

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**MORRISON'S SUPERSTORE,**  
**PRINCE CHARLES ROAD, POLSLOE BRIDGE,**  
**EXETER.**  
for  
Wm. Morrison Supermarkets Plc



Report No. 2429/2011

By Tim Longman



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Centred on  
N.G.R. SX 9395 9378

Client: Wm. Morrison Supermarkets Plc  
Agent: Watson Batty Architects Ltd

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<i>Date Issued:</i>	3 June 2011

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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Historic Environment Record		

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

June, 2011.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with an extension to the existing retail facility, which were to include the installation of new services, car parking provision, landscaping, roads, and the construction of new boundary walling at the Wm. Morrison Superstore, Prince Charles Road, Polsloe Bridge, Exeter.

Most of the site was located on top of a considerable deposit of 19th-century made ground, the site of a former railway engine shed that was demolished in 1970 and replaced by the existing store in 1979. The watching brief was therefore principally concerned with construction groundwork in relation to a new retaining wall along the eastern flank of the development site at the base of a steep embankment, in an area regarded as having archaeological potential, largely due to its close proximity to the medieval Polsloe (St Katherine's) Priory.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during the intrusive groundworks.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) was commissioned by Watson Batty Architects Ltd, on behalf of Wm. Morrison Supermarkets Plc, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at the Wm. Morrison Superstore off Prince Charles Road, Polsloe Bridge (**Fig.1; Cover**) associated with '*two storey extension on north elevation, extension on east elevation, lobby entrance on north west corner, wall on east boundary and additional parking*'.
- 1.2 Planning consent had been granted (planning reference number 09/1592/03) in late June 2010, by Exeter City Council, with a condition attached (Condition no. 9) which required that a scheme of archaeological work, including on-site work, be undertaken. This was confirmed as being limited to contractors' groundwork in the vicinity of the boundary of the former priory, to be monitored by an archaeologist or archaeological organisation to record any archaeological features exposed during the works.
- 1.3 The watching brief was therefore commissioned to comply with Condition no. 9 of the planning consent and in accordance with a statement of *Guidance on the Scope of Works Required* (ECC 2010) issued by Andrew Pye (Archaeological Officer, ECC) in December 2010, and a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (BaRAS 2011) prepared by Andrew Townsend (Project Officer, BaRAS) in March 2011.
- 1.4 The fieldwork was undertaken by BaRAS archaeologist Tim Longman (Project Officer, BaRAS) over a period of several days in April and May 2011. Tim Longman subsequently also compiled this report.
- 1.5 The project archive will be deposited with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter under an accession number, which will be issued at a future date. A reference number for the project has been issued, which is RAMM 11/1. A paper and digital copy of the report will be sent to the National Monuments Record Centre in Swindon, maintained by English Heritage. The project will be entered in the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER), as it lies in outer Exeter. This report will be entered onto the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations.

## 2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The superstore (centred on NGR SX 9395 9378) (**Figs. 2 & 3**) is situated in the Exeter suburb of Polsloe Bridge, which lies some 2.5km (1 mile) north-east of the city centre.
- 2.2 The site, which is roughly rectangular in shape, is located on the edge of a predominantly residential area, south of Prince Charles Road. To the north, west and south it is bounded by the grounds of the Wm. Morrison Superstore, while immediately east is a public footpath (beyond which lies Polsloe Priory). The site covers an area of approximately 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres), while site levels range in height from approximately 49.38m aOD at the top of the embankment to 40.55m aOD on the footpath at the base of the embankment.
- 2.3 The site previously constituted an embankment covered in dense scrub vegetation and small trees. To the west, occupying the remainder of the study area, had been the site of the Exmouth Junction Railway Depot, including an engine shed, a wagon repair workshop, a dormitory for engine crews and railway sidings. The nearby engine shed, along with other buildings, was demolished in 1970 and much of the site subsequently redeveloped for a new Leo's Supermarket (now a Wm. Morrison Superstore) in 1979.
- 2.4 The site is not in a conservation area, however a scheduled ancient monument (National Monument No. 24848) of national significance (Polsloe Priory, also known as St Katherine's Priory) is situated on land immediately east of the development site. The monument includes a Grade II\* listed building.
- 2.5 The geology in the vicinity of the study area lies close to the junction of shales and sandstone of the Crackington Formation of the Carboniferous period with breccia and clayey sand of the Whipton Formation of the Permian period (British Geological Survey 1962).

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Although no previous archaeological work has been undertaken for the site itself, the nearby Polsloe Priory has been the subject of archaeological excavations in the 1930s by A. W. Everett and in the 1970s by J. P. Allan (Webster & Cherry 1979), during which the disposition of the main ranges was revealed. In addition, an archaeological evaluation was completed for a site nearby in 2009 by Exeter Archaeology, during which the remains of a robbed-out medieval priory building and part of a possible precinct boundary ditch were recorded east of Mincinglake stream (Farnell 2009).
- 3.2 Historically, the site is located in the tithing of Polsloe in the parish of Heavitree in the hundred of Wonford in the County of Devonshire. In 1913 the parish of Heavitree was incorporated into the City and County of Exeter (a county corporate).
- 3.3 The nearby Polsloe or St Katherine's Priory (SAM 24848; NGR SX 9412 9379) was founded as a Benedictine nunnery before 1159 and dissolved in 1539. The priory conformed to the traditional medieval monastic plan in which a church and three ranges of two-storeyed buildings were grouped around a cloister, with ancillary buildings beyond. The extant elements of the priory comprise a two-storey building (Grade II\*), which represents a substantial part of the west range of the former cloister, and a small gateway in a boundary wall west of the latter building, which is part of the inner precinct wall. At the dissolution of the priory in 1539 there was a Prioress and thirteen nuns in residence.
- 3.4 After its disposal by the Crown the priory passed through a number of owners and tenants. By the mid 19th century the property had become a tenanted farm, with the area in general largely in agricultural use. By 1834 Polsloe was owned by Montague Edmund Newcombe Parker, Esq (1807 – 58) of Whiteway House, Chudleigh. An entry in 'A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain & Ireland' (Burke 1834) lists his properties at the time as '*Seat: Whiteway, Devon. Estates: Whiteway, in the parish of Chudleigh, Blagdon and Collaton Kirkham in Paignton and Polsloe, formerly a priory, in Heavitree parish, all in Devon*'.
- 3.5 The 1844 Tithe Apportionment (DRO LM 9/2) for the Parish of Heavitree shows that most of the study area was owned by Montague Parker and occupied by Elizabeth Adams (see **Table 1**).

**Table 1:** '*Apportionment for the Parish of Heavitree, in the County of Devonshire*', of 1844 (see **Fig. 4** for Tithe Map showing location of entries)

Landowner	Occupier	No.	Name	State of Cultivation	Quantities		
					<i>a</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
			<b>Polsloe</b>				
Montague Edmund Newcombe Parker Esq	Elizabeth Adams	760	Plantation by Road	-	0	0	23
		764	Carts Orchard	Orchard	1	2	8
		765	Buildings & Garden	-	0	1	3
		766	Road	-	0	0	30
		767	Road & Pond	-	0	1	30
		768	House & Buildings	-	1	1	18
		769	Garden	-	0	2	35
		770	Back Garden	-	0	2	38
		810	Great Meadow	Pasture	11	3	15
		811	Six Acres	Pasture	8	0	20



			<b>Polsloe Mill</b>				
Joseph Barnes Sanders Esq	John Ellicombe	759	Waste by Road	-	0	0	30
			<b>Polsloe</b>				
Thomas Yard Esq	Robert Sparkes	754	Court Field	Pasture	4	0	13
		761	Small Garden Plot	Garden	0	1	6
		762	Home Orchard	Orchard	1	0	16
		763	House, Barton, &c.	-	0	1	14

- 3.6 The London & South Western Railway (LSWR) opened the Yeovil Junction – Exeter Queen Street section of its main line to/from London Waterloo, which lies just a few metres south of the site, on the 19th July 1860 and a branch line between Exeter and Exmouth on 1st May 1861.
- 3.7 The Exmouth Junction Railway Depot was constructed on the study area on land to the north of the main London & South Western Railway (LSWR) line between Exeter Queen Street and London Waterloo to the east of Exmouth Junction. The depot included an engine shed built in light steel and corrugated iron cladding, located just west of the site. This was opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1887 (Phillips and Pryer, 1997). An Ordnance Survey plan of 1906 (revised 1903-4) (**Fig. 5**) shows the ‘*Engine Shed*’, which was a through-shed with 11 roads or tracks, in its original form. In addition, a turntable is shown close to the top of the embankment, at the east end of the study area just west of the grounds of Polsloe Priory.
- 3.8 The original engine shed was replaced with a single-ended 13-road shed, built of brick and concrete, in 1927 after the absorption of the LSWR into the Southern Railway (SR) in 1923.
- 3.9 The new depot measured some 82m (270 ft) long by 72m (235 ft) wide across 13 tracks. During the depot's peak period (1930-60) it typically had an allocation of more than 120 locomotives and more than 400 staff, including 240 locomotive crew. An Ordnance Survey plan of 1938 (revised 1932-3) (**Fig. 6**) shows the rebuilt ‘*Engine Shed*’ located closer to the summit of the embankment, with a new turntable near the south-east corner of the latter building. The plan also shows a ‘*Water Tower*’ near the top of the bank and a ‘*Tank*’ at the base of the embankment at the southern end of the site.
- 3.10 In the post-war period the predominantly rural area was subject to suburban residential housing development, so that by the 1960s the study area was largely surrounded by housing estates.
- 3.11 The depot closed to steam locomotives in June 1965 and finally closed in March 1967. The redundant engine shed was demolished in 1970 and the site lay empty until the building of a new Leo’s Supermarket (later a Co-op; now a Morrison store) in 1979.

## **4. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (BaRAS June 2010). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994, revised 2008). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundwork.
- 4.2 All groundwork was carried out by 360° slew mechanical excavators utilising both toothed buckets and toothless ditching buckets.
- 4.3 Ground reduction work commenced at the summit of the embankment, initially associated with providing access into the proposal area. Ground level was reduced, on the landscaped summit of the slope, by some 0.5m, exposing only made-ground while an access ramp was constructed. Subsequently, the ground was excavated to create terraces to permit the access of mechanical plant, thereby exposing the natural clay subsoil, and in places the natural solid geology beneath the deposits of topsoil/made ground. Other than early/mid 20th century concrete structures (retaining walls and a water tank) associated with the former railway depot and sidings no archaeological features or deposits were present.
- 4.4 In conclusion, the watching brief monitored ground reduction work on an embankment prior to the proposed construction of a new retaining wall at the base of the embankment east of the Wm. Morrison Superstore. No significant archaeological deposits or features were present in the exposed underlying subsoil. No finds associated with the former engine shed were observed on top of the embankment, confirming that most or all had been removed in either 1970 (demolition) or 1979 (construction of the existing store).

## **5. THE ARCHIVE**

- 5.1 The project archive will ultimately be deposited with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter under an Accession Number (yet to be issued) and a copy of the report will be made available to the National Monuments Record (NMR) maintained by English Heritage at the National Monuments Record Centre (NMRC) in Swindon. The project will be entered in the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER).

## **6. PROJECT TEAM**

- 6.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Longman MifA (Project Officer), who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge (Design & Production Officer). The project was managed by John Bryant MifA (Acting Manager).

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

### Published Material

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (first published 1994, revised 2001 and 2008)

Phillips, D. and Pryer, G., 1997 *The Salisbury to Exeter line: recollections of the Southern route to the West*, Sparkford

Webster, L.E. & Cherry, J., 1979 Medieval Britain in 1978. *Medieval Archaeology* 23, pp.250-51

### Unpublished Material

Farnell, A. J., 2009 *Archaeological Evaluation and Recording at 48 Beacon Lane, Exeter* (Exeter Archaeology Report No. 09.92; unpublished client report)

Pye, A., 2010 *Guidance on the Scope of Works Required*. (ECC Report)

Townsend, A., 2010 *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for an Archaeological Recording Programme (Watching Brief) at Prince Charles Road, Exeter (NGR SX 9395 9378) as Archaeological Mitigation for Construction Works to extend the existing retail superstore* (BaRAS Report compiled June 2010)

### Maps

Ordnance Survey map editions from 1887 to 1970, including:

2nd Edition, 1906. Devonshire sheet LXXX.NE. 1:10,560 Scale. Surveyed 1887, Revised 1903-4, Published 1906

Provisional Edition, 1938. Devonshire sheet LXXX.NE. 1:10,560 Scale. Surveyed 1887, Revised 1904, Boundaries Revised 1932-3, Published 1938

### Other Sources

Documents in Devon Record Office (DRO), including 1844 Heavitree Tithe Map (DRO LM 9/2) and Apportionment

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BaRAS would like to thank Terry Mortimer (Senior Project Manager), Dave Lewis (Senior Site Manager), Andy Cooper (Site Manager) and Kieran Bradford (Ground Works Foreman/Engineer) of Midas Group and their site team, along with Paul Hudson (Site Supervisor) and Will Ayres (Quantity Surveyor) of Luffmans and their site team for their assistance and co-operation during the programme of archaeological monitoring. Thanks also to Andy Pye (City Archaeologist) of Exeter City Council.

Policy C5 states:

C5: DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHICH WOULD CAUSE HARM TO A SITE, MONUMENT OR STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE, WHETHER SCHEDULED OR UNSCHEDULED, OR WHICH WOULD CAUSE HARM TO ITS SETTING. PROPOSALS SHOULD PRESERVE NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS IN SITU AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEIR ENHANCEMENT AND DISPLAY.

WHERE THE PROPOSAL WILL AFFECT REMAINS OF REGIONAL OR LOCAL IMPORTANCE, THE DESIRABILITY OF PRESERVING THE REMAINS IN SITU WILL BE WEIGHED AGAINST THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT.

IF PRESERVATION IN SITU IS NOT FEASIBLE OR APPROPRIATE THE DEVELOPER MUST UNDERTAKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING WORKS IN ACCORDANCE WITH A SCHEME TO BE AGREED IN ADVANCE.





Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:2500



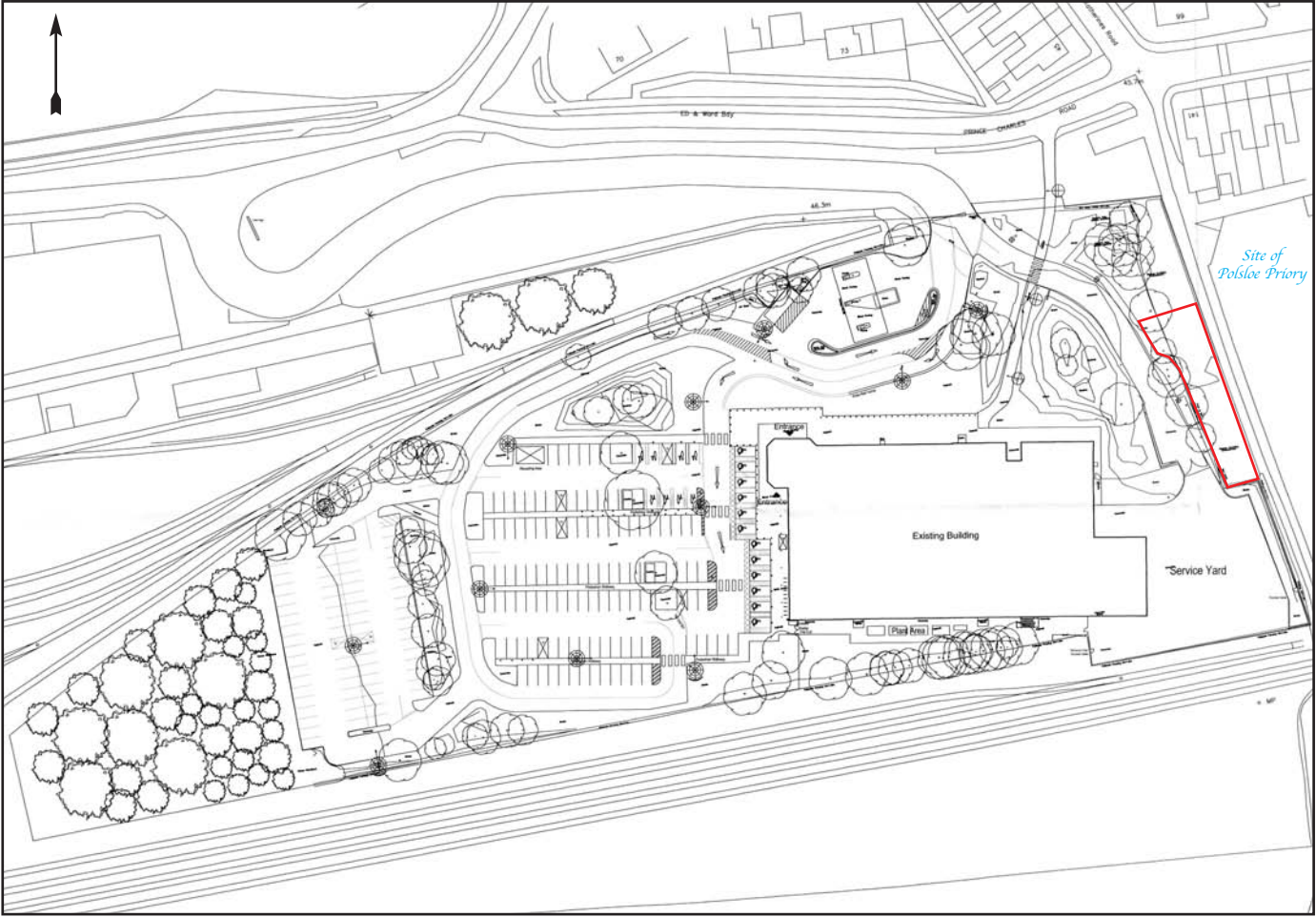


Fig.2 Existing site plan (original scale 1:500)

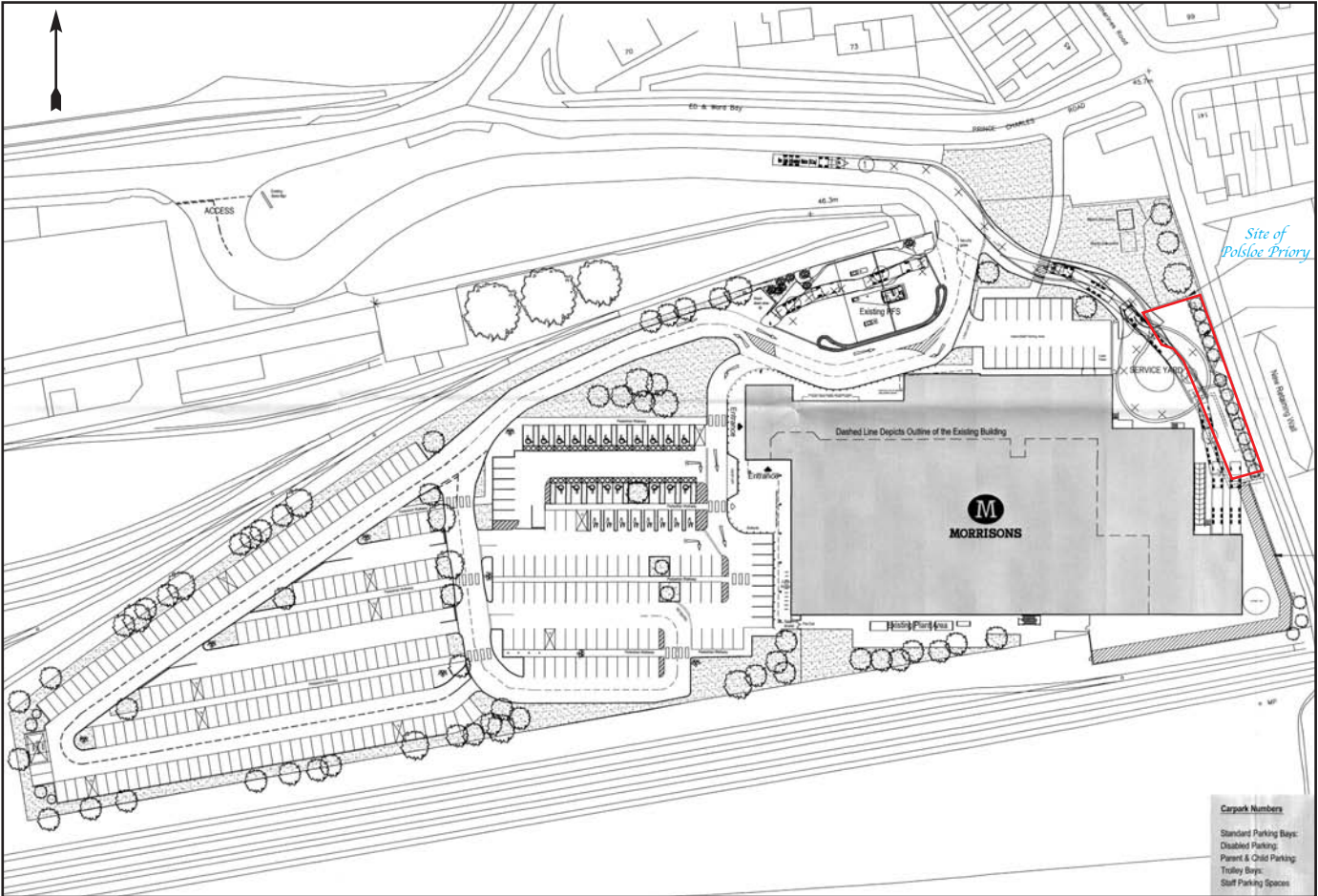


Fig.3 Proposed site plan (original scale 1:500)



Fig.4 Extract from 1844 Tithe Map of Heavitree parish



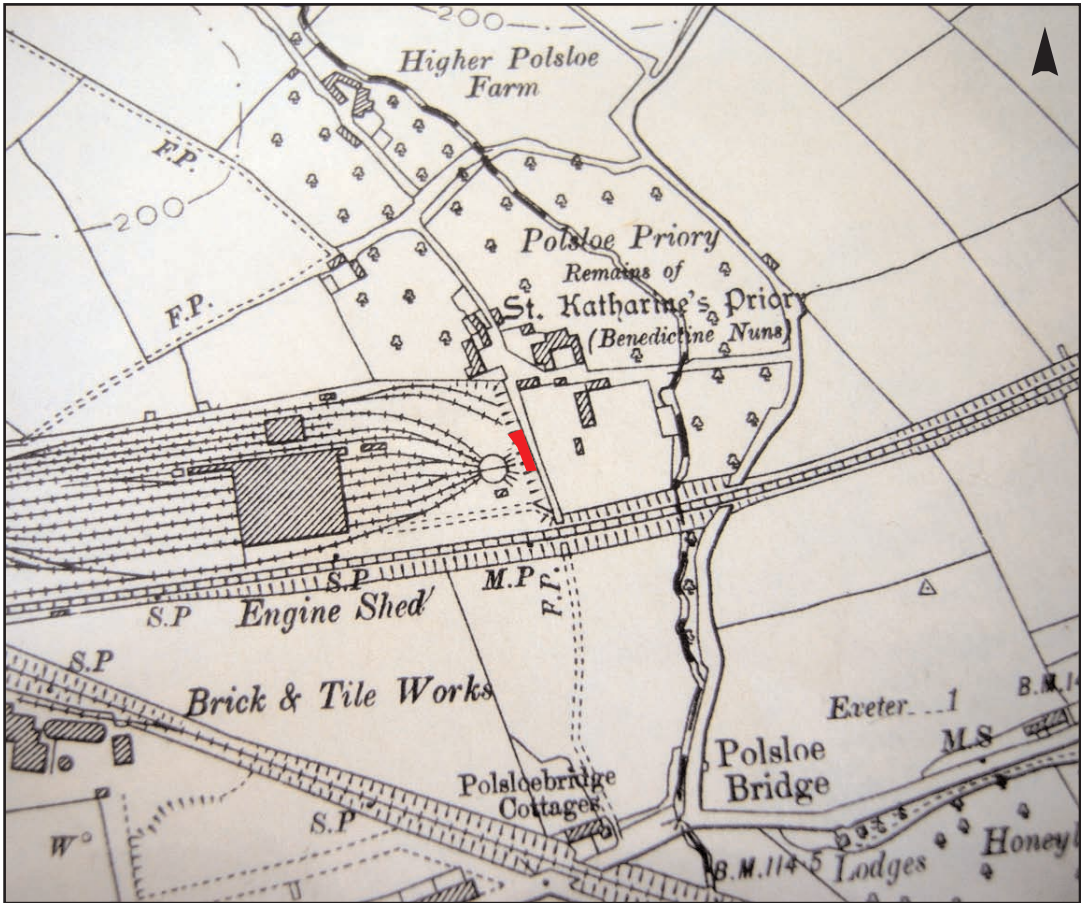


Fig.5 Extract from 2nd Edition O. S. 1:10560 map of 1906

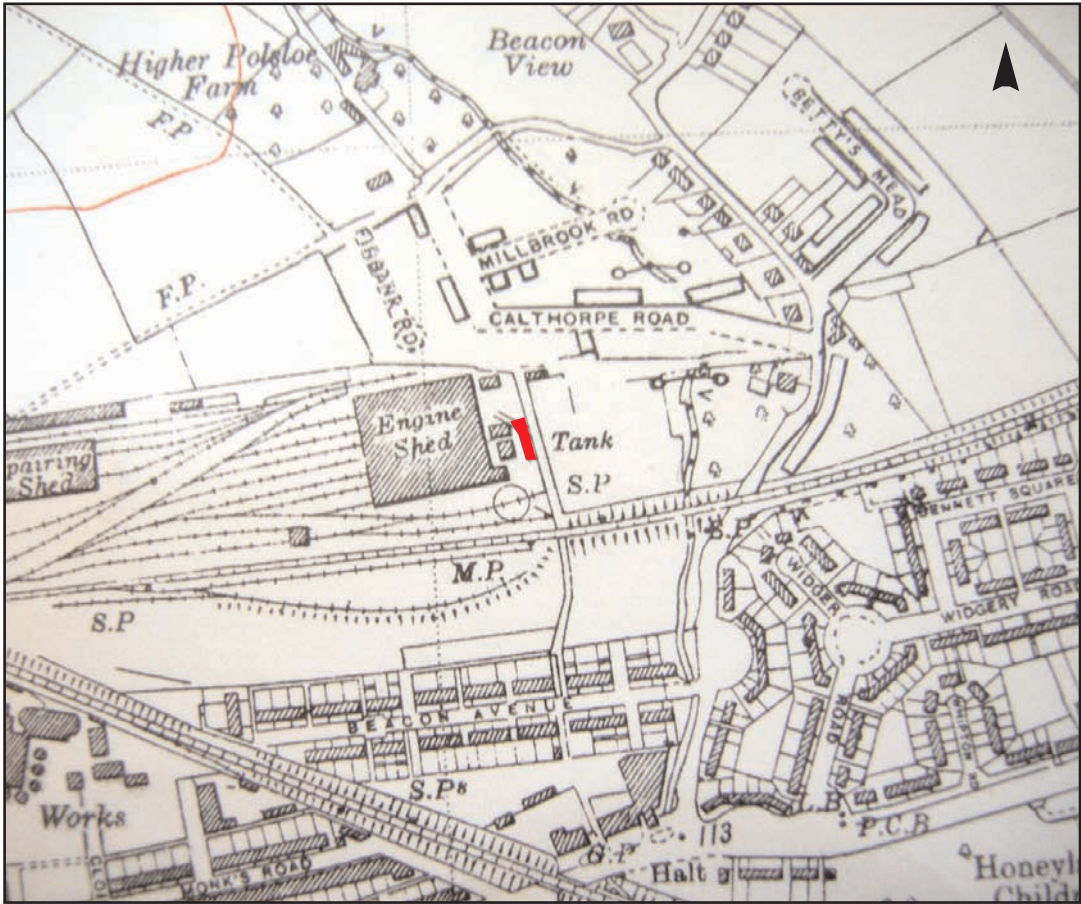


Fig.6 Extract from Provisional Edition O. S. 1:10560 map of 1938





Plate 1 View south-west of the site, prior to the commencement of excavation/ground reduction work



Plate 2 Looking south-east, from the top of the embankment, towards the grounds of Polsloe Priory. A late 15th/early 16th century gate is visible in the priory boundary wall



Plate 3 Looking east, from the top of the embankment, towards Polsloe Priory. Behind the boundary wall stands the two-storey former west range of the cloister, dating largely from c.1300



Plate 4 View north-east from the top of the embankment, at the rear of houses on St Katherine's Road



Plate 5 Excavation work underway (looking north) at the top of the embankment



Plate 6 View south, showing east-facing 1.5m high section at the top of the embankment. Remains of a concrete water tank are visible on the lower slope





Plate 7 Looking south across the site during excavation/ground reduction work



Plate 8 Looking south at excavation of foundation trench for new retaining wall



Plate 9 Looking south-west, from footpath, at remains of early 20th century water tank



Plate 10 View north across the site during final phase of ground reduction work