

Bryher Affordable Housing, Bryher, Isles of Scilly

Archaeological Watching Brief



Report No

2010R010

Report Name

Bryher Affordable Housing Archaeological Watching Brief

Report Author

S R Taylor

Event Type

Watching Brief

Client Organisation

Cornwall Rural Housing Association

Client Contact

David Perry, William G Weller & Son Ltd

Monuments (MonUID)

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Fieldwork dates (From) (To)

30/11/09

1/12/09

(Created By)

SRT

(Create Date)

15/12/09

Location (postal address; or general location and parish)

Church Quay, Bryher, Isles of Scilly

(Town - for urban sites)

(Postcode)

(Easting) X co-ord

SV 87975

(Northing) Y co-ord

14993

List of Figures

Fig no

Description

Cover

View of the site under excavation, facing south-west and Katharine Sawyer, right

1

Location map

2

Site plan



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

Project background

On 30th November and 1st December 2009 Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council carried out a watching brief for the Cornwall rural Housing Association Ltd prior to the construction of two affordable houses at Church Quay, Bryher, Isles of Scilly in order to satisfy a condition for planning permission.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Johns 2009) following a brief produced by the Council of the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Adviser (Breen 2009).

The site lies within an area of known archaeological interest where it is the Local Planning Authority's policy to provide for the examination of archaeological remains. The site is currently farmland and is located within an area characterised as bulb strips formed from Anciently Enclosed Land, being land that was enclosed prior to the nineteenth century and is potentially medieval enclosure or earlier (Land Use Consultants 1996). Past interventions have demonstrated that this category of land has potential for archaeological remains. There are a number of archaeological sites in the vicinity of the development site. These include the following sites identified by Primary Record Number in the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record:

- 7789 Pottery indicating possible medieval settlement (in field adjacent to development site);
- 7634 Flint blade, possibly Mesolithic;
- 7782 Eighteenth century church;
- 7607 Field boundary, possibly post-medieval.

There are also two Scheduled Monuments in the vicinity of the development site:

- 15491 Prehistoric linear boundary and cairns south west of the Bar, Bryher, located on the beach approximately 200m north-east of the development site;
- 15466 Prehistoric linear boundary SSE of The Island, Bryher, located on the beach approximately 225m south-east of the development site.

Aims and objectives

The specific aims of the watching brief 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 including above ground or buried field boundaries
- To establish the nature of the activity on the site
- To identify any artefacts relating to the occupation of the site
- To provide further information on the archaeology of the area from any archaeological remains encountered.
- To provide further information on the archaeology of the Isles of Scilly.

Working methods

The work was carried out according to the methodology set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

A mini-digger supplied by the client stripped topsoil and subsoil down to the natural *ram* under archaeological supervision. All stratified deposits and features were given a unique context number and located on a plan and/or section drawing at an appropriate scale. Colour digital photographs were taken of the work in progress. The project officer was Sean Taylor of Historic Environment Projects, assisted by Katharine Sawyer.

Results

The excavation revealed a substantial depth of soil over the site. The topsoil, (101), a dark brownish grey clayey sand, was up to 0.6m deep. The darkness and thickness of the deposit is likely to be due to the manuring of the soil with large amounts of organic matter, probably seaweed, in the course of the twentieth century. Below this was another deposit, (102), this much redder in colour, a dark reddish brown sticky sandy clay, up to 0.44m thick. Three large granite boulders were found on the site, covered by this deposit: two of them were found in the western baulk whilst the third was situated to the east. Deposit (102) contained sherds of modern white china but also a potsherd of Iron Age or Romano-British date and two worked flints of prehistoric date. The boulder in the far west of the site had two deposits below (102) associated with it: (105) butted against it to the west; (106) appeared to lie beneath the boulder. Both were buried soil horizons confined to this small part of the site. These deposits all lay over the natural *ram*, (110).

Four discrete areas or features were identified at the level of the *ram*. Two, (103) and (104), were dark deposits lying in what appeared to be cuts into the *ram* but probably represent the filling of holes left by the removal of stones set into it. Feature [107], on the eastern side of the excavation, appeared to be the truncated base of a posthole, and was oval in shape, 0.35m by 0.3m. It contained a single fill, (108). The feature was isolated, although located at the edge of the excavation. Associated features might be expected beyond the limit of excavation to the east.

The fourth feature was a linear band of compacted clay filling an irregular channel running west to east across the southern part of the site. It was assumed to be fluvial or periglacial in origin.

Various finds were recovered from the spoil heap, the majority if not all likely to derive from contexts (101) and (102). These included sherds of Cornish Medieval Coarseware and various finds of nineteenth and twentieth century date.

Discussion

The results of the watching brief indicated that there was sustained agricultural activity in this area, probably from late prehistory onwards. This activity had intensified in the twentieth century with soil improvements resulting in a thick rich topsoil, probably for bulb farming.

References

- Breen, E, 2009. *Brief for Archaeological Recording, Bryher Affordable Housing, Church Quay, Bryher*, Council of the Isles of Scilly
- Johns, C, 2009. *Bryher Affordable Housing, Church Quay, Bryher, Isles of Scilly: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Recording during groundworks*, HE, Truro.
- Land Use Consultants and Cornwall Archaeological Unit, 1996. *Isles of Scilly Historic Landscape Assessment and Management Strategy*, Cornwall County Council

Project archive

The HES project number is **2009106**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is temporarily housed at the offices of the Historic Environment Service, 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. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE700).

3. Electronic drawings stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (CAD)\CAD Archive\Scilly\Bryher Affordable Housing 2009106
4. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (Images)\Scilly\Bryher\Bryher Affordable Housing 2009106
5. This report text is held in digital form as: G:\Historic Environment (Documents)\HE Projects\Sites\SCILLY\SITES.A-D\Bryher Affordable Housing Watching Brief 2009106\ Bryher report.doc

The main paper records, plans and artefacts retrieved during the project will be stored at the Isles of Scilly Museum, Church Street, St Marys. The site code is BR09.

Context List

Context	Type (Cut/Deposit)	Description
(101)	D	Dark brownish grey loose clayey sand with few inclusions. Topsoil up to 0.6m thick.
(102)	D	Dark reddish brown sticky sandy clay with occasional bands of granite rubble at the top of the deposit. Finds: flint and prehistoric pottery around a large granite stone in the base of the western baulk. Buried soil horizon up 0.44m thick. Lay over ram across most of the site, except in the south-western corner where it overlay (105).
(103)	D	Dark reddish black soft sandy clay filling a possible cut, but more likely to be a stone hole, in the base of the western baulk. Not excavated.
(104)	D	Dark reddish brown sticky sandy clay filling a possible cut, but more likely to be a stone hole, in the base of the western baulk. Not excavated.
(105)	D	Mid brownish yellow sticky sandy clay with frequent quartz grit butting a large granite boulder at the south-western end of the western baulk.
(106)	D	Dark reddish brown soft silty clay with occasional grit possibly underlying a large granite boulder at the south-western end of the western baulk.
[107]	C	Oval cut 0.35m by 0.3m and 0.08m deep with a concave base near the eastern baulk. Possibly the base of a truncated posthole or pit.
(108)	D	Dark greyish brown soft clay with occasional quartz grit and mottled charcoal filling [107]. Half sectioned.
(109)	D	Dark reddish brown compact clay with abundant quartz grit filling an irregular channel running west to east across the southern side of the site. Assumed to be a fluvial or periglacial deposit.
(110)	D	<i>Ram</i> . Light reddish brown compact sandy clay with abundant quartz grit and occasional granite forming the natural across the site at a depth of 0.8m to the north to 1.2m to the south.

Finds List

Context	Type (C ut/ D eposit)	Description
(102)	Pottery Flint	2 sherds of modern yellow glazed china, C19th/C20th 1 sherd of prehistoric pottery, granitic fabric, IA/RB 1 flint pebble, utilised as a hammerstone, prehistoric 1 flint flake, shaft scraper, prehistoric
Unstratified	Pottery Brick Metalwork Glass	1 sherd of Modern White Glazed Stoneware (china), C19th/C20th 1 sherd of Post medieval Glazed Red Earthenware, C18th/C19th 2 sherds of Cornish Medieval Coarseware, C13th/C14th 1 brick fragment, C19th/C20th 1 copper alloy plate, inscribed B J Jenkins, B, Scilly, C20th 1 ink bottle, C19th/C20th

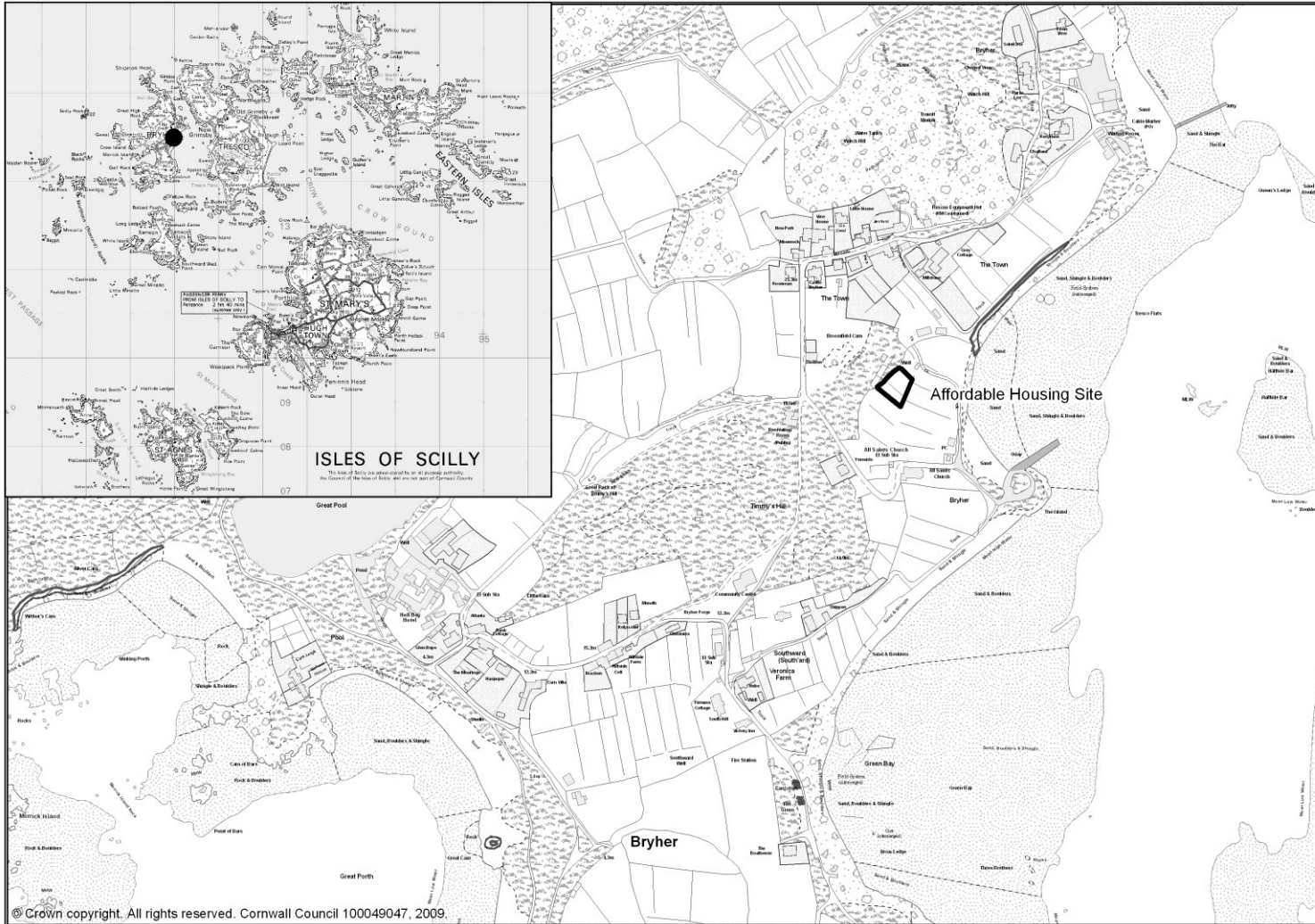


Figure 1: Location Map



Figure 2: Site plan