

# MUSEUM OF BARNSTAPLE & NORTH DEVON

## BARNSTAPLE

## DEVON

Results of a Desk-Based Assessment



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 160606

## MBND, Barnstaple, Devon Results of a Desk-Based Assessment

---

By T.Green, C. Humphreys & I. Daone  
Report Version FINAL  
15<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Work undertaken by SWARCH for Alison Mills  
MBND

### *Summary*

---

*This report presents the results of a desk-based assessment of the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon building and the immediate surroundings. This work was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of Alison Mills; museum development manager for North Devon District Council, in order to inform proposals to extend the museum to the north-west incorporating part of the site of Bridge End House that was demolished in 1963.*

*The site is at the north end of the Long Bridge parts of which potentially have a 13<sup>th</sup> century construction date. In 1584 buildings stood each side of the north end of the Long Bridge one of which may have been the chapel of St. Thomas à Becket*

*Until 1722 the site of the Museum and the adjacent Square was a tidal marsh circumnavigated to the west by a causeway from the Long Bridge and to the east by a roadway connecting Litchdon Street to the town. The museum building was constructed in 1872 as a private dwelling and from 1888 housed the North Devon Athenaeum. It became the museum in 1988. The Bridge End building was also constructed in 19th century and demolished in 1963.*

*No archaeological works have taken place in the immediate vicinity of the site however this is an area of high archaeological potential although the 19<sup>th</sup> century construction and later demolition of Bridge End House may have removed any archaeological features or artefactual remains.*



June 2016

South West Archaeology Ltd. shall retain the copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project.

## CONTENTS

---

<i>CONTENTS</i> .....	3
<i>LIST OF FIGURES</i> .....	4
<i>LIST OF APPENDICES</i> .....	4
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i> .....	4
<i>PROJECT CREDITS</i> .....	4
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND .....	5
1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL, URBAN AND GEOLOGICAL SETTING .....	5
1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	5
1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	6
1.5 METHODOLOGY .....	6
<b>2.0 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>3.0 EXTRACT FROM THE BARNSTAPLE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL</b> .....	<b>19</b>
3.1 CONSERVATION AREA BACKGROUND.....	19
3.2 THE SQUARE (AREA 5) SEE FIG 17 .....	20
<b>4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>23</b>
4.1 BASELINE DATA.....	23
<b>5.0 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>6.0 THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE BELOW GROUND ARCHAEOLOGY</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY &amp; REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>25</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

*Cover plate: View of the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon (North Devon Gazette 2015)*

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION.	7
FIGURE 2: EXTRACT FROM A PAINTING OF 1743 DEPICTING THE APPROACH TO THE TOWN FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.	8
FIGURE 3: EXTRACT FROM BRUCE OLIVER'S COPY OF A PARTIAL TOWN PLAN DATED 1584.	9
FIGURE 4: EXTRACT FROM BRUCE OLIVER'S COPY OF THE BRIDGE TRUST PLAN OF ITS PROPERTIES IN THE TOWN DATED 1772.	10
FIGURE 5: EXTRACT FROM A NORTH DEVON ATHENAEUM COPY OF WOOD'S TOWN MAP OF 1843.	11
FIGURE 6: PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SQUARE TAKEN PROBABLY IN THE 1850S-60S BEFORE BRIDGE END COTTAGES WERE DEMOLISHED.	11
FIGURE 7: EARLY 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW OF THE SQUARE FROM TAW VALE.	12
FIGURE 8: MID-20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW FROM SEVEN BRETHERN BANK TOWARDS THE TOWN ILLUSTRATING THE 'GATEWAY' EFFECT OF BRIDGE CHAMBERS ON THE LEFT AND BRIDGE END HOUSE ON THE RIGHT AS INTENDED BY R.D.GOULD.	13
FIGURE 9: EARLY 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW OF BRIDGE END HOUSE.	13
FIGURE 10: PHOTOGRAPH FROM AROUND 1914 IN WHICH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO BUILDINGS IS CLEARLY SEEN.	14
FIGURE 11: EARLY TO MID-20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW OF BRIDGE END HOUSE SEEN FROM THE BRIDGE AND SHOWING THE CONSERVATORY.	15
FIGURE 12: EXTRACT FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:500 MAP OF 1889.	16
FIGURE 13: PHOTOGRAPH OF 1963 SHOWING BRIDGE END HOUSE IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOLITION.	16
FIGURE 14: CURRENT VIEW ACROSS THE SQUARE SHOWING THE MUSEUM, BRIDGE CHAMBERS AND BRIDGE BUILDINGS.	17
FIGURE 15: EXTRACT FROM THE OS 25" MAP OF THE 1930S WITH THE LINES OF THE WIDENED BRIDGE SUPERIMPOSED.	18
FIGURE 16: BARNSTAPLE TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY.	19
FIGURE 17: MAP SHOWING POSITION OF HISTORIC ASSETS IN THE VICINITY OF THE MUSEUM.	22

## LIST OF APPENDICES

---

APPENDIX 1: HERITAGE ASSETS	26
-----------------------------	----

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

CLIENT: ALISON MILLS; MUSEUM OF BARNSTAPLE AND NORTH DEVON  
 THE STAFF OF THE DEVON HERITAGE CENTRE (DHC)  
 NAOMI AYRE,; NORTH DEVON ATHENEUM (NDA)  
 MARGARET REED; HISTORIAN  
 PETER CHRISTIE; HISTORIAN  
 PETER LAURIE; BARNSTAPLE BRIDGE TRUST

## PROJECT CREDITS

---

PROJECT DIRECTOR: COLIN HUMPHREYS  
 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT: TERRY GREEN  
 REPORT: COLIN HUMPHREYS, IZZY DAONE  
 EDITING: DR SAMUEL WALLS  
 GRAPHICS: COLIN HUMPHREYS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

---

<b>Location:</b>	Barnstaple
<b>County:</b>	Devon
<b>NGR:</b>	Centred on SS 5585 3297
<b>SWARCH ref.</b>	MBND16

### 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report presents the results of a desk-based appraisal carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) for the land adjacent to the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon, Barnstaple, Devon. The work was commissioned by Alison Mills of the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon and provides a statement of the historical context and significance of the existing building and adjacent buildings and structures. The following study will aim to place the site in its local context, to provide an account of the history of the site and the development of the neighbouring built environment. The account will be illustrated with historic maps and photographs from the available archives. References to the Devon County Historic Record (MDV...) are provided within the text. Please refer to fig 17 and appendix 1 for a list of these.

### 1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL, URBAN AND GEOLOGICAL SETTING

Located at SS 5585 3297 the site of the proposed extension lies on level ground on the banks of the Taw adjacent to the north-east end of the Grade 1 listed Barnstaple Long Bridge (MDV827). The site is situated on the edge of the commercial core of Barnstaple, where it is adjacent to the existing Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon. It is currently occupied by both an enclosed yard serving as museum storage and a small, paved public garden.

Between the site and the river is a public walkway which leads under the bridge towards the Strand area of Barnstaple. The area immediately to the north-east is laid out as a paved public space called simply The Square with seating, flower beds and trees. The Square is part encircled on the north by the A3125 road which carries a constant flow of traffic and on the east by Taw Vale, on which traffic is light and restricted. The Square lies at the point where several roads, the Strand, Boutport Street, Diamond Street, Belle Meadow Road and Taw Vale come together. Across the road in the corresponding bridge-foot location is the neo-Gothic building known as Bridge Chambers (MDV95989). Other elements of the built environment are detailed below.

The underlying solid geology is dominated by the Pilton beds, a blue grey, often fossiliferous shale or slate interleaved with thin bands of limestone and sandstone. Overlying the solid geology along the Taw are alluvial silts and sediments reflecting isostatic changes of sea-level during glacial and interglacial periods of the Quaternary.

### 1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Barnstaple was established as a burh in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and at this time the site of The Square, adjacent to the museum, was a tidal marsh lying outside the town defence. The proposed development site should be seen within the context of the Barnstaple Long Bridge, which was constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century; the arches which were originally constructed in wood were replaced with stone in 1589. By 1772 the square had been reclaimed and developed through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in accordance with changing demands.

The museum is one of Barnstaple's most iconic buildings and stands on the square close to the Long Bridge. The Bridge was widened in 1963 as the earlier construction did not serve the needs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which led to the demolition of the Bridge End building adjacent to the museum.

#### 1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Barnstaple has many notable archaeological sites, pertaining to a range of periods from Prehistory to Modern. The Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) provides a comprehensive list of all the known heritage sites within Barnstaple, some of which are mentioned in this report (see Appendix 1). The town flourished during the late medieval and post-medieval periods when trade and pottery production brought in most of the town's money. Pottery production sites dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have been found at Tuly Street and a site dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Litchdon Street. The bridge is an archaeological site of note, dating to 13<sup>th</sup> century.

As the proposed development site is in the direct vicinity of the bridge it may have an impact on buried archaeological remains associated with the structure or the buildings that once stood at the north end. Barnstaple demonstrates a good rate of survival regarding buried archaeology so preservation of remains is possible in this area, and may be affected by ground works.

#### 1.5 METHODOLOGY

This work was undertaken in accordance with best practice. The desk-based assessment follows the guidance as outlined in: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (CIfA 2014) and *Understanding Place: historic area assessments in a planning and development context* (English Heritage 2012).





Figure 1: Site location (the site is indicated).

## 2.0 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

### 2.1.1 THE BRIDGE

The proposed development and development site should be seen first of all in the context of the Barnstaple Long Bridge. From available records it is evident that the bridge was in existence in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, so that we may suppose that it was constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, though earlier still is a possibility. It appears to have been built in stone apart from the so-called Maiden Arches (those three nearest to the town) which are recorded by Adam Wyatt, Town Clerk in 1589 as being rebuilt in stone in place of wood. At the town end of the medieval bridge was a chapel dedicated to St Thomas à Becket (MDV12522).

The bridge was of sixteen arches carrying a roadway which was apparently little more than 9ft (3m) wide, suitable only for pedestrians and pack-horse traffic, as can be seen in a well known painting of 1743 (Fig.2). The bridge was widened in 1796, 1832 under the supervision of James Green, County Surveyor with the provision of pavements on cantilever brackets, and finally in 1963 by the Ministry of Transport. Maintenance of the bridge was at first in the hands of the Mayor and Councillors of Barnstaple by whom bridge wardens were appointed. The wardens morphed into feoffees and then into the Bridge Trustees. In 1961 the Ministry of Transport took over ownership and responsibility from the Trustees in order to facilitate the widening necessitated by 20<sup>th</sup> century traffic conditions.



FIGURE 2: EXTRACT FROM A PAINTING OF 1743 DEPICTING THE APPROACH TO THE TOWN FROM THE SOUTH-WEST VIA THE LONG BRIDGE (NDA).

### 2.1.2 THE SQUARE

From the time when Barnstaple was established as a *burh* in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area which is now the Square remained tidal marsh lying outside the South Gate of the defended town. The area of Litchton or Litchdon was accessible, perhaps initially by way of



a causeway, but by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Litchdon Street appears to have been approached by a roadway skirting the marshy ground on the north side (Fig.3).

When the Long Bridge was constructed, it seems certain that a causeway was provided for its access from the South Gate, while at the foot of the bridge a chapel dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket was built. A partial town plan of 1584 (Fig.3) – only available as a copy by the late Bruce Oliver - indicates the chapel and a water course running from the end of Boutport Street into the Taw just below it. This probable tidal pill may have carried effluent into the river. Of the four or five medieval chapels of Barnstaple, that of St Thomas was the least long-lived. When Leland visited the town in the 1530s he found the chapel 'profaned'. While it appears still to be present on the partial town plan of 1584, on the Bridge Trust map of the town dated 1772 (Fig.4) there is no longer any sign of it.

*NB. While the OS maps of 1889 and 1904 (eg. Fig. 12 below) place the site of the chapel on the north-east of the bridge foot, it appears from the 1584 plan that it may well have been on the other, north-west side.*

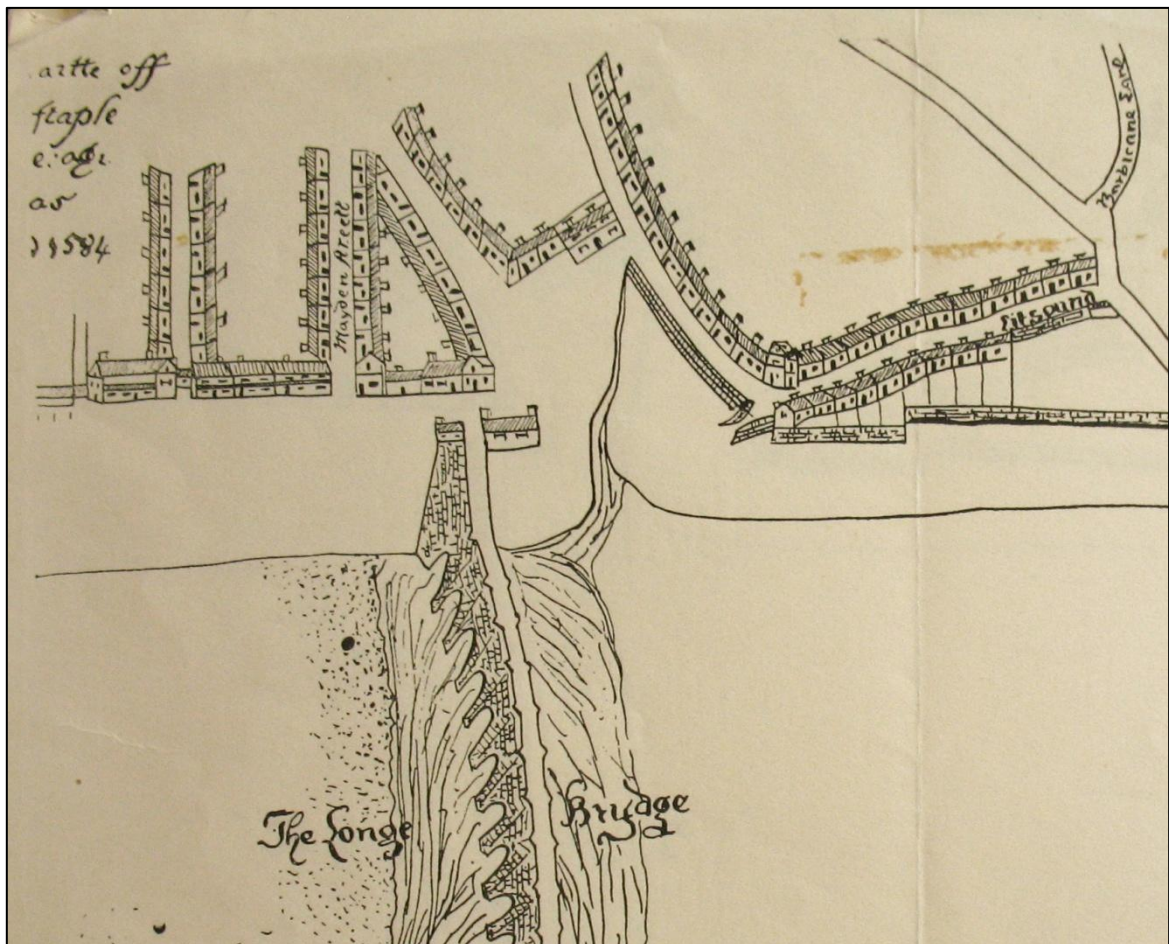


FIGURE 3: EXTRACT FROM BRUCE OLIVER'S COPY OF A PARTIAL TOWN PLAN DATED 1584 SHOWING THE LONG BRIDGE WITH, AT THE TOWN END, TWO BUILDINGS, EITHER (OR NEITHER) OF WHICH MAY REPRESENT THE CHAPEL OF ST THOMAS À BECKET (NDA).

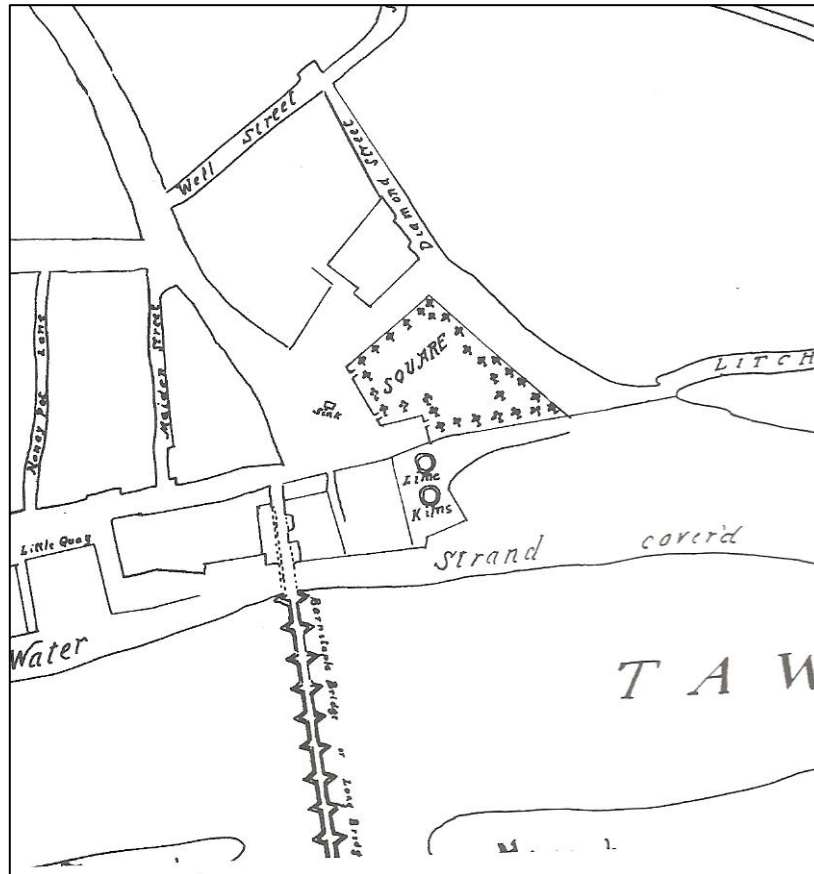


FIGURE 4: EXTRACT FROM BRUCE OLIVER'S COPY OF THE BRIDGE TRUST PLAN OF ITS PROPERTIES IN THE TOWN DATED 1772 (NDA).

In an effort at improvement, the marshy ground outside the town was reclaimed and enclosed in 1722, but when Daniel Defoe visited in 1724 he found that at spring tides the town was 'as it were, surrounded by water', which appears to mean that the area which was now to become the Square was still regularly inundated. However, the Bridge Trust map of 1772 clearly indicates that matters had by that date been brought under control, since it identifies the Square as a public garden between which and the river there were now buildings, yards and lime kilns.

Gribble's town plan of 1830 and Wood's very detailed plan of 1843 (Fig.5) seem to indicate that very little had changed since 1772. A photograph from the 1850s (Fig.6) shows an open space with public garden and, towards the river, a pair of houses or cottages standing at what must be the bridge foot, their location corresponding *more or less* to that of the present museum and development site.

Set out originally as a public space with gardens, the development of the Square through the 19th and 20th centuries reflects changes in transport and ways of life. Depicted in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century photographs (Fig.7) as dominated by a public garden and the Albert Memorial Clock (MDV95970) erected in 1862, by the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century any leisable use of the Square had been made practically impossible by through traffic, while the public garden had been reduced to a traffic island. Remodelling of the area in the last decade has returned the Square to its original function.



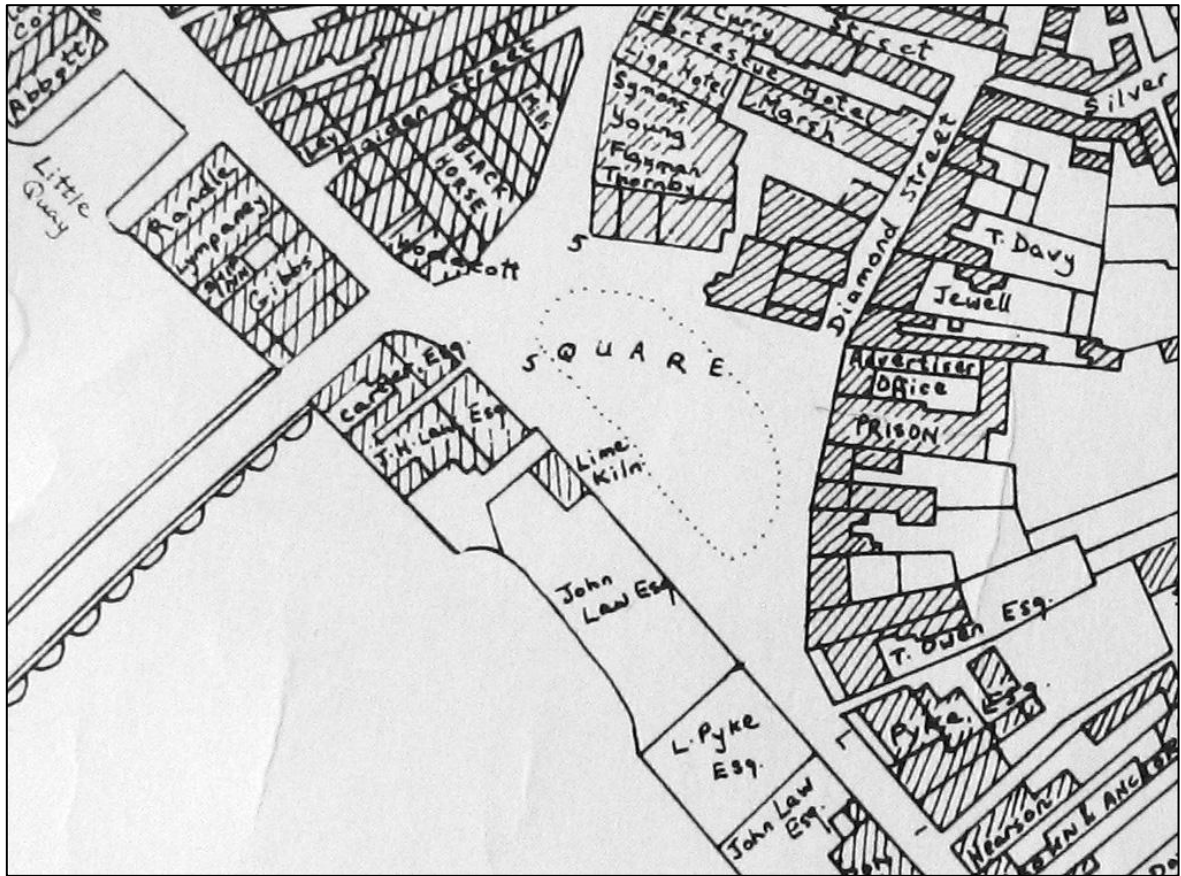


FIGURE 5: EXTRACT FROM A NORTH DEVON ATHENAEUM COPY OF WOOD'S TOWN MAP OF 1843 (NDA).



FIGURE 6: A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SQUARE TAKEN PROBABLY IN THE 1850S OR 60S BEFORE THE BRIDGE END COTTAGES WERE DEMOLISHED (NDA).



FIGURE 7: EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW OF THE SQUARE FROM TAW VALE (NDA).

### 2.1.3 THE BUILDINGS

The Wood map of 1843 shows private properties on either side of the bridge foot. In the early 1870s cottages on the north-west side of the bridge foot were demolished by the Bridge Trustees to be replaced by a 'Hall and Chambers'. Designed in the neo-Gothic style by R.D.Gould the new building, to be known as Bridge Chambers, was completed in 1873.

In the same period, the buildings, yards and lime kiln on the south-east side of the bridge foot were being progressively cleared away. These removals provided the opportunity for the construction in 1872 of a private house on behalf of Mr William Thorne. The house was never actually inhabited as a private dwelling and in 1876 was sold by Miss Thorne, the daughter of William Thorne, to the Bridge Trustees.

At this same time the Trustees purchased any remaining older structures on the south-east side of the bridge foot and demolished them in order both to widen the approach to the bridge and to allow for the construction, again to an R.D.Gould design, of a building which should be in harmony with Bridge Chambers so that the two should stand as a 'gateway' to the town (Fig.8). Built in the neo-Gothic style, the new building comprised a house fronting the river and a smaller house with shop facing the Square to be known as Bridge End House (Fig.9). It was linked to its neighbour, the former private house of Miss Thorne, with a service wing, coach house or yard and a conservatory (Figs 10, 11 and 12). The latter building was subsequently sold by the Trust to Mr W.F.Rock, Barnstaple's prominent 19th century benefactor, who founded the North Devon Athenaeum (MDV18353) and Free Library here in 1888\* (Fig.12). The building housed the Athenaeum and Free Library until 1988, when both were transferred to new premises in Tuly Street. Since then the building has housed the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon.

From the late 19th century up until 1960/61, Bridge End House accommodated the offices of John Brewer, then Brewer and Son and finally Brewer and Thorburn, Solicitors. It was sold to the Ministry of Transport in 1961 and demolished in 1962 (Fig.13) to facilitate the widening of the bridge to its present dimensions. (\* It should be noted that when the building was sold to Mr Rock, the Bridge Trustees reserved 'the drainage and watercourse rights through and under, access thereto and all other existing rights, liberties and easements.')





FIGURE 8: MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW FROM SEVEN BRETHERN BANK TOWARDS THE TOWN ILLUSTRATING THE 'GATEWAY' EFFECT OF BRIDGE CHAMBERS ON THE LEFT AND BRIDGE END HOUSE ON THE RIGHT AS INTENDED BY R.D.GOULD (NDA).



FIGURE 9: EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW OF BRIDGE END HOUSE (NDA).



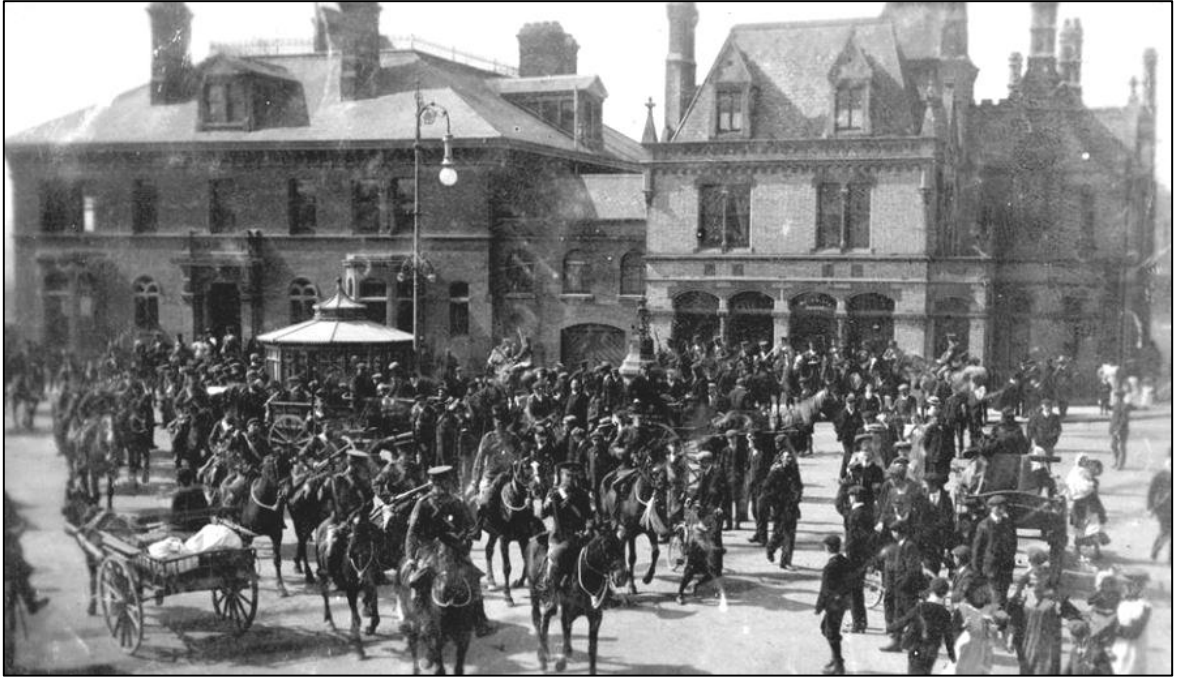


FIGURE 10: PHOTOGRAPH FROM AROUND 1914 IN WHICH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO BUILDINGS IS CLEARLY SEEN (MUSEUM OF BARNSTAPLE AND NORTH DEVON).



FIGURE 11: EARLY TO MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY VIEW OF BRIDGE END HOUSE SEEN FROM THE BRIDGE AND SHOWING THE CONSERVATORY CONNECTING IT TO THE ATHENAEUM (NDA).

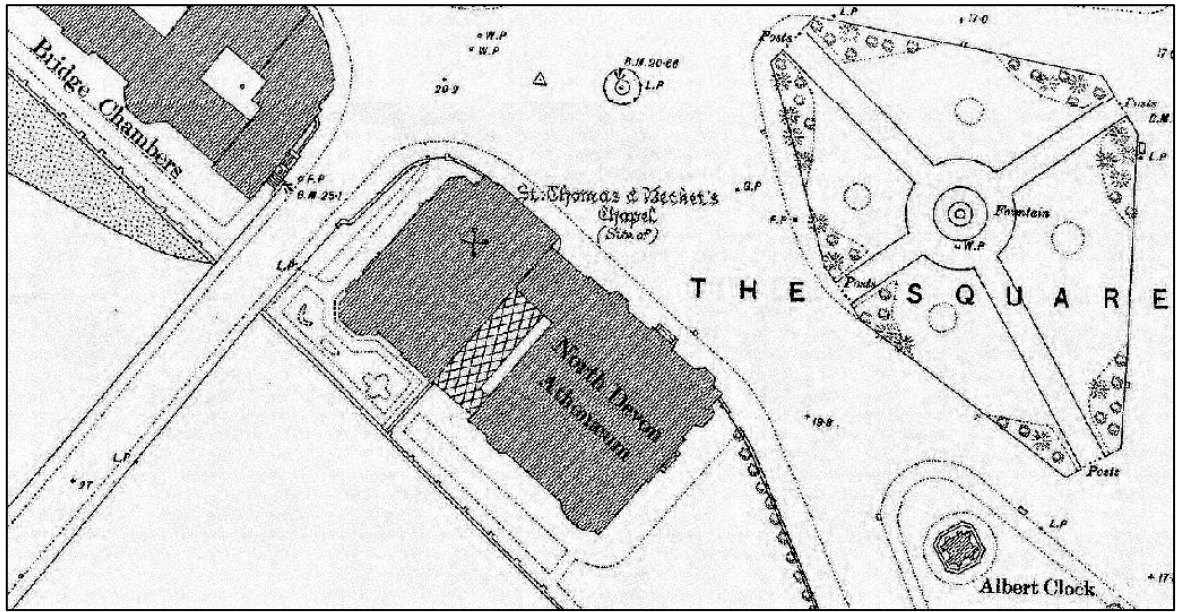


FIGURE 12: EXTRACT FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:500 MAP OF 1889 SHOWING THE FOOTPRINT OF THE TWO BUILDINGS WITH THE CONSERVATORY BETWEEN THEM.



FIGURE 13: PHOTOGRAPH OF 1963 SHOWING BRIDGE END HOUSE IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOLITION (NDA).

#### 2.1.4 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon, formerly the North Devon Athenaeum, stands on the edge of the recently remodelled public Square where it features prominently as one of Barnstaple's most iconic buildings (Figure 14). In this open environment it is accompanied by Gould's neo-Gothic Bridge Chambers of 1874 on the north-west and by the neo-classical Bridge Buildings, also by Gould, 1844 (MDV95969) on the north. Opposite the Museum at the end of Boutport Street is a mansarded French style four-storey building constructed apparently in the 1850s/60s as the West of England and South Wales District Bank (MDV95965), now in use as a restaurant, and beside it the Golden Lion Inn (MDV95973) with a Georgian frontage concealing probable 17<sup>th</sup> century work behind.

Continuing east and south, a pair of 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings (MDV95968 and MDV95967) lead to Diamond Street and between this and Belle Meadow Road a block of late 20<sup>th</sup> century apartments. On the other side of Belle Meadow Road a group of probably Victorian buildings leads the eye into Litchdon Street on the south side of which is the late Victorian Imperial Hotel (MDV95963) leading on to the elegant Tav Vale Parade, dating from the 1840s (MDV95957). Standing as a centre-piece is the Albert Memorial Clock (MDV95970) together with the Willshire fountain (MDV95974), flowerbeds and slender fastigate oaks, the whole presenting a pleasing prospect to anyone approaching the town from the east or the south.



FIGURE 14: CURRENT VIEW ACROSS THE SQUARE SHOWING THE MUSEUM, BRIDGE CHAMBERS AND BRIDGE BUILDINGS (T.GREEN).



## 2.1.5 THE BRIDGE WIDENING OF 1963

By 1960 the bridge, which had last been widened in 1832, no longer served the needs of 20<sup>th</sup> century traffic. As indicated above, responsibility for the bridge passed from the Bridge Trustees to the Ministry of Transport under whose direction work on further widening the bridge began in 1962. At the town end of the bridge the necessary work could only be achieved by demolishing Bridge End House (Fig.13). The result was a much wider approach to the bridge, the parapet of which now cut across the site of Bridge End House, creating an enclosed space between the bridge parapet and the wall of the Athenaeum (Museum) yard. This now serves as a small public garden with a walkway through it. In Figure 15 the extent of the widened bridge and the degree to which the site of Bridge End House was taken up is indicated by the coloured lines which are superimposed on the 1930s version of the OS 25" map.

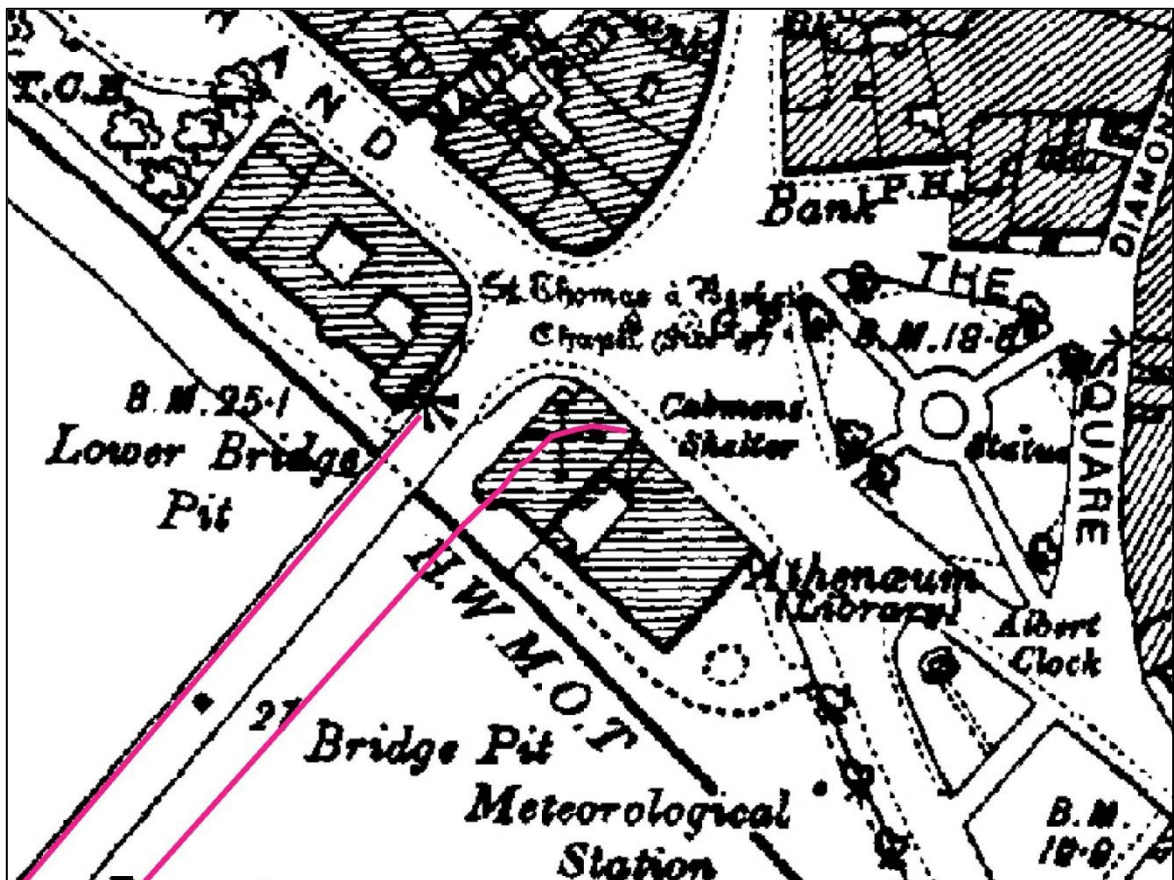


FIGURE 15: EXTRACT FROM THE OS 25" MAP OF THE 1930S WITH THE LINES OF THE WIDENED BRIDGE SUPERIMPOSED (TAKEN FROM THE OS 25" MAP OF 1971), SHOWING THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SITE OF BRIDGE END HOUSE WAS TAKEN UP BY THE BRIDGE WIDENING.



### 3.0 EXTRACT FROM THE BARNSTAPLE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

#### 3.1 CONSERVATION AREA BACKGROUND

The conservation area of Barnstaple covers an area of 30.9 hectares (see Figure 16) and was created in 1985. Within this area there are 234 Listed Buildings including the Grade I Long Bridge. Barnstaple town centre contains many historical buildings, all with a range of architectural style and historical period. This section presents the information within the appraisal regarding the areas around the site of proposed development (Barnstaple Conservation Area Character Appraisal: North Devon Council pages 65-68)

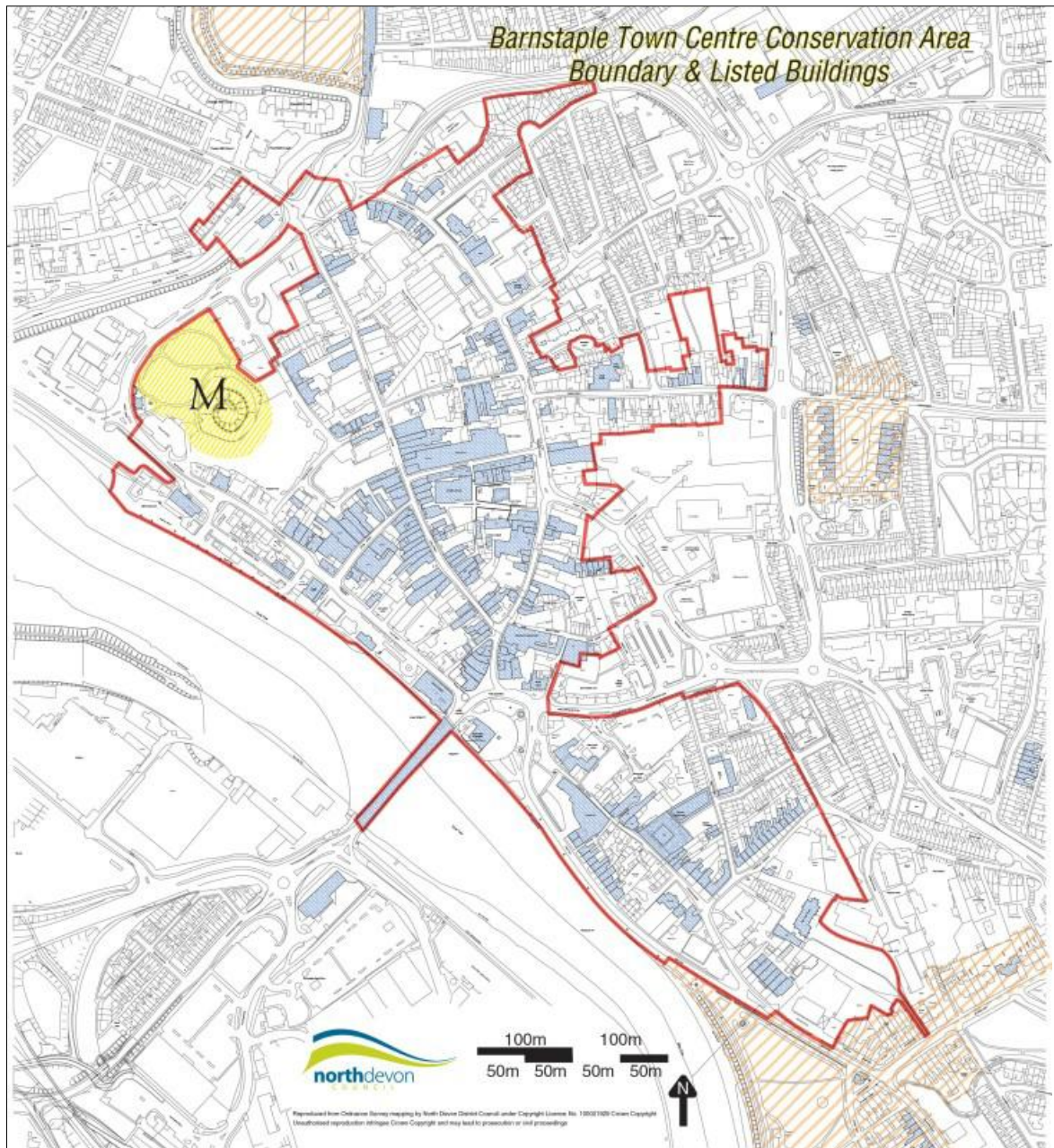


FIGURE 16: BARNSTAPLE TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY.

### 3.2 THE SQUARE (AREA 5) SEE FIG 17

The Square has never in its history been laid out as a formal public space enclosed on all sides in the conventional, regular way typical of early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century urban development found elsewhere in England. Its irregular plan form, that has always maintained at least a partly open aspect towards the river front has changed considerably over the last 150 years along with the growing use of the car. Before attempts were made to give the space some degree of order in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, The Square was described as a beach in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that could only be crossed at low tide by a stone causeway. The situation appears to have barely changed by the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century when it remained an area of unappealing wasteland where surface water run-off originating from High Street ended up. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century The Square had a formal layout, yet the name was still misleading as the area is not enclosed on all 4 sides and is far from being a square in plan. This layout was fragmented into parcels of grass and planting cut up by roads.

The 13<sup>th</sup> century Long Bridge (Grade I Listed, formerly a scheduled ancient monument) is currently outside of the conservation area, however it features in views along the riverfront, and also facilitates views along the town bank of the Taw. Its greatest importance is probably as a formal approach onto The Square, as such the link between the Long Bridge and The Square is sufficient to justify its inclusion in the conservation area as part of this character zone.

The irregular character of The Square is also demonstrated by the varying scale and height of its built form where the heavyweight appearance of Bridge Chambers, Bridge Buildings and the Athanaeum have a significant, decorative architectural presence clustered around its west side. This Victorian splendour contrasts with a much more modest scale found on the east side that reflects the generally lower building heights of Litchdon Street.

Specific examples of particular historic building types found in The Square include The Inn on the Square, being an example of a gallery and back block plan. The two left hand blocks to the building within the courtyard are linked by a first floor gallery. The front block is of stone with the rear block built of brick.

The Athenaeum (now the Museum of North Devon) was originally founded by Mr Rock in 1888 and later sold to the Barnstaple Bridge Trust. Its richly detailed eaves cornice are spectacular examples that follow the theme of other decorative cornices found within the Conservation Area and form a distinctive traditional architectural feature of this historic core.

Positive views can be appreciated looking south-east through this Sub-Area towards the confined entrance and close-knit frontages to Litchdon Street, which contrast with the relative openness of The Square. Other important views are possible in many directions from The Square: southwards to Sticklepath Hill; towards the south-east beyond slate -topped chimneys and Litchdon Street to the tower of Holy Trinity Church; along the riverfront towards trees to Rock Park and beyond to rising land and Tawstock in the background; northwards to the junction of the eastern frontage to Boutport Street at it converges towards the base of High Street; the curved frontage of the Royal & Fortescue Hotel leading the eye northwards along the eastern frontage of Boutport Street.

Existing plane trees provide important focal points of soft vegetation that offer relief along the northern side of the The Square outside Chambers Brasserie and other trees outside the set back frontage of Inn on the Square which define an informal space which is somewhat detached from the rest of The Square, due partly to the road configuration.

The eastern part of The Square has a varied architectural frontage where hipped roofs are used with height, styles and form having more in common with the character found in Litchdon Street,

while the present fascia signage on this side of The Square does not positively contribute to the quality of the townscape.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the plan form of The Square has increasingly become sacrificial to the road network that has circumvented it, and towards managing the needs of efficient car access between the two banks of the River Taw, relegating it (until recently) to the status of a large traffic island.

The most recent re-modelling of The Square in 2007-8 has involved a further significant alteration to its shape with the added presence of utilities, further lamp standards and signage. Together with the existing CCTV column doubling up as a lamp support, traffic management boxes and other street furniture this amounts to further street clutter that visually harms the quality of the space around The Square. Aerial views out through The Square particularly looking southwards towards Long Bridge and the green backdrop of Sticklepath Hill beyond are also degraded by the presence of tall highway related street equipment.

Positive benefits have included creating an enhanced treatment of the public space that now directly links to the riverfront without having to cross moving traffic (arising from the Downstream Bridge completed in 2007). The introduction of high quality natural hard and soft landscaping and tree planting, and particularly as the latter mature, will provide increased punctuation of views and serve to reinforce the deserved status of the public space.

Following largely highway-orientated improvement works here The Square's appearance has been much improved, although the through flow of traffic still makes the area dominated by vehicle movements. The works to surface improvements and enhanced street furniture along with planting and seating now offers an improved setting for perhaps the most important group of listed buildings in this Conservation Area including the North Devon Athenaeum, the Albert Clock, Barum House, the Bridge Chambers buildings and the Wilshire monument and fountain.

The Albert Clock was built in 1862 as a memorial to Prince Albert, who died the previous year, and formally dedicated and started running a year to the day after the Prince's death. The clock tower is a high visible landmark from along the length of the Strand, from where it is framed between the two rows of buildings along the street. The new improvements within The Square also mean that the clock and the Athenaeum are no-longer separated by roads and form two key elements to a single, level, pedestrian space.

**Please note** that this is a direct quote from the Conservation plan and has not been edited.



## 4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

---

### 4.1 BASELINE DATA

Barnstaple is rich in finds dating from prehistory to the modern period. The Barnstaple Conservation Area Character Appraisal gives a good explanation of notable archaeological sites within the town and the Devon Heritage Environment Records show the archaeological sites immediately surrounding the museum (fig 16) which are, in the most part, dateable to the Medieval period onwards.

#### 4.1.1 PREHISTORIC 4000BC - AD43

The evidence for Prehistoric activity and occupation in the immediate area around the museum is non-existent, although there have been finds in other parts of the town. A Bronze age hearth was unearthed at the junction of Holland Street and Paiges Lane, as well as flint tools recorded at a site on the High Street which date to the mesolithic period.

#### 4.1.2 ROMANO-BRITISH AD43 - AD410

No Roman sites have been found within the town, although some evidence from the surrounding area, e.g. Pilton, suggests that the town may have been in use during this time. However, there is no evidence to confirm this.

#### 4.1.3 EARLY MEDIEVAL AD410 - AD1066

Documentary evidence, dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, refers to a burgh in the area which is thought to be Barnstaple, supported by the exposure of a pre-Conquest ditch on Boutport Street. Coin evidence dating to this period have also been discovered, which were most likely minted in the town. However, no archaeological evidence immediately in the area around the museum has been discovered.

#### 4.1.4 MEDIEVAL AD1066 - AD1540

At this time, the town was most likely under intense occupation. The Motte and Bailey Castle was probably constructed in 1086. The Long Bridge, which is in the immediate vicinity to the museum site, dates mainly from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with additions made to it in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The bridge was important in terms of access to the town. Throughout Barnstaple there is a well demonstrated survival of medieval deposits below ground, such as pits and pottery assemblages. There is therefore the potential for finds pertaining to the medieval period within the area of the proposed development site.

#### 4.1.5 POST-MEDIEVAL AND MODERN AD1540-PRESENT

A number of above ground archaeological sites of note exist within the vicinity of the museum dating to this period and are shown on the Devon HER. Bridge chambers is situated on the opposite side of the road to the museum and dates to 1872, designed by R.D Gould who was the architect for multiple buildings in the town. The Albert Clock was erected in the square ten years prior to the construction of Bridge Chambers, in memory of Albert Prince Consort. Pottery production flourished in the town between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with one of the main production sites located at Tuly Street. It is possible that potter finds from this period may remain in the area of proposed development. However, the 19<sup>th</sup> century construction within the area of the museum and the square may affect the survival of earlier archaeological deposits.



## 5.0 CONCLUSION

---

1. The partial town plan of 1584 shows a watercourse entering the river at roughly this location. Environmental material may be preserved in any waterborne deposits underlying the site.
2. The medieval bridge was considerably narrower than the present bridge. It appears from the partial town plan of 1584 that the Chapel of St Thomas à Becket stood beside the bridge foot either on the north-west or on the south-east. If in the latter location it is probable that any remains would have been removed in the bridge widening episodes of 1796, 1832 or 1963. However, since the exact relationship between the medieval bridge and the chapel is not clear, there may yet be remains to be encountered in any ground works.
3. Until 1722 the whole area was tidal marsh crossed by a causeway. Silts, sands and gravels underlying the site may preserve environmental material and may also yield medieval and post-medieval cultural materials.
4. Remains of buildings that stood here prior to the developments of the 1870s may be encountered in any groundworks.
5. The proposed development site is situated immediately adjacent to the present Museum building, formerly the North Devon Athenaeum, built in 1872. In this location the proposed building would replicate the gateway effect intended by R.D.Gould when Bridge End House was built in 1876.
6. In this location the site coincides with the footprint of the linking coach yard and conservatory of the 1870s as well as part of the footprint of Bridge End House of 1876.
7. The bridge widening of 1963 took away all of Bridge End House, a large part of whose footprint must lie under the roadway.

## 6.0 THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE BELOW GROUND ARCHAEOLOGY

---

The current knowledge of the below ground archaeology for the area of the development is limited to supposition based on early documents and maps and although elsewhere in Barnstaple there is a good preservation of below ground remains in this case any archaeology may have been removed by the construction and later demolition of Bridge End House.

Regardless there is potential of encountering below ground archaeology, this includes:

- a. Environmental material that may yield information of the past use of the area including medieval and post-medieval cultural materials.
- b. Evidence of the medieval bridge and the associated buildings, e.g. chapel.
- c. Evidence of the internal layout of the Bridge End House.

It is therefore strongly recommended that if the development is to proceed that all groundworks are archaeologically monitored and any remains recorded and processed in an appropriate manner.

## 7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES

---

### *Published Sources*

**Cherry, B. and Pevsner, N.** 2002 edition: *The Buildings of England: Devon*, Yale.

**Cruse, J.B.** 1982: *The Long Bridge of Barnstaple and the Long Bridge Trust*, Barnstaple.

**Gray, T.** 1998: *The Lost Chronicle of Barnstaple 1586-1611*, Exeter.

**Gribble, J.B.** 1830: *Memorials of Barnstaple*, Barnstaple.

**Lamplugh, L.** 2002 edition: *Barnstaple: Town on the Taw*, South Molton.

**Pearse Chope, R.** (ed.) 1967: *Early Tours in Devon and Cornwall*, Newton Abbot.

Trade Directories:

**Kellys** 1897, 1938

### *Unpublished Sources*

**The Bridge Trust:** *The History of the Bridge Trust* [www.barumbridgetrust.org/history.html](http://www.barumbridgetrust.org/history.html)

**South West Archaeology Ltd 2015/6:** Extensive Urban Survey: Barnstaple

**North Devon Athenaeum** – maps and images

**Devon County Historic Environment Record:** MDV 827, 12522, 18353, 95957, 95963, 95969, 95970, 95989.

**North Devon Council 2007-08:** Barnstaple Conservation Area Character Appraisal

## APPENDIX 1: HERITAGE ASSETS

HER (MDV) No.	Name	Record Type	Description
MDV12522	ST. THOMAS A BECKET'S CHAPEL, BARNSTAPLE	Chapel	<p>'St. Thomas a Becket's Chapel (Site of)' recorded on the 1855-1895 1:500 town map, at the eastern end of 'Barnstaple Bridge'. Map object based on this source. Exact location and extent unknown.</p> <p>Henderson, C. + Jervoise, E., 1938, <i>Old Devon Bridges</i>, 86 (Monograph). SDV2296.</p> <p>St. Thomas a Becket's Chapel, beside the east end of Barnstaple Bridge, is recorded in 1312.</p> <p>Oliver, B. W., 1946, <i>The Long Bridge of Barnstaple Part 2</i>, 190 (Article in Serial). SDV76239.</p> <p>When old buildings were being cleared for the construction of the modern bridge the remains of a chapel were found, including a piscina and many human bones. There is no record of when the chapel was demolished.</p> <p>Timms, S. C., 1976, <i>The Devon Urban Survey, 1976. First Draft</i>, 70 (Report - Survey). SDV341346.</p> <p>St. Thomas' Chapel had fallen into disuse by the middle of the 16th century.</p> <p>Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division, Unknown, <i>SS53SE17</i> (Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Card). SDV82310.</p> <p>Site visits 13th October 1953 and 31st March 1976. No remains exist. Site now occupied by offices.</p>
MDV18353 LBII No. 1385357	MUSEUM OF NORTH DEVON INCLUDING GARDEN RAILINGS ADJACENT	Building	<p>House, later library, now museum. 1872. Red brick with dressings of stone and terracotta. Hipped, slated roof, the flat centre guarded by ornamental iron railings. 5 red brick chimneys with moulded, bracketed stone caps. Plan: square, built round an internal courtyard. To right (on N side) a small service wing (probably a coach-house) with walled courtyard behind. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys, the main house with garret. Front to square is 7-window range. Ground storey has centre doorway with pilasters having foliated stone capitals; above is a stone hood on large carved brackets. 6-panelled door. At either side a recessed sash window having in front of it a stone column supporting 2 round-arched transom-lights under a single round arch. Canted bay window at either end. Upper storey has sash windows with moulded stone lintels, rounded at the corners. Stone balcony with open tracery in front of middle window. Ground storey has 3 horizontal stone bands. Continued moulded cills in 2nd storey. Inset stone shaft with foliated capital at each corner. Bracketed eaves cornice with terracotta panels between the brackets. The other 3</p>

			fronts are similar in character, the best being to the left (facing S) and at the rear (facing the river). The latter front has terracotta panels and, at the right-hand end, a bow window having a string course carved with heads and heraldic shields. INTERIOR has several rooms and lobbies with enriched cornices and chandelier bosses. Open-well, wooden staircase in Jacobean manner with twisted balusters and large carved newels. Glazed inner doorway and screen with decorative woodwork, probably of the 1880s. Gothic stone chimneypiece in entrance hall. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: at the rear, facing the river, is a small garden enclosed by iron railings having spearhead uprights and standards. The gate piers, with the bases of Dolphin lamp posts, are separately listed (qv). HISTORICAL NOTE: built for William Thorne, but sold to the Barnstaple Bridge Trust in 1876. They in turn sold it to Mr WF Rock, who founded the North Devon Athenaeum and Free Library here in 1888.
MDV827 LB I No. 1384979	LONG BRIDGE, BARNSTAPLE	Bridge	Long Bridge. Road bridge over the River Taw, including causeways. 13th century in origin except for the 3 arches on the town side, replaced in 1589. Widened 3 times at least, once by James Green in 1834, most recently in the 1960s, using concrete faced with rubble. Grey rubble with ashlar arch rings to one of the later phases; rubble parapet. Approximately 159 metres long. 16 arches with the pointed medieval arches of the 3 metre (10 feet) wide original visible behind the later segmental arches; cutwaters; platband at road level; plain parapet. This is an important medieval bridge on a very large scale. Scheduled Ancient Monument. Date listed: 19th January 1951.
MDV95959 LB II No. 1385214	K6 TELEPHONE KIOSK	Telephone Kiosk	Telephone kiosk. Type K6. Designed 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Made by various contractors. Cast-iron. Square kiosks with domed roof. Unperforated crowns to top panels and margin glazing to windows and door.
MDV95963 LB II No. 1385348	IMPERIAL HOTEL	Building	Hotel. Largely 1902 (Pevsner), incorporating a c1800 house at the W end. Smooth plastered; natural slate roof with lead rolls; stacks with red brick shafts with corbelled cornices. c1800 house is symmetrical, 2 rooms wide. The hotel has been built around this and to the E with a large entrance/stair hall to E of the house. 3 storeys. Historical Note: a painting shows the c1800 house as 2-storey with projecting front wings. The building is an important feature of Taw Vale and the C19 riverside development close to the Long Bridge. (Buildings of England: Pevsner N and Cherry B: Devon: London: 1989-: 159).
MDV95965 LB II No. 1385360	'THE OLD EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE', ORIGINALLY BANK,	Building	Bank, now shops and studio. Probably about 1850-60, re-roofed in 1880s. For the

	FORMERLY SHOP, NOW RESTAURANT.		<p>West of England and South Wales District Bank. Limestone ashlar on a granite ashlar plinth; red brick side walls. Slated mansard roof. 2 limestone ashlar chimneys with bracketed cornices and shaped tops. Red brick chimney at rear (visible from Boutport Street), also with bracketed stone cornice. Ground floor seems to have consisted of a single large room, presumably the banking hall, with offices in the front right-hand corner. Entrance passage at far right-hand end leading to staircase at rear. Classical mostly Italianate style. 3 storeys with garret. 3-window range to The Square, 2 windows to Boutport Street. Rusticated ground storey with vermiculated quoins and surrounds to openings. 2 round-arched windows in each front, together with round-arched doorways on rounded corner and at right-hand end of front to The Square. Moulded string course at impost-level. Plain window with transom lights. 3-panelled double doors on corner; 6-panelled door to stair hall. Dentilled cornice above ground storey. Pulvinated frieze and cornice above 2nd storey. Heavily bracketed top cornice and blocking-course. 2nd-storey windows have plain surrounds and cornices on consoles, except for plain right-hand window facing The Square; the other 2 windows on this side are of 3 lights. 3rd-storey windows, 4 to The Square and 2 to Boutport Street, have moulded architraves slightly buttressed at the front. Plain sashes in both upper storeys. The rounded corner has a plain shaped panel in the 2nd storey and a pair of shields with coats of arms in the 3rd storey. 3 dormer windows towards The Square, 2 to Boutport Street; all have triangular pediments bracketed at the front and sides. Interior: only ground floor inspected. Main room has panelled walls and ceiling; enriched soffits to beams; both this and the former office have modillioned cornices. Entrance passage has similar cornice, together with chandelier boss. Geometrical wood staircase with slender turned balusters, carved step-ends, the balustrade voluted at the foot. Historical Note: erected for the West of England and South Wales District Bank, which opened a branch in Bridge Buildings on the west side of The Square in 1845, moving to the present site 'some years later'. The bank failed in 1878 and was replaced in 1880 by a branch of the Devon and Cornwall Bank. This was taken over by Lloyds Bank in 1906.</p>
MDV95967 LB II No. 1385352	BARUM HOUSE NOW COUNCIL OFFICES	Building	<p>House. Early C18, with late C19 additions. Solid rendered walls. Slated roof. Rendered chimney on each gable end; red brick ones just behind centre of ridge and on rear gable of wing. Probably double-fronted</p>



			and 2 rooms deep, with late C19 rear wing to right. 2 storeys. 6-window range with flanking giant pilasters, each with a section of triglyphed frieze on top, the boxed eaves cornice breaking forward above it. Ground storey altered in late C19. Centre doorway with deep glazed porch supported at the front by cast-iron columns with enriched capitals. At either side a flat-topped canted bay window. Upper-storey windows have plain sashes in box-frames. Side elevation to Diamond Street has sashes with margin-panes.
MDV95968 LB II.No.1385353.	FORMERLY BIRMINGHAM MIDSHIRES BUILDING SOCIETY ALSO FORMERLY BALE'S GARAGE.NOWSHOP	Building	House, now offices. Probably early or mid C18, slightly altered in early/mid C19. Solid rendered walls. Steeply pitched hipped slated roof. Plan appears to be L-shaped, with 1-room-deep ranges facing S and W. An old photograph shows the door in the middle of S front. 3 storeys with garret. Each of the 2 fronts is 3-window range. Ground storey wholly altered with late C20 display windows. Upper-storey windows have 6-paned sashes in box-frames; centre windows in each front are blind. Front facing S has full-height flanking pilasters. Bracketed eaves cornice on both fronts, continued on return front to right; latter has a blind window in each storey. Hipped dormer with 2-paned sashes and boxed eaves cornice, facing south; a late C20 dormer on the hip at either end. INTERIOR inspected only on ground floor. This has been wholly altered in late C20; upper floors also said to be altered. Included for group value.
MDV95970 LB II No. 1385356	ALBERT CLOCK, THE SQUARE, BARNSTAPLE	Building	Clocktower, erected in memory of Albert, Prince Consort. 1862, by RD Gould. Limestone ashlar with dressings of Devon marble, sandstone, other local stones and patterned tiles. Tower has an octagonal shaft on a broader octagonal base, the latter with a chamfered top and buttresses flanking each of the 4 main faces. Square, corbelled clock chamber with angle-shafts; clock-dial in each face. At the summit a small belfry with leaded spire and weather-vane. Historic Note: the clocktower was built at the instigation of the then mayor, John Norrington, and paid for by public subscription, some of the money being raised specifically for the provision of a drinking fountain. The original design was for a tower without a clock
MDV95973 LB II No. 1385362	THE GOLDEN LION INN	Public House	The Golden Lion Tap Public House (Formerly Listed as: The Square (North side) Mugford's Spirit Vaults). Inn, now public house and restaurant. Early/mid 17th century building remodelled and enlarged in early/mid 18th century and later; interior seems to include some imitation 17th century work
MDV95973	BRIDGE BUILDINGS, BARNSTAPLE	Buildings	Numbers 3-7 built 1844 by RD Gould of

LB II No. 1385355			Barnstaple; numbers 1 and 2 added 1887. Solid rendered walls; stone balustrades; cream brick at rear of number 1. Roofs not visible from street. Red brick chimneys. One of the earliest works of the distinguished Barnstaple architect, RD Gould, and makes a significant contribution to this part of Barnstaple. It was built by the Feoffees of Barnstaple Bridge both as an investment and to beautify the approach to the town from the bridge.
MDV95974 LB II No. 1385363	WILLSHIRE FOUNTAIN	Fountain	Fountain. 1876-1878 (inscription). Concrete and stone; cast-iron cresting. Fountain has large, round, concrete basin with cast-iron cresting. Base of bowl is granite with panels of vermiculated rustication. Shallow bowl on 4-sided stone pedestal with pilasters with delicate carved capitals. Bowl has 4 lions' heads with lead spouts and inscription round rim: 'Erected to record the gift by CS Willshire Esq of the railings enclosing this square during his mayoralty 1876-1878'. The fountain was originally the centre-piece of a square in the same place as the existing roundabout, which has replaced it. Included for group and historical value.
MDV95975 LB II No.1385364	WILLSHIRE MONUMENT	Monument	Memorial bust. Late C19. By WL Baron of Barnstaple. Bronze bust standing on a column with shaft of polished red granite; pedestal and capital of polished grey granite. On the shaft is carved CHARLES SWEET WILLSHIRE. 1837-89. On the pedestal is carved ERECTED BY FRIENDS AND FELLOW TOWNSMEN IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EMINENT AND UNSELFISH SERVICES AS A LIBERAL POLITICIAN AND MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVE. Willshire was described in 1897 as 'for many years one of the most influential political leaders in the Western Counties'. WL Baron was one of the principal decorators at Brannam's pottery in Litchdon Street in about 1895 he started his own pottery at Rolle Quay.
MDV95989 LB II No. 1385366	BRIDGE CHAMBERS	Building	Offices; one end was originally a hall for use as the County Court, and for meetings and auction sales. 1872-3. By RD Gould. Yellow brick with details in dressed limestone. Slated roofs with crested red ridge-tiles, except over the hall which now has plain ridge-tiles. 4 chimneys on ridge of west range, 3 on east range, one on south range and 2 on north range. Most have clusters of circular shafts on a base of yellow brick, the shafts being of a dark brown local stone with a limestone moulding halfway up and at the top. Historical note: the building was erected as an investment property for the Barnstaple Bridge Trust, who were generally concerned to improve the appearance of the town, and in this case, no doubt, to produce a design sympathetic to the

			medieval bridge. It is believed that the Trust retains Gould's original drawings. Very prominent in views of Barnstaple from across the river.
MDV96125 LB II No. 1385044	66 AND 67 BOUTPORT STREET	Building	66 and 67 Boutport Street. House with shop, now offices. Early 19th century; shop front probably mid/late 19th century. Rendered front, possibly timber-framed. Corrugated asbestos roof. Gable of second roof just visible behind ridge. 3 storeys. 3-window range. Ground storey completely occupied by a shop front with panelled end-pilasters and bowed entablature. Centre door flanked by canted display windows; house door at right-hand end. Upper-storey windows have moulded architraves and barred sashes; 6 panes per sash; except that the outer 2nd-storey windows are of 3 lights with 2-paned side sashes, the window to right also having 4-paned centre sashes. Boxed eaves cornice. Interior not inspected



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

Tel: 01769 573555  
Email: [mail@swarch.net](mailto:mail@swarch.net)