: NDRO)

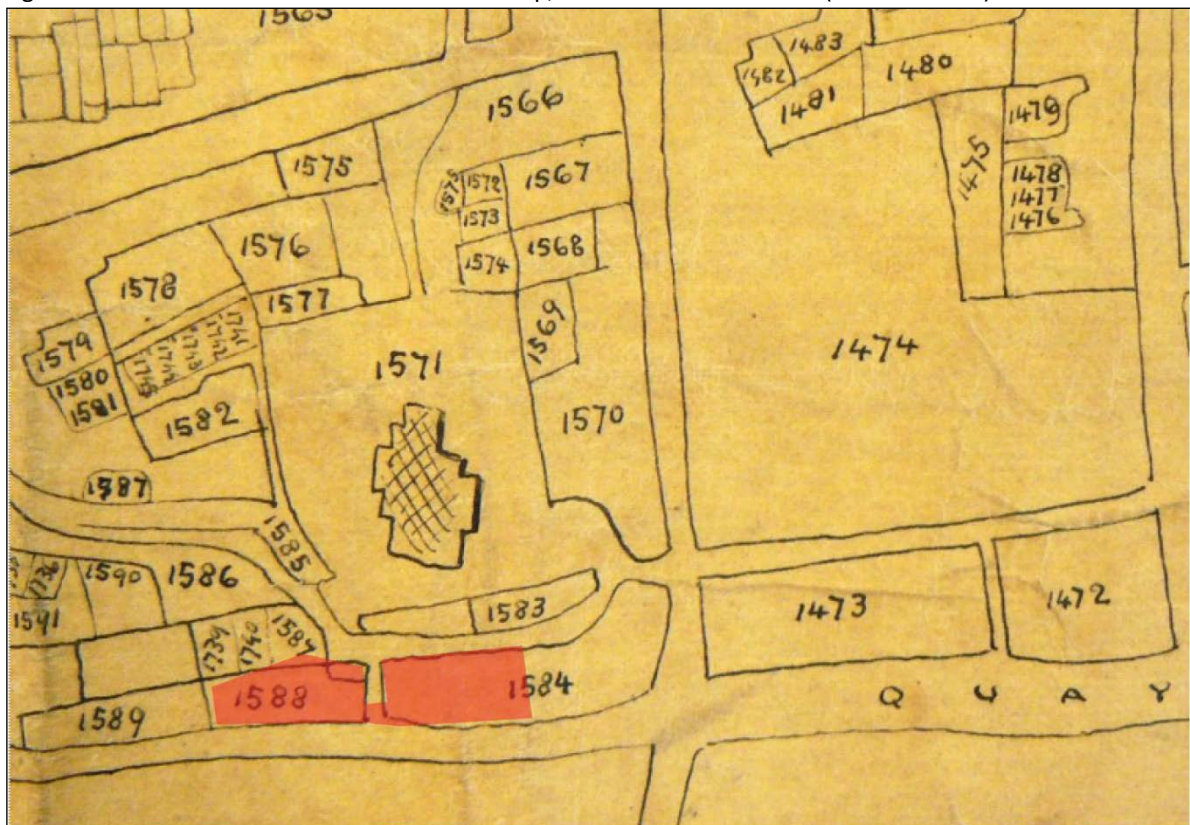


Figure 7: Detail of urban area of tithe map 1841, the site is shaded in red (source: NDRO: 2379A/Z13)

2.2.3 John Woods' Bideford Town Map of 1842

John Woods 1842 Bideford Town map (Figures 8 and 9) shows developments on either side of Lower Meddon Street, including the Tantons Hotel, and to the south of these buildings a short road. Figure 9 shows a lack of development in the plot to the south of Tantons and Lower Meddon Street, now occupied by the Riverside Flats, which appears at this point to be a garden.



Figure 8 John Wood's town map 1842, the site is shaded in red (source: NDRO)



Figure 9 Transcription of detail John Wood's town map 1842. Tantons Hotel is outlined

2.2.4 First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888

The First Edition OS map (Figure 10) shows the properties and immediate surrounding area much as they appear today. Lower Meddon Street is clearly depicted; Tantons Hotel is part of a contiguous set of buildings running along the boundary of the Parish Church. The southern half of the site where the Riverside Flats now stand has been developed in the time between the John Woods map and the first edition OS; here it appears to be occupied by a slightly tapering structure.

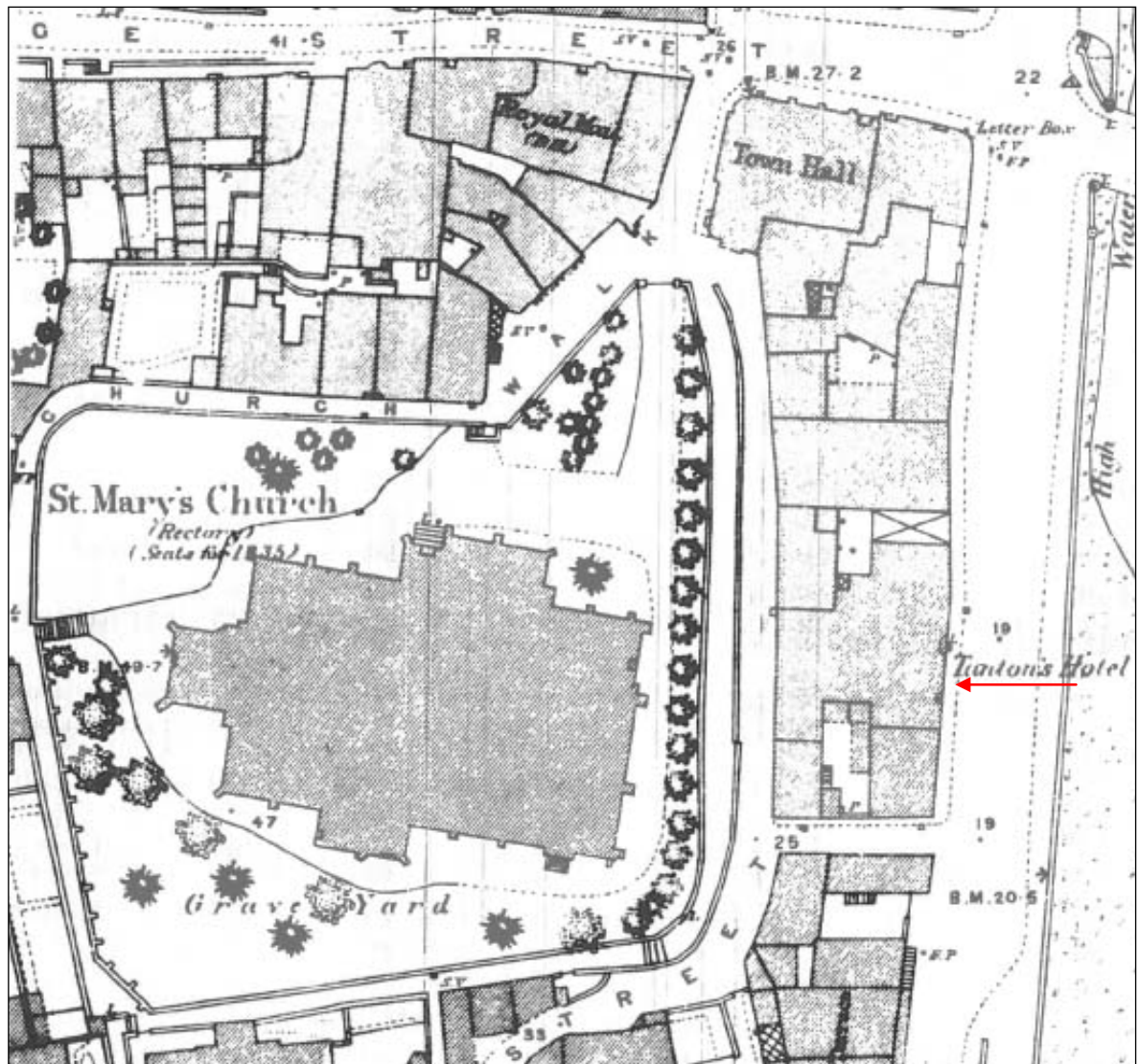


Figure 10 Extract from the First Edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1888

2.2.5 Second Edition Ordnance Survey 1906

There are a number of small changes from the first edition OS which may be identified on the second edition (Figure 11). For example, there have been slightly more houses built in the estate to the far west, before the school. Alongside this the access road behind the southern properties has been widened by the removal of the north-east wing of the adjacent westerly buildings. Finally only the Town Hall is depicted north of Tantons Hotel at the junction of Parish Church and Bridge Street suggesting the removal of the structures immediately north of Tantons Hotel. It is difficult to tell whether or not the form of the building itself has been altered in the time between the first and second edition OS maps. The second edition does not provide the same level of detail as the first edition; it shows the building as a solid continuous structure, the courtyards and open space to the south of the site are not depicted. This does not necessarily mean there were alterations made to the structure at this time; the simplicity of the second edition is evidenced in other areas of the map, for example showing terraced houses as continuous structures along the roadside.



Figure 11: Extract from the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1906, (source: NDRO)

2.2.6 Historic Illustration and Photography

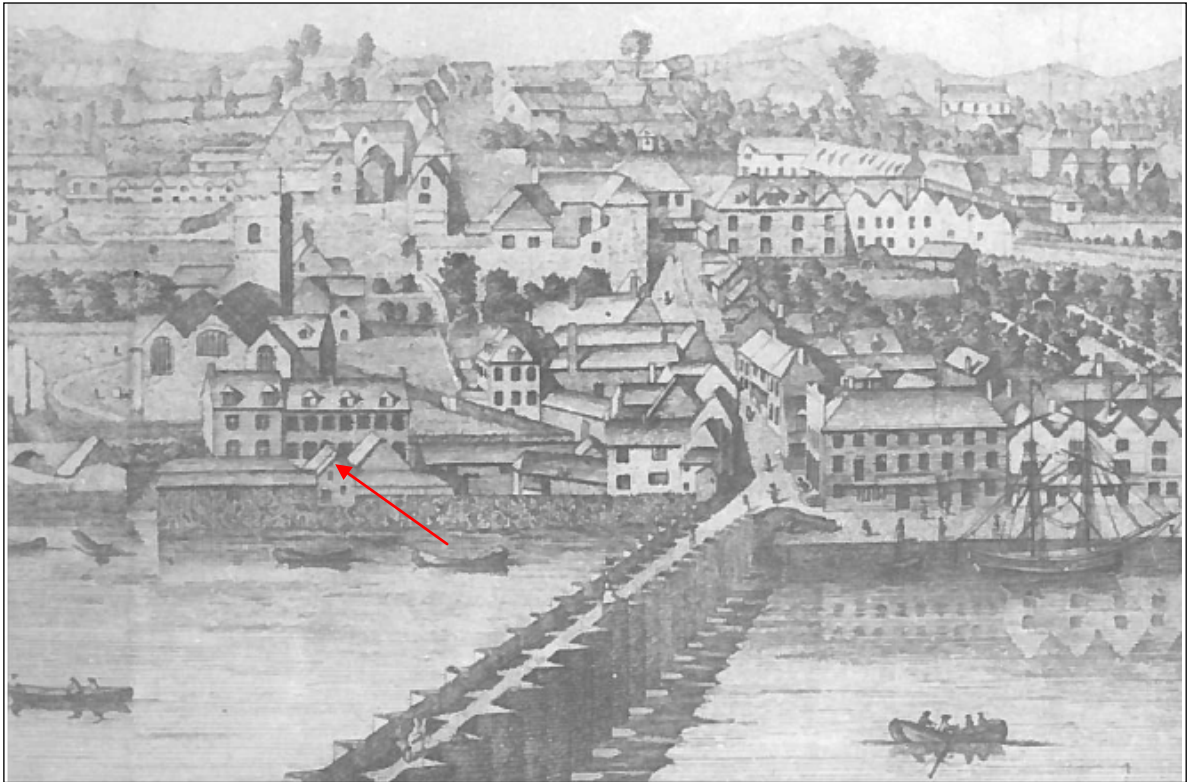


Figure 12: Extract from a painting by a Mr Jewell, 1760 (courtesy S. Chappell)

The extract from the 1760 painting is illustrative rather than informative. Despite this, there does appear to be development at the site of Tantons Hotel. Towards the far left side of the painting there are wharf buildings indicated) and adjacent open space, possibly a garden. Tantons today sits directly in front of the churchyard, therefore we may infer that the building in front of the churchyard in this painting is either a predecessor to the current building sitting in the same plot as Tantons or is the building that we see today (an early form of). The open space to the left of this building is the site of Riverside Flats and Hampton Terrace. As mentioned above, this is an unreliable source; Mr. Jewell may have added the building because it tied in with the overall composition of the work.



Figure 13 Tantons as Chester's Commercial & Family Hotel in 1863

Photography is a far more reliable source for this study, figure 13 (above) is one of the earliest available photographs dating to 1863, and shows Tantons Hotel as the Chester's Commercial and Family Hotel. Records note that Tantons Hotel had previously been named Commercial Inn in 1856. The early date of this photograph may be confirmed by the form of St Mary's Church for which renovations were completed between 1862-5. Figure 14 (below) shows Tantons after the completion of the renovation of the church and the widening of the bridge, meaning that the earliest possible date it could have been taken is 1864/5. Overall the building appears to retain much the same form, the second opening on the left hand side has been closed and an entrance has been added to the right of the newly blocked opening. It has also at this point been given the name 'Tantons Hotel'.



Figure 14 Tantons post the widening of the bridge in 1864



Figure 15: Late 19th century photograph of the eastern elevation of Tantons, showing further development of the building.

The main phase of alteration appears to have taken place between the taking of the photos in figure 14 and figure 15. The building depicted in figure 15 apparent closely resembles the building which stands today. In this photograph (the exact date of which is unknown), a fourth story has been added to the central section of the building and bay windows have been added to the second and third floors. When looking from the river towards Tantons, on the left hand side, the building which

is today known as The Riverside Flats has clearly been built, although its form cannot be distinguished and therefore any subsequent alterations cannot be identified in this photograph. Despite the fact that this photograph is obviously later than the previous two, there cannot be a vast difference in the date; the coach and style of dress both suggest a 19th or very early 20th century date.



Figure 16: AMP photo wharf 1927, the site is indicated (source: NDRO)

Figure 16 reveals little about the form of the buildings or any later alterations to it but it is clear that by 1927 all three elements; Tantons Hotel, Riverside Flats and Hampton Terrace are in form similar to that seen today.

4.0 Conclusions

The desk-based study would suggest that the Tantons Hotel is an amalgamation of buildings dating prior to the early 19th century mapping. These were unified in the mid 19th century and remodelled later in the 19th and early 20th century. Riverside Flats is a 20th century construction built on earlier buildings that were built in the north end of a walled garden. Hampton Terrace is of mid 19th century construction built in the southern end of the walled garden.

Later, mostly 20th century, alterations have removed a high percentage of the original internal fabric of the buildings.

The site is listed as a property of 'potential' in the Bideford Conservation Area Appraisal 2009. This is a common designation for an area/site that defines and is indicative of the general character of Bideford, but it is not of outstanding architectural character. The retention and possible renovation of the properties façade would, however, be considered important to preserving the architectural character of the town.

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<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk>

The National Archives

<http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Genuki

<http://genuki.cs.ncl.ac.uk/DEV/DevonMisc/Bankrupts1842.html>

Appendix 1

Details of the DoE Building listing

TANTONS HOTEL

SS4526 NEW ROAD

842-1/6/203 (West side)

08/11/49 Tantons Hotel

GV II

Hotel. Early C19. Solid rendered walls. Slate roofs. Centre offront range hipped with flat top; wings and a rear range running behind the whole building have pitched roofs paralalled to road, the rear range now heightened at left-hand end. 2 red-brick chimneys on rear range. 3 storeys, the centre of front range rising to 4 storeys. 3-window centre with slightly projecting wings, 3 windows to left and 2 to right. 6-panelled door slightly off-centre to right. Almost above it a round-headed semi-circular niche; it now contains a classical figure in armour, brandishing a sword, and is possibly a former ship's figurehead. Flanking it are flattened bow windows rising though 3 storeys to the bracketed eaves. Flat roof-top has patterned iron guard-rail. Wings have similar bows in second storey, except that left wing has a blind window in centre. Sashes throughout; 3-paned in ground storey; 6-paned upper sashes in the bow windows, with 4 panes in the side-lights; 3 over 6 panes in third-storey windows of the wings; 6-paned upper sashes in middle third and fourth-storey windows of the centre. INTERIOR inspected only on ground storey, which appears to have been wholly altered in late C20. The building is shown on Wood's 1842 plan of Bideford as 'Commercial Inn'. Kelly's directory for 1856 and Billings's directory for 1857 refer to a similar establishment, probably this one, described variously as being in New Road and at 'Bridge end'. A photograph of 1863 shows it labelled Chester's Commercial and Family Hotel; the whole building was then 3-storeyed. Morris's directory for 1870 lists it under its present name and calls it a family and commercial hotel and posting house. The building occupies a prominent waterside position adjoining the Public Library, Town Hall and Bridge. (Goaman M: Old Bideford and District: Bristol: 1968-: P.37).

Listing NGR: SS4542826429

HAMPTON TERRACE

SS4526 NEW ROAD

842-1/6/195 (West side)

08/11/49 1, 2 AND 3 Hampton Terrace

GV II

Also known as: Riverside Flats NEW ROAD. Terrace of 3 houses, now forming part of a larger complex known as Riverside Flats. Mid C19. Solid rendered walls. Pitched slated roofs at right-angles to street, now concealed by parapet. 3 storeys. Each house of 2-window range with round-arched doorway in place of right-hand second-storey window. Doorways are reached by a continuous balcony extending to the right across the unlisted part of Riverside Flats, where there are steps down to the street. Ground storey has 2 round-arched and 1 segmental-headed doorway; 2 late C19 window, each of 4 lights with segmental arches springing from moulded shafts. Upper storeys are flanked and separated by pilasters with moulded caps (the left-hand one now with a plain cap); above these a plain band and tall parapet. In second storey 6-panelled doors; triple-sashed windows, each sash with a single horizontal glazing-bar. Balcony has wrought-iron railings of a simple grid design, the centre of each section with a circle decorated with twisted motifs and braced to all 4 corners. 7 open-work uprights filled with circles and St Andrew's Crosses rise to support a pent-roof, which has a fringe of iron circles. Third-storey windows have 6-paned sashes. Rear elevations, visible from Marine Gardens, retain several windows with barred sashes. INTERIOR not inspected. The terrace is not shown on Wood's 1842 map of Bideford.

Listing NGR: SS4542526384



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