



Chysauster Ancient Village, Gulval, Cornwall:  
Archaeological watching brief during the construction of a viewing  
platform adjacent to House Six

Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Report No: 2018R015



## **Chysauster Ancient Village, Gulval, Cornwall**

### **Archaeological watching brief during the construction of a viewing platform adjacent to House Six**

<b>Client</b>	<b>English Heritage</b>
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<b>Report author</b>	<b>Adam Sharpe BA MCIfA</b>
<b>Checked by</b>	<b>Dr. Andy Jones MCIfA</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Andrew Young MCIfA</b>

#### **Cornwall Archaeological Unit**

Cornwall Council

Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3AY

Tel: (01872) 323603

Email: [enquiries@cau.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cau.org.uk) Web: [www.cau.org.uk](http://www.cau.org.uk)

## **Acknowledgements**

This study was commissioned by Georgina Bishop, Interpretation Manager (West), English Heritage and was carried out by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council. The Project Manager was Dr. Andy Jones.

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.



Cornwall Archaeological Unit is a Registered Organisation with the  
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

## **Cover illustration**

*Contractors installing the upright posts which will support the viewing platform, once cut down to their final heights.*

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## Abbreviations

CAU	Cornwall Archaeological Unit
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
EH	English Heritage
OD	Ordnance Datum – height above mean sea level at Newlyn
OS	Ordnance Survey

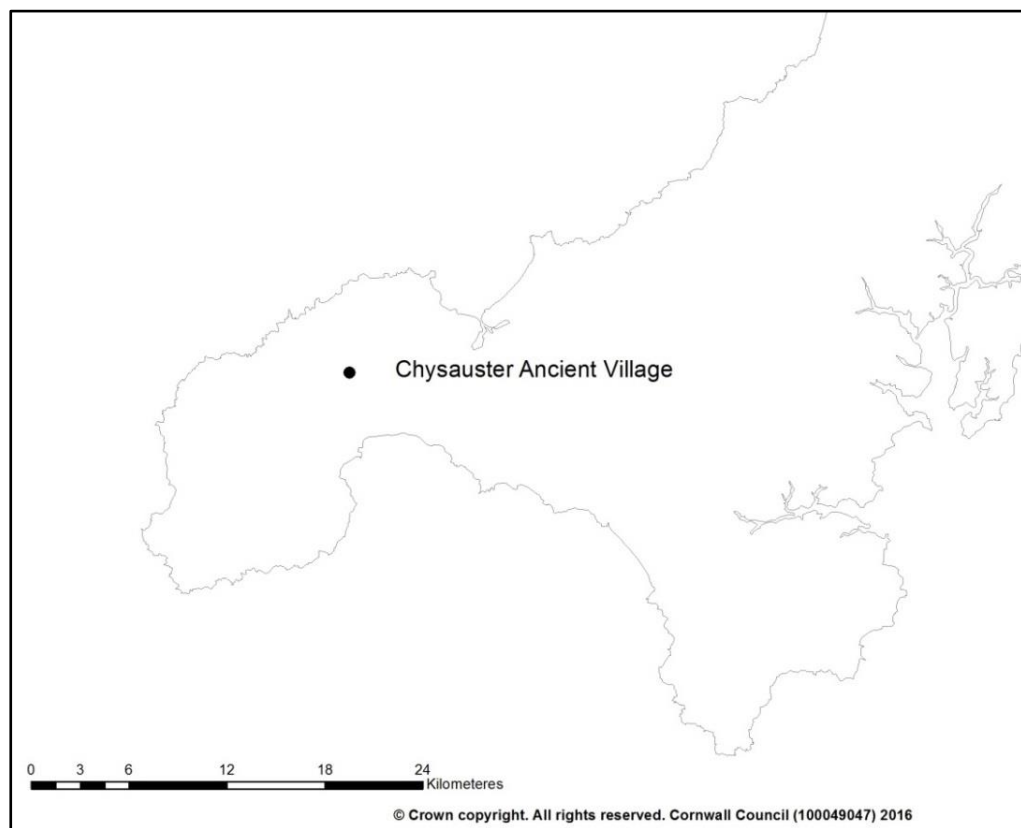
# **1 Summary**

Chysauster Ancient Village, Madron, Cornwall is a nationally significant Scheduled Monument under the guardianship and management of English Heritage.

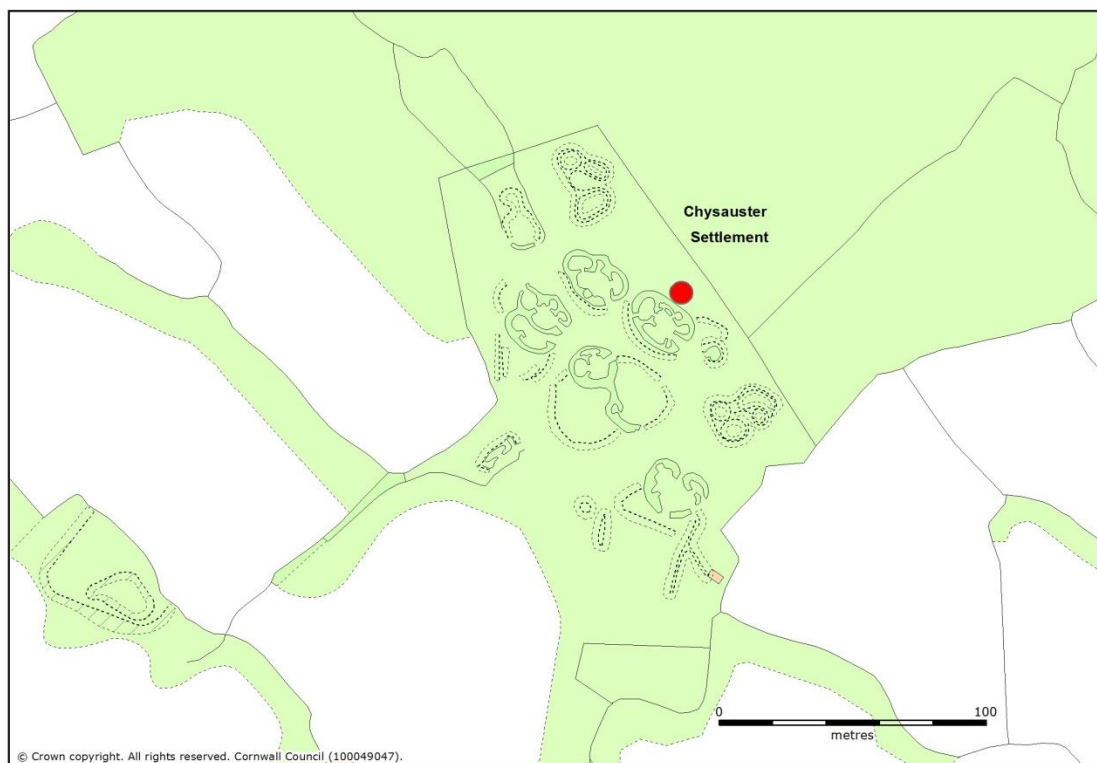
In January 2018 Cornwall Archaeological Unit was requested by Georgina Bishop, Interpretation Manager English Heritage to provide a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and costs for undertaking and reporting on an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a series of potholes associated with the construction of a viewing platform adjacent to Courtyard House 6. The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

The postholes were each 600mm deep and were wholly excavated within topsoil, which was considered likely to have accumulated against the upslope side of the building through former cultivation activities. No artefacts were recovered.





*Fig 1. The location of Chysauster Ancient Village, Cornwall.*



*Fig 2. The location of House 6 and the new viewing platform, Chysauster Ancient Village.*



## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Project background

Chysauster Ancient Village, Gulval, Cornwall is a nationally significant Scheduled Monument under the guardianship and management of English Heritage.

In January 2018 Cornwall Archaeological Unit was requested by Georgina Bishop, Interpretation Manager, English Heritage (West) to provide a WSI and costs for undertaking and reporting on an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a series of potholes associated with the construction of a viewing platform adjacent to and just upslope from Courtyard House 6.

The watching brief was required by one of the conditions for Scheduled Monument Consent for the works, which were also subject to Planning Consent from the LPA (Ref PA17/02944).

### 2.2 Aims

The principal aim of the watching brief was to observe the intrusive activities associated with the construction of the viewing platform, to record any archaeological features exposed during the excavation of the postholes and to recover any artefacts uncovered during the works.

The project objectives were to produce a report on the findings of the watching brief and to create an entry in the Historic England/ADS OASIS online national database of archaeological projects.

### 2.3 Methods

All recording work was undertaken according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) guidance (CIfA 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2017). CAU staff follow the CIfA *Code of Conduct* (2014d). The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists is the professional body for archaeologists working in the UK.

#### 2.3.1 Fieldwork

A CAU archaeologist undertook a continuous watching brief during the excavation of the six postholes by contractors. All soil arisings were checked for artefacts. The locations of the postholes were plotted onto an Ordnance Survey plan of Courtyard House Six and notes were made of the dimensions of the postholes and the material excavated from them. The upright posts were subsequently secured with Postcrete.

## 3 Location and setting

See Figures 1 and 2.

Chysauster Ancient Village is located near Newmill, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 8XA and is centred at SW 47241 34998 six kilometres to the north of Penzance in the parish of Gulval.

The site is underlain by granite (British Archaeological Survey 1970, sheet 351/358). Local topsoils tend to be thin and acidic and are of the Moretonhampstead Series, whilst the weathered subsoil, locally known as "rab", is clay-rich and derived from the degraded granite bedrock. A tin lode with a north-north-east to south-south-west aligned strike outcrops to the north-west of the settlement and has been worked both at surface and at depth.

The site lies within enclosed farmland on the mid southern slopes below Castle-An-Dinas hillfort, the core of the courtyard house settlement being at a height of 174m OD. The settlement occupies the south-west facing mid slope of the valley overlooking the Trevalyor Stream and commands clear views of the moors to the north and Mounts Bay to the south. It is intervisible with Lescudjack hillfort on the western outskirts of Penzance.

The Guardianship site sits within an extensive ancient terraced field system which in recent years has been surveyed and partially explored through excavation (Nowakowski and Sharpe 1986; Smith 1996). The extent of the prehistoric landscape surveyed within the area surrounding Chysauster Ancient Village extends to just over 70 ha, and incorporates a Bronze Age cairn, at least eleven roundhouses, at least one freestanding and several probable courtyard houses together with several phases of prehistoric field system, medieval outfields and evidence for tin streaming and the exploitation of local tin lodes by means of outcrop working and deeper shaft mining (Nowakowski and Sharpe 1996).

## **4 Designations**

### **4.1 National**

Chysauster Ancient Village is a Guardianship site managed by English Heritage. The site is a Scheduled Monument. The Guardianship site is confined to the area occupied by the courtyard houses and other features of the site which had been identified by the late 1930s. The Scheduled Monument (Ref 1006726) covers a larger area, including a detached Bronze Age burial cairn to the north-west of the Guardianship area and areas of moorland to the north-east and north-west of the Guardianship site.

Chysauster Ancient Village also falls within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

### **4.2 Regional/county**

The site lies within the area of the Penwith Heritage Coast and the Trenowin Downs County Wildlife Site.

## **5 Site history**

The core of the late Iron Age to Romano-British period settlement at Chysauster comprises nine closely-set well-preserved courtyard houses which display some aspects of a planned layout suggesting broad contemporaneity of construction, a fogou, together with parts of a contemporary field system. These were laid out within and partly overlying a landscape containing a number of roundhouses and an associated field system together with indications of other detached courtyard houses, documentary sources suggesting that the 'village' was originally more extensive, particularly on its eastern side. It has been suggested that the principal period of occupation of the courtyard house settlement dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD (Hencken 1933), whilst the underlying roundhouses and fields date to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC (Smith 1996).

Many of the surviving courtyard houses at Chysauster appear to have been formally arranged along a shared 'roadway', giving the settlement a 'planned' feel. This is not yet proven to be deliberate and may simply be an accident of survival, but the predominant individual houses within the settlement core suggest a more sophisticated build than some of the peripheral houses, possibly reflecting earlier and later phases of settlement contraction, expansion and/or re-organisation. The dating, phasing and organisation of settlement at Chysauster is still poorly understood, however. Adjoining a number of the courtyard houses are small walled enclosures and terraces interpreted as garden plots and/or building platforms. Many of the courtyard houses have substantial paved entrances marked by large orthostats. Along with the element of enclosure this gives the suggestion of private household space and autonomous control of land and social interaction.

The fogou at Chysauster is now peripheral to the surviving settlement, but is likely to have been more central within it, as is typical at many of the other courtyard house settlements of West Penwith (Carn Euny, Sancreed, Nanjulian, St Just and Porthmeor, for example). The Chysauster fogou has undergone little investigation but these stone-

lined souterrains are often shown to have had a long period of use, possibly primarily for storage but also perhaps as places of refuge and safeguarding.

The occupants of Chysauster were principally farmers, but also quite possibly tin streamers and traders. Evidence of metalworking has been found at other courtyard settlements, such as Carn Euny and Porthmeor, for example, and there is some suggestion for this at Chysauster: excavations by Borlase (1873), Hencken (1928) and Croft Andrew (1937-1939) record fragments of tin or iron slag, ore-stained moulds and a sherd of tin-glazed pottery from the site, principally from Houses 4 and 6. This is significant because it demonstrates the broader outlook of the local Romano-British communities of West Penwith, who from the Late Bronze Age had moved beyond a purely subsistence-based lifestyle to one of trade and exchange with the wider world.

### **Previous archaeological work**

The earliest documentary references to Chysauster date to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century: *Chisalwester* in 1302 and *Chisalvestre* in 1313 (Padel 1988). The name derives from the Cornish place-name elements *Chy*, typically referring either to a cottage or a building used for agricultural or industrial purposes, and *Salwester*, a personal name 'Sylvester'. This name is Latin in origin and derives from *Silvestris*, 'of a woodland'.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the site was occasionally used by Methodist preachers and became known for a time as the 'Chapels'. Hencken (1933, 357) documents an account by the then tenant at Chysauster that House 7 was the location of this activity.

The courtyard house settlement at Chysauster was first recognised by Henry Crozier in 1849 who noted ten courtyard houses and a fogou (Pool 1990). In 1861 a description of the site together with a plan was first published by J T Blight (1861a, fig. 2). At that time the settlement was considered to comprise at least eight ruinous and overgrown stone-built 'huts' of "elliptical form" (Blight 1861a). Cornish Antiquarian William Copeland Borlase carried out an excavation of the site in 1873 when he cleared out the interior of House 6 (coded by him as House 9) (Borlase 1873; 1880-81). In 1879 he with William Collings Lukis surveyed House 6 and in 1885 published a plan (Lukis 1885, plates XXXVII and XXXVIII). Hencken (1933, plate LXXII) renumbered Borlase's House 9 as the current House 6.

In 1897 F Holman and JB Cornish excavated House II (later known as House 4, Hencken 1928, 149) on behalf of The Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society (1893-8, 106-7).

The first accurate survey of the settlement was carried out by DH Watkins of Callington in 1928 during excavations directed by TD Kendrick of the British Museum and Hugh O'Neill Hencken. House 3 was excavated (Hencken 1928).

In 1931 Chysauster came into guardianship and Hencken continued his work on behalf of His Majesty's Office of Works. During this time Houses 5 and 7 were excavated, work was resumed on House 3, and some limited excavation, consolidation and repair work took place on Houses 6 and 7. On completion of the fieldwork Hencken published a detailed account of the results of his excavations in *Archaeologia* (Hencken 1933).

Charles Kenneth Croft Andrew was employed by the Office of Works to carry out work at Chysauster in 1937, 1938 and finally in 1939. Each season of work involved some excavation, alongside the recording and consolidation of upstanding walls. The results of these investigations have never been published.

In 1952, 319 acres of moorland existed in the immediate vicinity of Chysauster but by 1980, 98 acres had been broken in, and over the next three years a further 92 acres were converted to farmland. In May 1983 it was discovered that the well-preserved field system in the moorland above the courtyard house settlement (22 acres in total) was being cleared as part of a scheme of 'improvement'.

Chysauster was Scheduled by the Department of the Environment (DoE) in 1984, who also funded the survey of part of the field system by CCRA and the Central Excavation Unit (CEU). The works undertaken included the rescue excavation of a kerbed Bronze Age cairn and evaluation trenching of elements of the prehistoric field system within

this area (Smith 1996). Given that further moorland improvement was proposed, a survey of 71.92 Ha of the remaining unenclosed moorland and partially reclaimed croftland within these tenements was undertaken between December 1985 and February 1986 by Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) (Nowakowski and Sharpe 1986). These surveys for the first time provided the landscape context for Chysauster Ancient Village.

In 1986 palaeoenvironmental sampling of a sealed deposit underlying the cairn and of peat deposits to the south of the settlement was carried out (Scaife 1986). The pollen analysis from the cairn deposit indicated cereal growing activity within the area surrounding the cairn immediately prior to its construction, but it also detected taxa which might be associated with the initiation of soil degradation processes associated with this agricultural activity. The pollen sequence showed clear evidence for significant anthropogenically-led changes (predominantly the clearance of valley-side woodland within the local environment leading to the erosion of topsoil) which Scaife considered highly likely to have initiated the formation of the valley peats.

Subsequent small scale recording by CAU included archaeological watching briefs and supervision during the installation of interpretation panels on the site in 1988 and 2016, a watching brief during drainage and path works in 1999, a further watching brief during improvements to disabled access in 2004, during which a possible decorated stone orthostat and a Roman cochlear spoon were recovered and a survey of sections of walling in House 4 and 9 in 2007. An interim Conservation Plan for the site was produced in 2001 (Coe 2001); this was updated by CAU in 2016, whilst a comprehensive review of the Croft Andrew Archive was undertaken by CAU in 2010 (Nowakowski and Gould 2010). English Heritage commissioned a detailed topographical survey of the site in 2016.

## **6 Archaeological results**

See Figures 3 and 4.

The excavation of six postholes to support the viewing platform structure was undertaken by Cornwall Fencing on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2018 and was the subject of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Cornwall Archaeological Unit.

The turf and underlying soils were removed utilising a two handled post-hole excavation tool (Fig 3) and decanted into large buckets in order that the soil could be checked for artefacts. The colour, texture, moisture and stone content of the excavated soils were also noted. Each posthole measured 250mm to 300mm in diameter at surface, tapering to 200mm diameter at its base at 600mm from surface. The upright posts for the viewing platform were at 2.2m centres along the rear of the courtyard house, being set 300mm from the walling of the building, the outer pair being centred at 1.25m from these. Three additional posts were required to support the stairway up to the platform from the north-east. One of these was set midway between the outer platform supports; the other pair, at the base of the stairway, were 1.2m to the north-east of the outer edge of the platform.

Surface waterlogging was noted adjacent to House 6, and as a result the topsoil immediately below the turf covering was, in each pit, very dark in colour, being nearly black and had a high moisture content. At around 300mm from surface the soils in each pit became notably drier and slightly browner in colour. Golf ball to fist-sized stones were encountered from near surface to 600mm depth in each pit, the pits adjacent to the courtyard house wall being slightly stonier than those further away from it.

The base of the topsoil was not reached in any of the six pits. No artefacts were recovered.

## **7 Conclusions/discussion**

Given the small scale of these interventions it is not surprising that no artefacts were recovered from these locations on the immediate upslope side of House Six. What was

somewhat unexpected was the considerable depth of topsoil encountered in all of the holes, no indications of the underlying subsoil being revealed.

It has to be concluded that rather than this representing a natural topsoil, the considerable depth of material recorded at this location represents a topsoil which had accumulated as a result of cultivation activities upslope from the courtyard house, the implication being that this might well have extended right up to the exterior of the building. Whilst this might represent the movement of soils within fields backing onto the houses, it is more likely that the cultivation was carried out within garden or allotment plots attached to them. In this respect, the complete absence of artefacts incorporated into their soils as manuring scatters might be considered unusual.

In conclusion, it appears likely that somewhat less of the eternal upslope elevations of the buildings is currently exposed than was originally the case when the courtyard houses were constructed.

## 8 References

### 8.1 Primary sources

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

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### 8.2 Publications

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- Thorpe, C. 2004. *Chysauster Disabled Access Improvement, Cornwall* Historic Environment Service Report 2014R104, Cornwall County Council
- Thorpe, C.M. 1999. *Chysauster: Archaeological Recording January 1999*, Cornwall Archaeology Unit Unpublished Statement

### 8.3 Websites

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

## 9 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146768**

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

Electronic data is stored in the following location:

\\CAU\Archive\Sites C\Chysauster viewing platform WB

Historic England/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-311218



*Fig 3. Contractors excavating the postholes and disposing of the arisings into buckets for subsequent inspection.*



*Fig 4. Construction of the framework for the viewing platform under way. The upright timbers had not, at this stage, been cut down to their final heights.*



## Appendix 1: Summary Written Scheme of Investigation

**Client Name:** English Heritage  
**Client Contact:** Georgina Bishop

**Site name:** Chysauster Ancient Village  
**Site location:** SW 47241 34998  
**Planning ref:** PA17/02944

### Summary project background

Chysauster Ancient Village, Madron, Cornwall is an nationally significant scheduled ancient monument under the guardianship and management of English Heritage.

In January 2018 Cornwall Archaeological Unit was requested by Georgina Bishop, Interpretation Manager English Heritage to provide a WSI and costs for undertaking and reporting on an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a series of potholes associated with the construction of a viewing platform adjacent to courtyard house 6. The work was undertaken on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

### Methodology

All recording work will be undertaken according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) guidance (CIfA 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2017). Staff will follow the CIfA *Code of Conduct* (2014d). The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists is the professional body for archaeologists working in the UK.

Archaeological recording will include details of any sub-surface elements of the site revealed during the works.

Existing archaeological reports and other sources of information including recently updated mapping of the Guardianship site will be consulted to form a background to the watching brief.

The site archaeologist will be responsible for undertaking an archaeological watching brief during ground disturbance associated with the removal of three existing signs and ground preparation works for the new interpretation. Should intact archaeological layers or features be revealed by the groundworks the archaeologist will halt the work in order to more clearly define what is found and to record archaeological information. If sub-surface deposits are deemed to be significant, the archaeologist will closely supervise the excavation of the remainder of the ground disturbance activities. All artefacts revealed during the excavation works will be archaeologically retrieved and processed.

The level of recording will be appropriate to the character/importance of the archaeological remains revealed.

If complex and/or significant archaeological deposits are encountered then the archaeological requirements must be reviewed by the representative of English Heritage and Cornwall Archaeological Unit. **In the event that significant remains cannot be preserved *in situ* then full-scale excavation may be required.**

In advance of the proposed small-scale trenching Cornwall Archaeological Unit will discuss and agree with the client and with the site manager:

- Working methods and programme.
- Health, safety and welfare arrangements.
- Treatment of artefacts.

### *Recording - general*

- Site drawings (plans, sections, locations of finds) will be made by pencil (4H) on drafting film; all plans will be linked to the Ordnance Survey (electronic) mapping; all drawings will include standard information: site details, personnel, date, scale, north point.
- All features and finds will be accurately located at an appropriate scale. Sections will normally be drawn at 1:10 and plans at 1:20.
- All archaeological contexts will be described to a standard format linked to a continuous numbering sequence.
- Finds will be collected in sealable plastic bags, which will be labelled immediately with the context number and/or other identifier.
- Drawings and photographs will be recorded in a register giving details of feature number and location.
- Sealed/undisturbed archaeological contexts in the form of buried soils, layers or deposits within significant archaeological features (ditches and pits, etc.) may be sampled for environmental evidence and dating material. In the event that significant organic remains are encountered, advice may be needed from the Historic England Science Advisor (South West). Any necessary environmental sampling will be guided by *Environmental Archaeology* (English Heritage Centre for Archaeological Guidelines. 2001/02).

The fieldwork may produce artefacts.

- All finds in significant stratified contexts predating 1800 AD (e.g. settlement features) will be plotted on a scaled base plan and described. Post medieval or modern finds may be disposed of at the cataloguing stage and offered back to the site manager. The discard policy will be reviewed ahead of its implementation.
- All finds predating 1800 AD will be collected in sealable plastic bags which will be labelled immediately with the context number or other identifier.

Any human remains which are encountered will initially be left *in situ* and reported to the Site Supervisor and the appropriate authorities (the Coroner and Environmental Protection, Cornwall Council). If burials are encountered their legal status must be ascertained and recording and/or removal must comply with the legal guidelines. If human remains are not to be removed their physical security will be ensured by back filling as soon as possible after recording. If human remains are to be removed this will be done with due reverence and in accordance to current best practice and legal requirements. The site will be adequately screened from public view. Once excavated, human remains will not be exposed to public view.

Where appropriate the photographic record will consist of prints in both black and white together with their negatives. Digital photography will be used for report illustration. For both general and specific photographs, a photographic scale will be included. In the case of detailed photographs, a north arrow will be included. The photographic record shall be accompanied by a photographic register detailing as a minimum, feature number, location and direction of shot.

The photo record will comprise:

- general views
- examples of significant detail

Methodology for the archive standard photography is set out as follows:

- Photographs of details will be taken with lenses of appropriate focal length;
- A tripod will be used to take advantage of natural light and slower exposures;

- Difficulties of back-lighting will be dealt with where necessary by balancing the lighting by the use of flash;
- A metric scale will be included in all views, except where health and safety considerations make this impractical.

The fieldwork may produce artefactual material. The following recording and retention policies will be followed:

- In the event that objects containing precious metal(s) are encountered, the coroner will be informed as per the provisions of the Treasure Act 1996.
- Significant finds in stratified contexts will be plotted on a scaled base plan or with a Leica GPS unit and recorded as small finds.
- All finds will be collected in sealable plastic bags which will be labelled immediately with the site code, the context number or other identifier, the type of material, and the finder's initials. The only exception to this policy will be that large assemblages of modern (post-1800) material may be representatively sampled.
- Modern (post-1800) finds may be disposed of at the cataloguing stage. This process will be reviewed ahead of its implementation.

Following review with the CAU Project Manager the results from the fieldwork will be collated as an archive.

This will involve the following.

- All finds, etc., will be washed, catalogued, and stored in a proper manner (being clearly labelled and marked and stored according to CAU guidelines).
- All records (drawings, context sheets, photographs, etc.) will be ordered, catalogued and stored in an appropriate manner (according to CAU guidelines).
- Any black and white negative film will be catalogued and deposited with the site archive.
- Colour digital images taken as part of the site archive will be either converted from colour to black and white negative film and added to the site archive, or deposited with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).
- Completion of the Historic England/ADS OASIS online archive index.
- All correspondence relating to the project, the WSI, and a single paper copy of the report, stored in an archive standard (acid-free) documentation box.
- Drawn archive storage (plastic wallets for the annotated record drawings).
- Additional digital data (survey, external reports, etc.)

An index to the site archive will be created and the archive contents prepared for long term storage, in accordance with CAU standards.

- The project archive will be deposited initially at ReStore PLC, Liskeard and in due course (when space permits) at Cornwall Record Office.
- Digital data will be stored on the Cornwall Council network which is regularly and frequently backed up.
- Digital data (CAU reports, external reports, survey data, geophysics data, digital photographs, etc.) forming part of the site archive will be deposited with the ADS.
- The results from the project will be drawn together and presented in a concise report. The scope of the report will be dependent on the scale and significance of the results from the project.
- In the case of negative results the findings will be presented in a CAU short report format. In the case of limited results the findings will be presented in a concise archive report. Which type of report is most appropriate will be agreed at CAU at the conclusion of the fieldwork stage.
- In the case of significant and/or extensive results a post excavation assessment report will be produced in accordance with CIfA's guidelines for post-excavation assessment (2014c). This will include a summary of the site archive and work

carried out for assessment, a discussion of the potential of the data, and an updated project design (UPD) setting out proposals for analysis and publication.

### **Timetable**

- The study is anticipated to take place on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2018.
- The archive report will be completed within 3 months of the end of the fieldwork. The deposition of the archive will be completed within 3 months of the completion of the archive report.

### **Agreed monitoring points**

Monitoring of the project will be carried out by the CAU project manager.

- If significant detail is discovered, all works must cease and a meeting convened with the client to discuss the most appropriate way forward.

Monitoring points during the study will include:

- Approval of the WSI
- Completion of fieldwork
- Completion of archive report
- Deposition of the archive

This WSI was produced by Adam Sharpe BA MCIfA  
Projects Officer  
Cornwall Archaeological Unit  
10<sup>th</sup> January 2018



## **Cornwall Archaeological Unit**

Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, Cornwall,  
TR1 3AY

(01872) 323603  
[enquiries@cau.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cau.org.uk)  
[www.cau.org.uk](http://www.cau.org.uk)

