BELL INN, 108 DREW STREET, BRIXHAM

(NGR SX 92040 55105)

Architectural Assessment

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1. **INTRODUCTION** (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This architectural assessment has been prepared by AC archaeology on behalf of MTA architects in March and April 2016 to support a forthcoming Listed Building Consent application for internal reordering and the construction of a two storey extension and balcony at the Bell Inn, 108 Drew Street, Brixham (NGR SX 92040 55105).
- 1.2 The Bell Inn is located on the south side of Drew Street within the Higher Brixham Conservation Area. It is a double width building which sits directly on the road with a cart entrance to the right and a yard to the rear. The underlying geology consists of Interbedded Mudstone and Limestone of the St Mary's Bay Member (British Geological Survey online viewer 2016).
- 1.3 The Bell Inn is a Grade II Listed Building (National heritage List no. 1209748, under the name The Bell Public House), with the following description prepared in 1993:

Public house. Early C19; possibly earlier. Solid rendered walls; painted stone rubble at rear. Slated roof. Rendered chimney on each end wall. Large rendered chimney with tapered cap on rear wall. Red-brick chimney on rear wing. Double-fronted with long rear wing to left; rear part of latter a storage building. 3 storeys; single-storeyed storage building. Symmetrical 3-window range. Central doorway with flanking pilasters and entablature; 6-panelled door and panelled reveals, the bottom panels flush. Ground and second-storey outer windows triple-sashed; 6 over 6 panes in centre, 2 over 2 panes in side-lights. Smaller blocked window in centre of second storey. Third storey has wood casements with 8 panes per light: 2 lights in centre window, 3 lights in outer ones. The second- and third-storey windows have moulded architraves, those in second storey also with friezes and cornices. Continued sills in second storey. Panelled giant pilasters flanking upper storeys. Deep flat eaves-cornice.

2. AIMS

2.1 The principal aim of the document is to appraise the property to assess its significance and to inform proposals for the changes to the building. The results will inform any permitted architectural scheme and will be used to determine what, if any, mitigation will be required during the approved development.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The document has been drawn up in accordance with the *Specification for Architectural Assessment* provided by the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Torbay Council (Bishop 2016), and with reference to the the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2014), and Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006).
- **3.2** A rapid desk-based appraisal, comprising an assessment of the relevant historic maps was undertaken.

- **3.3** A site visit was carried out and included:
 - A written description of the public house and curtilage;
 - Preparation of annotated as existing floor plan to show builds of different date and architectural fittings and features; and

 A basic photographic record including the overall character of the building, as well as detailed views of any architectural features and fixtures and fittings as necessary to illustrate the document.

4. **DOCUMENTARY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND** (Figs 2-4)

Documentary background

- 4.1 Brixham was an ancient fishing port on the south shore of Torbay with a long history. It is recorded as Briseham and Brikesham in 1205, with it taking its name from a Celtic personal name suffixed by Old English *ham* and giving 'Brioc's homestead' (Poulton-Smith 2010). The original parish church (St Mary) is located in Higher Brixham to the east of the Bell Inn and contains 15th-century masonry and architectural features (National Heritage List no. 1195196).
- 4.2 The Bell Inn is recorded in an early Directory of Devonshire of *c*. 1824 (Bishop 2016). The property is first depicted as plot 854 on the Brixham tithe map of 1840 (Fig. 2). Unfortunately the buildings are not shown in detail, and are joined at both the front and rear to the adjacent buildings to the west. However, the L-shaped plan visible to day can be determined, along with a now-demolished rear range. The accompanying apportionment describes plot 854 as "Beach Roads Etc", owned by Sir John Henry Seale Bart and occupied by Phillip Elliot.
- 4.3 The building is recorded in detail on the first edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of 1864 (Fig. 3). It comprised a deep front range with two buildings (a central and rear range) attached to the rear on the east side, along with a yard to the west with a further rear building at the back of this yard. The property was simply labelled as "Inn". By 1906 when the 25-inch map was revised the southwest rear range had been extended into the yard (Fig. 4). The map also depicts the passage into the yard at the front of the property.
- There appear to be no changes to the building until 1954 when the range at the rear of the plot has been narrowed so it is no longer the full width of the plot and extended to the northwest. This though may just be a draftsman's error as on the 1:2500 map of 1959 it returns to its original shape. The range at the rear of the plot was demolished in the late 20th century (after 1981).

Archaeological background

- 4.5 In 2000 timber framing on the east elevation of the east side of the building was investigated by Keystone Historic Building Consultants (Thorpe 2000). This was located within the 3-storey part of the rear range (of *c*.1800) immediately behind the front range. The timber framing was exposed at first- and second-floor levels and contained two 20th-century windows on each floor, both within original openings.
- 4.6 Keystone also commented on the rest of the eastern rear range. They concluded that it dated to the late 17th century, based on the style of the roof, which was made up of six oak A-frames with pegged lap-jointed collars, joined at the apexes with pegged notched mortices and tenon joints. They noted a diagonal stack in the southwest corner, and that the areas had been formerly ceiled over below the level of the collars. It was concluded that the upper floor (above cellars) was built for domestic accommodation.

5. THE PUBLIC HOUSE (Fig. 5; Plates 1-18)

The main front building. The property is formed by three ranges: a main front range that is aligned northwest-southeast along Drew Street, and central and rear ranges along the east side. To the west there is a covered cart entrance that leads to a rear yard that contains a small outbuilding housing the male WCs. This entrance is under the first floor of the adjacent no. 110 Drew Street, rather than within the front range itself. There are also two extensions on the southeast side of the front range. The building is on a hill side with the land beyond the rear of the plot being at a much higher level than within the property itself. The rear range is, and the demolished rear buildings were, terraced into the hillside.

5.2 The exterior

The main, northwest elevation of the front range faces onto Drew Street (Plate 1). It is rendered with string courses along the base of the wall and below the first floor windows. On the ground floor there are two sash windows of 12 panes with four-pane side lights and a central door. The latter is of six panels with panelled reveals and has a simple surround formed of pilasters and an entablature. On the first floor there are a further two sash windows of the same design as those on the ground floor and a central sign for the inn set over a blocked or blind window. On the second floor there are three casement windows. The two outer are of three lights with the central one being of two lights; each of the lights has eight panes. The windows on the first and second floor have moulded architraves and on the second floor they also have friezes and cornices. There are large panelled pilasters flanking the upper two storeys and it has a deep flat eaves cornice.

The northeast elevation of the building runs along the side of an alley (Plate 2). The front range is rendered like the northwest elevation and has a ground floor wooden plank door at the south end. This is no longer in use and has been blocked internally. The central range is also rendered but this has been removed for repairs to the ground floor. This has exposed the fabric which is rubble stonework at the base topped with a timber frame with panels of rubble stonework (Plate 3). The timber frame is formed of thin pine studs, measuring 75mm wide and 150mm deep. During previous repair work to the elevation the rest of the timber frame was exposed (Thorpe 2000). There are two windows on each of the three floors all of which are 20th-century replacements but within the position of original window openings. The rear range is constructed of painted rubble stonework and incorporates three windows and a doorway (Plate 4). The door has been partially infilled to convert it into a window. All the openings have wooden lintels and are currently blocked.

The southwest elevation of the central range is of painted rubble stonework on the ground floor with the upper two storeys being rendered (Plate 5). There is a door and window on the ground floor, with two windows on each of the two upper storeys; all are 20th-century replacements. The rear range is also of painted rubble stonework, except the upper storey at the southeast end which is rendered (Plate 5). Below this the stonework is very uneven which may be because it blocks an opening that once went into the now demolished range at the rear of the plot, and/or is associated with a wall of this former building. There are two doors on the ground floor and a window on the first floor, all of which are 20th-century replacements. The southern doorway has been converted from a wider former window, whose opening retains two metal security bars (Plate 6). At first floor level, above this doorway, are areas of altered masonry. These comprise a small opening infilled with bricks, and below eaves level a wider, deeper area of possibly infill, defined to the south by a

row of jambs. This may represent a former opening, although its position appears to coincide with the first-floor partition.

The southeast elevation of the front range is rendered as are the two extensions constructed against this elevation (Plate 7). One extension is single storey with a sloping felt roof, and a 20th-century window and doorway. The other is of two storeys with a sloping tiled roof and a 20-century window at first-floor level. Above this extension is a projecting chimney stack for the front range; this has a single chimney pot. On the ground floor within the extension, the external wall of the front range has been retained. Adjacent to the extension there is a stone step and a drain which indicates that there may have previously been a door opening here.

The south elevation of the rear range is constructed of rubble stonework and incorporates a central wooden plank door at a higher level than the current ground level (Plate 8). The western part of the wall has been repointed but appears to be contemporary with the gable of the rear range to the east. Its upper section has been rebuilt or raised in height, and there is a buttress supporting the west end of the wall.

All three ranges have gabled slate roofs with the front and central ranges having had their slates replaced in the 21st century. The front range has projecting three chimney stacks, one at each gable end and one to the rear. The rear range has a chimney stack at its northwest end.

The covered cart entrance has a concrete floor. The southwest wall of the front range, which forms one side of this passage, is constructed of painted rubble stonework whilst the northeast wall of the adjoining property is of painted brick. There are two metal loops for tying horses on to the wall. The doors are large wooden planks with a smaller pedestrian door on the west side. The main doors have large straight strap hinges whilst the pedestrian door has spearhead shaped ends to the strap hinges which date stylistically to the 18th century (Plate 9).

The rear yard has a concrete floor and the boundary walls are painted rubble stonework with repairs in blockwork and concrete to the rear, southeast wall. The gents WC outbuilding in the yard is rendered and has a sloping corrugated sheet roof (see Plate 7).

5.3 The interior

Ground floor

Within the front range there are currently two bar areas, a central lobby and a staircase. The eastern bar has a flagstone floor and the lower part of the walls are covered with timber planks. The upper parts of the walls are either rendered or covered with faux stone walling. There is a blocked fireplace on the east wall that has a stone surround and a brick arch above (Plate 10). To the south of this is a blocked doorway to the side alley. There is a fake beam across the ceiling but also several larger, possibly original beams. The eastern bar is open to the rear bar that is located in the central range. It seems likely that at least one internal wall has been removed to create this larger open-plan space.

The floor of the western bar is covered with carpets and the lower parts of the walls are covered with timber planks, which continues over a doorway within the partition to the lobby (Plate 11). There is a fireplace in the west elevation with a 20th-century electric fire against a low 20th-century brick surround. In the south wall is a door into the ladies WCs which are within the two extensions to the rear.

The lobby has a flagstone floor, and there are doors to each of the bars and to the staircase to the first floor. The doors to the eastern bar and first floor are 20th-century replacements whilst the door to the western bar is of 19th-century date (Plate 12). The partition to the east of the door to the first floor is formed from a reused plank door. The stairs are wooden with a simple handrail to the east and a dado rail on the west (Plate 13). The wall to the east is formed by timber planks. The stairs themselves are date to the 20th century but are almost certainly in the position of the original ones.

Within the central range there is the rear bar and serving counter. There are two large beams on the ceiling (like those in the adjacent eastern bar) that are probably original; the joint between them is exposed (Plate 14). There are also several smaller fake beams. The lower parts of the walls are covered with timber planks like the other bars and there are pillars finished with faux stone walling.

Within the rear range there are two cellar rooms, both of which have concrete floors. In the north cellar the ceiling and internal walls are rendered and there are timber planks on the external walls. There was formerly a fireplace in the northwest wall but this has been blocked. In the alcove to the east of this there is a small wooden cupboard with a plank door fixed with simple rectangular H hinges; stylistically this feature dates to the 18th century. (Plate 15). The door from the bar into the cellar is of four panels with round headed strap hinges, and is of 19th-century date (Plate 16). In the south cellar the ceiling is finished with plasterboard, and there is a door in the south wall to a further small room which was not accessible (Plate 17). This door and the one from the north cellar are both of wooden plank construction.

First floor

Within the front range there are currently two bedrooms, a lounge and an office, all accessed from a small landing. The two bedrooms have been created by the addition of a stud wall in what was originally a single, larger room. There would have been a fireplace in the east wall but this has been blocked. These rooms along with the lounge and office have a modern finish, fixtures and fittings. There would have been a fireplace in the west wall of the lounge but this has also been blocked (Plate 18). The walls of the office appear to be modern stud walls and there is the end of a RSJ visible in the southeast corner of the room, which appears to indicate that the whole of this floor has been reordered during the 20th century, although an earlier layout generally seems to have been recreated.

Within the central range there is a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom accessed from a small corridor. A small utility room that is within the two-storey rear extension to the front range is also entered from this corridor. All of these rooms have a modern finish, fixtures and fittings. There are serious damp problems on the external walls, perhaps caused by the use of concrete render instead of lime render of the timber framing.

There was no access to the first floor of the rear range during the site visit. However it was accessed during the site visit conducted by Keystone (2000), whose description has been summarised in section 4.6 above. Photographs provided by MTA Architects provide additional information. This range contains two rooms separated by a partition wall; the southern side of this wall is finished with lath and plaster and may incorporate a blocked opening. The walls are generally finished with either painted plaster or painted masonry. The lower part of the partition between the north room and the central range is stone masonry with wooden

boards over. In the south room, in addition to the angled chimney stack with fireplace, in the south corner, there is a projecting area of masonry in the southwest wall.

In the east wall of this room there are two former window openings at eaves level; they are not visible externally. The openings are for dormer windows, and, as with the remainder of the building, the masonry of the walls and the feet of the trusses set into the walls are finished with plaster; this continues up the rafters to the former ceiling level just below the collar. The openings appear to be primary features, since there is no evidence that purlins have been removed. Two of the adjacent purlins extend slightly into the openings but this need not be evidence that they have been sawn off, since the same arrangement appears on the opposite pitch, where the puirlins are formed from lengths of timber whose ends overlap rather than having scarf joints.

Second floor

The second floor of the front and central range were not examined in detail since they are not subject to any changes as part of the development. The rooms have a similar layout to those on the first floor and have modern finishes, fixtures and fittings.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC HOUSE

- The oldest part of the building is the rear range which has been dated to the late 17th century, and on the basis of the first-floor ceiling just below collar level and a chimney stack in the southwest corner wall was also interpreted as a domestic building (Thorpe 2000). The building also appears to have contained a chimney stack in the northwest wall, although it is possible that this is later and was inserted when the central range was added. The function of the area of masonry projecting into the south room is unclear. It is characteristic of a chimney stack but does not appear to be associated with such a feature either in this room or within a demolished attached range. The presence of a first-floor ceiling need not imply a domestic function, and a light industrial use, such as a sail loft or warehouse, in which goods or other items needed to be protected is also feasible.
- There is no clear architectural evidence for any other buildings on the property during this period, although it seems highly likely that the main front range replaces an earlier building on a similar footprint. The demolished southwest range also appears to have been an early feature of the property.
- In the early 19th century the central and front range were constructed, presumably replacing an earlier structure. There is no visible evidence to suggest whether one range is earlier than the other and it is more likely that they are both contemporary. They appear to have been purpose built as a public house, and utilised the ground floor of the rear range as cellars. It is not clear when the first floor of the rear range falls out of domestic use (assuming this was its function) and became a store. It may have occurred when the other ranges were constructed, or alternatively later, and during the 19th-century may have been occupied by the owners as a private residence whilst the first and second floors of the other ranges housed public guest accommodation. There are a few fittings that survive from this date; namely the doors to the cart entrance and possible the larger beams in the front and central ranges.

The building appears not to be subject to any significant changes in the 19th century with only two doors in the property dating to this period being recorded. However in the 20th century the building was modernised with the addition of new windows, a new (replacement) staircase, and new fixtures and fittings throughout. The southwest range at the rear of the yard was demolished in the late 20th century. A small outbuilding had been constructed in the yard by 1959 and two extensions were added on the southeast side of the front range in the later 20th century. More recently the roof slates of the front and central ranges have been replaced, whilst the battens roof slates of the rear range have also been replaced.

7. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

7.1 Guidance on the assessment of significance has been taken from Historic England's document *Conservation Principles* and from the *National Planning Policy Framework*, and is assessed according to the heritage values outlined in these documents.

7.2 Evidential and architectural value

Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity, and includes both architectural and archaeological evidence.

There are no Historic Environment Record entries which relate to below-ground archaeological investigations or find spots relating directly to the site. Whilst the property is located in the core of historic, medieval Higher Brixham there are no archaeological interventions in the area that allow an assessment of potential to be put forward.

The building has architectural value, which relates to the late 18th- or early 19th-century style of architecture used in the main elevation. It also provides evidence of an earlier, late 17th-century building in the rear range that was then extended and possibly changed function when the north and central ranges were constructed, a common trend when inns and public houses were constructed during this period (English Heritage 2011, 12). The building retains a couple of 18th-century fittings along with its c. 1800 façade. In the context of a public house, intact details such as these can be considered to be very important (*ibid.*, 14), although in the wider context of historic town buildings generally they are much more common. The interior of the building and the majority of the windows are modern, and therefore do not have any architectural value in relation to the historic development of the building.

The building has the potential to contribute to two research aims as set out in the South West Archaeological Research Framework (Webster 2007):

Research aim 8 – Utilise the survival of Medieval and later artefacts and buildings to their full extent; and

Research aim 9 – Prioritise a recording strategy for buildings related to Post-Medieval to Modern social provision

From this evidence, overall it can be concluded that the building has medium architectural value, and this forms a large part of the building's significance.

7.3 Historical Value

Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.

The building has illustrative value since the property can be visually read as a public house. This is enhanced by the current (and proposed retained) use of the building for this function.

No associative values have been identified.

It can be therefore concluded that the building has medium historical value, and this forms a medium part of the building's significance.

7.4 Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

The building has aesthetic value, which mainly derives from the architectural style of its front elevation. This is recognised in the *Higher Brixham Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (Bishop 2011), which notes the "formidable late 18th century Georgian frontage over 3 floors", whose architectural features are "indicative of the confidence of the age". This value has, however, been diminished by the addition of 20th-century windows in the other elevations of the building.

It can therefore be concluded that the building has medium aesthetic value, and this forms a small part of the building's significance.

7.5 Communal Value

Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people (or specific groups) who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects.

Public houses, as prominent places of public gathering, have sometimes played leading parts in the story of a community and therefore hold some communal value (English Heritage 2011, 15). As a functioning public house the Bell Inn is considered to hold communal value for its clientele.

It can therefore be concluded that the building has low communal value, and this forms a small part of the building's significance.

7.6 Artistic Value

Artistic Value is not defined in the *National Planning Policy Framework* but is considered to be closely associated with aesthetic value, particularly if an asset has an association with a particular architect or artist, or is of exceptionally high-quality workmanship.

The building does not have any artistic value.

7.7 Setting

Setting is defined in the *National Planning Policy Framework* as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced.

The setting of the building is mainly Drew Street from which it can be readily experienced. This setting is not considered to form a large part of the building's significance, but as noted in section 7.5 above, the building itself contributes to the streetscape and setting of the Higher Brixham Conservation Area.

This setting forms a very small part of the building's significance.

7.8 Assessment of value

In summary, it is considered that the significance of the building is drawn mainly from its architectural value, with lesser contributions from its historical, communal and aesthetic values as well as from its setting.

8. COMMENTS

8.1 Internal reordering

Within the front range it is proposed to open up the front range to provide better access by the bars. This will involve the removal of the 20th-century stairs between the ground and first floor along with the surrounding walls. A new staircase will be constructed with the 20th-century extension to the rear of the front range. The extension will be largely rebuilt. The stairs and walls themselves do not have any architectural value, although they do reflect the original layout of the building. This layout is however retained through their positions between the first and second floors.

On the first floor it is proposed to remove the stud walls forming the two bedrooms and the office, and to create an opening in the wall between the bedroom and kitchen in the central range. All these partitions are of 20th-century date and do not have any architectural value.

Within the central range, on the first floor, it is proposed to rearrange the wall layout between the bedroom and kitchen making the kitchen slightly larger and the bedroom slightly smaller. The bedroom will be converted into a commercial kitchen which will be accessed through a proposed new doorway in the northwest wall of the rear range. This opening would result in the loss of a small amount of historic fabric.

Within the rear range, on the ground floor it is proposed to remove the wall in the southern cellar. Since the wall is rendered it is not clear what architectural value this wall has but is likely to be modern subdivision of an earlier larger cellar. New partitions are to be inserted within this cellar to create a new gents WC replacing those in the existing outbuilding that will be demolished. These will be accessed through a new doorway in the southwest wall. This is an area of what appears to be infilling associated with the demolished range along the rear of the plot.

On the first floor it is proposed to remove a partition wall to create a large, open function room. It was not possible to access this area during the site visit, but in photos provided by the architect the wall is shown to be covered with lath and plaster which possibly indicates that it is a timber partition. However it is currently not clear what architectural value this may hold. It is proposed to create two new openings in the southwest wall. The large north opening giving access to a proposed new balcony will incorporate the existing window opening along with the possible blocked opening to south, but will also lead to the loss of some historic fabric. The two former dormer windows in the northeast wall will be reinstated.

8.2 Construction of a two-storey extension and balcony

The proposed new extension is along the rear of the plot in the position of the demolished range, and will effectively reinstate the plan of the rear of the property. as recorded on historic maps. It will house WCs and a staircase to the first floor of the rear range and a balcony that will run alongside the southwest elevation of this range. It will be constructed against the existing boundary walls and south range and will not impact on any identified historic fabric.

8.3 **Concluding comments**

The alterations will have a little impact on historic fabric associated with the rear, south range of the public house. The historic fabric, and general layout, of the front range, along with its façade, will be maintained. This minimal loss of historic fabric is considered to be mitigated by the scope of the proposals that bring the currently unused first floor of the rear range into economic use. At a time of continuing closure of public houses, the scheme will provide additional public space in the form of a function room that will contribute to the economy of the public house, continuing and preserving the historic building in the use for which it was designed.

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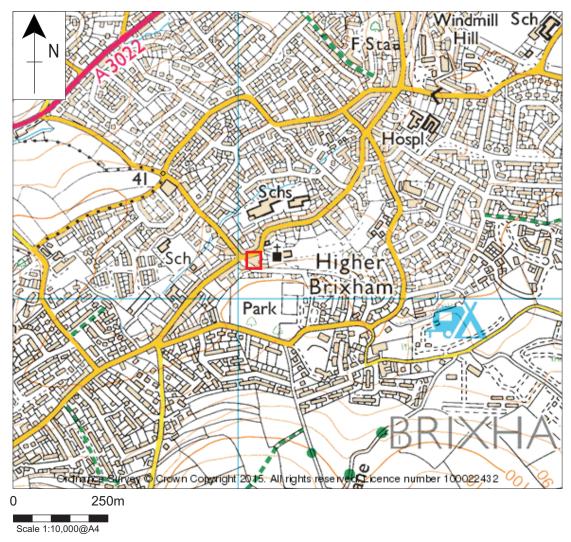
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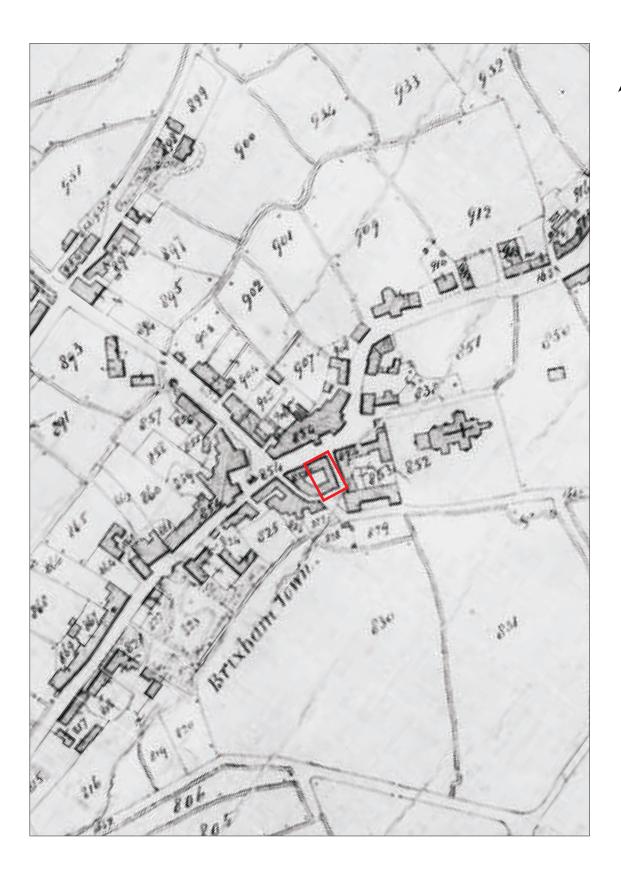
PROJECT

Bell Inn, 108 Drew Street, Brixham

TITI

Fig. 1: Site location







Bell Inn, 108 Drew Street, Brixham

Fig. 2: Extract from the Brixham Tithe map, 1840



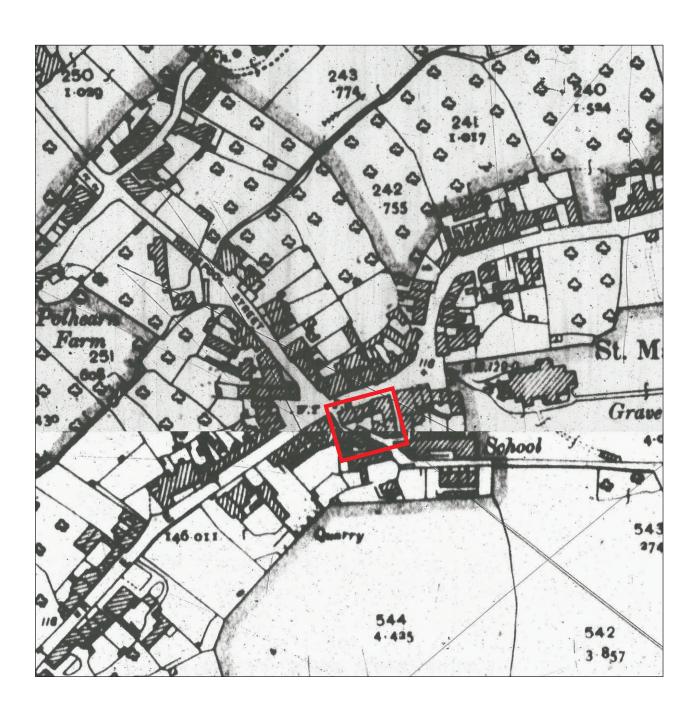


PROJECT

Bell Inn, 108 Drew Street, Brixham

Fig. 3: Extract from the first edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1864





PROJECT

Bell Inn, 108 Drew Street, Brixham

TITI F

Fig. 4: Extract from the second edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1906







Plate 1: Northwest elevation of front range, looking southwest



Plate 2: Northeast elevation of the building, looking south-southwest



Plate 3: Ground floor of the northeast elevation of the central range showing the timber framing, looking northwest



Plate 4: Northeast elevation of the rear range, looking west





Plate 5: Southwest elevation of the central and rear ranges, looking north



Plate 6: Door and earlier window in the southwest elevation of the rear range, looking northeast



Plate 7: Southeast elevation of the rear range showing the 20th-century extensions, cart entrance and 20th-century outbuilding, looking northwest

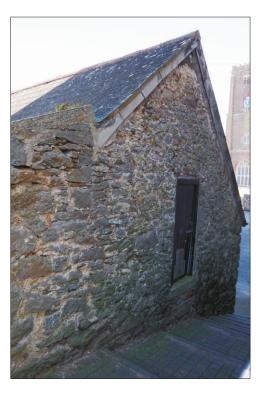


Plate 8: Southeast elevation of the rear range, looking north-northeast





Plate 9: 18th-century cart entrance gates, looking northwest



Plate 10: General view of eastern bar in the front range, looking southeast



Plate 11: General view of western bar in the front range, looking northwest





Plate 12: 19th-century door to the western bar in the front range, looking southwest



Plate 13: General view of the 20th-century stairs, view from the first floor to the ground floor, looking northwest



Plate 14: View of joint between two large beams in the bar in the central range, looking southeast



Plate 15: 18th-century cupboard in the north cellar of the rear range, looking northeast





Plate 16: 19th-century door to the north cellar in the rear range, looking southeast



Plate 17: General view of the south cellar in the rear range, looking east



Plate 18: General view of the lounge on the first floor of the front range, looking west



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