NORTH CORNWALL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Blisland Conservation Area Appraisal



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1 Introduction

The purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal

The purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal is to clearly define the special interest, character and appearance of the conservation area. The appraisal should then inform development control decisions and policies and act as a foundation for further work on design guidance and enhancement schemes.

Scope and structure

This appraisal describes and analyses the character of the Blisland conservation area and the immediately surrounding historic environment. The appraisal will look at the historic and topographical development of the settlement and analyse its present character in order to identify problems and pressures and make recommendations for its future management. More detailed advice on the management of the conservation area can be found in the Blisland Conservation Area Management Plan which is designed to stand alongside this appraisal.

General identity and character

Today Blisland is a popular village both to live in and to visit. Previously an agricultural community, the village is now mainly a home for commuters and the retired. Its picturesque natural setting, historic buildings (including a nationally renowned church) and proximity to the moor with its associated leisure activities make the village a significant tourist destination.

Date of designation

During the preparation of the North Cornwall Local Plan the centre of the village was identified as a potential conservation area. It was designated as a Conservation Area by North Cornwall District Council on 3 February 1997.

The Conservation Area within the wider settlement

The present conservation area boundary reflects the extent of the historic settlement core around the green, together with the church and rectory. It also includes the immediate setting of the core area, approaches to it and modern development which is ultimately related to the historic features.

2 Planning Context

National

In 1967 the concept of protecting areas of special merit, rather than individual buildings was first brought under legislative control with the passing of the Civil Amenities Act. Whilst listed buildings are assessed nationally with lists drawn up by the government on advice from English Heritage, conservation areas are designated by local authorities. The current Act governing the designation of 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. Under this Act local planning authorities (LPA's) are required to designate conservation areas, to keep them under review and if appropriate to designate further areas. The Act also requires LPA's to produce guidance on the day to day management of their Conservation Areas. This Character Appraisal and the Management Plan meet that requirement.

Designation remains the principal means by which local authorities can apply conservation policies to a particular area.

Regional

Broad polices relating to the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment is currently contained in the Cornwall Structure Plan (2004). The policy emphasis is that development should respect and consolidate local character. In 2008 the Structure Plan will be replaced as part of the statutory Development Plan by the South West Regional Spatial Strategy. The contained policy approach in respect of the built and natural environment will be maintained in accordance with national guidance.

Local

The adopted North Cornwall District Local Plan (1999) contains detailed polices relating to listed buildings and conservation areas. For this reason, anyone considering making an application for consent for development or demolition within a conservation area or which would affect a listed building should consult the Local Plan. The document is available for inspection at the Council's offices and online at www.ncdc.gov.uk . Pre-application advice can also be sought from the Council's Conservation and Development Control Officers.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced changes to the planning system that will result in the North Cornwall District Local Plan replacement by a Local Development Framework. A portfolio of Development Plan Documents will set out the spatial planning strategy for North Cornwall and provided detailed development control policies including locally distinct polices relating to listed buildings and conservation areas. All documents prepared as part of the North Cornwall Local Development Framework, including the Local Development Scheme which sets the timescale for Development Plan Document preparation and adoption can be viewed at www.ncdc.gov.uk .

The saved polices of the North Cornwall District Local Plan will remain part of the statutory development plan until replaced by adopted Development Plan Documents.

3 Location and setting

Blisland lies 8 km to the north east of Bodmin on the western edge of Bodmin Moor. It is approximately 5 km from the A30, the main arterial road through Cornwall. The village gives the parish its name, and is within the area of North Cornwall District Council.

The village lies in a secluded position on the north side of a valley above one of the tributaries of the River Camel. To the north the land rises gently to the open moorland of Pendrift Downs. To the west the land slopes to the river valleys of the De Lank and the Camel, whilst to the east the land falls sharply toward the hamlet of Waterloo. The river valley to the south is lined by the ancient deciduous Lavethan Wood.

The site of the village itself is gently sloping and, although surrounded by rivers, is high enough to be well drained. Its position at 130m above sea level makes it relatively low compared to many of the moorland settlements, but the village still feels somewhat exposed. As a consequence the trees on the green are an important source of shelter, as are the woods to the south of the village.

Under the historic landscape characterisation survey carried out by Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Service the land around the village was identified as medieval farmland, the land south of St Protus' Well as rough ground and Lavethan Wood as ancient woodland.

Geology

The soil is clay with a sub-soil of clay slate and stone. The land to the eastern side of the parish overlies granite which outcrops in places.

4 Designations

Scheduled Monuments
There are three scheduled monuments – the medieval cross to the south east of Denham House and two crosses in the church yard which are also listed Grade II.

Historic Buildings
There are 25 listed buildings and structures in Blisland including the grade I church and grade II* Mansion House.

Historic Area Designations
The majority of the settlement lies within a conservation area

See townscape map

Other Designations
(All policy numbers refer to North Cornwall Local Plan adopted April 1999)

Nearly all the settlement lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – (ENV1) and the land on its western tip is designated an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) – (ENV1)

Apart from its westernmost tip the whole settlement lies within an Area of Great Scientific Value (AGSV) – (ENV5)

The eastern end of the village is designated an Area of Great Historic Value (AGHV) – (ENV14/15)

The land to the south is a Cornwall Nature Conservation Site (CNC Site) – (ENV5)

5 Historic and topographic development

See also the surviving historic components map.

Prehistory

The landscape surrounding Blisland is rich in prehistoric remains including a late Neolithic circle called Stipple Stones Henge on Hawkstor Downs, the Trippet Stones, barrows, huts and other stone circles. Other evidence of early settlement in the area includes nearby Carwen the site of a Celtic hamlet. The layout of the village itself around a green is typical of many Saxon settlements, but a rare feature in Cornwall.

Medieval

The settlement was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 under the name of Grustone. It has been suggested this was a mis-spelling of the Saxon Manor of Bluston. Other suggestions for the evolution of the village's name include Blis lan meaning happy church, Bliston meaning heath town and Bliston-juxta-Montem. To the south of the green a church was built during the Norman period, possibly on the site of a Saxon structure, but there is no archaeological evidence for this. It is the only church in England to be dedicated to the brothers SS Protus and Hyacinth who were martyred in Rome in the third century.



Picture 5.1 The Church of SS Protus and Hyacinth viewed from the Bodmin approach road.

There are no early records of the church's dedication, however the nearby manor of Lavethan was originally known as Landewen which could suggest St Adwen was the original patron saint of the church. During the fifteenth century the church was extended to include the tower, transepts, south aisle and porch.

Although there are no surviving medieval domestic buildings it seems likely that they would have fringed the central green area. There are however a number of surviving medieval crosses including St Protus' cross on the main approach road from Bodmin, two crosses in the churchyard and a cross on the small triangular green outside Denham House.



Picture 5.2 St Protus' Cross – wheelheaded cross believed to date from the Medieval period



Picture 5.3 Remains of a medieval wheelheaded cross in the churchyard.

The manor of Blisland was granted to Sir Richard Nanfan in 1488 a supporter of Henry VII and one of the ambassadors responsible for the marriage of Henry's son, Arthur, to Katherine of Aragon. During the fifteenth century the house now known as the Mansion House was built at the eastern end of the green. Originally this building was called The Farmers House as it belonged to the Queen's Steward and was used to collect farm rents.



Picture 5.4 Although extensively altered over the years, parts of the Mansion House are believed to date from the fifteenth century.

Sixteenth century

In the early to mid sixteenth century a sizeable country house, Lavethan, was built to the south west of the village, described by Norden in 1584 as being the residence of Humphrey Kemp. Norden went on to describe the fertile nature of the surrounding land, 'there are pastures within the parishe that will kepe fatt oxen all winter, and in as good case as in some places they can be kepte with haye, and the soyle beareth as good corne'. The good quality of the land was reflected in the standard of building within the village and by the late sixteenth century, in addition to the humble cottages which have not survived, there were a number of sizeable houses built in stone around the green. These included the Manor House and Newton House. One of the leaders of the Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549, Thomas Holmes, came from Blisland, but there are no records of his actual address.



Picture 5.5 Despite its modern façade the Manor House has sixteenth century origins.

Seventeenth century

The Mansion House was remodelled after 1627 for its owner Obadiah Reynolds and a stone was erected commemorating the new works dated 1636. During this period a number of detached houses and cottages were built including Ivy and Lemon Cottages, Denham House, Church Town, Lyndale, Rectory Cottage and Churchgate Cottage.



Picture 5.6 Denham House – a seventeenth century cottage used for over a hundred years as the village's post office.



Picture 5.7 Dating from the seventeenth century Rectory Cottage was remodelled in the nineteenth century; its door and windows are twentieth century.



Picture 5.8 The rear of the seventeenth century Churchgate Cottage illustrates how its external stack has been incorporated into the later School building.

Most of these cottages would have been homes to agricultural workers or, in the case of Lyndale, smallholders. In 1653 Lavethan Manor was rebuilt incorporating fifteenth century features from a former building.

Eighteenth century

The village continued to expand and evolve with Beech Tree Cottage built adjacent to Denham House in the early eighteenth century.



Picture 5.9 Beech Tree Cottage – built in the eighteenth century, it has a simple slate canopy for the porch characteristic of the village.

During this period the Mansion House was converted into a series of cottages and the Manor House divided into two dwellings. A carriage house, stables and garden wall were constructed at Newton House. In the 1780s the rector William Pye (1782-1834) built a sizeable rectory to the west of the churchyard.

The 1809 Ordnance Survey drawing shows by this date the main routes into and through Blisland were already in existence. In addition there was a road leading south to Lavethan Wood on a similar route to the modern track to the sewerage plant. To the west of this road there was a small development of buildings, possibly a smallholding. On the site of the present day triangle of grass with the medieval cross there was an actual square with a road crossing from its north-east corner to join the road leading north from the village. The 1801 census records the population of Blisland parish as 437.

Early Nineteenth century

The northern side of the green was further developed in 1833 with the building of Pope Cottage. The northern side of the green was now fringed by a row of detached houses with long back gardens and by 1840 a house was built at the end of the plot behind Pope Cottage. A school for the local children was built on the southern side of the green adjacent to Churchgate Cottage in 1842. The 1840 tithe map shows the road linking the western end of the village to the route north was no longer in existence and the small square had evolved into the present informal green triangle. By this date there was a building on the north western corner of the green, a structure opposite Denham House and a building on the site of the current public house (the Perambulation of the Bounds of the Manor of Blisland of 1816 describes the parties involved as meeting at the public house at Blisland Church Town, so it would seem reasonable to suppose this building was the inn).

At its western end the village had spread along Tregenna Road to include a building on the site now occupied by Rose Cottage and there were buildings to the north and south of the Manor House.



Picture 5.10 Parts of Rose Cottage date from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century.

At the eastern end of the village there was a barn on the other side of the road opposite Newton House.



Picture 5.11 The large granite boulders at the foot of the modern garden wall opposite the rear of Newland House could be part of the early nineteenth century barn that stood on this site.

Later Nineteenth century

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1880 shows the building adjacent to Church Town operating as the Blisland Inn; the building on the green was the United Methodist Chapel and the structure opposite Denham House was a smithy.



Picture 5.12 The former Smithy opposite Denham House. Now converted into a house, the large stable door indicates its former use.

Denham House itself was operating as the Post Office and the census for 1873 records that its owner was a boot and shoemaker as well as the postmaster. The same census records the growing number of trades in the village including two blacksmiths, a farmer/shopkeeper and a publican. The second blacksmith operated from a premises to the north west of the inn. The majority of the parish's population of 569 in 1881 however were involved in agriculture, although one of the village's residents was a captain at a china clay works. China clay was discovered in the later nineteenth century nearby at Durfold and Carwen, where works were opened. Land surrounding the village was used for both cattle, corn and sheep - wool being the staple product of the parish. Sir John Maclead in 1873 in his 'Parochial and Family History of the Deanery of Trigg Minor' noted that 'wages are somewhat low' with the china clay workers and agricultural labourers receiving similar wages but supplementing their incomes with garden plots attached to their properties and by keeping pigs. The 1880 map shows a number of small agricultural buildings including pig houses in the gardens of Pope Cottage and Ivy Cottage and some stores on the northern side of Tregenna Road.



Picture 5.13 A former pig byre in the garden of Ivy Cottage.

There were 126 children at the village school and the church at the time was referred to as St Protho or St. Pratt. During this period the overall size of the village did

not alter greatly, although two further buildings were constructed on the road heading north – on the site of the present-day village hall. There were, however, a number of developments within the historic core. A coach house was built to the south east of the Blisland Inn in 1869 and a further small building directly to the north of it. By this date the buildings directly to the north and south of the Manor House had been demolished and a new house built to the east on the site of the modern house The Retreat. The 1881 map shows the green covered in trees and the vicarage garden formally landscaped with new stables. At some point during the nineteenth century Lyndale, Rectory Cottage and Newton House were all remodelled and Lyndale used as the police house.

In 1894 the architect Frederick Charles Eden restored the surviving medieval work in the church and designed a medieval style rood screen, the high altar, the chancel ceiling and a carved beam in the south aisle. His programme of works was far more sympathetic to the historic fabric of the church than many contemporary church restorations.

There is no record of the date the De Lank Quarry to the north of Blisland began commercially extracting granite, but by the late nineteenth century it was so successful that Eddystone Lighthouse and Tower Bridge were both built from De Lank granite. During this period the quarry was employing 100 local men and women and it would be reasonable to assume that some were living in Blisland. Undoubtedly the quarried stone used in Blisland at this time would have come from De Lank.

Early Twentieth century

The village's importance as a centre for local services continued into the early twentieth century. By 1910 within the village there was a boot and shoemaker, a grocer and sub postmistress, a blacksmith, a shopkeeper and a carpenter. In addition to its role as service provider to the agricultural community, the picturesque nature of the village, its beautiful natural setting and its proximity to the railway station at Bodmin Road resulted in its desirability as a tourist destination beginning to be recognised. The public house which had changed its name to Ye Royal Oak Inn was described in Kelly's Directory of 1910 as 'good accommodation for cyclists and anglers'.

By the first World War the village had physically changed very little since the Victorian period with the erection of just a few further small agricultural buildings and small structures including one to the south of Beech Tree Cottage and to the west of the Mansion House garden. The building to the east of the Manor House was demolished, a glass house built adjacent to the Rectory, and Rose Cottage extended. The churchyard was developed eastwards and a garage built on the adjoining land.

Later Twentieth century

The village's proximity to Bodmin has meant that over the years its importance as a commercial centre has diminished and several of the various small businesses have closed. However, the pub which is once more called the Blisland Inn is still highly successful and the winner of several awards. Following over a hundred years of service the Post Office in Denham House closed but has been replaced by a new

amenity centre housing the Post Office, general stores and doctor's surgery to the east of the church. The village school after it closed became the Sunday School and is now the village institute. By 1971 the population of the parish had fallen to 446, but following a number of building programmes by 2000 it had risen to 665.

During the 1960s ribbon development took place along the eastern axis of the village. At some point the barn opposite Newton House was partially demolished, and its front walls now form the front garden of a house built using the barn's stone. The buildings on the land behind Pope Cottage were demolished and a small council estate built on the surrounding fields incorporating a new hall for the village. The coach house, chapel, smithy, Post Office and Lyndale barn have all been converted into houses. Some modern infill has taken place within the historic core including houses between the pub and the Manor House and between Rose Cottage and Denham House. During the 1980s a private residential estate and a housing association scheme were built adjacent to the council estate and ribbon development took place along Tregenna Road. Recently the former garage site has been redeveloped with large detached houses. The nearest primary school is in the neighbouring hamlet of Waterloo.

6 Archaeological potential

There is one nationally recognised archaeological site of importance in Blisland, the medieval wayside cross opposite Denham House. However, the long and many layered evolution of the settlement gives the whole area developed up to the early twentieth century potential for standing or buried archaeological features. The earliest centres of development – the areas around the green and the church - are of particular archaeological interest and sensitivity. Here the deposits are likely to provide valuable information on the settlement's early form and development. The urban archaeological remains are likely to be more complex in these areas.

7 Present settlement character

Topography and settlement form

Blisland's sheltered position on the side of a river valley on the western edge of Bodmin Moor made it an attractive early site for settlement. The arrangement of houses around a central green suggests that as early as Saxon times the desirability of a well drained site not far from a stream, below the more exposed heathland and at the junction of a number of routes had been recognised. Subsequent development until modern times centred on the green with the surrounding land used for agriculture. In recent years the village has extended on its northern side where the land rises gently to Pendrift Downs and along the roads to the east and west on its northern side. The steeply sloping land to the south and south east of the village discourages further development and the land to the south west has remained undeveloped as it was part of the Lavethan estate.

Standing fabric

There is a great sense of homogeneity in Blisland as the majority of buildings have stone walls and slate roofs, are two stories high and are either detached or semi-detached. The village is far from bland, however, as a number of the buildings have architectural embellishments, or individual features resulting from conversion from former uses. The charm of the settlement was noted by A L Rowse who described Blisland as a 'grey granite village around a green' with 'not one ugly building in it'.

Blisland is of particular interest for the number of sixteenth and seventeenth century buildings which still survive. Although most were remodelled during the nineteenth century there is still a notable survival of projecting stone rubble chimney stacks, granite lintels (some moulded) and granite rubble walls many composed from massive boulders. The larger houses, Mansion House and Newton House, incorporate carved granite detailing. Most now have regular window arrangements, but the early seventeenth century Churchgate Cottage has an asymmetrical two window front.



Picture 7.1 An early asymmetrical window arrangement on the façade of Churchgate Cottage.

Polite architectural design is confined to the church, the Old Rectory, the Mansion House, Newton House, the old school and the large country houses which surround the village. The majority of the buildings are simple vernacular stone structures, with plain facades and slate roofs.



Picture 7.2 The Mansion House with Newton House beyond – fine examples of polite architecture on the eastern side of the village.

Although the majority of buildings are now houses many had previous incarnations which can still be observed within their fabric. The Coach House has large pointed windows with red brick surrounds and a central two storey former hay loft.



Picture 7.3 The Old Coach House has retained much of its former character despite its conversion to domestic use.

The tall east end windows on the former Methodist Chapel on the green have been filled in with stone at first floor level. Despite the addition of domestic gable dormer windows the former life of the Old Smithy is discernible from its stable door and the massive stone trough. The old school is now the village institute and this change of use has resulted in little external alteration.

Over the years many of the buildings have been sub-divided and in some cases restored to single occupancy. The Manor House, a row of three cottages in the late nineteenth century, is now a single dwelling. The Mansion House was also in multiple occupancy for a time but has reverted to its original form. Pope's Cottage was built as a pair of cottages with two round arched doorways but is now a single home, whereas Ivy Cottage and Lemon Cottage were originally built as a single house.



Picture 7.4 Pope Cottage was originally two cottages and the round headed windows were two doorways.

Churchtown Cottage was built in the seventeenth century as a house and a cottage was added in the mid eighteenth century. They now form one building.

An essential part of the historic character of the settlement is its former agricultural buildings. Although some structures have been lost to subsequent development or, like Lyndale Barn converted into domestic use, the nineteenth century piggeries with their simple granite walls and slate roofs

still survive, as do a number of stores such as those adjacent to Denham House and the Old Smithy.



Picture 7.5 Lyndale Barn - on the right – has been converted into domestic use.



Picture 7.6 Solidly constructed from slatestone and granite, with a slate roof, the former piggery still survives at Pope Cottage.

Key Buildings

- Church of St Protus and St Hyacinth – grade I. John Betjeman was particularly attached to this building and described how 'Of all the country churches of the West I have seen I think the church of St Protus and St Hyacinth, Blisland, in Cornwall, is the most beautiful'. This Norman building with fifteenth century additions, including the three stage tower, is a mixture of granite ashlar and rubblestone walls, Early English and Perpendicular tracery and seventeenth century internal joinery. Sensitively restored in the nineteenth century its original medieval features were conserved and Ecclesiological features such as the rood screen were added. The church is of national importance and its tower is both the principal landmark in the village and the surrounding countryside.



Picture 7.7 SS Protus and Hyacinth church – the three stage tower dates from the fifteenth century.

- Mansion House – grade II*. This granite rubble building with large granite quoins dates from the fifteenth century. Its scantle slate roof is not original and over the years the whole building has been subject to various schemes of renovation and subdivision. It represents, however, a substantial gentleman's residence and some-time estate house. As a consequence the building has a wealth of decorative features including an imposing two storey porch (partially demolished but rebuilt to the original design in 1970s), mullion windows, hood moulds and carved scroll kneelers.



Picture 7.8 The grade II* Mansion House is a strong feature on the north eastern side of the green.



Picture 7.9 Pevsner has suggested this doorway arch on the north elevation of the Mansion House could be Norman.



Picture 7.10 Carved decorative scroll work on the kneelers at Mansion House.

- Newton House – grade II. A stone rubble building rendered on its east front elevation and part slate hung on the rear elevation. The main eastern façade has two projecting bays and a seventeenth century entrance with a chamfered granite basket arch. Adjoining the house on its north western side are the grade II eighteenth century stables built from stone rubble with granite quoins.



Picture 7.11 Eighteenth century stables adjoining Newton House.

Other listed buildings in the village :-

- Medieval – The cross opposite Denham House, the churchyard cross and three headstones
- 16th Century – Manor House (remodelled in the mid twentieth century)
- 17th Century – Ivy Cottage, Lemon Cottage, Denham House, Church Town, Lyndale, Rectory Cottage, Churchgate Cottage
- 18th Century – Beech Tree Cottage, Lyndale Barn
- 19th Century – The Old Smithy, The Old Coach House, the piggery at Ivy Cottage, the old School, Pope Cottage and piggery.



Picture 7.12 Church Town one of the seventeenth century buildings on the northern side of the green, with a mid eighteenth century attached cottage.

Other unlisted but historic buildings :-

- Rose Cottage – although partially rebuilt in the early twentieth century the rear elevation of this structure dates from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century.
- The Rectory – this sizeable eighteenth century villa has been extended over the years but still retains its polite rendered façade with canted bay windows and decorative mouldings.



Picture 7.13 The façade of the Old Rectory glimpsed through trees from the churchyard.

- The Blisland Inn – a mid-nineteenth century structure with quasi medieval detailing such as the stone mullion windows, three centred arch above the doorway and stone canopy on carved brackets.



Picture 7.14 Its Gothic embellishments single out the Blisland Inn from the domestic buildings in the village.

- The Cottage on the Green – originally the Methodist Chapel.

Local details

There are both hipped and gabled roofs throughout the village. Most have plain ridges and hips, but the later Blisland Inn has decorative crested ridge tiles.

There is a pleasing variety of window treatments throughout the village including both casement and vertically hung sash windows. Early nineteenth century two light casements survive at Ivy Cottage and early nineteenth century sashes at Newton House and the Mansion House. The majority of the timber windows are painted white. There are original mullion windows at the Mansion House and nineteenth century versions at Blisland Inn. There are pointed window openings on the Old Coach House and trefoil headed windows with diamond leaded panes on the Old School.



Picture 7.15 Gothic style windows on the façade of the Old School.

Most of the cottages have plain facades, but the Blisland Inn has projecting bays and canted bays were added to the façade of Church Town in the nineteenth century.



Picture 7.16 The façade of Churchtown Cottage with late nineteenth century canted bay windows.

Similarly most of the rooflines are plain except for the Old Forge which has gable dormers, presumably added when the building was converted into domestic use.

One of the features of the village are simple slabs of slate held in place with iron brackets to form door canopies. These can be found at Churchgate, Beech Tree House, Denham House and Rose Cottage.

Local and traditional building materials

The historic building walls throughout the village are constructed from granite - the majority being rubblestone with cut granite detailing such as quoins and lintels. Granite would have been the obvious choice of building material with early builders using surface moorstone before the De Lank quarries opened to the north of the settlement. On the larger houses the granite features are carved and chamfered. Some of the earlier buildings include massive boulders in their lower courses. Pope's Cottage, the Blisland Inn and the northern elevation of Newton House are built from ashlar granite blocks. On most of the houses the stone walls are untreated, but Lyndale, the Manor House, the Rectory

and the eastern façade of Newton House are all rendered, and the walls of Churchgate, Denham House and Lemon Cottage have been painted.



Picture 7.17 The rendered façade of Lyndale – originally seventeenth century the door and windows date from its remodelling in the early twentieth century.



Picture 7.18 Although the stone walls of Lemon Cottage have been painted it is still apparent that it once formed a single dwelling with the adjacent Ivy Cottage.

Most of the houses have stone or slate cills and there are small areas of slate hanging - on the southern elevation of Beech Tree Cottage and the western elevation of Newton House. The early chimneys in the village were stone with slate drip courses, but over the years some have been rendered and others replaced with brick stacks.



Picture 7.19 Nineteenth century brick chimney stacks on Pope Cottage.

The roofs throughout the village are slate - both scantle and rag slate.

Activity and use

Originally an agricultural settlement Blisland, due to its close proximity to Bodmin and the A30, is now mainly a dormitory village for people who work elsewhere and the retired (the parish plan identified that 33% of the parish were retired). Its picturesque nature, famous church and proximity to Bodmin Moor and the River Camel (popular for fishing and its cycle route the Camel Trail) make it a significant tourist destination. As a result during the summer the village is busy with visitors and the pub becomes an important focus of activity.

There is a strong sense of community and, in addition to the pub, amenities in the village include the church, village hall (where a doctor's surgery is held) and village institute. The post office and general stores that had been run from Denham House for over 100 years recently

closed, but has been replaced by a purpose-built amenity centre to the east of the church. There is no longer a school within the village, but the green provides an important amenity for the children and includes an area with swings. There is a local bus service from the village to Bodmin once a week.

Spatial analysis

The central green area bordered only by granite boulders and slabs gives the village a spacious and open plan feeling. Such is the size of the green the buildings that surround it are often too far apart to relate to one another, a situation which is further exacerbated in summer when the trees are in leaf.



Picture 7.20 Simple granite boulders form a boundary to the green.



Picture 7.21 From the western end of the green during the summer the eastern side is virtually hidden.

As a result the village is experienced as a sequence of areas all united by the same common central space. To the south of the green the church, Churchgate Cottage, the village institute, the Rectory and its associated buildings and walls form an area of their own - a miniature church town with the landscape of the green to the north and the fields above Lavethan Wood to the south.

The buildings bordering the northern side of the green form an area of ribbon development, neatly enclosed by the Old Coach House set at an angle at its western end. The green on its southern side gives the row an edge of settlement feeling which has been increased in recent years by the further development of the village to the north.

The western end of the village forms its own tiny neighbourhood around the medieval cross on the triangular green. This area has a far greater sense of enclosure than the rest of the village as there are buildings on two of its three sides and the open vista of the main green to the east is blocked by the former Methodist Chapel. The sense of enclosure is intensified on its

northern side where the road curves round towards Lemon and Ivy Cottages bordered on both sides by high walls sited directly onto the street.



Picture 7.22 Cottages grouped around the triangular green at the western end of the village.

At the eastern end of the village the high walls enclosing the Mansion House and Newton House give a sense of a small enclosed community like a medieval manor farm complex, quite separate from the village.



Picture 7.23 High granite walls to the north of Newton House add to the sense of enclosure.



Picture 7.24 The garden of the Mansion House is highly visible and is an intrinsic part of the character of the eastern end of the green.

The siting of these two sizeable buildings with south facings gardens adds greatly to the sense of enclosure along Moor Common Road, whilst their large gardens allow for important views across the south-eastern corner of the green. Along Manor Common Road where the wall of the former barn faces the rear wall of Newton House the sense of enclosure is even more intense marking the boundary between the streets of the village and the country lane beyond.



Picture 7.25 There is a strong sense of enclosure at the western end of Manor Common Road.

Streetscape and views

The streets of Blisland are informal with simple tarmac surfaces and no pavements. Road markings are confined to 'give way' lines and information about the cycle route. Some areas of historic paving still survive including the granite cobbles outside Denham House and the slate paving stones bordered by a granite kerb in front of Churchgate Cottage.



Picture 7.26 Granite cobbles in front of Denham House.

In front of the garden walls of Lyndale and Rectory Cottage the historic slate gutter still exists.



Picture 7.27 Slate gutter in front of Lyndale.

The unenclosed green gives the impression of parkland at the centre of the settlement but the roads leading off from the centre are more enclosed. Here walls are an important feature, marking boundaries and enclosing gardens. The southern side of the road on the south and eastern side of the green is bordered by high granite walls enclosing the churchyard and the Rectory. Granite walls also surround the Mansion House, Newton House, and are adjacent to the Old Smithy and Denham House. Elsewhere there are low granite and rubblestone garden walls with granite copings. The boundary between Ivy and Lemon Cottages is formed by large vertical slate slabs – a common feature of early cottage gardens. In addition to the solid granite and rubblestone domestic walls, dry stone walls can be found throughout the village – some plain and some in the form of Cornish hedges with planting above.



Picture 7.28 A Cornish hedge bordering the Merry Meeting Road.

To the east of Newton House there is an area of drystone walling built in the distinctive style of diagonal courses known as kersey way popular in areas of slatestone.

The green dominates the views within the village itself softening the impact of the imposing grey surrounding granite walls and buildings. The views in the centre of the village change with the seasons as the leaf fall allows further visual connections to be made across the green. There are, however, other more intimate views within the village such as the view from below the triangular green looking north west as the road curves round towards Lemon Cottage.



Picture 7.29 A late summer view across the green showing only glimpses of the buildings on its northern edge.



Picture 7.30 From the green there are views to the church and the hillside beyond.

The village's positioning on a hillside affords a number of imposing vistas including the view from the Pen Tor Estate on the northern side of the village southwards over the roofs of the Mansion House and Newton House towards the church tower. At the south western corner of the green there is a long vista across the Horsepit field towards the River Camel.



Picture 7.31 The far reaching vista across Horsepit Field connects the centre of the village to its surrounding landscape.

From the churchyard there are charming views south across the river valley and north over the green towards Mansion House and Newton House.

Many of the lanes into the village are tree lined and provide a charming pastoral approach.



Picture 7.32 The leafy approach into Blisland from the south east of the village.

The steep cut lane that enters Blisland from the south western side, the Merry Meeting Road, forms a narrow enclosed wooded approach as it climbs to the village centre from the valley below.

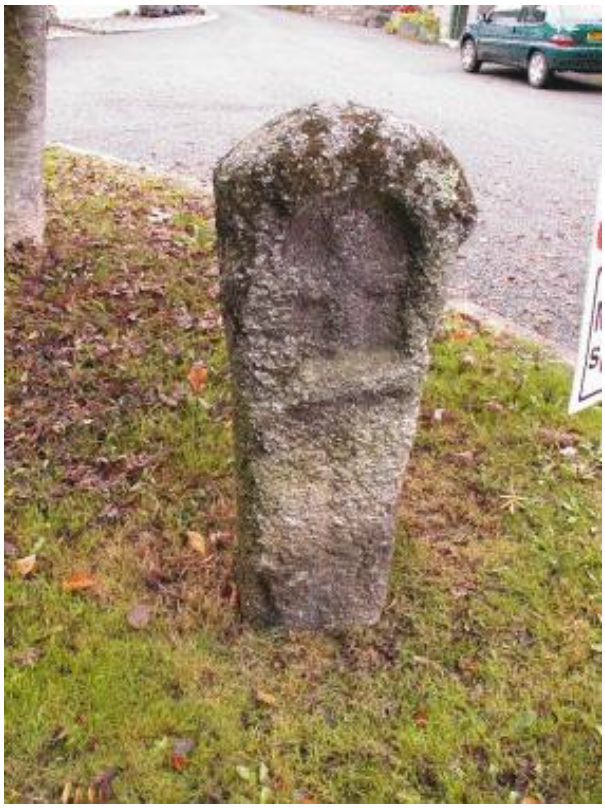


Picture 7.33 The intensely rural and enclosed approach to Blisland along the Merry Meeting Road.

In contrast as it reaches the summit it opens out into the small green with views of the large open village green beyond.

Public realm

In addition to the historic buildings there are number of features in the village that help to enhance its character. Unsurprisingly many of these are formed from the local granite. In and around the village there are a number of medieval crosses the most prominent of which is sited on the green outside Denham House. This granite cross has a Greek cross head in shallow relief on both sides and is a scheduled monument as well as listed grade II.



Picture 7.34 The Medieval cross on the green in front of Denham House is a listed building and a scheduled monument.

Outside the village on the south eastern side is the medieval St Protus' Cross – listed grade II – which retains its original wheelhead. There is a further listed cross in the churchyard.

Granite boulders and pieces of cut granite provide a simple but effective boundary to the green itself. Outside the Old Smithy is a large granite water trough a reminder of

the building's former use. The sound and sight of running water is also an attractive feature in its own right.



Picture 7.35 A granite trough outside the Old Smithy indicates the building's former use.

Other granite troughs can be found throughout the village including outside Denham House and the Old Coach House



Picture 7.36 Although re-sited this granite trough is a reminder of the former use of the Old Coach House.

Granite steps are another feature of the village – these mainly take the form of doorsteps but there is a flight of steps leading up to the Manor House, on the outbuilding adjacent to Denham House and in the form of a mounting block in front of the old stable block (listed grade II) next to Newton House.



Picture 7.37 Granite mounting block outside the stables at Newton House.

There is a small tethering post with iron rings on the green in front of Denham House and in recent years a granite monolith has been erected on the grass outside Horsepit field to commemorate the Millennium and the centenary of the Queen Mother.



Picture 7.38 Small historic survivals such as the tethering post on the green outside Denham House all add to the village's historic interest.



Picture 7.39 The green verge in front of Horsepit Field and the Millennium commemorative stone.

Other non-granite features of note include the original cast iron finger sign posts and the telephone box which is a K6 designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and listed grade II.



Picture 7.40 The cast-iron finger posts are an important feature in the village and greatly enhance its character.



Picture 7.41 The grade II listed telephone box adjacent to the Old Coach House.

There is a certain amount of original wrought iron work still surviving in the village the most notable of which is the churchyard gates supported by two granite posts.

Greenery and green space

The most significant open space in Blisland is the green - the focus of the settlement and the point where the five lanes meet. The importance of the green in not only determining the plan of the village, but also informing its whole character has long been recognised - Polsue in 'Lake's Parochial History of Cornwall' in 1867 described Blisland as a 'park-like church village'.



Picture 7.42 Polsue's description of a 'park-like' village is still applicable.

Although essentially an informal space the green lends an impression of grandeur and spaciousness, complementing and enhancing the stature of the surrounding buildings. Many of the old elm trees were destroyed by Dutch Elm disease but have been replanted with ash, oak, elm, chestnut and rowan.



Picture 7.43 After the elms on the green were destroyed by Dutch Elm disease they were replaced by a mix of species.

In addition to its obvious visual benefits the green also plays an import amenity role providing a children's play area, and the Silver Jubilee wrought iron seats for the use of both locals and visitors.



Picture 7.44 Swings on the green where local children can still play as they have done for centuries.

Further green areas include the grassy bank outside the Blisland Inn which is used in the summer for outside dining, and the small green in front of Denham House. This green with its medieval cross forms a miniature village green for the surrounding houses. Large grass verges can be found in front of Horsepit field, bordering the Rectory wall and in front of the eastern garden wall of Mansion House and Newton House. These areas relate to the central green, continuing the sense of informal open space.

The lanes approaching Blisland are lined with trees and these provide a green backdrop to many of the views, as does the woodland to the south of the village.

Gardens also make an important contribution to the character and quality of the village; these range from the exceptional gardens of the Rectory, Mansion House and Newton House to the charming front gardens on the northern side of the green and the cottage gardens at the western end.



Picture 7.45 The sizeable Mansion House and Newton House gardens are amongst the most exceptional gardens in the village.

Loss, intrusion and damage

The survival of historic buildings in Blisland is generally very high and the settlement has some of the oldest surviving domestic houses in Cornwall, albeit that many have been remodelled over the years. Historically; a real loss to the village was the removal in the eighteenth century of the great embattled gateway which formed the approach to the Mansion House and was subsequently moved to Lavethan. Otherwise nearly all the significant historic buildings survive, although many have been adapted to different uses. In the main these conversions have been successful and have ensured the buildings' survival whilst retaining much of their former character.



Picture 7.46 The former Rectory stables have been converted into a house.

Less easy to interpret is the House on the Green, the former Methodist chapel, where the modern bow window and domestic front door give no clues to the building's former identity.



Picture 7.47 The former use of the House on the Green as a chapel is not apparent from its domestic western façade.

As the nature of the village has evolved the type of buildings required has necessarily changed and as a consequence some of the small agricultural buildings have disappeared and with them some of the informal character of the settlement.

Recently the Post Office has closed changing the character of the small green area from a place of public congregation to an entirely residential area.

As the majority of new build has been confined to the northern side of the village the degree of intrusion in the historic core is slight. The bus shelter, whilst having a natural slate roof, (at an oddly low pitch) has inappropriate concrete walls and is of an unsympathetic design, especially given its sensitive location.



Picture 7.48 The bus shelter could be better designed in recognition of its sensitive historic location.

The 'infill' buildings to the west of the pub, whilst not unattractive, could have been better designed given the sensitivity of their setting.



Picture 7.49 New houses to the west of the pub.

The use of modern slate roofs, non-local stone, and inappropriate polite detailing all sound jarring notes in such a harmonious setting. Similarly the new development to the east of the church includes detailing such as round windows, gable dormer windows, over-scale classical style porches and non-local stone garden walls all of which are alien to Blisland's historic character, but are sited next to its most prestigious historic building.

One of the defining characteristics of the area around the Manor House is the sense of enclosure, but this unfortunately is lost where the front gardens between Denham House and Rose Cottage do not follow the road line.



Picture 7.50 Along Tregenna Road the historic road line and sense of enclosure has been lost.

There have been a number of alterations and extensions in Blisland over the years which not only impact on the character of the individual buildings involved but on the wider character of the village. The substitution of original windows, doors and roofs with modern replacements that do not replicate the original materials or style and the addition of porches, shutters and new wall finishes all have a detrimental effect.

General condition

The buildings in Blisland are generally well maintained and in good condition and there are no buildings at risk. The Rectory wall, however, has areas that require repair.

8 Problems and pressures

It is important for a village such as Blisland where its main traditional industry (agriculture) is in decline to adapt in order to survive. However, where the quality of the existing building stock and natural landscape is so high change needs to be very carefully managed, in order that these features are valued and maintained.

Historic Buildings

For the size of the village there is a large number of listed and historic buildings which in the main are well maintained and in good condition. Over the years however there has been a certain amount of adaptation and alteration that is beginning to impact on the character of the settlement and could compromise the village's historic integrity if it were to continue unchecked.

- Replacement windows and doors –a number of historic buildings have windows and doors in non-traditional materials or of inappropriate design and finish. These features not only diminish the historic integrity and aesthetic value of the building involved, but also have a detrimental impact on the historic character of the village as a whole.
- Dormers and roof lights –the majority of historic buildings in the village still have original scantle and rag slate roofs. The importance of these roofs as characteristic of the village should be recognised and any moves to insert dormers should be resisted. Roof lights should only be considered on rear elevations.



Picture 8.1 Natural slate roofs are an important feature of the village and should be preserved in their original form.

- Wall painting and slatehanging – stone is the traditional wall material in the village and all the walls would originally have been plain and uncoated. However, over the years a number of walls have been painted, rendered and slatehung.
- There are a number of important historic buildings in the village which contribute significantly to its character but are unlisted.

Public Realm

- Signage - although signage in the village is generally low key and not over intrusive it is fairly utilitarian, not always carefully sited and does not take account of the quality of the surrounding built and natural environment. There is also a tendency to place informal notices on trees and poles which are not then subsequently removed.



Picture 8.2 Over zealous road marking can have a detrimental effect on the surrounding environment - particularly in sensitive locations such as outside the Mansion House.

- Lighting – the street lights in the village are attached by brackets to existing poles. This is an excellent idea as it reduces the visual impact of a plethora of poles. However, the design of the lights is very utilitarian of a type more suited to a town bypass than a historic village.
- Garden walls and hedges - at present the majority of the village's historic plot boundaries are still in place, apart from the houses along Tregenna Road between Denham House and Rose Cottage. Increasingly however, these unifying and historic features are under threat in order to create off road parking spaces.



Picture 8.3 The historic plot boundaries are an important part of the village's character.

- Overhead cables – there are areas in the village where the prevalence of overhead cables, such as the corner of the Old Coach House, has a detrimental effect on the historic character.



Picture 8.4 The plethora of overhead cables has a detrimental effect on views of the church.

- Parking – the Blisland Village Plan highlighted the problem of parking around the green, particularly during the height of the visitors' season.

New Building

In recent years there has been a certain amount of development with the historic core of the village in the form of both infill and redevelopment. Whilst there is nothing wrong with both in principle, in such a sensitive location it is essential they should be of the highest standard. Furthermore within the village centre many of the original historic plots still survive and are fundamental to the village's charm and historic integrity - every effort should be made to preserve these historic plots. The scope for further infill is considered to be very limited.

- Materials – part of the essential character of the village is the ubiquitous local granite, rubblestone and slate. Recent development in the village centre however has included rendered and non-local stone walls, and artificial slate roofs. These materials sound a jarring note drawing attention to the new buildings, rather than allowing them to merge into the surrounding historic landscape.
- Pastiche and inappropriate detailing – some of the recently built houses display a lack of understanding of the surrounding historic environment. The addition of dormers, slate hanging, round windows and classical style porches none of which are traditional to Blisland again prevent the buildings' comfortable assimilation.
- The attractive nature of Blisland and its proximity to Bodmin and the A30 has resulted in its gradual expansion since the 1960s. However, if the village is overdeveloped it risks losing its unique historic value and special natural character.
- Form and layout are an important consideration as cul-de-sac developments have a suburban character that does not reflect the traditional development forms.

9 Recommendations

More guidance is available in the Conservation Area Management Plan

Historic Buildings

- Windows and doors in the historic core should be of traditional materials and design. Historic windows should be repaired where possible or replaced to match originals.
- Blisland has an admirable survival of original slate roofs which contribute greatly to the village's character. In order to preserve this asset the insertion of dormer windows and the replacement of natural slate coverings should be discouraged. On unobtrusive rear elevations good quality small scale rooflights could be considered, but an Article 4 direction ought to be considered to control these works.
- Whilst painted walls and slate hanging can appear charming, adding interest and accent they should not be allowed to become dominant otherwise the traditional aesthetic of Blisland as a granite moorside village will be lost.
- Other structures contribute to the character and deserve to be retained and cherished.



Picture 9.1 Locally significant structures such as the trough outside the Old Smithy wararnt preservation.



Picture 9.2 Blisland's historic cast-iron finger posts are another example of distinctive character features.

Public Realm

- Signage – given the historic sensitivity of the village core more thought could be given to the placing of signs and the use of better quality materials and design. The informal pasting of signs on trees and poles should be avoided, but if this does take place they should be removed as soon as the event advertised has taken place.

- Lighting – the practice of using existing poles to carry the street lighting should continue. The lights themselves should be of a design and materials more suitable to their sensitive surroundings and the question of their need may be revisited.
- Garden walls – consideration should be given to the creation of Article 4 Directions in order to control the demolition of walls and hedges, especially for the creation of hard standings.
- Overhead cables – consideration should be given to the feasibility of under-grounding cables. Otherwise they should be appropriately sited in order to impact less on the surrounding historic and natural environment.
- Parking - if a suitable site for a car park is found and the decision is taken to prevent parking around the green this should be indicated by discreet, well designed signs and not by yellow road markings which would have a significant negative impact on the character of the area.

New Building

- Design guidance specific to the village should be produced based on a detailed audit of the materials, designs, details and character of the historic buildings in order that any future development (including extensions) preserves and enhances the character of the settlement. Detailed site appraisals should be required for specific development sites.
- Further development should be limited to meeting the needs of those who require affordable housing and to those sites within the village development limit set by North Cornwall District Council. It is particularly important that Horsepit Field should be preserved as it represents a connection between the historic core and the surrounding landscape which has been lost in so many villages. Further development within historic plots should be avoided.
- In order to ensure the contribution made by existing trees to the character of Blisland (especially in the green area) is recognised and protected where necessary a full survey of the existing trees, hedgerows and ornamental landscapes should be carried out.

10 Opportunities

- In order to further promote Blisland as an historic settlement further information on its development and architecture could be provided by interpretation boards or by an exhibition in the Village Institute. A village trail could be produced not just for Blisland itself, but linking it with the surrounding historic settlements. This could present Blisland's heritage to a wider audience and help attract new visitors.
- A village notice board, possibly sited by the Village Institute or the new post office would avoid the need for pasting signs on lamp posts.
- The village children have indicated the need for a village clock. This should be well designed and of good quality materials, and could be sited on the Village Institute.
- Although the grassy area in front of the pub already provides a popular amenity, this area could be further enhanced by a more attractive surface on the access road. This would distinguish the area from the road, whilst still providing the necessary vehicular access to the pub.

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