## Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

| <b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b><br>Wembury, South Hams            | National Grid Reference<br>SX 51654 48525 |  | Number: |                     |
|---|---|--|---------|---------------------|
| Subject: Archaeological recording of eroding feature at Wembury Beach |   |  |         | Photo attached? YES |
| Planning Application no: N/A  |   | Recipient museum: Museum of Plymouth                 |         |                     |
| OASIS ID: southwes1-216400  |   | Museum Accession no: N/A                             |         |                     |
| Contractor's reference number/code: WB15                              |   | Dates fieldwork undertaken: 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2015 |         |                     |

## Description of works.

Archaeological recording was undertaken by South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) in conjunction with members of the Plymouth and District Archaeological Society (PDAS) of an archaeological feature eroding out of the cliff at Wembury Beach. This recording work acted as an assessment of the necessity of any further works, especially in light of the evaluation trenching undertaken in 2004 by Exeter Archaeology and PDAS (Reed 2005). The work and methodology were approved by Bill Horner of Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

The recording was carried out by S. Walls on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015, with the assistance of Chris Ruse, Geof Bowden and Peter Houghton (all members of PDAS). Chris Ruse kindly arranged for permissions from the landowner for access.

The site lies in Wembury Bay, just west of the Yealm Estuary and c.2.5km east from the entrance to Plymouth Sound. St. Werburgh's Church is located c.180m to the east of the site (Figure 1). The soils of the area are the well drained fine loamy and fine silty soils of the Denbigh 1 Association (SSEW 1983) overlying slate, siltstone and sandstone of the Dartmouth Group (BGS 2015).

The feature is part of a group of post-roman features identified and subject to archaeological evaluation in 2004 (Reed 2005). The 2004 evaluation identified two stone lined gullies [507] and [527] and a slate lined pit [513], which were radio-carbon dated to AD 420-600, no contemporary artefactual material was recovered although a number of flint flakes and a post-medieval mill stone were recovered from the overlying colluvium/head deposits and topsoil.

The overhanging vegetation in the vicinity of the feature was cleared by hand, and the exposed profile through the feature cleaned, photographed and drawn. The overlying stratigraphy of the site comprised; a yellow-grey slightly clayey and sandy silt loam topsoil (600) with occasional small pebbles and common platey shillet fragments. Below the topsoil was a grey slightly clayey-silt colluvium (601) with occasional small pebbles and common to abundant platey shillet fragments. These overlay a firm yellowish-grey silt-clay colluvium/head deposit (605) which contained occasional platey shillet fragments and rare small quartz stones.

The feature [602] cut into deposit (605) and was overlain by colluvium (601), it was 1m wide and 0.75m deep with a steep sided U-shaped profile. The exposed south facing section (appears to catch the feature (a gully?) at a slight angle, and it is believed the feature is south-east to north-west orientated. Feature [602] contained a single fill, a slightly yellowish-grey slightly clayey-silt with occasional to common platey shillet fragments, rare small pebbles (>30mm dia.) and very rare charcoal flecks. Rare irregular small quartz pebbles (>60mm dia.) were noted towards the top of the fill. The base appeared to include several large (>120mm dia.) shillet fragments (hinting at a stone lining). The head deposit (605) immediately adjacent to [602] had been heat affected and baked to a red colour (605), the heat had a greater depth of penetration to the north-east (on account of a south-western wind at the time of the fire), and there was only a slight penetration (c.50mm) at the base of the feature.

Following the recording process, it was possible to locate the feature in relation to the previous work on the site, and feature [602] appears to represent the same feature as stone lined gully [507], which was exposed within Trench 1 of the 2004 evaluation (see Figure 1). Despite some erosion of the cliffs, it appears that the feature falls within the previously excavated portion of the feature, although a detailed plan of the cliff face would be necessary to ascertain the full extent of the erosion in relation to the other features. It appears relatively stable at present.

No finds were recovered from the feature.

## Conclusions

The single feature [602] appears to relate to a slate lined gully [507] identified during an archaeological evaluation (Trench 1) by Exeter Archaeology in 2004. The present exposed portion visible in the cliff face was exposed during the evaluation, although the trench edges were not visible. At present although this cliff has eroded slightly over the last 10 years, it remains relatively stable, however if there is a substantial collapse additional features may be exposed in the future. Members of PDAS will continue to 'keep an eye' on the erosion.

## Bibliography

Reed, S.J. 2005: Evaluation Excavations of Post-Roman Features at Wembury bay near Plymouth, *Proceedings of the Devonshire Archaeological Society* 63, 55-64.

| Recorder: S. Walls | Date sent to HER: 01.07.15 |
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Figure 1: Site location. Based upon the plan produced in Reed 2005, showing the recorded section in relation to the locations of the Exeter Archaeology trenches.



Figure 2: South facing section of feature [602], and photo of the same, viewed from the south (1m scale).



Figure 3: Exposed section through Feature [602]; viewed from the south (scales 2m + 1m).