

# **Isles of Scilly Research Framework**

## **SHERF Resource Assessment**

### **Traditional post-medieval buildings**



**By Eric Berry**

**October 2011**

Cover photograph: St Mary's Harbour Gate

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## Summary

An important element of the Isles of Scilly Research Agenda is an assessment of the historic buildings traditions of the post-medieval period. Some work has been done on this subject before but there has never been an analysis that has looked at all building types on all the islands where traditional post-medieval buildings survive. This study attempts to identify the characteristic building traditions through its building types throughout the islands and to identify what might usefully be achieved by more intensive examination. Results of this brief study show that whilst some particular building types have been examined in detail others have had only superficial analysis and there are some building types that are at risk of almost total loss. It has also been established that the Isles of Scilly contain a built heritage that is unique and very special. The character of the traditional buildings in Scilly deserves better recognition and needs more thorough analysis and interpretation.

## Aims

The aim of the study is to identify the interest and importance of the Scilly's historic building traditions and to place them in a wider context that might lead to further related research, collation, and investigation.

## Methods

The study is predominantly a desk exercise to collate and assess available information about the traditional buildings of the Isles of Scilly. This has included publications and reports, and the compilation of the listed buildings descriptions from the English Heritage Images of England website with photographs of most of the listed buildings (included as an appendix). Most photographs in this report were taken within a four day field trip during May 2011 but some are from previous field trips to Scilly. The traditional buildings have been assessed both as an overall group and also within selected building types. As much as possible photographs relate to their associated text and captions add valuable information, some of which has been adapted from list descriptions. Discussion text in bold type relating to further work has been inserted usually following each building type section.

## The built tradition

### Context

Much has been written about the origins of the Isles of Scilly. It is generally accepted that the island distribution has evolved since the last ice age as a flooded landscape. The flooding is due to a combination of sea-level rise and lowered land levels associated with movement of the earth's crust within the land mass of England since the ice melted. During the Bronze Age, and for a long time since, what are now the northern islands of Scilly, still surround an extensive fertile plain between granite hills with granite outcrops. Since this time the plain been inundated by the sea and the islands are the former hills that surrounded the former plain. The result is a group of islands that share a common geology of granite rock overlain by granitic subsoil. Millions of years ago the granite rocks originally came about by volcanic intrusion under layers of sedimentary rocks. The sedimentary rock layers have long since eroded away. This granite landscape shares many characteristics that exist in the granite uplands of Cornwall and Devon.

Scillonian granite and in some cases, granite from Cornwall, are the principal building materials used on the islands. The granite is usually bedded in local earth mortar (subsoil) called 'ram' in Scilly ('rab' in Cornwall). Granite ashlar, more likely to be used for higher status buildings is usually bedded in lime mortar.

The older roofs coverings that survive are scantle slate that was imported from North Cornwall. However, the earlier roofing tradition for all but the most prestigious buildings was thatch. This is generally called 'rope thatch' in Scilly due to the ropes that were used to hold the used over the thatch and held in place by stone weights to protect the thatch from the high winds that are common on the islands. There are now no surviving thatched roofs but good evidence for their former existence is contained in old photographs, particularly those in the Gibson Collection. Further evidence is contained in many of the surviving buildings. This evidence includes heightening of buildings from when they were adapted to accept slate roofs and often to insert upper floors to buildings that had been built as single-storey structures.

An important source of information about the design of traditional buildings that were originally roofed in thatch are many of the buildings of the ruined settlement on Samson that, except for deterioration, survives

virtually unchanged since the settlement was abandoned in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the educational and other reforms that were being carried out by Augustus Smith, the then governor of the islands. Elsewhere there are a few buildings that retain their single-storey appearance but many that display their former roof lines in heightened gable ends.








## Settlement patterns

The settlement patterns that now exist in Scilly have evolved as a result of many factors including:

- Topography
- Relationship to the sea
- Access
- Land use potential
- Community considerations
- Reforms by Augustus Smith in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

There are now five inhabited islands: St Mary's (the principal island), St Martin's, Tresco, Bryher, and St Agnes, that is linked with Gugh at low tide.

Formerly inhabited islands are:

			
<p><b>Nornour</b> that has remains of a prehistoric settlement</p>	<p><b>Samson</b> has ruined houses that survive from a dispersed settlement that was inhabited until the 1850s</p>	<p><b>Teian</b> has the remains of an early chapel and other buildings including a small farmhouse</p>	<p><b>St Helens</b> has the remains of a pest (isolation) house.</p>
			
<p><b>Round Island</b> has a lighthouse that was occupied until the light was fully automated</p>	<p><b>Rosevear</b> has the ruins of buildings constructed to provide accommodation for the builders of the Bishop's Rock Lighthouse that was also occupied until the light was fully automated</p>	<p><b>Bishop's Rock</b> Lighthouse that was also occupied until the light was fully automated</p>	

The only proper 'town' in Scilly is **Hugh Town** on the largest island of St Mary's. This was built on an isthmus of land between the main part of the island and the **Garrison** (a defended headland), originally to service the garrison and passing ships. The town is served by a harbour. On the opposite side of the isthmus is **Old Town**, a smaller settlement that grew up relating to a Norman church and a sheltered cove.

	
<p>St Mary's, Hugh Town</p>	<p>St Mary's, Hugh Town: Pier, with the Garrison beyond</p>



Elsewhere, settlements are small or dispersed. Generally the most recognizable larger groups are hamlets rather than villages in terms of their size but churches that were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on St Martin's, Treско, Gugh and St Agnes mean that the small settlements to which these relate are technically villages. The use of names such as 'Higher Town', 'Middle Town', and 'Lower Town', as used on the islands of St Martin's, Bryher, and St Agnes are ways of describing their relative locations as small settlements. The word 'town' in Scilly is often used as an abbreviation of 'townplace', a term also used in Cornwall as describing a small settlement.

Throughout the inhabited islands the distinction between settlements and farmsteads is often blurred and historically complex, usually relating to land use and distribution, and the way that individual Scillonian families have affected their development.



Bryher, Middle Town: Dispersed settlement



Treско, New Grimsby: Dispersed settlement

The main traditional industries of the islands are farming, horticulture, and fishing or maritime related. Typically, islanders would need to be involved in more than one of these industries to survive, and this is still true for many islanders today. The traditional economy of the islands now is tourism that depends on a ferry and cargo boat link with Penzance in Cornwall, and air transport, that comprises a helicopter service to both St Mary's and Treско from Penzance, and a light aircraft passenger service from either Newquay or Land's End to St Mary's.

## Building types

The range of principal building types in Scilly is a result of many historical factors including: defence of the islands, farming practice, maritime activity, and the housing and mercantile requirements of the islanders.

## Date periods

Most of the buildings discussed in this report date from the post-medieval period but there is small number of buildings from the medieval period or earlier that have relevance to the evolution of Scilly's built traditions. Except for buildings relating to the defence of the islands that mostly date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century or the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there are very few buildings that are pre-1700. The vernacular buildings that characterize the simple dwellings of Scillonians date mostly from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Materials

**Granite** is the principal traditional building material in Scilly. Many of the hedgerows are built with granite rubble, the stone mostly probably resulting from field clearance.



Samson, Deer Park walls: Built for Augustus Smith in circa the 1850's (rubble stone with sea-shell infill)



St Mary's: Old granite rubble retaining wall





St Martin's: Field boundary (single-stone thickness)



St Mary's, Peninnis: old field boundaries, and later planted boundaries for horticultural enclosures

Most of the roofed buildings are constructed from granite rubble bedded in earth mortar.



St Agnes, Barn wall: Granite rubble



St Mary's, the Garrison: Guardhouse (c1600): Granite rubble

Granite has been used for the construction of buildings in Scilly since prehistoric times. From the late 16<sup>th</sup> century granite has often been dressed to shape in order to create more refined structures.



Pier wall, Hugh Town, St Mary's (shaped granite blocks)



Cross section of Garrison Wall, St Mary's

A cross section through a truncated length of defensive wall on the Garrison, St Mary's provides an opportunity to examine the construction of this walling through its depth; the battered (sloping) outer faces are constructed of granite ashlar but the inner core is constructed from granite rubble.

Sources of the granite used on the island are believed to be either from field clearance or from small quarries on the islands. However, granite from Cornwall was brought over for the construction of the Bishop's Rock



Lighthouse. There has been a long tradition for lime-washing granite rubble walls. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century many buildings were stripped of their historic layers of lime-washing now leaving the impression that it is a rare tradition.



Pelistry Cottage, St Agnes (lime-washed rubble walls)



Jerusalem Terrace, Hugh Town, St Mary's (lime-washed rubble walls)

**Rock-faced granite** has become part of the Scillonian tradition. The more established use of granite rubble appears to have been a strong influence in the development of an exaggerated rustic form of this material as used at the Post Office (1897) at Hugh Town on St Mary's, probably by Thomas Algernon Dorrien-Smith, Lord Proprietor (of Scilly) and architectural amateur (list description), who was responsible for the design of the church on Treeco (q.v.). This way of using granite is repeated in a number of buildings in St Agnes including: porches at Palace Row, New Grimsby; Pentle House where rock-faced granite is used extensively, and for the porch of a house at Old Grimsby. Rock-faced copings on the gateway to the harbour at Hugh Town appear to have a design affinity with these examples, and there may well be other examples of this sort of work in Scilly.



Post Office (1897), Hugh Town, St Mary's (probably by Thomas Algernon Dorrien-Smith, Lord Proprietor and architectural amateur) (rock-faced granite)



One of a row of small houses at Palace Row, New Grimsby with rock-faced granite porches



Treeco, Pentle House: Extensive use of rock-faced granite



Treeco, Old Grimsby: Rock-faced granite porch



**Granite ashlar** is used as a facing material on many of the more prestigious buildings, usually bedded in lime mortar, and even some of the architectural more modest buildings are also faced with granite ashlar to their front walls.



St Mary's, Hugh Town: Town house (granite ashlar)



St Martin's, Signal Row: Small house in row (granite ashlar)

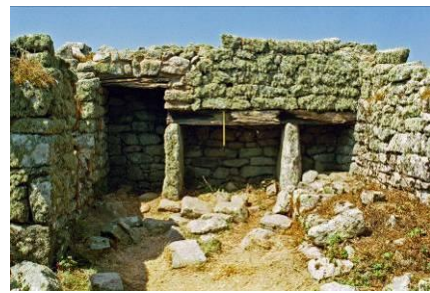
**Dressed granite** is used for many purposes and in a variety of ways. Often the granite is only lightly dressed from granite rubble blocks so that the desired flatness is achieved where it matters.



Tresco, King Charles Castle: Dressed granite doorway and fireplace with oven



St Mary's, Lunnon Farm: Roughly-hewn granite fireplace construction



Samson, House P: Fireplace and alcoves with roughly-hewn granite combined with oak lintels including ship's reused timbers

**Stucco** is also used, more often as a prestige material, particularly on some of the buildings in Hugh Town; it is also used to provide a more refined finish on some of the more rural buildings.



Bell Rock Hotel, Hugh Town, St Mary's (stucco with quoin rustication)



Rose Villa, Higher Town, St Martin's (incised stucco house front framed by a horse-shoe plan granite rubble walled forecourt)

There has never been a thorough analysis of the building materials of Scilly. There is much work to be done including the changes in tradition through time, the source of the materials and their distribution, the names of architects, builders and crafts people, and the cultural impact of changes of fashion and building methods and the introduction and function of various building types. The location and understanding of granite extraction and dressing, including quarries, is worthy of a special study.

**Scantle slate roofs** survive on many of the older buildings or this very traditional material has been used again when buildings have been re-roofed. However, many of the older buildings had already been re-roofed in slate of uniform size or with the inferior covering of asbestos fibre cement.

The 'quarries' from where the slate was extracted were probably located in North Cornwall, now represented by two surviving quarries.

The largest and oldest quarry is at Delabole (the Delabole Slate Quarry) The Delabole Slate website claims the following: 'The Delabole [slate quarry](#) is one of the largest of its type in England and has run continuously since the 15th century making it the oldest working slate quarry in England. In the reign of [Elizabeth I](#) the five quarries on the site of the now larger pit assumed considerable importance delivering slate to [Brittany](#) and the [Netherlands](#). In 1841 the five quarries combined to make the Old Delabole Slate Quarry.'

The other main quarry is at Trevillet, near Tintagel, an old quarry that was reopened about 50 years ago when it became part of Mill Hill Quarries Ltd. This company own three quarries including Trevillet and Mill Hill quarries near Tavistock in Devon. The company website states: Mill Hill Quarries "have been in work for many years.....for two centuries or thereabouts, for roofing slate." extract Mines & Quarries Report to Duke of Bedford 1857.

The scantle slate tradition has typically 14 inch (350mm) long slates for the eaves courses diminishing by one inch length sizes (each size used for a number of courses of slates) to a 6 inch (150mm) length at courses towards the ridge. This tradition makes good use of the smaller slate sizes that come from quarries. The slates are fastened to laths that are spaced according to the coursing, the lath spacing further closing together wherever there is a change of course size. This change is called a 'twist' and this can easily be seen when the roof is viewed from underneath. The slates are fastened with split wooden pegs projecting to the underside so that they hook over the laths. Where the fastening opportunity coincides with rafter locations the slates are nailed directly to the rafters. Scantle slate is either dry laid or wet-laid, in both cases usually rendered underneath onto the laths with either earth or lime mortar. Where earth mortar is used there is usually also a thin layer of lime mortar added as a final finish. This mortar has two main practical functions: it prevents wind-driven rain from entering the building and it also prevents condensation from occurring under the slates and therefore prevents frost damage. Many old roofs are suffering from powdering caused by expansion of successive laminates of slate caused by frozen condensation.



The roofing tradition in Scilly deserves a special study, both of records of the former tradition for thatch, and the parallel later traditions of slate, and imported tile. Surviving standing buildings provide an opportunity to study the traditional character of roofing materials plus the extensive evidence for buildings that were formerly thatched.

It is strongly recommended that all buildings that have evidence for the former uses of thatch are properly catalogued and recorded. Also, there is a strongly-held view by many on the islands that a selected building should be re-thatched with rope thatch to display this important tradition.



**Thatch** was once common in Scilly for cottages, small houses and farmhouses, as well as outbuildings but this tradition does not survive. The small house called 'Thatch' at Old Grimsby on Tresco is thought to have been the last building in Scilly to have had its thatched roof replaced (in 1989). Many buildings were heightened in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century when their thatched roofs were replaced with slate.



St Agnes, Higher Town: Heightened walls



St Martin's, Higher Town: Heightened frontage

**Terra-cotta tile** is a further traditional roofing material that was imported to Scilly, usually as a ballast cargo. This was more commonly used on outbuildings.



St Martin's, North Farm: Red clay pantiles used on pigsties



St Martin's, Lowertown: Red clay Roman tiles used on a former stables

**Chimneys** on most of the earlier buildings are built from granite rubble or with dressed granite. The latter material was used so that chimneys could be built to more slender proportions needing only one thickness of stone. The traditional for the use of stone for the construction chimneys survives later in Scilly than in Cornwall though this tradition was used quite late in West Cornwall, and within other areas with granite outcrops.



Dressed stone stacks at Watermill, St Mary's



Combined granite rubble and dressed granite stacks, the Strand, St Mary's

**Granite chimney stacks** in Scilly represent a unique survival of a tradition that dates back to at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Enough examples of these survive to enable their detailed study and distribution, their relationship to different building types, and the differences in their character and construction. Granite stacks are a very important part of the historic building character and interest in Scilly. Consequently, their survival is a finite resource that cannot afford further loss or alteration.

**Brick** has been used for chimneys on later buildings or where higher numbers of fireplaces required multiple flues within each chimney.



**Brick chimneys also deserve detailed study and recording together with a strong policy for their repair and conservation.**

### **Plan forms**

The subject of plan forms would require extensive investigation of internal arrangement within surviving traditional buildings for the subject to be presented with confidence and accuracy. However, much can be gleaned from external examination and from the few buildings that have interiors known to the author or can be established from ruined buildings, or from list descriptions. External examination is usually sufficient to establish whether a building is single-depth (one room deep) or double-depth (two rooms deep), also whether a building has one room at the front accessed by a side passage as with pairs of cottages, or has two rooms at the front usually separated by a central passage or entrance hall. Generally plan types are similar to those used on the mainland. What is distinctive in Scilly is the small scale of so many of its buildings. The simplest buildings in Scilly are single storey and have only two rooms, a kitchen and a parlour, plus sometimes an unlit attic within the roof space.

**Plan type, date evolution and distribution deserve a special study that would enable a much better understanding of the way that the traditional buildings in Scilly have evolved and were used. This study would need strong community involvement and permissions for access. Exemplar types should be surveyed by professionals/experts but much useful recording and analysis could be achieved by enthusiastic amateurs under the supervision of a central organisation or group.**



## Building types examples

### Domestic buildings

**Cottages** can be categorized into a number of types that can be better explained by discussion of selected examples.

**Single-storey cottages** are a building type that is now extremely rare in Scilly but was probably one much more abundant. In many ways these buildings resemble crofters' cottages in Scotland or 'bothies' in Ireland and Wales. Many of the best examples now survive as roofless ruins. Others remain as altered structures that were heightened when proper upper floors were added.



Tresco, Old Grimsby: Ruined single-storey cottage



St Mary's, Old Town: Single-storey cottage ('Nowhere') at



Samson (House C): Ruined single-storey cottage photographed following vegetation clearance prior to the Archaeological Assessment carried out by Cardiff University



Bryher, the Forge (II): Single-storey cottage



Tean Farmhouse ruin (C18), Tean (small single-storey house with former loft within the roof space)



Tean Farmhouse ruin, Tean (rear wall joist-socket evidence for former loft within roof space)

**Study of the smaller houses of Scilly may best be achieved as a thematic exercise so that the buildings get the more intensive assessment that they deserve. Their similarity to other small buildings in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and elsewhere, needs to be better understood and comparisons should be made taking into account all the factors involved in the development of the tradition for these simple but evocative buildings.**



**One-room-plan cottages** are very rare in Scilly and are usually found added to small houses. A development of this plan form is to have one room at the front and a service room at the rear.



St Mary's, 10 Higher Strand (1 room at the front, part of a double-depth plan)



St Martin's, Signal Row: One-room-plan cottage



Tresco, Dolphin Town: One-room-plan cottage (left) added to a small C18 house (note heightened eaves)



St Mary's, Old Town: One-room-plan cottage (left) added to small house (note dressed granite chimneys, with back-to-back stacks over party wall, to far right)

**Pairs of cottages** whether with single-depth plans, or double-depth plans, are a common building type in Cornwall, usually with a pair of doors together at the front (mirror-image pairs). This building type is found particularly in the industrial towns and villages. However there appears to be little such building tradition in Scilly (further fieldwork is required to confirm this suggestion with confidence). There are examples of similar one-room-plan cottages built next to each other but these are the result of later addition with one cottage added to another. There are two examples of this on Samson: Houses D and E and Houses Q and R. These are ruined cottages with doorways set to the same side of each 'pair'.



St Mary's, Trenoweth Cottage and Downs Cottage: a row of dwellings possibly built as one-room-plan cottages



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Higher Strand: Row of small houses and 'cottages'

**The way that rows of cottages/houses have evolved needs to be recorded as a stylistic group. Much can be learned about the sequence of build by studying the quoin-work that usually survives.**

**Rows of small houses** survive in reasonable numbers in Scilly. Most of the older vernacular buildings in Scilly are small double-fronted houses. With respect to identifying building types under English Heritage guidelines (as used in list descriptions) a house is identified as having at least two ground-floor rooms side-by-side. This means that most of the dwellings in Scilly should be described as small houses, houses, farmhouses, or town houses. Consequently, there are very few dwellings that should properly be called 'cottages' though that is probably what many of the smaller houses are popularly called.



St Mary's, Hugh Town, The Bank: C18 row of small houses



St Mary's, Hugh Town, The Strand: Row of small houses, a pair of cottages and a single terraced cottage



St Mary's, Hugh Town, The Parade: C18 row of small houses



Tresco, New Grimsby, Nos 3-7 Palace Row: Row of small houses (planned pairs of houses added to an older house)



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Church Street: Row of similar houses



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Hugh Street: Planned row/terrace of half-houses

**Planned terraces**, except for specialist housing such as **coastguards' housing**, are uncommon in Scilly. Most are concentrated in the residential streets of Hugh Town.

**Grouping of traditional housing** clearly has many causes and effects, particularly with respect to the culture and living conditions of the islanders of Scilly. Research needs to be carried out into the way that groupings have come about, their distribution, and their particular character. For example, to what extent have the buildings evolved in a piecemeal way and to what extent have others been planned? The management of the islands since Augustus Smith became Governor is clearly a strong factor but this needs to be better understood and the extent of his influence needs to be identified and described.





St Mary's, Hugh Town, Church Street: Planned terrace of 3-storey houses



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Church Street: Planned terrace of half-houses



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Church Street: Planned terrace of half-houses



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Hugh Street: Planned terrace of 8 small town houses, including a purpose-built corner shop, c1926 by Richardson and Gill for the Duchy of Cornwall



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Hugh Street: Planned terrace of 8 small town houses, including a corner shop, c1926 by Richardson and Gill for the Duchy of Cornwall

**Principal town houses** in Hugh Town stand out from the crowd. These are usually houses built for merchants or worthies of the town.



St Mary's, Lower Strand, Hugh Town: Lyonesse House,



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Church Street: Lemon Hall



Lloyds bank was built in the mid C19 as the town house and office for the shipping agent, Thomas J Buxton



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Hugh Street



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Garrison Hill



**Town houses** include many elegant houses in Hugh Town. Some are detached but most adjoin other houses of a similar period, or are within a row of buildings of many different dates. What usually distinguishes them from their more modest neighbours is: good proportions, generous scale, and often classical symmetry or classical features.

**Town houses with shops** are an interesting building type within the commercial heart of Hugh Town, St Mary's. There are very few purpose-built shops. Most of the shops in the town are the result of town houses having been converted from houses to shops with retained living accommodation above. In many cases the conversion may well have continued the original function of the building as many town houses were originally built as merchants' houses. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century conversion of a town house to accommodate a shop usually meant installing a 'show' shop front that would promote and exhibit the goods that were being offered for sale. Such alterations often meant considerable alteration to the fabric of the building, changing its character forever. It is therefore very fortunate that many of these conversions are now valued for their own particular character. Sometimes the stone frontages were carefully altered and stonework made good to disguise the changes but occasionally, where changes were difficult to hide a whole frontage was stuccoed to conceal the alterations.



St Mary's, Hugh Street (II): Shopfront added to town house



St Mary's, Hugh Street: Inserted bay window used as shopfront



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Kavarna (II): Probably one the town's oldest buildings, now used as a café and shop



St Mary's, Lower Strand (II): A shopfront designed to be seen from all angles!



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Quay House and Buckingham House: Town houses with shopfronts added



St Mary's, Hugh Town, the Parade (II): Two former town houses converted to commercial use with minor alteration

Town houses deserve attention as a separate group. The story of their builders, architects and occupants is more likely to be unearthed than studies of the more modest building types. However, this can only be achieved by determined research. Results of such a study together with the recording and analysis of the building is likely to yield invaluable results that are important to the story of Scilly.

A much better understanding of town houses with shops is possible with detailed research that includes reference to trade directories and other documentation of the commercial activity on the islands.

**Notable Houses** in Scilly are identified here as those that are particularly special or important. Some have unexpected origins or were not originally built as houses at all but are nevertheless of considerable historic interest.



St Mary's, the Garrison, Garrison House: built as an Officer's Mess for the Garrison, later became the first residence of Augustus Smith, Lord Proprietor of the Islands, before he moved to Treco Abbey (information adapted from list description)



Garrison Stores, later house, c1716-1718; porch and internal alterations by Richardson and Gill, 1927; restored 1971; originally built as the garrison storehouse at a cost of £306 15s 10d (information adapted from list description)



**TRESCO Abbey:** Country house (II), mostly of 1843 and 1861, with tower of 1891, for Augustus Smith and Thomas Algernon Dorrien Smith, overlooks the tropical gardens created by Augustus Smith and Thomas Algernon Dorrien Smith, Lord Proprietors of the Scilly Isles. Considerable poverty was prevalent on the islands before the arrival of the Smiths in 1834. Augustus Smith made education compulsory, built churches and other buildings and increased the prosperity of the islands through the improvement of agriculture and commerce, principally the introduction of the flower industry. Augustus was succeeded by his nephew Thomas Algernon, who continued his work especially in the flower industry. He was also an amateur architect who was responsible for the church on Treco (q.v.) and the Post Office in Hugh Town (q.v.) (information adapted from list description).

Some of the most important domestic buildings in Scilly have already been assessed in detail but many others have only received the most limited study, some of this as a result of the listing process. This building group promises the most detailed historical information that should be the subject of further research. Some of these buildings have been a strong influence over the building tradition of the islands from their architecture and methods of construction.

**Farmsteads** include farmhouses and small rural houses in Scilly, building types that are often architecturally indistinguishable from each other. A farmhouse is usually a small house that was built as a farmhouse or has been used as a farmhouse. Most are detached but they sometimes adjoin other houses, or have been extended, often for extended families. Most of the farms are very small and would usually be classified as smallholdings or horticultural holdings. Some of the settlements have evolved from farmsteads and have acquired extra dwelling houses over time. The only planned group of farm buildings belongs to the Abbey Farm, a group that includes a former barley mill and fish smoker of c1835. These farm buildings have been converted to holiday accommodation.





Tresco, Borough Old Farmhouse (II): One of the best surviving examples of small C18 farmhouse in Scilly



St Martin's, Higher Town, North Farmhouse (II): An unusually large farmhouse with an extensive range of small farm buildings



Hillside Farm, Bryher: An example of a farmhouse clearly relating to a horticultural holding



St Agnes, Middle Town: Small houses relating to Annet Farm, the original (heightened) farmhouse to the left



St Mary's, Borough Farmhouse



St Mary's, Borough Farmhouse (porch with dressed granite roof)



Tresco, Abbey Farm: This is the only farm in Scilly the has pretension to become a 'model farm'; its extensive outbuildings now mostly converted and new houses added



St Martin's: Flower packing shed



St Martin's, Lowertown: Glass house

**Farmsteads require much research and examination if they are to be better understood and their importance in the story of Scilly properly recognized. Despite the fact that so many farm buildings have now been converted there are still many that retain their original character. Similarly, many of the houses that may have been dubbed farmhouses need their origins explained and other domestic buildings within the settlement investigated.**



## Industrial buildings

Industrial buildings appear to be an unusual building type based on the surviving buildings. The Scilly Islands probably never supported a strong manufacturing, processing, or storage function, and consequently there are very few buildings that display an industrial heritage.



St Martin's, Middle Town: 'The Old Washhouse' (possibly named after its former function)



St Mary's, Hugh Town, Mermaid Public House: Built probably in the 1860s for the shipping agent, Thomas J Buxton, when it was called 'Buxton's Stores'

**Industrial buildings are an interest group that requires considerable study and research. The buildings that were used for industry need to be identified and recorded and research targeted at their origins and their functions.**

## Community use

**Anglican churches** represent a long tradition for Christian worship on the islands. Early Christian sites include the ruin of the pre-Reformation St Nicholas' Priory on Tresco, medieval church and oratory on St Martin's, remains of a pre-Conquest chapel on Tean. Old Town church is probably the oldest roofed building on the islands. There is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican church on each of the inhabited off islands but St Mary's has two Anglican churches: the original Norman church at Old Town and a 19<sup>th</sup> century parish church in Hugh Town. Churches on the off-islands replace the earlier church buildings noted by the Cornish antiquarian, Borlase as having been built in the same style and to two different sizes, and all built for the Godolphins. The new church on St Mary's was built by Augustus Smith between 1836 and 1838.

There is only one vicarage: the 'Chaplaincy', near the church in Hugh Town.

There is also a Catholic Church of 1860 at Higher Strand, Hugh Town, St Mary's, originally built as St Mary's School for Girls.



Old Town Church (St Mary's): C12 with rebuildings of 1666, 1743 and C19; restored in the 1830s for Augustus Smith, Lord Proprietor of the Islands; second restoration of 1890 for Rev W.E. Groves (text adapted from list description)



St Mary's, Old Town: Norman doorway jambs, probably the oldest architectural features relating to a roofed building on the islands



St Mary's, Hugh Town: Anglican Parish Church. 1836-1838 for Augustus Smith, Lord Proprietor of the Islands (text adapted from list description)



Church of All Saints, Bryher, 1742 with additions and alterations of 1882 and 1897, and new roof of 1930 (text adapted from list description)



St Agnes, St Agnes, early C19



Church of Martin's, St Martin's, 1866 for Augustus Smith (text adapted from list description)



Church of St Nicholas, 1877-79 by Thomas Algernon Dorrien-Smith as a memorial for his uncle Augustus Smith who died in 1871 (text adapted from list description)

**Whilst much is known and much has been written about the buildings that represent the established church in Scilly, the stories that they contain in their records, in their monuments, and within their burial grounds needs to be further assessed and collated. Also, the buildings themselves deserve better analysis, and recognition for the influence they have had on the evolving building traditions of the islands.**

**Methodist chapels** are an important building type in Scilly as they represent a cultural change to the way of life of the inhabitants of the Isles of Scilly. As happened in Cornwall, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Methodism was competing with the established church and Methodist chapels were built on all the currently inhabited islands except Tresco. There are three (identified) Nonconformist chapel buildings on St Mary's.



St Agnes: Former Methodist Chapel, now used as a community hall



Bryher: Former Methodist chapel, now converted to domestic use



Methodist chapel (c1845), Higher Town, St Martin's, still in use as a place of worship





Garrison Lane, Hugh Town, St Mary's:  
Former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel  
(1826), now used as offices by the Isles  
of Scilly Council



Church Street, Hugh Town, St Mary's:  
St Mary's Methodist Church, 1899 by  
A.J. Trenear (the Anglican Church is at  
the end of the same street)



The Old Chapel, Old Town, St Mary's  
(former Methodist chapel now  
converted to domestic use and rather  
altered)

**Nonconformity was once a very influential aspect of the culture of the isles of Scilly and deserves further study, particularly with respect to its surviving buildings. Two chapels have already been converted to domestic use and the most important chapel is used as offices. Consequently, the two chapels that remain in use as places of worship should be recorded as a matter of urgency.**

### Educational Use

In 1834 Augustus Smith was granted a lease by the Duchy of Cornwall. As Lord Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly he became a reforming governor who unlike previous governors took a great interest in the people of the islands and made his home there. Until his death in 1872 he made great changes to the islands. "He devoted his life unselfishly to those Islands and added greatly to their beauty" Before coming to Scilly from the home counties Smith had already been a keen advocate of improving education for the common people "When I find youths, the progeny of hereditary paupers, simply through being able to read, write and cipher, readily obtain in London apprenticeships in various trades, I felt the true or at least the main clue was discovered". As a result of his concerns Smith set up a number of non-denominational Parish Schools that were to survive until taken over following the 1870 Education Act. When he came to Scilly he was determined that all the island children should have a good education. During the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Smith had schools constructed on St Mary's, St Martin's and St Agnes and effectively made education compulsory. In order to achieve this, the declining population on Samson was moved to other islands so that the children could attend school regularly. The 1854 boys' primary school building at Carn Thomas was designed by Augustus Smith. This was later extended and is now used as the infant and junior school on St Mary's.



St Mary's, Carn Thomas: Infant School



Tresco former Reading Room

### Public Houses

**Public Houses** as a building type in Scilly are not a straightforward area of study. There are probably no old purpose-built public houses on the islands. All the traditional buildings now used as public houses appear to have been adapted from former houses or working buildings.

**This building type is complicated with respect to its origins and history. It is very important to community life in Scilly today but the role of public houses at earlier times needs to be unraveled as a detailed research project together with close examination of the surviving and former public houses.**



**ST. MARY'S, HUGH STREET, Hugh Town: The Atlantic Hotel (II),** Custom House and hotel, now hotel, late C18 and C19, remodelled 1927 by Richardson and Gill for the Duchy of Cornwall estate, wing at rear incorporates the Custom House of 1840 (text adapted from list description). The front building range appears to have originated as two town houses.



**ST. MARY'S, SILVER STREET, Hugh Town: The Bishop and Wolf Public House (II) House,** now public house, built c1700 for Thomas Ekins, first land agent of the Godolphin Estate, resident on the Islands from 1683, and one of the earliest surviving houses on the islands and of historical interest as the house of the first land agent (text adapted from list description)

## Defence related buildings

The Isles of Scilly are strategically placed as a good invasion base at the entrance to the western approaches and consequently many structures have been added to the islands to counter this threat.

The defence buildings of Scilly have benefitted from much investigation in recent years and many authoritative reports have been written. However, there is still much to be learned and explained. These buildings need to be studied as a thematic group with all the available information brought into play but with unanswered questions targeted. For example, when the gun platform was added to Cromwell's castle the original stone staircase was cut away to make a new doorway into the building and the walls made good. This kind of analysis is often lacking from available studies. Reconstruction drawings of the defence buildings explaining the way that they originally functioned and the ways that they have been altered to fulfill advancing technologies would greatly add to our understanding of these important buildings.



The Garrison, St Mary's: Star Castle (grade I), 1593 with late C17 alterations, designed by Architect/Engineer Robert Adams: Star Castle was the last Royalist stronghold, Prince Charles and his suite taking refuge here in 1646 after their retreat from the Battle of Bodmin. It was converted into an hotel in 1933 (text adapted from list description)



**ST. MARY'S: THE GARRISON, Hugh Town** Outer walls and gateway (grade I) Bastion walls and gateway across neck of the Hugh begun by Francis Godolphin soon after 1601; batteries and walls encircling peninsula of 1716-46 by Abraham Tovey, Master Gunner. (text adapted from list description)



The Garrison, St Mary's: Sally Port: Part of the defensive walls at the neck of Hugh begun by Francis Godolphin soon after 1601



The Garrison, St Mary's: batteries and walls encircling peninsula, 1716-46 by Abraham Tovey, Master Gunner; batteries and walls encircling peninsula of 1716-46 by Abraham Tovey, Master Gunner



The Garrison, St Mary's: Magazine



**ST. MARY'S SV9010 Buzza Gun tower (II), 1803,** by Major Daniel Lyman, restored 1911, one of 3 gun towers built on St. Mary's by Lyman, each tower intended to accommodate 8-10 men and mount a 32 pounder carronade at the top.





Tresco: King Charles Castle (II\*): Fortification. 1550-1554, built to cover entrance to New Grimsby Harbour, but badly sited and later superseded by Cromwell's Castle (q.v.), for which much of the stone from here was robbed (text adapted from list description)



Tresco: Cromwell's Castle II\*: Gun tower, 1651-2 with gun platform added c1740 by Abraham Tovey, Master Gunner, built following a threat to the islands by the Dutch, replacing the poorly sited King Charles Castle (q.v.) (text adapted from list description)



TRESCO: Blockhouse (II), probably 1548-52. Covers Old Grimsby Harbour, and is probably one of the blockhouses built on Tresco under Sir Francis Fleming, and later John Killigrew, captain of Pendennis Castle, between 1548 and 1552. (text adapted from list description)

## Maritime use buildings

**Gig sheds**, or their ruins, survive on the islands of St Agnes, Bryher, St Martin's, Samson, and St Mary's. These buildings were constructed to house the pilot gigs that became an important part of the economy of the islands. All are constructed with granite rubble and all are located for easy launching of the gigs.



St Agnes: Gig sheds (one in use and one ruined)



St Agnes: The gig Shah preparing for a gig race



St Agnes: ruined gig sheds



Bryher: Gig shed, now artist's studio



St Mary's, Porth Mellon: Gig sheds



Bryher: Gig shed



St Martin's: Gig sheds

**Lighthouses** have a long history in the Isles of Scilly. The lighthouse on St Agnes was built in 168 and is the one of oldest lighthouses in Britain. The Daymark on St Martin's was built in 1683 and must be one of the earliest examples of this building type. The lighthouse on the Bishop's Rock is a triumph of engineering over nature. The first lighthouse, built from steel between 1847-9, was washed away in a storm in 1850! The present lighthouse is built from interlocking blocks of granite ashlar initially between 1852 and 1858 but had to be

strengthened by adding an outer sheathing of granite ashlar (and heightened) that was completed in 1882. It is the tallest lighthouse in the British Isles. Round Island lighthouse was constructed in 1887.



ST. AGNES: The Lighthouse II\* 1680 for Trinity House, with cupola of 1806, by Captain Hugh Hill and Captain Simon Bayly, builders of the 1676 Lowestoft lighthouse, (text from list description)



ST. AGNES Bishop Rock Lighthouse II c1852-1858 by James Walker; encased and heightened in 1883 by James Douglass, superintending engineer; cast-iron tower of 1849 destroyed in 1850 (text adapted from list description)

**Quay walls** or harbours of some kind exist on all the inhabited islands. Some of these have been upgraded in recent years by adding an outer sheathing and by extension. There has been a harbour at Hugh Town since the early 17<sup>th</sup> and this has been extended many times. The older granite masonry is extremely interesting. The blocks of granite are shaped so that they fit together as tightly as possible.



ST. MARY'S, HUGH TOWN: The Pier ( II) Quay and breakwater, begun by Francis Godolphin soon after 1601, rebuilt 1740 and 1748; new pier extending north to Rat Island built 1835-8 for Augustus Smith, Lord Proprietor of the Islands; lengthened 1889 for the flower trade; the construction of a pier for the new harbour, St. Mary's Port, was associated with the fortification of the Hugh begun by Godolphin which included Star Castle and the Garrison walls (q.v.) (from list description)



ST. MARY'S, HUGH TOWN: The Pier: part of the earlier walling



St Agnes, C19 quay walls during 2007 works that encapsulated the old walls



Bryher has an old stone quay but a new quay is now used for most purposes



Tresco, Old Grimsby: distant view of the old quay (centre)

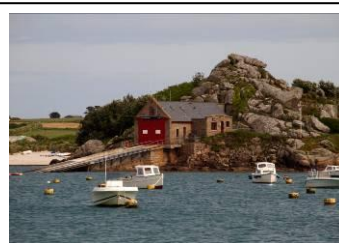




Tresco New Grimsby: Old quay walls



St Martin's: the old quay has been encapsulated



St Mary's: Lifeboat Station

Harbour walls deserve a special study, both of surviving walls and of archive photographs of walls that can no longer be seen. They should also be compared to harbour walls on the mainland. The walls on Scilly are an important part of the character of the islands. The listing status of the main quay should be re-assessed.

### Domestic outbuildings

**Domestic outbuildings** include earth closets, back houses, and the buildings that were used for small scale flower packing and other horticultural uses. **All are important to the story and character of Scilly.**



ST. MARY'S THE PARADE, Hugh Town Outbuilding approx. 2m south of Parade Cottage II



St Agnes, Middle Town, St Agnes



St Agnes, Periglis, the Cabin

### The modern period (mid 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards)

#### New-build (traditional)

The older building traditions in Scilly have been a strong influence on the design and construction of buildings in the modern period. Granite is still a favoured material and has been used well in some of these buildings but rarely with such skill as when granite walls were the prevailing tradition.



House built by Alfie Treneere in the 1970s



Tresco, Old Grimsby: New house in traditional style



St Martin's, Lowertown: new house using traditional materials

#### New-build (contemporary)

With the shortage of traditional buildings on the islands much of the new-build has had to be constructed with alternative materials that include rendered concrete block and timber-frame construction.



Tresco, New Grimsby: A variety of new-build holiday units

## Results

The results of this brief study demonstrate that the buildings of Scilly are important for many reasons. They include buildings of unique or rare building types and that these buildings are the result of a distinctive island culture. The limited choice of building materials has contributed to a harmonious vernacular built tradition that in many places appears to grow from the landscape that surrounds it. In other places there is a more polite kind of architecture, mostly within Hugh Town on St Mary's. Adding to the diversity are the various specialist building types and structures, most of which share the same materials of construction but add interest in their design fit for function. Comments about each distinct building type have already appeared in the appropriate sections of the report. What the study has also shown is that interest and importance is not always about status or architectural quality. Many of the simple buildings of the working people of the islands are now recognized as being an essential part of the story of the islands and their simple unpretentious design and appearance attracts the admiration of islanders and visitors alike. Some of these simple buildings are now so rare that they must be considered as a threatened building type. However, all of the traditional buildings of Scilly are significant and contribute to the whole character and interest of the islands.

## Recommendations

Guidance about suggested further action has already been included in the preceding themed paragraphs. It is clear that although the buildings of Scilly have been studied and written about more than most other parts of the British Isles there is much more to be done that is in accordance with the very special interest of the islands as a unique island community with a very distinctive character. Each building type is worthy of further recording and investigation. This would best be carried out as a phased programme over several years with as much community involvement as possible. Better understanding and presentation of the special character of the buildings of Scilly would be good for its economy and good for the conservation of its buildings. A particular aspect of the present heritage protection situation in Scilly is that whilst the listing process has perhaps been interpreted in a flexible way with respect to some of the buildings there appear to be serious gaps in the coverage with respect to the rarer building types. For example, it seems to be a serious omission that no gig houses are individually listed, except for the ruin on Samson that is protected within the scheduled area. Listing criteria need to be applied consistently but always in Scilly with the unique context as a major consideration. Conservation area status for all the islands has enabled considerable enhancement of many of its buildings through national and local funding schemes in recent years. Improvements have included replacement of inappropriate windows with windows of correct design and the reinstatement of scantle slate roofs. This work is a credit to those concerned and has changed the perception of what the buildings represent. One result of this is that some buildings that might have appeared marginal for listing now look better than some of those that are already listed.

Certain key points of recommendation are as follows:

- All buildings types deserve further recording and investigation
- Documentary sources should be further consulted to unravel some of the finer details about island life of the past and with respect to the buildings that are involved
- Enhancement schemes should be encouraged and supported
- New-build opportunities should be assessed very carefully to ensure that the special character of the islands is not compromised

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## **Appendix: Isles of Scilly combined illustrated list of listed buildings**