

4 ABBEY PLACE, TAVISTOCK, DEVON

(NGR SX 41201 74342)

Tavistock Abbey: Scheduled Monument no. 29679;
National Heritage List for England no. 1020401

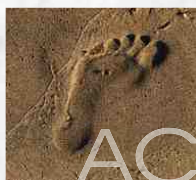
Results of an archaeological watching brief

Prepared by:
Naomi Kysh

On behalf of:
Western Power Distribution

Document No: ACD1681/2/0

Date: December 2017



AC archaeology

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Approved by	Andrew Passmore

The archaeological work was commissioned by Western Power Distribution and managed for them by Debbie Leavey, and for AC Archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The fieldwork was carried out by Naomi Kysh. The report illustrations for this report prepared by Sarnia Blackmore.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology on 7 December 2017 during the excavation of a joint pit for an additional electricity supply to 4 Abbey Place, Tavistock, Devon (SX 48201 74342). The only exposed archaeological deposit was the top of a landscaping layer associated with the 19th-century rebuilding of the Town by the Dukes of Bedford. No other deposits or features were exposed, and no finds recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by AC archaeology on behalf of Western Power Distribution on 7 December 2017 during the laying of a new electricity cable at 4 Abbey Place, Tavistock, Devon (SX 48201 74342; Fig. 1). The site lies within the Tavistock Abbey Scheduled Monument, and the investigation was required under the grant of Scheduled Monument Consent for the works (Historic England reference S00177717).

1.2 No. 4 Abbey Place is located within the centre of the historic town at a height of approximately 80.90m aOD. The underlying geology is Carboniferous basaltic lava and tuff of the Milton Abbot Formation overlain by Quaternary alluvium of clay, silt, sand and gravel.

1.3 The work comprised the excavation of a new joint pit at the end of the existing supply to the property, located to the south of the front range of 4 Abbey Place, in an area of its front curtilage between the building and the boundary of the front garden of 3 Abbey Place.

Statutory designations

1.4 The full extent of the precinct of Tavistock Abbey, within which the site is located, is designated as a Scheduled Monument (no. 29679; National Heritage List for England no. 1020401).

1.5 No. 4 Abbey Place is Listed at Grade II under the name the *Post Office* (National Heritage List for England no. 11627240). It is described as a mid 19th-century two-storey building with single-storey extension, which was included in the List for its group value.

2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Tavistock Abbey, which was of the Benedictine order, was founded in AD974, and was dissolved in 1539. Above-ground remains of the abbey are fragmentary, but include gatehouses into the courts, lengths of the precinct wall, a hall and part of the abbey church (Stead 1999, Fig. 11). Excavations in 1997 and 1999 exposed medieval masonry at the west end of the church as well as part of a tiled floor and three graves (*ibid.*, fig. 8).

2.2 After the dissolution some of the abbey buildings were dismantled, whilst others were retained. The ruined church was razed to the ground in 1670, and in the early-18th century former monastic buildings to the south of the church were incorporated into Abbey House, later rebuilt into the larger Bedford Hotel.

- 2.3** Income received by the 6th and 7th Dukes of Bedford from the copper boom of the later 18 and 19th centuries was spent on the rebuilding of the town. Buildings to the east of the parish church were swept away and the ground level raised significantly. Bedford Square was laid out to the west of the Church, and Bedford Street (and associated properties) constructed to the south of the churchyard. Archaeological evidence for these episodes of post-medieval activity was found in 1997 and 1999, and further evidence for the raising of the ground level to the west of the church was recovered during a watching brief behind West Street in 2011 (Passmore 2011), and to the east of the church in Guildhall Square in 2012 (Stead 2012).
- 2.4** The 1885 1:500 Ordnance Survey town plan of Tavistock records that at this date 4 Abbey Place continued further north than present, but was set back from the road. Around the turn of the 20th century the building was partially extended to the northeast, and was subsequently enlarged with a near full-width ground-floor extension. The site of the excavation was initially recorded as part of the front garden of 4 Abbey Place, and later as a space that as today opens onto the pavement.
- 2.5** The results of the monitoring and recording of the 1997 sewer trench in Abbey Place indicated that the current works would extend through modern surfaces into deposits associated with the 19th-century landscaping of the town centre, but that deposits, structures and features of 18th-century date may survive below these later deposits. A wall forming part of the reredorter range, along with an associated drain, have been recorded in the basement of 4 Abbey Place (Blaylock 1998).

3. AIM

- 3.1** The aim of the investigation was to monitor the excavation of the service trench and to excavate and record any archaeological deposits exposed, with the particular aim of furthering understanding of the historic development of the town centre.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** All works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Passmore 2017) prepared by AC archaeology that accompanied the Scheduled Monument Consent application. The only change to this was to the location of the works, which were moved from the access driveway north of 4 Abbey Place to a location south of the front of the building on the line of the existing electricity supply into the property.
- 4.2** All groundworks were monitored by the attending site archaeologist, and the exposed deposit sequence was recorded in line with the Written Scheme of Investigation and the AC archaeology *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*. In addition, a pre- and post-works photographic record of the area was prepared.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 1; Pls 1-5)

5.1 The trench was located adjacent to the southeast corner of 4 Abbey Place at its junction with the northern boundary wall of the adjoining West Devon Club (3 Abbey Place), and measured 4.30m long by up to 1.60m wide, and up to 720mm deep.

5.2 The following deposit sequence was recorded:

- 0-300mm tarmac surface and associated sand make up (102); and
- 300-520mm+ dark grey-brown sandy silty-clay (101) containing gravels, common brick, mortar and slate, and fragments of industrial china and glass (which were not retained).

5.3 The existing service cable, and adjacent smaller cables were located within a trench (F103) below the tarmac surface, cut into deposit 101, and backfilled with a mid reddish-brown soft silty sandy-clay with rare sub angular gravels (100).

6. COMMENTS

6.1 The only exposed archaeological deposit was the top of a layer (101), which represents a landscaping deposit associated with the 19th-century raising of the ground level as part of the rebuilding of Tavistock by the Dukes of Bedford. The works did not extend deep enough to expose any earlier deposits or features.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

7.1 An archive of digital photographs, including the pre-and post-works record, will be deposited with Historic England within three months of the submission of this report.

7.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 304318, and includes a digital copy of this report.

8. REFERENCES

Blaylock, S.R., 1998, *An Assessment of the Physical Remains of Tavistock Abbey*, Exeter Archaeology report no. **98.75**

Passmore, A., 2011, *Archaeological Watching Brief at 20 West Street, Tavistock, Devon NGR SX 4796 7434*, AC archaeology document number **ACD357/1/0**

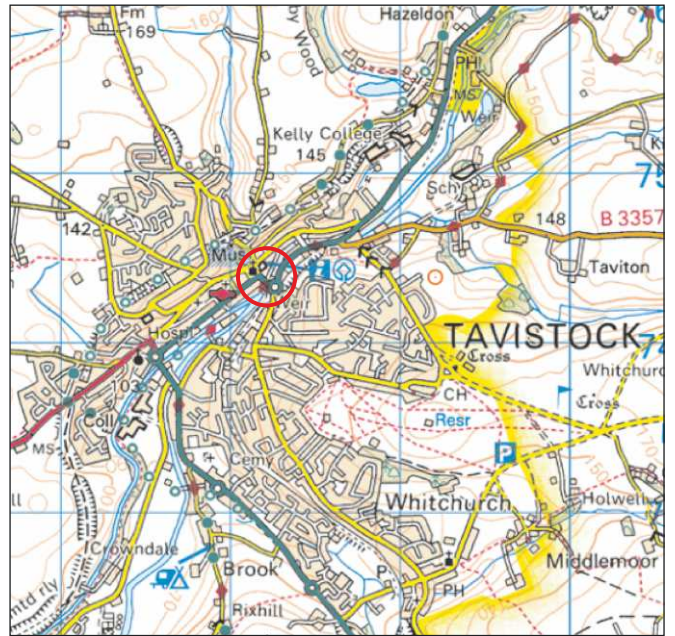
Passmore, A., 2017, *4 Abbey Place, Tavistock, Devon, (NGR SX 48194 74357), Tavistock Abbey: Scheduled Monument no. 29679; National Heritage List for England no. 1020401, Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief*, AC archaeology document number **ACD1681/1/0**

Stead, P.M., 1999, 'Archaeological Investigations at Tavistock Abbey 1997-1999', *Proc. Devon. Archaeol. Soc.*, **57**, 149-203

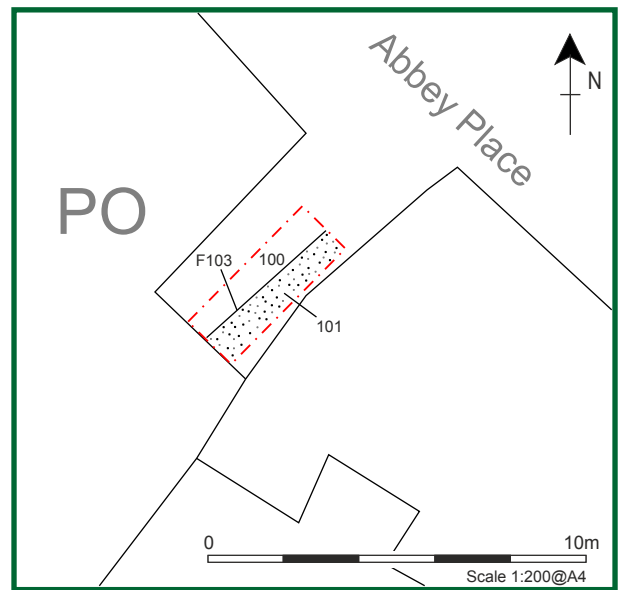
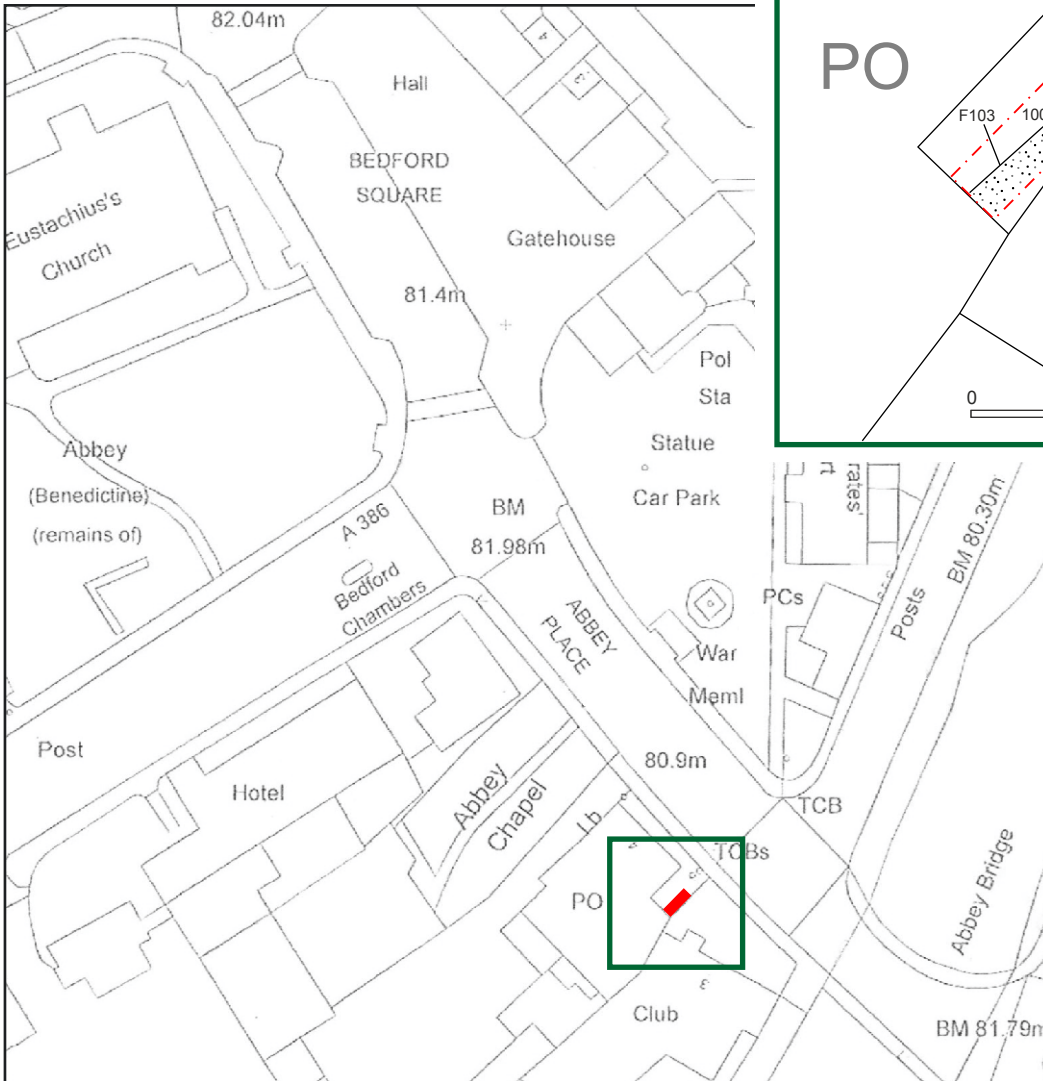
Stead, P., 2012, *Guildhall Square Car Park, Tavistock, Devon, Results of an archaeological watching brief, Tavistock Abbey: Scheduled Monument no. 29679*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD421/2/0**

Website

National Heritage List for England website,
<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>



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0 50m
Scale 1:1000@A4

PROJECT



4 Abbey Place, Tavistock, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of observation



Plate 1: Location of site showing 4 Abbey Place to the right, looking southeast. 1m scale

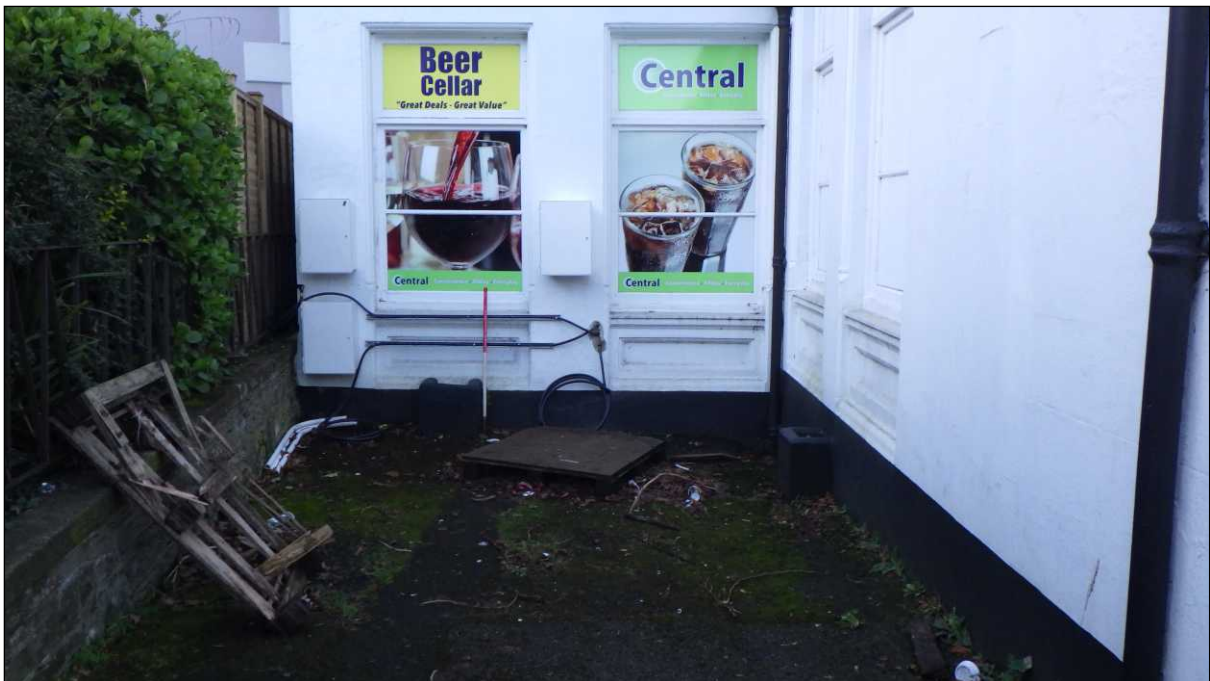


Plate 2: Location of site prior to works commencing, looking southeast. 1m scale



Plate 3: The excavated joint pit, looking southeast. 1m scale



Plate 4: The excavated joint pit, looking east. 1m scale



Plate 5: The existing cable where it enters 4 Abbey Place, looking southeast. 1m scale

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