

BLAGDON WHARF BARN BLAGDONMOOR WHARF HOLSWORTHY DEVON

Historic Building Recording & Archaeological Monitoring & Recording



South West Archaeology Ltd. report no. 170124

Blagdon Wharf Barn, Blagdonmoor Wharf, Holsworthy, Devon Historic Building Recording & Archaeological Monitoring & Recording

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Work undertaken by SWARCH for
George Dunkin (The Client)

Summary

South West Archaeology Ltd. was commissioned to undertake building recording and archaeological monitoring and recording at Blagdon Wharf, Holsworthy, Devon. This work was undertaken in advance of and during the conversion and development of the site, and set the buildings in their historical and archaeological context.

The warehouse is of early 19th century date with two main phases of build; elements of the south wall possibly predating the Bude Canal and the buildings warehouse function. The warehouse is constructed of local materials, conforming to a vernacular style common in the wider region. It is an undesignated heritage asset. Architecturally, it does not represent a particularly special example of type and is in a derelict and partly ruinous state; its collective value with other industrial heritage sites such as the other 19th century stone buildings at the former wharf site has been somewhat undermined by their conversions, and the now domestic character of the hamlet.

Any significance the building does hold lies with its associative history with the Bude Canal; as a warehouse on a key unloading wharf, on the small 'Holsworthy branch' of the main canal. The Bude Canal is a large, linear industrial asset which crosses the Devon and Cornwall border, fed by the lower Tamar, and the offshoot runs north-east, designed to carry sand and lime into the drained wetlands north-east of the town, for land improvement. The branch of the canal system is almost wholly silted up after an active history of less than 40 years. The Bude Canal is part of the narrative history of the town of Holsworthy, as well as the wider region's industrial history.



January 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	BLAGDON WHARF BARN, BLAGDONMOOR WHARF
PARISH:	HOLSWORTHY
DISTRICT:	TORRIDGE
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	SS 36110 05822
SWARCH REF:	HBW16
PLANNING APPLICATION:	1/0695/2014/FUL

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Mr. George Dunkin (The Client) to undertake historic building recording and archaeological monitoring and recording at Blagdon Wharf Barn, Blagdonmoor Wharf, Holsworthy, Devon. This work was undertaken in advance of the proposed conversion of the barn to a residential dwelling.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Blagdonmoor Wharf lies at the eastern end of the main line of the 19th century Bude Canal. It is located approximately 2km north east of Holsworthy at a height of approximately 135m (AOD). The local bedrock comprises the sedimentary sandstone of the Bude Formation (BGS 2015), overlain by the slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey, fine loamy and fine silty soils of the Hallsworth 2 Association (SSEW 1983).

1.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within the complex of industrial buildings that sit on the southern bank of the Bude Canal, which terminates here, at Blagdonmoor Wharf. The site is located in the historic Hundred of Black Torrington, north east of the town of Holsworthy, which likely developed from an enclosure, farm or estate (from the old English name Heald) or the Old English word for slope "*heald*". It is recorded in Domesday as *Haldeword*.

The Dartmoor and Devon HER records the location of the wharf and its association with the Bude Canal, but there does not appear to have been any archaeological work carried out in the immediate vicinity.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the following report is to place the building in its architectural-historical, topographic and social context. All recording works were carried out in accordance with a WSI (Boyd 2016) drawn up in consultation with Stephen Reed of Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

The building recording was conducted by Emily Wapshott in November 2016 and January 2017 and follows the guidance outlined in: ClifA's *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (2014).

The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in January 2017 and follows the guidance outlines in ClifA's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).

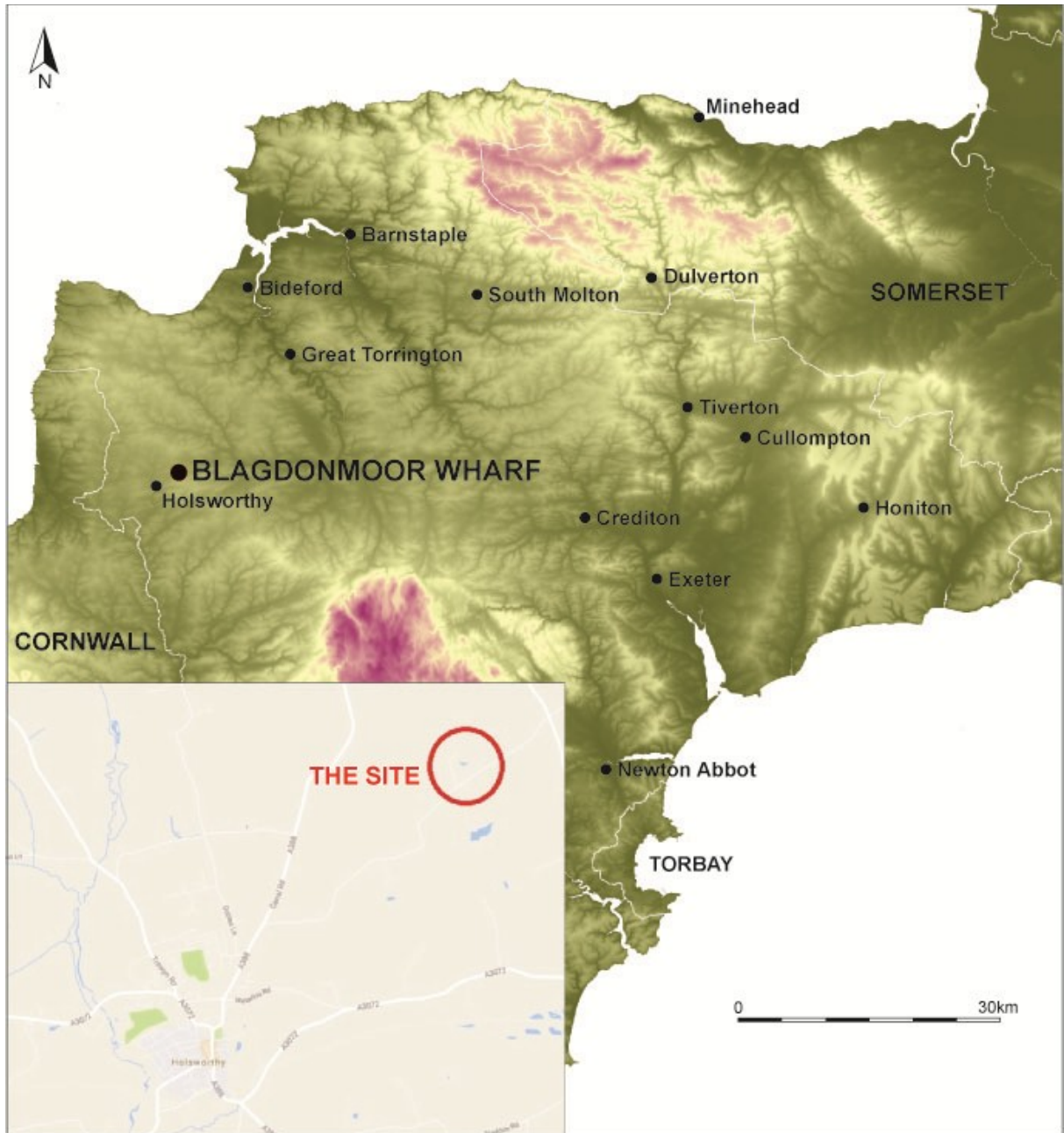


FIGURE 1: LOCATION MAP. THE SITE IS INDICATED.

2.0 DESK-BASED APPRAISAL

The concept of the Bude Canal was conceived by John Edyvean in 1774, following his work on the St. Columb Canal near Newquay. He intended to link the English and Bristol Channels with waterways. An Act granted at the time lapsed 10 years later. The idea was revisited by the local community, and James Green and Thomas Shearm developed the plans, using the inclined planes of the landscape rather than a lock system. James Green became one of the 330 shareholders of the Bude Harbour and Canal Company. He was the engineer in charge of construction, and brought the project to completion in 1825 almost £10,000 under his initial cost estimate of £128,341. The finished canal was 35.5 miles long, with a main line running from Bude to Blagdonmoor Wharf, a branch from Red Post to Druyton Wharf, and a feeder arm from Tamar Lake (now Lower Tamar Lake). Rather than performing as a link between the English and Bristol Channels, the canal served to transport the lime rich sand of Bude inland to improve the agricultural soils of the area. In this, its function was unique (Bude Canal and Harbour Society).

By 1879, the London and South Western Railway had been extended to reach Holsworthy, bringing with it the easy supply of modern, more effective chemical fertilisers. The improvement of the road network in the region was another factor contributing to the decline of the trade and use of the canal, and the Brendon Moor to Blagdonmoor stretch of the canal, along with the Red Post to Druyton branch were abandoned in 1891 (Bude Canal and Harbour Society 2016).

2.1.1 THE HOLSWORTHY TITHE MAP, C.1840

The Holsworthy Tithe Map depicts the barn on the north eastern edge of the wharf buildings. It is located in plot 202, which is recorded on the Apportionment as “waste” belonging to the Bude Canal Company. The strips of land to the north and east also belong to the Bude Canal Company. The plot immediately to the south of the barn, containing a house and garden, along with fields to the south, are owned by Earl Stanhope, and occupied by William Routly at this time.

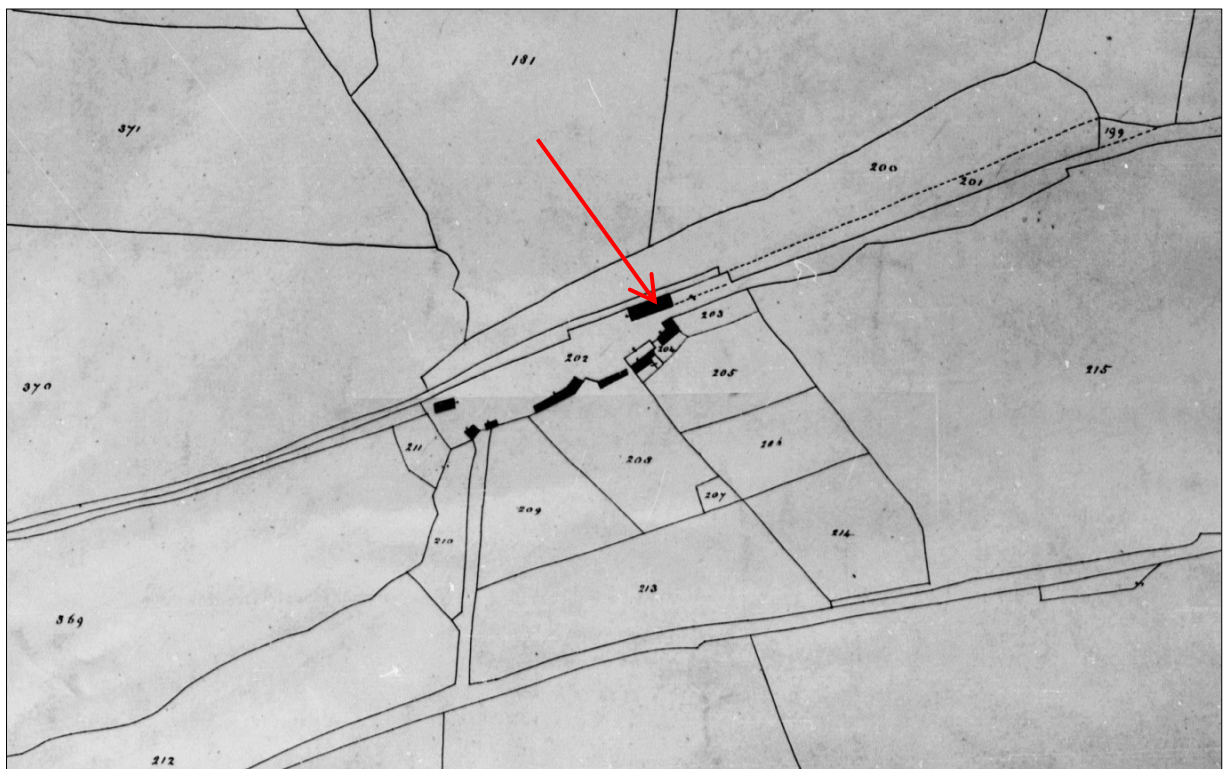


FIGURE 2: EXTRACT FROM THE HOLSWORTHY TITHE MAP (C.1840). THE BUILDING IS INDICATED.

2.1.2 THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITION OS MAPS, 1887 & 1907

Little difference is visible between the publication of the Tithes Map of approximately 1840 and the OS map of 1887. There has been an expansion in the buildings to the south west of the wharf, and the waste land to the north of the barn has been divided.



FIGURE 3: EXTRACT FROM COMPOSITE OF 1ST AND 2ND EDITION OS MAPS, 1884 AND 1907. THE BARN IS INDICATED.

2.1.1 THE 25 INCH OS MAPS, 1890-1920

The 25 inch map clearly shows that the dividing wall is now in place in the barn, with an access indicated in the west wall. This would suggest that the north of the building has now been enclosed, where it would have previously been an open-fronted building. By this time, the canal would have been abandoned, but the buildings of the wharf all appear to be extant, presumably still in use, although possibly with different functions.



FIGURE 4: EXTRACT FROM OS COMPOSITE 25 INCH MAPS, 1890-1920. THE BUILDING IS INDICATED.

3.0 BUILDING ASSESSMENT

3.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The building when visited in November 2016 comprised a 19th century rubble stone warehouse, in partly ruinous state, alongside the silted up channel of the former Bude Canal. The warehouse stands to the north-east of a small residential settlement, made up of the conversion of various cottages, warehouses and buildings on the site of one of the busy exchange wharfs along the 'Holsworthy branch' of the canal route; the warehouse is the last derelict structure on the site. The site is lined by fields to the east and north (a possible still-pond lies to the east), adjacent to the rest of the settlement and canal remains to the west, and faces two modern houses to the south, with further fields beyond.

3.2 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The warehouse is comprised of three stone walls, with narrow blind elevations to east and west. It was formerly open to the canal on its north side, with large stone pillars, but is now enclosed by sheets of corrugated metal. The south elevation has two large, partially blocked openings, providing access to the farm track which runs through the former wharf site and out to the fields. The walls are of typical rubble construction, with some possible phasing, but all of 19th century form, bonded with lime mortars. The roof is of typical 19th century king post form, with patches the roof covering of scantle slates surviving. The interior of the warehouse is divided by a central stone partition wall, running north-south, the east and west compartments have been converted in the 20th century; the east for livestock use, with two concrete block pens; the west to store hay and straw. Some original rough cobble flooring survives to the east end of the building and near the eastern opening in the south wall. The cobbles appear to be river pebbles and very irregular in size and shape.

3.3 HISTORIC PHASING OF THE BUILDINGS

3.3.1 PHASE 1

The south wall of the barn contains a section of wall to the west and central section which is of an earlier date. This walling is of tighter packed stonework, of mixed type/form; shale, granite, river pebbles, some slate stone blocks and also some quartz. This is within a greyish gritty and thick lime mortar, the wall bonded internally with clay/earth. The inner face of this wall is slightly battered to the base and there is a definitive ledge formed in the central portion of the barn on the inner face, where the older section of wall, about 1.6m tall, is wider in depth than the later upper 'raise'. This older walling represents the first phase, it may predate the canal or date to the construction process of the canal; possibly an agricultural building, or even a simple walled compound for materials or shelter for workers, built hastily with materials found in the immediate vicinity.

3.3.2 PHASE 2

The phase one walling is then abutted and built over (a clear elevation raise to the south wall) by the build of the warehouse, phase two. This walling is only of slate stone, in a looser blockier rubble style with much larger stones, in a creamy finer lime mortar, possibly mixed with sand. The roof is contemporary with this phase, as is the floor and this dates to the Bude Canal construction and period of function as a warehouse.

3.3.3 PHASE 3

The west elevation lies at an odd angle, particularly at the north end and this may represent an event of repair/rebuild. The build is of slate stones, but these are even heavier and have received some

shaping. This elevation is abutted by and contains several large posts, like sleepers, bolted to the elevation, the function of which is unclear as so little of the building survives at this end.

The large openings in the south elevation are also blocked by slate stone blocks, also shaped, some even with terracotta tiles used as levelling courses. These represent repair phases or alterations, not constructional phases.

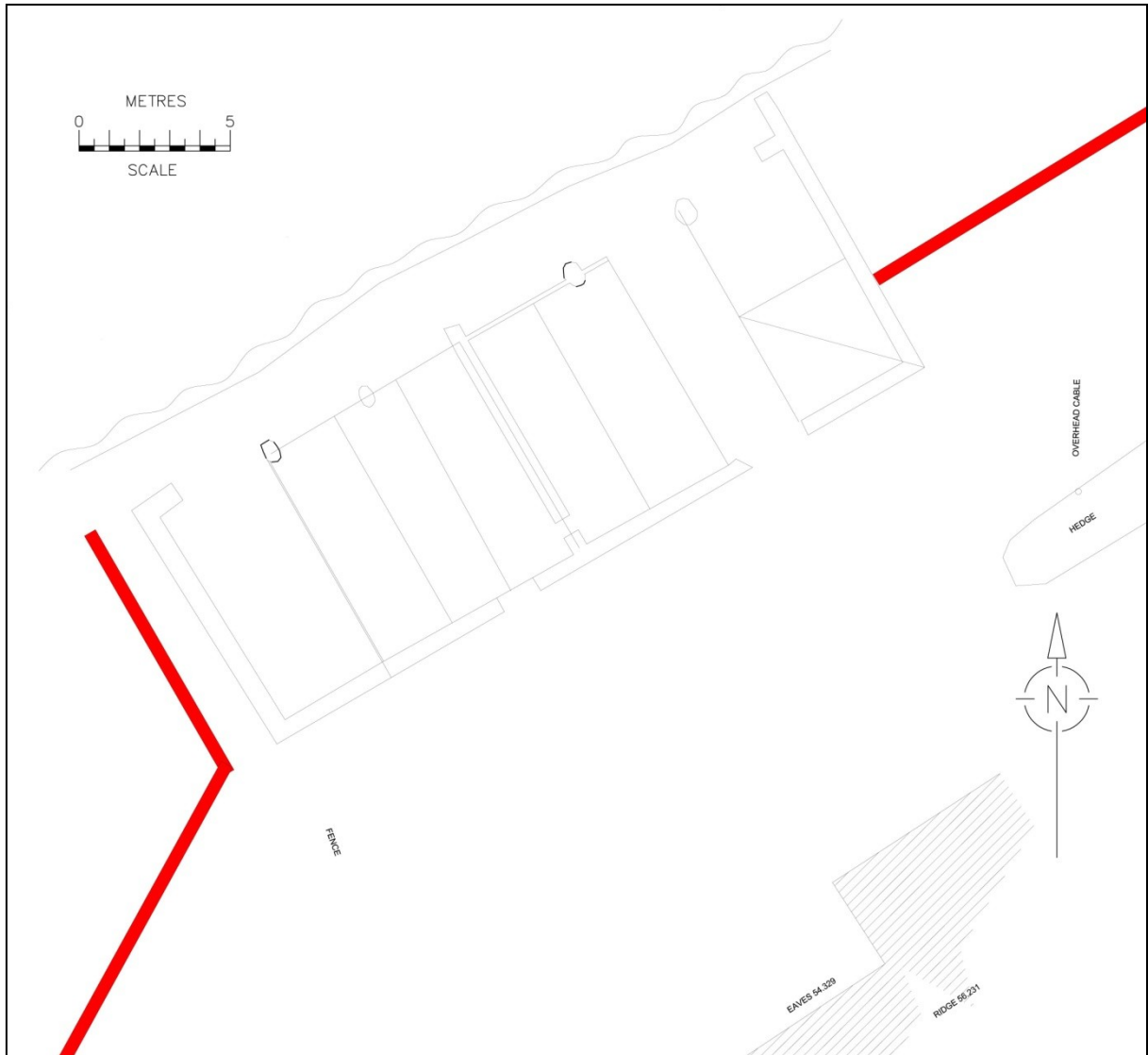


Figure 5: Site plan indicating the location of the trenches, depicted in red.

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & RECORDING

4.1 MONITORING & RECORDING

Monitoring was undertaken in January 2017 of some basic topsoil and overgrowth stripping undertaken to the west of the warehouse, in an area covered in overgrown reeds and rushes, the silted up nature of this area has created a heavy and thick mulch top layer and this was removed so hardcore could be laid on the topsoil to form a small parking area. No archaeological deposits were disturbed by this topsoil work.

The trenching was undertaken by a digger with a 300mm toothless bucket. All soils were tipped in an adjacent field for reuse in landscaping. The first trench ran from the south-west corner of the warehouse to the stoned roadway, where there is a manhole cover giving access to the water pipes. The trench was dug to 750mm in depth, angled slightly to run along the west wall of the house and then from the corner in an oblique angle. The first part of the trench was 3.05m in length, the second 9.35m in length. A shallow topsoil (110) layer (80-100mm) gave way to a thick layer of loose sandy yellow-red clay (102), with flecks and fragments of brown-grey friable shale and harder blue slate (c.600mm). This layer had sand lenses mixed into its upper portion (150mm), presumably derived from sands brought along the canal from Bude. This overlay a red-yellow clay the natural subsoil, which overlies blue clay (101) and blue slate bedrock (100). No archaeological features were revealed and no finds recovered.

The second trench was to the east of the warehouse, starting 1m in from the south-east corner and running 40m through the gate in the adjacent field, and into the field beyond. The trench had a depth of 1m along its length. At the east end, similar stratigraphy was viewed as in the west trench; again, a shallow topsoil (110) of dark grey silt-clay (c.100mm), with a thick layer below of dense clean yellow clay (104). This is a redeposited layer, probably from the excavation of the canal channel (c510mm). Below this is a thick layer of loose sandy yellow-red clay subsoil (102)(c.250mm), as seen to the west, which overlies the blue clay (101)(c.90mm) and blue slate bedrock (100) base. Deposit (104) runs out by 27.80m along the trench; and is a tipping layer, associated with the canal excavation. This overall stratigraphy continued, with some slight natural variation, up to 29m along the trench where the topsoil (110) becomes very black with rotted organic matter from the dense overgrowth which occupied the site; this appears to be mixed with charcoal (109). The upper layer retains some dark greyish soil (110), the charcoal more of a lense (109) within the base of this layer. The topsoil here is deeper, up to c200mm. By 38m, the buried topsoil layer is c.630mm below the top of the section. Above this buried topsoil is redeposited natural subsoil (102)(c470-490mm). Beneath the buried topsoil layer the natural subsoil (102) returns, again overlying a narrow blue clay layer (101) (100mm) which overlies (100) which appears in the base of the trench.

The buried topsoil layer runs up and over a stone built culvert {107}, rising to c.410mm, within the gateway. This culvert (seen at 38.55-39.90m along the trench) serves a large drainage ditch which runs down-slope from the fields to the south, feeding the canal. The culvert is of rubble build, in a lime mortar, a typical 19th century form. The cut of the feature [105], even shallow slope to the west side, almost vertical cut to the east, shows that the trench was dug and the culvert built up against the steeper bank; the soil (106) back-filled up against the culvert structure and the buried topsoil then ran over it. The redeposited subsoil (102) which overlies this, raises the level of the ground quite considerably, indicate the culvert and drainage ditch predate the canal. This shows the chronology of the reclamation process of this landscape, with drainage first, then the sand deposition.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The warehouse is of early 19th century date and of two phases of build, with elements of the south wall possibly predating the Bude Canal. The archaeological monitoring provided evidence also of a stone culvert, which alongside part of the warehouse suggest an early 19th century phase of activity and drainage prior to the construction of the canal.

The warehouse is constructed of local materials, conforming to a vernacular style common in the wider region. It is not Listed and is therefore classed as an undesignated heritage asset. Architecturally it does not represent a particularly special example of type and was in a derelict and partly ruinous state; its collective value with the other 19th century stone buildings at the former wharf site has been somewhat undermined by the conversion of the industrial complex to a domestic edge-of-town hamlet.

Any significance the building does hold lies with its associative history with the Bude Canal; as a warehouse on a key unloading wharf, on the small 'Holsworthy branch' of the main canal. The Bude Canal is a large, linear industrial asset which crosses the Devon and Cornwall border, fed by the lower Tamar, and the offshoot runs north-east, designed to carry sand and lime into the drained wetlands north-east of the town, for land improvement. The branch of the canal system is almost wholly silted up after an active history of less than 40 years. The Bude Canal is part of the important narrative history of the town of Holsworthy, as well as the wider region's industrial heritage development.

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Unpublished Sources:

- Devon Heritage Centre:
Holsworthy Tithe Map and Apportionment

APPENDIX 1: BUILDING RECORD

BUILDING 1		General Description
Function/Summary:		Warehouse/customs house, on the Holsworthy branch of the Bude Canal.
Dating Evidence:		Map evidence, the form of the roof is indicative, the stonework is of a very specific form and style
Exterior		
Elevation NORTH		Description
Figure Numbers:		
Fabric Description:		Former open front to canal. Supported on large stone pillars, of slate stone construction, in a lime mortar, much later concrete/cement patching and the pillar to the west has a rebuilt section in brick.
Roof Covering		Slate scantle roof, over timber roof structure, supported on a heavy wall plate beam, on stone pillars. The roof formerly had hipped ends to both east and west.
Significant Details:		The openings between the pillars have been mostly blocked with sheets of corrugated metal sheeting. To the east two of the open areas have been partially blocked with concrete block, to the animal pens which have been inserted.
Relationships:		The north wall is cohesive with the east and west walls, of one build.
Elevation SOUTH		Description
Figure Numbers:		
Fabric Description:		Stone rubble wall, of two phases, in mixed lime mortars. The lower wall is of irregular tightly packed build, with shale, granite and some quartz, the upper section is of slate stone. The wall to the east has lost its roof covering but is in good upstanding condition. The wall to the west has lost its roof covering and is in a collapsed state.
Roof Covering:		Slate scantle roof, over timber roof structure, clay ridge. The roof formerly had hipped ends to both east and west.
Openings – Doors:	2	Two wide openings, to east and west ends, both have been partially blocked with sections of later stonework, to reduce their width. Both openings have very narrow long timber lintels. Both have door frames formed from reused timber. The door to the west opening is of wide uneven width boards, with heavy ledging bars and may be early 19 th century. The doorway to the east has double doors, of narrow plank form, with heavy chamfered ledging bars to the rear and later bracing to the front, heavy iron door furniture, probably later 19 th century, again reset here.
Relationships:		The lower part of the south wall pre-dates the rest of the structure. The upper part of the wall is cohesive with the east west and north walls.
Elevation WEST		Description
Figure Numbers		
Fabric Description		Heavy slate stone wall, with at least two large timber sleepers bolted to the exterior face at the south end, function unknown. This wall lies at an odd angle to the rest of the building and may represent a later repair or rebuild, for reasons unclear at present. It comprises large squarish shaped blocks, in lime mortar. The wall is largely collapsed apart from the north and south corners.
Roof Covering		The hipped end of the roof has collapsed here some while ago; a temporary corrugated sheeting gable end wall has been constructed inside the building.
Relationships		May be a later repair or rebuild, different in style to the rest of the build.
Comments		More information may be uncovered when this wall is cleared of debris and overgrowth.
Elevation EAST		Description
Figure Numbers:		
Fabric Description:		Rubble stone wall, of slate stone, in a lime mortar, project out to the edge of the canal, enclosing the north elevation. Covered in ivy. Blind elevation, no openings.
Roof Covering		The hipped end of the roof has collapsed here and survives in ruinous condition inside the building, with rotten roof timbers and piles of slate.
Significant Details:		There is a deep gully against the east wall, running down to the canal, it wraps

		around from the south side of the building and shows how the barn was cut into the slope of the ground slightly.
Relationships:		Cohesive with the upper part of the south wall, and the whole of the north and west walls.
Interior		Description
Function:		Warehouse, split into two internal compartments.
Figure Numbers:		
Walls:		Exposed stone on interior faces.
Floor:		Earth floor to west compartment. East compartment exhibits stone cobbling surviving to the east side, to the centre it has been covered with concrete.
Ceiling:		Open to the timber roof structure. A-frames, with king posts, struts to sides, pegged joints, large bolts and strap hinges to king post. Three purlins to each pitch. Small ridge pole socketed into king posts. Rafters lie flat on back of purlins, purlins cut into back of trusses slightly. Typical later 19 th century roof.
Opening – Doors:	1	One forced doorway in the central stone partition wall, at the south end, braced with reused wood and poles.
Significant Details:		No historic fittings survive. Internal concrete pens in east compartment. Troughs of concrete, partly formed from re-purposed pallets.

APPENDIX 2: SUPPORTING JPEGs

BUILDING RECORDING



The south elevation of the warehouse; from the south-south-west (scale 2m).



The west doorway in the south elevation showing the partly-blocked opening; from the south (scale 2m).



The west end of the south elevation showing the different phases of stonework; from the south (scale 2m).



The central section of the south elevation, showing the different phases of stonework; from the south (scale 2m).



LEFT: Detail of the door to the west, south elevation; from the south.

RIGHT: Detail of the blocking and two phases of build at the west doorway, south elevation; from the south.



Double doors to the east end of the south elevation; from the south.



The partly-ruined east end of the elevation; from the south (scale 2m).



The east elevation of the warehouse; from the east (scale 2m).



The west ruined end of the warehouse; from the south.



The timber posts braced against the ruined west elevation; from the west.



View into the ruined west end of the warehouse; from the north (scale 2m).



LEFT: View along the back of the warehouse on the north side; from the west.



RIGHT: The mid elevation pillars on the north elevation; from the west.



The east end of the north elevation, showing the infill concrete sections; from the north-west (scale 2m).



View into the interior of the warehouse, from the double doors at the east end of the south elevation; from the south.



View of the east end of the warehouse where the hipped roof has failed; from the west.



View of the concrete animal pens built in the middle of the warehouse, up against the east side of the partition wall; from the south-east (scale 2m).



View of the concrete animal pens built in the middle of the warehouse, up against the east side of the partition wall; from the north-east (scale 2m).



View of the forced doorway in the partition wall, leading to the western half of the warehouse; from the east.



View of one of the hayricks in the concrete animal pens built within the central part of the warehouse; from the east-south-east.



View of the central partition wall and the surviving central portion of the roof; from the east (scale 2m).



Detail of one of the hipped corners of the collapsed east end of the roof over the warehouse; from the north-west.



The north wall of the warehouse at the western end, showing corrugated iron sheeting infill; from the south (scale 2m).



Detail of the roof trusses, showing three purlins to each pitch and the simple A-frame and king post trusses, with struts, bolted by straps, a mid or later 19th century roof; from the west.

MONITORING



The cobbled rough surface to the west of the warehouse; from the west (scale 2m).



The south wall at the west end; from the north (scale 2m).



The end of the south wall with the clear build line to the west extension, now demolished; from the north (scale 2m).



The stone pillars on the northern side of the warehouse; from the south-east (scale 2m).



The internal face of the east wall of the warehouse; from the west (scale 2m).



The posts to the north of the warehouse; from the east-south-east (scale 2m).



The south wall of the warehouse; from the north-west (scale 2m).



The external face of the east wall of the warehouse; from the east (scale 2m).



The excavated part of the floor in the west section of the barn; from the south.



The original cobbled floor surviving to the north side of the west section of the warehouse; from the west (scale 2m).



Detailed view of kingpost at apex, showing pegs, bolts, and graffiti; from the south.



LEFT: Trench #1, the north end by the wall of the warehouse; from the south-east (scale 2m).

RIGHT: Trench #2, showing the north-facing section at the west end; from the east-north-east (scale 2m).



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