

# Steval Point Battery, The Garrison St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Historic Environment Projects**



Report No

2010R103

Report Name

Steval Point Battery, The Garrison, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

Report Author

Charles Johns

Event Type

Watching Brief

Client Organisation

The Duchy of Cornwall

Client Contact

Jenny Nelstrop

Monuments (MonUID)

SM 165434

Fieldwork dates (From) (To)

26/04/10

27/04/10

(Created By)

Charles Johns

(Create Date)

27/09/2010

Location (postal address; or general location and parish)

Steval Point Battery, The Garrison, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

(Town - for urban sites)

Hugh Town

(Postcode)

TR21 0LS

(Easting) X co-ord

SV 89550

(Northing) Y co-ord

10360

### List of Figures

Fig no	Description
Front cover	The rear of the building showing the drain excavation
Fig 1	Location map
Fig 2	Site plan
Fig 3	Detail from the 1907 OS map
Fig 4	Section drawing of drain edge
Fig 5	The excavated drain trench
Fig 6	The iron object



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



## Project background

Steval Point battery is situated on the on the slope between the larger Steval Battery, on the summit of the Garrison, and Steval Point (Fig 1). The battery had two 12-pdr guns, approved but not mounted by 1902, but definitely in place by 1905. A party from 105 Company REA at Falmouth probably used these guns for armament training in the summer of 1905. The 1907 OS map (Fig 3) records the battery as 'dismantled' although there are contradictory accounts that dismounting did not take place until 1910.

In 1993 Jeanette Ratcliffe of the Cornwall Archaeological Unit described the battery as comprising an earth bank around two concrete gun platforms with subterranean rooms leading off from a sunken light well. There is also a brick above-ground building (shown on the 1907 map) with an original concrete ramp to it; the building slightly sunken as it was cut into the hill-slope. The well has a single flight of steps and, unlike larger Steval and Woolpack batteries, retained its railings. The underground rooms, leading off to east, north and south of the well have modern doors and windows; they were presumably shell and cartridge stores and officers' and gunners' shelters. The gun platforms have modern wooden seats / benches around their iron mounts. All the modern features, which include shrubs and decorative rockery constructions, relate to the current use of the brick above-ground building as a holiday home. The 1907 OS map records an irregular six-sided fence enclosing the battery with access to the rear, east, side of the track approaching from the north-east near Star Castle (Fig 3).

In April 2010 refurbishment of the holiday home by the Duchy of Cornwall, involved some excavation for new drainage works (Fig 2). The house is located within and on Scheduled Monument 165434: Post-medieval breastwork, curtain wall and associated defensive structures on the periphery of the Garrison. Although the dwelling itself is not scheduled, the land adjacent to and underneath the dwelling is scheduled. Consequently Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council (HE Projects) were commissioned by the Duchy of Cornwall to carry out archaeological recording during the groundworks as condition of Scheduled Monument Consent and to fulfil a brief for archaeological recording by the Council of the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Adviser (Breen 2010).

## Aims and objectives

The site specific aims of archaeological recording were:

- to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains;
- to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date, and significance of any archaeological remains encountered;
- to record any archaeological remains;
- to establish the nature of the activity on the site;
- to identify any artefacts relating to the occupation of the site; and
- to provide further information on the archaeology of the area from any archaeological remains encountered.

## Working methods

Two visits were made to the site: one on 26/04/2010 when excavation of the drain was in progress and the second on 27/04/2010 when it had been fully excavated. A photographic was made (digital) and a written and drawn record made (section drawing of the trench edge at 1:20 scale).

## Results

Excavation in the bathroom showed that the floor of the interior of the dwelling has been raised by approximately 0.28m (11 inches). A polythene membrane had been laid over the original concrete floor, then 0.10m (4 inches) of concrete, 0.05m (2 inches) of insulation then 3 inches pf timber with the flooring laid on top. It is likely that this was done when the dwelling was refurbished in 2003 (John Horton pers comm).

The hole through the wall showed that a ½ inch thick layer of fired clay had been placed between the concrete foundations and the brick wall of the dwelling, possibly as a damp-proof course.

The excavated edge of the drainage channel revealed three layers of concrete: the present pale grey concrete yard/drive surface 50mm thick (1); an underlying pour of rougher pale grey concrete 50-70mm thick (2); and another layer of brown concrete 50-300mm thick (3), which was deeper towards the western end of the trench where the underlying layers had been cut away. Below this was a 1 inch thick layer of grey concrete (4) forming a sloping surface. This layer was interpreted as either an earlier path or, more likely, bedding for an old drain, and, like the underlying layer, appeared to have been cut away halfway along the section. Below this was a layer light brown concrete make-up (5) and a then a layer of compact dark brown sandy clay (6), which was not fully exposed by the excavation.

Layer (6), also interpreted as a make-up or levelling layer, contained fragments of brick and saltglazed drainpipe. It also contained a length of broken wrought bar 14 inches long by 2 inches wide by up to 1 inch thick. The bar had a distinct flange at one end and, the other end was covered in concretion.

## Discussion

The excavation for drainage works did not disturb any significant archaeological deposits, although the bottom layer (6) evidently contains demolition material and it should be noted that any further groundworks have potential to reveal more of this deposit.

A study of the 1898 War Department Pattern Book, an illustrated document with specifications for military fixtures and fittings did not reveal any matches for the iron bar, which has been placed in one of the underground rooms for safe keeping.

## References

- Breen, E, 2010. *Brief for Archaeological Recording, Steval Battery*, Council of the Isles of Scilly
- War Department 1898. *Pattern Book*, photocopy held by Historic environment, Cornwall Council

## Project archive

The HE project number is **2010046**

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 and an information file containing copies of documentary/cartographic source material (file no 201046).
2. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE 725).
3. Digital photographs stored in the directory ..\Images\Scilly\St Mary's\Steval Point Battery Watching Brief 2010046
4. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-83263

This report text is held in digital form as: ...\\HE Projects\Sites\Scilly\Sites Q-T\St Mary's\Steval Point Battery Watching Brief 2010046

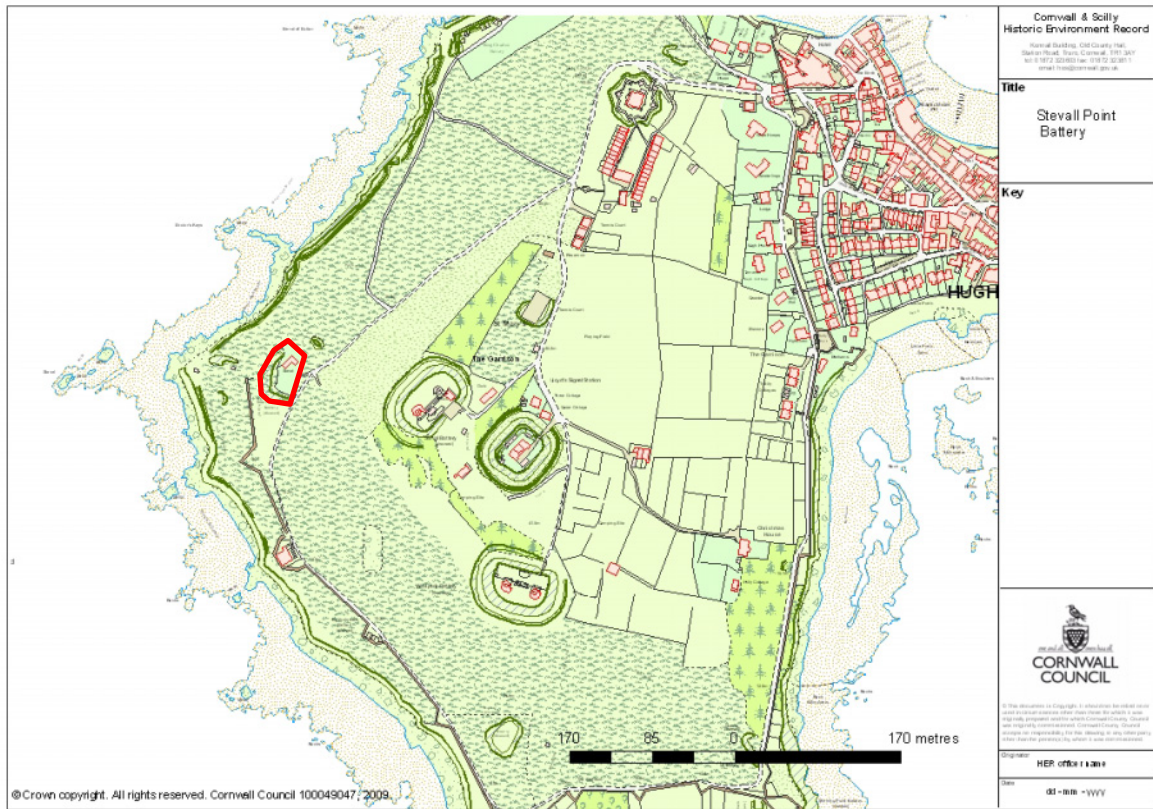


Fig 1 Location map: Steval Point Battery is outlined in red

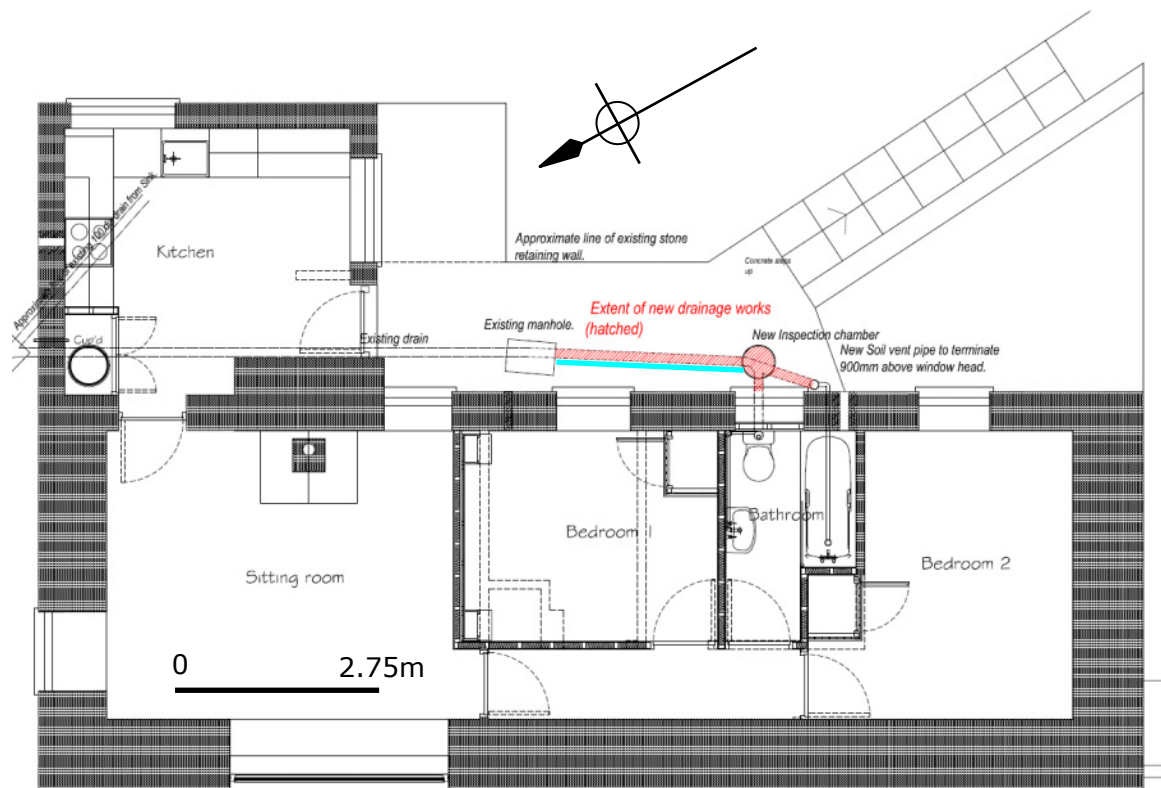


Fig 2 Plan showing the extent of the new drain, the pale blue line marks the line of the section drawing of the drain trench edge (Fig 4)



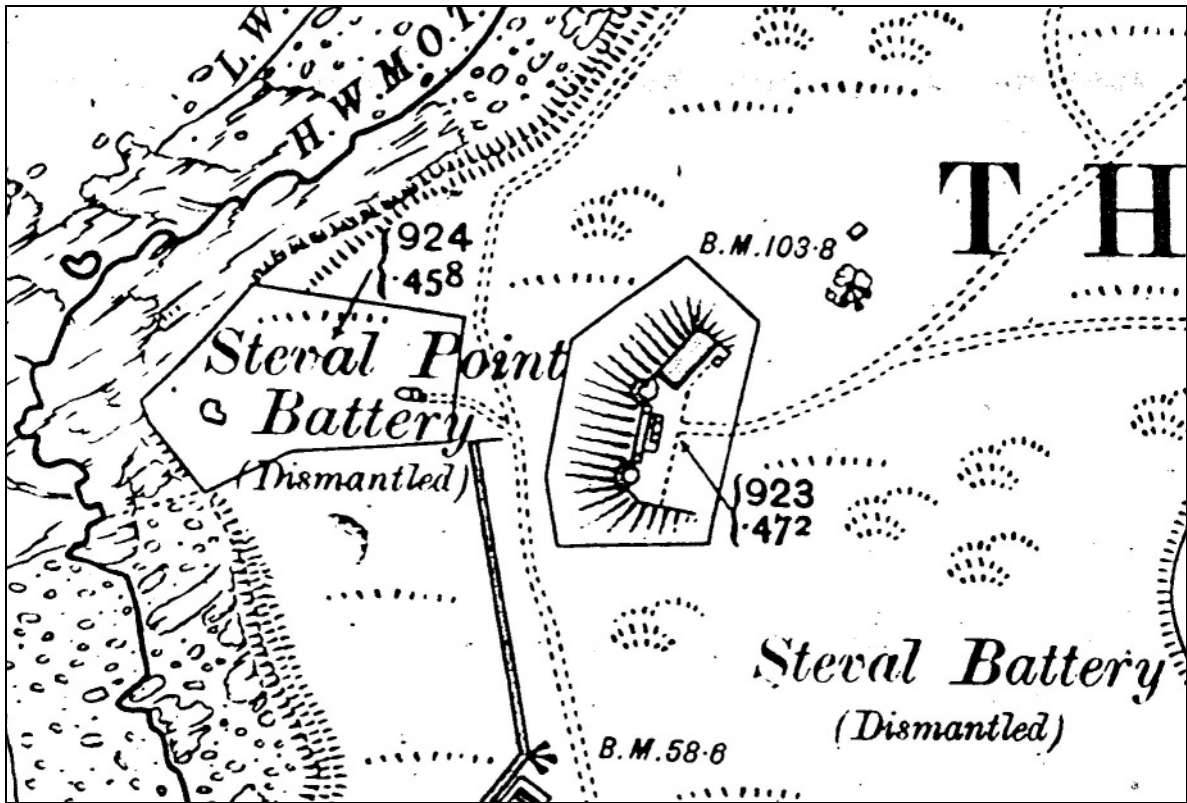


Fig 3 Detail from the 1907 OS map (not to scale)

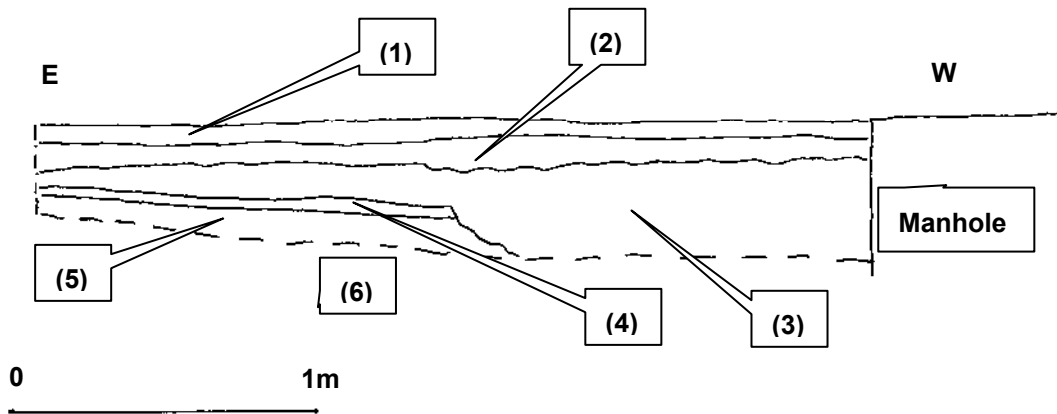


Fig 3 Section drawing of the drain trench-edge





*Fig 5 The excavated drain trench (photo: HE Projects)*



*Fig 6 The iron object (photo: HE Projects)*