



# Portland Castle, Castletown, Portland, Dorset

## Observations and Recording



Report No. 53372/3/1

April 2012

# Portland Castle, Castletown, Portland, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording During Erection of New Display Panels, March 2012

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**Client:** English Heritage, English Heritage, 1 Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, EC1N 2S

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## Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
OASIS Reference	terrains1-124603		
Project Title	New Display Boards, Portland Castle, Portland, Dorset		
Short Description of Project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology during the erection of two new display panels in the grounds of Portland Castle, Portland, Dorset. The deposits revealed related to the Governor's Garden or the earlier yard surface. No significant finds were observed.		
Project Dates	Start: 27-03-2012	End: 27-03-2012	
Previous/Future Work	Yes/Not Known		
Project Code	53372		
Monument Type and Period	Artillery Castle (Post-medieval)		
Significant Finds	None		
Project Location			
County/District/Parish	Dorset/ Weymouth& Portland/ Portland		
Site Address	Liberty Road, Castletown, Portland, DT5 1AZ		
Site Coordinates	SY 6845 7437		
Site Area	0.375 m <sup>2</sup>		
Height OD			
Project Creators			
Organisation	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Brief Originator	English Heritage		
Project Design Originator	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Supervisor	Peter Bellamy		
Project Manager	Peter Bellamy		
Sponsor or Funding Body	English Heritage		
Project Archive			
Archive Type	Physical	Digital	Paper
Location/Accession No		Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum
Contents	No Physical Archive	Digital photography	context sheets, report



# Portland Castle, Castletown, Portland, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording During Erection of New Display Panels, March 2012

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Project Introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by English Heritage to undertake archaeological observations and recording during the erection of new display boards in the grounds of Portland Castle (Figure 1, hereafter referred to as 'the site').

'Archaeological observations and recording', also more colloquially known as an archaeological watching brief, is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) as *"a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive"* (IfA 2008).

Fieldwork was carried out on 27 March 2012 by Peter Bellamy BSc (Hons) MIfA.

Terrain Archaeology gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and assistance of Claire Henry and Heather Sebire of English Heritage and David and David of Parcsigns.

#### 1.2 Brief

No written brief was issued by, or on behalf of, English Heritage.

#### 1.3 Site Location and Topography

The site lies on the west side of Castletown, Portland on the southern side of Portland Harbour, at Ordnance Survey NGR SY88457437. The Castle lies on low flat land about 3 m above OD close to the shoreline. The land to the west of the castle is reclaimed.

#### 1.4 Geology

The underlying geology is mapped as Kimmeridge Clay (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

#### 1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

Portland Castle is one of a pair of artillery castles built during the reign of Henry VIII c. 1540 to protect Portland Harbour (together with Sandsfoot Castle). It is constructed of Portland stone ashlar with lead and slate roofs. In plan it forms a sector of a circle and has a gun room to seaward and a gun platform above. A yard lies to the south enclosed by a stone wall, originally with a ditch outside it, which contained further gun platforms and 17th century buildings. The castle was contained with outer ditch and bank defences of mid-late 16th century date (RCHME 1970, 250).

In 1623 it had 13 guns and by the time of the Civil War it had 21 guns. It was held by the Royalists but surrendered in 1646, after which it was used as an ordnance store and prison. From 1816 it was modernised for residential use and was occupied by the Manning family. In 1870 it reverted to the Crown and was empty for many years (RCHME 1970, 250).

The castle has been subject to a number of previous episodes of archaeological investigation and survey. It was surveyed and described by the Royal Commission and published in 1970 (RCHME 1970, 250-252). Between 1999-

2001 archaeological investigations including evaluation, watching brief and building recording was carried out by Stewart Brown Associates, which revealed remains related to the construction of the castle including lime kilns and building layers. Civil War remains were encountered during trenching in the moat. Prehistoric levels were also found which yielded 449 flint and chert artefacts, mostly of Bronze Age date. Further quantities of worked Portland Chert broadly dating to the Middle Bronze Age onwards were found during a watching brief in 2003 carried out during groundworks for the new Governor's Garden (CFA 2003).

Observations carried out by Birmingham University in 1995 in the area around the castle revealed evidence for a stone-built angle bastion to the northwest and traces of a bank and ditch to the south (Woodward and Tyler 1995). Observations by Terrain Archaeology in 2002 during drainage construction at Osprey Quay within the former area of the outworks of the castle revealed only reclamation deposits, but these contained a number of large Portland stone blocks which may have been derived from the castle outworks (Bellamy 2004).

## 1.6 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the archaeological works were laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2011).

The aim of the Archaeological Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

Three objectives were defined by the Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2011):

- To observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to install the new display panels within the Governor's Garden, to an appropriate professional standard.
- To monitor the installation of display materials within the interior of the castle to record any exposure or alteration of the historic fabric.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.

## 1.7 Fieldwork

The groundworks comprised the hand excavation of two rectangular pits in the locations shown on Figure 2, under the observation of a suitably qualified archaeologist.

## 1.8 Methods

The methodology and scope of the works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Terrain Archaeology in August 2011 (Terrain Archaeology document no. 3372/0/1).

The works were carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IfA 2008).

The test pits were excavated by a JCB wheeled excavator fitted with a toothed bucket. The test pits were initially excavated to the top of the natural deposits under archaeological supervision. Subsequent excavation down to the top of the bedrock was not archaeologically observed or recorded. Resulting ground visibility was moderate, but was of sufficient clarity to determine the absence of archaeological features and artefacts.

The location of the pits was surveyed using taped measurements.

A qualified, experienced archaeologist was present on-site during all key groundworks. Spoil arising from the test pits was visually scanned for artefacts and all deposits exposed, regardless of their perceived date and archaeological significance, were recorded using components of Terrain Archaeology's system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records.

A digital photographic record of the watching brief was maintained, incorporating specific aspects of its technical detail as well as its conduct and wider setting.

## 1.9 Archive and Dissemination

The project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and appropriate background documentation, is currently stored by Terrain Archaeology under the project code 53372. In due course, it is intended to deposit the archive with Dorset County Museum, subject to fulfilment of the museum's requirements for the deposition of archaeological archives. Deposition of the archive will place it in the public domain.

A paper copy of this report will be lodged with Dorset County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.

A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project ([www.oasis.ac.uk](http://www.oasis.ac.uk)) under the reference code *terrains1-124603*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

A brief summary of the fieldwork results will be published by Terrain Archaeology in the next edition of the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*. No further publication is proposed.

## 2. Results

### 2.1 Introduction

A total of two rectangular pits for the erection of two new display boards were excavated in the locations shown on Figure 2. No archaeologically significant features or deposits were identified within the excavated areas. Summary deposit sequences are presented below. All depths are expressed as below local ground level (BGL).

### 2.2 Pit 1

Dimensions 0.65 m x 0.3 m x 0.58 m. Located on the east side of path outside Captains House (Figure 2). Two electricity cables were found crossing diagonally across the southern end of the pit.

0.0 – 0.09m	Dark brown clay loam topsoil and turf
0.09 – 0.15m	Hard-packed imported semi-rounded flint gravel surface.
0.15 – 0.35m	Dark brown clay with moderate stone flecks and sparse clinker.
0.35 – 0.5m	Dark greyish-brown clay with frequent Portland stone rubble including some dressed fragments.
0.5 – 0.58m+	Stiff dark reddish-brown clay with mixed dark brown soil with moderate limestone fragments and sparse unworked Portland chert fragments.

The deposit sequence represents a series of mixed undated soil layers below a layer of flint gravel, which is probably part of an earlier path or yard surface. This is sealed below the turf of the current garden.

### 2.3 Pit 2

Dimensions 3.05 m x 1.0 m x 0.6 m. Located just southeast of the steps leading up to the gun platform on the east side of the castle (Figure 2).

0.0 – 0.1m	Reddish-brown clay silt and turf.
0.1m – 0.37m	Gritty clay loam with rounded flint gravel, small limestone fragments and some reddish-brown clay mottles.
0.37 – 0.5m	Dark brown clay loam with frequent small rounded limestone fragments and occasional animal bone fragments.
0.5m+	Dark brown clay loam with sparse small stone fragments



### 3. Finds

#### 3.1 Finds

A small number of fragments of animal bone were noted in Pit 2. These were not retained.

### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

#### 4.1 Conclusions

The excavation of the two pits for the erection of the new display boards did not expose any significant archaeological deposits, features, or finds. The deposits exposed appeared to relate to either the forming of the Governor's Garden or the earlier yard area of the castle.

### 5. References

- |                                                            |      |                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AAF,                                                       | 2007 | <i>Archaeological Archives. A guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation.</i> Archaeological Archives Forum.                     |
| Bellamy, P. S.,                                            | 2004 | Osprey Quay, Portland, Dorset: Archaeological Observations and Recording, October 2002. (Terrain Archaeology report No. 53101.1). Unpublished Client Report. |
| Brown, S. & Matthews, A.,                                  | 2001 | Portland Castle Archaeological Evaluations, Watching Briefs & Building Recordings 1999-2001. Stewart Brown Associates                                        |
| IfA,                                                       | 2008 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief.</i> (Revised Edition). Institute for Archaeologists.                                          |
| [RCHME] Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) | 1970 | <i>An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset, Volume 3: Central Dorset,</i> (London; HMSO)                                                |
| Woodward, A. and Tyler, D.,                                | 1995 | 'Proposed New Barrackmaster's Workshop, R.N.A.S. Portland' <i>Proceedings for the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society</i> 117, 137-140.           |

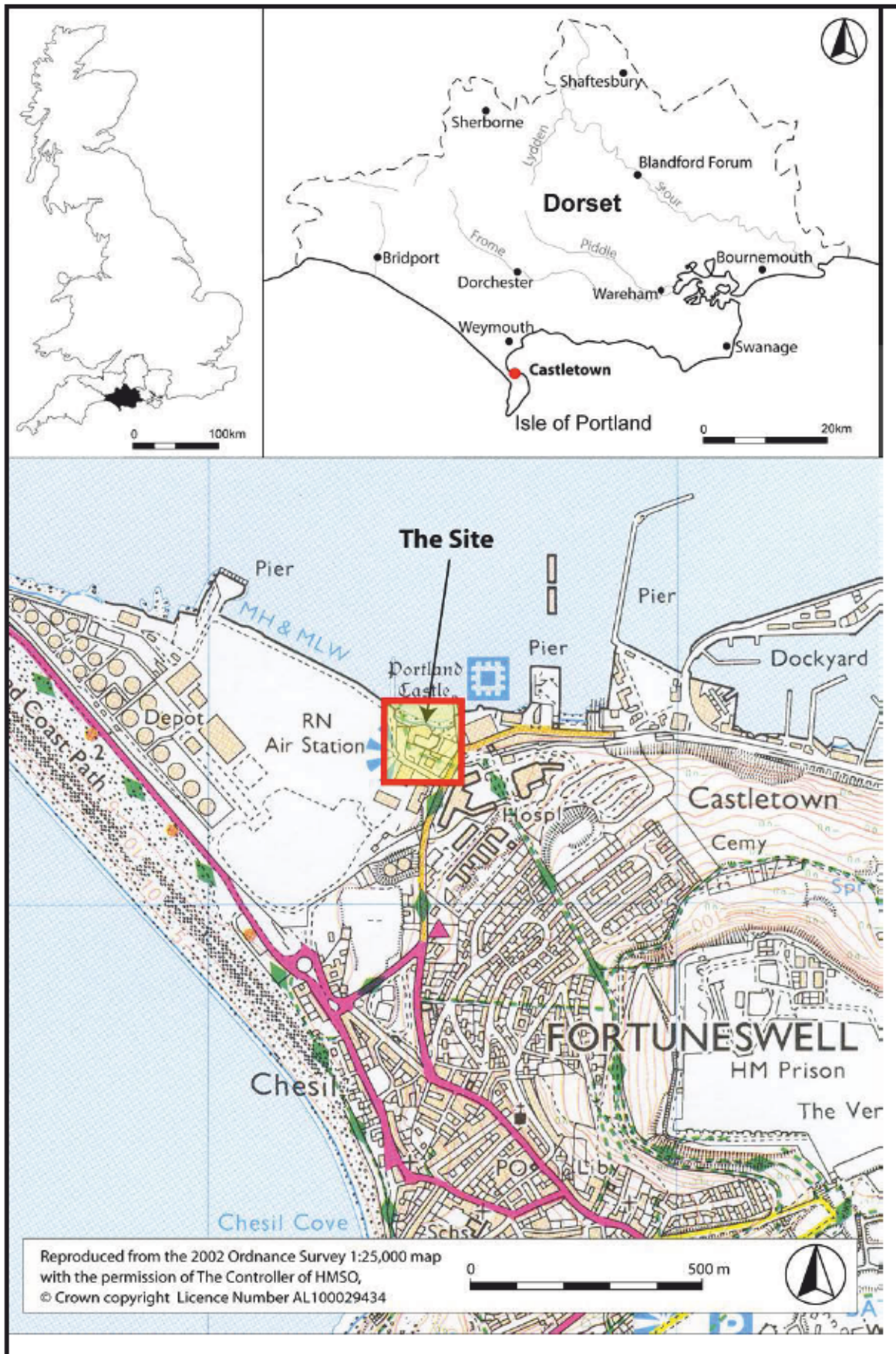


Figure 1: Location map

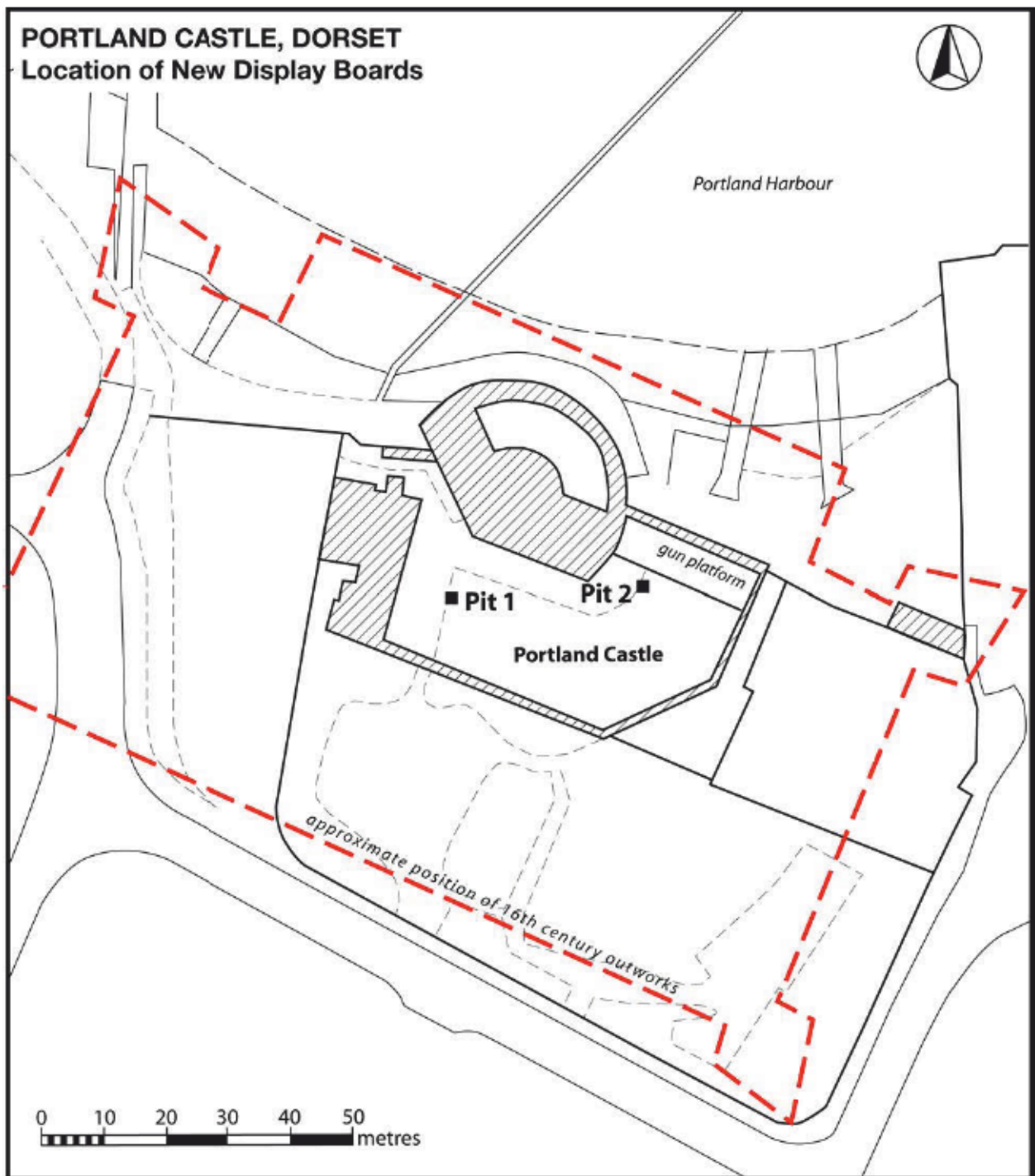


Figure 2: Plan of Display Board Pit Locations





*Plate 1: General view of Pit 1 viewed from south. 0.5m scale.*



*Plate 2: Pit 1 viewed from west. 0.5m scale.*



*Plate 3: General view of Pit 2 viewed from southwest. 0.5m scale.*



*Plate 4: Pit 2 viewed from southwest. 0.5m scale.*