

WINDMILL HILL CAVE, BRIXHAM, TORBAY

(NGR SX 92432 55961)

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Prepared by:
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On behalf of
South West Water Ltd

Document No: ACD1347/1/1

Date: April 2016



AC archaeology

Torbay Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Brixham, Torbay	National Grid Reference SX 92432 55961	Number: (Leave blank for HES to fill in)
Subject: Windmill Hill Cave, Brixham, Torbay, Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief		Photo attached? Y
Planning Application no: N/A	Recipient museum: N/A	
OASIS ID: 248383	Museum Accession no: N/A	
Contractor's reference number/code: ACD1347	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 15 March 2016	
<p>Description of works</p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology during groundworks associated with the collapse of a sewer pipe at Mount Pleasant Road, Brixham which had revealed the presence of a large void beneath the collapsed sewer. The site lies immediately to the southwest of Windmill Hill Cave which is designated as a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1008681). The archaeological works were required following consultation between South West Water, Historic England and the Senior Historic Environment Officer for Torbay.</p> <p>The site lies on a fairly level stretch of road but occupies an elevated position to the southeast of Brixham Harbour at approximately 23m aOD. The underlying solid geology comprises interbedded limestone and mudstone of the Berry Head Member.</p> <p><i>Archaeological background</i></p> <p>The principal archaeological interest in the site is its close proximity to Windmill Hill Cave. The cave is situated in an outcrop of rock overlooking Brixham Harbour and comprises a series of galleries and chambers on a NW-SE alignment that extend approximately 40m into Windmill Hill. The galleries are up to 4.5m in height, with the east-west extent of the cave approximately 30m in width. The majority of the cave lies below 107 Mount Pleasant Road; there is a gated northern entrance beneath the pavement at the front of the house and additional entrances which have been blocked on the western side of the cave. Previous investigations of the cave have revealed rich faunal remains associated with Palaeolithic flint implements. These finds are of particular significance as they provided scientific proof for the contemporaneity of humans and various extinct animal species. The cave also holds undisturbed deposits of cave earth within the galleries and chambers.</p> <p>The aim of the archaeological monitoring and recording was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed within the two test pits, with particular reference to the potential for the exposed void to represent an extension of the cave system at Windmill Hill Cave, immediately to the northeast.</p> <p><i>Results (Plates 1-4)</i></p> <p><i>Tp1</i></p> <p>The length of collapsed sewer had been exposed by the excavation of two test pits prior to arrival on site, and had revealed the presence of a large void beneath the complex of modern services (water, gas and sewerage) which were concentrated within the top 0.60m of the test pits. The northern test pit (Tp1) measured 1m wide at its northern end, 0.85m wide at its southern end and 1.50m long. The length of broken sewer pipe was located within the northwest corner of this pit. The layer sequence within the northern end of this test pit comprised 0.40m of tarmac road surface and associated hard-core overlying the sewer pipe. The north-south aligned sewer pipe was overlying a thin layer of limestone bedrock, with a thick deposit of dark reddish brown sandy clay with medium sized fragments of limestone beneath. This section marked the northern end of the void. It is possible that this thin deposit of limestone represents the roof of a chamber which has subsequently collapsed to the south, with the reddish brown material representing infilling of a chamber or void. A similar deposit of dark reddish brown sandy clay with fragments of limestone was also visible within the west-facing section of this pit.</p> <p>From the road surface to the north of Tp1 it was clear to see that the void extended to the south beneath the unexcavated road surface between the two test pits. The sides of the void were also visible from this vantage point and revealed them to be composed of limestone which inclined at an angle of approximately 15° from the vertical away from the east towards the west. The void became very narrow towards the base but it was not possible to identify any <i>in-situ</i> soil deposits due to the presence of collapsed material at the base of the void.</p>		

Tp2

The southern test pit (Tp2) was located 1.90m to the south of Tp1 and measured 1m wide by 1.20m long. This test pit also exposed part of the void beneath two sewer pipes which were situated adjacent to the northern and western edges of the pit.

The deposit sequence within the pit consisted of the tarmac road surface with modern made ground beneath overlying a dark reddish brown sandy clay with abundant large fragments of limestone. The solid natural geology was exposed from a depth of 1.30m from the road surface and was visible on both the east and west sides of the void. The base of the void was visible from the road surface to the southwest of the pit but it was not possible to identify any *in-situ* soil deposits due to the presence of collapsed material at the base of the void. As the top of the void within this test pit was so narrow it was difficult to determine whether the void continued further to the south beyond the pit.

Discussion

The two test pits have shown the void to extend on a north-south alignment for approximately 4.60m+. Historic maps of the area show the presence of a former quarry immediately to the southeast of No. 89 Mount Pleasant Road, with which the void may be associated. However, the exposure of natural geology within the slanting sides of the void, and the presence of a narrow base indicate that it is more likely to represent a chamber or fissure associated with the cave system immediately to the northeast.

A ground plan of the Bone Cave at Brixham, included as part of the Brixham Cave excavation report, shows the layout of the cave following the excavations of 1858. The southwest corner of the cave complex comprises a large gallery labelled as the 'Southern Chamber' from which there are three passages leading off to the west. Of these, the two northern passages lead to an opening at the surface, while the southern passage is labelled as the 'Kings Gallery' indicating a continuation of the cave system in this direction. The Southern Chamber is located immediately to the northeast of 89 Mount Pleasant Road, approximately 20m to the northeast of the void exposed beneath the collapsed sewer. Although it is impossible to determine whether this void represents a continuation of the Windmill Hill Cave system, it is likely that it represents a chamber or fissure created through a similar formation process to that of the nearby cave.

This report and the associated OASIS entry represent the archive for the project.

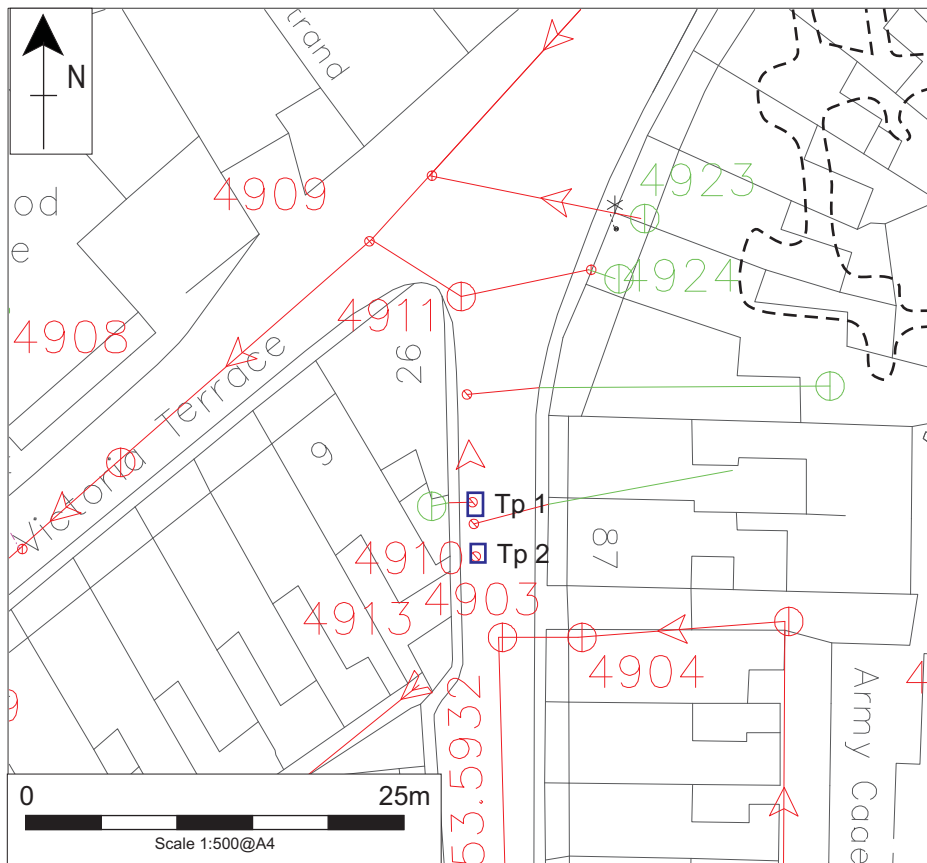
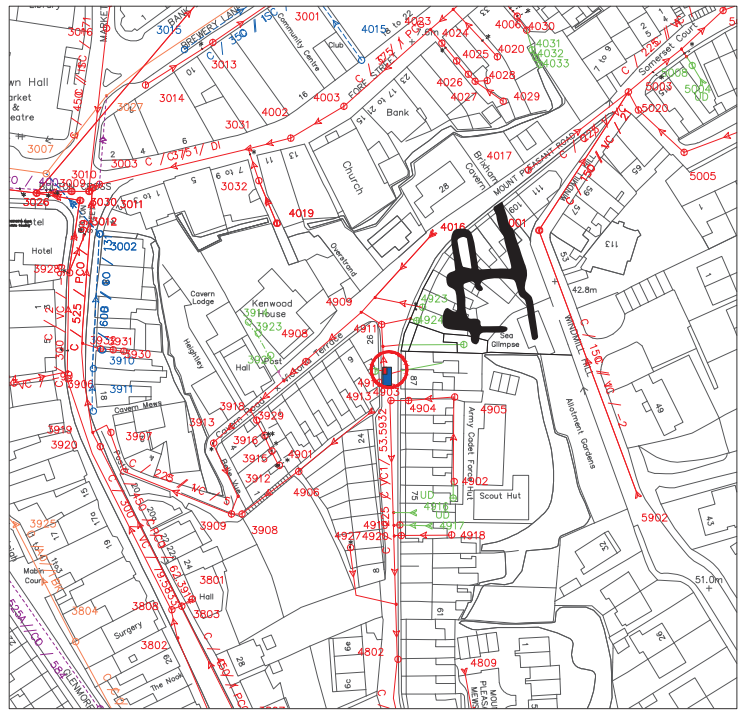
References

Prestwich, J., 1872. 'Report on the Exploration of Brixham Cave, conducted by a Committee of the Geological Society, and under the Superintendence of WM. Pengelly, Esq., F.R.S., aided by a local Committee; with Descriptions of the Animal Remains by George Busk, Esq., F.R.S., and of the Flint Implements by John Evans, Esq., F.R.S.' *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, Vol 20, 471-572.

A plan as well as any other relevant drawings must be attached showing the location and extent of site, areas investigated and features exposed.

Recorder: Fiona Pink, AC archaeology

Date sent to HER: 18 April 2016



- - PRIVATE SEWER
- - COMBINED SEWER
- - TREATED SEWER
- - SURFACE WATER
- - - - FOUL SEWER

PROJECT

Windmill Hill Cave, Brixham, Torbay

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location plan showing position of test pits



Plate 1: Site Location. View to the southwest along Mount Pleasant Road



Plate 2: Site Location. View to the northeast along Mount Pleasant Road



Plate 3: View to the south showing the void within Tp1 (1m scale)



Plate 4: View to the east showing the void within Tp2 (1m scale)

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