

# **Land adjacent to Tower Meadow, St Buryan, Cornwall**

## **Archaeological Assessment**



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## **Acknowledgements**

This Archaeological Assessment was commissioned by Architects, Febo Designs (1 Foxcombe, South Harting, Petersfield, Hants, GU31 5PL), on behalf of the landowners, W & E Richardson. Jeanette Ratcliffe, Historic Environment Consultant, oversaw the project, carried out the historical research and prepared this report. ArchaeoPhysica Ltd were commissioned to carry out a geophysical survey, which in the event did not take place owing to unsuitable ground conditions.

The author would like to thank the following for providing information and assistance: Alfredo Fornieles (Febo Designs); John and Debbie Nankervis (Client's JCB contractors); Phil Copleston (Senior Development Officer, Historic Environment, Cornwall Council), Emma Trevarthen (Cornwall & Scilly Historic Environment Record) and the staff of Cornwall Record Office.

**Front cover illustration:** View across site, looking SW towards Tower Meadows housing estate, with the tower of St Buryan Parish Church beyond.

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## **1 Summary**

*An Archaeological Assessment took place during Spring 2015 to discharge a condition attached to planning permission for the building of a housing development on Land adjacent to Tower Meadows, on the northwest edge of St Buryan village.*

*The development site lies within Anciently Enclosed Land, an historic landscape characterisation type with high potential for buried (prehistoric-medieval) archaeological remains, and the site boundaries fossilise part of a medieval strip-field system, traces of which may survive below ground, along with associated artefacts and paleo-environmental evidence. Given the number of prehistoric sites within the area, including settlement enclosures at nearby Trevorgans and St Buryan, evidence of earlier occupation may also exist.*

*However, the degree of coherent survival of any buried archaeological remains (and, therefore, the value of an archaeological watching brief) is likely to have been reduced by significant below-ground disturbance caused by installation of a sewage system serving the adjacent Tower Meadows housing estate.*

## **2 Background**

### **2.1 Location and setting**

The development site is an agricultural field on the north western edge of St Buryan village, adjacent to the west side of the St Buryan to Crows-an-Wra road (Figure 1). It is situated on the crest of the high ground occupied by the village, on ground which slopes gently down into the head of a shallow valley, where the farmstead of Trevorgans is sited. A public right of way from St Buryan to Trevorgans runs E-W across the site.

### **2.2 Statutory designations**

The development site lies outside (northwest of) St Buryan Conservation (Figure 2), separated from it by a modern housing development (Tower Meadows). Figure 3 shows Listed Buildings within the vicinity, the closest being the Grade II Churchtown Farmhouse (DCO11624) to the southeast of the site, on the opposite side of the road. The nearest Scheduled Monuments (the only two within a 250 metre radius, Figure 5) are associated with the Grade I listed St Buryan Church (DCO12564) in the centre of the village – two early medieval crosses outside and inside the entrance to the churchyard (DCO881 & DCO777).

### **2.3 Planning context**

Planning application 08-1704 was submitted on the 3 February 2009 and was for the construction of 31 affordable dwellings and associated works (Figure 10). This application was approved on 12 July 2012, subject to twenty one conditions. Condition 14 states:

*No development shall take until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation and timetabling that has been first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.*

*Reason: In the interests of the archaeological value of the site.*

The minimum requirements for recording to discharge the planning condition were specified in a 'Brief for Archaeological Assessment and Geophysical Survey' provided by Cornwall Council's Senior Development Officer, Historic Environment (SDOHE), Phil Coplestone (18th December 2014).

At the request of Febo Designs (architects acting on behalf of the site owner), a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) addressing the Brief's requirements was prepared by Historic Environment Consultant, Jeanette Ratcliffe, and approved by the SDOHE (19<sup>th</sup> December 2014). The WSI set out the methodology and standards for the archaeological work, which was aimed at evaluating the potential for buried archaeological remains and informing any recommendations for further archaeological recording (if required).

In line with the Brief, the WSI included provision for geophysical survey. Subsequently, in the light of previous modern above and below-ground disturbance across the site, the SDOHE approved a request for the requirement for geophysical survey to be waived (10<sup>th</sup> April 2015).

### **3.0 Methodology**

The recording work involved the following stages.

1. Archaeological Assessment (consulting existing records)
2. Assessment of suitability for Geophysical Survey
3. Archive and report preparation
4. Dissemination & deposition (of report & archive)

#### **3.1 Historical research (consulting existing records)**

The purpose of this stage of the work was to gain a clear picture of what was already known of the history of the site, by drawing together existing historical and archaeological information.

It consisted of visiting Cornwall Council's Historic Environment Record and the Cornwall Record Office in Old County Hall, Truro, in order to view and copy easily accessible, existing archaeological and historic information about the site and the immediate vicinity.

This included the following types of records.

- Records held within the Cornwall Historic Environment Record's computer database of archaeological sites (including historic landscape characterisation mapping and statutory designations)
- 1840 Tithe Map
- Historic Ordnance Survey maps (1880 & 1908)
- Published accounts of St Buryan

Electronic copies of the architect's plans were also obtained at this stage and used as a base for assimilating the archaeological and historic information that has been collected.

#### **3.2 Assessment of suitability for geophysical survey**

It was planned that a magnetic survey would be carried out over the development area (with data collected to meet 1.0m x 0.25m spatial resolution), the results of which would be presented in a specialist report (to be submitted as an appendix to the main assessment report). However, when suitably qualified and experienced practitioners, (employed by specialist contractors ArchaeoPhysica) visited the site (19<sup>th</sup> January 2015), they found above ground conditions which prevented survey – in particular, extensive mounds of re-deposited stone and soil, incorporating some dumped metal objects (Figure 11).

A subsequent site visit was made by the Jeanette Ratcliffe (11<sup>th</sup> February 2015) in the company of the client's local JCB contractors, John and Debbie Nankervis, who are familiar with the recent history of the development site. This established that the re-deposited stone and soil was derived from the construction some years ago of the adjacent Tower Meadows housing estate, and that a sewage pumping and drainage system associated with the latter

had caused considerable below ground disturbance within the western two thirds of the present development site (Figure 11), confirming its unsuitability for geophysical survey.

Colour digital photographs were taken during the site visits in order to illustrate surface ground conditions (see Figures 12-16).

### **3.3 Archive and report preparation**

A project archive folder for deposition at Cornwall Record Office has been created (Appendix 3). This report has been prepared in order to present the results of the Archaeological Assessment.

### **3.4 Dissemination & deposition (of report & archive)**

- The report has been submitted to Cornwall Council Historic Environment Service and the Cornwall Record Office.
- A digital copy has been supplied in 'Adobe Acrobat' PDF format.
- The report will be held by the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) and made available for public consultation.
- A digital copy of the report has been supplied to the applicant/client.
- An ordered and integrated site archive has been prepared in accordance with: *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) English Heritage 2006* upon completion of the project.
- The archive has been deposited with the Cornwall Record Office.
- A summary of the contents of the archive has been supplied to the SDOHE.
- A copy of the report has been supplied to the National Monuments Record (NMR) in Swindon (via Oasis).
- A project summary has been added to the OASIS (the English Heritage/ADS online index of archaeological investigations).

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Historical research**

#### **4.1.1 Historic landscape character**

The development site lies within an area classified within the Cornwall Historic Landscape Assessment as 'Farmland: Prehistoric', part of the broad HLC Type 'Anciently Enclosed Land'. The latter is Cornwall's agricultural heartland, with farming settlements documented before the 17th century AD and field patterns morphologically distinct from the generally straight-sided fields of later enclosure, being either medieval or prehistoric in origin (Herring 1994, 1998).

Much, even most, of this HLC Type has been enclosed and farmed since later prehistory (Middle Bronze Age) onwards, from c1500 BC. Subsequently, most of the land cleared and improved in later prehistory was re-organised in the medieval period into extensive 'strip' field systems. Many strip field systems are still recognisable in the Cornish landscape, either as bundles of enclosed or unenclosed strips, or as the cropping units that contained the strips. (Ibid)

Being the land of ancient enclosure, this is also the principal area of ancient settlement. This mainly takes the form of single farms now, although from later prehistory through to the medieval, and often right into the modern period, the Type would have been dominated by small farming hamlets. Many enclosed or defended later prehistoric hamlets, or 'rounds', survive either as earthworks or as underground remains producing cropmarks on aerial photos. There may have been as many unenclosed or 'open' prehistoric and Romano-British settlements as there were rounds, but open settlements, with houses more loosely scattered through fields tend to be less easy to detect archaeologically. This is also the land of medieval churches, churchtowns, and the few small villages, which served the farming community. (Ibid)

The Historic Landscape Assessment states that much important archaeological material will survive below the surface within Anciently Enclosed Land, including the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British settlements and fields of the farmers who originally cleared this land. Buried archaeological features from prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval periods and including settlements, fields, ceremonial and ritual monuments and industrial remains can be expected virtually anywhere in this Type. (Ibid)

#### **4.1.2 Archaeological sites and historic buildings in the vicinity**

Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that there are there are a large number of prehistoric sites within 1km radius, including four standing stones, an enclosure and associated field system, two 'Rounds' (defended farmstead settlements), three barrows (burial mounds), eight prehistoric artefact find spots, as well as the Scheduled Monument DCO1295 Boskennal Iron Age enclosure/Romano British fort.

Appendix 1 lists archaeological sites recorded in HER that are located within a 250 metre radius of the development site (as located in Figure 5). Those of particular relevance to this assessment are described below.

No previous archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the development site. Figure 6 maps the previous archaeological 'events' (ie recording projects) that have taken place in the vicinity. These two events consist of St Buryan Conservation Area Appraisal and a watching brief during road widening involving the repositioning of St Buryan churchyard wall (Preston-Jones 1985).

#### **4.1.3 St Buryan and its surrounds**

The earliest reference to St Buryan is the appearance of the name 'Berion' in an early 10<sup>th</sup> century list of Cornish saints' names, and from at least Norman times it was the most important religious site in West Penwith (Preston-Jones 1985).

The settlement and manor of St Buryan (MCO11313) is recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086, as 'Eglosberrie', a Cornish place-name containing the elements *eglos* meaning 'church', plus the saint's name. A collegiate church (MCO27027) was established here (traditionally by King Athelstan in 930), which was granted the privilege of sanctuary and owned extensive lands. By Domesday, although reduced in extent, they still belonged to the church - the entry shows land for eight ploughs with pasture of twenty acres held by the Canons of 'St Berronia'. The college was re-established in 1238, when the church was re-dedicated to Saints Andrew, Thomas the Martyr, Nicholas and Beriana, and survived until



its suppression in 1545. The present, parish church (MCO6446) is largely 15<sup>th</sup> century (restored 1800s/1900s), with a 14<sup>th</sup> century tower and traces of a Norman chancel aisle.

The place-name and documentary indicates that, rather than founding a new college, Althelstan was confirming the rights of a pre-existing Celtic establishment (*ibid*). Further evidence for this is that St Buryan churchyard - a large, raised, oval enclosure, encircled by roads and surrounded by the houses of the churchtown - has the plan-form of an early Christian *lann* (MCO27026). Dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, lanns are characteristic of the early Christian period in Cornwall, consisting of an enclosure defining the consecrated area and containing a cemetery, chapel and houses for the cleric and lay population.

Archaeological excavations during road widening affecting the south west side of the churchyard revealed a silted-up ditch, suggesting that the pre-Norman ecclesiastical enclosure may itself have been predated by an Iron Age/Romano-British hill fort or round – the original enclosed settlement to be sited on this prominent area of level high ground.

In addition to the early medieval crosses within and just outside the churchyard, numerous other crosses mark the roads and footpaths radiating out from it in all directions – the historic routes providing access to this important religious centre point (Figures 7-9). One such route is the St Buryan to Crows-an-Wra road, which forms the eastern boundary of the development site. Commencing on the north east side of the churchyard, it ends at Trevorgans Cross, where a medieval wayside cross stands at its junction with the A30.

Another distinctive historic landscape feature is represented by the blocks of medieval strip fields extending back from and filling the interstices between the radiating roads, combining to form a distinctive ring around St Buryan. This encircling pattern suggests the extent of the former church lands, which is borne out by the 1840 Tithe Apportionment Survey recording many of the fields (including the development site, see 4.1.4 below) as being in the ownership of the incumbent vicar (Rev Uriah Tonkin).

#### 4.1.4 Trevorgans

Trevorgans (Figure 5, MCO11605) is first recorded in 1323 when it is spelt "Trewurgans". The place name is Cornish, containing the element *tre* (meaning 'estate, farmstead' and implying a settlement of early medieval origin), plus a personal name.

On the NW side of the present farmstead, a curvilinear enclosure is visible as a cropmark on aerial photographs (MCO55375). This is likely to be the remains of a prehistoric farming settlement on the same general site, with field boundaries identified to the north (MCO53374) possibly being associated with it.

#### 4.1.5 History and present condition of the development site

Historic map evidence indicates that by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the development site had become a single, sub-rectangular field, depicted on the 1840 Tithe Map (Figure 7) and listed in the Apportionment Survey as part of Black Wells Tenement.

Plot no.	Field name	Cultivation	Landowner	Occupier
1135	Homer Park Pender	Arable	Rev Uriah Tonkin	Jane Maddern

In church ownership and cultivated by a tenant farmer, the meaning of the field name is obscure, with its different elements being repeated in the names of adjacent plots. The Tithe

Map provides evidence for Plot 1135 previously consisting of medieval cultivation strips, with an enclosed strip still surviving beyond its western boundary and Plot 1135, itself, representing the rest of the cropping unit which would originally have been divided into parallel strips.

The footpath (a public right of way) running east to west across the development site, on its way from the road to Trevorgans, is also depicted on the Tithe Map. It is unlikely to date back to medieval times, given that its route dissects the strip-field system (rather than passing around it), indicating that the path was established after amalgamation into the present field took place.

By the time of the 1880 OS map (Figures 8-9) the surviving strip to the west had been incorporated into the adjoining field. The plan-form of the development field remained unchanged until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century/early 2000s, when an agricultural processing unit was established in its northeast quadrant and Tower Meadows housing estate took a bite out of its south east corner.

Large quantities soil and granite stone excavated during the building of Tower Meadows were re-deposited within the development site. Previously reaching telegraph wire height, some of the soil has since been re-used to level St Buryan playing fields, but substantial mounds still extend along the inside of the northern boundary and in the eastern part of the field (Figure 11).

There has also been significant below-ground disturbance as a result of a sewage pumping station for Tower Meadows being installed towards the middle of the field, with pipes feeding in from the south and a soakaway system extending down the slope to the north (Figure 11). In addition, a water main runs along the inside of the eastern field boundary, parallel with the road, and a telecommunications cable (supplying Trevorgans) has recently been laid in a trench across the south west corner of the development site (Figure 11).

#### **4.3 Potential for buried archaeological remains**

On the basis of the results of the historical research, there is significant potential for buried archaeological remains. These are most likely to relate to the site's agricultural use during and since medieval times, and might include earlier field boundaries (below the boundaries presently enclosing the site and traces of strip field divisions), artefacts derived from midden material used to dress the soil, and possibly also buried soils providing paleo-environmental evidence. In addition, given the prehistoric settlement enclosures recorded at nearby Trevorgans and below St Buryan churchyard, there is also some possibility for the discovery of evidence for earlier occupation.

However, the installation of a sewage pumping station and associated pipes and soak away system, causing below-ground disturbance across a significant portion of the site, will have comprised the degree of coherent survival of any buried archaeological remains, reducing to some extent at least the value of conducting an archaeological watching brief during the development ground works.

## References

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- Herring, P.C., 1994. *Cornwall Landscape Assessment: Historic Landscape Character Zones*
- Herring, P.C., 1998. *Cornwall's Historic Landscape: Presenting a Method of Historic Landscape Character Assessment*
- Ordnance Survey, c1880. *25 Inch Map* First Edition (licensed digital copy at Cornwall & Scilly HER)
- Ordnance Survey, c1907. *25 Inch Map* Second Edition (licensed digital copy at Cornwall & Scilly HER)
- Ordnance Survey, 2007. *MasterMap Digital Mapping* (licensed digital copy at HER)
- Preston-Jones, A., 1985. Road Widening at St Buryan and Pelynt. Cornwall Archaeological Unit Report No.1985R003
- Tithe Map & Apportionment Survey, c1840. *Parish of St Buryan* (licensed digital copy at CRO)

## Appendix 1: Index of Historic Environment Record sites in Figure 5

Information extracted from report generated by HBSMR from exeGesIS SDM Ltd. All material copyright © Cornwall Council 1987-2012

HER No.	Monument Type	Date	Evidence
MCO5800	Cross	Early Medieval	Extant structure
MCO5801	Cross	Early Medieval	Extant structure
MCO6446	Church	Medieval	Extant structure
MCO8497	Pound?	Medieval	Documentary evidence
MCO9315	Blacksmith's workshop	Post Medieval	Extant structure
MCO11313	Settlement & manor (St Buryan)	Early Medieval & Medieval	Documentary evidence
MCO11605	Settlement (Trevorgans)	Early Medieval? & Medieval	Documentary evidence
MCO27026	Lann?	Early Medieval	Extant structure
MCO27027	Monastery	Early Medieval	Documentary evidence
MCO27028	Tombstone	Early Medieval	Extant structure
MCO32898	Nonconformist chapel (Weslyan), with stable & trap house	19 <sup>th</sup> century	Extant structure
MCO52139	Nonconformist chapel (Bible Christian)	Post Medieval	Demolished structure
MCO52168	Sunday school (Weslyan)	19 <sup>th</sup> century	Extant structure
MCO52940	School	20 <sup>th</sup> century	Extant structure
MCO52941	School; church hall	19 <sup>th</sup> & 20 <sup>th</sup> century	Extant structure
MCO53374	Field system	Prehistoric	Crop mark
MCO53375	Enclosure	Prehistoric	Crop mark
MCO56381	Well	Post Medieval	Extant structure

## Appendix 2: Contents of project archive

1. Brief For Archaeological Assessment & Geophysical Survey produced by Senior Development Officer (Historic Environment), Phil Copleston (18<sup>th</sup> December 2014)
2. Written Scheme of Investigation, Jeanette Ratcliffe (19<sup>th</sup> December 2014)
3. Archaeological Assessment report (printed in black and white; copied to CD in colour)
4. Colour digital photographs copied to CD
5. Architect's plans annotated with site visit notes

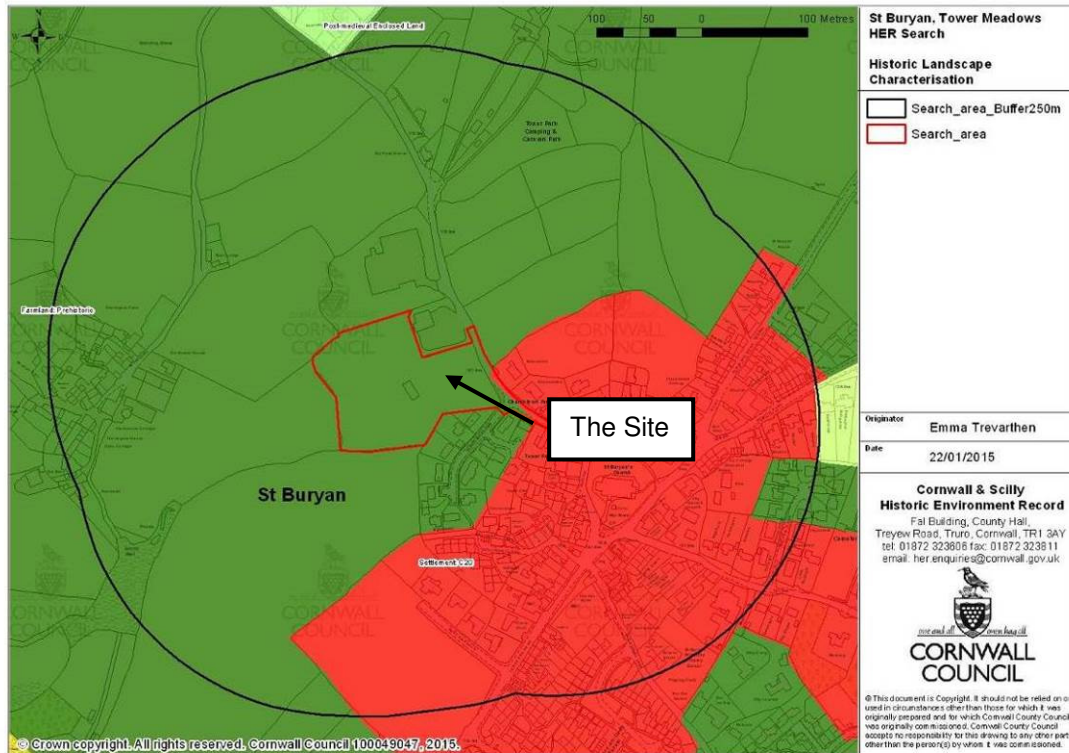


Figure1. Site location and Historic Landscape Characterisation (Cornwall & Scilly HER; © Crown copyright and database rights (2015) Ordnance Survey 100049047)

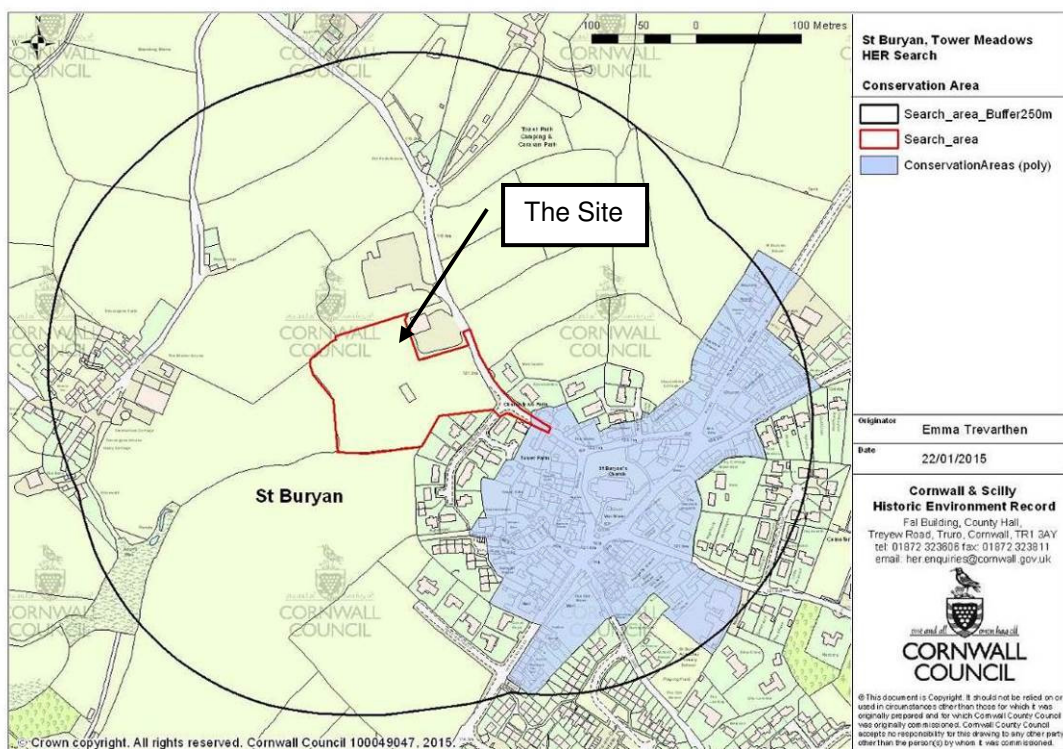


Figure 2. Site location in relation to St Buryan Conservation Area (Cornwall & Scilly HER; © Crown copyright and database rights (2015) Ordnance Survey 100049047)



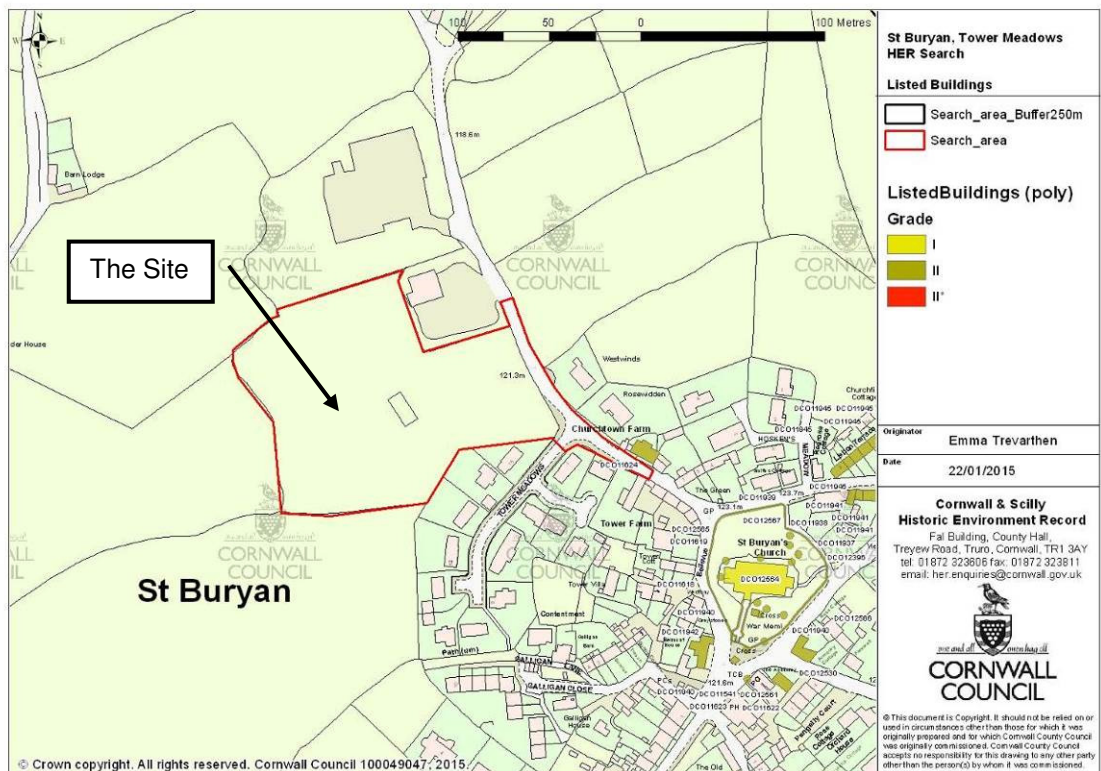
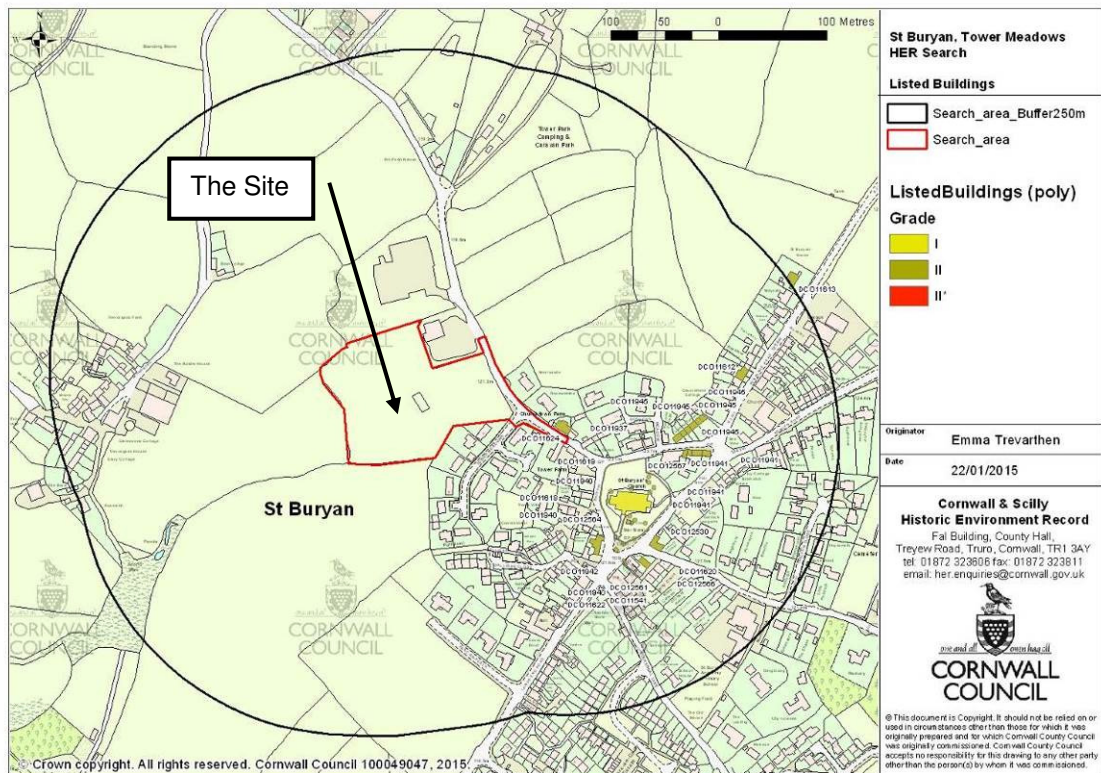


Figure 3. Listed Buildings within the vicinity of the site – 250 metre and 100 metre radius (Cornwall & Scilly HER; © Crown copyright and database rights (2015) Ordnance Survey 100049047)

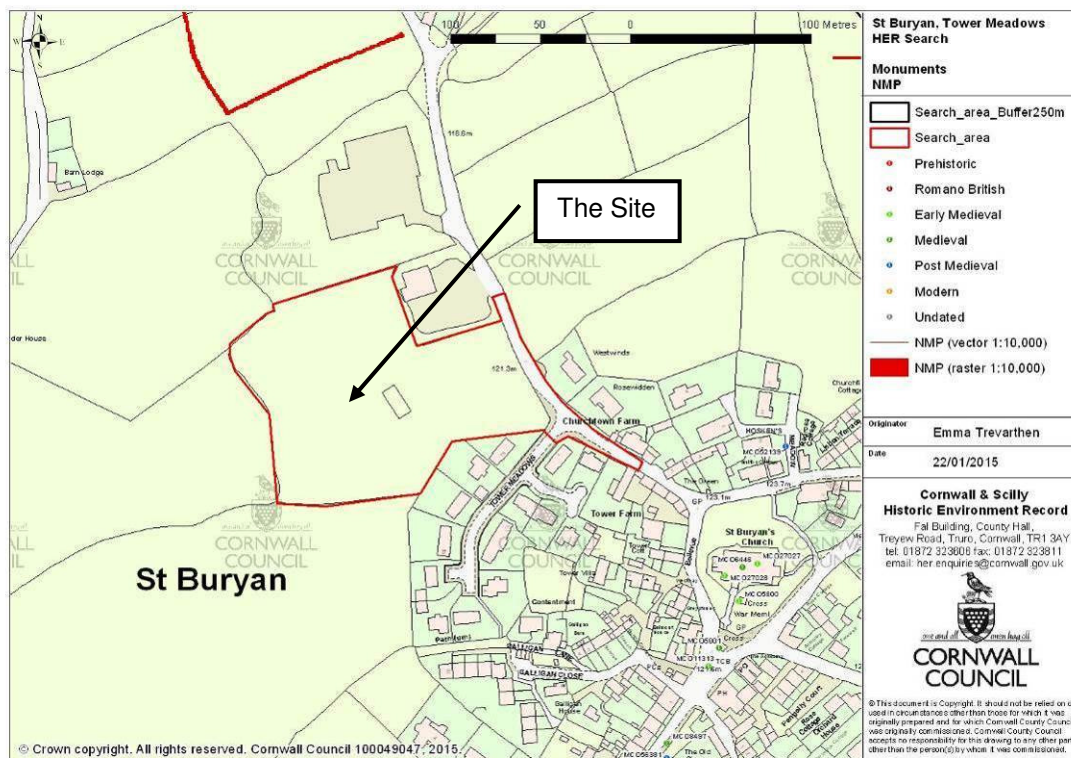
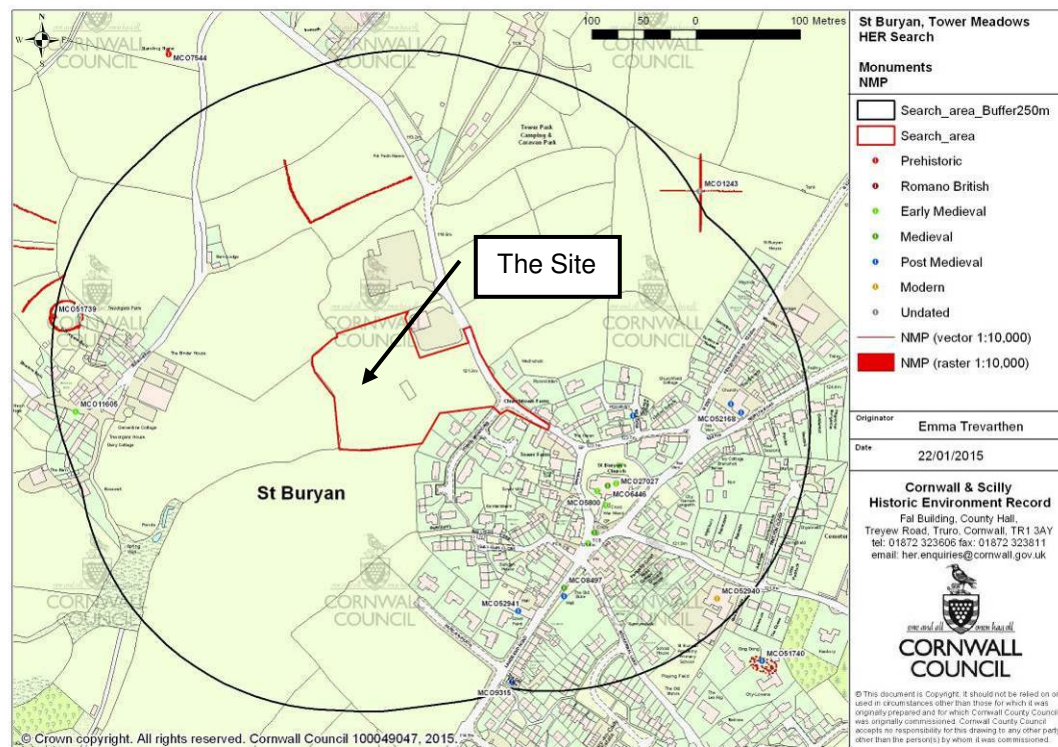


Figure 4. Archaeological sites within the vicinity of the site - 250 metre and 100 metre radius (Cornwall & Scilly HER; © Crown copyright and database rights (2015) Ordnance Survey 100049047)



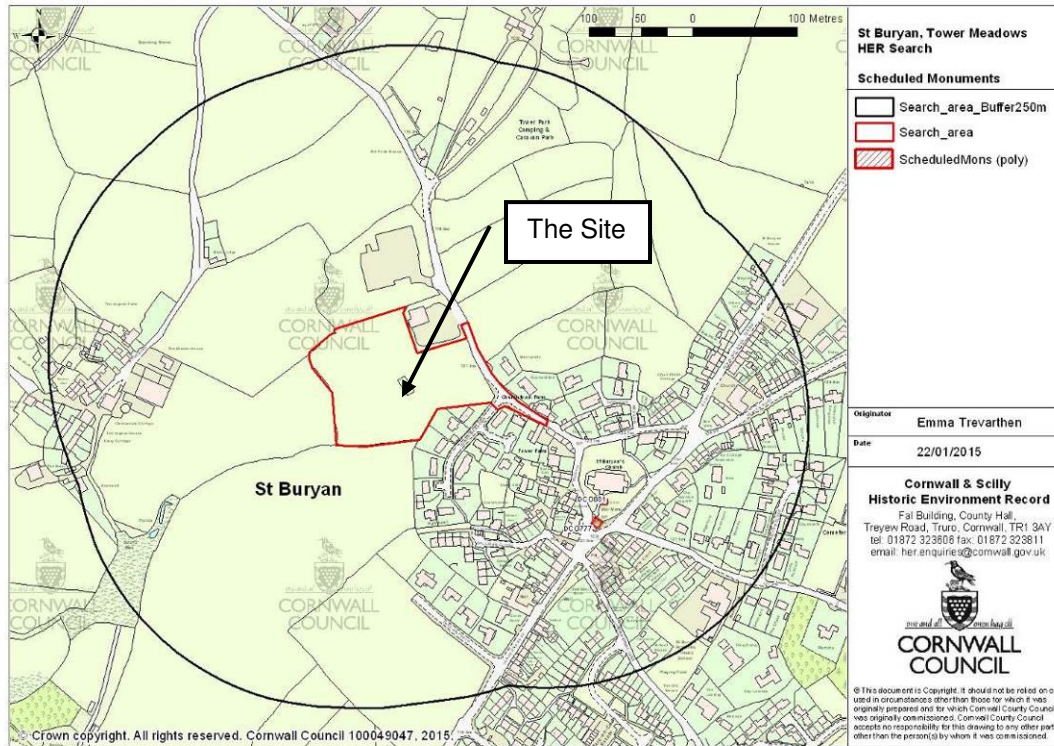


Figure 5. Scheduled monuments within 250 metre radius of the site (Cornwall & Scilly HER; © Crown copyright and database rights (2015) Ordnance Survey 100049047)

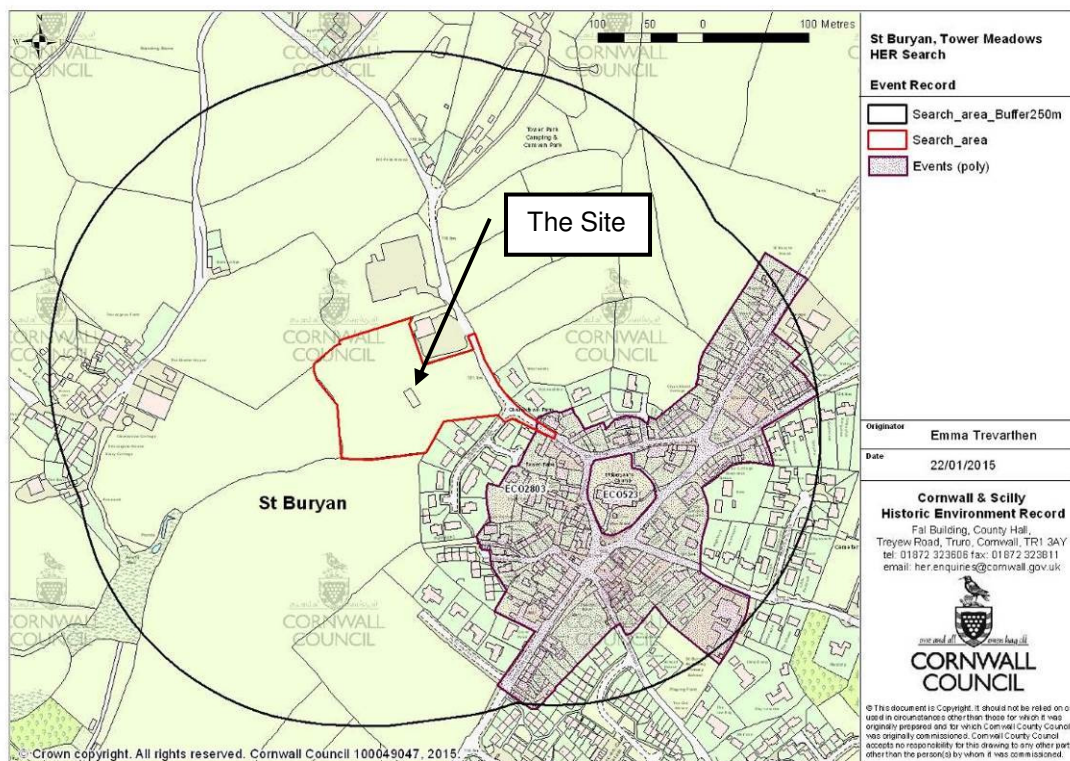


Figure 6. Archaeological events within 250 metre radius of the site (Cornwall & Scilly HER; © Crown copyright and database rights (2015) Ordnance Survey 100049047)





Figure 7. c1840 Tithe Map (Cornwall Record Office)



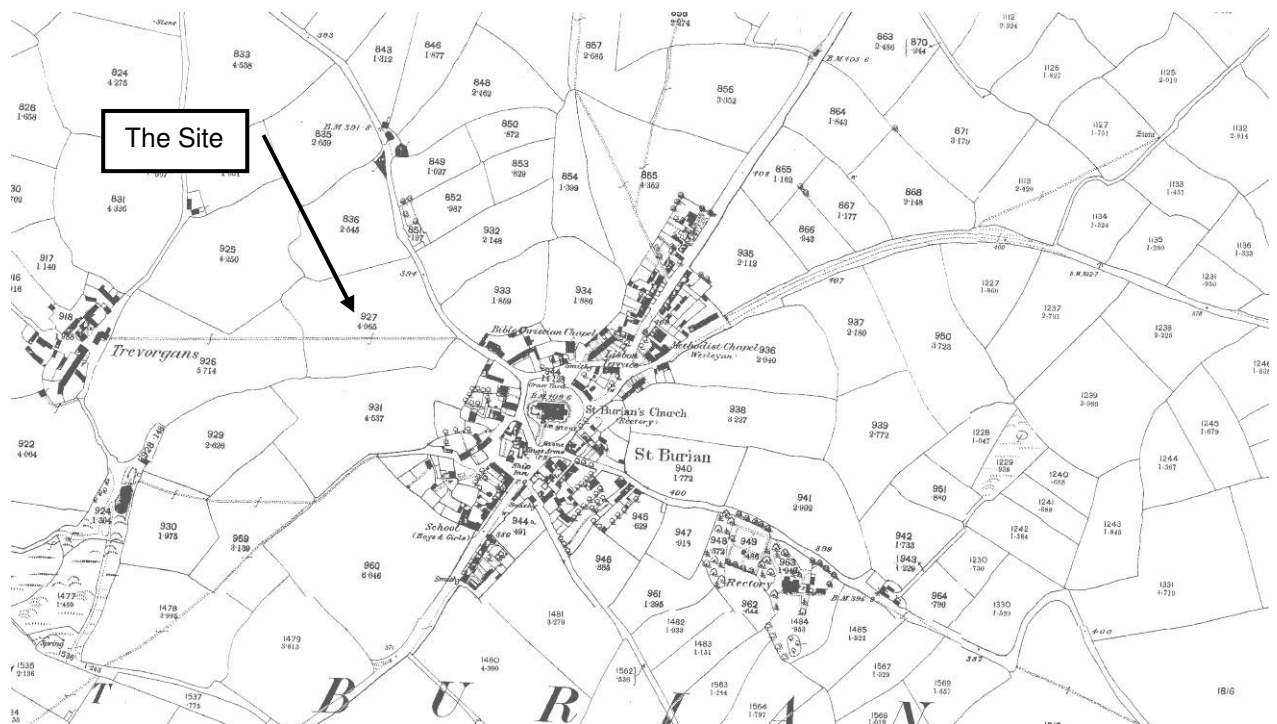


Figure 8. c1880 OS 1st edition 25" map (Cornwall & Scilly HER)

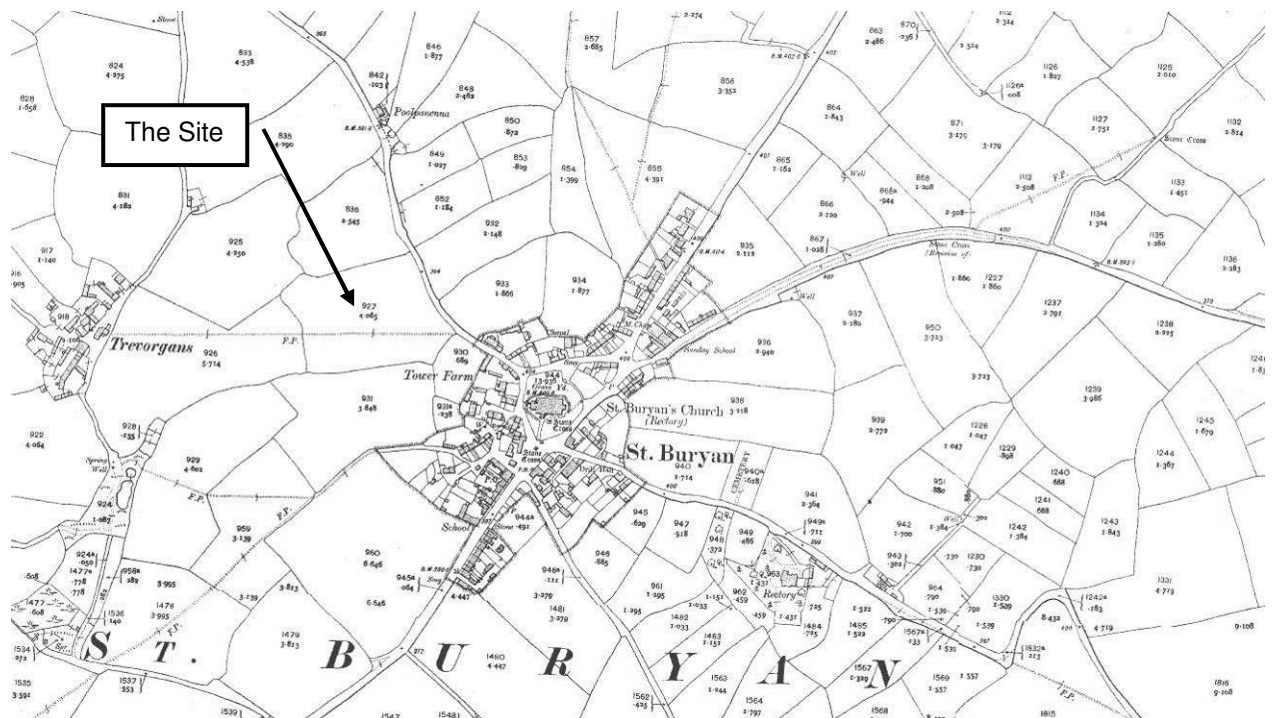


Figure 9. c1907 OS 2nd edition 25" map (Cornwall & Scilly HER)



Figure 10. Development plan (Febodeesigns October 2014)

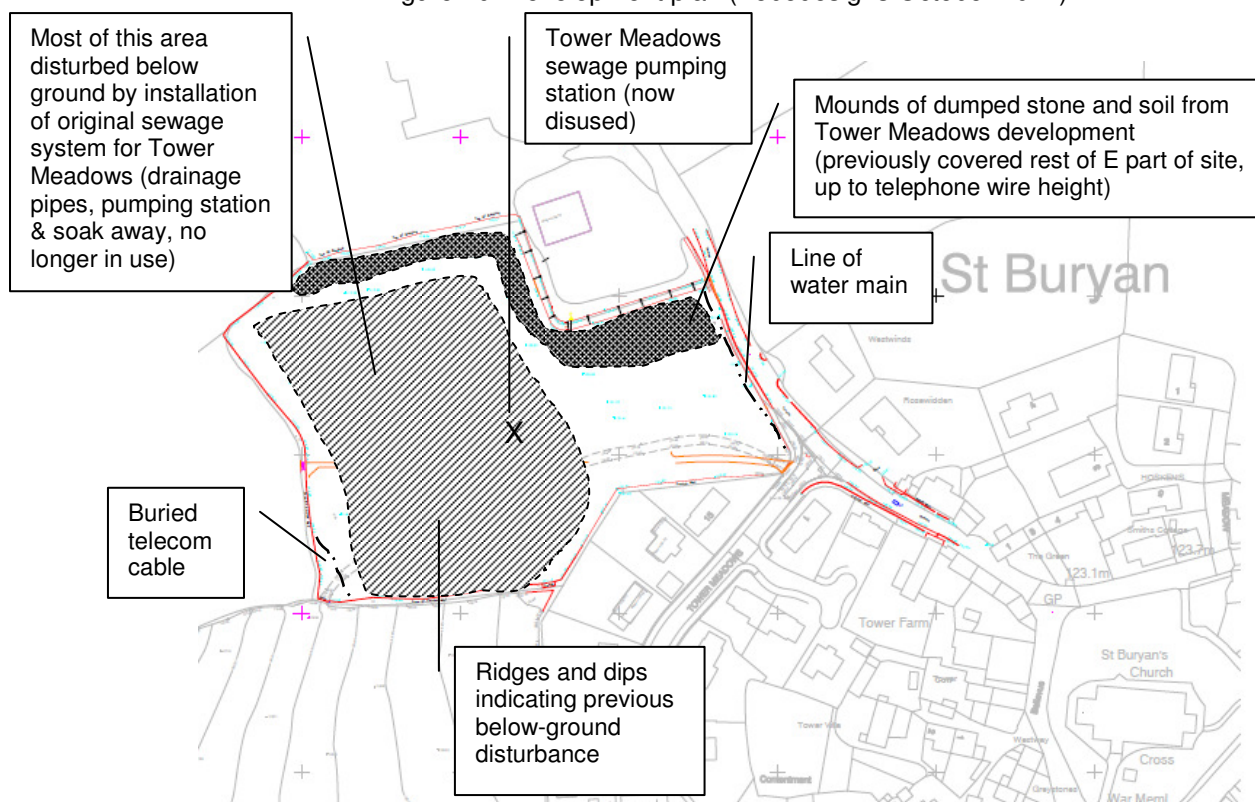


Figure11. Ground conditions recorded during archaeological site visit (February 2015)



Figure 12. Field gate and footpath style into SE corner of the site, looking NNW



Figure 13. View across site from SE corner, looking NW towards Trevorgans





Figure 14. Mounds of dumped soil and stones and other debris in E part of site, looking SE and NE





Figure 15. Sewage pumping station near centre of site, looking NW, towards Trevorgans



Figure 16. Northern part of the site, from sewage pumping station