

**CATTLE HANDLING AREAS,
HENGISTBURY HEAD, DORSET**

Archaeological Observations and Recording



**Report No. 53310/3/1
April 2010**

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in March 2010, during construction of two new cattle handling areas on Hengistbury Head, Dorset (OS NGR SZ1664391058 and SZ1720090892). The small scale of these works, together with late modifications to the proposed design (namely the use of percussion-driven posts throughout the construction) meant that no archaeological deposits were exposed and no finds were recovered.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Bournemouth Borough Council to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during construction of two new cattle handling areas on Hengistbury Head, Christchurch, Dorset (centred on OS NGR SZ1664391058 and SZ1720090892). Hengistbury Head has statutory protection as a Scheduled Monument (Dorset 824, Figure 1) and both sites were subject to scheduled monument consents.

Archaeological Observations and Recording, also known as an archaeological watching brief, is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.”

The fieldwork was carried out on the 19th March 2010 by Mike Trevarthen.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Mark Holloway and Lyndon Forster (Bournemouth Borough Council); Vervan Heal (English Heritage) and the groundworkers.

THE SITE

Hengistbury Head (centred on Ordnance Survey NGR SZ17309081) lies on the eastern edge of Bournemouth and forms the southern side of Christchurch Harbour (Figure 1). It comprises a long, narrow headland, with land on its southern side rising to about 36 m above OD at Warren Hill.

The headland's underlying geology is complex, comprising gently inclined Tertiary sands and gravels of the Bracklesham series. Warren Hill is unconformably capped by Pleistocene gravel.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in an area rich in archaeological remains. A number of important excavations have been undertaken on Hengistbury Head since 1911 (Bushe-Fox 1915, Cunliffe 1987, Barton 1992). These have revealed important Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites, primarily on Warren Hill, and lesser amounts of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity, the most visible aspect of which are the round barrows. In the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, there was extensive settlement across the headland, which was fortified by the construction of the Double Dykes, possibly in the Middle Iron Age. During the Late Iron Age the main focus was on the low-lying land to the north of

Warren Hill and the occupation included a wide range of industrial activities and developed into port-of-trade with the continent. By the end of the Late Iron Age, the long-distance trade continued but at a much reduced scale. Occupation of the headland continued into the Roman period, but its focus by this time appears to be on agriculture (Cunliffe 1987).

During the prehistoric period, the shape and environment of the headland was very different to its present form. In the Upper Palaeolithic and earlier Mesolithic periods, the headland formed a low hill overlooking the river valleys below and it lay at some distance from the sea. Considerable quantities of worked flint dating from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age have been recovered as surface finds from Hengistbury Head over many years. Through the work of Mace (1959), Campbell (1977) and Barton (1992), an important Upper Palaeolithic open air site and an Early Mesolithic hunter's camp have been investigated on Warren Hill. Mesolithic flint has also been found along the harbour foreshore, in the Nursery Garden, and outside the Double Dykes, indicating widespread use of the headland at this time (Barton 1992).

Large quantities of Late Neolithic flint have been found across Hengistbury Head, mainly concentrated on Warren Hill and in the Nursery Garden, with smaller concentrations on the eastern side and to the north of Barn Field (Gardiner 1987). An Early Bronze Age barrow cemetery comprising at least 13 barrows is present on the headland (Cunliffe 1987).

During WWII, the whole of Hengistbury Head was requisitioned by the military and a variety of installations were built across the headland (Hoodless 2005).

In 2005 Terrain Archaeology undertook a watching brief during the erection of new fencing in Barn Field, Long Field and Saltmarsh. A small quantity of archaeological material, mainly Late Neolithic flint and Iron Age/Roman pottery, was recovered from Barn Field (Tatler and Bellamy 2006). Monitoring of various amenity enhancement works across the headland between 2006 and 2008 produced small quantities of Prehistoric and Roman finds (Tatler & Bellamy 2009)

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 work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2009, Document No. 3310/0/1) and with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (1994, as revised).

Scheduled Monument Consent for the works was obtained by Bournemouth Borough Council.

The original specification stated that each handling area would measure 12.04 m by 4.2 m, and would comprise eighteen earthfast posts set in post-holes 0.2 m wide and 1.0 m deep. These holes were to be hand-dug or mechanically drilled. The proposed archaeological response was to comprise visual scanning of upcast soil for artefacts, together with a measured descriptive record of the soil-sequences exposed in each hole (Terrain Archaeology 2009, 2-3).

Late design changes to the handling areas resulted in a slightly different internal arrangement of fences and gates, and (more significantly) the structures were constructed using vertically percussion-driven posts, removing the necessity to dig post holes.

The handling areas were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. These have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum.

RESULTS

In light of the design modifications detailed above, no archaeological observations were possible: Recording was confined to observations of redundant fence-post-removals and notes on the revised layout and construction of the handling areas. No archaeological finds were recovered.

DISCUSSION

The use of vertically-driven posts in construction of handling areas 1 and 2 meant that no upcast soil or below-ground soil exposures were available for inspection and recording. The removal of three older wooden fence posts prior to construction of Area 2 revealed only undifferentiated dark topsoil deposits. No archaeological finds were recovered from either area.

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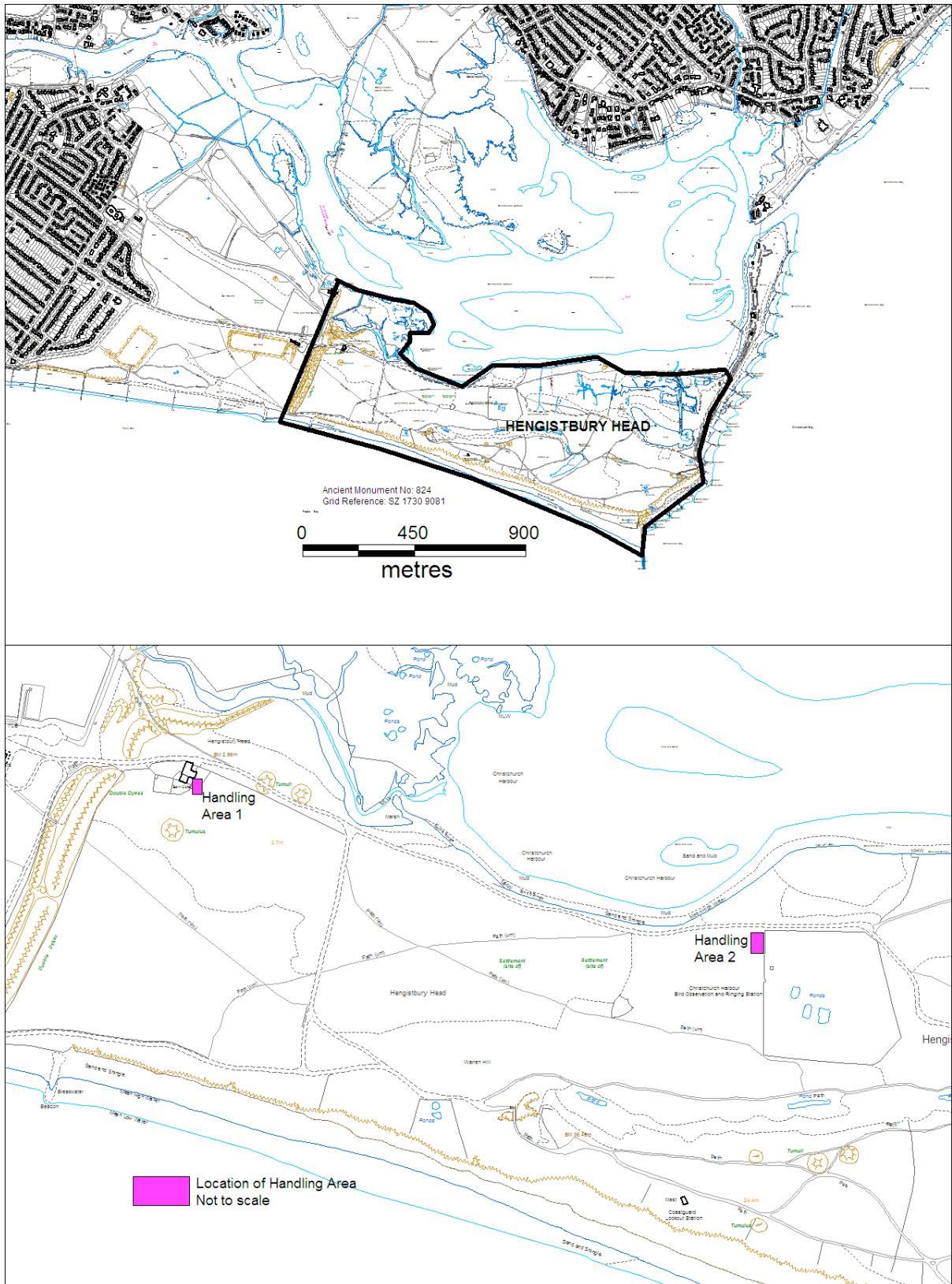


Figure 1: Location of Cattle Handling Areas (provided by the Client).

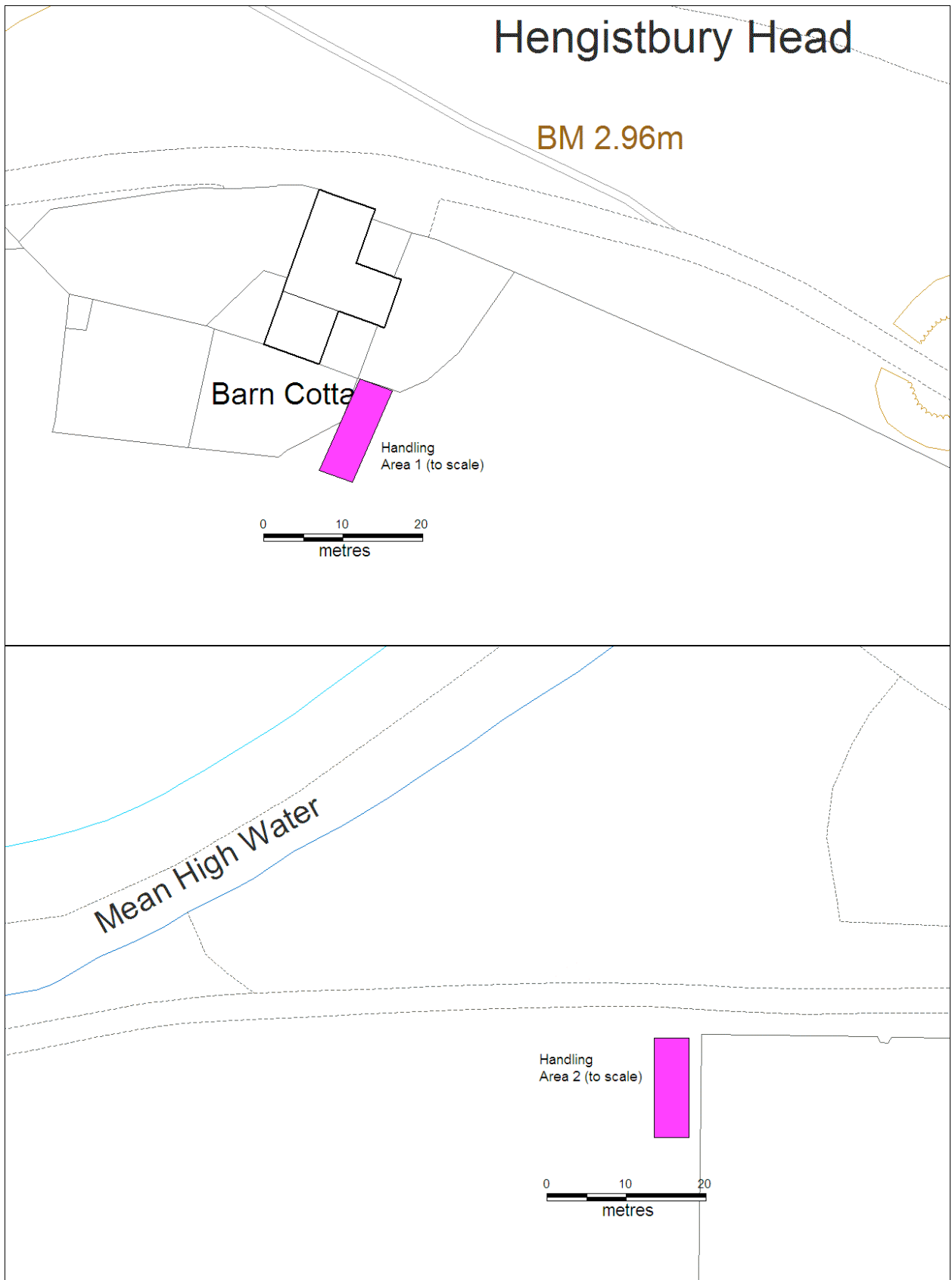


Figure 2: Detailed Location of Cattle Handling Areas (provided by Client)



Plate 1: Cattle handling area 1, viewed from the north.



Plate 2: Cattle handling area 1 viewed from the south.