

The Old School, Abbotsham, Devon

(SS 42456 26440)

Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

Planning refs Torridge District Council 1/0089/1012 and
1/0090/2012

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
The Abbotsham Cornborough Trust

Document No: ACD509/1/0

Date: October 2012



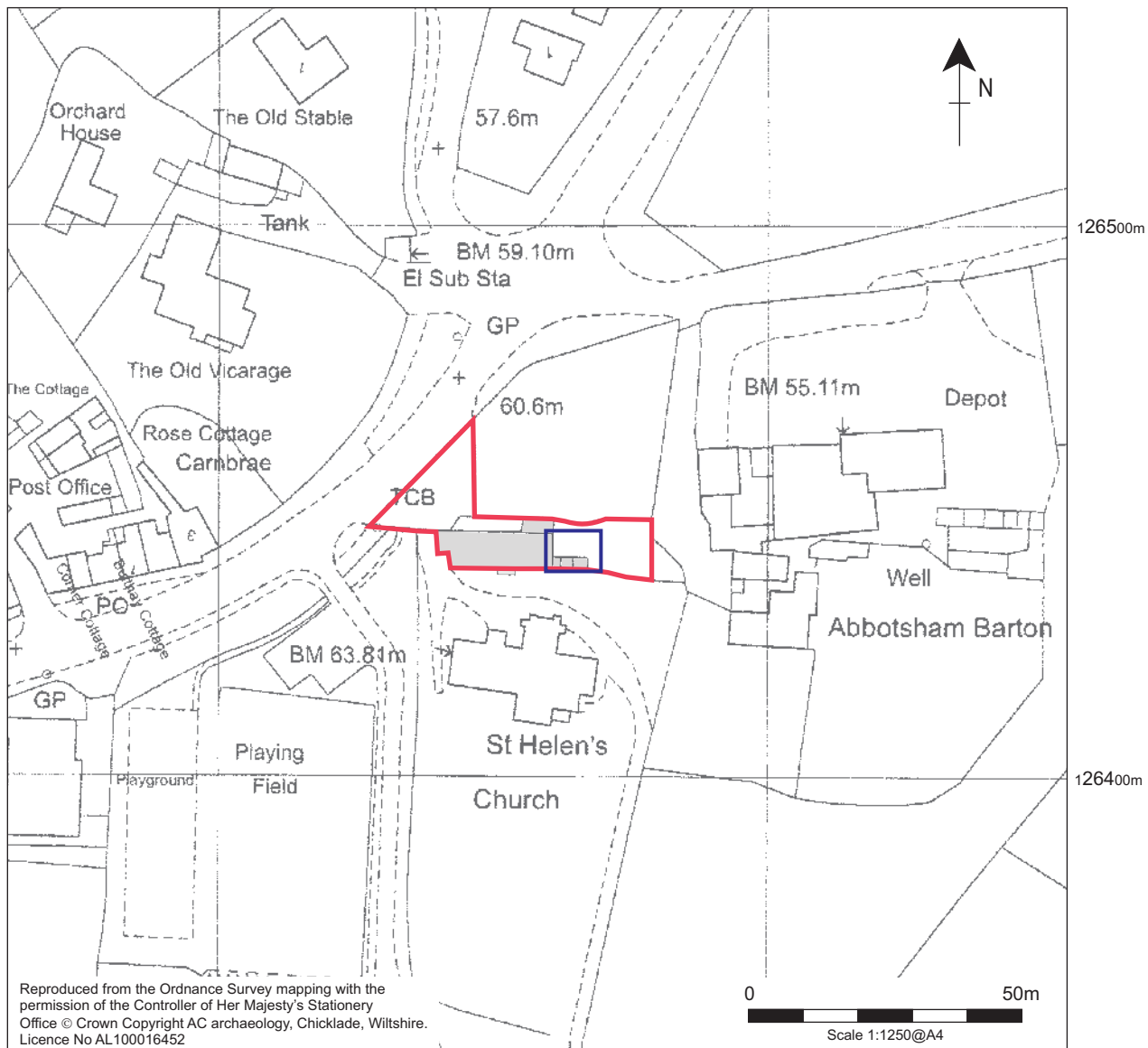
AC archaeology

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Abbotsham, Torridge	National Grid Reference (SS 42456 26440)	Number: (Leave blank for HES to fill in)
Subject: The Old School, Abbotsham, Devon: results of an archaeological watching brief		Photo attached? Y
Planning Application no: 1/0089/2012 and 1/0090/2012	Recipient museum: Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	
OASIS ID: 135365	Museum Accession no: NDMS2012.11	
Contractor's reference number/code: ACD509	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 30/07/2012– 15/08/2012	
<p>Description of works.</p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology during the construction of an extension at the Old School, Abbotsham, Devon (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by The Abbotsham Cornborough Trust. The Old School is a Grade II Listed building of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (National Heritage List number 1170635). A gateway from the school into the adjacent churchyard is included within the listing.</p> <p>The building (DCHER MDV99282) was originally a school and schoolmaster's house, opened in 1851 and closed in 2004. The building was subsequently converted into a community centre that opened in 2009. The DCHER records that the school was originally the parish poor house (a workhouse), and that it occupied a larger footprint than the later school building (MDV35546; see Figs 2-3). The school is located in the centre of the village immediately north of the Church of St Helen. The present church is mainly of 13th-century date with a tower of c. 1300. Inside is an earlier, Norman font (MDV475 and MDV476). The village is however, documented in 978AD, and the church may stand on or in the vicinity of an earlier ecclesiastical building.</p> <p>Prior to the archaeological monitoring being undertaken a number of walls associated with the existing toilet block (extensions to the east of the Old School) were demolished (Fig. 4). The earliest stone walls (F103) were exposed and mirrored the line of the former upstanding walls. The footings of the modern extension were exposed at the SE end of the trench where concrete blocks had been laid onto a concrete footing whose construction trench had been dug into the natural clay.</p> <p>The excavation of an L-shaped foundation trench was monitored (Plate 1). This measured 0.5m wide by 1.25m deep. The deposit sequence throughout the rest of the trench consisted of a tarmac surface overlying a dark blackish brown clayey silt topsoil (100) containing frequent small to large angular stones and occasional mortar and slate fragments. This overlay subsoil (101), a mid yellowish brown silty clay with very frequent small to large angular stones. This deposit also contained some fragments of slate and mortar along with fragments of human bone. Natural subsoil was encountered from a depth of 0.54m below the surface. Towards the west end of the northern foundation trench part of an <i>in-situ</i> stone wall F104 was exposed, possibly representing a corner (Plate 2). This measured 0.49m wide by 0.40m deep, and had been constructed into subsoil 101. This was on a different alignment to the Old School building, and it is possible that it is associated with the former poor house that occupied a larger footprint than the current building.</p> <p>A small assemblage of pottery (five sherds; 156g) was recovered from the topsoil. This included one base sherd and one body sherd of North Devon Gravel-Tempered pottery (c. 18th century), an unglazed handle sherd from a small jug with a sandy slightly gritty fabric, probably also a North Devon product (c. 16th century), and two fragments of North Devon Gravel-Free pottery (c. 17th century) – a body sherd and a rim sherd from a small cup. A total of 21 fragments of disarticulated human bone was also recovered from the topsoil. These have been left at the church for reburial.</p> <p>In summary, a subsoil (101), possibly of post-medieval date was uncovered through which a wall (F104) was constructed. This may relate be associated with the workhouse. The demolished wall was overlain by a topsoil (100), probably of 19th-century date and associated with landscaping around the school. The presence of human bone within this lay indicates it is probably of local origin.</p>		
<p>A plan as well as any other relevant drawings must be attached showing the location and extent of site, areas investigated and features exposed.</p>		
Recorder: Chris Caine, AC archaeology		Date sent to HER: 10 October 2012



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PROJECT

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TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site

- Site area
- Area of excavation



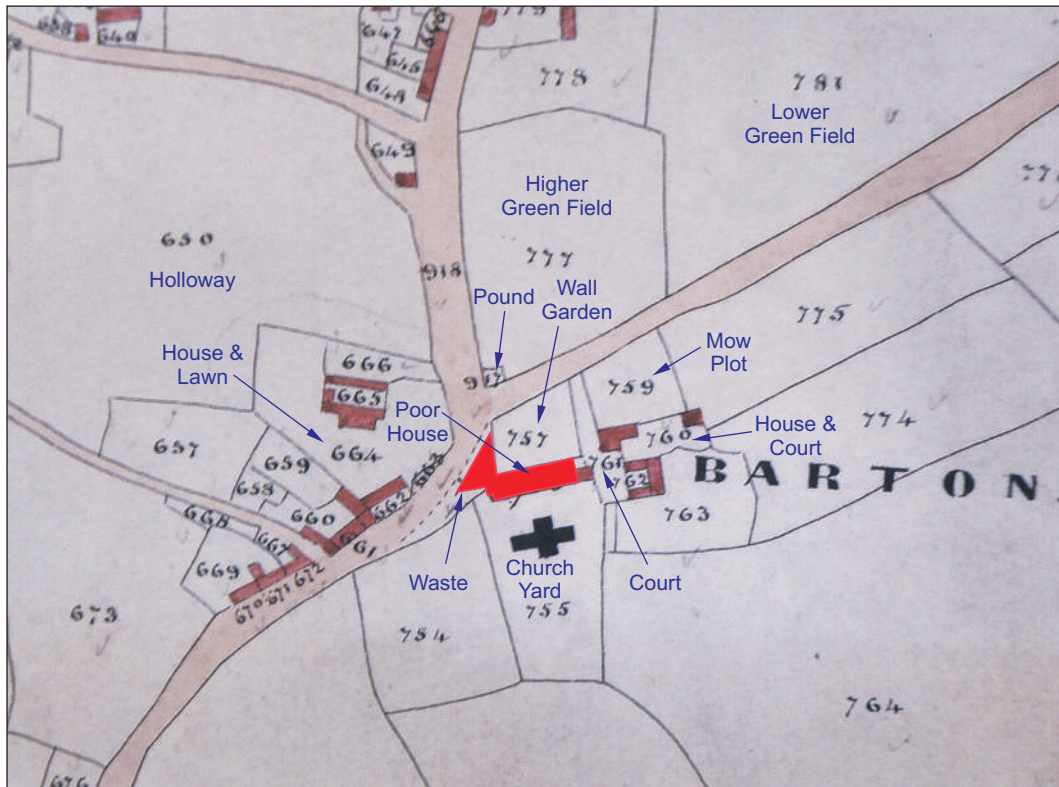


Fig. 2: Extract from the Abbotsham tithe map, 1840, with field names added from the apportionment, 1840

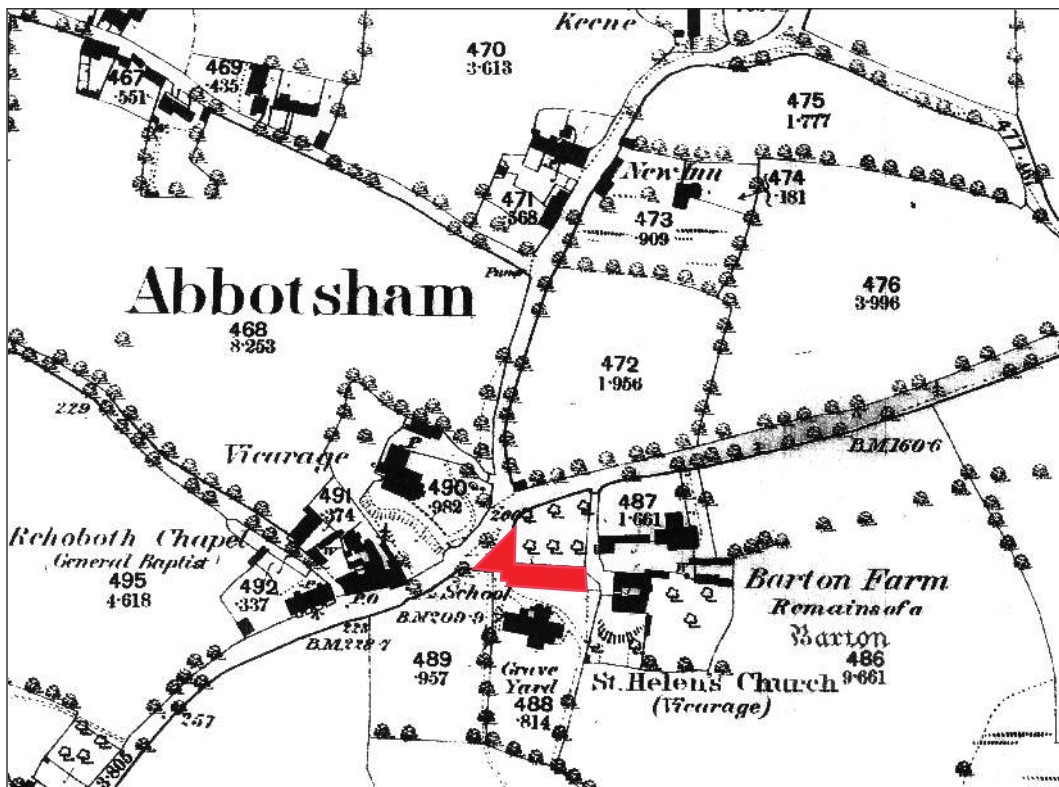
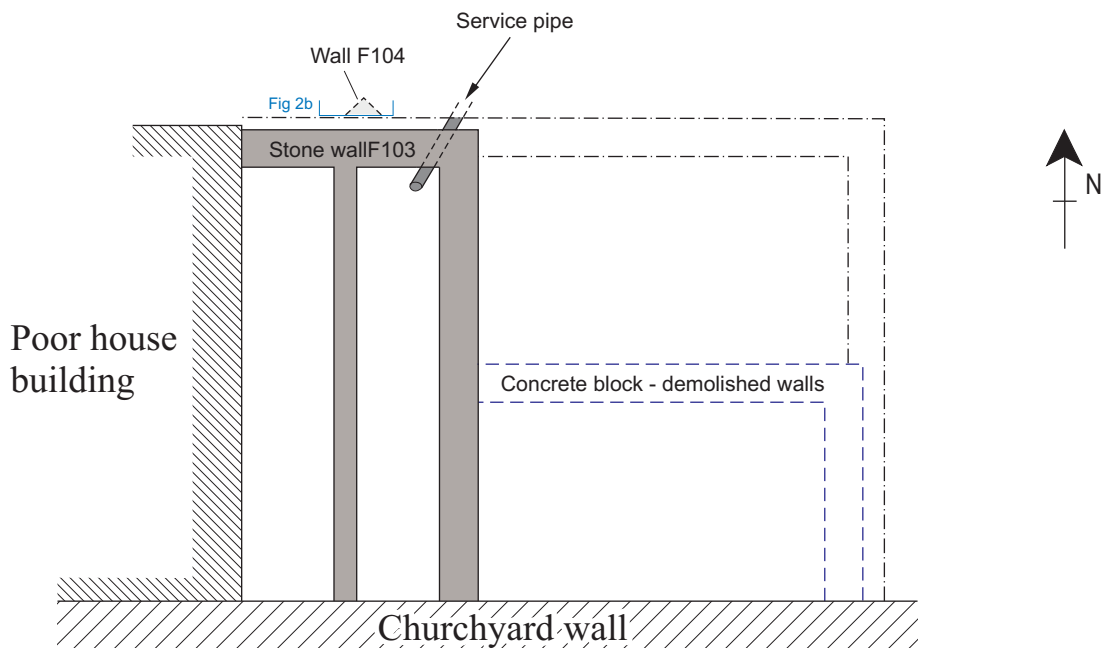


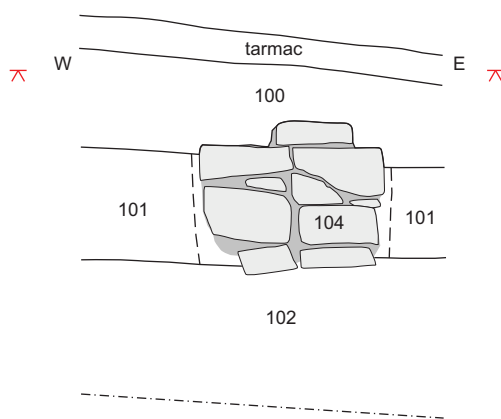
Fig. 3: Extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map sheet 19.5, surveyed in 1886, published in 1889

 Location of site area






a) Plan



b) Section of wall F104



Key

-  Excavation
-  Existing building
-  Stone wall
-  Stones
-  Mortar



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Fig. 4: Plan and section



Plate 1: General view of the excavation, viewed from the north. Scale 1m



Plate 2: Wall F104, viewed from the south. Scale 1m

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