

HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR LAND OFF MORWENNA ROAD, SHOP, MORWENSTOW, CORNWALL

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Barry Tape of BkT Architecture to produce a heritage statement for land off Morwenna Road, Shop, Morwenstow, Cornwall, in advance of the application for planning for the residential development of the site. This rapid appraisal of existing documentary and cartographic sources, together with a short site visit and geophysical survey (summarised below), is intended to inform and guide the need for subsequent archaeological work on the site.

SITE LOCATION

The site is located across two fields on the north side of the hamlet of Shop. Shop is in the parish of Morwenstow off of the A39, c.2km east of Morwenstow and c.3km east of the coast and c.8.4km north of Bude. It is in a hilly area of coombes, valleys and ridges associated with watercourses running to the sea to the west and inland to more major rivers to the east, such as the Tamar. The site sits on the western end of a relatively flat plateau/ridge that falls away gently to the west, beyond the site and rises gently to the east, with higher ground beyond a gentle valley to the north and a steep valley to its south. This topography puts it on the primary route way inland from Morwenstow. The number of springs and wet ground in the area and undulating topography account for rough grazing and wetland/marshier areas in the landscape as well as the predominantly pastoral agricultural landscape. The site is at a height of between c.180m and c.190m AOD.

SITE HISTORY

Shop is a relatively modern hamlet in the parish of Morwenstow. Morwenstow, first mentioned in 1201 (*Morwestowa*), means 'St Morwenna's holy place' from the saint's name from the dedication of the church and the Old English *stōw*. Shop is first denoted on the Morwenstow tithe map of 1840 and probably refers to a workshop or smithy located at a convenient road junction around which the hamlet grew. A chapel existed at what is now Shop in c.1400 and the adjacent farmstead named Furze (presumably once a sub-manor or barton?) is mentioned in 1313.

The available cartographic evidence suggests relatively limited change over the period 1884-present. The only notable change (see Figure 1) is the removal of a field boundary in the eastern part of the site and the construction of a housing estate (West Beacon Close) to the south.

THE site is located within an area characterised as Medieval farmland by the Cornwall Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC). The Cornwall Historic Environment Record (HER) records several heritage assets within 1km of the site. This includes a flint scatter (HER No.36), a cropmark of a possible Iron Age 'round' (HER No.70623), the earthwork of a possible Iron Age enclosure (HER No.29), The cropmarks of Early Medieval field-systems (HER No.70605 and 70629), Medieval settlements at Little Brayton, 1284, Beccaton, 1429, Brown Spit, 1520, Ruxmoor, 1302 and Dene, 1327 (HER No. 41, 18, 39, 4489 and 4469 respectively), the cropmark of a Medieval field boundary at Beacon Down (HER No.70562), the c.1400 chapel in Shop (HER No.4527), a medieval settlement at *Furze*, 1313 (HER No.4502), the possible location of a beacon near to the site (HER No.170373), Post-medieval structures listed on the 1840 tithe apportionment and 19th century structures such as a school, a malthouse and yard and, the Blacksmiths Workshop from which the hamlet takes its name (HER No.4501). No archaeological field work has been undertaken on the site prior to this survey, however a watching brief was conducted at Chapel Park, in the south-west of Shop (HER Reference: ECO1710; HES report reference: ER665).

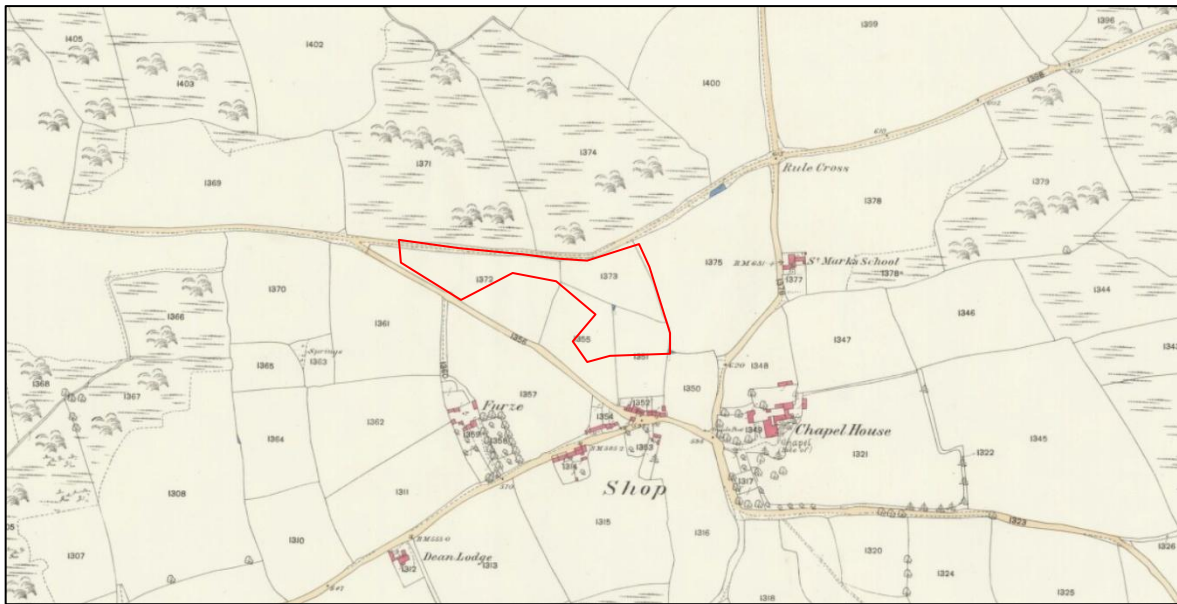


FIGURE 1: EXTRACT FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY 1ST EDITION, 25 INCH SERIES, PUBLISHED 1886 (CRO);
THE SITE LOCATION IS OUTLINED IN RED.

WALKOVER SURVEY

The site was comprised of two fields under pasture with relatively short grass. The fields were bounded by overgrown Cornish hedgebanks with a wire and post fence. A modern housing development stands to the south between the two fields. The western of the two fields was roughly triangular in shape and relatively flat with a modern hedge line boundary separating a house from its western end. A number of vehicle tracks had left scars across this field. The eastern field was roughly rectangular and undulated unevenly. It contained large areas of maram-type grass indicating a relatively marshy wetland across the low parts of the field and had modern fence lines at its southern and western ends. Its topography is indicative of rough grazing modified by standing and possibly running water in ancient times.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

The results of the geophysical survey (Figure 2) would suggest that there are a number of undated features across the site including pits or natural hollows (e.g. tree-throws) potentially medieval boundaries and agricultural features such as ploughing and drainage associated with medieval to modern periods. Given the nature of the surrounding landscape it is probable that drainage was and is vital to the use of the land on the site and the majority of the features will be associated with that; either as field drains or having once been open drains. For full details of the survey please see SWARCH report 160831 (Bampton 2016).

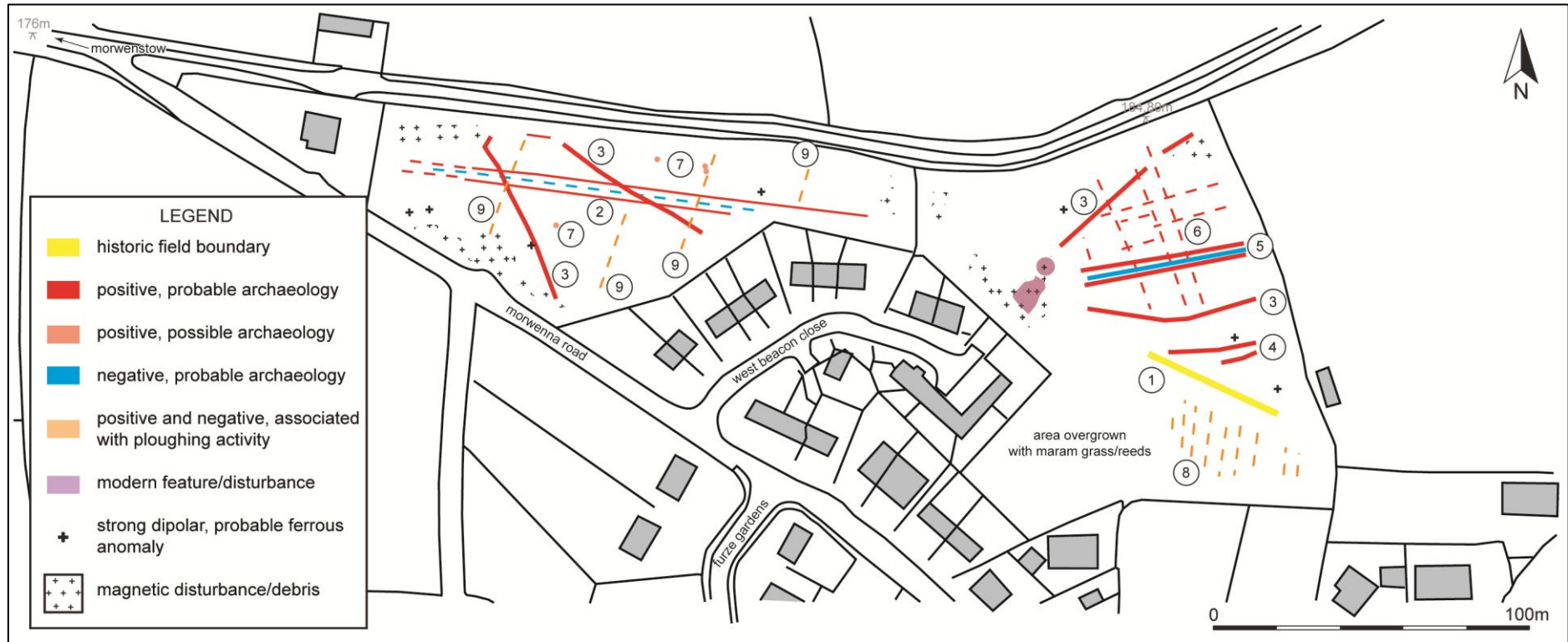


FIGURE 2: INTERPRETATION OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The location of the proposed development is on a largely gentle north-west-facing slope, behind the extant extent of the hamlet thus far, and behind and lower than the road with its high Cornish hedgebank that lines the sites north boundary. The site is at a slight distance from the most sensitive heritage assets in the immediate area (the various Listed buildings within that hamlet and various farmsteads). This means that there is unlikely to be any significant impact on the settings of these assets. Designated heritage assets to the west, east and south will be predominantly shielded from views of the development by the existing buildings and assets to the north are at such a distance that any views of the proposed development are unlikely to have any significant impact upon their setting.

The proposed development will be seen as part of the hamlet, and therefore must be in keeping with the existing housing stock in terms of heights, roofing materials, colours etc.

CONCLUSION

Based on current evidence, development of the site is unlikely to encounter or disturb and significant archaeological deposits. The majority of anomalies identified in the geophysical survey appear to be of agricultural features of generally undated, but most likely medieval and later dates. A brief desk-based appraisal and walkover did not identify any additional potential archaeological features. However, the hedgebanks here are likely to be considered important under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations (Schedule 1, pt2, 5(a) 'integral part of a field system pre-dating the Inclosure Acts'), and some provision for recording breaches should be made.

REFERENCES

Bampton, J. 2016: *Land of Morwenna Road, Shop, Morwenstow, Cornwall: Results of a geophysical survey*. South West Archaeology Report No. 160831.