

ST LEONARDS SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS, LAUNCESTON, CORNWALL

Centred on NGR SX 35002 84882

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of:
South West Water Ltd

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2015 at St Leonards Sewage Treatment Works (STW), Launceston (NGR SX 35002 84882). The proposed development area covers approximately 1,500 square metres in the west side of the STW. The area is considered as having potential for surviving archaeological deposits related to a medieval chapel and leper hospital.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches totalling 18m in length, with each trench measuring 1.50m wide. These were positioned to provide sample coverage of the development area. The evaluation found that the area had been significantly disturbed by construction works, beginning in the late 19th or early 20th century, associated with the STW. All finds observed and collected were of 19th or 20th century date. No evidence for medieval activity was found.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1** This document presents the results of an archaeological trench evaluation at St Leonards Sewage Treatment Works (STW), Launceston (SX 35002 84882) undertaken by AC archaeology on 14 July 2015. The works had been requested by the Cornwall Council Senior Development Officer (Historic Environment) in advance of the proposed construction of a new tank within the existing STW, and were commissioned by South West Water Ltd.
- 1.2** The proposed development area covers approximately 1,500 square metres in the west side of the STW. The STW is located 2km to the east of Launceston on the floodplain of the River Tamar at the junction of the River Kelsey with the River Tamar, at a height of approximately 50m aOD. The underlying geology comprises Carboniferous interbedded mudstone and sandstone of the Crackington Formation overlain by Quaternary alluvium of clay, silty, sand and gravel.

2. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The site is located in the vicinity of a medieval chapel and leper hospital that was founded before AD 1075 (Cornwall Council HER MCO10207 and MCO28605). Its exact location is not known, and it has previously been placed both to the south of the river, and to the north of the river (within the STW). A medieval bridge, designated as a Grade II listed building, crosses the River Kelsey, and may be associated with access to the chapel and leper hospital (MCO9610).
- 2.2** The area was investigated for the *Time Team* television programme in 1996, and included a geophysical survey (ECO3865) and trial trench excavation (ECO2320). Within the STW the geophysical survey (GSB Prospection 1996) did not locate any anomalies that could be conclusively related to the leper hospital. The excavations established the limits of the cemetery but suggested that the hospital buildings lay beneath the Launceston Sewage Works. The excavation of an inhumation provided a radiocarbon date contemporary with the hospital. A watching brief south of the River Kensey in 2001 (in one of the supposed locations for the hospital) did not identify any medieval features (ECO658; Muir 2001). A previous survey of the development area by Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) revealed a few linear anomalies interpreted as non-metallic (see Fig. 2).

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the investigations were to carry out a trial trench evaluation in order to establish the presence, absence, survival, date, character and location of any below-ground archaeological deposits, and secondly to prepare a report on the findings to allow, if required, the Cornwall Council Senior Development Officer (Historic Environment) to formulate a mitigation strategy should archaeological remains be present.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) 2014 document *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation* and an approved written scheme of investigation (Passmore 2015). The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of three trenches totalling 21 in length, with each trench 1.5m wide. The trenches also performed the function of geotechnical pits and were thus dug deeper than what would normally be considered necessary for an archaeological evaluation. The removal of soil within the trenches was carried out under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.
- 4.2 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro-forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS (Plates 1-4)

5.1 Introduction

A total of three trenches was excavated, each measuring up to 8m long by 1.5m wide; two trenches were located within the area of the proposed new tank with the third located to the east to investigate a second location for a potential second smaller tank (Fig. 2). The site was found to contain no surviving deposits of archaeological interest and provided a record only of the modern use of the site. The trench deposit descriptions are provided in detail below. All finds observed were of modern date and the majority were not collected; a sample that was collected is described separately in section 6 below.

5.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the centre of the development area. It was aligned approximately NW-SE and excavated to a maximum depth of 4.8m. The deposit sequence was as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
100	Light grey to light grey brown silty clay loam, containing a single large unworked stone	0-0.20m	Topsoil
101	Light grey silty clay	0.20-0.33m	Subsoil
102	Light grey and yellowish brown silty clay	0.33-1.53m	Made ground
103	Dark blue to grey silty clay	1.53-1.93m	Organic-rich redeposited alluvium
104	Dark yellow sandy silt and gravel	1.93-2.93m	Stoney alluvium

105	Light yellow/grey/blue fine silty clay	2.93-3.73m	Alluvium
106	Dark yellow and dark yellowish brown sand and gravel	3.73-4.80m+	Possible river terrace deposit

5.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the southwest side of the proposed development. It was aligned NW-SE and excavated to a maximum depth of 4.5m. The deposit sequence was as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
200	Light grey to light grey brown silty clay loam	0-0.20m	Topsoil
201	Light grey silty clay	0.20-0.30m	Subsoil
202	Light grey and yellowish brown silty clay	0.30-0.60m	Made ground
203	Light grey and brown sandy silt	0.60-0.90m	Made ground
204	Dark blue to grey silty clay	0.90-1.90m	Organic-rich redeposited alluvium
205	Light brown and dark yellowish brown fine silty clay. Worked wood containing modern nails was found in this deposit	1.90-2.40m	Alluvium
206	Yellow to dark yellow fine clay	2.40m+	Alluvium

5.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in the northeast side of development area. It was aligned approximately NE-SW and excavated to a maximum depth of 4.10m. The deposit sequence was as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
300	Light grey to light grey brown silty clay loam	0-0.20m	Topsoil
301	Light grey silty clay	0.20-0.30m	Subsoil
302	Tarmac underlain by a silty sand containing metal, glass, potentially asbestos-containing material and fragmented plastic and concrete drainage pipe	0.30-1.50m	Made ground
303	Yellow to dark yellowish brown fine clay	1.50-4.00m	Alluvium
304	Dark yellow sand and gravel	4.00m+	Possible river terrace deposit

6. FINDS *by Charlotte Coles*

6.1 The only finds retained were from made ground (102) and consisted of a piece of slate, post-medieval pottery and a horseshoe.

6.2 Post-medieval pottery

A total of two pieces of post-medieval pottery – a sherd of 19th-century coarseware and a sherd of 19th-century blue-and-white transfer printed industrial china – were recovered.

6.3 Iron

The horseshoe was made from iron is 19th- or 20th-century date.

6.4 Slate

The piece of slate is large measuring 440mm x 280mm x 34mm, and may be a roofing shingle or door threshold. However, there are no distinctive features which would confirm it as an architectural piece.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that the deposits overlying the natural alluvium and river terrace gravels consist predominantly of made ground and are devoid of archaeological features.

7.2 A possible buried soil (103/204) must be of relatively recent date since 204 overlays redeposited alluvium 205 which contained modern wood. These and the overlying made ground deposits containing modern material indicate at least two phases of former landscaping, with the tarmac (302) indicating a buried area of former hard standing in the northeast part of the proposed development area.

7.3 No evidence was found for activity on the site prior to its most recent modern use and there were no finds of pre-late post-medieval date. The made ground is most probably related to activities relating to the construction and expansion of the STW in the 20th century but the area may also have been disturbed by the construction between 1892 and 1899 of the now closed North Cornwall Railway (MCO55730) which resulted in a cutting to the northwest of the site and an embankment for a road bridge (Colhay Bridge; MCO 55731) which abuts the site to the southwest. The cutting is now filled in with only the parapets of the bridge extant.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The trench evaluation found that the overlying deposits are made up of modern material, and no evidence to indicate the potential for survival of deposits of archaeological interest was found.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ, and will be offered to the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro.

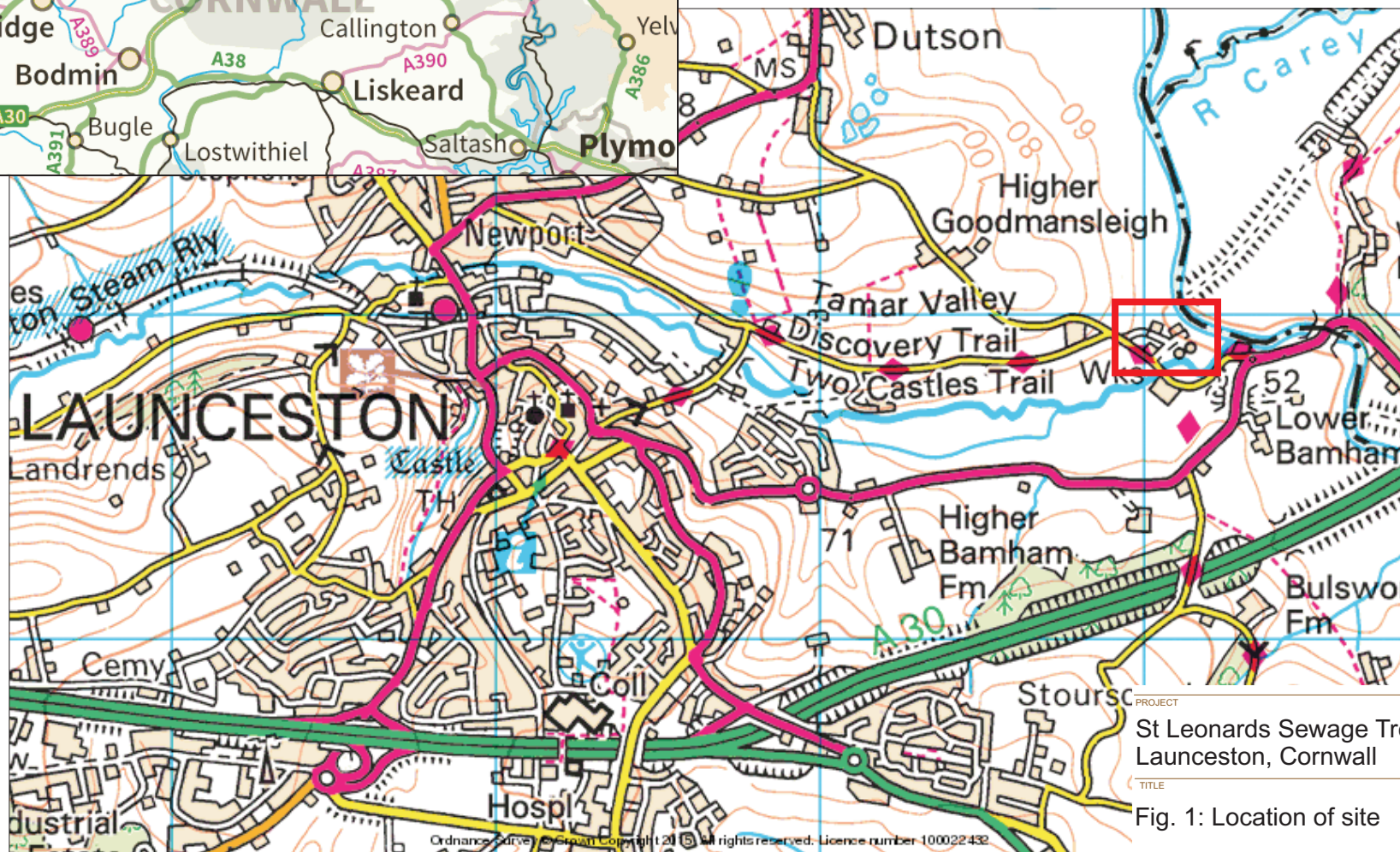
9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 218201, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by South West Water Ltd. The site works were carried out by Ben Pears. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Stella De-Villiers and Elisabeth Patkai. Thanks are due to Balfour Beatty, in particular Dave Hollyoak, for setting up the project and providing plant.

11. REFERENCES

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PROJECT
St Leonards Sewage Treatment
Works, Launceston, Cornwall

TITLE
Fig. 2: Location of trenches





Plate 1: General view of development area, looking southeast



Plate 2: Trench 1, southeast-facing section (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 2, northeast-facing section (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 3, southeast-facing section (scale 1m)

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