

TAVISTOCK GUILDHALL CAR PARK, TAVISTOCK, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 48201 74400)

Archaeological Assessment of Potential and Impact

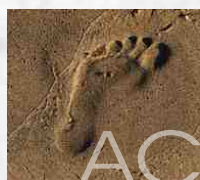
Scheduled Monument: Tavistock Abbey (National Heritage
List for England entry 1020401)

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On behalf of:
Le Page Architects Ltd

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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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Fig. 1: Location of site and previous archaeological investigations discussed in the text

Summary

An assessment of archaeological potential and impact has been prepared by AC archaeology on behalf of Le Page Architects in September 2019 and updated in October 2019 to provide accompanying information for a Scheduled Monument Consent application for the re-landscaping of the Tavistock Guildhall Car Park (SX 48201 74400). The works are ancillary to a wider (consented) scheme to convert the former Police Station and Guildhall to a mixed-use development of Heritage Gateway Centre and Council Offices.

The car park is situated within part of the Scheduled Monument of Tavistock Abbey. Historically, the site of the car park was located within the outer court of the abbey, and subsequently within an important undeveloped position with the post-medieval town as laid out under the Dukes of Bedford (and later a cattle market), surrounded by a number of Listed Buildings including the Guildhall.

There is known survival of buried archaeological remains within this general area relating to both the medieval abbey and later town including 19th-century re-landscaping. There is therefore considered to be potential for archaeological deposits and features dating from the medieval period onwards to be present.

Due to the raising of the ground level during the 19th century, as identified through a number of archaeological investigations in the centre of the town, along with the design of the landscaping of the car park, which will generally involve shallow excavations with a maximum formation level of 475mm (and localised maximum deeper depths of between 600mm and 900mm for new services) – the scheme is unlikely to impact upon buried remains associated with Tavistock Abbey. The scheme will involve the removal of modern surfaces and other street furniture and associated make-up deposits, along with the upper deposits associated with the 19th-century re-landscaping of the town centre.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1** This assessment of archaeological potential and impact has been prepared by AC archaeology on behalf of Le Page Architects in September 2019 and revised October 2019 to support a Scheduled Monument Consent application for the re-landscaping of the Tavistock Guildhall Car Park (SX 48201 74400). The document was requested by Historic England. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1. The scheme is associated with the (consented) conversion of the former Police Station and Guildhall into a Heritage Gateway Centre and Council Offices. The former is intended to provide facilities to enhance public understanding of the town and its place within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site (see Section 1.4 below).
- 1.2** The car park comprises an area of approximately 0.1 hectares and is situated at 80.50m to 81m above Ordnance Datum with the underlying solid geology comprising Carboniferous basaltic lava and tuff of the Milton Abbot Formation overlain by Quaternary alluvium of clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey 2019).

Designations

- 1.3** The car park is situated in the centre of the historic town of Tavistock within part of the Scheduled Monument of Tavistock Abbey (NHLE entry 1020401). It fronts Abbey Place (the A386) and aroundabout to the south and west, and is surrounded to the north and east by the Grade I Listed Abbey Gatehouse (NHLE entry 1105833), the Grade II* Listed Guildhall, Police Station and attached railings and boundary walls (NHLE entry 1309358) and the Grade II Listed Library and Librarian's House (NHLE entry 1105845) and Antique Shop (NHLE entry

1105844). Within the car park are the Grade II Listed War Memorial (NHLE entry 1391930) and statue of the Duke of Bedford (NHLE entry 1326183).

- 1.4** The site is also located within Area A10ii (Tamar Valley Mining District with Tavistock) of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site inscribed by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO in 2006, and within the Tavistock Conservation Area.

The scheme

- 1.5** The scheme will comprise the re-landscaping of the car park to create 20 car parking spaces and a bike rack area with a resin finished surface, and new granite paving leading to entrances within the redeveloped Guildhall and Police Station. The Duke of Bedford statue will be relocated to the southwest of court gate. In the southern portion of the site, the war memorial will be retained and a grassed area established, surrounded by a hedge boundary and lines of 150mm granite setts; the latter will also be used to delineate the car parking spaces. Two trees will be removed and some street furniture and concrete kerbing will be removed or repositioned. Existing granite paving and kerbs will be reshaped to narrow the entrance. Overall the scheme intends to retain existing site levels and drainage.
- 1.6** The scheme also includes additional services not provided within the consent for the main works to the Guildhall and Police Station. These comprise a new water pipe through the car park extending east between the Guildhall and adjacent public conveniences, along with an extension of the existing gas main through the car park and again extending east between the Guildhall and adjacent public conveniences. The latter length of these services will be placed within the same trench to minimise excavations.

2. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1** The main aims of this report, as requested by Historic England, were to establish the potential for survival of buried archaeological remains within the application area, and to assess the potential impact of the scheme on known or previously unrecorded archaeological deposits.
- 2.2** The study has consisted of a rapid archaeological appraisal, but has been drawn up with reference to standard procedural documents, such as the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* (updated January 2017) and the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019).
- 2.3** The following data sources have been examined:
- Archaeological records and other relevant cultural heritage data held by the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER);
 - Historical cartographic, photographic and documentary information held online;
 - The Archaeology Data Service;
 - Historic England National Heritage List for England (NHLE) website;
 - British Geological Survey online database; and
 - Other relevant published or unpublished information.

3. LEGISLATION

- 3.1** Scheduled Monuments, as defined under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, are sites which have been selected by a set of non-statutory criteria to be of national importance. These criteria comprise period, rarity, documentation, group value,

survival/condition, fragility/vulnerability, diversity, and potential. Where scheduled sites are affected by development proposals there is a presumption in favour of their physical preservation. There is also a presumption against developments which have a significant impact on the integrity of the setting of scheduled monuments. Any works, other than activities receiving class consent under *The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1981*, as amended by *The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1984*, which would have the effect of demolishing, destroying, damaging, removing, repairing, altering, adding to, flooding or covering up a Scheduled Monument require consent from the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS INTERVENTIONS (Fig. 1)

- 4.1** Tavistock Abbey, which was of the Benedictine order, was founded in AD974, with significant periods of rebuilding in the early 14th and second half of the fifteenth centuries (Devon Historic Environment Record MDV3919). It was dissolved in 1539 and the land and property granted to John Lord Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford. Upon dissolution, some of the abbey buildings were dismantled, including the Abbey Church in 1670, whilst others were retained, including the Abbots Hall and the Abbey Gatehouse, and repurposed. The nearby parish Church of St Eustachius was also retained. Above-ground remains of the abbey are otherwise fragmentary and include lengths of the precinct wall, a second gatehouse, and a tower (Stead 1999, fig. 11).
- 4.2** 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 to establish Bedford Square, Bedford Place and Abbey Place. The Abbey Gatehouse was incorporated into the Tavistock Library with an extension of approximately the same period now comprising an Antique Shop but formerly listed as a Weights and Measures Office. The main library building behind was built at approximately the same time, c. 1830, on an L-shaped plan that defines the northeast corner of the Great Court of the Abbey. A purpose-built court, police station and fire engine house were built in 1848, defining the southeast extent of the Great Court of the abbey, and almost certainly incorporating some 15th century fabric.
- 4.3** The Abbey deviated from the usual Benedictine plan, having the Outer Court to the east of the claustral range, as opposed to the west, around which the buildings described above were constructed in the 19th century. Otherwise it consisted of the Abbey Church and three ranges of buildings grouped around a central cloister in more traditional convention. Excavations in 1914 and 1920 located the north and south walls of the Abbey Church and *in-situ* medieval tiles, and the results of monitoring and recording during drainage works and town centre enhancement works in 1997-1999 exposed medieval masonry at the east end of the church as well as part of a tiled floor and three graves (Stead 1999, fig. 8). The highest medieval deposits were exposed at depths of 0.60m from the surface, although they more generally survived from 0.80m below the surface.
- 4.4** Recording of buildings within the centre of the town (Blaylock 1998; 2001; see also Govier 2017) have presented a more accurate plan of the layout of the abbey than previous interpretations.
- 4.5** The 1997-1999 works also uncovered evidence of the extensive post-medieval activity, notably observing that the ground level has raised up by up to 2m since the medieval period as part of the town redevelopment during the 18th and 19th centuries. On the corner of Bedford Square and Plymouth Road the remains of an 18th century inn was uncovered and near the Bridge a series of industrial buildings comprising malthouses and stables were identified at a depth of

2m below the street surface which were also likely to be in use during the post-medieval period but have potential to be earlier.

- 4.6** Further evidence for the raising of the ground level to the west of the church was recovered during watching briefs behind West Street in 2011 (Passmore 2011) and to the south of the church in 2017 (Kysh 2017). In the former probable 19th-century levelling deposits extended to a minimum depth of 1m below the surface, and in the latter 19th-century levelling deposits were exposed to a minimum depth of 0.52m from the surface.
- 4.7** In the Guildhall Car Park, in 2012 two trenches were excavated during repairs to a drain. These were excavated to maximum depths of 1.40m and 0.52m below the car park surface. In one trench an 18th-century cobbled surface was exposed at a depth of 1.3m below the surface, overlain with layers of clay and slate sealed by another cobbled surface that was dated through pottery to the 19th century. No medieval or dissolution deposits were identified at these depths (Stead, 2012).
- 4.8** Limited groundworks within the Butchers Market Hall in 2017 were not deep enough to expose any deposits pre-dating the 1860s building (Brown 2017).

5. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1** The historical development of the proposed re-development area is set out here and is based on a rapid appraisal of maps.

John Wynne's map, 1752-53

- 5.2** This map drawn up by the Duke of Bedford's surveyor John Wynne captures Tavistock prior to its extensive remodelling. The site occupied a large area marked as Abbey Court and shown surrounded by buildings particularly to the southeastern side, flanking the river. At this time, neither Abbey Bridge nor Bedford Square had been built, and the area to the north and northwest of the site is occupied by buildings and the parish churchyard, with the main thoroughfare travelling through the Abbey Gatehouse into the Court.

John Wood's map, 1842

- 5.3** This map was drawn up after the initial remodelling of the town by the Dukes of Bedford. Bedford Square and Abbey Place have been established, leading south to Abbey Bridge. This has resulted in the reduction in the size of the parish churchyard (confirmed by the 1997-1999 investigations) and the reduction of Abbey Close to create the approximate area the site occupies today. Some extant buildings are still present within Bedford Square. The proposed development site is shown here as comprising two enclosed areas of a sheep and cattle market. A number of buildings encircling the site to the south, east, and northeast, including the Library, have been constructed.

Ordnance Survey 1:500 town map, 1883

- 5.4** At this time the town centre more closely resembles the present urban topography, with the area being partially enclosed from Abbey Place to the south and southwest by railings, with access opposite the entrance to Bedford Place, now Plymouth Road and the roundabout. The Guildhall is labelled, with tower and fire engine house adjacent to the east and northeast. An enclosed area is adjacent to the south, which remains separate today containing public toilets. The Duke of Bedford statue is present central to the site. Buildings to the south of the Guildhall and Police Station have been removed with the establishment of New Market Road following the route of the river.

Later Mapping

- 5.5 The 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1905 shows no significant changes aside from the labelling of the Guildhall building as a Police Station. Modern maps identify the presence of the war memorial.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL AND IMPACT

- 6.1 The site is not located within an area of known prehistoric or Romano-British archaeology. Archaeological interventions in and around Bedford Square have recorded buried features and deposits from the early medieval to post-medieval periods of Tavistock's history, including those associated with Tavistock Abbey, subsequent post-reformation land use, and 19th-century re-landscaping and remodelling of the town.
- 6.2 The site is located within the Outer Court of Tavistock Abbey. Investigations nearby have identified remains of the Abbey Church surviving at depths of between 0.60 and 0.80m below the surface. These, and other, investigations also identified that the ground level was significantly raised during the post-medieval period, including within the 19th century, resulting in good preservation of surviving features, and therefore indicating that there is a high potential for survival of medieval buried deposits below the car park. The investigations have also identified the potential for the survival of post-medieval deposits, structures and surfaces.
- 6.3 The 2012 observations within the car park did not expose medieval deposits, and this is consistent with the earlier observations, where deeper post-medieval deposits were present away from known medieval buildings; current interpretations of the plan of Tavistock Abbey does not indicate there were any permanent structures within the area of the current car park. Groundworks associated with the re-landscaping of the car park are therefore considered to have **very low potential to impact** on buried deposits dating to the early medieval to medieval periods, but are considered to have **high potential to impact** on buried deposits dating to the later post-medieval period, specifically the deposits and surface associated with the 19th-century cattle market.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The car park is located within part of the Scheduled Monument of Tavistock Abbey. Buried remains of the medieval abbey have previously been exposed nearby at depths of 0.60m below the surface. Post-medieval, including 19th-century, re-landscaping of the town centre has raised the ground level by up to 2m.
- 9.2 Previous archaeological investigations within the car park have identified 18th- and 19th-century landscaping deposits extending at least 1.30m below the current ground level. The current scheme has formation levels for the landscaping of 0.475m, and this is therefore not expected to impact on buried medieval remains. There will be localised deeper excavations – specifically for two soakaways within the new lawn measuring 750mm deep, a new gas main measuring 600mm deep, and a new water main measuring up to 900mm deep. The eastern length of the latter two services will however be combined within a single trench to reduce excavations and impact. Due to the depth of post-medieval raising of the ground level, the scheme will only impact on the uppermost 19th-century deposits, including a surface associated with a former cattle market.

10. SOURCES CONSULTED

Published and unpublished sources

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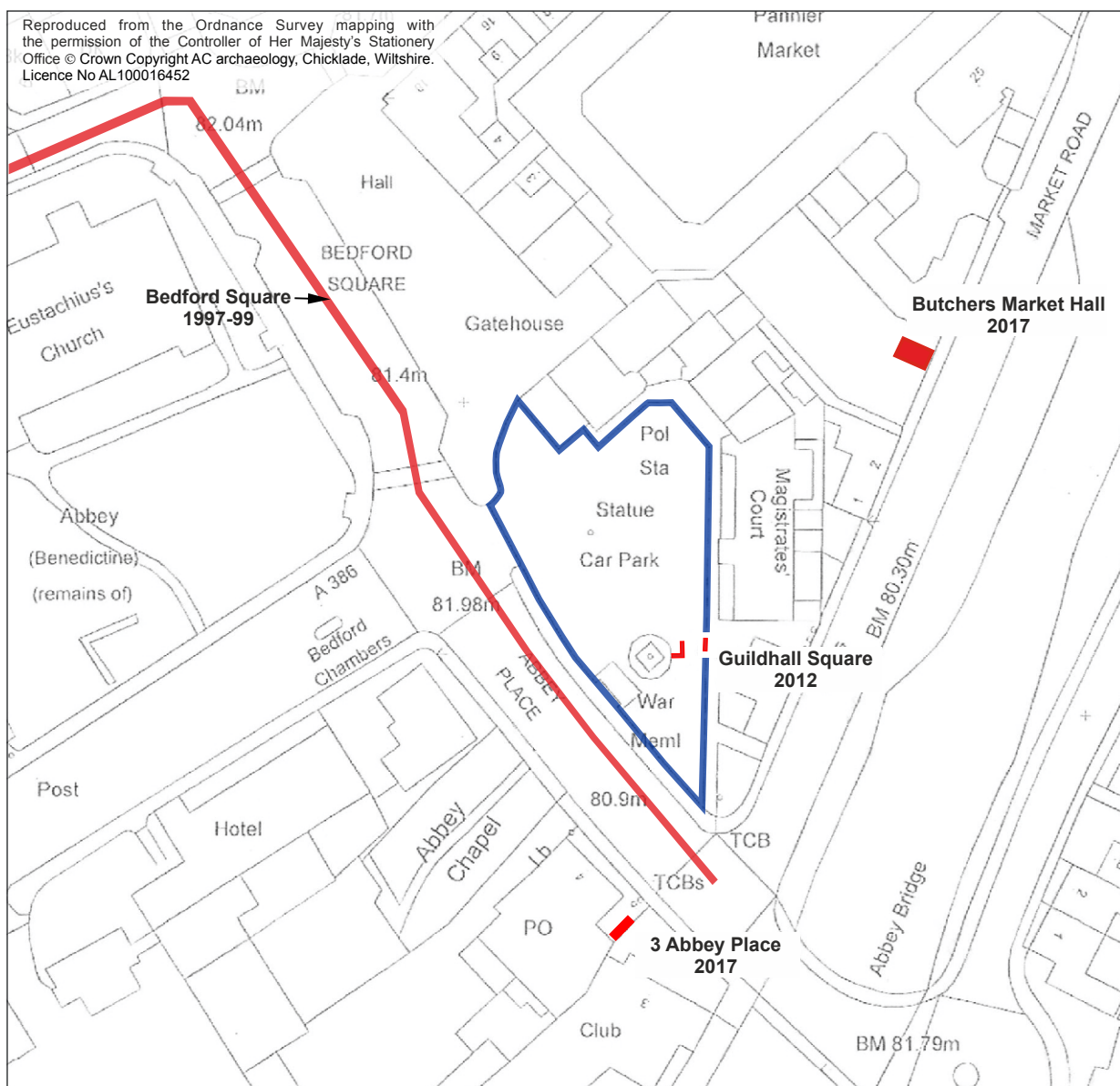
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Devon Environment Viewer: <http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/>

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



PROJECT

Tavistock Guildhall Car Park,
Tavistock, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site and previous
archaeological investigations discussed in the text



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