

MOUNT KELLY COLLEGE OLYMPIC LEGACY 50M SWIMMING POOL, TAVISTOCK, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 49113 75153)

Results of archaeological recording

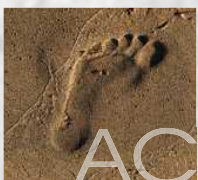
Planning ref: West Devon Borough Council 02645/2012
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On behalf of:
Mount Kelly College

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AC archaeology

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Summary

Archaeological recording was carried out by AC archaeology between November 2015 and July 2016 during the construction of a new swimming pool at Mount Kelly College, Tavistock, Devon (NGR SX 49113 75153).

The archaeological features of interest were the former leat for the Mount Foundry and the earlier Town Leat/Mill Brook. Historic mapping showed that the Mount Foundry leat crossed the development area and was filled in during the second half of the 20th century. Its line was represented by a shallow earthwork which was subject to topographic survey although topsoil stripping for a parking area did not find any further evidence for the position of the Mount Foundry leat. It is concluded that the remains of the leat remained buried under late 20th century made ground. The Town Leat/Mill Brook was present as a dry stone-line ditch adjacent to Parkwood Road and was largely undisturbed by the development. The junction between the two leats remains extant and a basic record was made and is presented here.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig.1)

- 1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological recording carried out by AC archaeology between 11 November 2015 and 14 July 2016 during the construction of a new swimming pool at Mount Kelly College, Tavistock, Devon (NGR SX 49113 75153). The investigations were commissioned by Mount Kelly College, and were required under condition 20 of the grant of planning permission (West Devon Borough Council reference 02645/2012) for "Demolition of existing metal clad building and erection of Olympic Legacy Swimming Pool with associated works." Guidance on the scope of the archaeological works has been provided by the County Archaeologist.
- 1.2 The site covers an area of approximately 0.60ha located to the east of the main college building and to the northwest of the A386 (Parkwood Road), and is located within the Tavistock Conservation Area. It is situated at height of approximately 100m aOD. The underlying geology is Carboniferous basaltic lava and tuff overlain by Quaternary alluvium comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey online viewer 2016).

2. THE SITE (Figs 2-3)

- 2.1 The archaeological interest in the site is in regard to two leats: the Town Leat or Mill Brook (Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) no. MDV19146) that is located adjacent to Parkwood Road, which has its origins as a monastic leat supplying Tavistock Abbey and later powered the town mills, and a leat to Mount Foundry (Devon HER no. MDV61767) that dates to the early 19th century. The foundry itself is located within area A10 (Tamar Valley Mining District with Tavistock) of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. Both the foundry and the leat form part of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. Both leats are extant within the grounds of Mount Kelly.
- 2.2 Archaeological recording was carried out by Exeter Archaeology in 2010 during replacement of the fish pass at the head weir of the leats. The main fabric of the weir was tentatively dated to c.1804, with a granite fish pass added in the mid-19th century. An earlier revetment wall against the west river bank was recorded, but could not be dated (Passmore and Pink 2011).

- 2.3** Archaeological work undertaken by Wessex Archaeology at the site of the former foundry between 2004 and 2007 produced evidence for several phases of activity during its use as a foundry, and subsequently as a woollen mill. A total of three wheelpits was excavated with water being provided to the wheels by the Mount Foundry Leat that was located above the industrial complex (Trevathan 2009).
- 2.4** The Mount Foundry leat is depicted on historic maps from the mid-19th century, starting with the Tavistock tithe index map, dated 1842 (Fig. 2), and on the Ordnance Survey (OS) 25-inch scale maps beginning in 1885, which also marks the line of the Town Leat (Fig. 3). The Ordnance Survey mapping depicts a sluice where the Mount Foundry Leat is taken off the Town Leat. Later maps only mark a footbridge here, reflecting the disuse of the former watercourse. Within the application area Mount Foundry Leat was crossed by a bridge to provide access to Parkwood. Beyond the western edge of the development area is another bridge that provides access to the original college building.

3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The aim of the archaeological works was to preserve by record the evidence for the leats, particularly that to be disturbed by the development.
- 3.2** All works were undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Passmore 2014). Where possible all features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012).

4. RESULTS (Fig. 4; Plates 1-5)

4.1 Introduction

The works at the site comprised observations of the groundworks for the new building. Much of the development was conducted without archaeological observation (including a pre-works topographic survey) and this report is based on observations after the fact and with the aid of a time lapse film and other photos of the development published on-line at <http://www.mountkelly.com/50m-Swimming-Pool>. The time-lapse camera was fitted high on a tree trunk on the western perimeter looking east and the view gave excellent coverage of the groundworks across the site.

4.2 Mount Foundry Leat (Plates 1-4)

Prior to the development works commencing a shallow earthwork feature which retained some puddling after wet weather was observable in the expected position of the former leat (Plate 1). This feature could also be identified in a topographic survey prepared during the development's design, and its position is marked on Fig. 4. At its widest the shallow earthwork indicated that the leat had measured up to 7m wide, which compares with the approximately 3m wide feature where the leat ditch is extant beyond the western boundary of the site. The Mount Foundry leat was taken off the Town Leat at a point which is marked as 'sluice' on historic mapping (see Fig. 3). The junction of the two leats survives and was the subject of basic recording (Fig. 5). A sluice for the Town Leat survives at the junction and is built of concrete blocks indicating that it must be a replacement for an earlier structure (Plate 2). A further sluice gate was provided for the Mount Foundry leat, but this was constructed largely of timber with

only part of this surviving in a collapsed state (Plate 3). Slots on either side of the leat showed where the sluice structure stood and at this point the leat is 3m wide (Plate 4). Beyond this point the Mount Foundry leat was filled with modern rubble and metal detritus.

Surprisingly, observations of the groundworks showed no buried evidence for the Mount Foundry leat within the area of the development. The topsoil strip in the area of the leat and towards Parkwood Road reduced the ground surface by 0.4m to 1m and these overlying deposits were comprised of dark brown humic silty loam with dumps of yellow clay loam, with deeper trenches for services revealing dumps of angular stone. The only finds observed consisted of modern bottles in the humic leaf litter close to the road; these were not collected. A deep trench excavated for a water drainage tank was observed to the southeast of the new swimming pool. This was located to the northeast of the junction of the Mount Foundry and Town leats. The deposits could only be recorded from the trench side due to the depth of the hole, but approximately comprised 0-0.10m of topsoil, above a 0.15m thick deposit of made ground consisting of stone aggregate which sat directly on a 0.10m thick layer of tarmac. Beneath the tarmac was a 0.15m thick layer of gravel in a light yellow sand matrix, which was above a layer of alluvium which overlay bedrock.

4.3 Town Leat/Mill Brook

The Town Leat was found to be in largely a good state of survival, but heavily overgrown in places, which restricted observations that could be made in those areas. Adjacent to the site it is located parallel to Parkwood Road, but to the east exits the site by turning south under Parkwood Road before turning east again to meet the sluice gate at Evans Weir on the Tavy. It currently largely functions as a roadside ditch, although towards the east end it has been provided with a decking floor and appears to be used as part of a course by an outdoor adventure business (Plate 5). Along the length adjacent to the site the leat is lined with local stone cobbles with the base filled to an unknown depth, with the sides of the leat typically a minimum of 1m high, but rising to up to 2m at the east end, and approximately 2m wide. Just beyond the sluice gate at the point where the Mount Foundry leat is taken off the Town Leat a bridge crosses the leat on a pier and abutments of local stone which support girders of granite; this was within a dense patch of bamboo which impeded attempts to record it.

5. COMMENTS

5.1 Mount Foundry Leat

Historic OS mapping shows the leat passing through the area of the development. That buried evidence for it was not observed in the groundworks is peculiar and it may be the case that groundworks in the second half of the 20th century, with works for a tennis court and a workshop, resulted in the covering of the leat in this area; leaving it observable only as a slight earthwork feature where slumping had occurred. The groundworks for parking in the location where the leat was expected only removed part of the previous made ground, not revealing the buried leat. In support of this argument are the observations made during the watching brief which indicated that much of the area to the south of the former tennis court had previously been truncated and made up; a tarmac surface was observed at a depth of 0.25-0.35m below ground surface. It is not known exactly when the leat was filled in and buried, but the part of the leat in front of the former swimming pool was presumably filled by the time that building opened in 1977.

5.2 The Tavistock tithe index map of 1842 shows the eastern end of the leat as a much more orderly straight structure being taken directly off the Tavy and not the Town Leat, with the latter not marked at all. It is difficult to reconcile this map with the serpentine form of the Mount Foundry leat at its east end and the positions of both leats as shown on later mapping. The later OS mapping (1885 to 1906) shows the eastern part of the leat as a broad arc, matching that of the topographic survey, heading first west and then southwest until it meets the surviving footbridge with stone parapets (Plate 6), beyond which it curves to the northwest and dog-legs under the college drive to join the section which fronts the college. In front of the college is a straight section aligned approximately northeast to southwest; this section has clearly been incorporated, probably with some modification, within the landscaping of the grounds related to the college which was built in 1872-4 (Plates 7-8). Arguably the eastern section close to and within the area of the development was modified for landscaping purposes within the grounds to the east of the college drive which include the gardens of Parkwood (Newton) House, built c. 1830, which became part of the college. This landscaping would explain the serpentine form of the east section and, in particular, the broad arc, which may not be typical of an industrial leat. The effect that such modifications would have made to the proper functioning of the leat, which was certainly actively used until 1891 (Trevarthen 2009), is not known, but clearly enough flow was present to allow the continuing functioning of the leat as an industrial structure.

5.3 Town Leat

The Town Leat survives largely as presented in historic OS mapping. The observed bridge crossing the leat below the sluice gate has a path emanating from its position on the 1885 OS map and is marked as a footbridge on the 1953 OS map. That the Town Leat is not shown on the tithe index map of 1842 remains a mystery.

6. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

6.1 The archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch under the project number ACD1013. In line with the current policy for retention of archives in Devon, on acceptance of the report and completion of the OASIS entry the archive will be discarded.

6.2 An entry to the OASIS database, which will include a digital copy of this report, has been created using the unique identifier **259186**.

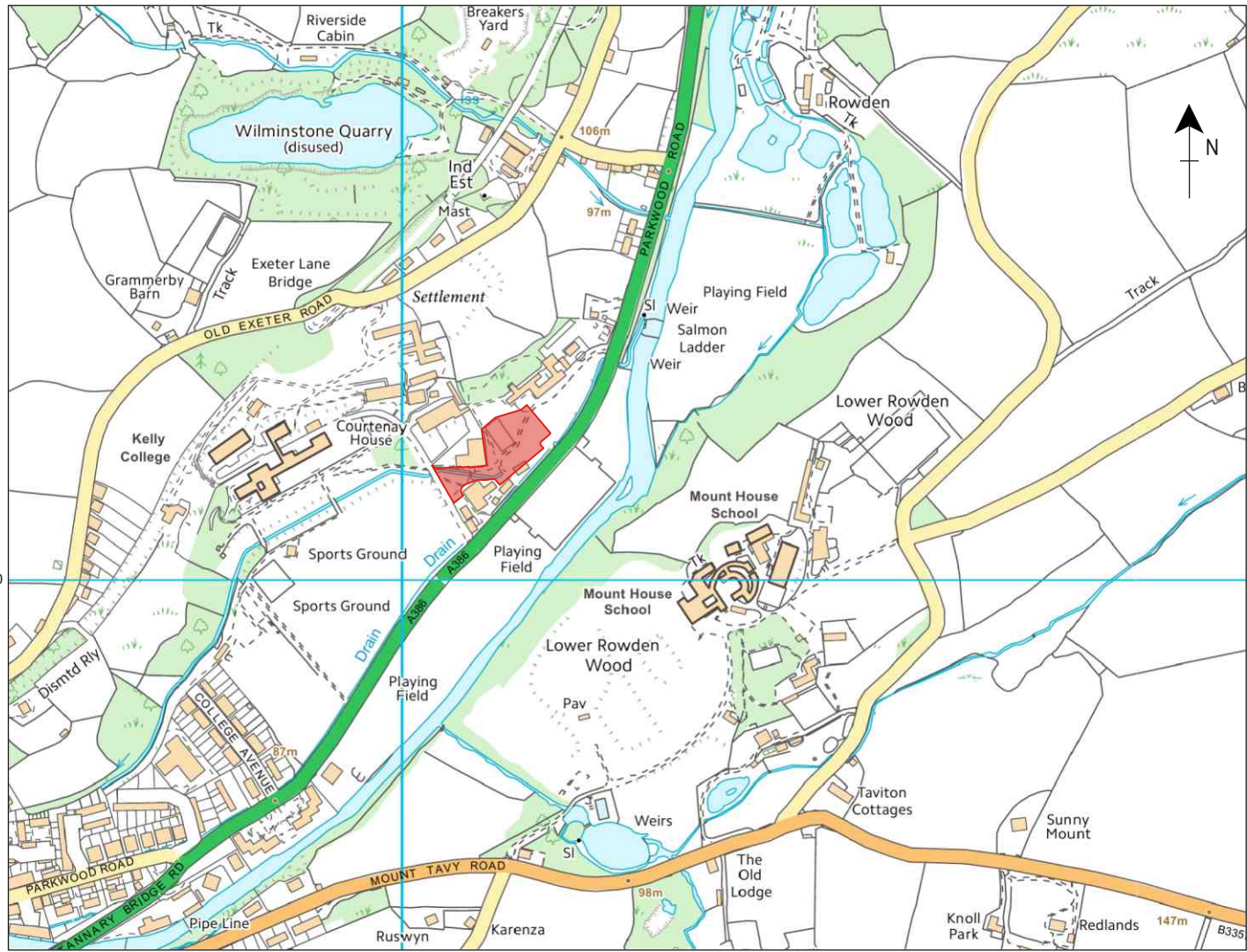
7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 This project was commissioned by Mount Kelly College and was managed for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The site work was carried out by Chris Blatchford, Paul Cooke and Paul Rainbird. The illustrations were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The collaborative role of Bill Horner, Devon County Archaeologist, is duly acknowledged.

8. SOURCE CONSULTED

BGS, 2016, *Geology of Britain On-Line Viewer* (www.bgs.ac.uk)
Frederick Sherrell Ltd, 2012, *Proposed Olympic Swimming Pool at Kelly College, Tavistock, Devon Phase 1 Desk Study report*, report no. **3751**.

- Passmore, A.J. 2014, *Mount Kelly Legacy 50m Pool, (NGR SX 49113 75153),: Written Scheme of Investigation for a Topographic Survey and Archaeological Watching Brief, Planning reference: West Devon Borough Council 02645/2012.* Unpublished AC archaeology document no. **ACD1013/1/0**.
- Passmore, A.J., and Pink, F., 2011, *Archaeological Recording at Evans Weir, Parkwood Road, Tavistock, Devon*, Exeter Archaeology Report No. **11.14**.
- Trevarthen, M. 2009. 'Mount Foundry, Tavistock: An Early 19th Century Iron and Brass Foundry in West Devon', *Proceedings of Devon Archaeological Society* **67**, 217-247.



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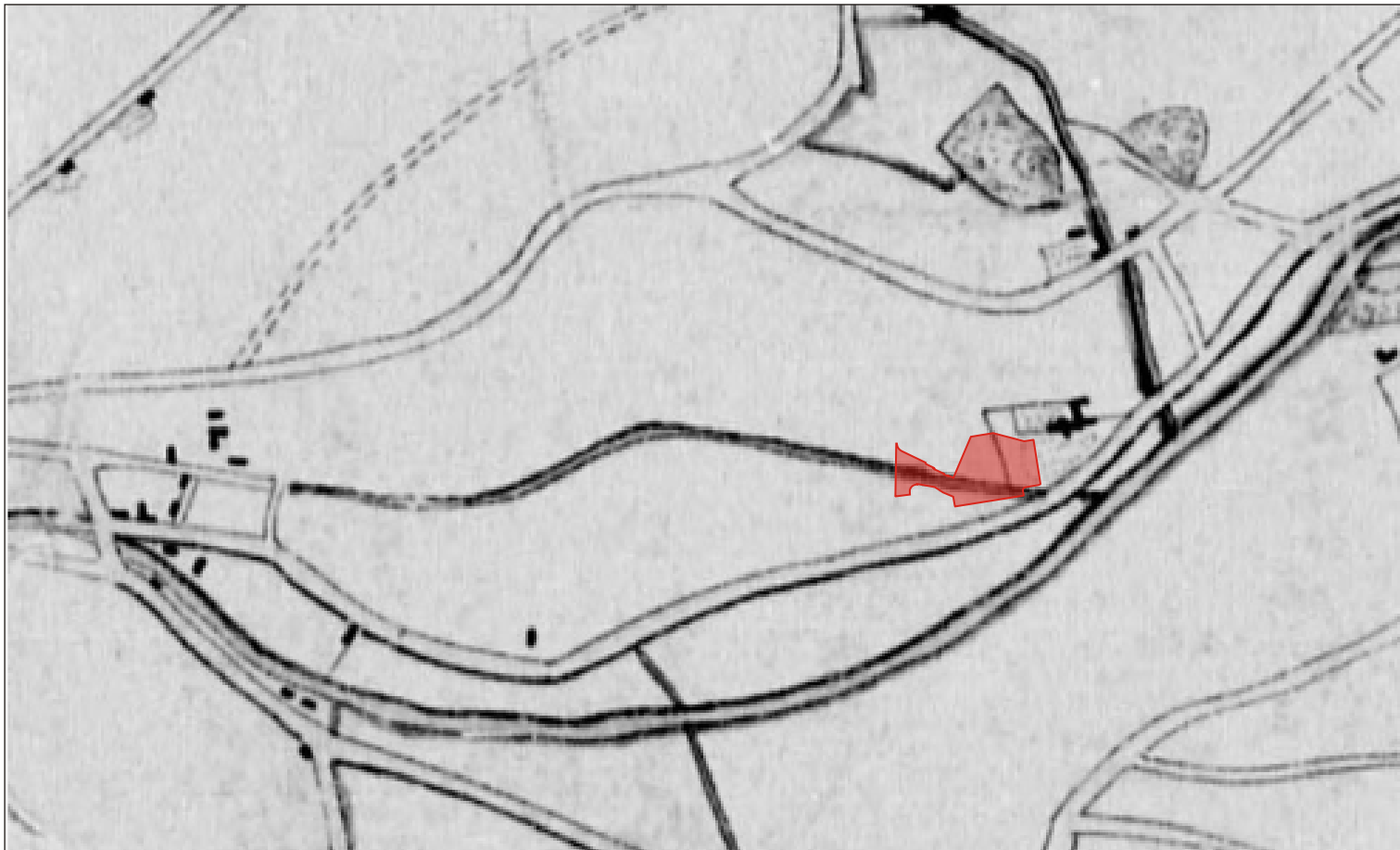


Site location

PROJECT
**Mount Kelly College Olympic Legacy
 50m swimming pool, Tavistock, Devon**

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site





Approximate location
of site

PROJECT

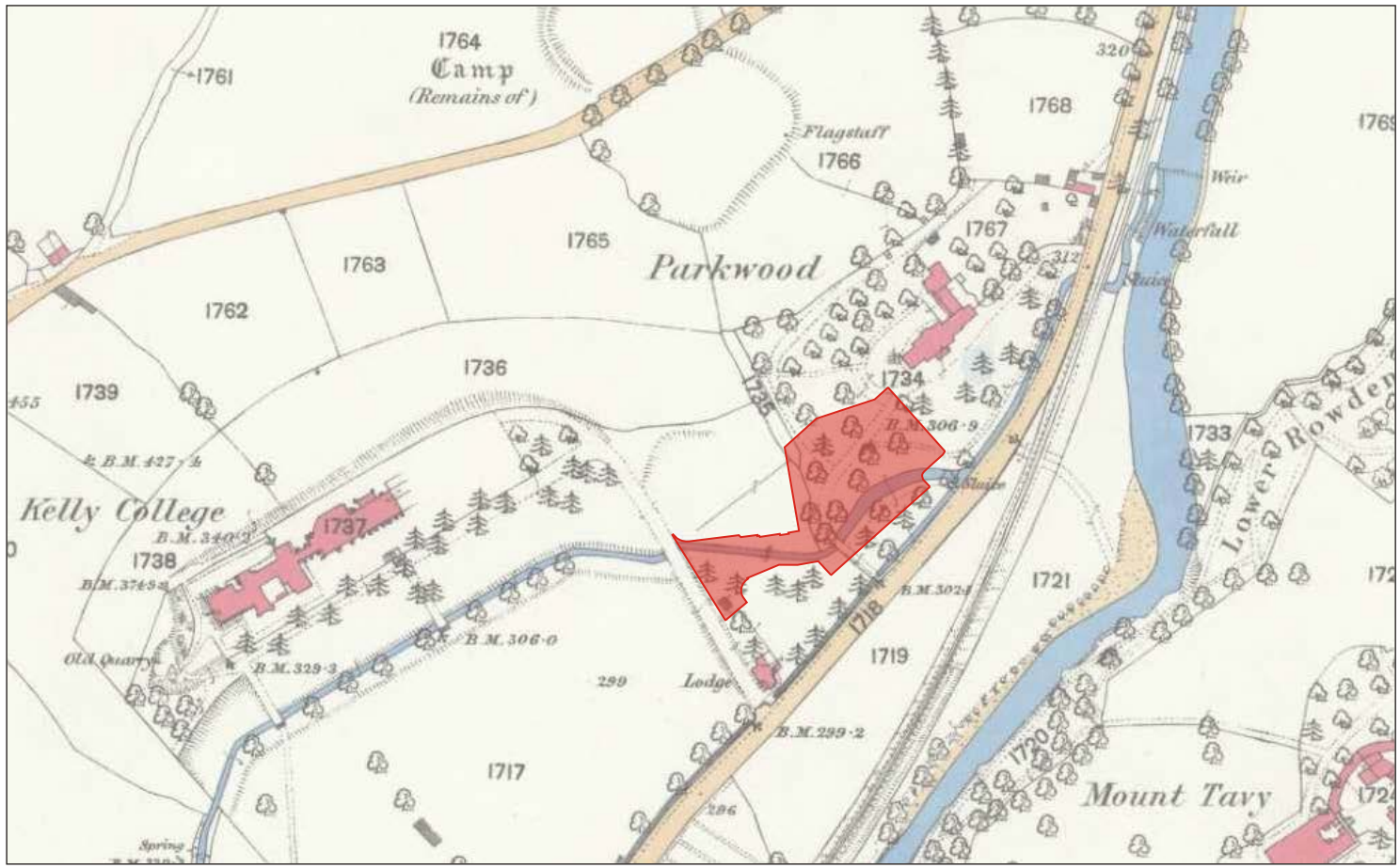
Mount Kelly College Olympic Legacy
50m swimming pool, Tavistock, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Extract from the Tavistock tithe
index map, 1842



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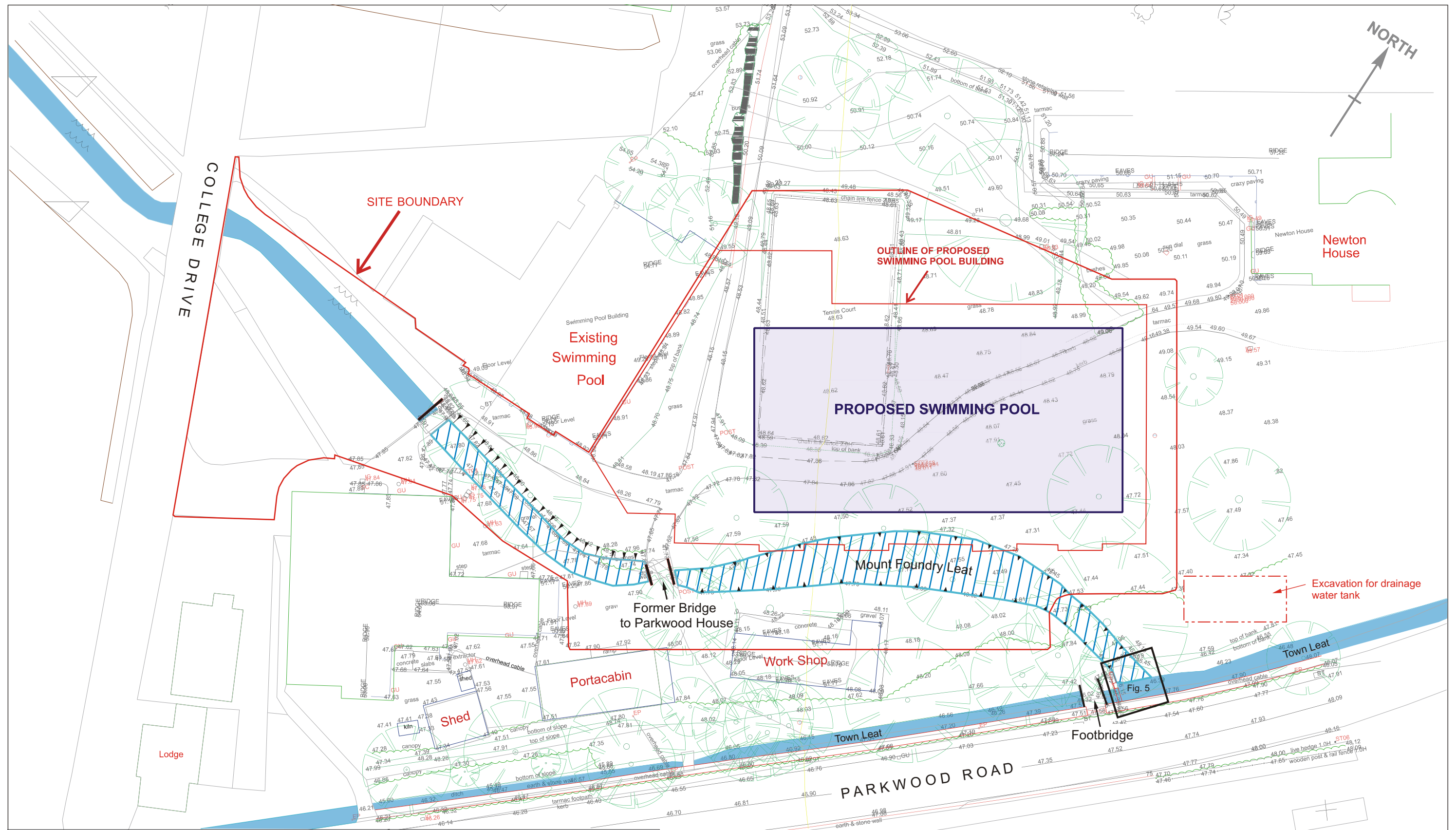


Approximate location of site

PROJECT
Mount Kelly College Olympic Legacy
50m swimming pool, Tavistock, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 3: Extract from the 25-inch First
Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1885





NOTE: Based on a drawing by Mitchell Architects, April 2012 annotated by Frederick Sherrell Limited.

Key

- Open leat
- Filled leat



PROJECT
 Mount Kelly College Olympic Legacy 50m
 swimming pool, Tavistock, Devon

TITLE
 Fig. 4: Topographic survey





Plate 1: General view of Mount Foundry Leat, within the development area, view from the southwest (Frederick Sherrell Ltd 2012)



Plate 2: Town Leat, sluice to Mount Foundry Leat junction, view from the east (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Mount Foundry Leat, remains of sluice structure at junction with Town Leat, view from the south (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Mount Foundry Leat, slot in leat wall for collapsed sluice structure at junction with Town Leat, view from the east (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Town Leat at eastern boundary of development area, view from the east (scale 1m)



Plate 6: Mount Foundry Leat, former access bridge to Parkwood House, view from the northeast (Frederick Sherrell Ltd 2012)



Plate 7: Mount Foundry Leat, the main college building (the leat passes along the line at the base of the terrace), view from the southeast



Plate 8: Mount Foundry Leat, in the area in front of the main college building, view from the southwest

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