



Germoe (land opposite Church Cottage), Cornwall

Archaeological recording



Historic Environment Projects

Report No

2011R053

Report Name

Germoe – land opposite Church Cottage

Report Author

Anna Lawson-Jones

Event Type

Archaeological
recording

Client Organisation

Mr Johnson

Client Contact

Bargess Holding, Boscreege, Ashton, Helston,
Cornwall, TR13 9TE

Monuments (MonUID)

Located within the core of medieval
Germoe settlement – MCO14516

Fieldwork dates (From) (To)

27th April 2011

-

(Created By)

Anna Lawson-Jones

(Create Date)

28th April 2011

Location (postal address; or general location and parish)

Immediate west of St Germoe Church (and opposite Church Cottage)

(Town – for urban sites)

-

(Postcode)

TR20 9QX

(Easting) X co-ord

SW 58505

(Northing) Y co-ord

29436

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Historic Environment, Cornwall Council is a Registered Organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists

Project background

Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council were commissioned by Mr R Johnson to undertake a short programme of archaeological recording of two machine excavated pits, in advance of potential further archaeological involvement prior to the construction of a three bedroom dwelling.

Phil Markham (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council) wrote a brief for archaeological recording dated 11th April 2011.

Andy Jones arranged for a preliminary investigation (at the request of the developer) to inform whether further archaeological work on site would be required in order to fulfil Condition 11 of Planning Application W2/PA09/01480/F.

The archaeological recording took place on 27th April 2011.

Site background

The site is located within a plot of land located to the immediate west of the Grade 1 Listed Church of Saint Germoe in the village of Germoe, located 7km north-west of Helston. The settlement of Germoe (see Fig 1) is first recorded in c1176 as the '*Chapel of Sanctus Germoch*' (Padell 1988, 87 - recorded in the HBSMR as MCO14516). The name is Cornish. The site is located within land classified as Anciently Enclosed Land and of Medieval Farming type.

The site itself is located centrally within the village of Germoe and has in the past contained buildings shown on the 1875 OS map, with subsequent alterations and dismantlement shown on the 1907 OS map – shown as differently coloured lines on Fig 2. None of the 1875/1907 features identified (buildings, footpath or wall) were visible on site - see front cover photograph. This is a result of previous removal and infilling, and most notably the result of considerable recent below ground disturbance caused by the creation of a septic tank and soakaway with interconnecting pipe trenches and a manhole, plus below ground electrical cabling running to the soon to be demolished garden shed (marked in green on Fig 2).

Objective

The purpose of this archaeological recording was to record two pits already excavated on the site, and to ascertain the need for further archaeological work within the footprint of the proposed new development.

While on site the recording archaeologist had the opportunity to briefly record machine excavation work located centrally within the plot designed to locate a former septic tank with associated pipes and trenches and linked manhole and soakaway features located in the eastern and western side of the site respectively (see Fig 2).

Results

The archaeological recording was focussed on two rectangular pits, excavated by machine prior to the presence of the recording archaeologist, which ran down the edge of the northern and southern walls defining the long edges of the diagonally aligned plot. It also briefly records a centrally located excavation focussed on the septic tank. All three recorded areas are shown on Fig 2.

Pit A

The wall footings are briefly described and then the layers visible in the most clear (east facing) section are described. There was nothing to suggest that the other sections differed (Fig 3).

This pit was located on the northern edge of the plot and immediately abutted the pre-1875 walling defining the northern long edge of the site. The pit measured 1m long by 0.75m wide by 1m deep. It showed the wall to be standing directly on rdb or decayed granite bedrock, which was visible below the wall at a 0.65m depth below surface level. It then dropped to a 0.9m depth as it moved south from the wall. Above the rdb was a

0.35m deep layer of dark brown stony loam, overlain by a compacted slightly gritty loam 0.2m thick; overlain by a 0.15m thick layer of rooty loose loam with occasional glass and roof slate fragments. Above this was a 0.1m thick layer of pale coloured mortar or gritty lime, topped by a 0.1m thick modern, mixed rooty spread of disturbed topsoil.

Pit B

The wall footings are briefly described and then the layers visible in the most clear (east facing) section are described. There was nothing to suggest that the other sections differed, although the west facing section was largely disturbed due to the location of two sunken sinks representing an expansion of the former Perspex-lined pond setting (Fig 4).

This pit was located on the southern edge of the plot and immediately abutted the pre-1875 walling defining the southern long edge of the site. The pit measured 1m by 1m by 1m deep. It too showed the wall to be standing directly on decayed bedrock, which included an apparently natural clay content not seen in Pit A. This natural decayed bedrock layer dropped in depth by 0.1m to the north of the walls footings, which consisted of noticeably large granite blocks (0.7m long and 0.35m wide, laid horizontally with smaller stones laid horizontally above). Above this naturally formed layer was a compacted dark brown clay loam 0.35m deep with very occasional granite inclusions. Above this was a further deposit 0.05-0.1m thick of re-deposited rab. This may represent former surfacing, although it was not compacted and may simply have been the residue of former granite construction work. Above this was a 0.15m mixed dark brown loam, and above this a combination of granite blocks and re-deposited rab. The stones appeared vaguely horizontally lain, but did not form part of any built structure and were considered likely to relate to the proximity of the pond. Rooty, shallow grass partially overlay these stones.

Excavated area around the septic tank

Located near centrally within the building plot was a machine excavated depression centred on the septic tank (see Fig 2 for approximate location). This was being excavated in order to locate the tank and its connecting pipes ready for removal prior to construction work. The ragged edged excavation, located to the immediate west of the tank had a 1m depth at which point the top of decaying natural granite bedrock was visible as a dense brownish orange, coarse gritty layer overlying non-decayed bedrock. The overlying layers were predominantly dark and loamy (0.7m thick) with occasional granite blocks – none of which appeared to be *in situ* parts of former buildings. This dark deposit contained the pipe trenches and the electrical cable piping, and although obviously fairly recently disturbed contained no finds of any date. The upper approximately 0.3m was far more mixed and contained occasional recent metal scraps and a broken bottle etc.

Conclusion

Despite the former presence of pre-1875 structures within the area of the plot, the proximity of the Listed Church, and the potential for medieval activity within the immediate area, demolition and more recent below ground disturbance has significantly reduced the potential for archaeological remains to survive on site.

The removal of buildings, the construction of a new granite built shed (almost certainly using previously demolished stone) and the substantial level of below ground disturbance caused by the creation of tanks and trenches, plus a pond immediately adjacent to Pit B have removed almost all *in situ* post-medieval or medieval remains.

The near total lack of domestic debris of any date (with the exception of two post-medieval glazed pot sherds) could suggest that the site has in the past been cleared and backfilled with 'clean' soil (which would seem unlikely). Alternatively the former buildings may all have opened outwards - away from the plot, leaving much of the site as an open area with a footpath running through it. This open area would not have been cultivated and so would not have been the focus for kitchen midden disposal as a means of

fertilising the soil (the main source for domestic scatters of material within and around settlements).

All the excavated areas showed that since the construction of the surrounding walling the ground level has been raised by approximately 0.5m, with the lowest dark loamy soil and occasional granite being the earliest *in situ* deposit encountered. Much of the additional 0.5m consists of granite used on site (presumably from the earlier buildings) and the displacement of soil associated with the insertion of a septic tank, pipes, a manhole, a soakaway and the pond.

References

Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, c1875. *25 Inch Map* First Edition – licensed digital copy at HE

Ordnance Survey, c1907. *25 Inch Map* Second Edition – licensed digital copy at HE

Ordnance Survey, 2007. Mastermap Digital Mapping

Secondary sources

Cornwall County Council, 1996. *Cornwall Landscape Assessment 1994*, Cornwall County Council: Truro

Padell, OJ, 1988. *A popular dictionary of Cornish place-names*, Penzance.

Project archive

The HE project number is **2011045**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration.
2. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.E-H\Germoe - land opposite Church Cott
3. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-100204

This report text is held in digital form as: G:\Historic Environment (Documents)\HE Projects\Sites\Sites G\Germoe, land opposite Church cottage WB 2011045

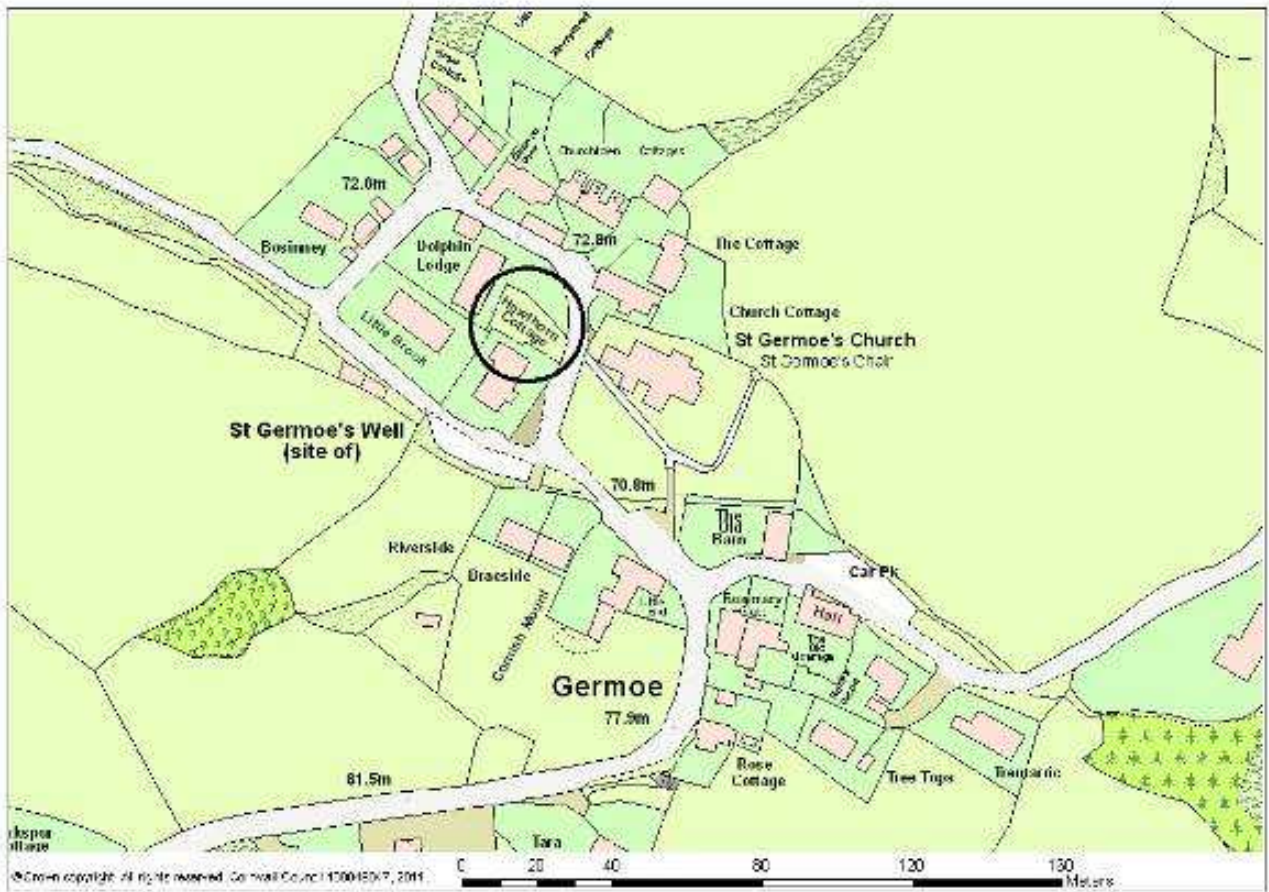


Fig 1 Location map showing circled area of site.

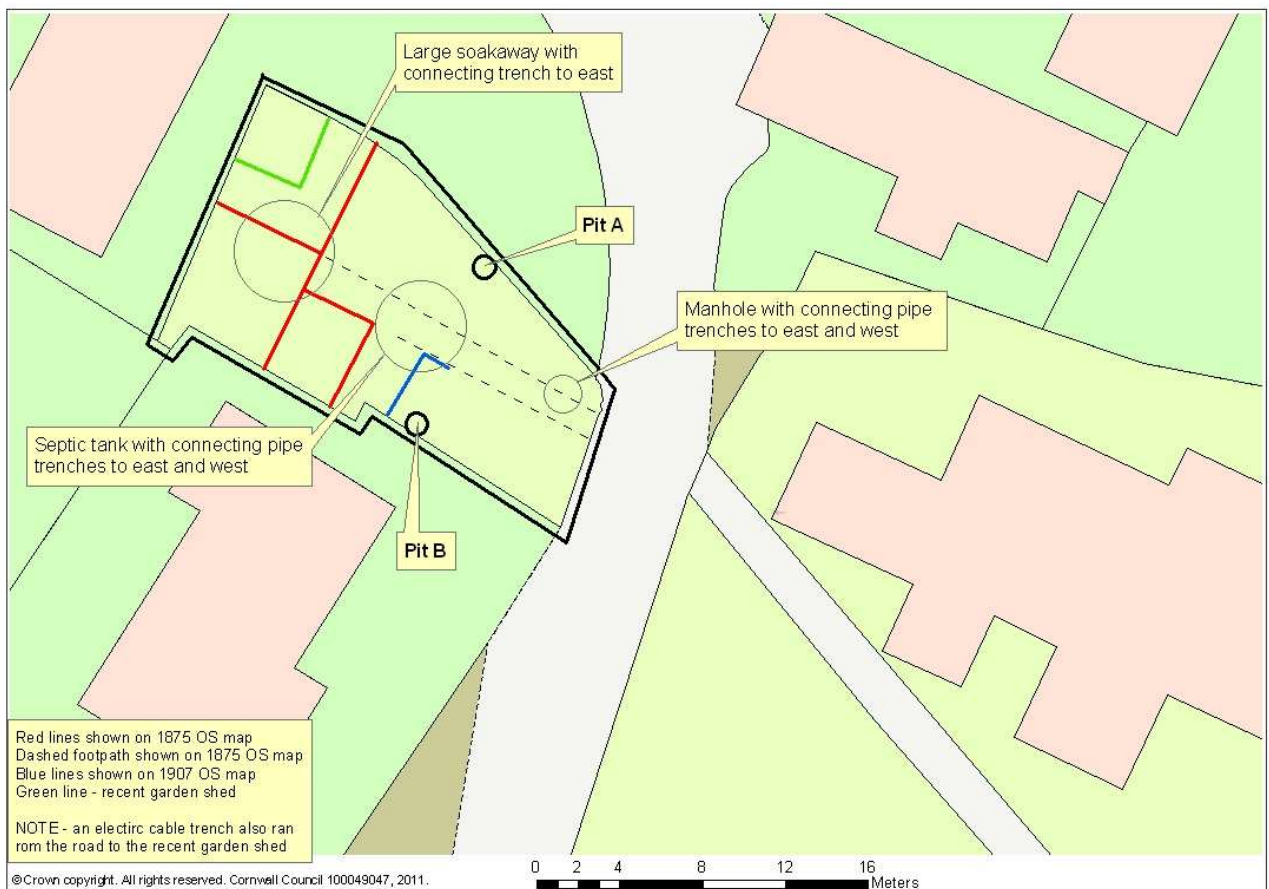


Fig 2 Map showing the location of pits A and B, known areas of recent disturbance and the former presence of structures on the site (colour coded).



Fig 3 Photograph showing Pit A.



Fig 4 Photograph showing Pit B.