

# Noss Mayo Conservation Area Appraisal



**Conservation Areas are usually located in the older parts of our towns and villages. They are places whose surviving historic, architectural and locally distinctive features make them special. Conservation area designation highlights the need to preserve and reinforce these qualities.**

The policies followed by the District Council when assessing proposals affecting conservation areas are set out in the South Hams Local Plan, while the Supplementary planning document 'New Work in Conservation Areas' explains how to achieve compliance with them. This is essential because the Council has a statutory duty to approve proposals only if they "preserve or enhance the character or appearance" of the conservation area.

The purpose of this appraisal is to set out what makes the Noss Mayo Conservation Area special, what needs to be conserved and what needs to be improved.



# Noss Mayo Conservation Area

## Summary of Special Interest

The tidal creeks form the backbone of Noss Mayo's setting and many activities in and around the village are governed by its relentless ebb and flow: a walk to Newton Ferrers via Newton Voss is only possible at low tide, as is parking a car rather precariously on the hard; it also presents an opportunity for curlews and egrets to scratch around in the mud and for boats to be scraped down.

From an elevated position on the steep sides of the valley there are outstanding views and the walks nearby are some of the most popular in the South Hams. From the conservation area around the shore, the valley provides a sense of enclosure and a wonderful position for St. Peter's Church, which seems to look down on the village reassuringly.

The conservation area is small, with little space for further infill. Some modern development has occurred up the valley side above the historic village but this tends to reinforce the sense of snugness and does not seem to detract from the charm of the original cluster of cottages;

The character and development of the village has been greatly affected by its position down in the valley. Some parts of it do not get any sun for two months and others only in the morning or evening. Residents of nearby Newton Ferrers still sometimes refer to "those over in the dark" but few at Newton would dispute that Noss Mayo is a very attractive place and that they benefit from the view.

One cannot assess the village without giving credit to the Baring family and their legacy of buildings in the village. These were built distinctively and well and contribute

## The Barings

Edward Charles Baring (1828-1897) bought nearby Membland Hall in 1877. He proceeded to lavish money on the property and developed many estate buildings throughout the 4000 acre estate.

The resulting architecture is distinctive in style and is mostly attributed to the office of George Devey, a prominent late Victorian architect. Traditional, local materials of slate and stone with lime mortar were used, but the buildings' design is eclectic with picturesque, pointed roof-lines, Elizabethan style chimneys, bracketed eaves and leaded windows. The buildings are prominently situated and make a unique contribution to the building stock in the area.

Edward Baring was created 1st Lord Revelstoke in 1885 and was senior partner in Baring Brothers, the merchant bankers. Baring had personal assets on a scale rarely imaginable today. His rise to fortune had been exceptional as was his dramatic financial decline in 1890, which led to the sale of Membland Estate.

Locals still refer, with respect, to the Barings and their achievements. They extended and completely changed the appearance of Membland Hall, built a new church for Noss Mayo, a post office, a school, lodges, model farms, stables and ancillary buildings, all in a short thirteen year period of residence.

enormously to the building stock of the village. Several of them are listed.

Within the conservation area, the original tightly knit group of fishermen's cottages have become expensive homes. Up to a third are holiday homes and lie empty much of the year, a state of affairs that permanent residents dislike. However, summer visitors help create a lively atmosphere for several months. Most residents enjoy experiencing the difference between summer activities and quieter periods of winter tranquility and beauty, when the village reverts to being a small but thriving community.



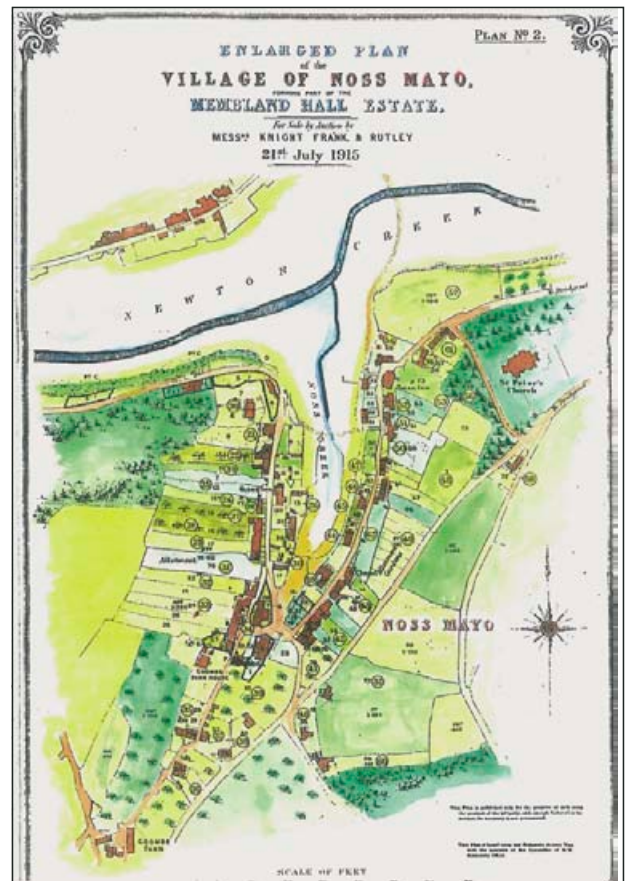
■ St. Peter's Church



■ Cottages in Creekside Road



■ Cottages in Passage Road c1900



## Location and Setting

Noss Mayo is ten miles from Plymouth ref. Sx547476 and was designated a Conservation Area on 3rd October 1985.

The original village, which has become the conservation area, is in a small steeply wooded valley, hugging the shoreline of Noss Creek. The west facing valley side is covered with houses, some of which are very large and out of scale with the original small cottages. The east facing side is not built up and has many long narrow gardens rising steeply behind the houses.

From the conservation area, the general feeling is one of envelopment as the two valley sides look across at each other. The other views are south up the rural valley and north across Newton Creek over to Newton Ferrers. At the mouth of Noss Creek there are excellent views to the east and west along Newton Creek.



## Historic Development and Townscape

The name Noss Mayo originated in 1287 when King Edward 1 gave Mathew Fitzjohn the manor of Stok, hence Noss Mayo, Mathew's Nose.

The original village evolved from a primitive 13th century cellar settlement which was a collection of basic structures built around the edge of the creek by farmers to house boats for fishing. There are several indications that fishing took place; Noss was granted permission for a fish market in 1286 and Cellars Beach is a popular place today. The original crude shelters gradually became more substantial and eventually emerged as the cottages that form most of the conservation area. The village remained spatially the same for hundreds of years, isolated by a poor road which virtually stopped at Noss Mayo. Most people, living in their little cottages, trying to scratch a living, might hardly have had the time or inclination to enjoy the view that today has become so expensive to acquire.

Noss has benefitted from several generous benefactors who contributed towards improving facilities in the village: the first was the Vicar of Yealmpton who built a new Chapel of Ease in 1839. The Chapel became the school in the 1950's and eventually the Village Hall, which it continues to be to this day; the Baring family were the most generous benefactors - they built a new church above the village called St. Peter's and many other buildings in the area. The Barings also financed the building of Nine Mile Drive, now incorporated in South Devon Coastal Footpath.

After the Barings left, around 1890, the estate was bought briefly by William Gray who sold off much of the property in 1915. At this time many of the houses in Noss Mayo

## Noss Mayo Appraisal

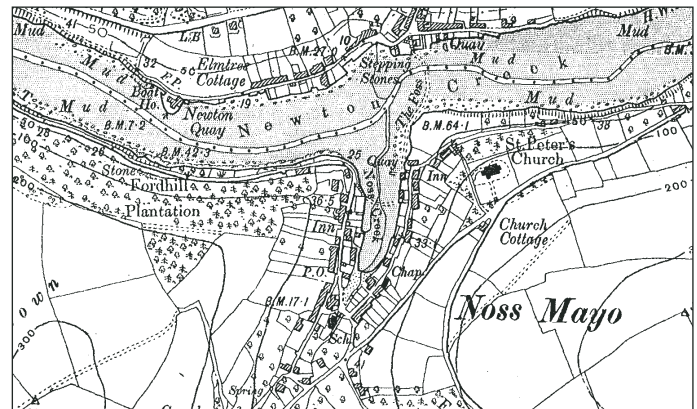
■ East facing valley side with gardens behind



Within the conservation area there are many low stone walls beside the narrow lanes which have to cope with increased summer traffic. Several lanes are just wide enough for one car with only infrequent passing places which allow traffic to move. However, the low walls do allow views of the creek and valley from most places, so that the village does not have a corridor feeling.

were bought privately and the map on page two shows how many houses were up for sale.

World War Two changed the pattern of life and Noss Mayo gradually became more prosperous, though in this sense it remained the poor relation of Newton Ferrers. The village is still dogged by being a terminus village serviced by minor roads which may look attractive, but are wholly inadequate to cope with the volume of cars that arrive in the summer.



1st Edition map of Noss Mayo 1800/1890



■ Modern map of Noss Mayo

# Community Involvement in the Preparation of this Appraisal and Management Plan

This appraisal has been produced with the involvement of the community from the earliest stages; views were sought from the children of the Primary School and the households of the village. Once the Draft Appraisal was complete, residents were invited to comment at a public exhibition. Many of the findings are shown in the Management Plan which accompanies this appraisal.

## The Listed Buildings

There are eleven listed structures in Noss Mayo.

St. Peter's Church (1) is Grade II\*. Designed by St Aubyn in Perpendicular Style and commissioned by the Barings, it looks down onto the village from an enviable position. The church was built extravagantly and is considered by most to be a great addition to the village.



1 St Peters Church

The Churchyard gateway (2) is a fine example of wrought iron work with running leaf decoration. The Tilly Institute (3) has become a snooker hall, but the Reading Room, which is part of the building, is still available for the village to use and is a valuable small meeting place. The Village Hall (4) is a great asset to the village. The remainder of the listed buildings are privately owned. These are: 41 Creekside Road (5), Blue Shutters (6), Voss Cottage and 50 Creekside Road (7), Pink Cottage (8), The Old Boathouse (9) and Anchor Cottage (10).



2 Churchyard gateway



3 The Tilly Institute



4 The Village Hall



5 41 Creekside Road



6 Blue shutters



7 Voss Cottage (51) and 50 Creekside Road

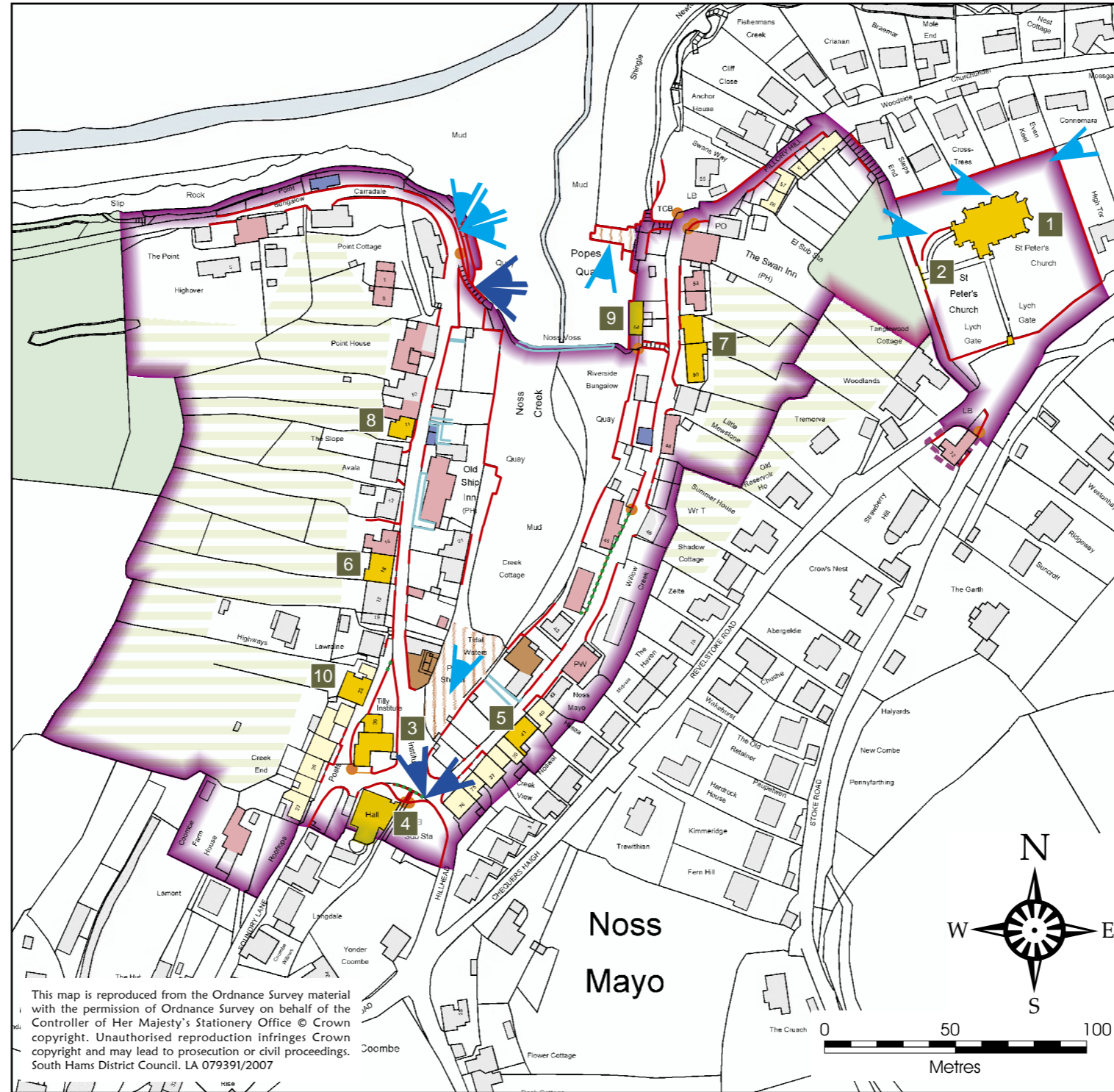


8 Pink Cottage



9 The Old Boathouse

# Noss Mayo Components Map



KEY	
	Conservation Area Boundary and Area of Archaeological Potential
	Proposed Conservation Area boundary extension
	Listed Buildings
	Positive Group Impact
	Unlisted buildings with a Positive impact (includes some buildings that have been subject to inappropriate alterations (eg UPVC windows) but contribute positively nonetheless)
	Important Open Space characterised by lack of development within it
	Buildings with a negative impact on the Conservation Area
	Walls with a positive impact on the Conservation Area
	Paths with a positive impact on the Conservation Area
	Revelstoke Railings
	Historic street furniture
	Area with scope for improvement
	Important Garden Areas
	Significant Distant Views
	Significant Close Views

### Cautionary Note

The formal designation of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Tree Preservation Orders and Scheduled Ancient Monuments is a continuous process so if you need to be certain that the designations shown on the Map are still correct, please check with Planning and Building Control at the District Council.



10 Anchor Cottage

# Areas with Archaeological Potential

The archaeological background set out below is based on information currently held in Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER). The knowledge is likely to evolve and be revised over time.

## Prehistoric and Roman Noss Mayo

While there is no evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity within the conservation area, two areas of early activity are recorded nearby in the Historic Environment Record. One of these is a settlement site, of Prehistoric or Roman date, visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. This is located on Coombe Down, just about 100m to the west of Noss Mayo Conservation Area. The other is an isolated farmstead and adjacent cultivation plots, that may be of pre-medieval date. This is located at Netton, to the south of the village of Noss Mayo.

Nearby Newton Creek has potential for the survival of preserved archaeological sites, as well as waterlogged palaeo-environmental deposits on the foreshore and estuary, including the remains of wrecks.

## Post Medieval and Modern Noss Mayo

In addition to numerous 17th, 18th and 19th century houses of historic interest within the village, there are a number of military features (though these are outside the conservation area). These include a Worswell Battery, a possibly Napoleonic Battery, as well as evidence of military activity from the Second World War; Netton anti-aircraft battery and the site of World War Two seachlight at Worswell. Also near Little Worswell there is the site of a Royal Observer Corps post, opened in May 1953.

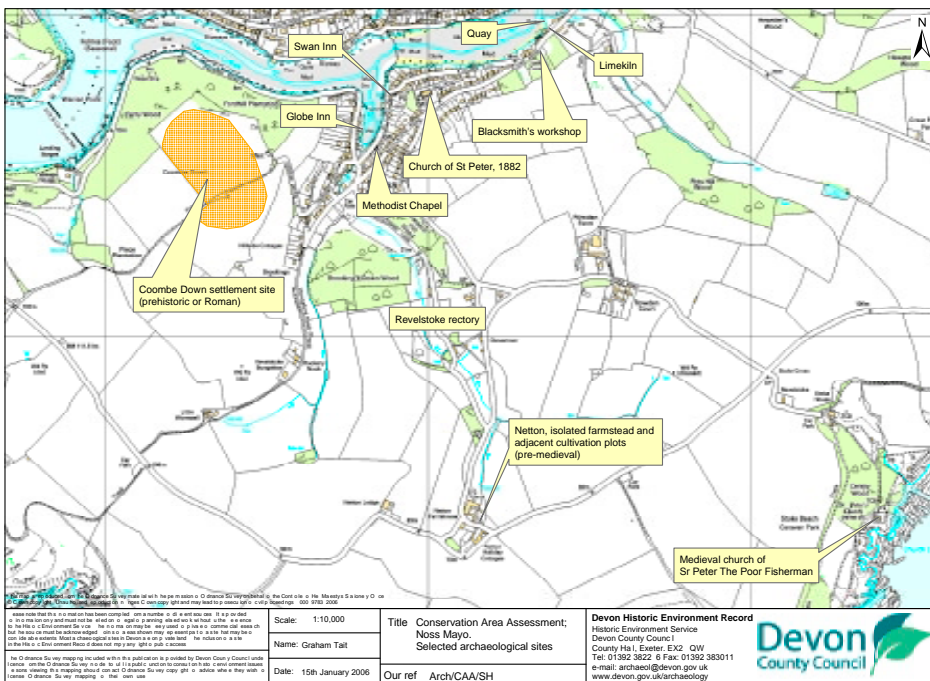
## Sites with Statutory Protection

Historic Landscape Characterisation shows the historic core of Noss Mayo as an area similar to the Conservation Area. Directly to the west of this, field boundary patterns suggest that the land was enclosed in the post-medieval period. Directly to the east of the conservation area, the enclosures are probably based on medieval fields, but the many straight field boundaries suggest they were substantially re-organised in the post-medieval period. Further south towards Netton and Worswell, modern enclosures have replaced barton fields (regular enclosures that appear to have been laid out between 15th and 18th centuries), whilst the steep slopes by Newton Creek appear to be ancient woodland that may date back to the medieval period.

## Planning Implications

Any development within or adjacent to the historic core of Noss Mayo will be subject to either predetermination archaeological investigation or PPG16 planning condition. The level of archaeological mitigation will depend upon the nature, extent and location of the development as well as previous disturbance to the site.

The above represents an appraisal of the current Historic Environment Records as of 12 January 2007 and does not include a definite consideration of the listed buildings within this area.



## Trees

Although there are only two groups of Tree Preservation Orders in the conservation area, trees generally make a vital contribution to the character of Noss Mayo. The group to the west of St. Peter's Church, in particular, bring about a seasonal transformation. In the winter a sense of close proximity, power and solidarity are felt, but in the summer the tower is just visible above a wall of green, which gives an impression of distance and mystery.

The valley is surrounded by trees, more thickly on the western side, but generally they provide a backdrop for the houses that have been built throughout the valley.



## Other Buildings and Structures of Special Interest

The two houses in the conservation area built by the Barings add great interest to Noss Mayo and are described on the main map as having a Positive Impact. They are grander than the earlier cottages and yet at the same time complement them; their location, near the mouth of Noss Creek at the opposite end to the Village Hall and The Tilly Institute, seems to balance the village.

Another building lending interest is the former Methodist Chapel. Now a private house, it is typically prominent and has not been altered externally.

Outside the Village Hall is an area where fishermen would gut and clean their catch. Formerly known as The Chute, it is called The Fountain today. Beside it is the Fitzroy Storm Barometer given to the fishermen of Noss Mayo by the RNLi during the 1860's (a matching one can be seen at Newton Ferrers).

Around the creekside are old taps that supplied water to the village. Originally fed by a hydraulic ram higher up the valley, some still work but are now fed by mains water.



■ A Revelstoke House



■ A Revelstoke House



■ The Fountain



■ Fitzroy Barometer



■ Previous water supply



■ Former Methodist Chapel

## Former Activities and Current Uses

In times past the main activity was fishing. Noss had a fish market as far back as the 13th century and was known as a fishing village up to 1900. Visitors started arriving in the early 20th century, but they usually came by boat and in much fewer numbers than today. Noss has been described by one long-term resident as "the back of beyond" in the 1950's, but at that time there was a baker, butcher, school and general store. There are no shops now and the local children go to school in Newton Ferrers.

Today there is little commercial enterprise except for public houses and bed and breakfast accommodation. The pubs provide some employment but the village has become a tourist attraction for yachtsmen, walkers and motorists. It is unfortunate that such successful enterprises, which have given the village a core in the winter, should also cause some of the traffic problems in the summer.

Most visitors arrive via the narrow road through Bridgend. This is a single lane road with passing places. The pressure generated by so many cars trying to get into the village in the summer causes the residents a great deal of stress.



■ The last fishing boat left in the 1960's



■ Regatta at Noss Mayo 1930's

## Building Material Assessment

The original cottages were built with the materials that were available nearby i.e. stone and slate. There were many places where slate, known locally as “shellet”, was available but this was of poor quality and all the original roofs have been replaced with a mixture of slating alternatives.

Early 20th century photographs show several thatched properties, mainly around the Swan Inn but there are no thatched properties in the village today.

Many UPVC windows have been introduced. Some are early examples of this material and are very obviously inappropriate for the building and the area. Preference for traditional fenestration is returning, however advice is given by the District Council, whose Supplementary Planning Document

‘New Work in Conservation Areas’ provides guidance of appropriate window types.

The Baring family built St Peter’s Church at Noss Mayo in 1888.

The church stands perched above the village, a fine stone and slate



■ Typical walling in the village

## Areas with Potential for Improvement

Noss Mayo’s greatest problem, is the large numbers of cars in summer and where they park especially. Many residents were against introducing double yellow lines and it was a pleasant change not to have this visual intrusion. Recently however Devon County Council’s Highways Department introduced some small sections of double yellow lines but it is too early to gauge their effectiveness. The village has really tried to stop inconsiderate parking by putting up notices making drivers aware of the necessity for access for large emergency vehicles, yet selfish parking does still occur.

It is possible that some parking restriction could be tried with the introduction of some residents parking areas. This would mean that more double yellow lines are not introduced and residents could park near their homes.

Any proposal will be controversial but it must be recognised that visitors’ cars unfortunately cannot be stopped from entering and leaving the village. It will take some enterprising person to find a solution and it may be that Noss Mayo just has to accept that roads in the summer often become impassable.

Overhead cables are very visible in the conservation area and have emerged as a source of annoyance from the questionnaires. Several residents referred to the enhancement that has taken place at Newton



■ Overhead cables

building with an interior plastered with murals and furnished with elaborate wood carving.

The Barings built many houses and farm buildings and the two at Noss are typical of their style. They have been described as a ‘distinctively spiky romantic style of continental derivation’, instantly recognisable and unique to the Baring Estate.

The extent of walling within the village is shown on the main map. The walls are not high and are really fences but stone was used as it was so easily available.

The next stage of development started around 1930 and is an ongoing process. Within the conservation area the dominant buildings are still the original cottages and later additions do not detract from the original fishing village.



■ Delabole slate on edge in the porch at St Peter's Church



■ Church door

Ferrers in Riverside Road, where cables were removed. Residents would like to see the same happen in Noss Mayo.

The lavatory block needs to be updated or replaced. The surrounding area should also be generally improved as this is a key position in the conservation area.



■ Lavatory block

Except for some unpainted iron-work there are no other areas that need urgent improvement.

There is a definite aversion from a perceived threat of suburbanness. Areas that have previously needed attention have been addressed by the residents. The village has demonstrated an unusually strong sense of community cohesion and has completed several communal projects such as the restoration of The Fountain, Crocker’s Quay and The Tilly Reading Room. The village hall has just had major renovation with many villagers giving hands-on support. Popes Quay was another successful village project completed 25 years ago. The village is fortunate in having several forward looking



■ Revelstoke railings

residents who try to anticipate problems that could occur in the future. They feel that some foresight can prevent unfortunate development which if allowed, goes on to become an area that then needs improvement.