



Tintagel Castle, Cornwall
Archaeological desk-based assessment of an area
near the visitor facilities

Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Report No: 2017R054

Tintagel Castle, Cornwall: archaeological desk-based assessment of an area near the visitor facilities

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Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by Matthew Brooke, English Heritage Facilities Manager, Buildings, South West, and was carried out by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Cornwall Archaeological Unit and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Cover illustration

The area to the south of Tintagel Haven. Hawke postcard 5387, 1925. Image courtesy of the Charles Thomas Archive.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| CAU | Cornwall Archaeological Unit |
| CIfA | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists |
| DBA | Desk Based Assessment |
| EH | English Heritage |
| HER | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record |
| OD | Ordnance Datum – height above mean sea level at Newlyn |
| OS | Ordnance Survey |

1 Summary

Cornwall Archaeological Unit was approached by Matthew Brooke, English Heritage Facilities Manager, Buildings, South West in May 2017 with a request for a method statement and associated cost schedule for undertaking an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) of an area between the southern end of the valley-bottom visitor facilities and the southern end of the café to its east.

A water supply pipe serving the visitor centre running through this area has failed and options for its repair or replacement are being considered. The DBA is intended to indicate whether the subsurface archaeology within the area of the pipe run has been so significantly compromised by previous disturbance that a watching brief would not be appropriate during repair/replacement works.

The DBA concluded that only a limited amount of archaeological recording had taken place within the area traversed by the pipe, revealing platformed working areas associated with the 18th and 19th century slate trade at Tintagel Haven. This material had incorporated stray early medieval artefacts which have helped to map out the likely extent of post-Roman occupation on the mainland at Tintagel. As the majority of the area has not been archaeologically investigated it was felt that should the water pipe require replacement the opportunity should be taken to further investigate the 19th century industrial remains here and to recover additional post-Roman artefacts through a small-scale archaeological watching brief. It was concluded that repair works to the existing water pipe would not require archaeological oversight or recording.

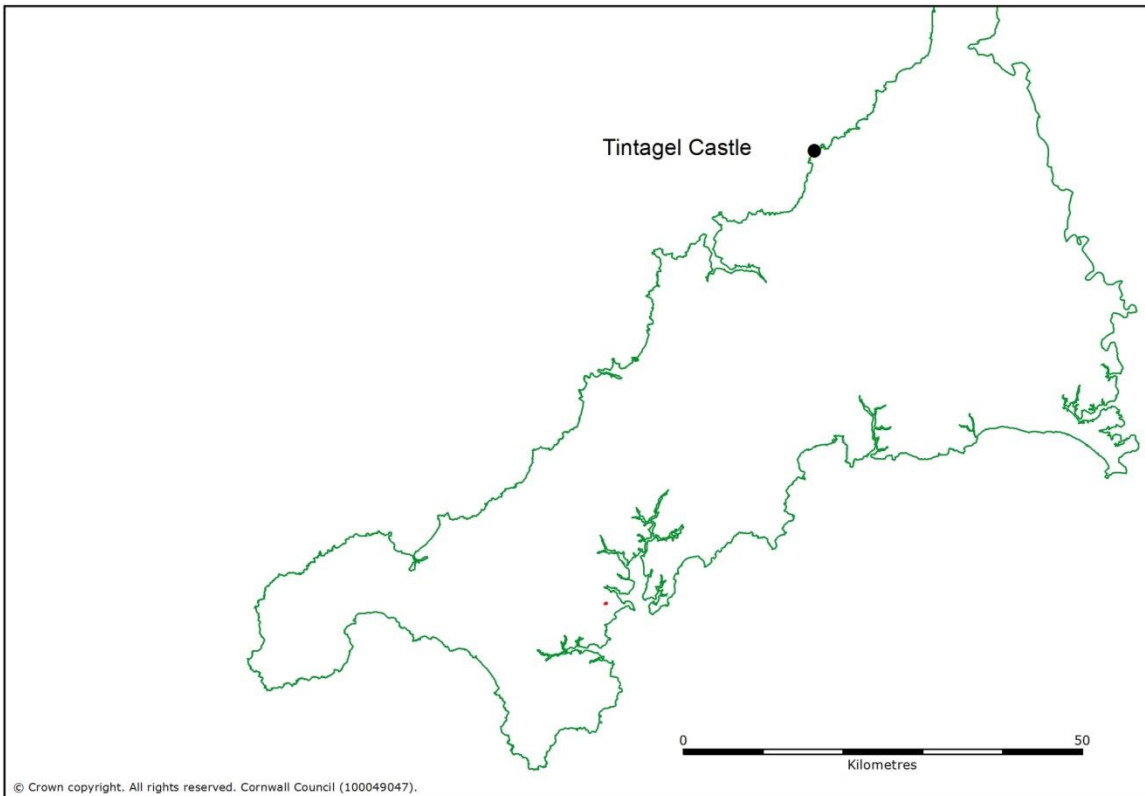


Fig 1. The location of Tintagel Castle, Cornwall.

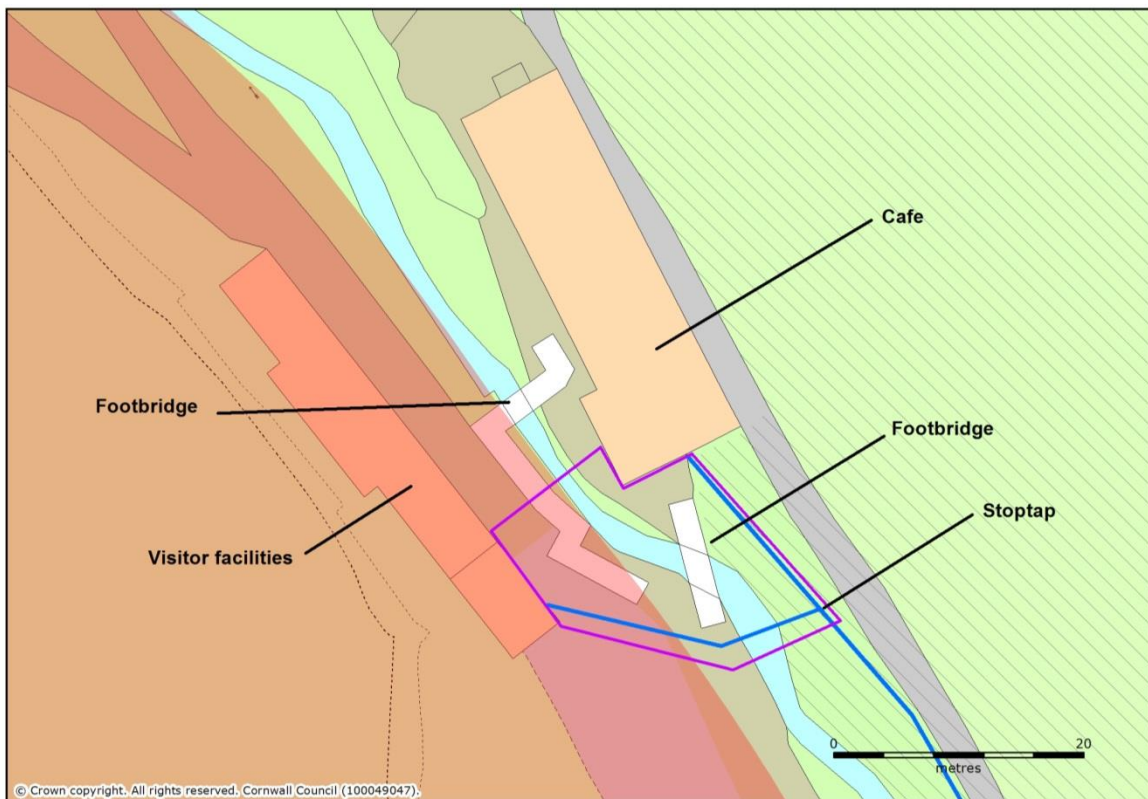


Fig 2. The Tintagel Castle visitor centre area. Blue – approximate line of water pipe, red tone – Scheduled area, purple – area within which water pipe may be renewed.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project background

The visitor facilities at Tintagel Castle are located at the northern end of Castle Drive adjacent to Tintagel Haven, and comprises a café on the eastern side of the stream and the interpretation centre, shop, toilets and site office on the western side of the stream. The visitor toilets are at the southern end of the western block (Fig 2). The water pipe to the toilets has a stopcock on the lower valley side adjacent to the eastern end of the southern footbridge across the stream to the café.

This area between the southern ends of the café and visitor centre is traversed by a leaking water feed pipe which requires repair or replacement. The western part of the area lies with the Scheduled Monument at Tintagel Castle and Tier 3 consent would be required for the works. It was suggested by Mr Win Scutt (English Heritage Properties Curator) that this area had already been considerably disturbed, and that an archaeological watching brief during the works to repair or replace the water pipe would not be required but that this would need to be demonstrated through a desk-based assessment being undertaken.

Cornwall Archaeological Unit was approached by Matthew Brooke, English Heritage Facilities Manager, Buildings, South West in May 2017 with a request for a method statement and associated cost schedule for undertaking an archaeological desk-based assessment of an area between the southern end of the valley-bottom visitor facilities and the southern end of the café to its east (Fig 2).

Two options are currently being considered by English Heritage (EH). In the first, test pits would be dug to identify the location of the leak, and the existing pipe would be repaired. In the second, a new pipe would be installed, possibly along a new route, though within the same general area as the original. This option would require trenching work partly within the Scheduled area, and Scheduled Monument Consent would be needed.

2.2 Aims

The principal aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the degree to which archaeological deposits within the project area have been so disturbed by previous building works and other activities that an archaeological watching brief during the repair or placement of the water pipe would be unlikely to record any intact stratigraphy.

The objectives for this project are to prepare a report on the findings of the DBA for the client, and to create an entry to the Historic England OASIS/AD-online database of archaeological projects.

2.3 Methods

All work has been undertaken according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording*. CAU staff follow the CIfA *Code of Conduct* and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Archaeology*. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists is the professional body for archaeologists working in the UK.

2.3.1 Desk-based assessment

A desk-based assessment has been carried out to meet the project aims and objectives. This comprised:

- A re-assessment of relevant archaeological reports on Tintagel Castle;
- Historic maps, including
 - The Tintagel Parish Tithe map (c1840),
 - 1st and 2nd Editions of the OS 25 inch maps (c1880 and c1907)
- Modern maps;

- Early postcards of Tintagel Haven (Charles Thomas Collection).

3 Location and setting

Tintagel Castle occupies a coastal site on the rugged and exposed north Cornish cliffs, its structures being located both on the mainland and on a headland attached to it by a slender and eroding isthmus. Tintagel Island is centred at SW 04927 89115, its highest point being at 83m OD (see Fig 1). The associated visitor centre and café are sited at the north-western end of the valley leading down to Tintagel Haven, and are centred at SX 05207 89005.

4 Designations

4.1 National

Tintagel Castle is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, but passed into the Guardianship of the State in 1929, being cared for by the Office of Works and its successors, now the English Heritage Trust. The site was Scheduled in 1981. The Scheduled area extends to the western bank of the stream and includes the visitor centre; the café and the section of water main on the eastern bank of the stream are not within the Scheduled area (see Fig 2).

Tintagel Castle lies within an area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), lies within the Cornwall AONB and the Heritage Coast area.

5 Summary site history

There is some ephemeral evidence for prehistoric activity at Tintagel including a scatter of flints picked up from paths around the site (Harry and Morris 1997; Barrowman *et al* 2007) along with part of an (unprovenanced) Neolithic polished greenstone axe which has clear evidence of having been re-used as a whetstone (Thomas 1988). All are chance finds. Cup-marked stones long known of on the headland (King Arthur's Cups and Saucers) may also date to this period, as may additional examples found on the clifftops above the eastern terraces by Sharpe and Thorpe in 2017.

Two inscribed Roman milestones in the vicinity of Tintagel suggest that it had become a relatively important place by this period, whilst Roman coins and pottery (Oxford colour-coated Wares and native flanged bowls) have been found on or near the Island, suggesting a date *circa* AD 300 – 400; C14 dates from structures at Site C suggest some degree of occupation during the later Roman period (Barrowman *et al* 2007). It has been suggested that Tintagel was possibly the '*Durocornovio*' (fort of the Cornovii) of the *Ravenna Cosmography* (Thomas 1993, 84).

During the post-Roman period (from the 5th to early 7th centuries AD) the headland of Tintagel developed into a major fortified citadel. A survey of the Island undertaken by RCHM(E) in 1985 (reinterpreted by Bowden and Jamieson 2016), together with excavations undertaken since the 1930s have revealed numerous buildings and structures related to the post-Roman period, these now recognised as covering almost every available space on the headland. Associated with these buildings are artefacts that reflect the importance of this site at this time, these primarily consisting of large quantities of imported pottery originating from North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, along with Merovingian glass vessels traded from the Atlantic seaboard. These suggest that Tintagel had emerged as a significant place with sufficient organisation and power to trade directly with the Byzantine Empire and subsequently with coastal south-western Europe. The full extent of the post-Roman settlement at Tintagel is not entirely clear, particularly in relation to areas of the mainland adjoining the Island, though chance finds of amphora fragments in levelling layers adjacent to the Haven suggest that contemporary occupation sites are likely to have been sited close by.

The Island was subsequently abandoned until a small chapel was built on its high ground c1100. The present castle was constructed by Richard, Earl of Cornwall during the mid-13th century to reinforce his claims to the legitimate control of Cornwall, and was very much a showpiece rather than a defensible structure. Its occupation seems to have been intermittent and to have ceased by the 15th century. During the later medieval and modern periods the castle was consistently described as a picturesque ruin (Thomas 1993).

In the 19th century there was an attempt to mine the lead and silver lodes found beneath the Island under the name of Wheal Heart and then as King Arthur's Mine; the haven also developed as a harbour for servicing the local slate quarrying industry, a significant amount of infrastructure being constructed in the area backing the Haven and extending inland as far as the present visitor centre and café.

Tintagel Castle had been identified as the place of King Arthur's conception during the 12th Century by Geoffrey of Monmouth; this attribution was greatly reinforced by Tennyson, Swinburne and Hardy during the 19th century, and Tintagel became an increasingly popular and highly romanticised tourist destination, particularly following the connection of the main line railway to Cornwall and the construction of the Railway Hotel at Tintagel. Parts of the area adjacent to the Haven were remodelled and following the decline of the slate trade, a number of its industrial structures were demolished; two of the former slate works and lead mine buildings were converted to tourist facilities during the early 20th century and the adjacent area was landscaped to some degree (Figs 6 and 7 and report cover image). It is assumed that the original water supply to the present café was installed during this period.

Archaeological investigations overseen by C.A. Ralegh Radford during the 1930s were followed by some landscaping, reconstruction and repair works, although these predominantly took place on the Island. English Heritage commissioned small-scale research excavations at Site C and elsewhere from 1990 to 1999 (Barrowman *et al* 2007), whilst Cornwall Archaeological Unit and its successors have undertaken a number of watching briefs during safety, visitor management and other works within and adjacent to the Castle site from the mid-1980s to the present day, and a substantial programme of research excavation on the Island in 2016 and 2017 (TCARP). Whilst the extent and nature of post-Roman occupation on the Island are as a result now much more clearly understood, the degree to which contemporary settlement extended onto adjacent areas of the mainland remains uncertain; post-Roman finds recovered during archaeological recording exercises near the visitor centre suggest that this was the case, and CAU staff have identified a number of possibly contemporary occupation terraces on the valley slopes above the present visitor centre (pers. comm. Carl Thorpe).

6 Results of the desk-based assessment

The results of all available reports on archaeological investigations relating to the wider Tintagel Castle site were considered to establish whether they could cast any light on the degree to which the area immediately to the south of the visitor facilities building and café at Tintagel have been disturbed to the point where any archaeological deposits would have become so compromised that there would be little value in undertaking archaeological recording during the replacement of the failed water pipe. The natures and dates of activity within this area were also considered.

The majority of studies relating to Tintagel Castle have focussed on the development of the Castle and its archaeology; only a small number have been focussed on the area around the Haven and specifically that occupied by the present visitor centre and the northern part of the carpark.

Two reports in particular proved relevant to this assessment:

- Craze (2003) assessed the whole of the valley down to the Haven in general terms as part of a Tintagel Regeneration Project, considering this area's known development history.
- Dudley (2004) reported on the findings of a small-scale archaeological watching brief during works to enlarge and enhance the visitor centre. Area 4 of these works covered a part of the area covered by this DBA whilst Area 1 abutted it.

A small number of CAU and other reports relating to works adjacent to the visitor centre or research into this part of the Tintagel site are of some relevance in providing background context (see Section 9.2). Historical maps and plans for this part of the site were also consulted where they included sufficient levels of detail to be of use to this study (Figs 3 and 4), whilst historical postcards depicting this part of the site were also consulted (Figs 6 and 7 and cover image).

Craze (2003) concluded that although the early stages of the development of the local slate industry are documented as dating to the later medieval period, the lower part of the track had probably been constructed during the 18th century to allow the development of vehicular access to the Haven when the slate export industry here was developing. This may have taken the form of a widening of a traditional route to the sea used from the medieval period by slate quarrymen and fishermen. The trackway was first shown on Martyn's 1748 map of Cornwall; Martyn also showed a small settlement at the rear of the Haven, this being presumed to represent the slate working complex. The route of an earlier, underlying trackway from Trevena and the cliffs to the south of Tintagel to the post-Roman citadel and to the Haven has been postulated by Herring (2016). Herring considers it likely that the seaward section of an early track to the Haven is now overlain by the English Heritage visitor infrastructure. Herring's detailed examination of surviving sections of the track on the western valley side has led him to conclude that this pre-dates the construction of the 13th century castle.

Craze also noted indications of a number of demolished buildings around the periphery of the Haven, the majority of these being assumed to relate to 19th century slate working activities. The building now functioning as a café was in use during the later 19th century as the workshops and offices for at least one phase of the lead mine which worked lodes under Tintagel Island. It was subsequently converted into a cottage (Castle Cottage) and, during the 1930s, into tea rooms. The core of the English Heritage visitor centre was a cottage during the 1930s though probably had its origins as part of the Haven's slate working activities. It was extended during the 1990s and has subsequently been substantially refurbished.

The 2003 CAU watching brief on trenching activities in the area backing the Haven (reported on in Dudley 2004, relevant locations shown on Fig 8 in this report) was focussed on four areas adjacent to the visitor facilities building. Areas 1 and 2 comprised areas of levelling and foundation trenches for the enlarged building, Area 3 comprised a cut into the adjacent hillside and Area 4 was focused on the trenching for a service pipe to the south of the visitor facilities and café buildings. All of the trenching activity intersected areas of made ground, and it was concluded that the levelled area on which the visitor facilities building has been constructed was originally created as an open yard within which slates were prepared for shipment from the Haven during the 18th or 19th centuries. The material used in the levelling process incorporated post-Roman amphorae sherds, suggesting that at least some of this material derived from nearby occupation terraces dating to the post-Roman/early medieval period. Lawson Jones (1994; 1995) had located post-Roman pottery and part of a medieval slate Merrells board in similar deposits of build-up immediately to the north of the visitor centre during trenching in advance of the construction of its extension.

The service trench through Dudley's 2003 Area 4 (Dudley 2004) was excavated through the northern end of the present car park surface and underlying layers of made ground from the western end of the southern footbridge to the southern end of the concrete walkway running past the visitor centre (Figs 8 and 9). The area was found to have been cut by the installation trench for a 100mm diameter cast iron pipe running down

the valley. The service trench measured 0.74m deep. Another trench (Area 1) opened up immediately to the south-east of the visitor centre revealed the footings of a former wall.

The *circa* 1840 Tintagel Tithe Map does not show any structures adjacent to the stream near the Haven; these may simply have been omitted from the mapping as being non-titheable, as was the case with many industrial buildings and features during the creation of this mapping. It is unclear to what degree the structures mapped by Martyn might have survived by this date.

The *circa* 1878 and 1908 OS 1:2,500 mapping for Tintagel (Figs 3 and 4) showed buildings on both sides of the footbridge over the stream, the easternmost now converted into the café, the westernmost subsequently very considerably extended to form the modern visitor centre. A further building shown on the 1878 mapping to the north-west of the café on the eastern side of the stream appears to have been incorporated into the building to its south, when this was labelled 'Castle Cottage'. No indications of other structures, yards or walling which might have been associated with the mine or slate works were shown in the area covered by the DBA on these maps. This part of the site is now partly occupied by the north-western end of the carpark and partly by the modern footbridge and pathways associated with the café and visitor centre (Fig 5).

A number of late 19th century/early 20th century photographs of the valley running down to the Haven show distant views of the buildings on the eastern side of the stream, but the detail in the majority of these views is insufficiently clear to identify whether any other smaller features were sited near the buildings within the area considered by this DBA. Two early postcards have been reproduced in this report (Figs 6 and 7) and an extract from a further example has been used as the report cover. All three were sourced from the Charles Thomas Archive.

7 Anticipated impacts

An examination of previous archaeological investigations of this part of the Tintagel Castle site has provided some indications of the archaeological deposits likely to be found along and close to the route of the failed water pipe. These seem most likely to consist largely of relatively deep rubble levelling layers associated with the creation of 18th or 19th century slate processing yards close to the Haven. This material has been shown from investigations in several areas to incorporate both early and later medieval artefactual material, some of which seems likely to derive from occupation sites which are likely to have been located close to this area, which Herring (2016) considers likely to have sited a post-Roman route to the Haven.

The only intervention within this specific area which has been archaeologically recorded consists of the trench cut through Dudley's Area 4 in 2003 at the southern edge of the area with which this DBA is concerned (see Figs 8 and 9) This may well have been the trench for the currently failed water pipe. It is probable that other surviving levelling spreads in the adjacent area will be of similar character and origin, and that there is a possibility that this 18th and 19th century material will also incorporate post-Roman/early and later medieval artefacts.

The area considered by this DBA also includes parts of the eastern valley slope along the lower slopes of which the water pipe enters the site. Although disturbance will have taken place along the route of the pipe trench, this area may also contain buried evidence for early or later medieval activity associated with the Haven and Castle. This area has not been archaeologically investigated.

Whilst test pitting to locate and repair the existing water pipe will have minimal impacts on the buried archaeology of this area, there is insufficient archaeological information relating to the remainder of the area to determine whether or not significant archaeological deposits underlie these areas, or the degree to which they have been disturbed in the past. Only part of the area occupied by the water pipe has been

archaeologically investigated. Where this did take place, although no features other than levelled 18th or 19th century slate working platforms were found, the levelling material (which was not bottomed) incorporated post-Roman artefacts. The plotting of the distribution of further artefactual material of this type would help considerably in better understanding the likely locations of post-Roman occupation sites on this part of the mainland.

8 Recommendations

This DBA suggests that the levelled area of this part of the site which is likely to be affected by trenching for any new water supply pipe is underlain by 18th or 19th century levelled areas associated with the slate trading industry, some areas of which have been shown to incorporate post-Roman artefactual material. This material may overlie a post-Roman trackway, as well as 18th century industrial structures. These deposits have been disturbed in some areas by a number of service trenches, not all of which appear to have been recorded. No equivalent record exists for the remainder of the area which might be disturbed should a replacement water pipe be installed.

On the valley side, the only known area of previous disturbance is that for the existing water pipe. No previous archaeological recording has taken place within this area. Whilst this area lies outside the Scheduled area at Tintagel, it may well contain archaeological features relevant to the better understanding of the site and if a new water pipe is installed within this area it would be advantageous to conduct a watching brief along the whole of its length.

9 References

9.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, c1880. 25 Inch Map First Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)

Ordnance Survey, c1907. 25 Inch Map Second Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)

Ordnance Survey, MasterMap Topography

Tithe Map and Apportionment, c1840. Parish of Tintagel (licensed digital copy at CRO)

9.2 Reports

Barrowman, R, Batey, C, and Morris, CD, 2007. *Excavations at Tintagel Castle, Cornwall, 1990-1999*, Society of Antiquaries of London

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9.3 Websites

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/> Online database of Sites and Monuments Records and Listed Buildings

10 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146710**

The project's documentary, digital, photographic and drawn archive is maintained by Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Electronic data is stored in the following locations:

Project admin: \\Sites\Sites T\Tintagel Castle visitor centre water leak DBA 2017\

Historic England/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-293649



Fig 3. The area backing Tintagel Haven circa 1880.

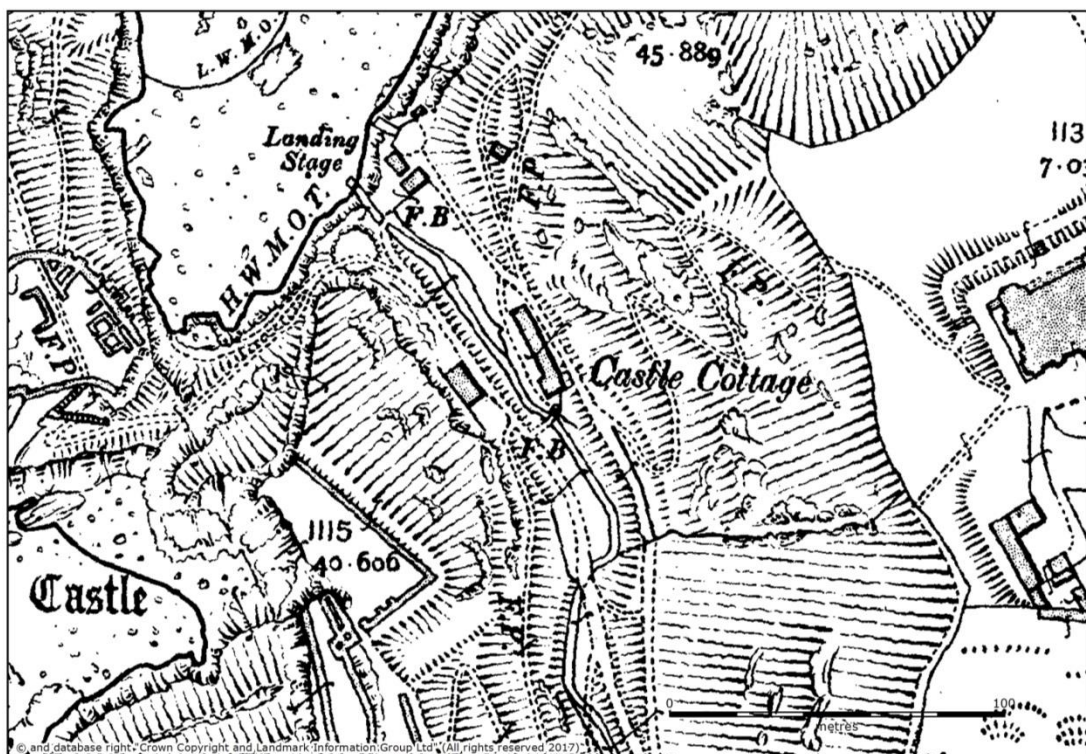


Fig 4. The area backing Tintagel Haven circa 1908.



Fig 5. The area backing Tintagel Haven in 2005.



Fig 6. The buildings at the lower end of Castle Drive in the early 20th century following their conversion from industrial uses. Postcard image courtesy of the Charles Thomas Archive.



Fig 7. A further view of the buildings at the lower end of Castle Drive in the early 20th century. Postcard image courtesy of the Charles Thomas Archive.

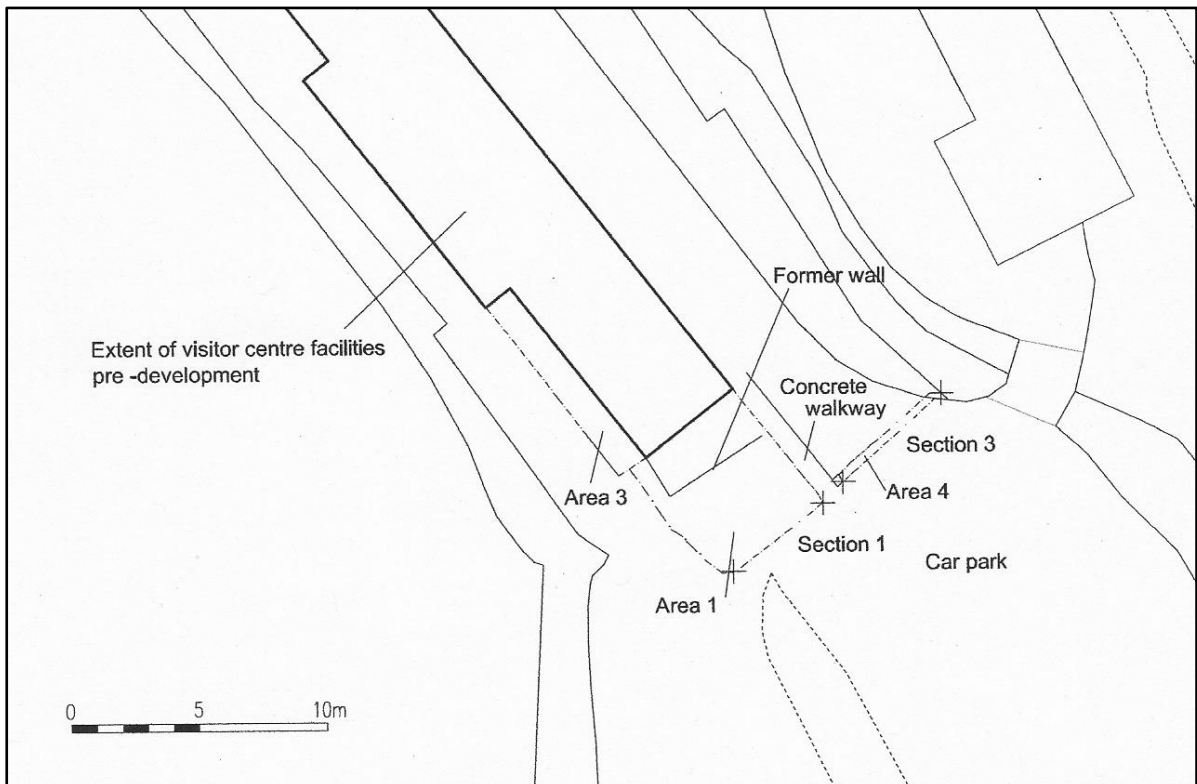


Fig 8. An extract from Figure 2 in Dudley 2004 showing the locations of the trenching in Areas 1 and 4 to the south of the visitor centre and café at Tintagel.



Fig 9. The services trench excavated in Area 4 in 2003 (Dudley 2004) showing the built up material interpreted as a slate processing yard and the iron pipe (bottom centre).

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