



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

A CONSERVATION APPRAISAL

OF

PARADE HOUSE,

ESPLANADE,

WOOLACOMBE, DEVON

NGR SP 456 439

On behalf of

Coast Group Limited

JULY 2011

REPORT FOR

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REPORT ISSUED

22nd July 2011

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Summary

This is a conservation appraisal carried out on Parade House, Woolacombe, North Devon, which is located in a conservation area. The study outlines the merits of the present building and its proposed replacement.

1 Introduction

John Moore Heritage Services have been asked to assess Parade House, Woolacombe, by Barton Willmore on behalf of Coast Group Ltd in advance of an application for conservation area consent to demolish the existing building and erect a new building.

The building lies within Woolacombe a town awarded conservation status by the North Devon District Council. The building is unlisted but is named in that report (North Devon Council 2008, 5.8). This report investigates the history of the building and considers its value in conservation terms with reference to the guidelines for assessing unlisted buildings in a conservation area in English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals* (2005).

2 History and Archaeology

The Victoria History has not produced any parochial studies for the county of Devon, thus our understanding of this area is mainly produced in antiquarian accounts of the county and in privately researched volumes. The archaeological material is catalogued on the Devon Historic Environment Record.

Archaeological finds of the prehistoric period have been noted in the Mortehoe and Woolacombe area (Reed 1997, 1-2). Mesolithic deposits have been identified at Morte Point (HER M2076: SS 457 435), while excavations at Duckpool Farm, Mortehoe, have also recovered scatters of prehistoric flints. A further scatter of prehistoric material has been recovered near the site of Parade House (HER M63559: SS 4545 4395). Bronze Age round barrows are known to have been located previously on a number of the surrounding hills: Berry Down, East Down, Bittadon, Martinhoe, Paracombe, Borough and Mortehoe (Reed 1997, 3). While other sites are alluded to in place-names for example North, East and West Battlefields, the Druids Field, besides North, East and West Camp. These finds and names are indicative of prehistoric activity in the Woolacombe area but are not site specific to indicate that remains exist in or near Parade House.

More crucially for the Woolacombe conservation area are the remains of a Bronze Age cremation pit eroded by the tides (HER M11915: SS 453 442) and Roman potsherds and coins recovered from the beach (HER M11911: SS 4563 4375; M11908: SS 4546 4389).

Woolacombe like many of the settlements in Mortehoe parish is first mentioned in the Domesday Book (Thorn and Thorn 1985, 19.11, 36.15). At this time it is similar to many other scattered hamlets in the Devon area, and is not at this time exceptional. These isolated hamlets in Mortehoe parish include Morthoe, Woolacombe, Borough, Over Woolacombe, Roadway, Spreacombe, and Wellecombe that were subject to the barony of Barnstaple. The holding held by William Cheever covered 2 hides and

contained 12 villagers. It is this holding that is considered to be the manor which later became Woolacobe, the buildings of which were located in the vicinity of Barton, just outside or on the boundary of the conservation area (Bidgood nd, 27; HER 31249: SS 4603 4377; Ev4531: SS 46106 43722). The farmstead known to have existed at Barton is undated (HER 31248: SS 45969 43714).

The place-name Woolacombe is derived from *wellecoma*, 1086, has been given the etymology *wolves valley* from Old English *wulfa cumb* (Gover, Mawer et al. 1931, 54). The name Morteohoe was Morteoh, 1086, of which the first part is associated with English word *murt*, small person, or Icelandic *murtr*, short or stumpy (Gover, Mawer et al. 1931, 52-53). The latter part is Old English *hōh*, a projecting piece of land. It thus refers to the short or stumpy promontory that is Morte Point.

The manor of Woolacombe passed to William de Tracy in 1133 an illegitimate son of Henry I (Reed 1997, 69-75). The subsequent descent of the manor, of which the following is a abstract, was established by Polwhele (1806, 400). By 1170 it had passed down the Tracey line to a further William de Tracey who was renowned as one of the knights who killed Thomas a Beckett. He was exiled to his lands in Morteohoe. The Tracey line passed through Eva Tracey as the sons took on the maiden name of their mother. This manor descended to Henry Tracey who had three children John, Isabella, and Isolda. In 1342 the manor passed to Joan daughter of Isabella and in 1359 the manor of Woolacombe Tracey was in the hands of the Fitzwarrens. The Lay Subsidy records for 1332 indicate that there were 24 taxpayers in the village of Morteohoe (Reed 1997, 125-6), which must cover all the hamlets. The Black Death decimated the hamlets in 1361/2. Medieval pottery scatter have also been located (HER M11908: SS 4546 4389; M11909: SS 4543 4394).

In 1574 the estate was held by Amias Chichester, in 1590 by Queen Elizabeth I, and in 1717 was back in the hands of the Chichester family, with Giles Chichester holding the title deeds. In 1569 the muster roll accounted for 20 able boded men in Morteohoe, while in the Protestant Oath of 1641 there are 80 named men from the parish.

Four maps survive of Woolacombe prior to the establishment of the Ordnance Survey series. Three of them are held at the North Devon Record office at Barnstable and are loosely dated to the late 17th century (NDRO 3704M/E2/1, 3704M/E2/2, 3704M/E2/3). These maps show little more than the historic core located in the Barton area. Pottery of the 17th century has been recovered in the vicinity (HER M11910: SS 4544 4397), and a mill dated to the 18th century (HER M37540: SS 457 436).

The other map is of 1840 (DRO Morteohoe Tithe Award), this also shows Woolacombe as a small hamlet (fig 1). This map mentions a number of place-names that may point to archaeological activity in the Woolacombe area: Blackfield, Limekiln, Burrow Close, Gorak Green, East Down Park, West Down Park, and Potter's Hill and Common. The latter has been highlighted as coming from a surname (Bidgood nd, 36), but that surname is derived from a trade and thus the origins are obscure.

Woolacombe's growth occurred after its road and rail connections were improved (Bidgood nd, 66-67). The railway to Ilfracombe was constructed in 1875. Morteohoe

Station was constructed in 1887. The road links between Woolacombe and the station where enhanced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Turnpike Cottage was built near the station in 1877. The post-office was constructed at Morte-hoe in 1892, while in 1894 a post-office and shop were introduced at Woolacombe.

These infrastructure connections enabled the planned development and growth of Woolacombe (Reed 1997, 140-186). A lighthouse was constructed at Morte Point in 1850. The lifeboat house was constructed c. 1890. The Club Room was constructed 1867. The British workmen's club was constructed in 1870. The Chichester Hotel was constructed in c. 1895 and the Barricane Inn in c. 1865. The conservation appraisal (North Devon Council 2008) mentions the following Victorian and Edwardian Villas: Hartland House, Parade House, Castle Hotel, Ocean View, White House and Woolacombe Bay Hotel (1887).

A full list of the Victorian and Edwardian Villas on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map (fig 2) that survive is as followed: The Castle Hotel, Ocean View, White House, Shellsborough, Chatsworth, Belmont, Cliffside, Saint Michael, Parade House, Hartland House, Bentley Court, Holmesdale, Imperial, sands, Baggy View, Sea View, Fairhaven, Sandleigh, Sands End, Westward, Sandyside and Ocean Heights. A further group of four villas were demolished to make way for the Naracott Hotel.

The Woolacombe area was used for training American forces for D-Day and as such there are a number of features that are associated with this event: a defensive unit (HER 55502: SS 4542 4419), a training areas (HER 57332: SS 45238 42104; HER 73990: SS 45443 38682), Woolacombe Bay Hotel as HQ (HER 58461: SS 4590 43622), and the Scaffold military defences (HER 74997: SS 455 436).

3 Description

The house was originally built to fit into two blocks, a front two-storey unit and a rear three-storey unit (plate 1). Parade House occupies a broad terrace with the Esplanade below and between it and the shoreline and Bay View Road above.

The façade facing the Esplanade and the sea is a two storey double-bayed structure with hipped roof (plate 1). The bay-windows upward projection extends into the roofline producing polygonal dormer settings. The roofline extends on the corners and is supported by ornamental metal balconies. The walls are rendered.

The bay-window design continues onto the north side of the building, where a single bay exists at the west end (plate 1). To the east of this is a large window that allows light into the hall or lobby of the building with its large staggered staircase. The roofline contains a tall chimney with ornamental brick moulding. Running through the line of this window is a moulding that extends the full length of the original house. The back part of the house is three stories with two hipped dormer windows set in an attic roof on the upper floor. The ground floor has an extended lean-to. The walls are rendered.

The south side of the building has a projecting gable at the east (or back) end of the front two-storey unit. This gable contains the main entrance and is displayed in a pleasing display of moulded bricks designed to set it off. The door contains a square

moulding with an elaborated or emphasised head (plate 2). The panel to the right contains a representation of classic temple façade around a rounded arch with inserted foundation date of 1890. The upper storey of the gable contains one light and is rendered. There are single lights on both storeys to the west of this, with the ground floor continuing the red-brick theme. The rear part of the house has a ground floor with a central door flanked by windows in a red-brick façade. The first floor is rendered and contains three larger more well spaced windows, but with a fourth smaller light placed between the two eastern ones. There is a single hipped dormer in the roof.

The original back wall of the building is now obscured with the addition of modern maisonettes in a Victorian mock design that still looks modern. A central chimneystack can be identified in the roofline for this back wall.

The building may have lost one or two of its original chimneys, have had its windows replaced with PVC windows, lost its railings and balconies (as most places did in the Second World War). It also would seem to have retained other features such as the staircase, the decoration around the staircase (if not they are sympathetic replacements), plaster-ceiling mouldings, and brick moulded entrance (plates 2-4). The missing components do not detract greatly from the fact that over 80% of the structure is in essence still of a Victorian building (plate 5). Parade House like a number of other properties retains its characteristic local trait of a Morte slate wall.

The Victorian Villa Parade House set in spacious grounds is considered by some to be pleasing to the eye and has proportional artistic lines. Coupled to this it has historical associations with the Chichester estate that had lived in Woolacombe from the 16th century.

4 Date

The construction date of the building is not in doubt, it is a Victorian Villa dated by its foundation stone to 1890.

5 Architectural setting

The historical core of Woolacombe lay in the Barton area of the settlement on the fringes of the conservation area to the southeast. Very little of this complex survives and thus it is not the reason for the designation of conservation status. In the wake of the rail and road connections being brought into Woolacombe in the later part of the 19th century the settlement gradually expanded. Arnold Thorne laid out Woolacombe Bay for building in the 1880s (Cherry and Pevsner 1989, 921). He is believed to have designed many of the Victorian Villas in the area along the Esplanade (plate 6).

It cannot be ignored that this is a Conservation area and, therefore, considered by certain authorities to have architectural merits. Conservation areas by their very nature are designed to protect the character of specific locations or places in a legalised framework. Each building conservation area will have a designated period(s) that it is designed to protect. Buildings of this period subsequently have a degree of legal protection similar to that of listed buildings. It is thus perceived as a means by which a whole group of buildings can be legally protected without having to individually list

them. The Victorian / Edwardian villas, some or most of which were designed by Arnold Thorne, form the reason for the establishment of the conservation area of Woolacombe as is stated in the council's appraisal of the area (North Devon Council 2008, 4.1).

The Architect Arnold Thorne was born in 1843 and was raised in Barnstaple. He is recorded on the 1881 census as an Architect and Surveyor resident at Barbican Terrace, and simply as an Architect in the 1891 census and 1901 census.

Discussions on the architecture of North Devon are sparse. Pevsner (1952) was originally critical of Woolacombe as a whole as being a shapeless form of 20th century buildings. Pevsner is known to have been highly critical of Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Cherry and Pevsner (1989, 921) is non-descript about the Victorian and Edwardian Villas forming a seafront fringe. This has been little altered from 1905. The development of the town can be established clearly by first and second series Ordnance Survey maps. Where Cherry and Pevsner do criticise Woolacombe is the 'formless spread of 20th century seaside flats that insult the glorious sweep of the bay'. Thus it is the post-1905 development that is seen as problematic in Woolacombe's development.

Two buildings in the Woolacombe area have been listed which include the church of Saint Sabinus an Edwardian church (EHIN 98450: SS 46134 43808) given grade II* listing in 1985 built by Carøe. The other is the Castle Hotel a Gothic folly of c. 1900 (EHIN 98460: SS 45477 44100). The former lies outside the designated conservation area and the latter inside the conservation area. The conservation area was established in 1983 and expanded in 2009. English Heritage's list of listed buildings should never be seen as definitive, as buildings can be added to this list and also deleted as further research details are produced. The Vicarage and Health Centre are also mentioned by Cherry and Pevsner (1989, 921) as structures of note.

Though Parade House has individual characteristics it is not out of keeping with its surrounding Victorian and Edwardian neighbours. Most noticeably its differences arise from its hipped roof and smaller stature, added to the fact that it sits in a considerably larger piece of land. This reflects its association with the Chichester Estate. In this part of Woolacombe the diversity it brings is significant but not out of place or character.

Parade House sits at a break in the landscape, to the north the hill becomes more tree lined and the skyline more broken as the original villa properties extend along the Esplanade to the Castle Hotel.

The client is of the opinion that this building is not an asset to the area and that various statements made in the Management Plan and SPD would allow for alterations to this plot. The Management Plan contains the following statements:

"elaborates on the advantages and disadvantages of infill development and the criteria which such development should meet in order to be considered acceptable within its setting. Chiefly this is that the new development should respect the established pattern of building, including plot width, plot size, building heights, building materials, textures and colours."

Further to this the plan states:

“some larger plots can accommodate additional development and higher density is not necessarily unacceptable if the local context is respected and the proposed design is appropriate. However, the spacing and rhythm of existing buildings will need to be conserved. It is often desirable to retain the character of established residential areas which may have high architectural and design quality, or high spatial quality by virtue of spacing and scale of individual buildings within the area.”

They have proposed the demolition and replacement of the building with a new build in what they describe as a Victorian pastiche (fig 3). The proposed building is pleasing to look at and although three stories is set within the height limits of the existing building. The bay window frontage is reproduced within the central part of the new build. There are extensions to the building line either side. This development the client feels conforms to the rules laid out within the appraisal and management plan for Woolacombe.

The replacement uses the proportions and designs of the original to produce a mock imitation of it. Its spacing between adjoining buildings is retained.

6 Appraisal

The extent and scope of the conservation area can perhaps be questioned as it does encompass the later 20th century development in Woolacombe. Having stated this any reduction of the conservation area to simply include the main buildings stated as important in the conservation appraisal would still include Parade House. The conservation area would not necessarily exclude the demolition of the later 20th century developments if they were viewed as a later architectural blot, which Parade House is not.

Parade House is an original villa, set in a broad piece of ground, and part of the 1880-1905 designs by Arnold Thorne. The villa is different to others in the area, and this may be due to its historical association as a summerhouse for Dame Chichester. The difference in its design, therefore, sets this building apart architecturally from the other neighbouring gothic buildings.

The proposed replacement has fitted in with certain required criteria in the management plan in that it has kept height proportions and increased the density. In addition it has retained the spacing of the buildings along Esplanade. Architecturally it is a pleasing building, well-proportioned and would be an asset to Woolacombe.

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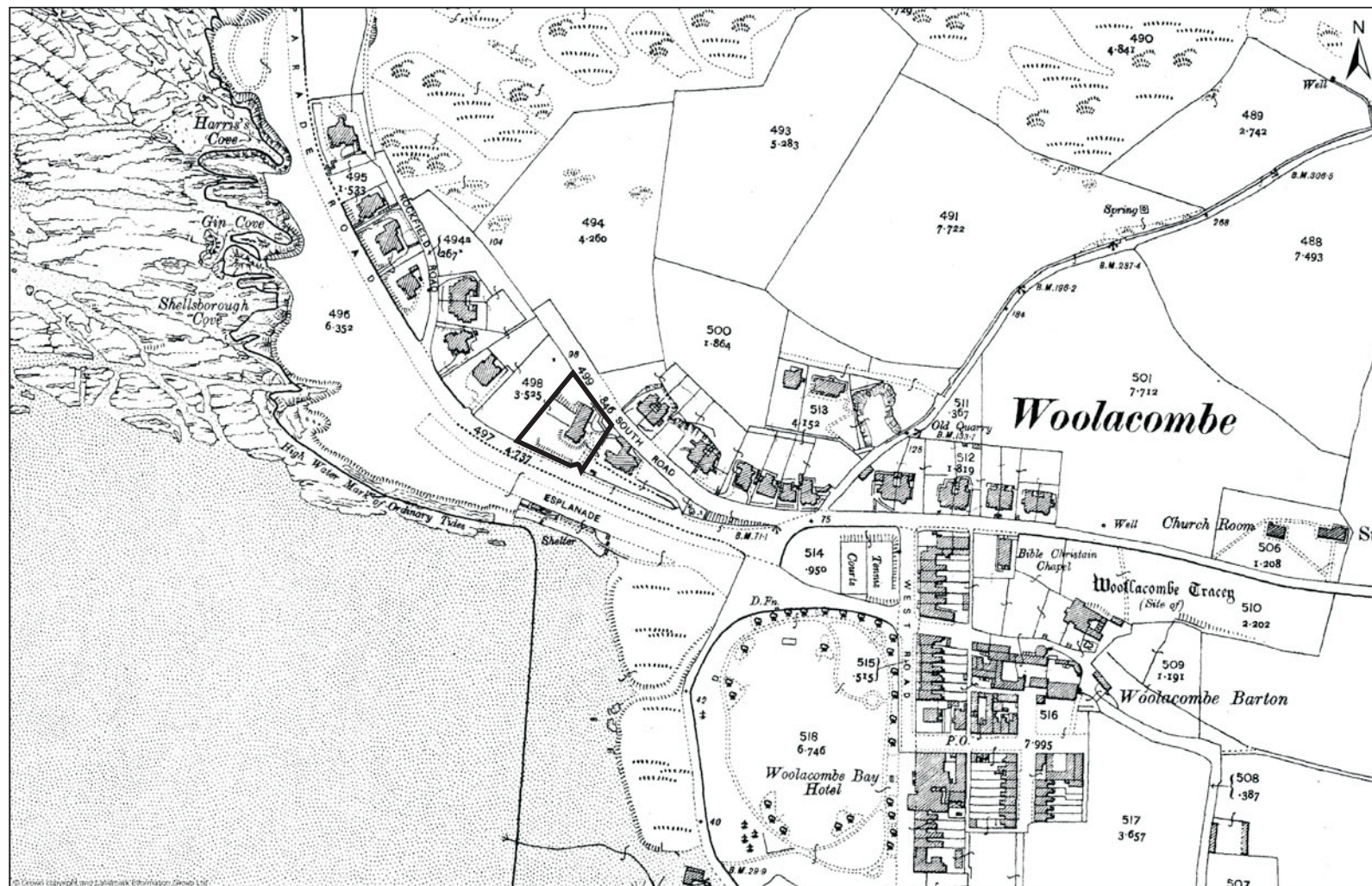
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Not to scale

 Rough Vicinity of Parade House

Figure 1. Mortehoe Tithe Award Map circa 1840



Not to scale

 Paradise House

Figure 2. Ordnance Survey 2nd series circa 1905

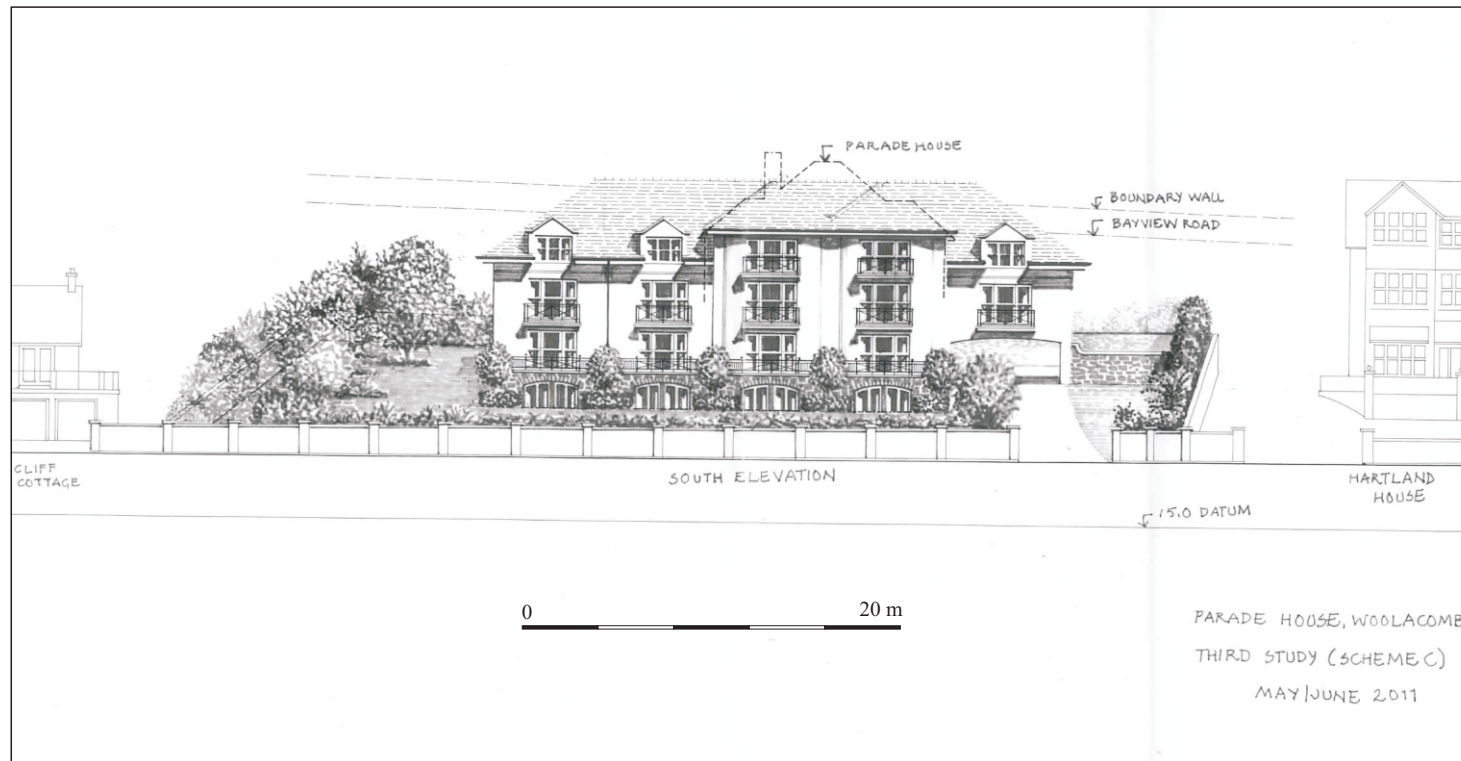


Figure 3. Proposed new build



Plate 1. External view of Parade House from north west



Plate 2. Entrance with original mouldings



Plate 3. The main staircase



Plate 4. Stairwell with decoration



Plate 5. Parade House with original Iron work



Plate 6. Parade House viewed from the beach