

# Trenance Mill, Blowing House Hill, St Austell, Cornwall.

A programme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording



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**Trenance Mill, Blowing House Hill, St Austell, Cornwall.**

**A programme of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording**

for

**Trenance Mill Properties Partnership**

by



Brickfield Offices, Maperton, Wincanton, Somerset. BA9 8EG.

T: 01963 824696

E: [mail@contextone.co.uk](mailto:mail@contextone.co.uk)

W: [www.contextone.co.uk](http://www.contextone.co.uk)

**COAS reference:** C1/WBF/10/TMS

**Cornwall Council Planning Reference:** 08/01766

**National Grid Reference:** centred on SW 00991 52618

**OASIS reference:** contexto1-150091

**Royal Cornwall Museum Accession Number:** TRURI:2010.18

**COAS project team:**

**Project Director:** Richard McConnell

**Fieldwork Manager:** Stuart Milby

**Post-excavation Manager:** Dr Cheryl Green

**Fieldwork:** Peter Fairclough, Dave Roberts

**Report:** Dr Cheryl Green

**Illustration:** Tara Fairclough

May 2016

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## Non-technical summary

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the conversion of a historic mill complex (the 'Site'), over 4 days between 1 July and 1 November 2010. The project was commissioned by Mr Christopher Jones (Architect) on behalf of Trenance Mill Properties Partnership.*

*The monitoring programme was required as a condition of planning consent in mitigation of the conversion of existing mill buildings, demolition of a flat roof structure, and construction of new 25 residential units on the Site. This followed a desk-based assessment carried out by COAS in 2008, which concluded that archaeological remains may be encountered during development excavations.*

*In the event, the excavation of a service trench revealed a similar deposit sequence across the Site, comprising a deep layer of modern make-up directly above the natural clay. Elsewhere, development groundworks did not extend beneath modern made-ground and therefore no archaeological features or deposits were observed and no artefacts were recovered.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at Trenance Mill, Blowing House Hill, St Austell, Cornwall (the 'Site'), over 4 days between 1 July and 1 November 2010. The project was commissioned by Mr Christopher Jones (Architect) on behalf of Trenance Mill Properties Partnership.
- 1.2 The monitoring programme was required as a condition of planning consent (Cornwall Council planning application ref. 08/01766) in mitigation of a development proposal to convert existing mill buildings, demolish a flat roof structure and construct 25 residential units on the Site. The requirement followed advice by Central Government as set out in paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012).
- 1.3 This formed the second phase of an archaeological programme of works and was requested by the Local Planning Authority on the advice of Mr Dan Ratcliffe (Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council, Historic Environment Service (HES)). The first phase comprised a Desk-Based Assessment carried out by COAS in August 2008 (Allum 2008). The second phase is stipulated in a *Brief for Archaeological Recording* issued on 14 April 2010, in which Mr Ratcliffe stated:

*"No development shall take place subject to this permission until the applicant has secured and implemented a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Historic Environment Service.*

*Information contained within the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record shows that smelting of tin in a water powered 'blowing house' is documented on this site from 1690 until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the water supply was reused by the present corn mill. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of the site by Context One Archaeological Services has noted that remains of structures of these industrial practices, in addition to the systems of leats providing water to power the complex are likely to be impacted upon by the development proposals and that the archaeological recording of "this key site within the industrial landscape of St Austell [is] particularly crucial given the scarcity of surviving documentary records".*

- 1.4 The programme of archaeological works comprised five elements: a Desk-Based Assessment (Allum 2008); the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which set out the project strategy; monitoring and recording during development groundworks; post-excavation and report production; and archive deposition. The WSI was approved by Mr Ratcliffe prior to the commencement of any Site works.

## 2. Site location and topography

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR SX 01000 52680) is located within a residential area, c. 0.5km north-west from St Austell town centre. The Site is bounded to the south-west by Blowing House Lane, to the south-east by Blowing House Hill and to the north-east and north-west by residential housing. The Site is largely situated on level ground at an average height of c. 64m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). Prior to development works, the Site mostly consisted of hardstanding with some tree cover.

### 3. Methodology

- 3.1 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), formerly the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) (December 2014). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 3.2 In the absence of archaeological remains, a profile section of the deposit sequence across the Site was recorded using a standard COAS *pro forma* profile sheet to illustrate the soil morphology. The profile was recorded as a graphical representation accompanied by a brief description. A photograph including a suitable scale was also taken and the location recorded.
- 3.3 All deposits were recorded as individual contexts and ascribed a unique number. Contexts referenced in this report are presented in standard terms, e.g. (100), (203).
- 3.4 A photographic record of the fieldwork comprised digital images in .jpg format. As a minimum, the record included photographs of the profile section, the site setting and development works.

### 4. Results

- 4.1 No visible features or deposits of archaeological interest were encountered during the monitoring programme, and no finds were observed.
- 4.2 Development excavations varied between 0.25m and 1.00m deep. The excavation of a service trench for a water main (**Plate 1**) demonstrated a similar deposit sequence across the Site. This comprised tarmac and made-ground (100) measuring up to 0.40m deep, directly overlying natural clay (101) (**Plate 2, Profile 1**).



Plate 1. Service trench along NW side of Former Corn Mill (from NE)



Plate 2. Profile 1 (from SW; 1m scales)

### 5. Discussion

- 5.1 Trenance Mill complex is a key site within the industrial landscape of St Austell. There appears to have been a Blowing House here in the c. 18<sup>th</sup> century, with New or Middle Blowing House in operation by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Allum 2010). This was demolished soon after 1881 and a Corn Mill constructed immediately to the north, with a further late 19<sup>th</sup> century Corn Mill and a 1940's clay laboratory within the eastern part of the Blowing House footprint (*ibid.*). Archaeological potential for the Site relates to the possible discovery of buildings associated with the Blowing



House; evidence for water management of the Blowing House and later Corn Mills; and prehistoric remains (an earthwork or round and an iron spearhead) recorded within the complex by the Historic Environment Record. Despite this potential, development excavations did not reveal any evidence of activity from these periods. However, with the exception of a service trench which revealed make-up and tarmac above natural clay, excavations did not extend beneath modern made ground.

## 6. Archive

- 6.1 An ordered and integrated site archive has been prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015).
- 6.2 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:
- | Item                  | Number | Format |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|
| Profile record sheets | 1      | Paper  |
| Digital images        | 67     | .JPG   |
| Photographic register | 3      | .JPG   |
| Day record            | 2      | .JPG   |
- 6.3 The paper archive has been scanned as a single file in .PDF format and will form part of the physical Site archive to be deposited with the Royal Cornwall Museum.
- 6.4 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations - <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>).

## 7. COAS acknowledgements

- 7.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Christopher Jones, Architect  
 Dan Ratcliffe, Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer, Cornwall Council

## 8. Bibliography

- |   |  |
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