

North Brentor



Conservation Area Character Appraisal



Dartmoor National Park Authority January 2011

Conservation Areas were introduced through the *Civic Amenities Act 1967*. Section 69 (1) (a) of the Act gives the definition of a Conservation Area as:

‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’

There are now over 9,000 Conservation Areas nation-wide. Local Planning Authorities are required to designate Conservation Areas, keep them under review, and if appropriate, designate further areas (Section 69 (2)). There are currently 23 Conservation Areas within Dartmoor National Park.

Designation brings certain duties to local planning authorities:

- ◆ to formulate and publish from time to time proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and submit them for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate (Section 71)
- ◆ in exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Areas (Section 72).

Conservation Area Character Appraisals aim to define and analyse the special interest which constitutes the character and appearance of a place. It is these qualities which warrant the designation of a Conservation Area.

An appraisal will provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for policies within the Local Development Framework and Development Management decisions. It can also form the groundwork for a subsequent **Conservation Area Management Plan**, which will contain defined issues, proposals and policies for the conservation and enhancement of the area. It is also intended that the document will be helpful to those involved in drawing up Enhancement Projects and Village Design Statements within the National Park area.

The main function of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal is to enable Dartmoor National Park Authority and the community to relate planning proposals to the Conservation Area.

Defining the character of an area is not a straightforward exercise and it is not always possible to reach a truly objective view. The statement of character and appearance in this appraisal is based on various detailed methods of analysis recommended by English Heritage. A range of qualities are looked at including: historical development, building materials, and relationships between buildings and open spaces. However, character appraisals are not intended to be fully comprehensive and any omission does not imply that something is of no interest.

This Character Appraisal has benefited from several public consultations which have taken place through the Parish Council.

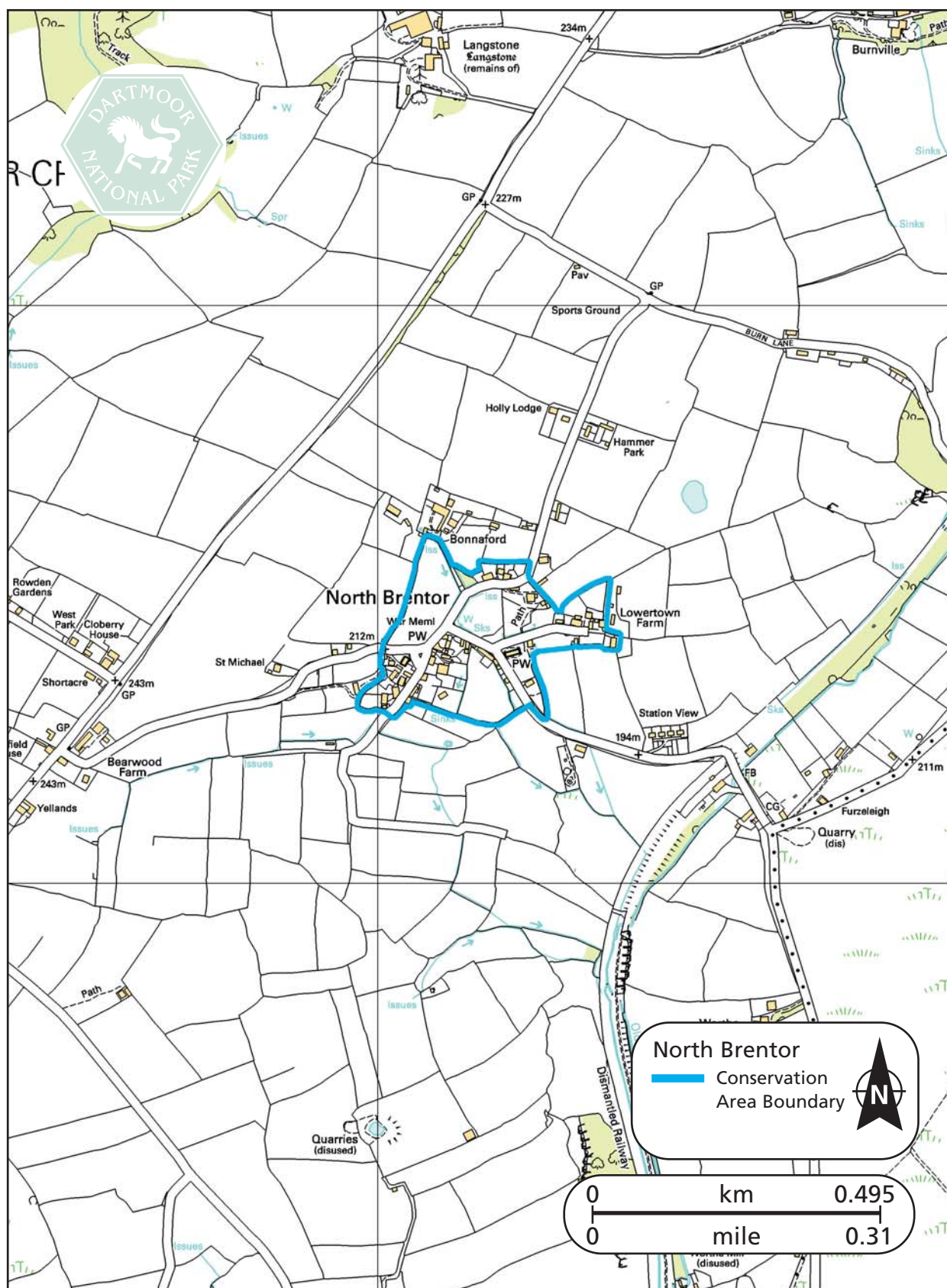
Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 5 |
| 1 Village History | 5 |
| 2 Settlement Plan | 6 |
| 3 Building Types, Materials and Styles | 12 |
| 4 Key Buildings | 15 |
| 5 Local Details and Street Furniture | 21 |
| 6 Spaces and Views | 23 |
| 7 Modern Development | 30 |
| 8 Archaeological Potential | 31 |
| 9 Trees | 32 |
| Appendix A: Tree Survey | 34 |

Maps

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Map 1 Conservation Area Location | 4 |
| Map 2 Tithe Map 1842 | 7 |
| Map 3 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1884 | 8 |
| Map 4 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1906 | 9 |
| Map 5 Ordnance Survey Map c.1954 | 10 |
| Map 6 Conservation Area: North Brentor Settlement | 11 |
| Map 7 Conservation Area: Historic Quality and Integrity ... | 14 |
| Map 8 Conservation Area: Spaces and Views | 25 |
| Map 9 Conservation Area: Trees and Boundary | 33 |

Map 1 Conservation Area Location



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Introduction

The small village of North Brentor lies just west of the high moor on the fringe of the Dartmoor National Park, about 4 miles north of Tavistock. Although closely linked to the nearby landmark of Brentor, the settlement of North Brentor was a detached portion of the parish of Lamerton until 1880; now it lies within the parish of Brentor.

The underlying geology is interesting – to the east is the granite mass of the high moor, and to the south west is the volcanic plug of Brentor. As a consequence of these major features there is a variety of volcanic and metamorphic rocks found in the buildings and structures of North Brentor. The volcanic history of the area also deposited minerals and ores.

The Conservation Area was originally designated in August 1993 and based on the findings of this Character Appraisal no changes to its boundary were considered appropriate.

1 Village History

There is evidence of human activity in the area from late prehistoric times. The age of North Brentor itself is uncertain. Medieval references may refer to Brentor itself, to South Brentor or to North Brentor. Although North Brentor was historically in the parish of Lamerton, it seems likely that the church of St Michael de Rupe, less than a mile away, would have been used by local people since Lamerton was over 3 miles distant.

Until the 19th century the economic base of the settlement was agriculture, but during that century there were five local mines exploiting deposits of manganese, ochre and copper. This activity was clearly of economic importance and led to an increasing population. The influx of people and money stimulated growth away from the historic settlement core and enabled construction of the school and Christ Church.

White's Directory of 1850 records a "small chapel of ease built in 1825", but the location of this is uncertain as the site of the present Christ Church was vacant at the time of the tithe map [\[Map 2 page 7\]](#) A "small dissenting chapel" is also mentioned and can be seen on the tithe map. More houses, the vicarage and school were built in the middle part of the 19th century. The local population supported a number of trades that are recorded in White's Directory. As well as three farmers there were three carpenters, (all sharing the surname Rice), one shoemaker and two shopkeepers. These were probably the old Post Office and the former butchers immediately west of the war memorial.

In 1865 the South Devon Railway Company built the line from Tavistock to Launceston. Initially there was only a goods siding at North Brentor and this appears to have made little difference to the settlement. It was not until 1890 that a proper station was built to serve the village.

2 Settlement Plan

The historic core of the settlement is now the south western corner. Centred on the convergence of four lanes, with a triangular plot at the junction, there appear to have been three or four farms with associated outbuildings and cottages. The triangular plot has been developed over the years – first by the erection of the non-conformist chapel and more recently by sheds and garages.

Slightly outside the old core are the historic farmsteads of Lowertown and Bonnaford, and on the northern side of the settlement lies the small group of properties comprising Church Cottages, East Cottage, Heatherlands and The Old Vicarage, constructed in the mid 19th century. The spine of green open space between these groups and the settlement core is one of the defining visual characteristics of North Brentor. The intrinsic historic interest of the layout has its own significance as it records the planned growth of the settlement in the 19th century. This layout also gives a number of charming views across the green space adding to the special identity of the place.



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Fig 1 The central green spine

The central area became more important with the erection of the chapel of ease in 1825 and the National School in 1832. Their location at the south eastern end of the green spine makes these buildings the focal point of the village. With the Old Post Office as well, this area became the centre of social activity and the old core had reduced significance, although there was further development along the old lanes during the 19th century. The 1906 OS map [Map 4 page 9] shows that during the latter half 19th century development occurred along the south eastern side of Dark Lane, (the green lane that leads to South Brentor), and then along what is now Station Road.

The 20th century saw dispersed development outside the Conservation Area to the north, east and west. In the centre of the settlement there has been some modern development but the majority of new dwellings have been created by the conversion of former outbuildings.

Map 2 Tithe Map 1842



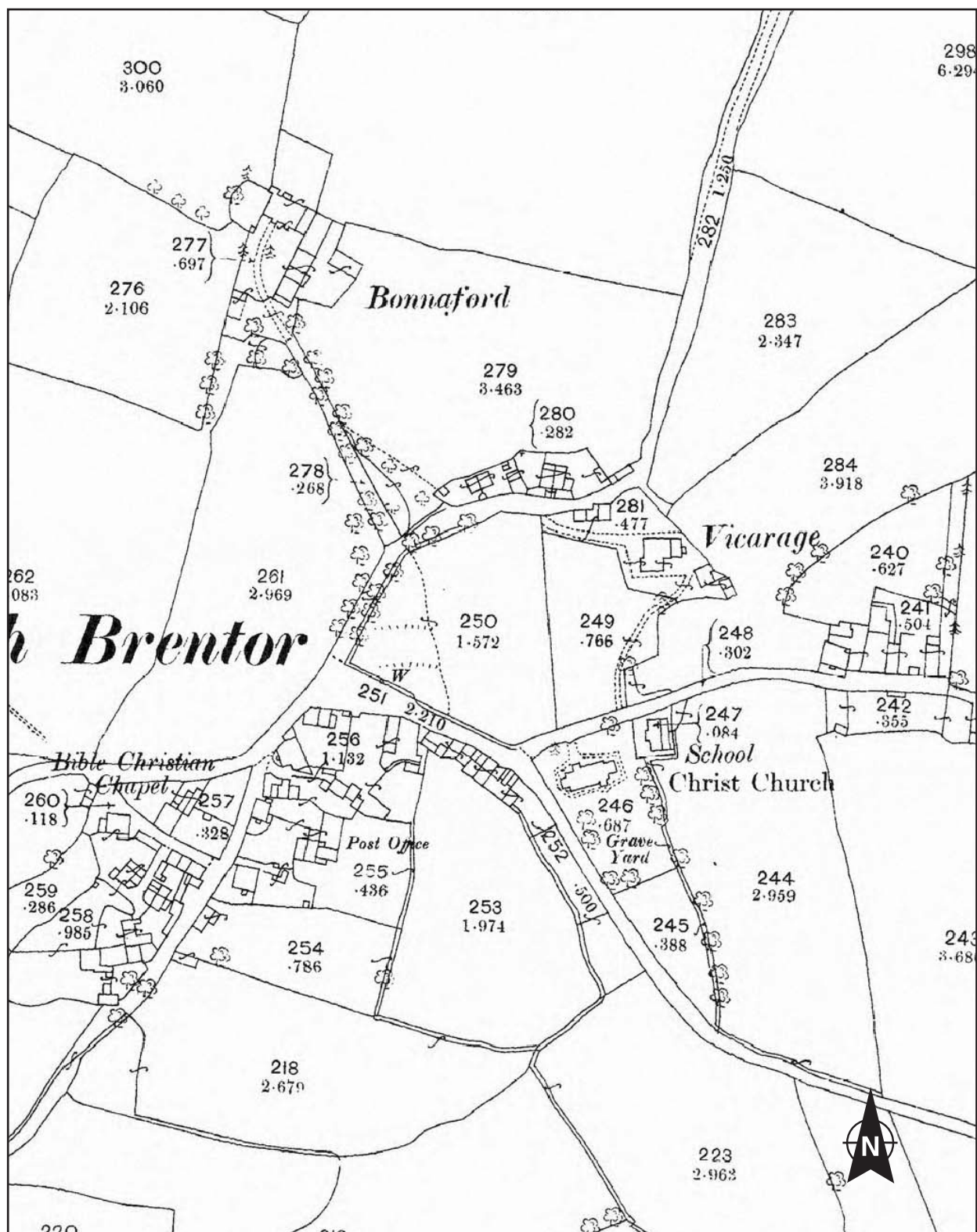
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Historical Footnote:

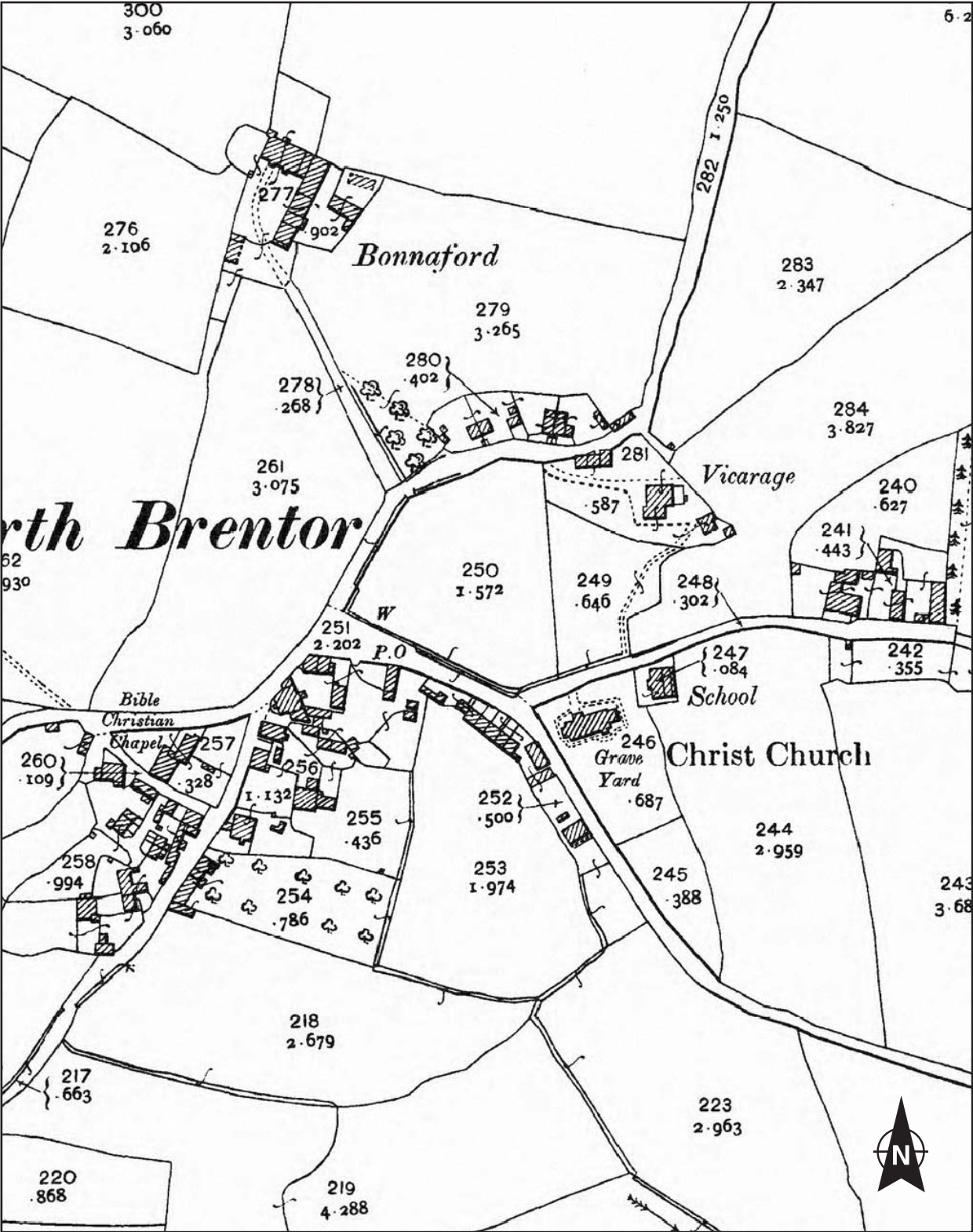
The tithe system provided the traditional means of supporting the clergy in England for many centuries. However, over time abuse of the system led to the *Tithe Commutation Act 1836* which empowered the newly formed Tithe Commission to commute tithes paid 'in kind' to an annual money payment. A Commutation Agreement required the creation of a large scale Map showing each plot of land in the tithe district and an accompanying Apportionment listing relevant details. The Tithe Act 1836 provided for the gradual redemption of all tithes by the end of the century.

Map 3 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1884



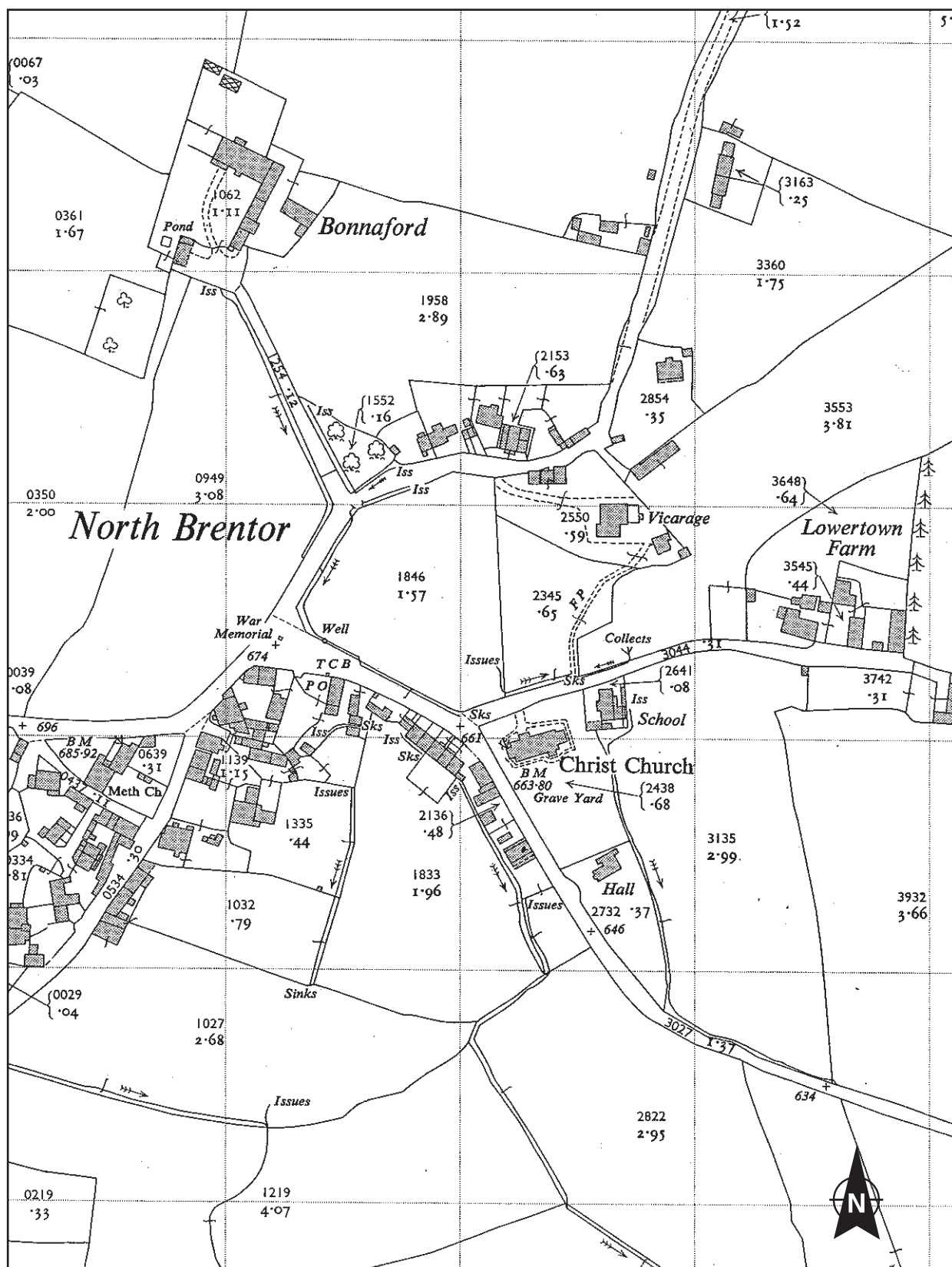
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Map 4 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1906

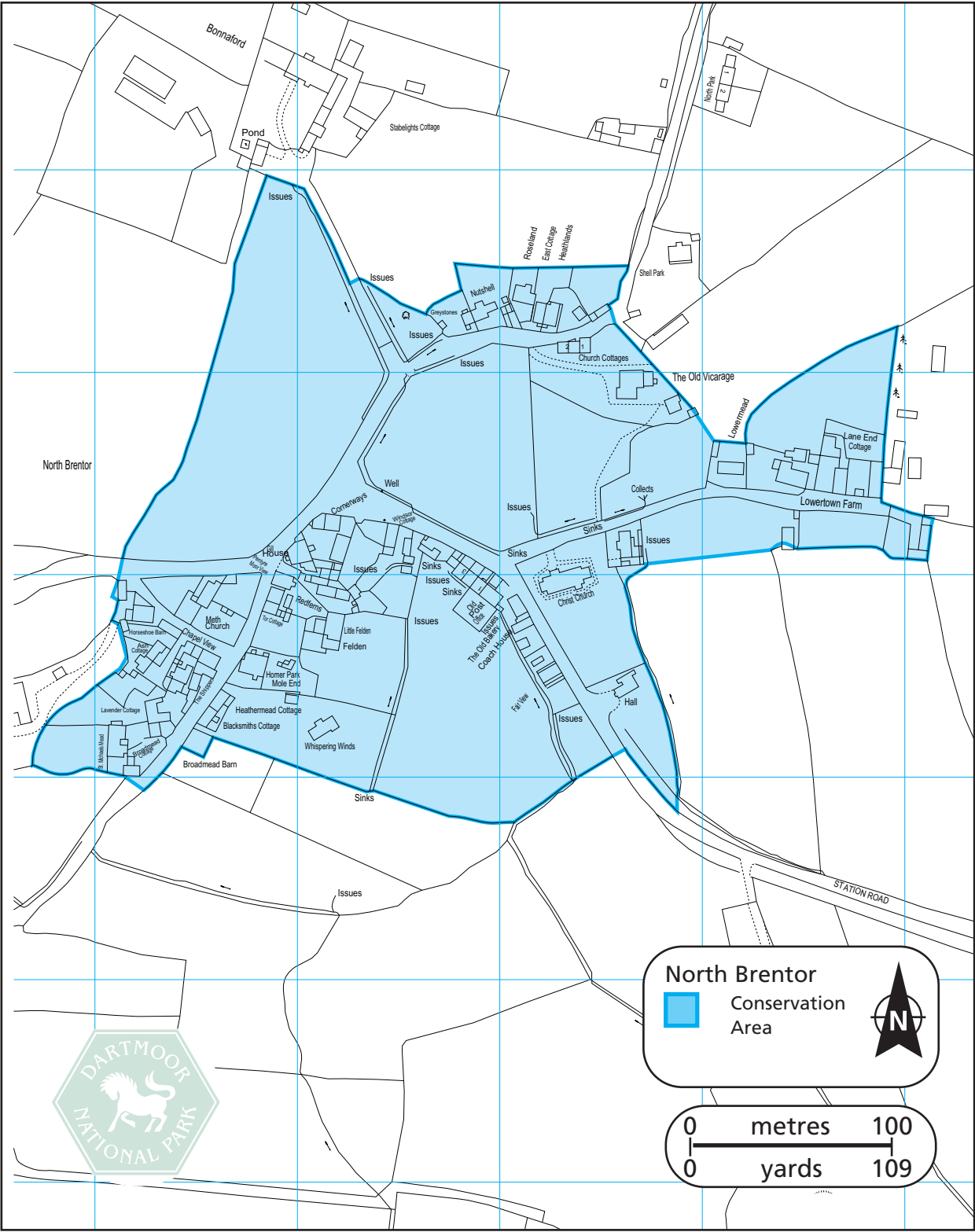


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Map 5 Ordnance Survey Map c.1954



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County Series 1:2500 (not reproduced to scale)



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3 Building Types, Materials and Styles

The character of North Brentor is very varied. Although most buildings are traditionally constructed in stone, the relationship with the street is diverse. Some properties are built tight to the street, some set back behind gardens or down subsidiary tracks. Many are aligned parallel to the street, others show gable ends and a few are sited obliquely. The overall effect is somewhat jumbled, with its own distinctive character.



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Fig 2 Buildings relate to the street in a variety of ways

Dwellings are mostly two storied, stone-built but usually rendered or painted and there is some slate hanging. Chimneys are a feature of most dwellings – brick built and rendered. Brick is used for quoins and lintels on many buildings of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Slate is the traditional roofing material, with clay ridge tiles and cast iron gutters. There has been much replacement of natural slate with artificial products and of metal rainwater goods with plastic, often of an inappropriate colour and profile. Dormers are not a characteristic feature, though a few have been inserted in recent times.



© DNPA

Fig 3 Render and stone are the main materials but there is some slate hanging

Corrugated iron makes a contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The parish hall is the most obvious example, but the old slaughterhouse and the group of outbuildings adjacent to the east derive much of their character from the survival of rusty old corrugated iron. The small shed, like the parish hall, is an example of early 20th century pre-fabrication and both have historic interest from that perspective.



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Fig 4 The Parish Hall

There is a mix of casement and sash windows in the village. Casements are generally seen on earlier and/or humbler dwellings, though a rather eccentric casement design was favoured on the late 19th century Greystones Cottages. Sashes are found on more aspirational double-fronted homes such as Gill House and on later cottages such as the row that includes the Old Post Office. The survival of historic fenestration is patchy and where replacement windows have been installed it has usually been in a style that fails to relate to the original units. This applies to a number of timber windows as well as metal and PVCu.



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Fig 5 The unusual casement window design at Greystones

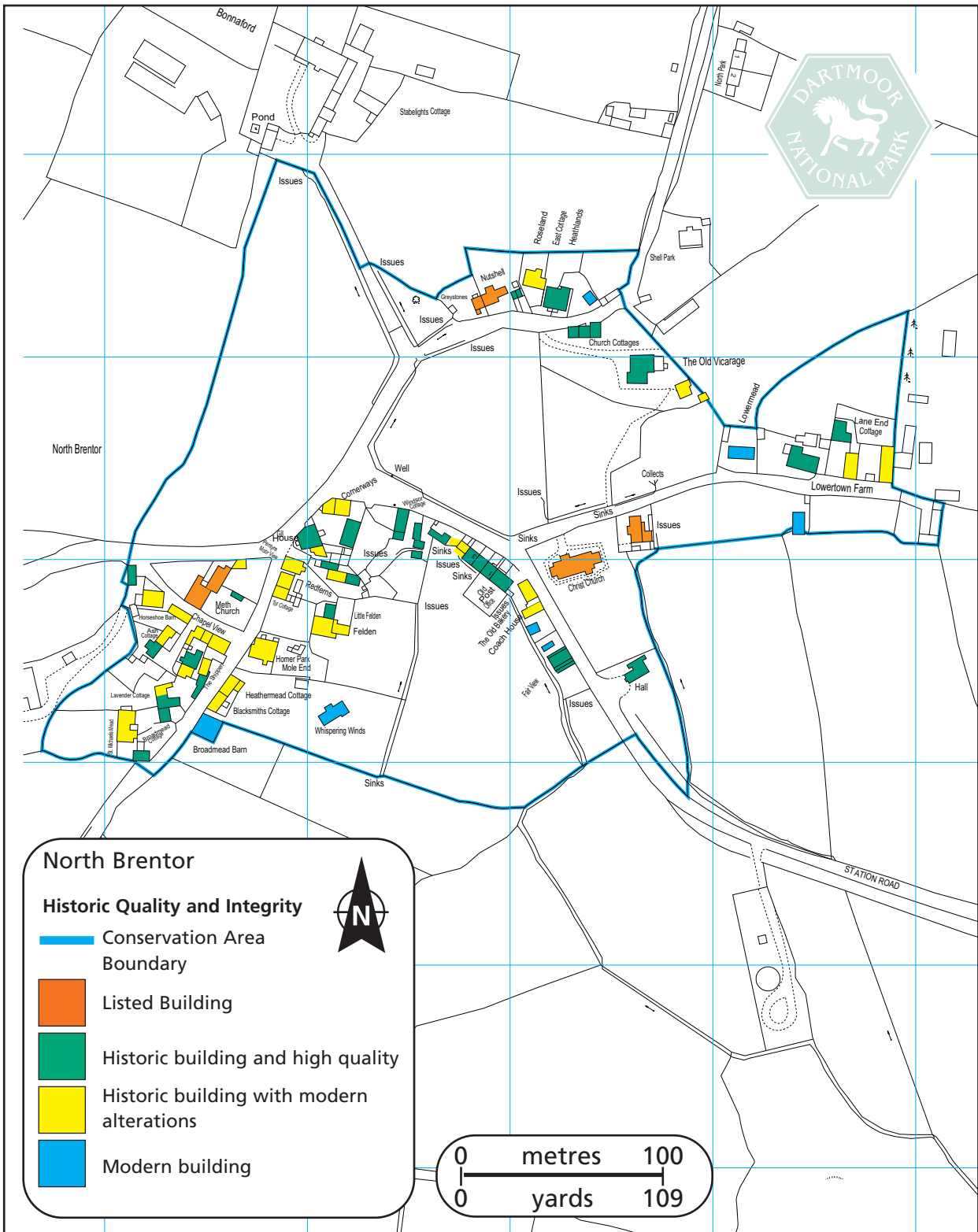


© DNPA

Fig 6 The porch at Gill House

Panelled doors are prevalent, some part-glazed, but there are also boarded doors. Porches are fairly common, most are simple gabled structures. None is more attractive than the decorative example on Gill House.

Map 7 Conservation Area: Historic Quality and Integrity



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4 Key Buildings



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Fig 7 Christ Church

Christ Church: Grade II

Built in 1856, presumably as a replacement for the chapel of ease, (to the Church of St Peter in Lamerton), that had been built in 1825. Financed largely by Mrs Isabella Holwell, it was designed by Richard Gosling of Torquay in an eclectic gothic style. It provides a fine focal point which can be seen in many views within the village and far beyond.



© DNPA

Fig 8 The Methodist Chapel

Methodist Chapel: Grade II

A good and unspoilt example of a non-conformist chapel; it was built in 1841 and extended in the early 20th century. It is located on the triangular plot at the intersection around which the settlement grew. The south east elevation is slate hung with unusual large brownish slates that were probably quarried locally.

Listed Buildings Footnote:

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is required to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest for the guidance of local planning authorities. Conservation policies are often based on these lists. The re-survey of all Dartmoor parishes was carried out during 1985-88.

A listed building is 'a building of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. There are about 500,000 listed buildings in England. Nationally, 2% are grade I listed, 4% II* listed and the balance of 94% are grade II listed. Within Dartmoor National Park there are 2,563 listed buildings.



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Fig 9 The former school

Former School: Grade II

This is a fine example of a purpose-built National school. It is attractively proportioned and well constructed, with understated Tudor details. After it ceased to operate as a school it became the church hall.



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Fig 10 Gill House

Gill House: Unlisted

Prominently located as the village is entered from the west, this is a good and unspoilt example of a modest late Georgian house. In the context of North Brentor, however, it is a fairly substantial home.



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Fig 11 An attractive row of cottages

Row of cottages including the Old Post Office: Unlisted

A good row of 19th century cottages forming a group with the church opposite. All but one had their original windows at the time of survey.



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Fig 12 The Coppice

The Coppice: Unlisted

An unspoilt 19th century farmhouse on the western edge of the Conservation Area with an attractive cottage to the rear and good stone outbuildings – now converted.

Other Notable Buildings



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Fig 13 Small historic outbuildings add character

The Old Slaughterhouse and outbuildings to the west: Unlisted

These traditional functional buildings encapsulate the working character of North Brentor and make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.



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Fig 14 One of the older surviving outbuildings

Outbuilding on Dark Lane: Unlisted

On the south western edge of the Conservation Area is one of the oldest outbuildings surviving intact, probably dating from the late 18th century. It can be seen on the tithe map [\[Map 2 page 7\]](#) and by virtue of its position on this ancient green lane it is an important structure.



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Fig 15 A simple little building can have great group value

Outbuilding west of Heatherlands – Unlisted

Prominently sited at the entrance to the village from the north, this pleasing stone building retains its original character.



© DNPA

Fig 16 A nice stable and coach house

Stable block to rear of Gill House: Unlisted

At the back of a nice courtyard this is a good example of a stable block associated with a dwelling. It dates from around the beginning of the 20th century.



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Fig 17 Good Victorian domestic architecture

Greystones and Nutshell: Grade II

Dated 1886 this pair of cottages exhibit a degree of architectural design otherwise unseen on dwellings in North Brentor. They are notable for that reason and reflect the change in social character that came with the railway.



© DNPA

Fig 18 A large detached dwelling by North Brentor standards

Fair View : Unlisted

A substantial detached dwelling, built around the end of the 19th century. On the edge of the village closest to the railway station it also indicates a degree of gentrification during that period.

5 Local Details and Street Furniture

There is a notable absence of street furniture such as signs, street lighting and the like. It is hard, however, to find a pleasing view in North Brentor that is not in some way diminished by the intrusive presence of overhead wires and cables. The general lack of pavements reflects the rural character of the Conservation Area, though a number of properties are fronted by stark concrete – notably at Chapel View. The most attractive survival of historic paving is in the courtyard behind Gill House. A small patch of cobbles survives outside Heatherlands.



© DNPA

Fig 19 The cobbled yard at Gill House

The influence of water is ever-present, especially in the central green spine - from the moss-draped stones on the walls, to the running water in the gulleys and the village pond opposite the church. The well head east of the war memorial is one of the most distinctive character features of the village and is complemented by the pyramid capstone dated 1883 on the conduit pipe a little way to the south east.



© DNPA

Fig 20 The well head



© DNPA

Fig 21 Conduit with datestone

On the other side of the road there is the red K6 telephone kiosk and the post box marks the location of the former Post Office. The key focal point is, however, the war memorial. Located in the middle of the T-junction it is unavoidable and has a strong, direct relationship with Christ Church.



Fig 22 The K6 telephone kiosk



Fig 23 The post box

Historic enclosure is provided mainly by rubble stone walls. Garden walls are generally laid in lime mortar and some have a decorative capping of white veinous quartz – likely to have been a by-product of the mining activity in the area. A number of granite gateposts survive, some are plain, others more decorative. A few good iron gates may be seen and the property immediately west of the chapel has bold iron railings. Field boundaries are more often laid dry in banks and are sometimes coursed. In recent years there have been a number of timber boarded and panelled fences erected that invariably detract from the street scene.



Fig 24 Rubble stone wall with white quartz capping



Fig 25 Granite gateposts at the entrance to Bonnafor

6 Spaces and Views

Spaces Refer to map 8 page 25

The substantial green space at the heart of North Brentor is one of the fundamental character features of the settlement.

A Vicarage field and West field [Fig 26 page 26]

This undeveloped open space is crucial to many of the pleasant views in North Brentor. The low key public access offered by the sitting area on the north side and the pond on the south allows enjoyment of the space without visual intrusion. For the purposes of this document the Vicarage field is taken to include the three fields west of Lowermead and the more recent sub-enclosure around the pond. The West field continues the green spine and forms part of the setting of the buildings to either side. It helps to define the distinctive development pattern of the village.

B War memorial and bus shelter [Fig 27 page 26]

This is a space that is a focal point both visually and socially, but presently it lacks definition. The shelter and seat are utilitarian and unpretentious, which reflects the underlying character of the place, but the materials are rather poor.

C Chapel burial ground [Fig 28 page 26]

The triangular space immediately to the west of the Methodist Chapel allows an open view of the chapel as the village is entered from the west. As it is strongly enclosed, by walls to the lanes and iron railings to the footpath, it has the special character of a space that is entered for the purpose of contemplation and remembrance.

Views Refer to map 8 page 25

The open spaces and narrow lanes of North Brentor offer many attractive views. A representative sample is chosen here.

1 The church from the bus shelter

This view captures the east – west axis at the heart of the Conservation Area between these important focal points [Fig 29 page 27].

2 West from Lowertown Farm

A charming view of the village, with sheep often grazing the field in the foreground, and the church tower breaking the skyline leading the eye on to Brentor [Fig 30 page 27].

3 Across Vicarage field from the north

The clear view of the church framed by the cottages to the right and the high moor beyond captures some of the essence of North Brentor [Fig 31 page 27].

4 From the picnic area

Looking south west the settlement flows away in a jumble of walls and roofs with the church of St Michael de Rupe on the skyline above [Fig 32 page 28].

5 Glimpses of the church

Around the village the church tower may be seen between and over cottages and outbuildings. Perhaps the most notable example is through the entrance to Felden, adjacent to Gill House [Fig 33 page 28]

The final views are from outside the Conservation Area looking in.

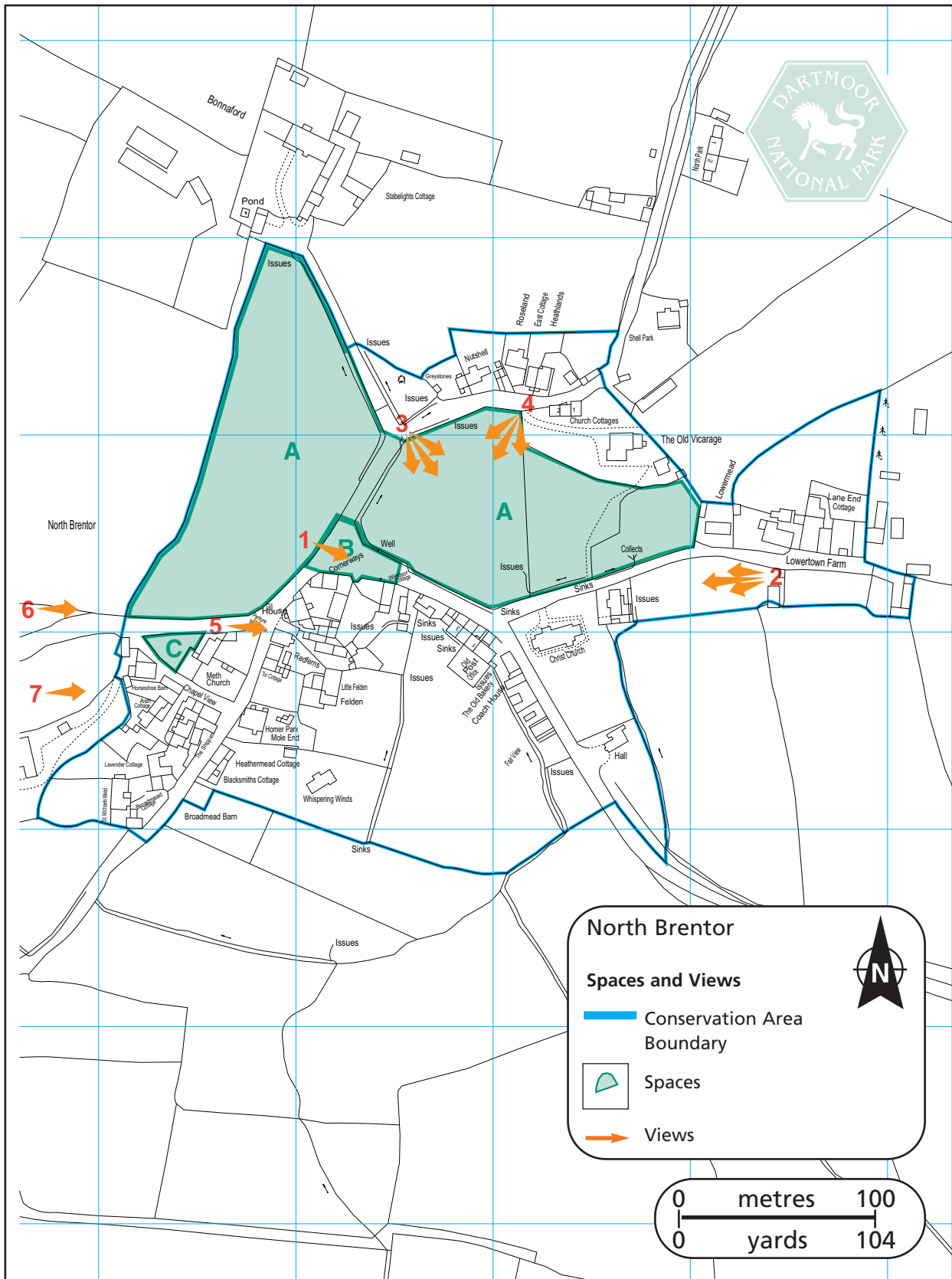
6 From Brentor

The special vantage point of Brentor allows the settlement to be seen in the wider landscape of farmland and high moor [Fig 34 page 28].

7 From the cemetery

Looking down onto the village roofscape is possible from here until the overgrown hedge comes into leaf [Fig 35 page 29].

Map 8 Spaces and Views



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Fig 26 Vicarage field



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Fig 27 The war memorial and bus shelter



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Fig 28 The Methodist chapel burial ground



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Fig 29 The heart of the village



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Fig 30 The church and Brentor from Lowertown



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Fig 31 A field entrance offers a fine view



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Fig 32 View from the picnic area



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Fig 33 The church seen through the entrance to Felden



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Fig 34 The village seen from Brentor



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Fig 35 View from the cemetery

7 Modern Development

There has been very little modern development in North Brentor – the bungalow Lowermead is the most obvious example. The older part of the village has seen a lot of conversion of former outbuildings that vary in quality. Several appear to have involved a considerable amount of reconstruction and there has been the introduction of render and even dormers. This has inevitably meant a loss of character for individual buildings and many of the more intimate views in this part of the settlement.



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Fig 36 Some conversions have involved significant alterations

8 Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of North Brentor lies chiefly in its historic core which most probably dates to the medieval period and which forms the south western part of the present day settlement.

There is documentary evidence for buildings whose location is now unknown, such as the small chapel of ease, whilst the Tithe Map shows that the historic core area has changed in the last 150 years, with the addition of new building, conversion of outbuildings and the loss of other buildings. Along Dark Lane the Map reveals a number of changes, with the loss of some buildings, in particular a large building shown to the south of Mole End Cottage.

The green open areas which contribute so much to the character of North Brentor should also be regarded as being archaeologically sensitive. To the east of the Old School House the fields which lie either side of the road to Lowertown Farm contain evidence of slight earthworks and there is an interesting circular curve in the field wall south of the Old Vicarage. The field which lies immediately south of the road below Heatherlands also contains what appears to be a distinct raised platform area.

9 Trees

Within the Conservation Area there is a limited range of species with a limited age range. Unusually, there are a large number of mature trees growing throughout the Conservation area which are visually important and add to the character of the village.

Little new planting has been carried in and around the Conservation Area, but there are numerous sites which are suitable for tree planting.

Outside the Conservation Area the nature trees growing on field boundaries around the village contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area.

Trees in Conservation Areas Footnote:

The *Town and Country Planning Act*: Section 211 makes special provision for trees in Conservation Areas not subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Anyone who wishes to cut down or carry out works to a tree in a Conservation Area must give the Local Planning Authority 6 weeks prior notice. The purpose of a Section 211 Notice is to give the Local Planning Authority the opportunity to protect the tree with a TPO. A tree is not defined in the Act, but a Section 211 Notice is only required for a tree with a diameter exceeding 75 mm in diameter. Trees in a Conservation Area already protected by a TPO are subject to the normal TPO controls. A Tree Preservation Order is an order made by the Local Planning Authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principle effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of a tree without the Local Planning Authority's consent.

Hedgerows Footnote:

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 require owners of hedgerows bordering agricultural land to notify the Local Planning Authority before removing a hedgerow or section of hedgerow. The Authority has 6 weeks from receipt of the Hedgerow Removal Notice to determine whether the hedgerow is 'important' and if it is consider protecting it with a Hedgerow Retention Notice.

Map 9 Conservation Area: Trees and Boundary



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Tree Survey: Lydford Conservation Area

(see Tree Survey map page 34)

| Number | Species | Age Class | Number | Species | Age Class |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Ash | Semi-mature | 57. | Ash | Mature |
| 2. | Group of ash | Semi-mature | 58. | Linear group of sycamore | Mature |
| 3. | Group of sycamore | Semi-mature | 59. | Group of cypress | Semi-mature |
| 4. | Linear group of sycamore | Mature | 60. | Cherry | Young |
| 5. | Linear group of mixed broadleaves | Mature | 61. | Group of sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 6. | Sycamore | Mature | 62. | Group of beech | Semi-mature |
| 7. | Sycamore | Mature | 63. | Ash | Mature |
| 8. | Ash | Mature | 64. | Sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 9. | Group of sycamore | Young | 65. | Ash | Mature |
| 10. | Ash | Semi-mature | 66. | Group of sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 11. | Sycamore | Mature | 67. | Ash | Semi-mature |
| 12. | Sycamore | Semi-mature | 68. | Sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 13. | Beech | Mature | 69. | Hornbeam..... | Semi-mature |
| 14. | Lime | Mature | 70. | Maple..... | Semi-mature |
| 15. | Horse chestnut | Mature | 71. | Hawthorn | Semi-mature |
| 16. | Horse chestnut | Mature | 72. | Oak..... | Semi-mature |
| 17. | Beech | Mature | 73. | Sycamore | Mature |
| 18. | Sycamore | Mature | 74. | Beech | Mature |
| 19. | Sycamore | Mature | 75. | Beech | Mature |
| 20. | Sycamore | Mature | 76. | Group of mixed broadleaves | Semi-mature |
| 21. | Beech | Mature | 77. | Sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 22. | Beech | Semi-mature | 78. | Elm | Semi-mature |
| 23. | Beech | Semi-mature | 79. | Yew | Mature |
| 24. | Beech | Semi-mature | 80. | Pine | Young |
| 25. | Beech | Semi-mature | 81. | Laburnum | Young |
| 26. | Beech | Semi-mature | 82. | Hawthorn | Semi-mature |
| 27. | Beech | Mature | 83. | Beech | Young |
| 28. | Broadleaved woodland ... | Semi-mature to mature | 84. | Cherry | Semi-mature |
| 29. | Cherry | Young | 85. | Linear group of beech ... | Semi-mature |
| 30. | Ash | Semi-mature | 86. | Group of beech and willow | Semi-mature |
| 31. | Willow..... | Semi-mature | 87. | Beech | Semi-mature |
| 32. | Cherry | Young | 88. | Cypress..... | Semi-mature |
| 33. | Group of sycamore | Semi-mature | 89. | Birch..... | Semi-mature |
| 34. | Willow..... | Semi-mature | 90. | Willow..... | Semi-mature |
| 35. | Birch..... | Semi-mature | 91. | Group of mixed broadleaves | Semi-mature |
| 36. | Apple | Semi-mature | 92. | Spruce | Semi-mature |
| 37. | Apple | Semi-mature | 93. | Group of alder | Semi-mature |
| 38. | Group of cypress | Semi-mature | 94. | Group of beech | Semi-mature |
| 39. | Group of beech | Mature | 95. | Ash | Semi-mature |
| 40. | Cedar..... | Mature | 96. | Cypress..... | Semi-mature |
| 41. | Yew | Mature | 97. | Sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 42. | Beech | Mature | 98. | Holly..... | Semi-mature |
| 43. | Beech | Mature | 99. | Group of mixed broadleaves | Mature |
| 44. | Beech | Semi-mature | 100. | Group of sycamore | Mature |
| 45. | Beech | Semi-mature | 101. | Linear group of sycamore | Semi-mature |
| 46. | Group of beech | Semi-mature | 102. | Birch..... | Semi-mature |
| 47. | Beech | Mature | 103. | Cypress..... | Semi-mature |
| 48. | Sycamore | Mature | 104. | Group of mixed broadleaves | Semi-mature |
| 49. | Sycamore | Mature | 105. | Cedar..... | Semi-mature |
| 50. | Beech | Semi-mature | 106. | Ash | Semi-mature |
| 51. | Hawthorn | Semi-mature | 107. | Beech | Semi-mature |
| 52. | Holly..... | Semi-mature | 108. | Group of ash | Mature |
| 53. | Beech | Mature | 109. | Group of sycamore | Semi-mature to mature |
| 54. | Ash | Semi-mature | | | |
| 55. | Beech | Mature | | | |
| 56. | Beech | Mature | | | |

Tree Survey: Lydford Conservation Area

(see Tree Survey map page 34)

| Number | Species | Age Class |
|--------|----------------------------|-------------|
| 110. | Cherry | Semi-mature |
| 111. | Ash | Mature |
| 112. | Beech | Semi-mature |
| 113. | Cherry | Semi-mature |
| 114. | Group of mixed trees | Semi-mature |
| 115. | Beech | Semi-mature |
| 116. | Ash | Semi-mature |
| 117. | Amelanchier | Semi-mature |
| 118. | Cherry | Semi-mature |
| 119. | Hawthorn | Semi-mature |
| 120. | Holly..... | Semi-mature |
| 121. | Willow..... | Semi-mature |
| 122. | Holly..... | Semi-mature |

The survey was carried out from publicly accessible land.