



Watching Brief on Lammana Chapel footpath, Looe,  
Cornwall

Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Report No 2017R085



## **Watching Brief on Lammana Chapel footpath, Looe, Cornwall**

<b>Client</b>	<b>Mr Jim Candy</b>
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## **Acknowledgements**

This study was commissioned by Mr Jim Candy and carried out by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council.

Help with the historical research was provided by Anne Preston-Jones.

The Project Manager was Adam Sharpe.

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.

## **Freedom of Information Act**

As Cornwall Council is a public authority it is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into effect from 1st January 2005.



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### **Cover illustration:**

*Looking east from the chapel along the new footpath.*

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## **Abbreviations**

CAU	Cornwall Archaeological Unit
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
CRO	Cornwall Record Office
HER	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
MCO	Monument number in Cornwall HER
NGR	National Grid Reference
OD	Ordnance Datum – height above mean sea level at Newlyn
OS	Ordnance Survey

## **1 Summary**

Mr. Jim Candy, Cornwall Council farm tenant at Trerieve Farm, Downterry, proposed works to upgrade the path from Hannafore to Lammana Chapel in order to make this a safer access route for walkers. The route was steep in its western section and its surface sloped to the south. It was, as a result, off-putting to many walkers. It was intended that the western section of the path would be widened (to a maximum width of 1.2m, though generally less than this), and regraded to produce a broadly level surface. It was proposed that a flight of narrow steps near the chapel would be replaced with a sloping ramp.

The place name Lammana was first recorded in c 1250 as a small priory belonging to Glastonbury Abbey although the earlier Cornish origins of the name suggest an earlier site of pre-Conquest origin. Whilst the initial focus of Glastonbury Abbey's holdings was on Looe Island itself, in the 13th century a chapel was built on the mainland as a site deemed less dangerous to reach in adverse conditions than that on the island. The original access track for the Chapel during its life as a site of worship was to the north and can still be seen today as a stone wall lined path; nothing has been recorded as having been sited on the southern side of the chapel where the hillslope is steep. A monk's house was built some distance to the east of the chapel in a lower and more sheltered part of the hillside overlooking Looe Island.

In the 1930s, excavations were carried out by CK Croft Andrew at both the site of the monks' house and the chapel, whilst further investigation, including geophysical survey, was carried out by Time Team in 2009. These excavations defined the extent of both buildings and identified a number of possible associated wall structures in the vicinity of the chapel. Whilst largely concentrated to the north of the chapel, it is the presence of these structures and others, which might be disturbed during path works, that was the reason why this watching brief was required.

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Cornwall Archaeological Unit in December 2017 on ground breaking works associated with mechanically re-grading the current footpath to level it out and make a more gradual ascent up the hill. No archaeological features were revealed, though some pieces of probable late medieval ridge tile were found close to the chapel.



Fig 1. Site location.

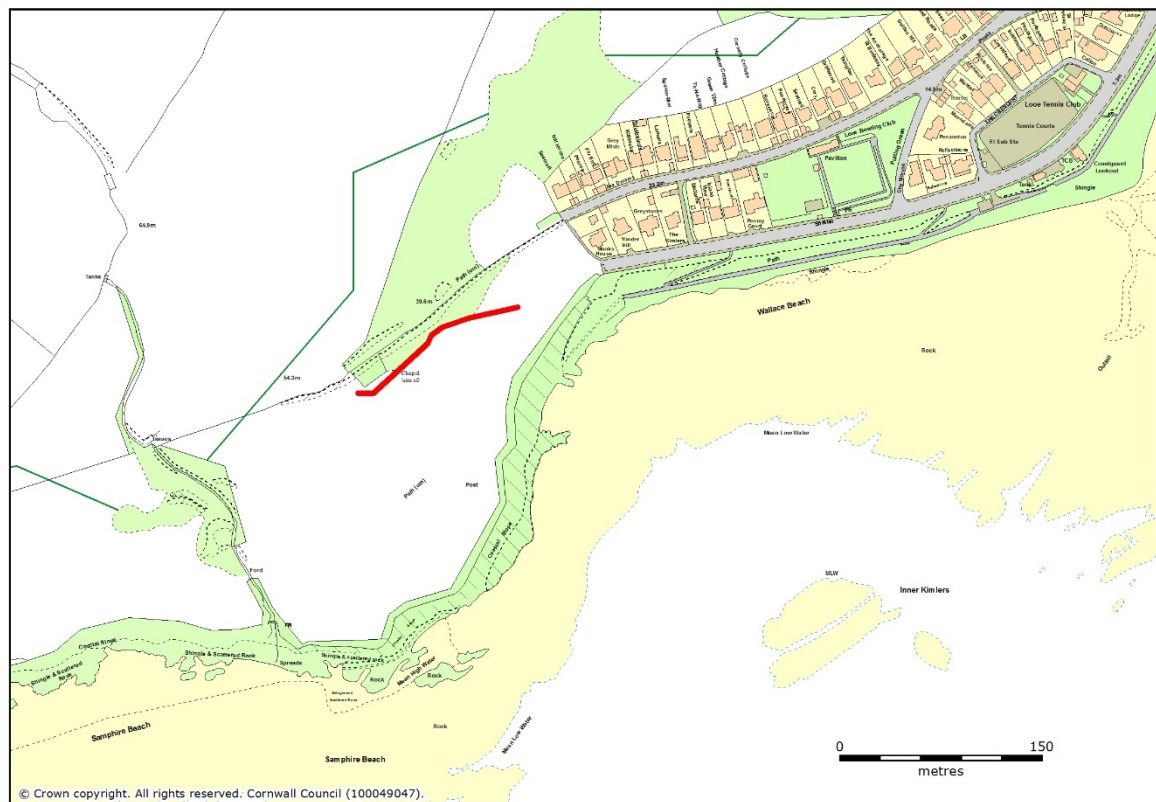


Fig 2. Site extent showing the course of the upgraded footpath.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Project background

Mr. Jim Candy, Cornwall Council farm tenant at Trierieve Farm, Donderry, proposed works to upgrade the path from Hannafore to Lammana Chapel in order to make this a safer access route for walkers. The route was steep in its western section and its surface sloped to the south. It was, as a result, off-putting to many walkers. It was intended that the western section of the path would be widened (to a maximum width of 1.2m, though generally less than this), and regraded to produce a broadly level surface. It was proposed that a flight of narrow steps near the chapel would be replaced with a sloping ramp.

The area adjacent to the chapel is considered to be of high archaeological sensitivity, given that evidence for burials has been found adjacent to the chapel during previous archaeological investigations. Monastic buildings associated with the chapel were noted as having been sited *'down the hill in a sheltered spot, but little evidence later than 1290 exists for this'* (Wessex Archaeology 2009). However, Croft Andrew's investigation suggested that *'there had been a building running north of the chapel now under the road – 'A little passage... intervened between the original north wall and the mystery building to the north'*. The path itself seems likely to have originally been created to link the chapel with the Monk's House to the east and may therefore be 13th century in origin, though subsequently modified through agricultural activities.

A brief dated 23 September 2017 for an archaeological watching brief had been written by Ann Reynolds, Senior Archaeologist (Countryside Advice) to guide the specifications for this work. Further information on the proposals was provided by Mr. Candy by phone. Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by Mr. Candy to undertake the watching brief and this was carried out in December 2017.

### 2.2 Aims

The principal aim of the watching brief was to gain a better understanding of the subsurface archaeology within the landscape immediately to the south and east of Lammana Chapel to determine whether associated features exist within this zone. A further aim was to ensure that damage to the historic environment was minimised whilst work was in progress. The objectives were to obtain an archaeological record of the land traversed by the path and to produce a report on its findings. A secondary objective was to produce an entry to the Historic England/ADS-Online OASIS national database of archaeological projects.

### 2.3 Methods

#### Methods

All fieldwork and post fieldwork was carried out according to CAU and CIfA guidelines and included the following:

#### Fieldwork

- Pre-fieldwork preparation and liaison with Anne Reynolds and the client, Mr Candy.
- Archaeological watching brief/monitoring of all trenching work carried out by the contractors. The whole length of the path shown in Figure 2 was mechanically excavated.
- Archaeological recording by the CAU archaeologist included: hand excavation of exposed features as required, drawing of plans and sections, selective collection of artefacts, photographic recording with scales – colour digital and black and



white as required, the written record being in the form of notes and context sheets.

### Archiving

- All finds were cleaned, identified, dated, recorded and stored according to CAU guidelines.
- All records (context sheets, photographs, etc.) were ordered, catalogued and stored according to CAU guidelines.

### Report

- The results from the watching brief have been drawn together and presented as this report.

## 3 Location and setting

The section of path being upgraded runs from SX 25050 52191 adjacent to Lammana Chapel downslope to its east for approximately 100m (to SX 25124 52254) (Figs 1 and 2). The path is in the ecclesiastical parish of Talland. The chapel is at an elevation of 45m OD.

The site of Lammana Chapel is on a break of slope near the top of the south eastern facing slope of West Looe Hill, directly opposite and overlooking Looe Island (otherwise known as St. Georges Island). The site lies just outside of the village of Hannafore which itself is located about half a mile along the coast to the west of West Looe. The site also overlooks a popular stretch of the South West Coast Path. The hill slope below the chapel on which the path is situated is quite steep, becoming more so as it approaches the chapel (see cover photo and Fig 3). Prior to the siteworks, the access for the chapel from the South West Coast Path is a narrow path cutting diagonally up the slope of the hill. Although there are a few wooden steps on steeper parts of the route, it is largely steep and slippery, with a severe cross slope. The late 19th and early 20th century 25" to a mile OS mapping showed a footpath to the chapel running alongside a boundary to the north of the chapel. Whilst likely to have been the original access, this is no longer the main path to the chapel, as the entrance to the path has been blocked off by the farmer. The narrow, more informal path through the field below the chapel is now the primary access route.

The field within which the site lies is currently used by grazing cattle.

## 4 Site history

The following is based on research undertaken by Anne Preston-Jones.

The place name of Lammana is first recorded in c 1250 as a small priory belonging to Glastonbury Abbey (Gover 1948, 299; Picken 1985). The name is Cornish, contains the place name elements *lann*, 'enclosed cemetery', or church site and *manach*, *managh*, 'monk' (Padel 1985, 142, 156; 1988, 190, 192), indicating that Glastonbury had inherited or acquired a religious site of early, pre-Conquest origin. The name seems to have referred originally to a site on St Georges or Looe Island, just off-shore from Looe and south-south east of the project site, but the evidence of the 1839 Tithe Map for Talland, which includes a hamlet of *Lemain* (whose name is a devolved form of Lammana) shows that the site included property on the mainland (Padel 1988, 86)

The focus of Glastonbury's holding was originally Looe Island but by the thirteenth century it also included a chapel on the mainland facing the island. The document of 1250 explains the origin of mainland chapel's foundation:

'Lammana is a certain sea-girt island in which a certain chapel of Saint Michael used to be kept up where the monks of Glastonbury, time out of mind, had monks celebrating divine service. And because, in days of old, many of those people who through devotion would have wanted to visit the said chapel on Saint Michael's day often lost their lives in the stormy sea, a certain chapel of Saint Michael was constructed upon the coast opposite the said island' (Picken 1985, 283).

The Ordnance Survey 1" to a mile map of 1803-9 gives no indication of the site of the chapel and neither does the Tithe Map of 1839. The latter does show a trackway leading north east to south west, which on the 1880 first edition Ordnance Survey 25" to a mile map is shown passing close to and just north of the site of the chapel, which is marked as chapel (*site of*). The track is shown strongly lynched on its downhill (south) side and in the vicinity of the chapel is both cut back into the slope on its north side and built out over the chapel site to the south. A similar arrangement is shown on the OS 1907 map. This track is still used as a footpath within the wider area but not for access to the chapel any more.

Both OS maps also note Monks' House (*remains of*) built into the hedge line to the east north east of, but on lower ground than, the chapel. A track, branching southwards from the main track noted previously, leads past the site of the monks' house to a quarry and buildings on the cliff edge.

In the 1930s, excavations were carried out by CK Croft Andrew at both the site of the monks' house and the chapel. Brief reports of these excavations were published (Croft Andrew 1936-7; 1937), but a very much fuller report was compiled by Lynette Olson from Croft Andrew's archive and published in *Cornish Archaeology* for 1994 (Olson 1994). Olson's report included a topographic survey of the visible remains made in 1988 by Cornwall Archaeological Unit. Further investigation, including geophysical survey, was carried out by Time Team in 2009 (Wessex Archaeology 2009).

The monks' house was found to consist of remains of the undercroft of a large single-celled building which extended south-west into the field. Remains of its north-east wall can still be seen forming part of the boundary of the field. This building may have been for the reception of pilgrims attempting the crossing to St Michael's Chapel on Looe Island and finds indicated a thirteenth to fourteenth century date.

The chapel proved to be a small building consisting of a nave and chancel only, with the later addition of a buttressing porch. Finds (mainly pottery) suggested that it may have been founded in perhaps the twelfth century (although Croft Andrew thought it might be pre-Norman); Olson was of the opinion that it continued in local use as a chapel of ease, after the mid thirteenth century when Glastonbury Abbey ceased to have an active interest in the property (Olson 1994, 125). The pottery was considered to be a surprisingly large collection for a chapel site and it was thought that some, especially that found north of the chapel, might be associated with the further walls found there. Some of the pottery dated from the twelfth century, but the majority was of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (in contrast with that from the monks' house). The collection also included a small number of Romano-British wares and one very abraded sherd of Samian (Roman fine ware), hinting at earlier activity in the area (O'Mahoney 1994).

The principal results of these investigations that are of significance in relation to the work on the footpath are as follows.

1. The geophysical survey carried out in advance of Time Team's work extended south and south west from the Monks' House and only covered a small section at the east end of the foot path. In this area, the responses indicated only natural features. On the steep slopes in the surveyed areas, however, various pits were identified, as well as ditches possibly representing a remnant field system (GSB 2008).

2. The chapel is set at the foot of a rock outcrop – possibly to increase its visibility in the landscape from Looe Island and explaining why the track which runs above it had to be cut into the slope and levelled out.
3. It is likely that the levelling of the track shown on all historic mapping will have partly covered over remains on the north (uphill) side of the chapel.
4. North east of the chapel, and partly covered by spoil from the track, the excavation revealed traces of further buildings.
5. The excavations did not extend far beyond the immediate footprint of the chapel so the existence of further remains in this area is not known, although the natural topography – the very steep south-facing slope – may mitigate against further remains.
6. Burials were found beneath the floor of the chapel. One was dated to c 1300 by Time Team (Wessex Archaeology 2009). None were identified outside the walls of the chapel but, as noted above, there was no excavation beyond the immediate vicinity of the chapel’s wall.
7. Pottery found in the chapel included a small collection of Roman period material. This hints at earlier activity in the area which was not, however, pinned down to any particular features.

## **5 Watching brief results**

The route of the new path was excavated into the hill slope by a mini digger with a toothless grading bucket in cold and windy but dry conditions on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The route follows the existing footpath, running upslope between two wooden way-marker posts seen in Figure 3. The chapel site is at the head of the slope.



*Fig 3. The route of the path between the way posts, looking west.*

In most areas the depth of excavation did not expose natural or reach any bedrock, cutting largely only through topsoil and subsoil. In a few places in the higher part of the path where the hill slope was steepest, some natural slate bedrock was exposed.

The main soil layers were as follows:

(101) Topsoil. A mid reddish-brown firm silty clay with occasional small pieces of shattered slate throughout. Its depth varied between 0.18m and 0.2m. This layer was noted along the whole length of the excavated section of the path.

(102) Natural. A pale blueish grey silt with compact laminated slate pieces, the weathered natural stone for the area.

(103) Subsoil. A mid reddish yellow brown firm silty clay with moderate amounts of small sub angular slate pieces. This layer was between 0.3m and 0.4m thick and visible along the whole length of the excavations. Within the lower portion of this layer, three pieces (two adjoining) of ceramic ridge tile were found, the larger piece (broken in two) being an apex section from the end of a ridge tile. A triangular crest can be seen on the top of this and a greenish yellow glaze survives on the external surface. The pieces were found close together below and to the east of the eastern corner of the chapel and may possibly have just slid down the hill as the chapel building deteriorated. The largest piece of ridge tile is illustrated in Figure 4 (below). The ridge tiles are hand made in a granitic fabric that resembles Cornish Medieval Coarsewares, (South-western micaceous ware). Glazing on Cornish wares is adopted in the late 13th to early 14th centuries. The form of the tile with the sharp triangular peaks suggests a date around 1500 (maybe slightly before), examples (in form) coming from Exeter being dated to *circa* 1500 to 1550.



*Fig 4. The crested ridge tile fragment.*

(104) Redeposited spoil, most likely derived from the 1930s excavation. Mid reddish yellow brown loose silty clay with frequent sub angular slate fragments and pockets of crumbled mortar (Fig 5). This layer had a thickness of 0.1m to 0.3m at its centre and sat directly on the hill slope downslope from the chapel site. This material showed above ground as a bulge in the hill slope and most likely represents spoil from the excavations carried out in the 1930s by Croft Andrews. This material is very loose and has extensive burrowing through it. It sits below the topsoil but within the subsoil. In no locations cut by the new path was it noted as sitting directly onto natural.



Fig 5. A section through the redeposited 1930s excavation spoil (104).

## 6 Conclusions/discussion

No buried archaeological remains were disturbed during the excavation of the new access path to Lammana Chapel although part of the spoil heap from the excavations carried out in the 1930s by Croft Andrews was exposed. This lay on the slope directly downslope from the chapel. The only finds were three pieces (two adjoining) of medieval ceramic crested and glazed ridge tile. Whilst not in a firm context, these were recovered from the lower portions of the subsoil, so can be attributed firmly to the area and are not residual surface finds.

Not much is known about the original appearance of the chapel, and no firm lifespan for this building is known (though it is likely to have gone out of use following the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII during the mid-16th century). The late medieval date of these pieces suggests that it had a decorative ceramic tiled ridge line. The fact that the pieces were found downslope from the chapel to its east as opposed to directly adjoining it suggests that materials from the derelict building had tumbled and slid down the hill at some point, possibly during a phase of deliberate demolition or removal of materials from the site during the post-medieval period.

Given the steep nature of the southern slope below the chapel, it would be unlikely that associated structures or features to the chapel would lie in this area. Most records suggest that the northern side of the chapel is a more likely location for any further buildings or burials. The topsoil and subsoil to the south of the chapel in the area traversed by the new path were noted as being intact, well-formed and of a reasonable depth, so had any features been present in this area, they would have survived.

## 7 References

### 7.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, c1903. 25 Inch Map Second Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)

Ordnance Survey, MasterMap Topography

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### 7.2 Publications

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Wessex Archaeology, 2009. *Looe, Cornwall: Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results*, Salisbury

### 7.3 Websites

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

## 8 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146774**

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 and images: \CAU\Live Projects\Lammana Chapel path WB 146744

Post archiving: \CAU\Archive\Sites L\Lammana Chapel path WB 146744

Historic England/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-303698

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