

Land adjacent to Belhaven Ventnor, Isle of Wight

Archaeological Evaluation Report





**LAND ADJACENT BELHAVEN, CASTLE ROAD,
VENTNOR**

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Andrew E Hitt, on behalf of Barbara Springall, to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development at land situated adjacent to Belhaven, Castle Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight centred on NGR 455543 77371.

Two trenches were excavated within the footprint of the proposed residential development, and exposed bands of natural geology related to the Undercliff; a series of landslip events on which the town of Ventnor is built.

No archaeological features or finds were identified in the evaluation.

The fieldwork was undertaken on the 25th March 2009.

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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Andrew E Hitt and Barbara Springall for commissioning the work and also would also like to acknowledge the help and assistance of Owen Cambridge, Isle of Wight Archaeologist.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Thompson, and Kevin Stratford. This report was compiled by Steve Thompson with illustrations by Ken Lymer.

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Andrew E Hitt, on behalf of Barbara Springall (the Client), to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of development on land situated adjacent to Belhaven, Castle Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight (hereafter the Site, see **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 Following consultation with the Isle of Wight Planning Archaeologist, and in line with 1 App and PPG16 requirements, a Heritage Statement, comprising an archaeological evaluation was required in order to provide further information regarding the archaeological potential and inform the nature of the archaeological survival on the Site.
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Wessex Archaeology 2009) setting out the strategy and methodology by which Wessex Archaeology would implement the archaeological evaluation was submitted to and approved by the LPAs Planning Archaeologist prior to fieldwork commencing. In format and content the WSI conformed with current best practice and to the guidance outlined in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1999) and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (as amended 1994).

2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The Site covers an area of approximately 0.15 hectares, immediately to the west of Belhaven and currently comprises a well kept garden with some mature trees and shrubs. The Site is divided into two terraces (upper and lower) separated by a low stone wall.
- 2.1.2 The Site is located on gently sloping land from north to south from a height of 57.90m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) to 52.50m aOD, and is centred on NGR 455543 077371.
- 2.1.3 The town of Ventnor is situated in an area of general landslip or graben known as the Undercliff, with the Site situated on a complex pattern of landslide types, developed in the Upper and Lower Greensand rocks. All the strata below the greensand is concealed by the landslips (Geological Map of Great Britain, 1:50,000, parts of sheets 330, 331, 344 & 345).
- 2.1.4 The present generation of landslips is thought to have originated about 5000 years ago and these extend along the coast for about 12km from Blackgang Chine in the west to Luccombe Chine in the east. (Pritchard Wilmott 2008).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Summary

- 3.1.1 A brief search for archaeological and historical sites within a 1km radius ('the Study Area') of the Site via the Archaeology Data Service (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>) indicates the presence of 31 sites, predominantly of a prehistoric and Romano-British date.
- 3.1.2 To the south of the Site at Undercliff Gardens, a hoard of c. 30 socketed axes were found in the 19th century.
- 3.1.3 Further evidence of prehistoric activity is known to the south-west of the Site, where Bronze Age cremations and Iron Age inhumations have both been excavated.
- 3.1.4 Furthermore, to the west of the Site, excavation uncovered a Late Iron Age settlement site. Two hut circles, pottery, animal bones and a brooch were recorded.
- 3.1.5 During the construction of Belhaven in 1928, a Romano-British midden, indicative of Roman domestic and settlement activity was discovered. Pottery, animal bones and shells were collected. In addition a hoard of 279 Roman coins, dating to the reign of Valerian c. 273AD, was recorded.
- 3.1.6 Excavations undertaken in the mid-19th century recorded several Roman inhumations to the south-east of the Site. More recently, an archaeological evaluation undertaken to the east of the Site at the Flowers Brook Recreation Ground in advance of a sewage treatment works, exposed several inhumations. Although the dates of these were uncertain, they were thought to be prehistoric or Romano-British.
- 3.1.7 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Site.

3.2 Previous Investigations

- 3.2.1 Although no recent archaeological investigations on the Site have been undertaken, the underlying geology was investigated through a series of geotechnical boreholes.
- 3.2.2 The 12 hand augured boreholes was undertaken by Pritchard Willmott Consulting Engineers and Environmentalists. This survey identified '*hard landslip debris and sandstone material to be present at varying depths of between 0.30m and 2.50m below the existing ground surface*'. (Pritchard Willmott 2008, 5)

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1.1 The aims and objectives of the project were established in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2009) and were:
- To determine or confirm the presence/absence and the general nature of any remains present.
 - To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence where development is proposed.

5 EVALUATION STRATEGY

- 5.1.1 Two machine excavated trial trenches (10m x 1.2m) positioned within the footprint of the proposed building and access drive were excavated as indicated on **Figure 1**.
- 5.1.2 The evaluation trenches were laid out and surveyed using a Global Positioning System (GPS) and the trenches were scanned with a CAT (Cable Avoidance Tool) prior to machining.
- 5.1.3 All works were undertaken in accordance with the standards set out within the Specification (Wessex Archaeology 2009).
- 5.1.4 All works were conducted in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations (as amended 1994), excepting where they are superseded by statements made below.
- 5.1.5 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.
- 5.1.6 All overburden was removed under constant archaeological supervision with a 360° tracked excavator down to the natural clay and gravel geology. In general a depth of 0.55m-1m of topsoil, subsoil, made-ground and levelling deposits was removed down to natural geology.
- 5.1.7 The evaluation took place on 25th March 2009.

5.2 Recording

- 5.2.1 All archaeological deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system.
- 5.2.2 A full graphic archive was maintained. Plans and sections were produced at a scale of 1:20 and 1:10 respectively, where appropriate, with reference to a site grid tied to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels were calculated, with plans and sections annotated with OD heights. All features and archaeological interventions and objects were surveyed with a Leica GPS 1200, and hand-planned at an appropriate scale.
- 5.2.3 A full photographic record was maintained using digital images. The photographic record illustrates both the detail and the general context of the Site.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The soil sequence noted in both trenches was generally consistent.
- 6.1.2 Details of the excavated contexts can be found in **Appendix 1**. A summary of the findings of the evaluation are presented below.

6.2 Trench 1

- 6.2.1 Trench 1 was located upon the upper terrace and aligned roughly NW – SE and recorded as 13m long by 2.30m at its widest point and a maximum of 1.70m deep and positioned over the footprint of the proposed house.
- 6.2.2 Following the removal of 0.30m of turf and topsoil (**101**) relating to the existing garden, a weathered or redeposited natural deposit (**102**) 0.23m thick was recorded. This deposit was sterile of finds and was removed to reveal *in situ* basal geology (**103**).
- 6.2.3 Due to the known landslip deposits in the area, a large sondage was excavated through the natural (**103**) to investigate the possibility that landslip events had potentially sealed earlier ground surfaces, which had the potential to contain archaeological remains.
- 6.2.4 The sondage was excavated to a depth of 1.7m from the existing ground surface to a level of 56.19m aOD and revealed a series of sterile natural geological bands recorded as **104**, **105** and **106**.
- 6.2.5 No archaeological remains were identified and no finds were recovered from the exposed geological bands, suggesting they were not redeposited.

6.3 Trench 2

- 6.3.1 Trench 2 was located on the lower terrace and aligned NNW – SSE and recorded as 10m long by 1.30m wide and to a maximum depth of 0.87m. The trench was placed over the proposed driveway leading to a new garage within the proposed development area.
- 6.3.2 Following the removal of 0.18m of turf and topsoil (**201**) forming part of the existing lawn and the further removal 0.18m of subsoil (**202**) the underlying basal geology (**203**) was revealed. Layer **203** was recorded as 0.44m thick and identified as the same deposit observed in Trench 1 and recorded as **105**. Beneath **203** was a further natural deposit recorded as **204**.
- 6.3.3 No archaeological features were observed and no finds were recovered within the trench.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 The evaluation on the Site has demonstrated the differential nature of the underlying natural basal geology resulting from a succession of landslip deposits known as the Undercliff and accords with the results of the borehole survey undertaken by Pritchard Willmott in identifying repeated layers of landslip geology.
- 7.1.2 Despite being in an area relatively rich in prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology, no archaeological remains were present within the excavated trenches and given the absence of any artefactual evidence, suggests a low potential for archaeological remains elsewhere on the Site.
- 7.1.3 The possibility that archaeological remains are sealed beneath landslip material derived from the higher ground to the north was investigated through the excavation of a deep sondage, yet this proved negative.

8 STORAGE AND CURATION

8.1 Museum

- 8.1.1 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology, under the site code **71230**. It is recommended that it is deposited with the local museum in due course. Deposition of the archive with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.

8.2 Security Copy

- 8.2.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of microfilm. The master jackets and one diazo copy of the microfilm will be submitted to the National Archaeological Record (English Heritage), a second diazo copy will be deposited with the paper records, and a third diazo copy will be retained by Wessex Archaeology.

9 REFERENCES

English Heritage 1999. Management of Archaeological Projects. MAP2. www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/MoRPHE-Project-Managers-Guide.pdf

Geological Map of Great Britain, 1:50,000, parts of sheets 330, 331, 344 & 345

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APPENDIX 1: TRENCH APPENDIX

bgl = below ground level; aOD – above Ordnance Datum; CBM ceramic building material

TRENCH 1			Type:	Machine
Dimensions: 13 x 2.3m		Max. depth: 1.70m	Ground level: 57.96m aOD to 56.07m aOD (NW-SE)	
context	description			depth m
101	Topsoil	Current topsoil and turf of area of garden under lawn. Mid brown loose friable silty loam with rare small greensand stone inclusions <0.04m highly bioturbated.		
102	Natural	Mid grey brown loose silty clay loam, with very rare small greensand stone inclusions <0.04m, possible weathered natural.		
103	Natural	Very light grey firm silty clay marl, stone free natural geology, upper 0.10m of deposit is slightly lighter almost white in colour compared to the remaining deposit.		
104	Natural	Mid grey firm silty clay, natural geology with common sub angular greensand stone inclusions <0.05m in size.		
105	Natural	Mid grey with green (olive) tinge with slightly darker mottled grey brown patches very firm silty clay with rare small green sand stone inclusions <0.01m in size		
106	Natural	Light grey silty clay relatively stone free with very rare small greensand stone inclusions <0.01m in size.		

TRENCH 2			Type:	Machine
Dimensions: 10 x 1.3m		Max. depth: 0.87m	Ground level: 54.24m aOD to 52.49m aOD (NNW-SSE)	
context	description			depth m
201	Topsoil	Current topsoil and turf of area of garden under lawn, mid grey brown friable silty loam, highly bioturbated and relatively stone free, with very rare small greensand stone inclusions <0.04m in size, with occasional modern CBM, glass and flower pot sherds.		0-0.18
202	Subsoil	Light grey brown silty clay heavily bioturbated silty clay, diffuse horizon with overlying (201) and underlying (203). Rare medium greensand stone inclusions <0.06m		0.18-0.36
203	Natural	Mid green grey (olive) silty clay with occasional sub angular green sand stone inclusions <0.07m in size. Natural geology		0.36-0.80
204	Natural	Light green grey (olive) silty clay natural geology with occasional greensand stone inclusions <0.07m in size.		0.80m+



Site and trench location

Figure 1



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