

# PRISON CELL ANNEX TO THE REAR OF 4 HIGHLAND STREET, IVYBRIDGE, DEVON

(NGR SX 63558 56253)

Results of historic building recording

South Hams District Council planning reference 27/2033/15/F  
(condition 6)

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AC archaeology

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## Summary

*A historic building record of a prison cell annexe to the rear of 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon was prepared by AC archaeology in April and June 2016. The work was required under a condition of the grant for planning permission by South Hams District Council for the "conversion of existing annexe prison cells to ancillary accommodation".*

*The cell annexe was constructed in the late 19th century (by 1880) after no. 4 Highland Street was leased for use as the Ivybridge police station. The property was leased for this use until 1926 at which point the cell annexe became redundant. The cell annexe is a small stone building which originally contained two cells and an access corridor. The interior arrangement had already been partially demolished and was further removed during the period of recording. However, several historic fittings were recorded prior to their removal including the windows and opening mechanisms, window security bars, the rudimentary sanitary facilities and the door to the chimney raking out chute. One of the cell doors was also present, but not in its original position.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of historic building recording undertaken by AC archaeology in April and June 2016 during works to former prison cells at the rear of 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon (SX 63558 56253; Fig. 1). The recording was commissioned by Alex Scott and required under condition 6 of the grant of planning permission (South Hams District Council reference 27/2033/15/F) for "conversion of existing annexe prison cells to ancillary accommodation". The works included the removal of the internal walls of the prison cells and creation of new first-floor accommodation. Guidance on the scope of building recording works was provided by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET) in their consultation response to the application.
- 1.2 The property is located on the north side of Highland Street, which is within the historic core of Ivybridge on the west side of the River Erme. It is situated at a height of around 70m aOD within the valley of the River Erme. The underlying geology comprises Middle Devonian Slates and Metalimestone (British Geological Survey 2016).

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The prison cell annexe has been the subject of an *Historic Building Appraisal* prepared by the Ivybridge Mill Archives Group (Thatcher 2015), from which the following summary history is partially derived, bolstered by further documentary research.
- 2.2 It has been suggested that Highland Street was constructed in around 1816, with the name reflecting its location within the Highland Estate; Highland House (constructed 1792) is located on the hillside immediately west of the historic town, and west of Highland Street. The street is depicted on the Ermington tithe map of 1841, with no. 4 shown as one of the larger properties that are located at each end of a terrace (Fig.

2). To the rear there are two small outbuildings, and a longer outbuilding set against the eastern boundary of the property.

**2.3** Proposals for an Ivybridge police station (or a policeman's residence and lock-ups) were put forward in 1874, and no. 4 was leased for this purpose. The lock-ups were constructed as a detached building to the rear of the existing house partially on the site of the earlier outbuilding; they are depicted on historic Ordnance Survey maps from the 1880s onwards (Fig. 3). Police constables at this property are recorded on the 1881 census (the first after the new use of no. 4) until 1926.

**2.4** The Historic England Listing Selection Guide on *Law and Government Buildings* records that a large number of police stations were constructed during the 19th century, and in particular following the 1856 County and Borough Police Act. Purpose built police stations often included four principal elements: the administrative block, a cell block, police accommodation, and a drill yard. No. 4 Highland Street contains two of these elements, the police accommodation and the cell block. The Selection Guide also notes that "in villages, often policed by local constables...single cell lock ups were provided to hold inebriates and other miscreants overnight. These can be as simple as a sturdy timber or stone box, but some are larger and more elaborate."

### **3. BUILDING SURVEY (Figs 4-5; Plates 1-12)**

**3.1** The works involved removal of both historic fabric and fixtures and fittings (both *in situ* and removed) associated with the former use as prison cells. The aim of the investigation was therefore to prepare a record of the historic building prior to works commencing, and to carry out further recording during works as appropriate. The investigations were carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2016). A full written description of the building was prepared, together with annotated as existing floor plan and elevations, along with a photographic record in colour digital format. The work was undertaken with reference to the current advice from Historic England: *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices* (2016).

**3.2** The prison cell annexe is to the rear (north) of no. 4 Highland Street (Plate 1). It is now joined to the house by a modern link kitchen. The garden of the property is terraced in three levels with the central terrace to the north of the cell annexe obscuring the majority of the elevation at that end of the building. The level of this terrace is modern as is shown by the fact that a blocked window in the north elevation can be seen internally. The ground level to the west of the annexe is also higher than the floor level within it.

#### **3.3 Exterior**

The cell annexe is stone built with a gabled slate roof with rounded clay ridge tiles, and a brick chimney stack on the north gable wall with a tall plain ceramic pot with collared rim (Plate 2). It measures approximately 14m long by 5m wide and is largely constructed of sub-angular slate stone blocks ranging in size from 0.05m by 0.20m to 0.45m by 0.60m and laid in rough courses with lime mortar containing common sub-angular quartz inclusions. For quoins, and for detailing of the windows (in the west elevation), shaped granite blocks have been used; they ranged in size from 0.30m by 0.30m to 1m by 0.40m. A modern metal flue was positioned in the centre of the east side just off the ridge line, and the roof was drained by plastic guttering with a metal downpipe, which had been reused as the head is triangular and designed for use in the corner of a building (Plate 3).

### ***North elevation***

The north elevation was rendered with cement and had slate tile flashing below the eaves (Plate 2).

### ***South elevation***

Little of the original building work could be seen on the south elevation which externally had the lower half covered in modern cement render and internally within the link kitchen was rendered with modern plaster (Plate 3). Just above the roof line of the kitchen where it joined the annexe a timber could be seen within the stonework (this was also visible internally). On the west side of the elevation the bottom four granite quoins projected to form a gate post approximately 1.5m high with a metal pintle set into one of the quoins for hanging a gate. A rough stone had been cemented in position on the top of the gate post; this is out of character and has presumably been added for more recent aesthetic reasons.

### ***West elevation***

A pair of cell windows were located in the west elevation and each consisted of nine panes in metal frames with the top six being hinged (Plate 4). Each window was protected by three metal bars which were dog legged at the top to allow the windows to open outwards. A metal hook for an unknown purpose was positioned within the stonework at middle height next to the north quoins. To the south of this was some modern painted graffiti which says 'our honeymoon'. The ends of the roof timbers could be seen below the slates at the eaves level and at this height to the north was a curved metal bracket which probably supported earlier guttering.

### ***East elevation***

The east elevation could not be viewed as it formed the boundary of the plot and is only visible from the adjacent property.

## **3.4 Interior**

The prison cell annexe is accessed from the link kitchen through a modern door which led into a corridor with two cells situated to the west. The area around the door is formed of timber batons and plasterboard with insulation between the timbers, although this was certainly the position of the original door opening which has been altered.

### ***Corridor***

The corridor measured 1m wide by 6.5m long. It had large slate flagstones on the floor the average size of which was 1m by 1.5m. The walls of the corridor were rendered (Plate 5). When first recorded a large part of the west wall including the area where the cell doors would have been located had been removed showing that the internal corridor wall was constructed of rubble stonework with some brick and blockwork added to the part to the north. Granite threshold blocks measuring 1m long by 0.30m wide marked the position of the cell doorways showing that they had been adjacent to one another and central to the length of the corridor. In the north wall of the corridor a metal door measuring 0.25m by 0.30m provided access to the chimney cavity (Plate 6). In the upper part of the same wall a window opening filled externally by blockwork had a wooden frame with four metal bars surviving (see Plates 5 and 7).

### ***Cells***

The partition wall between the cells had been partially removed on its eastern side when first observed and later was completely removed as the development

progressed. The cells had a been a mirror image of one other with each measuring approximately 3m long by 2m wide (Plates 7 and 8).. The partition wall was constructed of rubble stonework which had been rendered matching the other cell walls. The two cells had wooden floorboards. Both cells were provided with a window located high in the west wall. The windows are described above, but internally had a metal slide mechanism for opening (Plate 9). The slide mechanism was marked "Bodley Brothers Exeter"; these were a very long lived foundry in Commercial Road, Exeter and used this name from at least 1865/6 (quite possibly much earlier) and continued well into the 20th century.

In the northwest corner of the north cell and southwest corner of the south cell there were rudimentary sanitary facilities (Plate 10). These consisted of deep cone-shaped brown glazed ceramic bowls with a metal pipe leading into the top of them. They were set into plinths constructed in rubble stonework and occasional brick. The plinths measured 0.90m long by 0.52m wide by 0.63m high. On removal the bowls were found to measure 0.36m in diameter at the top reducing to 0.10m at the base and were 0.42m high (Plate 11). On the rim a stamped manufacturer's mark consisting of the letters J and L within a bow with a line at the base joining the base of the bow; it has not been possible to trace the manufacturer. The bowls had drained into, but were not physically attached to, ceramic drain pipes set within the plinths.

A four-panel cell door, removed from its original position, was present (along with part of its plain frame), and measured 2m high (Plate 12). It retained its metal handle and lock, along with a hatch in the top right panel with a handle, a metal bolt and bracket beneath to support the hatch when opened.

### ***Ceiling***

Large slate slabs formed the ceiling of the cells, which were topped with rubble and supported by the internal walls and beams provided by metal rails; these had the appearance of being re-purposed railway lines of bridge type which were in use during the 19th century. Approximately two thirds of the slate ceiling survived when first seen and on top of it at the south end of the structure was water tank formed of slate slabs (Plate 13). The corridor originally had a lath and plaster ceiling, which had been replaced with modern plasterboard.

### ***Roof***

The roof trusses comprised 10 pairs of rafters lapped and pegged at their apex and braced with nailed collar beams. Three collars above the position of the south cell had been removed, but empty mortices showed that these were differently joined than the other collars. The batons for the slate roof sat on the back of the trusses. The modern metal flue visible on the east side of the roof was visible internally, but no longer attached to anything.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1** The prison cell annexe to the rear of no. 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge was purpose-built in the late 19th century (by 1880) after no. 4 was leased for use as the Ivybridge police station. The property remained the police station until 1926 at which point the cell annexe became redundant. The recorded layout of the cell annexe was that which was constructed with no evidence to show that it had been remodelled during its use.

- 4.2** When first recorded the exterior of the prison cell annexe was generally in a good state of repair with the west elevation in particular largely presented as built. However, inside a large proportion of the partition walls and the ceiling had been removed and the wooden floors of the cells were in a very poor state of repair. Several historic fittings were present including the high-level windows and their external security bars and internal opening mechanisms, the rudimentary sanitary facilities and the door to the chimney. No evidence for a fireplace was observed and instead it seems probably that there was a freestanding stove at the end of the corridor, with such an arrangement shown in a guide for the construction of station houses for rural constabulary, dated 1856 (Powys Digital History Project 2016). One of the cell doors remained in the building, but had been removed from its original position.
- 4.3** The prison cell annexe was built with a functional simple 2-cell and corridor design. It was provided with simple sanitary facilities supplied from a water tank in the roof space. It was also heated, but it was not possible to identify the specifics of the heating system. No direct comparison with other known detached late Victorian police station cells can be drawn and it is most probably the case that it was designed to suit the space available and to utilise local building materials. The requirement of a brick-arched ceiling specified in the historical documentation (Thatcher 2015) was clearly not instated and instead a ceiling of heavy slate slabs further weighted down by rubble was regarded as a suitable alternative for providing the same level of security.

## **5. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 5.1** The digital (photographic) archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service. Architectural fittings specific to the use as cells have either been retained on site for reuse or deposited with the Devon & Cornwall Police Heritage & Learning Resource at Okehampton.
- 5.2** An OASIS entry has been created under the unique identifier 257803 and includes a digital copy of this report.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 6.1** This recording and this report were commissioned by Alex Scott. The project was managed for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore and carried out by Stella De-Villiers and Paul Rainbird. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Stella De-Villiers.

## **7. REFERENCES**

British Geological Survey, 2016, *British Geological Survey Online Viewer* ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk))

Historic England, 2011, *Designation Listing Selection Guide, Law and Government Buildings*

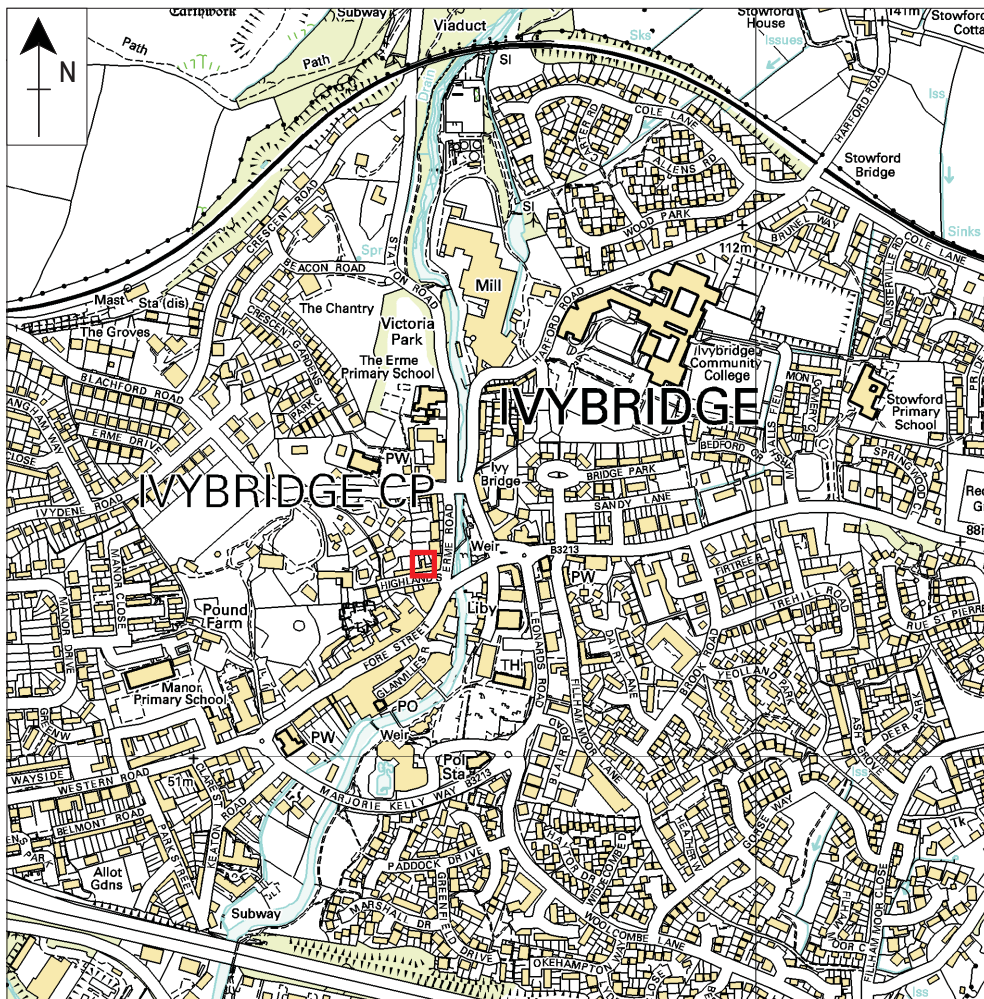
Passmore, A., 2016, *4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon (NGR SX 63558 56253), Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording. South Hams District*

*Council planning reference 27/2033/15/F, condition 6. AC archaeology document no.*  
**ACD 1366/1/1**

Powys Digital History Project, 2016, *Victorian Powys for Schools – Presteigne – Crime and Punishment*  
(Online at <http://history.powys.org.uk/school1/presteigne/lockup4.shtml>)

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PROJECT  
Prison Cell Annexe to the rear of 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon

TITLE

Fig.1: Site location



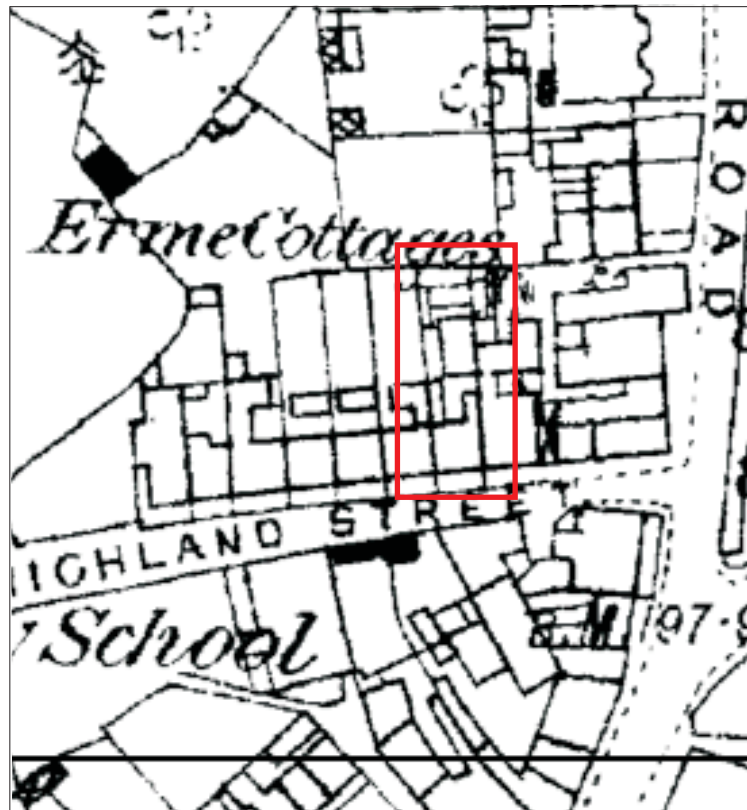
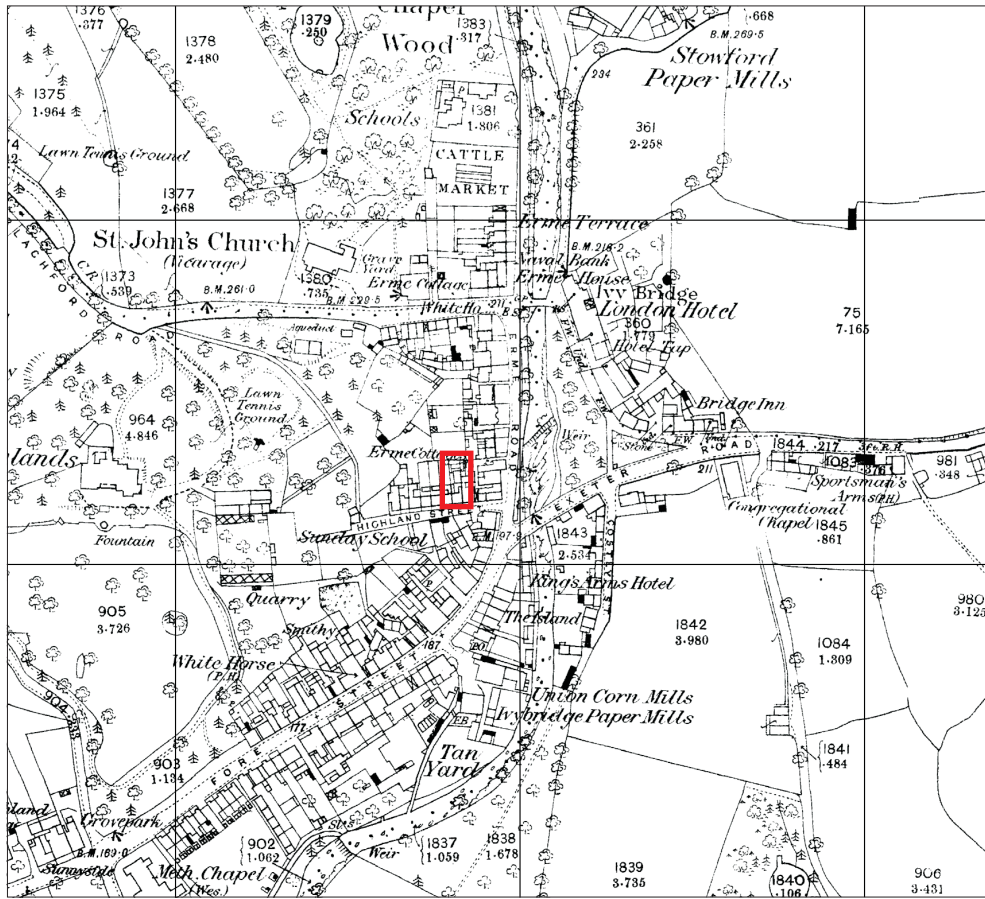
PROJECT

Prison Cell Annexe to the rear of 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Extract from the Ermington tithe map, 1841





County: DEVONSHIRE, Date(s): 1887 Survey scale: 1:2,500 (c) Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited 2016. All rights reserved.

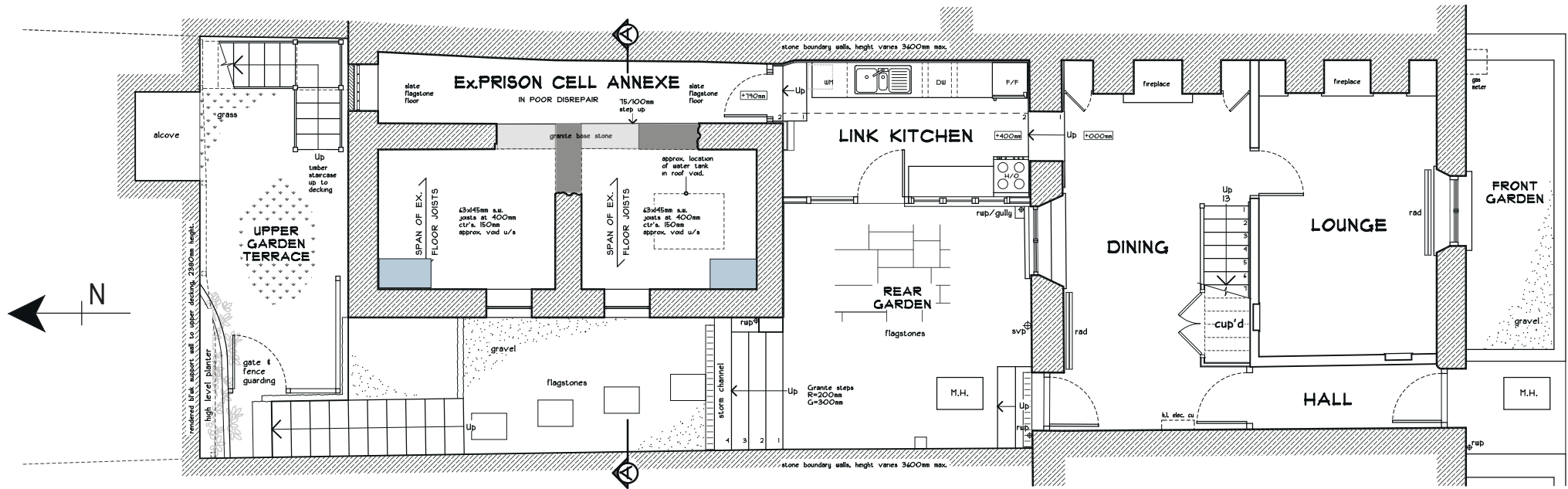
PROJECT

Prison Cell Annexe to the rear of 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Extract from the first edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1887

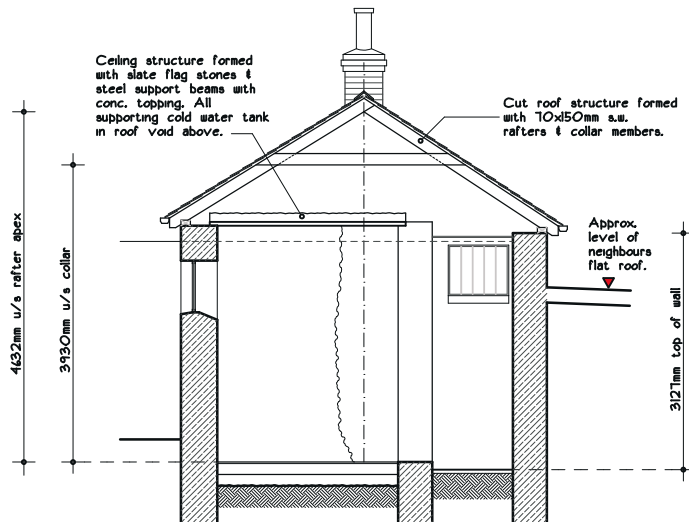




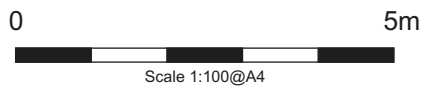
Ground floor and part of site plan

Key

- Location of sanitary facilities
- Line of removed wall
- Position of doorways



Typical section A-A



PROJECT  
Prison Cell Annexe to the rear of  
4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon

TITLE  
Fig. 4: Ground floor and site plan  
and section



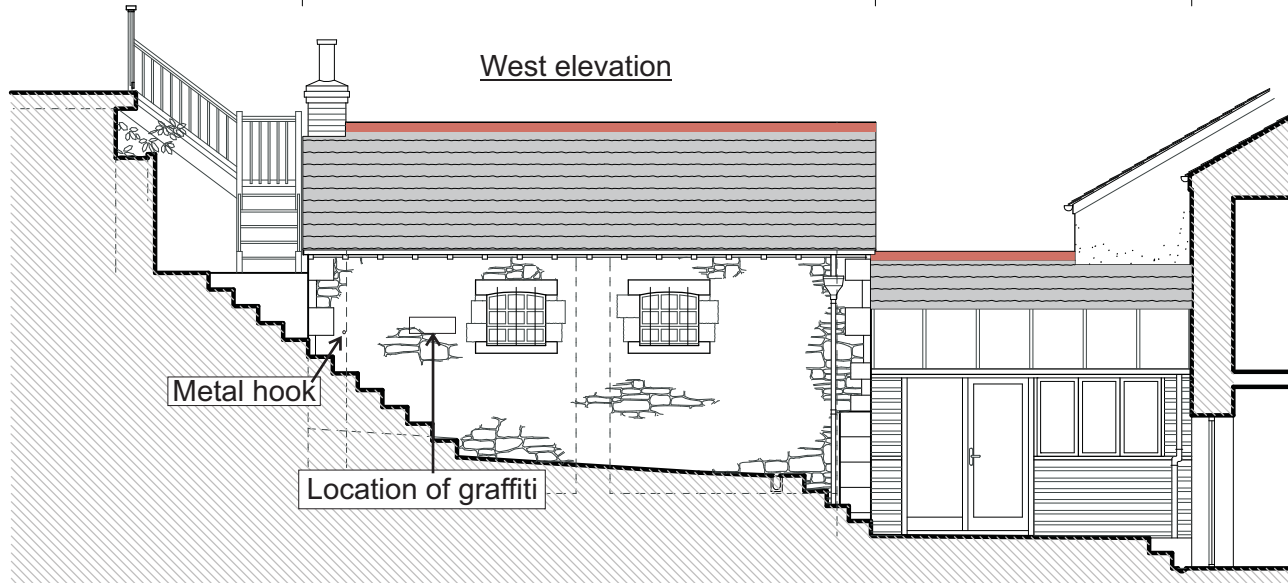
UPPER GARDEN & DECKING AREA

Ex. PRISON CELL ANNEXE

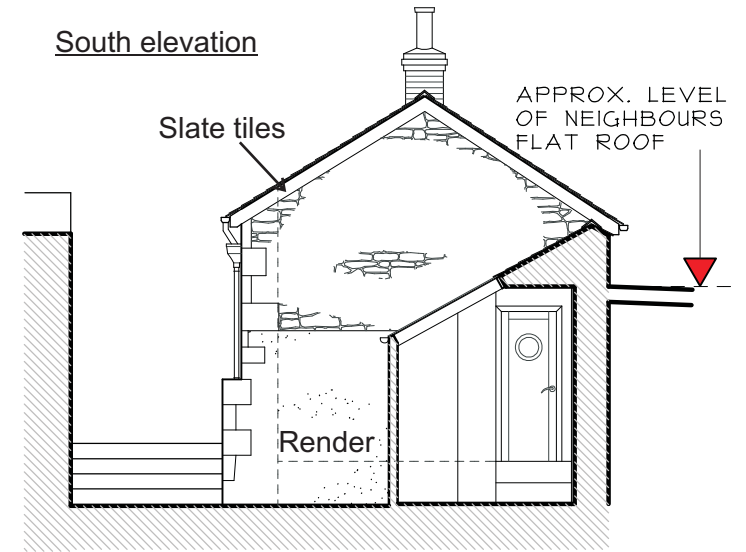
LINK KITCHEN

MAIN HOUSE

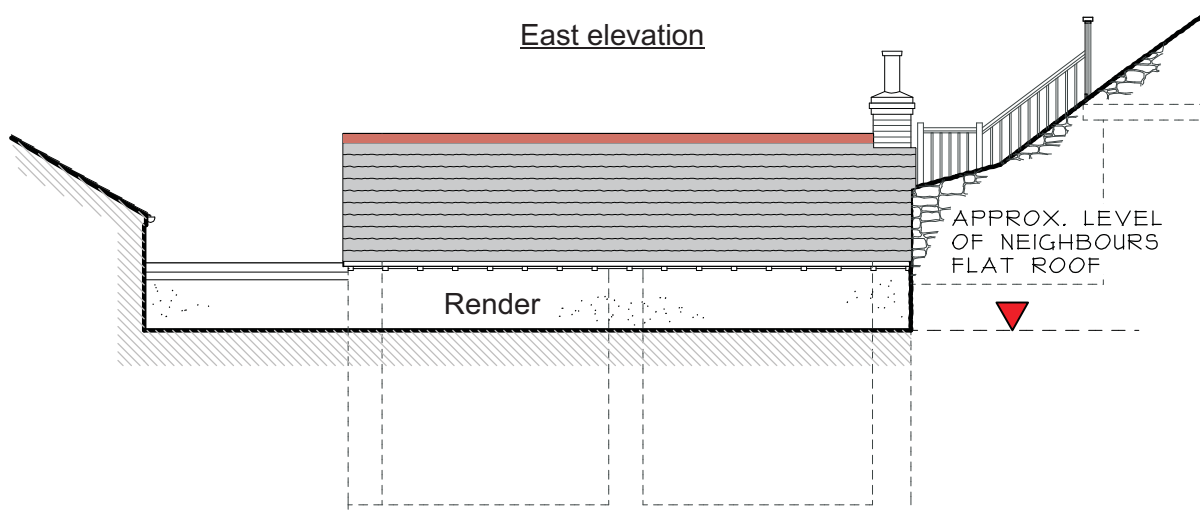
West elevation



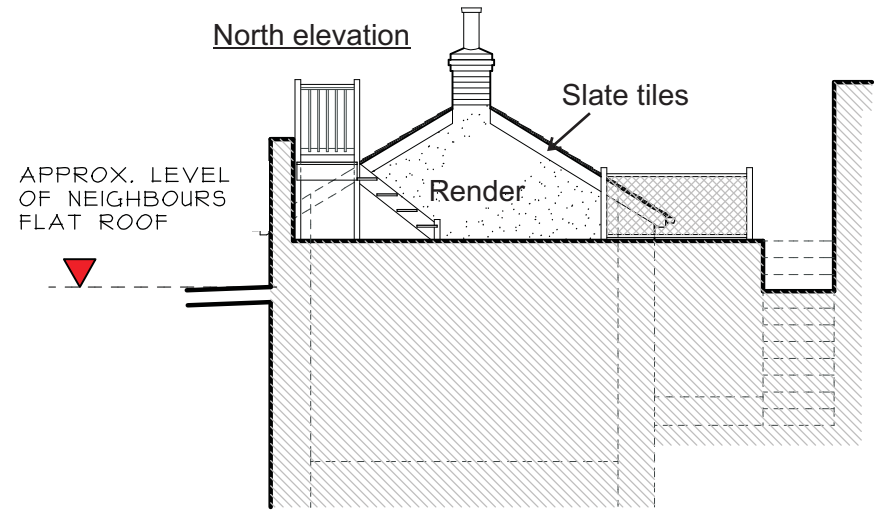
South elevation



East elevation



North elevation



0 5m

Scale 1:100@A4

PROJECT  
Prison Cell Annexe to the rear of 4 Highland Street, Ivybridge, Devon

TITLE  
Fig. 5: Elevations







Plate 1: General view of prison cell annexe to the rear of no. 4 Highland Street, looking south



Plate 2: North elevation, looking southwest (1m scale)



Plate 3: South elevation, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 4: West elevation,  
looking southeast (1m scale)



Plate 5: General view of corridor,  
looking north (1m scale)



Plate 6: View of metal door covering a  
raking out chute, looking north





Plate 7: General view of north cell and corridor, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 8: General view of south cell and corridor, looking southwest (1m scale)



Plate 9: View of metal window mechanism, looking northwest





Plate 10: View of rudimentary sanitary facilities, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 11: The excavated sanitary facilities (0.2m scale)



Plate 12: View of cell door, looking west  
(1m scale)



Plate 13: General view of ceiling, water tank and roof, looking south

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