

**WWII BUILDING, HIVE BEACH CAR PARK,  
BURTON BRADSTOCK, DORSET**

**Archaeological Evaluation**



**Report No. 53303/2/1**

**March 2009**



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### CONTENTS

Summary .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Archaeological and Historical Background .....	1
Aims and Objectives .....	2
Methods.....	2
Results .....	3
<i>Pre-building soils</i> .....	3
<i>Building 1</i> .....	3
<i>Building 2</i> .....	4
<i>Finds</i> .....	4
Conclusions .....	4
References .....	5
Figures	
1 Site location map .....	6
2 Plan of Site .....	7
3 Plan of Buildings .....	8
4 Northeast -facing sections through Trenches 1 and 2.....	9
Plates	
1 Extract from undated postcard (1950s or 60s?) showing Hive Beach.....	10
2 Hive Beach Car Park, viewed from north.....	10
3 View of Building 1 from northeast.....	10
4 View of test pits during excavation, with disturbed entrance step in foreground .....	11
5 Trench 1 after excavation .....	11
6 Trench 2 showing drain sump 110, stone rubble 102 and slot in concrete base 105 .....	11
7 Trench 2 showing corrugated asbestos roofing material.....	12
8 View of Building 2 .....	12



# **WWII Building, Hive Beach Car Park, Burton Bradstock Archaeological Evaluation, March 2009**

## **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation of some building remains in the southeast corner of Hive Beach car park, Burton Bradstock was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in March 2009, in advance of car park improvement works. The visible building remains comprised a rectangular base of concrete blocks with a small rectangular concrete base next to the southwest corner. Two 1m<sup>2</sup> trenches were excavated across the structure, which revealed the concrete blocks, were set on a poured concrete footing and the interior levelled up with rubble and gravel. A concrete drain sump was found adjacent to the small concrete base. To the east another concrete base edged in red brick, now largely covered in grass was noted. Historic maps and photographs confirm that these remains date to WW2 and that the concrete block base formerly supported a wooden army hut with an adjacent toilet hut. It is probable that this hut was used by the searchlight detachment operating the searchlights on Bind Barrow and on the beach.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the National Trust, to undertake an archaeological evaluation of remains in the southeast corner of Hive Beach car park, Burton Bradstock, thought to date to WWII. The visible remains lie beneath grass, and comprise a NE-SW aligned rectangular outline of concrete blocks with a small square concrete slab immediately adjacent to the southwestern corner. The remains are located at NGR SY49148877 at a height of about 8.8 m above Ordnance Datum (Figure 1).

The National Trust is proposing to undertake major improvement works on the car park at Hive Beach, which are scheduled to start in April 2009. As part of these works it has been proposed that these remains be removed. In order to make a decision on the future management of these remains, an evaluation of the character and extent of the features was required.

An archaeological evaluation, as defined by the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1994, as revised) is "a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork, which determines the presence, or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site. If such archaeological remains are present, field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate."

The fieldwork was carried out on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 by M. Trevarthen and B. Hennessey.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Alix Gilmer, Martin Papworth (The National Trust), Peter Chapman (Brody Forbes Partnership), the staff of Bridport Museum Local Studies Centre.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Locally, a Bronze Age round barrow (known as Bind Barrow) survives on Burton Cliff, some 600 m to the east (NTSMR 110584). To the west, two Roman Republican coins have been reported from the site of the large Victorian villas that overlook the car park (NTSMR 110510). The absence of

other Roman coinage from this site suggests these may represent Iron Age imports. Immediately east and north east of the site, the hillslope bears traces of medieval strip lynchets (RCHME 1952, 60, NTSMR 110509).

Local anecdotal evidence suggests that an “old cottage” formerly stood in the vicinity of the site (cf NTSMR 110580). No evidence for this was found during the evaluation itself, although such a cottage may correspond with previously unrecorded mortared stone walls and other stonework eroding from the low beach-front cliff some 30m to the west (M. Trevarthen pers. obs.).

Burton Bradstock played a significant if minor part during World War II (Evans 1995), and the site forms one material aspect of its wartime history. Burton Freshwater and Burton Beach were identified as potential landing places and were defended by dragon’s teeth and a number of minefields laid all along this part of the coast. Burton Bradstock was designated as an anti-tank island to be defended by F Company of the Home Guard. A number of pillboxes were constructed, that at Bind Barrow having a thatched roof as camouflage. In September 1940 Home Defence Regiments RA were formed for coastal defence and Burton was part of the area covered by 947 Battery of the 10th Defence Regiment. There was a 6-pounder gun emplacement at Cogden Beach and three searchlights were set up on Bind Barrow. By 1941, there were 6-pounder guns at Bridemouth, and Burton Bradstock together with 4-inch guns on Burton beach and Southover. In July 1941 the 8th and 9th Essex regiments manned the light guns formerly the served by 947 Battery, which included 6-pounder guns at Burton Bradstock, West Bexington and East Bexington. The 9th Essex D Company had two platoons and Burton Freshwater and one at Southover. The Home Guard took over the beach defences from the regular troops in the spring of 1942.

A 1947 aerial photograph (RAF VAP 2475-3073) shows the area, but unfortunately the print is not very clear. The building is shown and adjacent to the east is another rectangular structure, perhaps a platform or hard-standing rather than a building. There is also a suggestion of another one or two small buildings just to the west. The building is depicted on the 1961 Ordnance Survey map, but is not shown on later maps. There is a postcard (unfortunately undated), which shows the building as a long single storey wooden army hut with a small ?toilet hut immediately adjacent and another (two?) small wooden hut(s) in front, partially obscuring it (Plate 1).

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

## **METHODS**

The archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Terrain Archaeology (Ref. 3303/0/1, March 2009) and the Institute for Archaeologists’ *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation*, although no written brief was issued for the works.

Two small trenches were de-turfed and hand-excavated in order to address the project aims. Trench 1 measured 1 m by 1.3 m and was positioned across the southeastern wall of the hut base, near its southern corner. Trench 2 measured 1 m by 1.6 m, and was positioned to straddle the opposing (north-western) wall base near its western corner, and also to investigate any relationship between the wall base and the square slab of concrete immediately to the west.



All structures and deposits revealed were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complimentary written, drawn and photographic records, regardless of their perceived archaeological significance. A digital photographic record was maintained, which includes specific archaeological detail and the general setting and conduct of the investigation. Detailed trench plans were drawn at 1:20 scale, and sections at 1:10.

Upon completion of archaeological recording, both trenches were backfilled with excavated arisings, re-turfed and manually compacted.

A measured plan of the hut base and associated features was drawn at 1:50 scale, and indicates the locations of excavated trenches.

## RESULTS

### Pre-building soils

The earliest deposit encountered (at c. 0.27 – 0.35 m below ground level) comprised a stiff mid yellowish-brown sandy clay loam (104) containing occasional small to medium-sized (<40 mm) rounded and sub-angular pebbles. This material corresponds closely with exposures of natural clay observed in the adjacent cliff-face, and is interpreted as a weathered/bioturbated upper facet of natural deposits. Sealing natural deposits, layer 104 comprised up to 0.10 m of mid-dark yellowish-brown sandy clay-loam, also with occasional small pebbles. This is interpreted as a truncated remnant of the original soil profile, most probably a subsoil or B horizon: It is likely that the original topsoil/ploughsoil was removed as a prelude to construction. No finds were recovered from either layer.

### Building 1

The hut base rested on a shallow, poured concrete foundation (106). Seen in both trenches, this was c. 0.50 m wide and up to 0.15 m deep, filling the base of a vertically-sided and concave-based construction trench (107). Set centrally on the foundation, the hut base itself comprised a single course of cement-bonded concrete blocks, each measuring 0.48 x 0.23 x 0.23 m (18 x 9 x 9"). The blocks were hollow-cast, with two sub-square voids per block separated by a central bar. The voids had all been infilled with cement, presumably to add strength to the footing (Plates 3-7). The base was rectangular measuring 11.28 m by 5.10 m (37 ft by 16 ft 8 ins) across (Figure 3). There was no evidence from the upper surface of the wall-base to indicate the former existence of any blockwork above the first course.

Inside the hut base, Trench 2 contained a 0.10 – 0.12 m thick layer of medium-large angular and tabular limestone pieces, firmly set in a matrix of pale yellow sand (102). This deposit butted against the interior face of the blockwork, resting directly above the concrete foundation (and physically overlying truncated soil 103 (Figure 4; Plate 6). Only a thin smear of sand corresponding to layer 102 was seen in Trench 1, suggesting that it represents an internal levelling-up deposit, compensating for the slight northeast – southwest fall of the hillslope (Figure 4).

Ground immediately outside the eastern (upslope) wall of the hut base appears to have been artificially lowered to the top of the concrete foundation, and in its place had been laid some 0.10m of abundant small sub-angular gravel (mostly < 5-10mm) in a mid-dark brown sandy loam matrix (111). The reason for this is unclear, although it may indicate a path or external walkway, or have facilitated drainage surface-water runoff. The relationship of this layer to a building- or structural base immediately to the east remains unknown. The inner part of the foundation trench

exposed in Trench 1 had been backfilled with almost identical material, suggesting a single build phase.

Of unknown purpose, a small vertical sub-rounded recess 0.10 m across had been crudely cut into the inner face of the blockwork (105) in Trench 2. This was carried out after the voids in the concrete blocks were filled with cement, but before sand and rubble layer 102 was deposited: A slightly curved piece of tabular limestone had been set vertically against the rebate, as if to brace an upright post or support.

Immediately outside the hut base blockwork (105) in Trench 2, a rectangular drain sump (110) measured 0.55 by 0.40 m (Plate 6). The northwestern and northeastern arms of this were of red brick construction encased in cement, and with a steeply-sloping internal cement bowl some 0.20m deep funnelling to a vertically-set stoneware foul-pipe (internal diameter 0.10 m / 4 ins). The drain sump butted/bonded to both the hut base blockwork (105) and to the edge of the external square concrete slab (109), although no other relationship was found between blockwork and slab. A rebate in the southeastern corner of the bowl suggests the existence of an outflow into the drain from a cement channel between 105 and 109.

On the west side, beyond the Trench 2, the building had been disturbed and the concrete blocks removed. A single displaced block remains in this area, which has quantities of stone and concrete rubble visible in the soil. One metre to the west, a broken (now L-shaped) piece of brickwork with a concrete skim may be the dislocated edge of an entrance step.

## **Building 2**

Some three metres southeast of the hut base, a slightly raised (c. 0.30 m high) sub-rectangular platform was noted (Figure 3; Plate 8). This structure is estimated as c. 4 m wide and at least 6 m long, and was aligned perpendicular to the southern end of the hut base (parallel with the existing stone car park boundary wall). A small erosion scar at its western end revealed a red brick-edged concrete slab. This was confirmed by additional lifting of a small area of turf, but no additional evaluation was undertaken. The approximate outline of the platform was plotted at 1:50 scale in relation to the hut-base (see Figure 3).

## **Finds**

No finds were retained from this watching brief.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The documentary and photographic evidence suggests that these building traces belonged to WW2 activity. A postcard image indicates that Building 1 was a wooden army hut and the adjacent small square concrete base was for a small timber shed with a pent roof, most likely a toilet. This hut appears to have been removed in the 1960s or very early 1970s as it is still shown on the 1961 Ordnance Survey map, but is not shown on a 1972 aerial photograph.

The evaluation has confirmed the interpretation of the structure, Building 1, as a hut base and has shown that it is of relatively shallow construction. The base of the foundation lies only c. 0.35 m below modern ground level, with internal construction deposits to a depth of only 0.15 – 0.25 m below present ground level. There is no evidence for an internal concrete slab. This confirms the photographic evidence for a timber superstructure and indicates that the hut was most probably furnished with a wooden floor laid directly on the concrete block base.

No finds pre-dating the removal of the hut in the 1960s or very early 1970s were observed.

Additionally, the fieldwork has identified a second structural platform, Building 2, probably of similar date, immediately to the east. It is not certain that this platform ever held a superstructure and it may have been simply the base for some installation.

The precise military of the hut and adjacent platform has not been determined. It is likely to have been built in the period 1940-41, when the threat of German invasion was at its highest. There was both a searchlight installation and a gun emplacement along this part of the coast. The gun emplacement was on top of Burton Cliff west of Hive Beach and there were three searchlights installed on Bind Barrow and on the beach at Hive (Evans 1995). It is considered more likely that the hut belonged to the searchlight detachment. The adjacent platform to the hut may have supported a searchlight, generator, or light anti-aircraft gun. Further investigation of this structure is required to ascertain its likely function.

Finally, it should be noted that in the event of further fieldwork undertaken, the presence of potentially hazardous (friable) asbestos products might necessitate a specific safety method statement, and require that the landowner put in place appropriate protocols for its safe remediation and disposal.

## REFERENCES

NTSMR = National Trust Sites and Monuments Record

RCHME = Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England

- |           |      |                                                                                                        |
|-----------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Evans, D. | 1995 | 'Bridport and West Bay at War'. Unpublished manuscript. (Bridport Museum Local Studies Collection).    |
| King, B.  | nd   | 'Burton Bradstock at War' <a href="http://www.burtonbradstock.org.uk/">www.burtonbradstock.org.uk/</a> |
| RCHME     | 1952 | <i>An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset 1 West.</i>                        |

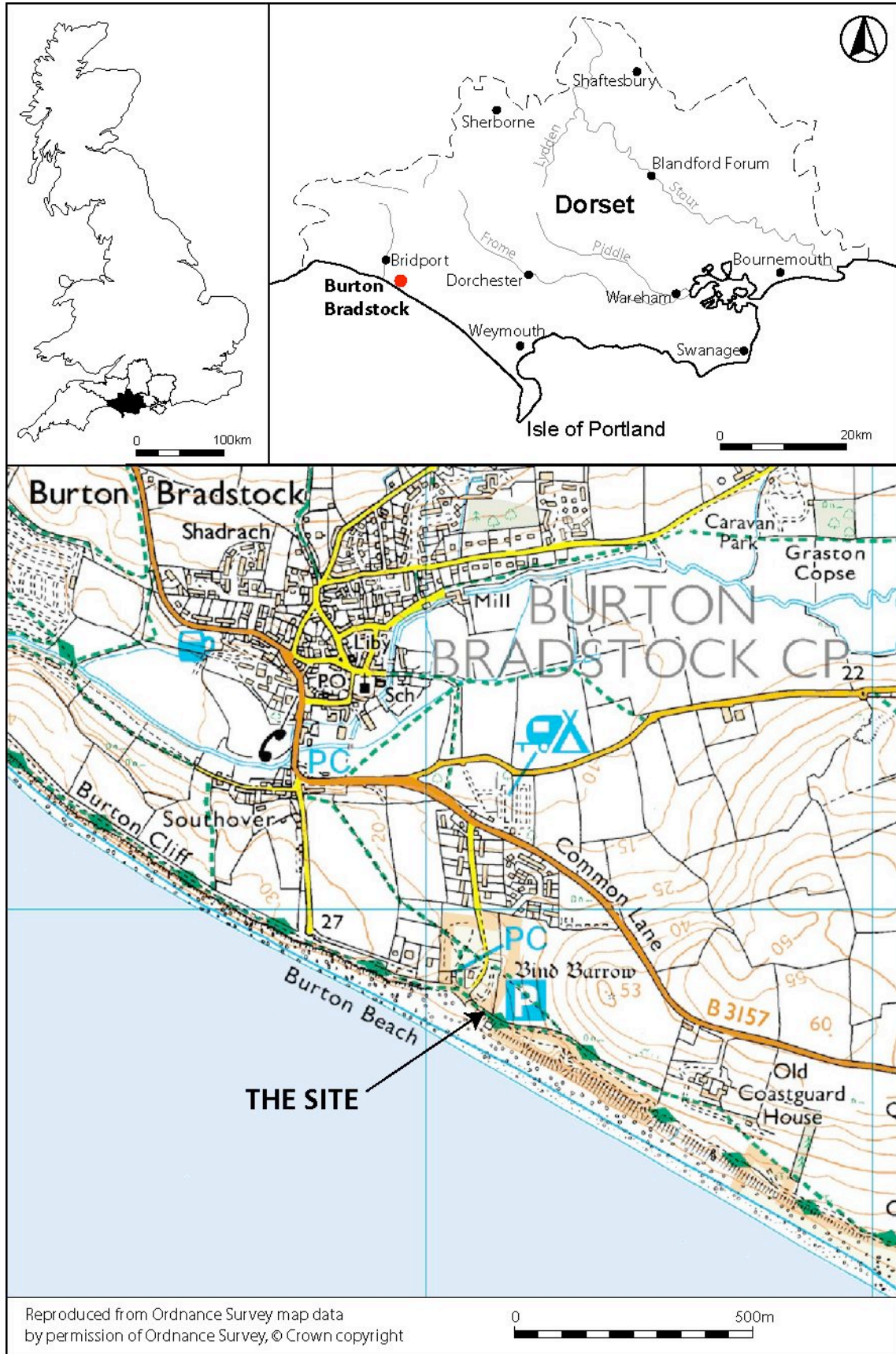


Figure 1: Site location map

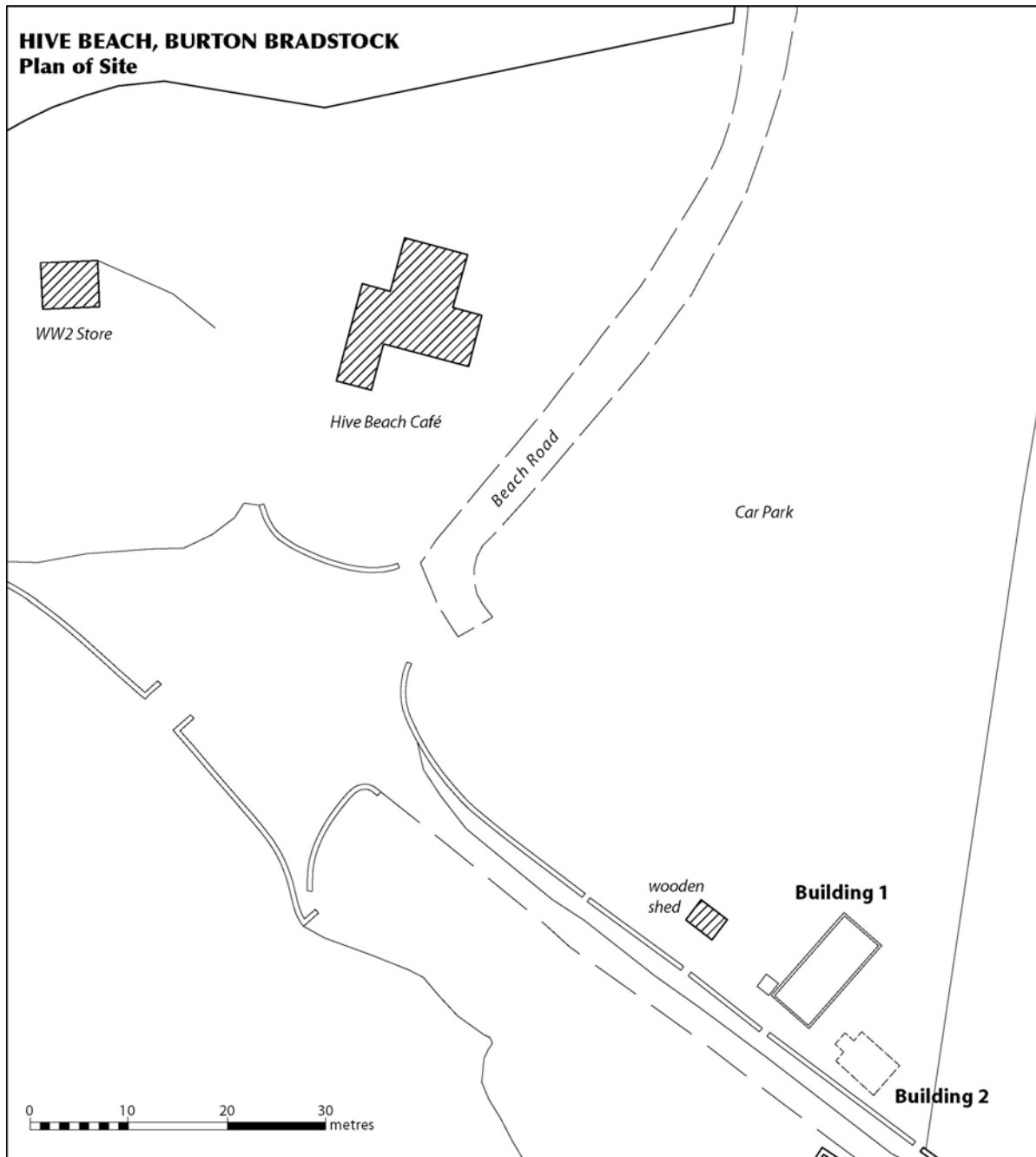


Figure 2: Plan of Site (from a survey provided by the Client).



**HIVE BEACH, BURTON BRADSTOCK**  
**Plan of WW2 Building Remains**

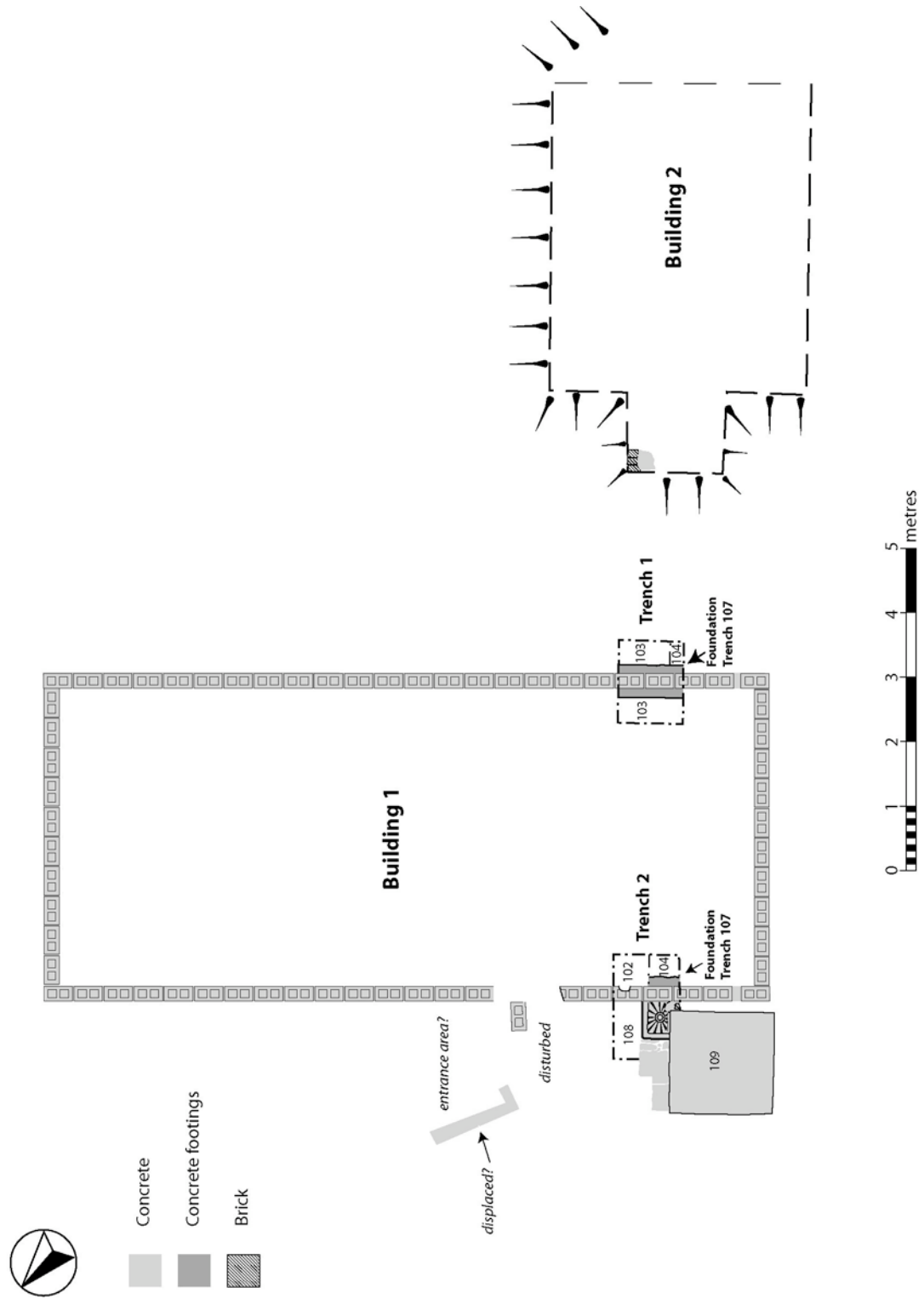
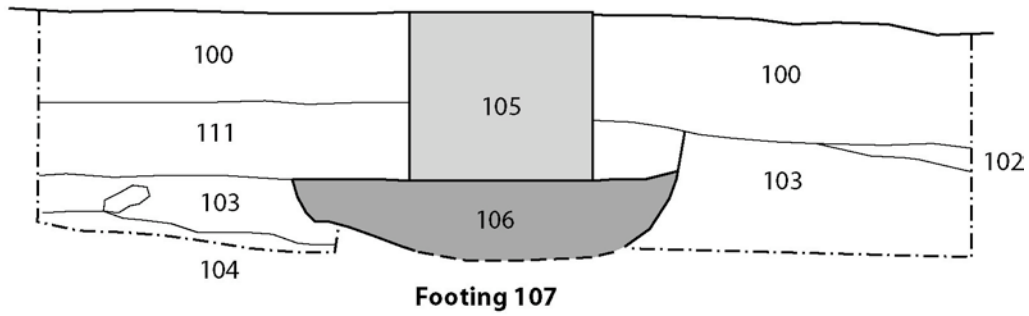


Figure 3: Plan of Buildings

### Northeast-facing Section of Trench 1



### Northeast-facing Section of Trench 2

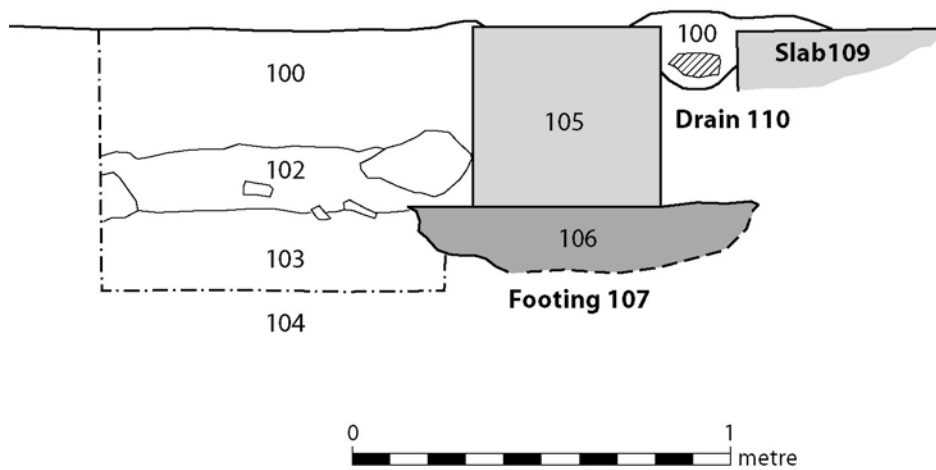
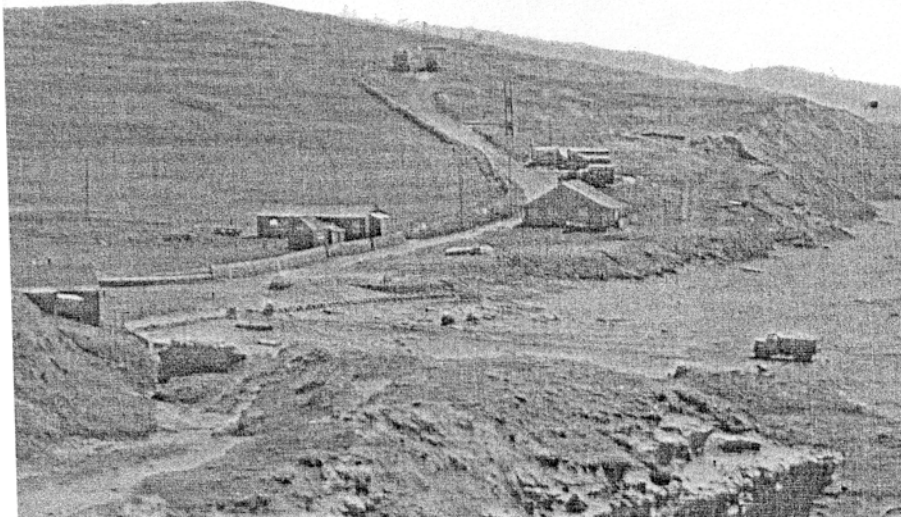


Figure 4: Northeast-facing sections through Trenches 1 and 2.



*Plate 1: Extract from undated postcard (1950s or 60s?) showing Hive Beach.*



*Plate 2: Hive Beach Car Park, viewed from north.*



*Plate 3: View of Building 1 from northeast.*





*Plate 4: View of test pits during excavation, with disturbed entrance step in foreground.*



*Plate 5: Trench 1 after excavation.*



*Plate 6: Trench 2 showing drain sump 110, stone rubble 102 and slot in concrete base 105.*





*Plate 7: Trench 2 showing corrugated asbestos roofing material.*



*Plate 8: View of Building 2.*