

EAST STIBB FARMHOUSE, STIBB CROSS, LANGTREE, DEVON

(NGR SS 42699 15244)

Historic building appraisal

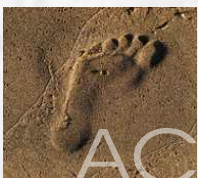
Torridge District Council planning reference
1/0537/2020/FUL

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On behalf of:
Trewin Design Architects Ltd

Document No: ACD2342/1/1

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archaeology

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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 historic building appraisal was prepared by AC archaeology in August and September 2020 to support a planning application for the demolition of the existing farmhouse and replacement with a new dwelling at East Stibb, Stibb Cross, Langtree, Devon, EX38 8LN (NGR SS 42699 15244). The farmhouse and surviving historic agricultural buildings are not Listed nor are they (or the overall farm) recorded on the Devon Historic Environment Record.

The farmhouse was constructed in the early-19th century and has largely retained its original layout. In the later part of the 19th century an earlier rear range was removed and replaced with a new rear extension, and a front porch was added. In the later 20th century the rear range was reconfigured and extended.

*The significance of the farmhouse is drawn principally from its architectural value, with lesser contributions from its historical and aesthetic values, and from its setting. The farmhouse is considered to be a heritage asset of **low significance**.*

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This historic building appraisal has been prepared by AC archaeology in August and September 2020 to provide accompanying information for a planning application (Torridge District Council planning reference 1/0537/2020/FUL) for the demolition of the existing farmhouse and replacement with a new dwelling at East Stibb, Stibb Cross, Langtree, Devon EX38 8LN (NGR SS 42699 15244; Fig. 1). The document was commissioned by Trewin Design Architects Ltd on behalf of the private owners, and was requested by the Devon County Historic Environment Team to inform the planning decision. A project-specific brief has not been provided.
- 1.2 The farm is located 0.4km northwest of Stibb Cross within the historic parish of Langtree, 7km to the southwest of Great Torrington. It is situated at approximately 175m above Ordnance Datum on the west side of a north-facing valley, with the land sloping down to the northeast.
- 1.3 The underlying solid geology comprises Carboniferous sandstone of the Bude Formation. There are no overlying superficial deposits (British Geological Survey 2020).

Designations

- 1.4 There are no heritage designations within the property, nor does the Devon Historic Environment Record contain any entries within the farm or nearby surrounding land.

The scheme

- 1.5 The scheme comprises the demolition of the existing farmhouse and replacement with a new dwelling located immediately to the east within the current garden of the house. All other elements of the property, such as access and surrounding agricultural buildings, will remain unaltered by the scheme.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 Government policy and local plan policies relating to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of heritage assets relevant to this development may be summarised as follows:

The National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 General policy and guidance for the conservation of the historic environment are now contained in Chapter 16 (Paragraphs 184-202 and associated footnotes) of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019a). This document provides the definition of a heritage asset as ‘a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)’ (*ibid*, 67). Designated heritage assets are defined as ‘a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation’ (*ibid*).

2.3 The following policies are relevant to this scheme:

Paragraph 184

Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Footnote 62 to paragraph 184

The policies set out in this chapter relate, as applicable, to the heritage-related consent regimes for which local planning authorities are responsible under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as to plan-making and decision-making.

Paragraph 189

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 190

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 192

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

Paragraph 197

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Paragraph 200

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Local authority plan and district policies

- 2.4 The joint *Torridge and North Devon Local Plan 2011-2031* was formally adopted in October 2018. The plan supersedes earlier local plans of the former District and Borough Councils. The adopted plan includes the following policies relating to the historic environment:

Policy ST15 – Conserving Heritage Assets:

Great weight will be given to the desirability of preserving and enhancing northern Devon’s historic environment by:

- a) Conserving the historic dimension of the landscape;*
- b) Conserving cultural, built, historic and archaeological features of national and local importance and their settings, including those that are not formally designated;*
- c) Identifying and protecting locally important buildings that contribute to the area’s local character and identity; and*
- d) increasing opportunities for access, education and appreciation of all aspects of northern Devon’s historic environment, for all sections of the community.*

Policy DM07 – Historic Environment:

(1) All proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by sufficient information, in the form of a Heritage Statement, to enable the impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset and its setting to be properly assessed. As part of such an assessment, consideration should be given, in order of preference, for avoiding any harm, providing enhancement, then minimising and mitigation any harm.

(2) Proposals which conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings will be supported. Where there is unavoidable harm to heritage assets and their settings, proposals will only be supported where the harm is minimised as far as possible, and an acceptable balance between harm and benefit can be achieved in line with the national policy tests, giving great weight to the conservation of heritage assets.

(3) Proposals to improve the energy efficiency of, or to generate renewable energy from historic buildings or surrounding these heritage assets will be supported where:

- (a) there is no significant harm or degradation of historic fabric including traditional windows; and*
- (b) equivalent carbon dioxide emission savings cannot be achieved by alternative siting or design that would have a less severe impact on the integrity of heritage assets.*

3. AIM AND METHODOLOGY

Aim

- 3.1 The aim of the document is to prepare, in line with paragraph 189 of the NPPF, a statement of significance for East Stibb Farmhouse, was informed by a desk-based appraisal and an historic building appraisal.

Assessment of significance

- 3.2 Advice on the criteria to be used in assessing the significance of heritage assets, as well as an outline methodology, is included in Historic England’s *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2* (2015), as well as the earlier English Heritage guidance *Conservation Principles – Policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (English Heritage 2008). This guidance states that heritage assets are considered to have significance based on their evidential, historical, aesthetic or communal value. The NPPF also includes the criteria of architectural and artistic value, and states that setting can also contribute to an

asset's significance. Additional guidance is contained within Historic England's *Statements of Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* (2019).

3.3 In addition to the above documents Historic England's *The Setting of Heritage Assets*, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3* (Historic England 2017) and the *NPPF Planning Practice Guidance* (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 2019b) have been used to assess the contribution of setting to significance.

3.4 Together *Conservation Principles and Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2* identify the need (a) to understand the importance of heritage values; (b) to understand the level of significance of an asset and the contribution that its setting makes to its significance; and (c) for an assessment of the impact on significance; the latter two are requirements of the NPPF. However, neither document provides a methodology for the ranking of relative significance of heritage assets. This heritage statement therefore expresses the results of the assessment of significance of an asset using a scale of significance derived from Volume 11, Section 3, Part 2 of the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* (The Highways Agency 2007) and from guidance provided by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 2011). An understanding of the relative significance of heritage assets is important because of the issue of proportionality expressed in Paragraphs 189, 190, and 197 of the NPPF. The ranking is presented in Table 1 below.

SIGNIFICANCE (VALUE)	FACTORS FOR RANKING THE SIGNIFICANCE (VALUE) OF HERITAGE ASSETS
Very High	World Heritage Sites (including nominated sites) Assets of acknowledged international importance Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged international research objectives Assets with exceptional heritage values
High	Scheduled Monuments (including proposed sites) Grade I and II* Listed Buildings Grade I and II* Registered Parks and Gardens Non-designated heritage assets of schedulable or exceptional quality and importance Conservation Areas containing very important buildings Assets that can contribute significantly to acknowledged national research objectives Assets with high heritage values Hedgerows of national interest that have historical or archaeological importance as defined within Part II, Schedule I of the Hedgerows Regulations of 1997
Medium	Designated or non-designated assets that have exceptional qualities or contribute to regional research objectives Grade II Listed Buildings Conservation Areas containing important buildings Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens Assets with moderate heritage values Hedgerows of regional interest that have historical or archaeological importance as defined within Part II, Schedule I of the Hedgerows Regulations of 1997
Low	Designated and non-designated heritage assets of local importance Assets compromised by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations Assets of limited value, but with potential to contribute to local research objectives Assets with low heritage values Hedgerows of local interest that have historical or archaeological importance as defined within Part II, Schedule I of the Hedgerows Regulations of 1997
Negligible	Assets with very little or no surviving archaeological, architectural or historical interest Assets with minimal heritage values
Unknown	The importance of the asset has not been ascertained

Table 1: Ranking of significance

General methodology

3.5 A site visit was made on 28 August 2020. This was informed by a rapid desk-based appraisal of the following sources:

- Historical cartographic, photographic and documentary information held online;
- British Geological Survey online database;
- Devon Environment Viewer including the Devon Historic Environment Record; and
- Other relevant published or unpublished information.

3.6 No relevant documentation for the property was identified at the Devon Heritage Centre.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Figs 2-3)

4.1 The earliest identified map to depict the property is the Ordnance Survey 2-inch to 1-mile map of 1804 (not illustrated). This small-scale map depicts *Stibb* as comprising two buildings set within a roughly square plot.

4.2 The Langtree tithe map of 1838 (Fig. 2) depicts the property, now called *North Stibb*, in more detail than the 1804 map. The farm complex comprised three plots – 266-268 – owned by John Stoneman and occupied by William Crews; they were described in the accompanying apportionment as ‘Houses and courtlage, orchard and garden’. The farmhouse is depicted as a rectangular range aligned northeast-southwest with a projecting range on its northwest side. To the west are three rectangular structures set within an informal area of yards, and there was a further small rectangular structure to the east. It was accessed via a track from the east. There is no clear correlation between the tithe map and the 1804 Ordnance Survey map, but the former probably records the farmhouse and the southernmost of the three buildings to the west.

4.3 The Ordnance Survey First Edition 25-inch map of 1886 records the farm under the name *Stibb* (Fig. 3). There has been some change to the layout of the property, and the farmhouse has a different shape, although it is possible that in part this represents the more detailed mapping by the Ordnance Survey. The building has a roughly square plan with part rear range along with a projecting porch on the southeast side. The southern barn has been extended on its northwest and south sides, the central barn (along with the barn to the east of the house) has been removed, and the north range of the north barn has been replaced by a new rear addition.

4.4 The Ordnance Survey Second Edition 25-inch map of 1906 and the 1955 1:2,500 revision (neither illustrated) depict no changes to the farm.

4.5 In the later part of the 20th century the farmhouse was extended again on the northwest side, and new agricultural sheds were constructed to the north, northeast, and west of the farmhouse.

5. EAST STIBB FARMHOUSE (Plates 1-9)

5.1 The farmhouse is aligned northeast-southwest with a roughly square main front range with extensions on its northwest side. The house has a gabled slate roof that continues over the rear range as a continuous catslide; the ridge is not central. In the main block there are single chimney stacks at its gable ends, both of which are constructed of (exposed) brick above ridge level; the northeast stack has a single ceramic pot, and the southwest stack a pair of ceramic pots. The northeast stack projects out from the line of the elevation. The house is fully rendered externally but the owner advises that the walls are constructed of stone and cob. All of the windows and doors date to the 20th century; some are early-mid 20th-century wooden and metal casements, with the others being late 20th-century UPVC.

- 5.2** The main elevation faces to the southeast with two windows and a doorway on the ground floor and three windows on the first floor; it is asymmetrical with the (near-central) doorway and one window off-set slightly to the northeast. The doorway was formerly covered by a porch but this has been removed (Plate 1). The northeast elevation has two windows on the ground floor and a single window on the first floor, all set towards the rear of the property; one of the ground floor windows is within the rear range (Plate 2). The southwest elevation has a first-floor window towards the rear of the main range and a further window in an extension that projects out from the line of the elevation (Plate 3). On the north elevation (of the rear range) there are three windows and a doorway (Plate 4).
- 5.3** Internally, there are two reception rooms to the front of the property, with the front door opening into a central entrance hall that contains the main staircase. Both rooms have early 19th-century four-panel doors and there is another door of the same design at the base of the enclosed staircase; the upper panels are taller and they have upright door handles with thumb plates and rounded ends (Plate 5). In the northeast reception room there is an early 20th-century surround to the fireplace, whilst in the southwest reception room there is a large fireplace with a wooden lintel, repointed stone work and a wood-burning stove on a modern slate hearth (Plate 6). There is also a niche in the rear wall and a plain four-panel door to a cupboard beneath the stairs.
- 5.4** In the middle of the house, behind the reception rooms, there is (from southwest to northeast) a dining room (the original kitchen), a larder/utility room, and a store. The door in the partition from the southwest reception room into the dining room is of a simple plank and batten design. There is a fireplace in the southwest wall of the dining room; in the early 20th century the opening has been finished with tiles (Plate 7). The stack projects into the room, and in the adjacent recess there are cupboards fitted with simple early 20th-century panel doors. The opening from the dining room into the larder has a four-panel door of a simpler design than those in the front of the house and the store cupboard has a four-panel door of horizontal panels. In the rear range there is the (only) bathroom and a kitchen, along with a rear entrance lobby (into the kitchen) that projects out from the line of the southwest elevation. There is a slight slope down to the bathroom from the kitchen. This room has a 20th-century door and fittings. The kitchen also has all late 20th-century fittings.
- 5.5** On the first floor are five bedrooms, of which three are set towards the front of the house; the other two bedrooms are to the rear and are both narrow rooms under the eaves. All are served by a short central corridor. The rooms all have plank and batten doors with spear ended strap hinges and upright door handles, the latter being of the same style as those on the ground floor (Plate 8). None of the rooms were heated by historic fireplaces. There is a small window above the stairs, which provides light to the enclosed staircase from the central bedroom (Plate 9). The feet of roof trusses are visible at the rear of the house below ceiling level. All but one have the appearance of a 20th-century date, with the earlier rafter displaying pegs from a now removed collar.

Development of the farmhouse

- 5.6** The farmhouse was probably constructed in the early 19th century, and the property itself does not appear to have ancient origins. The farm complex is located within land classified in the Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation project as both 'medieval enclosures based on strip fields' and 'rough ground', and it seems likely that the property was inserted into an existing historic field system. (Appraisal of the historic Ordnance Survey maps indicates that the 'rough ground' also appears to incorporate some early field boundaries – including the parish boundary – that may be of medieval date.) The plan form of the farmhouse falls within the evolution of later Devon farmhouses. This style appears locally in the late 17th century with modified lean-tos, but the purpose built '4-room' or 'Georgian farmhouse' as at East Stibb probably arrived in the region at a later date, and is for example common in Somerset in the 18th and 19th centuries. The internal doors would indicate an early 19th-century date

for its construction, and the house probably represents the building shown on both the Ordnance Survey map of 1804 and the tithe map, albeit not accurately mapped. By the 1840s it had a rear outshut, which may have been a primary feature. Although altered and updated, the building retains its original internal layout. None of the surviving fixtures and features indicate a building of high status, which is perhaps commensurate with the late date of the farm and its 'imposition' into the historic landscape.

- 5.7 In the mid-19th century (by 1886) a porch was added to the southeast elevation. The rear range also appears to have been reconfigured, or rebuilt.
- 5.8 Some internal and external fixtures and fittings were replaced or altered in the early-mid 20th century. In the later 20th-century the rear range was again reconfigured and extended to the southwest creating the current kitchen (moved from the present dining room), and then further extended to include the rear lobby. Windows and external doors in the main range were also replaced during this general period. In the early 21st century the porch was removed.

6. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 6.1 Architecturally, the farmhouse is of not of a vernacular style, and relates to the design (and introduction locally from the Georgian period onwards) of buildings in a 'national' style; its plan form and associated fenestration does not reflect the historic evolution of the local southwest vernacular rural architecture. In this context, its design contributes little to its significance. The building has largely retained its plan form and internal partitions with primary and/or early doors, which does contribute towards its significance. The doors are of a standard design for the period and do not express a high level of craftsmanship; there is nothing to indicate the building was of high status (as betrayed within its architecture). This architectural value and its aesthetic value, based on the near symmetrical front façade, have been diminished by later 20th century alterations such as the replacement windows and doors and the removal of the porch.
- 6.2 Historical values can be illustrative and associative. No specific associative historical value has been identified, and it is only of local interest in relation to the creation of the farmstead within an earlier relict medieval strip field landscape. The farmhouse's illustrative historical value is associated with its architecture, in that it can be visually read as being a residential property, and as a farmhouse of early 19th-century date.
- 6.3 No communal values associated with its historical value have been identified, nor is it a building considered to have any artistic value.
- 6.4 The setting of the farmhouse can be considered to be its immediate surroundings of the farmstead, this being the surroundings in which it is experienced, and from where its significance can be appreciated. Due to the surrounding boundaries and agricultural buildings (including modern large sheds) there are no long-distance views of the farmhouse.
- 6.5 In conclusion, the significance of the farmhouse is drawn principally from its architectural value, with lesser contributions from its historical and aesthetic values, and from elements of its setting. The farmhouse is considered to be a heritage asset of **low significance**, that is a non-designated building of local importance, with low heritage values, but with potential to contribute to local research objectives.

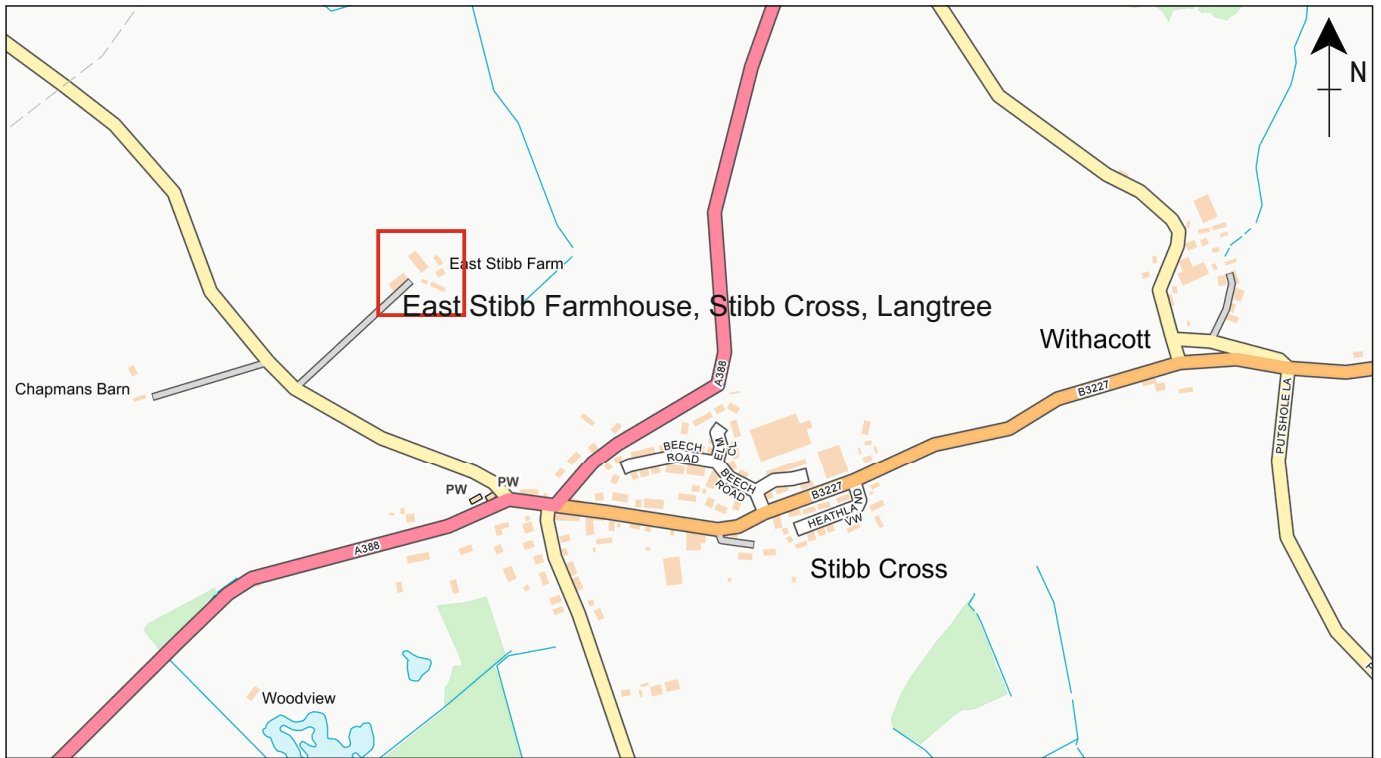
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- National Library of Scotland: <http://maps.nls.uk/>
- Old Maps Repository: <https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/>



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PROJECT

East Stibb Farmhouse, Stibb Cross, Langtree
Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



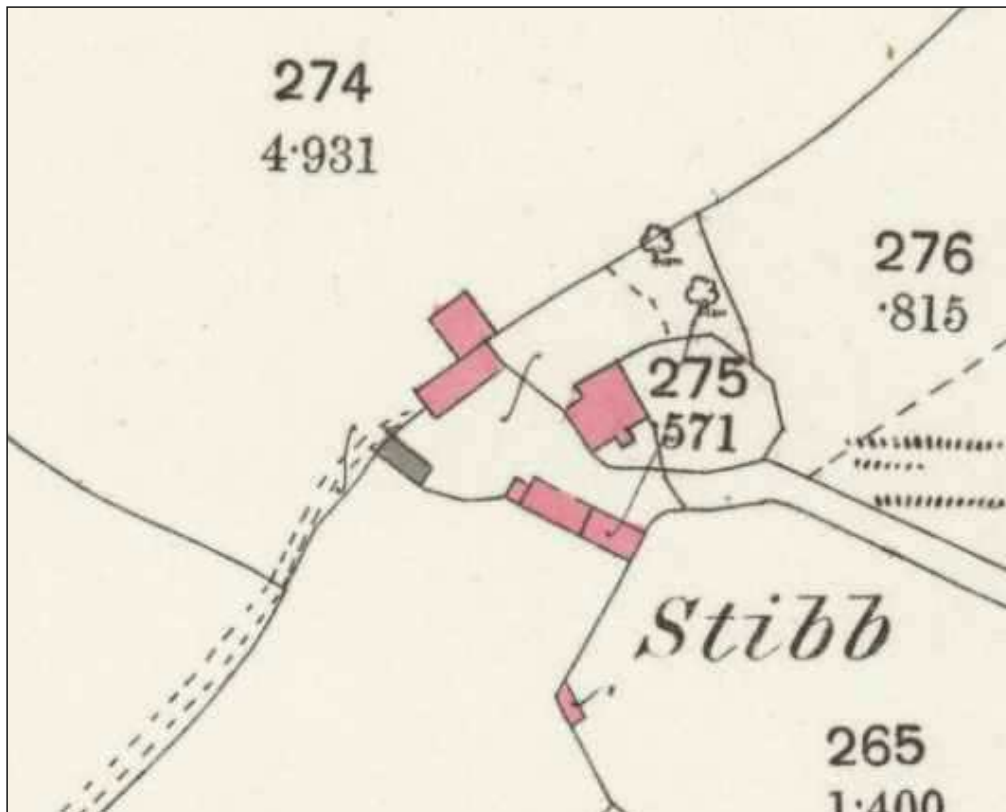


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Fig. 2: Extract from the Langtree
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East Stibb Farmhouse, Stibb Cross, Langtree
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Fig. 3: Extract from the
Ordnance Survey First Edition
25-inch map, 1886



Plate 1: Southeast elevation, looking northwest



Plate 2: Northeast elevation, looking west



Plate 3: Southwest elevation, looking northeast



Plate 4: Northwest elevation, looking east



Plate 5: Four-panel door to reception room, looking east



Plate 6: Fireplace in southwest reception room, looking southwest



Plate 7: Fireplace and cupboards in dining room, looking southwest



Plate 8: Plank and batten door to a bedroom on the first floor, looking north



Plate 9: Window lighting staircase, looking north

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