

Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey

## Historic characterisation for regeneration



# HUGH TOWN



CORNWALL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
UNIT



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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# **HUGH TOWN**

HES REPORT NO. 2003R031

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CORNWALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

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## **Cover illustration**

Hugh Town from the south, 1987 (CCC Historic Environment Service, ACS 1304).

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## **Abbreviations**

CCC	Cornwall County Council
CSUS	Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HERS	Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme
IAP	Integrated Area Plan
South West RDA	South West of England Regional Development Agency
SWEB	South West Electricity Board

## Summary

### Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey

The Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey is a pioneering initiative aimed at harnessing the quality and distinctive character of the historic environment to successful and sustainable regeneration. The Survey is investigating 19 historic towns and creating for each an information base and character assessment which will contribute positively to regeneration planning. The project is based within Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Service and funded by English Heritage, Objective 1 and South West RDA.

### Hugh Town

Hugh Town is located on St Mary's, the largest island in the Isles of Scilly. It is the only urban settlement in the islands and functions as the 'capital', with a range of administrative, commercial and service functions. It is an important centre for the islands' tourist industry, both in terms of accommodation and services and as the focus for sea and air links with the mainland and for inter-island marine traffic.

### Historical development

There has been human activity in the area around Hugh Town for at least 4000 years, with archaeological evidence for settlement from the Bronze Age to the early Christian period. The present town, however, had its origins around the quay built to serve the major defensive complex created at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the headland to the west. Initially the town's economic functions were probably limited to serving the military garrison; by the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had taken on a central role in the Scillonian economy and become the largest settlement in the islands. It remained small – the population in 1800 was only 350 – until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when, under the proprietorship of Augustus Smith, a new phase of building expanded the settlement considerably.

The economy diversified to include shipbuilding and maritime trading and, towards the end of the century, the export of flowers and bulbs and tourism.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were improvements in transport links with the mainland and redevelopment of key areas in the historic core of the town. The post war period saw the increasing dominance of tourism in the island economy, with Hugh Town providing a large proportion of visitor beds and facilities. From 1949, the Duchy of Cornwall, to which the whole of Scilly historically belonged, sold the freeholds of many of its properties in Hugh Town, prompting a spate of development in and around the historic settlement. This period also saw the construction of several modern institutional buildings.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, provision for the 120,000 visitors received annually by the islands represents 85 per cent of the economy, with horticulture making up most of the remainder. Regeneration planning acknowledges the need for additional affordable housing, enhanced transport links, increased economic diversification and a widening of employment opportunities for the island population. It also recognises the opportunity provided by the high-quality environment of Scilly while acknowledging that there are very significant environmental constraints on development.

### Historic settlement character

Hugh Town's history has created a settlement with a strong, locally distinctive character. Major elements of this include:

- The town's striking topographic situation on a narrow isthmus.
- The strong presence within the townscape of 'natural' elements: landforms, greenery and gardens, and spectacular views of the sea and off islands.
- Its undoubted 'urban' quality, despite its relatively small size and population.

- A distinctive architectural style of great charm and visual appeal.
- A high degree of completeness in the historic built environment.
- Good survival of extremely high quality architectural detail.
- An unusually prominent and successful contribution to the built environment from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- A significant later 20<sup>th</sup> century component, some elements of which have a negative impact on the town's character and distinctiveness.

### **Character-based principles for regeneration**

A strategy for Hugh Town's regeneration soundly based on characterisation should incorporate the following as fundamental principles:

- Respect for the contribution which the physical setting and natural elements make to the unique character of the town.
- Recognition of the quality and distinctive character of Hugh Town's historic built environment, and a commitment to achieving equally high quality and distinctiveness in all future new build and the public realm.
- The need to reinstate character and quality in the built environment and public realm where it has been eroded by inappropriate past interventions.
- The potential for presenting Hugh Town as a place of high architectural quality, historic character and significance.
- The significance of Hugh Town as an exemplar of *sustainable* small-scale urban design and topography.

### **Regeneration and the historic environment: key themes for Hugh Town**

Characterisation identified regeneration and conservation opportunities under the following broad themes.

#### **Create a new urban 'quarter'**

There may be potential for meeting St Mary's needs for affordable housing and additional small-scale workspaces through a major development in the Porthcressa Bank area.

#### **Reinstate character and quality**

There is a need for a programme aimed at repairing the erosion of Hugh Town's character and distinctiveness which has resulted from inappropriate later 20<sup>th</sup> century interventions in the historic area of the town.

#### **Promote beneficial change**

As an adjunct to a programme aimed at reinstating character and quality, there is a strong case for a programme of planned replacement or removal of some 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

#### **Enhance the public realm**

Character and the sense of quality in the historic environment would benefit from an enhancement programme for the public realm: streetscape details, street furniture, undergrounding of overhead cables, improvements to boundary features and green spaces.

#### **Manage traffic and parking**

Traffic management requirements, including signage and routing, would most appropriately be assessed as part of a comprehensive transport plan, potentially incorporating public transport improvements, traffic reduction measures and an emphasis on smaller vehicles and 'green' forms of transport.

#### **Promote reuse of historic buildings**

Historic outbuildings offer potential for conversion as workspaces.

**Guide future change**

The proposed Design Guide for Scilly will be valuable in reducing the ‘anywhere’ character of much later 20<sup>th</sup> century new build. Detailed planning guidance would be beneficial for future redevelopment of prominent sites.

**Review conservation designations**

A number of historic buildings in Hugh Town, in addition to those already designated, merit consideration for statutory listing. There is potential for a supplementary ‘local list’ to acknowledge the significance of locally important historic structures.

**Assert Hugh Town’s historic significance**

Promote the quality and interest of Hugh Town’s historic built environment as a positive asset; encourage local participation in maintaining its character.

**Promote Hugh Town as a model for small-scale urban design**

Hugh Town’s undoubtedly successful urban qualities offer an exemplar for the design of small urban settlements elsewhere. There is potential for it to develop as an acknowledged model for sustainable urban living.

**Character areas and regeneration opportunities**

This study identified nine distinct Character Areas within the historic urban area. Its findings on these areas, together with an assessment of overall settlement character, offer a means of understanding the past and the present. In turn, that understanding provides the basis for a positive approach to planning future change which will maintain and reinforce the historic character and individuality of each area - sustainable local distinctiveness.

A summary of the character attributes for each area and key themes for heritage-led regeneration within them is overleaf.



<p><b>1. Church, Carn Thomas and Buzza Hill</b></p> <p>Substantial houses and institutional buildings in their own grounds around the low ridge forming the eastern extent of Hugh Town. Trees, garden greenery, open spaces and prominent landforms contribute a strong 'natural' element.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the strong natural boundary to the historic settlement area</li> <li>• Create public realm enhancements</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive development briefs for major sites</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Church Street and the Parade</b></p> <p>Nineteenth-century expansion from the historic core of the town: polite houses, terraces and institutional buildings in a formal townscape setting. There is an atmosphere of quiet and modest gentility, enhanced by a sense of space, good survival of high quality building detail and the presence of well-ordered gardens, shrubs and palms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and enhance historic detail</li> <li>• Create a new prestige building</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Town Beach, Thoroughfare and the Strand</b></p> <p>An important visual 'gateway' to Hugh Town for arrivals by sea, this is the town's historic working foreshore and related areas. Buildings and sites associated with maritime activity are set around a spectacular curving beach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance Town Beach 'gateway'</li> <li>• Enhance the public realm</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Porthcressa Bank</b></p> <p>Historically this was an open area behind the foreshore, used for shipbuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but with earlier small-scale settlement at the eastern end. The present character derives from a low density mix of residential, commercial and leisure uses which developed in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. An informal 'promenade' is set behind a popular bathing beach and there are fine views to seaward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the feasibility of a significant new development</li> <li>• Create public realm improvements</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Porthcressa post-war housing</b></p> <p>An area of later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing on the eastern slopes of the Garrison. The traditional form and quality of design and materials in some of the earlier public housing, together with the proximity of the development to the historic core of Hugh Town and Garrison defences, makes this a significant area in terms of the overall character of the settlement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the public realm</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. The historic core – the Bank and Hugh Street</b></p> <p>The historic core of the settlement and still Hugh Town's commercial focus. A narrow main street and several small irregular 'squares' are for the most part strongly enclosed by stone-fronted or plain rendered buildings, creating a tight grained, strongly urban streetscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce car parking</li> <li>• Improvements to the external appearance of the Co-Operative building</li> <li>• Review street furniture and signage</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Garrison Lane, Garrison Hill and Jerusalem Terrace</b></p> <p>Historic expansion from the early core of the town. Cottages and modern housing are dispersed along a network of lanes. Rubble boundary walls and greenery combine with the sloping topography and narrow lanes to create a strong sense of enclosure, interspersed with glimpses into colourful gardens and sudden vistas over town and seascapes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the public realm</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. The Quay</b></p> <p>Successive phases of Hugh Town's quay mark major steps in the town's historic development. The distinctive fabric of the quay itself, together with the movement and activity associated with it, are key elements in many views from and to the town.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regard for the historic fabric and visual prominence</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. The Garrison</b></p> <p>The character of the Garrison derives jointly from its well preserved multi-period complex of defensive works and associated structures and its role as an area of open green space and spectacular views bounding the western edge of the town.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a sustainable management regime</li> <li>• Control vehicle access</li> </ul>

# 1 Introduction

## Regeneration and the historic towns of Cornwall and Scilly

In July 1999 Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were designated as an Objective 1 area, bringing potential investment from European funds of more than £300m over the nine-year spending period. Economic regeneration schemes and development projects within the region's towns are likely to form a major element of the Objective 1 Programme.

Regeneration on this scale offers an unparalleled opportunity for contemporary contributions in urban design and architecture to the built environment of Cornwall and Scilly's towns. At the same time, the Objective 1 programme emphasises environmental sustainability (including the historic environment) and regional distinctiveness as key considerations in regeneration planning. The process of change launched by current regeneration initiatives could, if not carefully managed, have a negative impact on the historic environment and the unique character and sense of place of each of these settlements. The pressure to achieve rapid change could in itself result in severe erosion and dilution of their individuality and particular distinctiveness and, at worst, their transformation into 'anywhere' towns.

It is clear from recent research that a high-quality historic urban environment and the distinctiveness and sense of place integral to it are themselves primary assets in promoting regeneration. The effect may be direct, through heritage tourism, for example, but there is a more powerful and decisive impact in prompting a strong sense of identity and pride of place which in turn creates a positive and confident climate for investment and growth.

This synergy between the historic environment and economic regeneration was recognised and strongly advocated in the *Power of Place* review of policies on the historic environment carried out by English Heritage in 2000, and its value clearly highlighted in the government's response, *The Historic Environment: A Force for the Future* (2001). The tool by which the two may be linked to create a framework for sustainable development in historic settlements is *characterisation*.

## Characterisation and regeneration

*'The government . . . wants to see more regeneration projects, large and small, going forward on the basis of a clear understanding of the existing historic environment, how this has developed over time and how it can be used creatively to meet contemporary needs.'*

(DCMS / DTLR 2001, *The Historic Environment: A Force for the Future*, 5.2)

'Characterisation' is the creation of a comprehensive knowledge base on the historic environment. This includes what is known of a settlement's historic development and urban topography (i.e., the basic components which have contributed to the physical shaping of the historic settlement such as market places, church enclosures, turnpike roads, railways, etc.), together with an overview of the surviving historic fabric, distinctive architectural forms, materials and treatments and the significant elements of town and streetscapes. Characterisation may also provide the basis for assessing the potential for buried and standing archaeological remains and their likely significance, reducing uncertainty for regeneration interests by providing an indication of potential constraints. Overall, the process offers a means of understanding the diverse range of factors which combine to create 'distinctiveness' and 'sense of place'.

Characterisation is also a means whereby the historic environment can itself provide an inspirational matrix for regeneration. It both highlights the ‘tears in the urban fabric’ wrought by a lack of care in the past and offers an indication of appropriate approaches to their repair. It emphasises the historic continuum which provides the context for current change and into which the regeneration measures of the present must fit if the distinctive and special qualities of each historic town are to be maintained and enhanced. Characterisation is not intended to encourage or to provide a basis for imitation or pastiche: rather, it offers a sound basis on which the 21<sup>st</sup> century can make its own distinct and high-quality contribution to places of abiding value.

## Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey

The Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey (CSUS) was set up – funded by both English Heritage and the Objective One Partnership for Cornwall and Scilly (European Regional Development Fund) – as a key contributor to regeneration in the region. The project is investigating 19 historic towns and creating for each the information base and character assessment which will provide a framework for sustainable action within these historic settlements.

These towns have been identified, in consultation with planning, conservation and economic regeneration officers within the seven district, borough and unitary authorities in the region, as those which are likely to be the focus for regeneration. The project’s ‘target’ settlements are:

Penzance	Newlyn
St Ives	Hayle
Helston	Camborne
Redruth	Falmouth
Penryn	Truro

Newquay	St Austell
Bodmin	Camelford
Launceston	Liskeard
Saltash	Torpoint
Hugh Town	

CSUS is a pioneering initiative aimed directly at cutting across the boundary that traditionally divides conservation and economic development. Nationally, it is the first such project carrying out a characterisation-based assessment of the historic urban environment specifically to inform and support a regional economic regeneration programme. Future regeneration initiatives in other historic settlements, in Cornwall and Scilly and further afield, will benefit from the new approach developed by the project.

## CSUS reports

CSUS reports present the major findings and recommendations arising from the project’s work on each town. They are complemented by digital data recorded using ArcView Geographical Information System (GIS) software, and together the two sources provide comprehensive information on historic development, urban topography, significant components of the historic environment, archaeological potential and historic character.

**Importantly, the reports also identify opportunities for heritage-led regeneration and positive management of the historic environment. However, they are not intended to be prescriptive design guides, but should rather be used by architects, town planners and regeneration officers to inform future development and planning strategies.**

The reports and associated digital resources are shared with the appropriate

local authorities; economic regeneration, planning and conservation officers therefore have immediate access to the detailed information generated by the project. Additional information is held in the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, maintained by the Historic Environment Service of Cornwall County Council.

Public access to the report and to the associated mapping is available via the project's website - [www.historic-cornwall.org.uk](http://www.historic-cornwall.org.uk) - or by appointment at the offices of Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Service, Old County Hall, Truro.

## Extent of the study area

The history and historic development of each town are investigated and mapped for the whole of the area defined for the settlement by the current Local Plan. However, the detailed characterisation and analysis of urban topography which together form the primary elements of the study are closely focused on the *historic* urban extent of the settlement. For the purposes of the project as a whole this area is defined as that which is recognisably 'urban' in character on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1908 (Figs. 1 and 2). In the case of Hugh Town, the extent of historic and modern settlement is closely similar but there has also been a very significant 20<sup>th</sup> century contribution to the character of the town and elements of this are incorporated in the detailed study.

*Hugh Town from the north west, 1987 (CCC Historic Environment Service: ACS 1302).*



## 2 Hugh Town: the context

The Isles of Scilly form a group of some 200 islands and rocks located approximately 45km south west of the coast of west Cornwall and 60km from Penzance, the nearest mainland passenger port. St Mary's is the largest of the five inhabited islands (629 ha.) and houses more than 1600 of the total population for Scilly of about 2150. Hugh Town is the major settlement on St Mary's with an estimated resident population of a little over 1,000. It is the only large settlement on the islands and is effectively the 'capital' of Scilly, providing commercial, retail, administrative, educational and transport services for residents and a large proportion of the 120,000 visitors received annually; at least 70 per cent of all visitors are accommodated on St Mary's and more than half of the available beds there are in Hugh Town. The local authority is the Council of the Isles of Scilly, a unitary authority established in 1891 and based in Hugh Town.

The town is linked to the mainland by the March - November passenger ferry and year-round cargo services operated between Penzance and Hugh Town quay by the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company, by helicopter services from Penzance operated by British International and by Skybus fixed wing flights from Land's End airport, Newquay, Exeter and Bristol. An occasional air route to the Channel Islands operated in 2002 and trial services are being extended to Southampton and Bournemouth in 2003. The Isles of Scilly airport is located less than 2 km east of Hugh Town, which has substantially more frequent and accessible public transport links with its nearest towns and regional centres than most mainland settlements of comparable size. Journey costs are much higher, however, and subject to disruption by weather.

Launch services to the off-islands operate from Hugh Town and it is also the focus for roads from Old Town - the only other nucleated settlement of any size on St Mary's - and the eastern and northern parts of the island.

### The regeneration context

The whole of Scilly has Objective One status within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One area and is identified in the Single Programming Document (SPD) as a measure 2.2 'employment growth area'. Its remoteness from major British and European markets is recognised under measure 2.4, providing for improvements to strategic regional infrastructure, and provision is made for community regeneration under measure 4.8. The Integrated Area Plan (IAP) for Scilly emphasises the importance of both the natural and historic environments as key elements in its unique character and in the development of a sustainable future, underpinning the primary economic sectors of tourism and agriculture and Scilly's particular quality of life. Key economic problems identified include underemployment - 44 per cent of jobs are part time - and low wage levels. There is also particular concern at the vulnerability of the narrow economic base - tourism accounts for 85 per cent of the

*Scillonian III arrives at Hugh Town quay from Penzance. The link by sea remains crucial to the islands' economy.*



economy - and high dependency on a fragile environment as the foundation for economic activity.

A variety of agencies and organisations are involved in current regeneration planning. Preparation of the Integrated Area Plan was supported by a Partnership Management Group which included the Council of the Isles of Scilly, Duchy of Cornwall, Tresco Estates, Isles of Scilly Steamship Company and British International. An expanded group known as the Isles of Scilly Partnership is appraising Objective One project proposals and makes recommendations to Government Office South West. The Isles of Scilly fall within the area of responsibility of the South West RDA.

Strategic and regeneration planning for Scilly takes place in the context of very specific constraints. Not least of these are the islands' inadequate transport and communication infrastructure. An Isles of Scilly Transport Strategy produced in 2002 identifies the 'shallow and ill equipped' harbour at Hugh Town as a key issue for the future of sustainable transport links, particularly freight. Proposed solutions are either a substantial extension to the present commercial quay or construction of a completely new facility at Newford Island, north east of Hugh Town.

Residential building on the islands is currently governed by a strict local needs policy. Hugh Town and Old Town are the only settlements of a size in which significant levels of new build could be appropriate. However, Hugh Town is located on a very restricted site with little space for expansion and both settlements are in locations susceptible to the consequences of climate change; this and other factors urge consideration of the potential of other areas of St Mary's for future settlement.

High property prices, among the highest in the UK, create a particular barrier to

development: site assembly for any scheme on a significant scale is likely to be prohibitively expensive. Freight charges can increase the costs of imported materials by approximately 40 per cent, with consequent impacts on the overall cost of new build (and repairs) and in particular on the affordability of quality components. Tight limits on future expansion of water supply and of sewage and waste disposal restrict the potential for any changes which would result in significant expansion of demand for these services.

There is also a developing commitment to quality and distinctiveness in the built environment: the IAP acknowledges the poor quality and unsympathetic design of much of the building which has taken place in the post-War period and asserts that future new build should be of the highest quality, 'complementing and respecting the character of the landscape'.

The Isles of Scilly Local Plan (1992) introduced a new policy emphasising the particular importance of the environment to Scilly, including in the wider definition of the term 'archaeological, historic and architectural heritage'; development proposals likely to have an adverse impact on the environment would be subject to 'rigorous appraisal'. It also acknowledged that the 'visual quality' of the islands is partly derived from the 'local character and traditional appearance and settings' of buildings. The Plan introduced policies imposing strict limitations on development, with housing new build based strictly on local need. The Plan envisaged that residential development on St Mary's would be restricted to Hugh Town and Old Town but noted that there were few sites in either where new development could be integrated 'without damaging incursions into the landscape'. Existing policy was reaffirmed controlling the external appearance of new build and conversions, with presumptions against buildings of more than three storeys, flat roofs, use of materials out of keeping with





*The English Heritage funded Isles of Scilly Grant Scheme aided refurbishment of this historic shopfront on the Bank.*

those of surrounding buildings and buildings which damaged the character of existing groups. In recent years the Council has introduced an Article 4(2) direction intended to control loss of traditional features such as wooden framed sash windows and slate roofs.

A consultation draft of the revised Local Plan is timetabled for mid 2003. It introduces policies making it possible to provide affordable housing for local need and to enable development required to underpin a healthy economy, while at the same time protecting the environment. New policies to inform and control new development are also expected, together with specific provision for landscape, archaeology, the built environment and architecture. Design guidance on new build may be produced to supplement the Plan. The Council's Corporate Plan (2000) includes planning policy objectives aimed at safeguarding the historic character of Scilly (as identified by Conservation Area status, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and areas of archaeological interest).

An initial draft of a Cultural and Heritage Strategy for Scilly emphasises the richness of the historic environment throughout the islands. It notes that the archaeological resource is relatively well recorded and that a wealth of written and photographic sources is available. The Isles of Scilly

Museum is identified as a valuable asset with significant potential for improved interpretation and education. The document refers to the quality, character and interest of much of the built historic environment but also notes the unsympathetic nature of some later 20<sup>th</sup> century development and recently introduced materials. The draft Strategy proposes that there is potential in Hugh Town for enhancement of historic shopfronts and enhancement of streetscapes through reinstatement of locally distinctive surfacing. It also notes particular future opportunities in improved promotion and interpretation of the historic environment and community participation in design issues.

In 1997 the Council of the Isles of Scilly made proposals for a Conservation Area Partnership (CAP) scheme for the islands. The application document referred to the commitment of the Council to preserving and enhancing both the landscape and townscape of Scilly and included proposals for a proactive programme aimed at undoing 'unsympathetic works of recent years' which had diminished character. This included gateway improvements to Hugh Town through enhancements to shorefront buildings, particularly in terms of more appropriate fenestration and beneficial use of colour on external surfaces. It also proposed reinstatement of historic street surfacing in Hugh Town and of traditional features on historic buildings which had suffered unsympathetic alteration, together with enhanced interpretation and presentation.

The CAP bid was unsuccessful but an Isles of Scilly Grant Scheme, funded by English Heritage and closely comparable with HERS initiatives elsewhere, was introduced in April 1999, to run until March 2004; a pilot for the scheme operated during 1998-99. Projects supported in the Hugh Town area have included work on the Woolpack Battery, part of the historic defensive complex within the Garrison, to enable use as a

volunteer hostel, refurbishment of a historic shop front on the Bank and new display facilities in the Isles of Scilly Museum. Training has been provided under the scheme to develop the historic built environment skills base in Scilly. Courses on scanted slate roofs and stonework and pointing have been organised in conjunction with Cornwall College and West Dean College, West Sussex; a further course is planned on lime render.

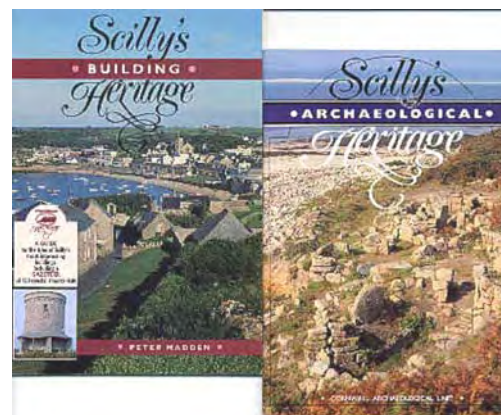
Two particularly useful popular guides published by Twelveheads Press cover Scilly's archaeological resource and buildings. A comprehensive interpretation leaflet for the Garrison is produced by English Heritage.

## Interpretation of the historic environment

There is a variety of positive local contributions towards understanding and appreciation of the historic environment. The Isles of Scilly Museum Association was formed in 1963 and the present purpose-built museum building opened in 1967. Exhibits include archaeology, history and the natural environment and many of the artefacts have been donated by local people. The museum receives curatorial advice through Penlee Art Gallery and Museum, Penzance, but until 2002 was staffed entirely by volunteers. A part-time curator post has been created but it is perceived that additional professional staff will be required in the near future to develop the museum's services and education provision.

Hugh Town offers regular video presentations and slide shows on aspects of Scilly during the summer and there is a programme of guided archaeological walks, including one around Hugh Town and the Garrison. The twice-yearly *Scillonian* magazine regularly carries articles on aspects of the islands' heritage.

There are a number of guidebooks to the islands, most of which incorporate information on the historic environment.





## Landscape and setting

The Isles of Scilly are the submerged remnants of a granite boss, a continuation of the series of granite uplands which run down the south western peninsula of Britain from Dartmoor to west Penwith. They form an archipelago of some 140 islands and islets bearing vegetation and many more sea rocks. St Mary's is the largest of the islands and is made up of two discrete blocks of granite, a larger mass roughly 3 km square to the east, joined by a narrow sandy isthmus to an outlying hill historically known as the Hugh, now the Garrison, rising to about 40m OD on the south west side.

This underlying geomorphology creates for Hugh Town one of the finest settings for a small town in the British Isles. The town lies along the isthmus, only about 200m wide at its greatest extent, and extends up the steep slopes of the higher ground to east and west (Fig. 1). From the town, particularly from vantage points on

the higher ground, there are spectacular views north across St Mary's Pool towards Tresco, Bryher and Samson and to the south across the open ocean, framed by the projecting arms of Porthcressa Bay. The town is flanked by long curving sandy beaches on both the northern and southern sides of the isthmus, each of which is punctuated by a massive granite outcrop.

The small scale of the settlement means that green open spaces are close and form part of its immediate setting, both physically and visually. The Isles of Scilly Historic Landscape Assessment characterises much of the land adjacent to the eastern extent of Hugh Town as anciently enclosed (i.e., prehistoric to early post medieval) but there are also some modern enclosures, particularly an area of allotments south east of the town, and some of the distinctive bulb strips of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form of narrow strips divided by cultivated windbreak hedges. Buzza Hill, rising prominently at the south east end of

*The granite masses of Buzza Hill and Carn Thomas rise at the eastern end of the sandy isthmus on which Hugh Town has developed (CCC Historic Environment Service, 1987: ACS 1301).*



the isthmus, is covered by heathland vegetation. The Garrison, to the west, also carries some bulb strips on its southern side, but the area closest to the town is primarily 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosures, parts of which are now set out as sports fields.

### **Physical topography of the urban area**

The core of Hugh Town is very low lying and level; on several occasions in the historic period it has suffered considerable damage from storm surges driving across the isthmus from the south. To the west the ground rises sharply to the Garrison behind the main axis of the town, Hugh Street, and a network of minor lanes and alleys winds across the hillside. A low ridge closes off the eastern end of the isthmus, giving additional prominence to the church and other buildings in this area. The steep-sided Buzza Hill, topped

by a former windmill tower, rises sharply just south east of the centre of the town.

### **Conservation and historic environment designations**

The Isles of Scilly are designated as Heritage Coast and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. An AONB Management Plan is in preparation, due for completion in 2004. The whole of Scilly, including Hugh Town, has Conservation Area status.

Hugh Town's current historic environment designations are summarised below and shown on Figure 5.

- Nine Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the wider Hugh Town area, of which four lie in the defined area of study.
- 66 Listed Buildings (including those within the Garrison).

### 3 Historic and topographical development

#### Before Hugh Town

There has been human activity in and around what is now Hugh Town for at least four thousand years. The earliest monumental evidence is a group of three entrance graves of the later Neolithic – early Bronze Age on Buzza Hill, overlooking the town from the south east. Only one of these is now certainly visible. A mound which may be the remains of another burial cairn lies on the ridge some 250m to the south east. Flint scatters at Porthcressa and on the ridge east of the town suggest prehistoric occupation in these areas. Coastal erosion on the east side of Porthcressa Bay, immediately south of Buzza Hill, has revealed a settlement of at least four stone-built huts of the mid to late Bronze Age, and traces of prehistoric stone walls and a possible hut circle have been recorded in the intertidal zone east of Carn Thomas.

There is also evidence of activity over a long period on the lower slopes of the Garrison. Two sites between Garrison Lane and Parson's Field have revealed evidence of later prehistoric terraced fields

*The entrance grave on Buzza Hill; remains of two others may survive nearby.*



*Old Town quay.*

bounded by stone walls, succeeded by a cemetery of cist burials dating to the Later Iron Age – Romano-British period; a similar cist grave has been identified within the area of prehistoric settlement on the east side of Porthcressa Bay. A carved granite altar stone of the Roman period, now on Tresco, is said to have been found on the eastern slopes of the Garrison, raising the possibility that a shrine existed in this area. Occupation material dating to about the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries AD or slightly earlier came from the late prehistoric site at Parsons Field but it is not clear whether this indicates continuing settlement in this area or re-establishment after an interval.

In the medieval period the primary settlement on St Mary's, then known as Ennor, was around Old Town Bay, 1 km south east of Hugh Town. A church was established there in about 1130-40, probably by Tavistock Abbey, and a small shell keep castle had been built by the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. A settlement grew up around these focal points, with the bay providing a sheltered natural harbour recorded as *Portbenor*. In about 1540 Leland described the settlement and castle as a 'poor town and a meately [i.e., adequately or appropriately] strong pile, but the roofs of the buildings in it be sore defaced and worn'. The remains of a stone quay of medieval or early post-medieval date survive at the head of Old Town Bay.



There was also activity in what was to become the Hugh Town area in the medieval period. A stone building, almost certainly a chapel, stood close to the shore near the Bank and survived, converted into a dwelling, until about 1830. A 1669 illustration of Hugh Town (known from a 19<sup>th</sup> century copy – see this section) shows a single-storey building in this area, oriented east - west with a high pointed gable and steeply pitched roof. Several pieces of worked stone found in Hugh Town, including a mullion window and pointed arch, may have come from this building, for which Charles Thomas has suggested a possible 14<sup>th</sup> century date. Two 14<sup>th</sup> century documentary references to land at *Seynt Maudut* in Scilly may refer to this site, offering a possible dedication for the chapel.

Local tradition of a 'great quantity of human bones' found nearby may indicate a burial ground attached to the chapel, presumably predating the 12<sup>th</sup> century foundation of the church and graveyard for St Mary's at Old Town. This in turn would suggest the likelihood of an earlier chapel at the Bank, and of a nearby settlement; a small quantity of imported pottery of the late 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century is known from Porthcressa.

### **'To have these isles always well kept, with good guard . . .'**

In the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century the potential national strategic value of Scilly was realised and the islands became the focus of a programme of defensive works. Garrisons were established on St Mary's and Treco and the medieval castle at Old Town was equipped with artillery. Two artillery pieces were also located on the Garrison in 1554 – possibly at a site on the south side known as The Folly or at Mount Holles on the eastern slope – but the extent of any accompanying works in the area at this time is not known.

The Cornish Godolphin family became Captains of the Isles during this period, commanding a garrison of around 150 on Treco and St Mary's during the 1550s. Their presence, initially as military commanders and subsequently as lessees of Scilly from the Crown, may have brought new settlement: Francis Godolphin claimed in 1579 that in the previous 30 years some 80 tenements had been built and 'laborious enclosures' made. The strengthened role of the castle at Old Town makes it likely that at least part of the new settlement took place there.

The renewed threat of invasion in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century prompted construction of a complex of major defensive works on the Garrison. Star Castle – a fortified house within a rampart in the form of an eight-pointed star, fronted by a curtain wall and surrounded by a dry moat and outer rampart – was constructed for Elizabeth I by Francis Godolphin in 1593-4. A stone-built curtain wall, fronted by a rock-cut ditch, was set across the neck of the headland and the defended area also held a gatehouse, barracks, storehouses, a magazine and two windmills. A stone quay was constructed in 1601 on the north side of the isthmus, directly below the gateway to the Garrison. There were also several strong points outside the defensive line: batteries at Mount Holles, Lower Benham, Rat Island and close to the landward end of the quay probably all

*Star Castle, the core of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century defensive complex.*



originated at this period. In the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, during the Civil War and subsequent troubles with the Dutch, additional artillery platforms and breastworks of earth and stone were constructed around the whole of the seaward periphery of the Garrison.

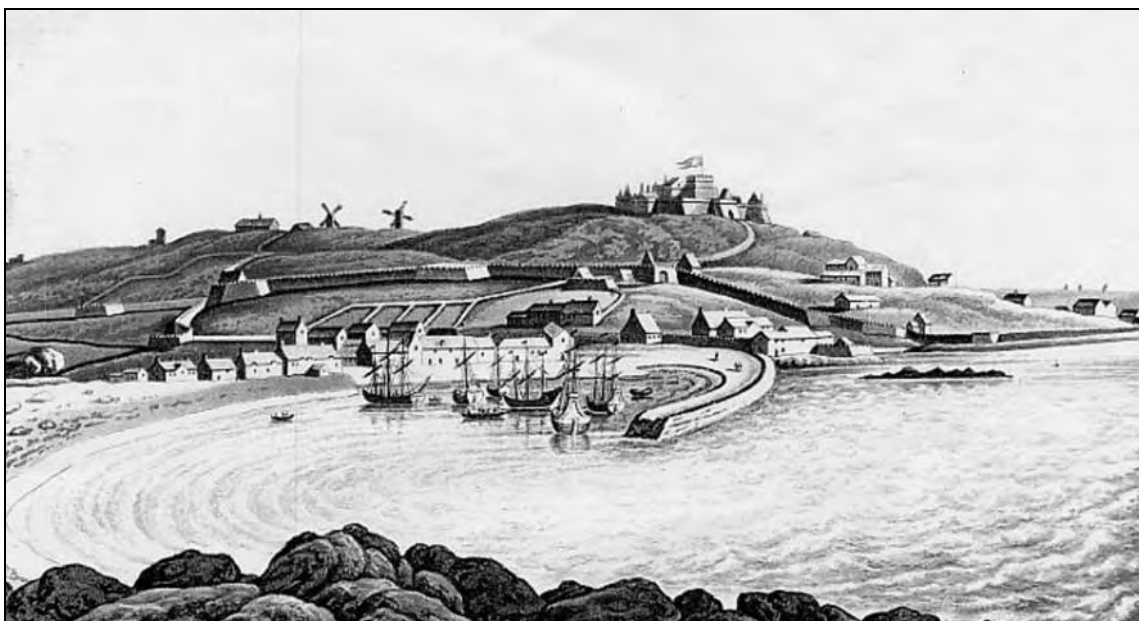
The early stages of the settlement which grew up between the defences on the Garrison and the new quay are obscure. A survey of 1652 recorded fewer than 20 houses in the 'Hugh or New Town near the new castle', with another handful within the Garrison and a further eight or ten outside the town around Carn Thomas and Buzza Hill. The survey recorded around 40 houses in the Old Town area at this time and the older settlement maintained an economic role as the place where in summer the Governor's representative received daily fish catches from the islands. The survey noted a two-storey fish cellar with a 'counting house' nearby.

The 1669 illustration confirms the small scale of Hugh Town at this period. An open area lies south of the quay, below the gate in the Garrison curtain wall, and the settlement extends south east from this, straggling along the foreshore and

what became Hugh Street. Several substantial buildings close to the quay were probably those recorded in 1652 as stores and workshops for the garrison. A crenellated wall divides them from the foreshore and links at one end to the high-gabled building identified as the possible medieval chapel. Fields are laid out behind Hugh Street on the lower slopes of the Garrison. Star Castle surmounts the hill behind the stark line of the curtain wall, with several large buildings and two windmills within the defended area.

This depiction, taken together with a map of 1715, demonstrates the early origins of several distinctive elements of Hugh Town's historic topography. The open area south of the quay represents the landward side of a working beach where boats could be loaded and unloaded in the shelter of the quay. Robert Heath referred in 1750 to the 'landing place' and noted that 'vessels lie aground upon the sand at low water, where is a good place to clean, wash, tallow, and stop leaks.' This area partly survives as the Bank, now enclosed and with the former open access to the shore preserved only by the slip adjoining the Atlantic Hotel.

*Hugh Town in 1669: a 19<sup>th</sup> century copy of a 17<sup>th</sup> century illustration produced on the occasion of the visit to Scilly of Cosmo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany.*





*Christian Lilly's map, 1715.*

The earliest buildings in the settlement probably clustered loosely around this 'landing place', extending as far as the triangle now defined by Lloyds TSB and Kavorna bakery. Beyond this, Hugh Street has a more planned aspect, shown in 1715 with a straight alignment and a continuous row of buildings on both sides as far as the junction with the present Garrison Lane. This appears to be the furthest extent of the settlement on the 1669 illustration but by 1715 it had expanded along the two roads which diverged from this point, now fossilised in the lines of Silver Street and the narrow link between Hugh Street and the Parade. The small square which fronts the Bishop and Wolf pub originated as an open space at the edge of the settlement, perhaps gaining importance from construction on its south west side of a house for the Godolphin steward. This was itself

severely damaged by a violent storm surge which burst across the isthmus in 1744 and replaced by the fine mid 18<sup>th</sup> century house now the Bishop and Wolf.

By 1715, a scatter of buildings lay along what would later be Garrison Lane, Well Lane and Jerusalem Terrace, set among small fields or gardens on the lower slopes of the Garrison. Among these was a Custom House, built in the 1680s just off Hugh Street on Well Lane. Development on the rear of some of the plots on the north side of Hugh Street established what subsequently became the south side of Thoroughfare, facing the foreshore and linked by an alley to the area in front of the steward's house. Outside the town, the hamlets recorded by the 1652 survey persisted: the 1715 map shows buildings close to the shore on the west side of Buzza Hill and in 1794 Troutbeck referred to cottages known as Ram's Valley there;

*Hugh Town's early 'landing place' in the shelter of the quay. The area behind the foreshore was developed in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century (CCC Historic Environment Service, 1987: F14/154/903106).*



he also noted a farmhouse near Carn Thomas and a ‘small village of cottages, called Down Derry’ sited about 200m south of the carn, east of the road from Hugh Town to Old Town church.

### **‘The most populous place of these islands . . .’**

During much of its earlier history Hugh Town was economically dependent on providing services to the garrison; military pay was important as a means of bringing cash into the economy. This was particularly the case in the period 1715 – 1746 when a major development programme on the Garrison’s defences was carried out, including construction of more than 2 km of curtain wall and refurbishment of the original quay.

By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, the town was also developing as a ‘central place’ for Scilly, providing a variety of service functions to the populations of St Mary’s and the off islands. It was also the Customs port and profited from servicing vessels sheltering in the Pool from bad weather or adverse winds. Robert Heath, an officer in the garrison in the mid 1740s, described Hugh Town as

one long and two cross streets, of strong stone-built houses, wherein are several shop-keepers and public house-keepers, selling many sorts of liquors and commodities . . . The several trades of bakers, brewers, coopers, butchers, weavers, tailors, mantua-makers, shoemakers, sailmakers, a boatbuilder, joiners, carpenters, masons, smiths, periwig makers, &c. are exercised in this town, either separately, or several together.

The impression of activity and prosperity, and a growing gentility, is confirmed by William Borlase, who reported the town in 1756 as the ‘most populous place of these Islands: here is the Custom-house, and the principal Inhabitants and

Tradesmen live here. It has been much improved of late in building . . .’ Heath observed that new roads built on the Garrison to serve the artillery batteries provided ‘a pleasant way where people might walk for their health and amusement; the longest is near a mile and may be called the “Mall of Scilly”’.

Illustrations of Hugh Town accompanying Borlase’s study and a survey of Scilly published by the Reverend John Troutbeck about 1794 trace its development during the second half of



*The Garrison gate. The bellcote was added to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century gate to mark the expansion of the defences in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Below: Arms of the Board of Ordnance displayed on a lead cistern, formerly at Star Castle, now at St Mary’s church, Hugh Town.*





the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Borlase's engraving, taken in 1752, suggests little expansion of the town beyond its 1715 extent. The recent building improvements he referred to were therefore probably replacements of earlier structures, including those damaged by catastrophic flooding in 1744. Troutbeck also claimed that there had been a major fire in 1718, starting in a house 'then almost in the middle of the town . . . all the houses, on that side of the street where the fire happened, were consumed, to the southward, till an opening stopped the progress of the devouring flames; and the houses, that were then burnt down, remained many years in ruins before they were rebuilt.' Neither Heath nor Borlase mention this episode but the latter's engraving shows a row of substantial buildings along the south west side of Hugh Street, conceivably replacing those destroyed.

Borlase's 1752 illustration again shows the Bank as an open space behind the foreshore with vessels moored offshore in the shelter of the quay. At the south-east edge of the town, the recently rebuilt steward's house dwarfs clusters of single-storey structures along Silver Street and on the east side of the alley from the Bishop and Wolf 'square' to the present Thoroughfare, each group apparently set within a fenced compound. Roads to the 'country' – Old Town and the eastern parts of the island - are shown diverging from this eastern end of the settlement,

*Hugh Town from Buzza Hill, 1752 (Borlase 1756).*

their alignments establishing what subsequently became the north and south sides of the Parade. There are still only a few scattered houses among the fields on the slopes behind the town.

Hugh Town was still relatively small in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century – in 1793 it was said to have 'about 70 houses', with an estimated population of 350; St Mary's as a whole had only about 650 residents – but contemporary descriptions suggest a thriving settlement. Henry Spry observed in 1800 that the town had 'many good houses and a great number of inhabitants, many of whom are very respectable people'. He also noted the 'good shops . . . where we can get most things the same as in the towns of Cornwall'.

Troutbeck's illustration, although crude, clearly shows that significant changes had taken place in the 40 years since the Borlase image. Most significantly, there has been significant development of the Bank, with new buildings along the north-eastern side with their backs to the sea now blocking access to the shore. Building density around the shoreward end of the quay appears greater than previously and more building is apparent on Well Lane and at the lower end of Garrison Lane. The drawing also shows the initial stages in enclosing the space which subsequently became the Parade through construction of the row of double-fronted two-storey houses along







*Hugh Town in the early 1790s (Troutbeck n.d.).*

the north side and the present Riviera House fronting onto the space from the east. The area is shown open along its south side and was clearly at the eastern edge of the town. Beyond it was an outlying two-storey building on the track which became Church Street (the cottage adjoining the Bell Rock Hotel?) and a long, apparently single-storey structure fronting onto the shore in the area of the present Lower Strand, perhaps similar to the single-storey cottage 'rows' which survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> century on Higher Strand. Hugh House, the recently built officers' quarters, dominates the town from immediately within the Garrison wall.

The sense of major change taking place in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century is reinforced by Spry's comment in 1800 that even though

many new houses had been built over the previous 20 years, 'there are still a great many more wanting [i.e., required] to carry on trade'. Confidence may have been boosted by practical investment by the Godolphins during this period. Sea defences were constructed on the Porthcressa side of the town in the wake of another major flooding episode in 1771 and in 1781 a building incorporating a small market area, a council room and a prison was built in Hugh Street. There was also an attempt at prospecting for tin on the hill slope between the Garrison wall and the Bank. Landlord permission would also have been required for erection of the original Methodist chapel in Garrison Lane in about 1790.

The proprietors may also have been directly associated with new building. This

*The earliest buildings around the Parade, shown on Troutbeck's illustration (above).*

*Left: a row of double-fronted houses on the north side. Right: Riviera House, on the east side.*



is suggested by the major changes around the Bank and development of the space which became the Parade. Such major changes in urban topography would certainly have required specific approval from the landlord. The construction of evidently planned groups of 'respectable' dwellings on these spaces at about this time - the double fronted houses on the north side of the Parade, for example, and the terrace incorporating Pentland Flats and Bank House which fills the seaward side of the Bank - suggests deliberate encouragement of development, perhaps even direct investment, by the Godolphins.

The early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were a period of general prosperity for Scilly, with income from service in the island militia, kelp production, increased returns from pilotage and a boom in the export of potatoes. This latter trade also boosted Hugh Town's shipbuilding industry, which had begun in a small way in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but developed in scale in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 1830s four shipyards were active on the foreshores at Town Beach and Porthcressa, employing almost 100 men and apprentices.

While distress increased in the off islands during the post Napoleonic War period, Hugh Town's prosperity was maintained by its central role in the Scillonian economy. George Woodley, writing in the early 1820s, followed earlier commentators in making specific mention of its shops, 'especially for grocery, drapery, earthenware, &c.' and noting the 'great number of inns, the principal of which are dignified by the name of hotels'. He described the town as 'one principal street about three hundred and twenty yards long [i.e., from the quay to the Parade], but very irregular both in its course and in the appearance of the



*Hugh House, built as quarters for the officers of the garrison, c. 1790. It was a hotel in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and is now used as offices by the Duchy of Cornwall.*

houses; and of several lanes, alleys, courtyages, &c.; most of which are paved with round stones . . .'

Woodley's account records further significant changes in Hugh Town's topography. The present Lower and Higher Strand were now lined by a row of small houses extending almost to Carn Thomas, with the beach in front 'generally enlivened by the presence of boats and vessels of various sizes'. He also confirms the altered topography of the former open area at the Bank: 'About twenty yards from the pier, an opening in a small kind of square, on the right, shows the steep ascent to the garrison. A few yards further, another opening to the left (called the Bank) shows the pool and beach, studded with boats.' Of the Parade, or 'Green', Woodley noted that 'the houses, forming somewhat of a square, stretch along the two sides of the sandy isthmus', with a single dwelling between the two roads leading from its eastern end; the name 'Green' was inappropriate for the space, he added, 'not the least sign of vegetation of any sort appearing on its arid surface'. (The term 'Parade' derived from brief use of the space for musters of the local militia during the Napoleonic Wars.)

## ‘A community thrifty and rich’

The Godolphin family, latterly Dukes of Leeds, relinquished their lease of Scilly in the early 1830s, ending more than 250 years of involvement with the islands. In 1834 they were succeeded as ‘proprietors’ by Augustus Smith, a young Hertfordshire landowner who sought in Scilly a testing ground for his theories of economic and social improvement. Smith’s lease required construction of a new church – the original island church near Old Town had become ruinous – and a large extension to Hugh Town quay. These improvements were completed before the end of the 1830s and marked the beginning of a significant period of change.

In negotiating his tenure with the Duchy of Cornwall Smith had ensured that he would be able to create building leases, indicating that he expected these to be taken by local people ‘who have realised a small capital of two or three hundred pounds in the shipping business’. This is the context for the flowering of Hugh Town’s distinctive late Georgian and Regency architecture, particularly in and around the south sides of the Parade and Church Street. The houses and terraces here are conventionally architecturally dated to the 1810s and 1820s. In Cornwall, however, from where it is likely that the design influence came, houses in these styles typically date rather later than

*Lemon Hall, Church Street – perhaps the finest example of Hugh Town’s distinctive Regency-style domestic architecture.*



*The view east along Church Street to Augustus Smith’s St Mary’s church, completed in 1839. The area on the left remained undeveloped until construction of the Bible Christian chapel 60 years later.*

their equivalents elsewhere in Britain and this was also the case in Hugh Town. The St Mary’s stonemason Robert Maybee, born in 1810, recalled the period following Smith’s arrival in Scilly as ‘the time of the new pier building . . . and the new church . . . and most of the big houses were built at the same time.’ A press report of the launch of the first vessel built at Porthcressa in 1837 also recorded ‘several new and handsome houses rapidly progressing towards completion’.

Smith’s new church was built well outside the then built-up area of the town but was located in a prominent position facing the settlement along the existing road from Old Town. This axis between the church and Parade, now Church Street, became an important focus for development over the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It now carries the air of a planned streetscape, rising gently from the green space at the Parade to the church and lined by a mix of genteel domestic and institutional buildings; in fact it was created piecemeal over a period long enough to make it unlikely that any initial master plan was followed throughout.

Most of the modest but well designed terraces were probably built as separate ventures during the later 1830s and 1840s. Several substantial detached houses are likely to be of the same period, including Lemon Hall, the present Bell Rock Hotel,



and, nearby on Lower Strand, Strand House and the three-storey Lyonesse. Isaac North commented in 1850 on the resulting contrast between the older part of Hugh Town and the new:

The houses in Hugh Street are very old, and many of them certainly wear a somewhat forlorn and dreary aspect; but as the visitor advances towards the Church and sees those more recently built on the Parade and in Buzza Street, towards Porcrasa, he will be impressed with a widely different feeling. He will find himself surrounded by houses with every token of cheerfulness and comfort . . . they have been built by the inhabitants themselves, and are in the majority of instances held of the Proprietor at a trifling ground rent for forty years.



*The Town Hall, 1889, dominates the western end of the Parade and Church Street.*

Smith added an infant school on the north side of Church Street in 1854 – he built a boys’ school at Carn Thomas in the same year - and a girls’ school on Lower Strand in 1860. However, much of the east end of Church Street remained undeveloped until late in the century: to the south open fields rose onto Buzza Hill and photographs of about 1870 show the north side, between Church Street and the rear of properties on Higher Strand, as a large open space used to store timber for the shipbuilding industry. A further terrace and a detached villa were built on the south side before the end of the 1880s



*Terraces of the late 1830s or 1840s on the south side of Church Street. As elsewhere in Hugh Town, palms add an exotic, Mediterranean element to the sense of place.*

but, after the demise of shipbuilding, the north side was divided into gardens or flower strips until the Bible Christian chapel was built in 1899 in a prominent position facing the centre of the town. The terrace to the east of the chapel may date to the early 1900s but the final plot on the north side was not occupied until St Mary’s Hall (now a hotel) was built in the 1930s.

Construction of the Town Hall on the Parade in 1889, initially planned as a market hall and public rooms, provided a prestige building to dominate the west end of the streetscape, and removed the tumbledown vernacular houses which had previously occupied the site. At about the same time the central area of the Parade was enclosed as a public park,

*Augustus Smith’s mid-1850s infants school on the north side of Church Street.*



contributing further to the emerging urban character and developing air of gentility around this end of the town.

Other visitors echoed North's comments on the different character of the older part of the settlement. The Reverend H J Whitfield derided the 'lower town' in 1852 as 'sufficiently miserable'; he saw the word 'Bank' painted on a 'wretched hovel . . . I found that the name was that of the situation, not of the house.' Later 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs show Hugh Street with a plain, workaday appearance deriving from the unornamented form and generally small scale of most of the buildings; some had simple whitewashed rubble walls and a few thatched roofs. This area also saw some changes. The original house from which Tregarthen's Hotel developed was built above the end of the quay in Hugh Town's distinctive Regency style; the small but imposing mid-19<sup>th</sup> century house now occupied by Lloyds TSB was elaborated with a Doric-columned classical porch, enabling it to dominate the three-sided 'square' south of the Bank onto which it faced. The scale and quirky rustic quality of the 1897 Post Office, designed by Augustus Smith's nephew and successor as proprietor of the islands, created a significant landmark in this part of the town.

Shipbuilding continued into the 1870s and the associated slipways, timber yards,



*The Parade was enclosed and planted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the wider process of genteel improvements to Hugh Town at this period.*

smithies, saw pits and stores were scattered over both the Porthcressa Bank and Strand areas. Early photographs show an industrial building, perhaps a sawmill, adjoining the cottages immediately north of the church, facing the area used for storing timber. The severe, well-constructed terraces of single and double-fronted dwellings on Higher Strand, Well Cross and Buzza Street reflect the prosperous industrial character of these areas in the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the Strand these probably replaced more humble housing: a cluster of the older thatched houses survived at the eastern end of the Strand, close to Carn Thomas, until at least the WWI period.

Augustus Smith died in 1872 and his obituary in the *Cornish Telegraph* observed that when he took over Scilly it was poor; now it was 'a community thrifty and rich'. This sense of prosperity was evident to visitors. Courtney observed of houses in Hugh Town in 1867 that they were 'for the most part small, but they are almost universally furnished with neatness and

*Hugh Town Post Office, 1897. The jaunty eccentricity which this building introduces into the streetscape contrasts sharply with the severe façade of the 1920s Richardson and Gill terrace adjoining to the south east. The Kavorna – Lloyds TSB 'square' lies immediately beyond, relieving the strong sense of enclosure of this part of Hugh Street.*



*Plain 19<sup>th</sup> century housing on Higher Strand, almost certainly associated with the shipbuilding industry located on the foreshore immediately in front.*

comfort, and the visitor is at once struck by the appearance of comfort among the inhabitants . . . There are several shops of some pretension, in which almost every article of domestic use may generally be obtained.'

The key change in the Scillonian economy during the middle and later decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was diversification, actively promoted by Smith, particularly into areas which brought cash into the islands. Hugh Town in particular benefited from exporting potatoes, involvement in maritime trade, fishing – aided by the rapid links to market made possible by steamship and rail connections - and servicing shipping sheltering in St Mary's Roads. The most significant advance,

*Richardson and Gill's mid 1920s terrace of eight houses and a shop in Hugh Street, built for the Duchy of Cornwall. The shop windows were a deliberate reference to a 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfront previously on part of the site. (Photograph: Eric Berry.)*



however, was the rise of the flower industry. This began in the late 1860s, initially centred on St Mary's. Exports of flowers reached around 65 tons annually in the mid 1880s but had increased tenfold by 1901. The windbreak hedges and subdivided fields which the industry required became a major feature of the landscape, even crowding in around the expanding villa development at the east end of Hugh Town. The expansion of maritime activity associated with these industries prompted construction of a further 250 foot extension to Smith's quay in 1889.

Tourism also became significant during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, aided by the introduction of steamship services to St Mary's and the opening of the rail link to Penzance in 1859. North published *A Week in the Isles of Scilly* in 1850 and a visit to Scilly featured in Wilkie Collins' *Rambles Beyond Railways* the following year. More adventurous travellers were now adding a visit to the islands to the established tour of the 'Far West'. By the early 1880s, a guidebook could point out that 'tourist tickets can now be obtained at all the chief railway stations in England and Wales, to the Isles of Scilly', adding that 'Hugh Town being reached visitors will have no trouble in accommodating themselves to comfortable lodgings, either at the hotels or private houses.' Growing demand for accommodation resulted in some larger private houses in the town being converted into hotels and guest houses. In moves symbolic of the wider changes in Hugh Town's character which were taking place, a large, purpose-built hotel – Holgate's - was constructed in the 1890s on the site of one of the former shipyards on Lower Strand; in 1902 the recently created Council of the Isles of Scilly cleared the remaining traces of industrial activity on the Porthcressa shore, levelled and grassed the area and provided seating.



## The 20<sup>th</sup> century

The significance of tourism increased enormously during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now accounts for about 85 per cent of the islands' economy. During the summer 'season' in 1906 around 6000 people travelled between Penzance and St Mary's; the annual visitor total is now about 120,000. This rise has been facilitated by and has also spurred improvements in transport links. The island-based Isles of Scilly Steamship Company was formed in 1919 to provide a dependable daily service between Hugh Town and Penzance. Air services began in 1937, but became significant in terms of passenger numbers only with the opening of the helicopter service in 1964, supplemented from 1987 by the fixed wing Skybus service. Hugh Town is effectively the 'terminus' for these routes (there is a limited helicopter service direct to Tresco) but also much the largest accommodation centre on the islands. Thus, while it maintains its historic role as the commercial, administrative and service centre for the resident population of Scilly, its economy has become increasingly dominated by its function as a tourist centre, providing beds, catering, retail, leisure, excursions and other services to visitors.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen substantial changes to the built environment of Hugh Town. In 1920 the Duchy of Cornwall resumed the lease on the whole of Scilly except Tresco. It began a building



programme, directed by Duchy architects Sir Albert Richardson and C L Gill, on some of its properties in Hugh Town. This included remodelling some significant buildings, among them Strand House, Newman House in the Garrison and the Atlantic Hotel. The latter had been created before WWI from two earlier houses and was now extended to incorporate the 19<sup>th</sup> century Customs offices overlooking Town Beach.

The largest impact on the townscape was created by replacing a number of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages and shops in Hugh Street with two new residential terraces. These were faced in coursed fine dressed granite and introduced a significantly more severe and ordered aspect to the street. A small terrace at Porthcressa Terrace probably also built by the Duchy at about the same period was considerably more exotic in design and materials, combining classical design elements with construction in grey brick and the use of concrete for external detailing. Further changes to Hugh Street occurred in the following decade with the construction opposite one of the Duchy terraces of premises for Barclays Bank and the Isles of Scilly Steamship Co., the latter replacing the late 18<sup>th</sup> century market and council house. At the east end of the town this period saw the building of a small electricity generating plant in a disused quarry below Buzza Hill and the islands' first hospital on an exposed site nearby.

In the three decades after 1950 Hugh Town experienced the most rapid and far-reaching period of change to the built environment in its history. From 1949 the Duchy sold the freeholds of much of their property in the town. The consequence was a surge of extensions and conversions of existing buildings, aimed at meeting the rising demand for visitor accommodation and facilities resulting from the national

*Porthcressa Terrace – another example of the interesting and distinctive architecture produced for the Duchy of Cornwall in the inter-war period.*

post-war boom in holidays and travel. The Council of the Isles of Scilly was also able to acquire land at Porthcressa for much needed public housing, beginning the process which resulted in dense development of the slopes of the Garrison right up to the curtain wall (see section 5, character area 5). Other public housing was built at Porthcressa Bank and Higher Strand.

There was also a boom in private housing development, fuelled by rising demand for holiday and retirement homes. ‘Apart from the flower and tourist industries’, noted Jellicoe in 1965, ‘the wealth that is generated privately in the islands comes from land speculation in Hugh Town, a source that may soon run dry.’ This period saw large-scale building, predominantly bungalows, on greenfield sites in Rams Valley, along the road to Old Town and on Jackson’s Hill overlooking Porthmellon. Several large bungalows were constructed just inside the Garrison curtain wall on prominent sites overlooking the town. New build within the central area of the historic settlement was relatively limited, the most significant instances being the construction of new retail premises at the lower end of Garrison Lane in the late 1960s and a comprehensive redevelopment of Silver Street and the adjacent Porthcressa View in the mid 1970s.

These later 20<sup>th</sup> century developments paralleled the huge growth in housing which took place throughout Britain at this period. As elsewhere, the designs, materials and siting of the new structures rarely made connection with historic character. Recent houses and flats on Scilly ‘might be anywhere’, commented the authors of a collection of historic photographs in 1972, and a local journalist observed that from its ‘former compactness’ Hugh Town had taken on a ‘sprawling character’. Archaeologist Paul Ashbee particularly condemned the impact which development had had on



*Public housing of c. 1950 at Parsons Field. Variation between units and the high quality of materials and detailing are notable elements of the development.*

the integrity of the Garrison’s historic defences: ‘In 1949 . . . the Garrison Curtain Wall stood stark and clear above Hughtown, fronted by its great unencumbered ditch. The tasteless synthetic stone-faced holiday-home development that now masks it is shameful, reflecting as it does a lack of regard for a unique monument, and it is matched only by the equally tasteless houses, more suited for Slough than Scilly, built on either side of Hugh House.’

This period also saw the building of several modern institutional buildings in the town. The Isles of Scilly Museum and the islands’ secondary school were completed in the late 1960s and the Park House residential accommodation for the elderly was built in a prominent position on the Parade in about 1970. Other new building went to greenfield sites just beyond Hugh Town’s eastern edge: a new primary school at Carn Gwaval in 1976, an industrial estate behind the beach at

*Dense 1960-70s development on a steeply sloping site at Rams Valley.*







*Hugh Town's 1990s health centre, prominently sited on high ground close to Buzzza Hill.*

Porthmellon in the 1980s and a health centre on the ridge south east of the town in the 1990s. Demolition of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Holgate's Hotel on Lower Strand during the 1970s enabled the creation of a pleasant informal grassed promenade overlooking the eastern portion of Town Beach.

## Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The most significant regeneration proposals relating to Hugh Town are those relating to improvement of its harbour facilities. Two possible schemes have been proposed. The first would create a new breakwater arm extending north east from Rat Island, with improved space for cargo handling and increased protection for the harbour. It has been suggested that additional space could be developed by reclamation at Rat Island or between it and the shore of the Garrison. Access to the new facilities would be via

the existing quay or, if land was reclaimed to the west of Rat Island, via a new road. Traffic to and from the harbour would still be routed through the centre of Hugh Town. The alternative scheme would construct a new breakwater running south west from Newford Island towards the existing quay, creating an enclosed harbour area, with access on the landward side via a new road link. This scheme would reduce traffic through the town and also, it is said, make a substantial improvement to 'tranquility' within the harbour area.

Traffic movement within Hugh Town, particularly larger vehicles collecting freight from the quay, has been identified as a problem, with particular concerns about the detrimental effect of large and heavy vehicles on the fabric of historic buildings, road surfaces and the historic structure of the quay itself. A traffic management plan for Hugh Town proposed in 2002 would have required a substantial addition to the present level of signage, road marking and one-way restrictions. No conclusions were reached from public consultation on the plan but it is now perceived that improvements can be made within an integrated transport strategy. There are public concerns that the number of cars and levels of traffic on the islands are too high and of the need for speed and vehicle size limitations. Consultation has identified some local support for enhanced provision of bus services but relatively little for increased levels of cycling and walking.

*Two possible redevelopment sites in Hugh Town. Left: the marine chandlery store on Thoroughfare, with a frontage to Town Beach. Right: the Isles of Scilly Museum building in Church Street. The high visibility of each of the sites merits design of the highest quality for future replacement buildings, closely guided by a detailed understanding of character.*



The IAP identifies needs for small workshops and business space and there are also acknowledged needs for community sport and leisure facilities; improvements in provision of these would have important additional benefits in providing wet weather activities for visitors. There is also a requirement for a dedicated environmental interpretation centre, perhaps combined with a replacement for the present Isles of Scilly Museum building. Other sites which may become available for redevelopment include the marine chandlery premises in Thoroughfare, fronting onto Town Beach, the single-storey small business premises adjoining the old lifeboat house at Porthcressa Bank and part of the old school at Carn Thomas. There are more distant possibilities that the sites of the South West Electricity Board generating facility and present 1960s secondary school buildings may eventually become available.

Policy and programme frameworks underpinning current regeneration planning for Scilly emphasise broad needs for additional affordable housing, improved transport links, a more diverse economic base and enhanced employment opportunities. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, these objectives echo themes which have recurred in proposals for improving the Scillonian economy over much of the four centuries since Hugh Town was founded. They are now expressed, however, in a broader context, in which the importance of the environment and long-term sustainability are also acknowledged. The significance of these factors is emphasised on the one hand by the extraordinarily high quality and richness of Scilly's environment, natural and historic, but also by a growing recognition of its fragility and the consequent vulnerability of an economy so directly based on it. This point is underlined by the very specific difficulties of water supply and waste disposal which apply in the islands. A

*Hugh Town's low-lying situation makes it vulnerable to the consequences of global climate change.*



desalination plant on St Mary's, installed in the early 1990s, has relieved the pressure on supply in the peak tourism season but water quality remains an issue.

For Hugh Town in particular there are also very specific environmental concerns about the consequences of global climate change and its own long-term sustainability as a settlement. It seems likely that even a relatively small rise in sea levels would place the town at extreme risk; public consultation undertaken in the course of preparing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management

Plan identified substantial local demand for a comprehensive coastal defence scheme for the town. Again, this is a concern foreshadowed by earlier commentators. Robert Heath noted in 1750 that Hugh Town, 'being almost level with every high tide, the water comes into some of the dwellers yards and houses'. He added: 'it would be a happiness to most of Hugh inhabitants, if their town were removed, either into the Garrison, or to the high land, at the farther end of the isthmus, next the body of the island . . .'

## 4 Archaeological potential

Archaeology is potentially a rich asset for Hugh Town. A number of investigations have been carried out in the immediate area (see appendix 1) but these have been almost universally focused on deposits predating the historic settlement or on the military monuments of the Garrison. There is still much about the town's history which is obscure and archaeology is the only way in which certain key aspects of its historic development and character can be better understood. Archaeology can also make a significant contribution in cultural and economic terms: remains of the past have important potential for education, tourism and leisure, as well as in terms of local pride and sense of place.

It should be emphasised that 'archaeology' does not refer solely to buried remains. Information on the historical sequences embodied in standing buildings and other 'above ground' features could be extremely valuable: a building survey of the town would be likely to yield significant new information and opportunities for investigation and recording should be sought when buildings are refurbished or undergo substantial alteration. Figure 5 indicates

*Survey and documentary research could enhance understanding of the date and associations of Hugh Town's buildings, including these modest houses on Well Cross, located between the genteel terraces of Church Street and the 'industrial' rows on the Strand.*



the survival of historic fabric, defined here as standing pre WWII structures, which may offer potential for archaeological investigation. In the particular context of Hugh Town archaeological potential also includes foreshore and intertidal structures and palaeoenvironmental deposits.

Further documentary research is likely to yield valuable data. This area of study, together with participation in building survey, could provide a challenging and worthwhile avenue for involvement by local people wishing to investigate aspects of their heritage.

Archaeological remains are an important and non-renewable resource and as such are protected by national and local planning legislation. One component of future investigation of both buried archaeological remains and standing buildings may be through more extensive targeted implementation of PPG 15 and PPG 16 legislation as part of the development control process.

### Indicators of archaeological potential

Figure 6 indicates the potential extent of buried archaeological remains, although it must be emphasised that this depiction of potential is indicative, not definitive, and future archaeological investigation and research will test and refine its value.

An understanding of potential is broadly derived from the historic extent of the settlement itself. In simple terms, any location within the area developed up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (as represented on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1908; Fig. 2) is regarded as having potential for standing or buried archaeological features. The historic post-medieval (possibly medieval) core of the settlement is of particular archaeological interest and sensitivity in that deposits are likely to provide valuable information on





*An important part of Hugh Town's shipbuilding industry was located in this area of the Strand from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until c. 1870. Traces may survive within the made ground below the present 'promenade' area and there are certainly surviving remains in the intertidal zone: in 2001 strong winds revealed two cobbled slipways on Town Beach. Documentary sources indicate a post medieval burial ground for shipwreck victims somewhere in the vicinity of Carn Thomas.*

its early form and development. Urban archaeological remains are likely to be more complex in such areas. In the particular instance of Hugh Town, however, the strong evidence for human activity predating the establishment of the town from a number of points within and

around it means that the entire area must be regarded as having significant archaeological potential.

To avoid repetition, the assessments of archaeological potential for each of the nine character areas in Hugh Town included in section 5, below, do not refer to the potential for archaeology predating the development of Hugh Town unless there are specific indications of such remains from that area.

Figure 6 identifies a number of sites and areas of known historic significance: i.e., those where the presence of a significant structure or feature has been demonstrated by archaeological investigation or can be identified from historic maps but does not now survive above ground. It also records the approximate location of a number of sites recorded in documentary sources and of several casual artefact finds.

**NB.** Overviews of the archaeological potential of nine 'character areas' within the town are presented in section 5.

## 5 Present settlement character

### Understanding character

The CSUS investigation, in addition to assessing the broad elements of settlement character defining Hugh Town, identified nine distinct character areas within the town's historic extent (see below; Fig. 7 and character area summary sheets 1 - 9). These character areas are differentiated from each other by their varied historic origins, functions and resultant urban topography, by the processes of change which have affected each subsequently (indicated, for example, by the relative completeness or loss of historic fabric, or significant changes in use and status) and the extent to which these elements and processes are evident in the current townscape. Each character area therefore has its own individual 'biography' which has determined its present character.

Together with the assessment of overall settlement character, the nine character areas offer a means of understanding the past and the present. In turn, that

*An urban townscape: Hugh Street.*



*The Town Hall.*

understanding provides the basis for a positive approach to planning future change which will maintain and reinforce the historic character and individuality of the town: *sustainable* local distinctiveness.

### Overall settlement character

Hugh Town is small. The main axis of the town from the quay to the church can be walked in a few minutes and the distance between shores across the narrowest point of the isthmus is less than 150m. Green open spaces and seascapes are always close and the low level of vehicle traffic during most of the day makes the streets quiet enough to hear birdsong. 'Hardly more than a village', concluded the Cornish author Jack Clemo. Yet, while undoubtedly of village size, Hugh Town is just as certainly urban in character, both in function and form. 'Here the metropolis . . . here are the shops, the hotels and the port; the full tide of human existence on the Scillies flows at Hugh Town,' explained an early 20<sup>th</sup> century visitor guide (presumably partly tongue in cheek), and it continues to be the 'capital' of Scilly, the primary transport node and the administrative, commercial, retail, leisure and service centre for the islands.

More importantly, in terms of character, its major streets are essentially urban in appearance, with continuous frontages, building lines hard to the pavements or set back only behind small, formal gardens, predominantly urban architectural forms and a number of landmark buildings. It has a small formal park and a Victorian Town Hall. At the same time, the small scale of the place frequently results in a juxtaposition of urban forms with vernacular elements deriving from the settlement's rural and maritime links: immediately adjacent to the impressive classically-influenced formality of the Town Hall, for example, stands a traditional Scillonian cottage with whitewashed walls of coursed granite rubble, accompanied by a well preserved single-storey pantiled outbuilding. The proximity of the town to prominent natural features - Buzza Hill, Carn Thomas, the Garrison and the sea – also means that its true scale is always evident. 'Urbanism writ small' is a key aspect of Hugh Town's character.

### Settlement form

The primary element in Hugh Town's topography (Figure 4) is the elongated form resulting from its constrained physical location. The town expanded along the isthmus from an early core close to the quay (see section 3; Figure 3). Hugh Street represents the early axis of this growth, with subsequent extension along the road to Old Town, now Church Street. Lower and Higher Strand front a historic working area along the northern foreshore but also represent expansion of the settlement along the route to the central and north-eastern part of the island.

There are several wider areas along the length of Hugh Street, each representing a significant point in the development of Hugh Town's historic topography (section 3). The Bank maintains part of the former open space around the main landing place; the triangular space bounded by Kavorna and Lloyds TSB marks the edge of the early settlement around this landing place, from which it expanded along Hugh

*Hugh Town from the south, showing its constrained location. The linear underwater feature in the right foreground is the SWEB power cable to St Agnes (CCC Historic Environment Service, 1987: ACS 1304).*





Street on a new axis. The 'square' fronting the Bishop and Wolf and the Parade similarly represent former open spaces at the edge of the settlement which, as the town expanded beyond them, became fossilised in the building layout; the latter was enclosed and formalised as a miniature urban park in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. A further open space was created to front the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Methodist chapel in Church Street and another below Tregarthen's Hotel has been created by demolition during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The resulting 'string of beads' effect, with a series of small open areas linked by Hugh Town's main streets, is a particularly distinctive feature of the town.

The town's other streets - and the houses and other buildings located on them - are decidedly secondary to these major alignments. To the west the settlement expanded over the lower slopes of the Garrison in fairly haphazard fashion among small fields and gardens, served by a network of sinuous lanes. North of Hugh Street, Thoroughfare (Blood Alley) represents a former back lane which also provided access to working buildings along the shorefront. To the east, Well Cross and Buzza Street represent infilling of the isthmus between shorelines; Church Road, Back Lane and Ram's Valley are similar but may also preserve routes between former hamlets at Carn Thomas, Donderry and below Buzza Hill, now incorporated within the town.

There are significant contrasts in form between the earlier and later portions of the town. In the former, the streets and



*The Bank: the view north west.*

lanes are relatively narrow with two and three storey buildings built tight to the pavement or carriageway. The resulting strong sense of enclosure is relieved by the series of 'squares' along Hugh Street (see above), by the view to Town Beach through the slip alongside the Atlantic Hotel and the unexpected greenery of cottage gardens on the south west side of the Bank. In the later part of the town to the east, Church Street and the Parade are wider and more open. Most of the buildings here are of two storeys and set back from the street line behind small front gardens. The Strand opens onto a green 'promenade' behind the foreshore with wide views out to the Pool and off islands. The smaller cross streets in this area, Ingram's Opening, Well Cross and Buzza Street, also have a relatively more open character, not least from the expanse of sky revealed at their seaward ends.

*The view north west along Hugh Street towards the Bank from the 'triangle' fronting Lloyds TSB and the Kavorna café.*





*A traditional outbuilding with granite rubble walls and pantile roof located behind Parade Cottage, adjacent to the Town Hall.*

### Survival of historic fabric

A key component of Hugh Town's distinctiveness is the completeness of historic fabric through much of the town, contributing significantly to its interest, charm and quality. There have been losses, but in much of the core area of the town these are not immediately evident. Much of the standing fabric is of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but there is a notable earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century contribution in Hugh Street.

The town possesses a number of interesting 'landmark' buildings, almost all relatively modest in scale and elaboration; the part of the Garrison closest to the town includes nationally important late Elizabethan military structures and a good collection of 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings and defensive features. In general, however, it is the quality, quantity and diversity of less intentionally prominent buildings which is so striking. These include row and terrace housing, some of modestly genteel status, and a variety of houses ranging from Regency and Victorian villas to vernacular farmhouse and cottage dwellings. There are also interesting survivals of historic outhouses, stores and workshops. Hugh Town is particularly notable for the good survival of original fenestration and doors and of external detailing such as railings, gates, storm porches and dwarf walls; the quality and survival of cast iron railings along Church Street rivals that of any other British urban streetscape of similar period.

### Architecture, materials and detail

The best known element in Hugh Town's architecture is the strong late Georgian and Regency influence. Several terraces and individual houses in this style probably date to the late 1830s and 1840s (see above, section 3), probably following contemporary developments in Penzance, Truro and Plymouth. Buildings in this group are marked out by their 'severe simplicity of design' (Pevsner) and rather smaller scale than might be expected from the polite quality of the architecture. Most are of two storeys although there are some instances of three, notably a fine terrace on the south side of Church Street. These aspects combine with plain materials (predominantly coursed dressed granite or render) and high quality detailing. Particular features are round-headed door openings, often with semi-circular fanlights, bow and bay windows and minor classical elements in the design of porches and door casings. Lemon Hall, perhaps the finest expression of this style in Hugh Town, has end pilasters, an eaves cornice and Doric pilasters and entablature to the front door opening.

*Lemon Hall, Church Street. (Photograph: Eric Berry.)*





*Elevations of coursed dressed granite and colourwashed render on the Bank.*

Some of Hugh Town's older domestic buildings are in a plain and robust vernacular-derived style, giving a sense of traditional farmhouse or cottage dwellings set down in an urban setting. These are of two storeys, mostly of three window range and built of coursed granite rubble, in some cases rendered but frequently simply whitewashed. They are low in height and most may originally have been thatched. Examples include Wahroonga, known as Clemmies Cotage, behind Buzza Street, Parade Cottage, adjoining the Town Hall, and the group of cottages on Hugh Street adjoining the Bank. These are all late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century in date but a comparable simplicity can be seen in the probably mid 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced cottages fronting the Strand.

Several notable buildings of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century make strong reference to earlier local architectural forms.

*Granite ashlar with strap pointing on the former Bible Christian chapel, Church Street, 1899.*



Richardson and Gill's 1920s terraces in Hugh Street for the Duchy of Cornwall incorporate the round-headed door openings and use of squared granite of some of the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings but combine these elements with the dour severity of the Lower and Higher Strand terraces. An unusual row of ground floor plus attic cottages at Porthcressa Terrace, probably built for the Duchy at about the same time, is much more flamboyant in design, incorporating classical detailing in the form of concrete pilasters and columned porches. The Isles of Scilly Steamship Company offices and Barclays Bank in Hugh Street, both of the 1930s,



*'Wahroonga', also known as Clemmies Cottage, Porthcressa Terrace. Coursed granite rubble and slate roof. Listed Grade II. An example of Hugh Town's surviving vernacular dwellings of the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

are of a nicely determined scale for their immediate context and incorporate design references to older buildings nearby. A similar approach is apparent in the fine quality granite stonework and two-storey bay windows of a house (now St Mary's Hall) built close to the church in 1933. The modest traditional form of some of the 1950s public housing at Porthcressa, carried out with design variations between adjacent units, simple render finishes and Delabole slate roofs, is also notable.

The dominant historic building material in Hugh Town is local granite. Spence described it in 1793 as 'coarse brown granite' and the colour, particularly in sunlight, is often warmer than that of granites in Cornwall and elsewhere. Granite rubble is used for some vernacular buildings and also occurs



*Coursed rubble stonework and slate-bung dormer cheeks: Riviera House, the Parade.*

frequently beneath render and on side and rear elevations of other buildings. More frequently the stone is dressed, varying in degree from rough dressing to granite ashlar. Coursing is almost universal and adds a particular regularity and formality to much of the town's fabric. Some buildings have substantial granite dressings, particularly lintels; examples include the pair of houses west of the Town Hall listed as Spanish Ledge Guest House and the Higher Strand terrace. The use of massive rough hewn boulders on the façade of the Post Office emphasises the building's eccentric qualities but may echo occasional use of very large stones in some vernacular Scillonian buildings.

There is considerable use of colour-washed render, notably on some of the larger polite structures such as Lemon Hall and Lyonesse, but also on less prominent buildings such as Kavorna, in Hugh Street and the row of double fronted houses on the north side. Two substantial late 19<sup>th</sup> century detached villas at the east end of Church Street have

*A cottage row and gardens on Hugh Street, near the Bank.*



painted render combined with raised quoins, canted bays, string courses and dormers. Stucco is rare in Hugh Town but appears on Strand House and a three-storey house on the north side of the Parade. There is a very limited incidence of the use of pebbledash on historic buildings. Colour treatments throughout are predominantly in pale hues but there are a few instances of stronger colours. Some rubble faced buildings are painted or whitewashed. Slate hanging occurs frequently on recent developments as a form of token 'local distinctiveness' but in fact appears to have been little used historically, other than on the cheeks of dormers: one photograph of c. 1870 shows slate hanging on the first floor façade of a shop on the Bank and other later 19<sup>th</sup> century images show two examples of slating on gables, above the level of adjoining roofs.

Roofs are predominantly of slate, frequently scanted. Imported 'double Roman' pantiles were used extensively in the past but the main survival is now on outbuildings. Some poorer houses in Hugh Town had roped thatch roof coverings until at least the 1920s but none now survive. Historic roofs are of a variety of forms – gabled, hipped and half hipped – and a large proportion feature hipped or half hipped dormers. Some of these are probably original but many others were added in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in response to increasing demand for visitor accommodation.

Window openings are predominantly vertical – only on lower buildings do they approach more nearly to square form – with most originally sashed. Distinctive tripartite sashes, probably produced for the Duchy of Cornwall in the pre-WWII period, occur on the late 18<sup>th</sup> century terrace fronting onto the north-east side of the Bank and the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century terraces in Hugh Street and Porthcressa Terrace. Bow and bay windows are a feature of some of the Church Street terraces and occur sporadically elsewhere.



The historic importance of retail provision in Hugh Town has left a number of good shopfronts, on the Bank and around the east end of Hugh Street, and several examples of houses in which part of the ground floor has been converted to provide shop accommodation.

### Streetscapes

'The gardens of the cottages are luxuriant with green leaves and flowers all the year round', noted an 1897 visitor guide, and the presence of greenery and natural colour is still a very significant feature in many parts of the town. Trees and shrubs soften the visibility of buildings on the rising ground both east and west of the town and the numerous 'Cornish' palms and aloes add an exotic element to many parts of the town. Flowers and overhanging greenery soften the historic rubble walls which are themselves a significant feature of lanes across the lower slopes of the Garrison and on rear property boundaries throughout the town.

Woodley referred in 1822 to Hugh Town's 'lanes, alleys, courtlages, etc . . . paved with round stones' and historic

photographs show rounded beach cobbles used to surface pavements in, for example, Silver Street and outside Lloyds TSB and Kavorna; at the latter a slabbed path runs through the cobbled area providing a level walking surface and barrow-way. There are small exposures of cobble surfacing at various points in the town and a larger survival on the east side of the park area in the Parade, post-dating its enclosure in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Good quality granite slabs are used to surface pavements in some areas of the town, on part of the north east side of the Bank, for example, often combined with dressed granite kerbstones. Rough dressed moorstone kerbs survive in places, particularly away from the centre; these are notable for their softer, more rounded appearance.

Woodley and other 19<sup>th</sup> century observers commented on the good quality of roads around Hugh Town, that to the church at Old Town being described in the 1820s as 'hard and dry, made of *ram* and fine sand'. (*Ram* is the Scillonian term for the clayey granitic subsoil termed *rab* in Cornwall. In both places it was also traditionally used

*Distinctive surfacing. Left: Granite slab paving on the Bank. Right: a kerb of rough-dressed moorstone.*





*Low levels of street signage and the general uncluttered aspect of Hugh Town's streetscapes contribute significantly to its sense of quality and character.*

for bonding stone walls.) Roads within the town appear to have been similarly surfaced into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, often bounded by cobbled gutters. There are *ram* surfaced paths at the east end of Porthcressa Bank, below Buzza Hill.

Hugh Town is particularly notable for the generally low incidence of street furniture, particularly traffic signage, and the main streets consequently have a clean and uncluttered appearance which complements the historic fabric. Exceptions are the cluster of telephone boxes and street and commercial signage at the western end of the Parade and the proliferation of signs on the wall fronting the south side of Ingram's Opening.

Overall levels of traffic within the built up area appear lower than for settlements of comparable size on the mainland, with a significant level of vehicle - pedestrian conflict only for brief periods around the

*The view north along Well Cross from Church Street offers a narrow glimpse of the sea.*



arrival and departure times of the *Scillonian*. Parking, however, is relatively undisciplined and often visually intrusive.

### Landmarks and views

Hugh Town's major landmarks are natural landforms, their prominence emphasised in some cases by historic buildings: the granite outcrop of Carn Thomas and the rugged Newford Island beyond, Buzza Hill, topped by the low tower of its 1820s windmill, the ridge behind the church and the high ground of the Garrison surmounted by Star Castle. This strong presence of the 'natural' contributes substantially to Hugh Town's specific sense of place. Views from these points



*Buzza Hill, with its early 19<sup>th</sup> century windmill tower, looms over the east end of Hugh Town.*

are spectacular, providing panoramas across the town and beyond to the surrounding seascape and off islands.

The historic core of Hugh Town for the most part turns its back on the sea: only on Lower and Higher Strand and at the east end of Porthcressa Bank are there historic buildings which look seaward. The main streets lie close to the shore but there are few views out and in good weather it would be easy to forget while on the lower ground that this is a port and 'seaside' town; glimpses of the sea gained from Hugh Street through the slip alongside the Atlantic Hotel and from Church Street looking north along Well Cross come almost as a surprise.



There is a small number of prominent buildings – the Town Hall, the church, the former Bible Christian chapel in Church Street, the Old Chapel in Garrison Lane, the former steward’s house (Bishop and Wolf) and the Post Office – but the only ‘set-piece’ townscape views are those up Church Street to St Mary’s Church and the reverse view towards the Parade and Town Hall. The Garrison curtain walls and bastions, once strongly visible from the town, are now largely masked by post war housing built close below them. This has also diminished the impact of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Hugh House and Veronica Lodge, which originally dominated the town; they still form strong visual elements on the Garrison slopes.

One of the most significant impacts on views *within* the town, and consequently on Hugh Town’s overall sense of historic character, has been the widespread post-war alteration of the rear and side elevations of buildings, primarily in the form of conversions and extensions intended to provide additional visitor accommodation. These have brought radical changes to building form and an accompanying introduction of utilitarian design elements and modern materials which contrast strongly with the distinctiveness and high quality of much of the earlier architecture. The high level of permeability within the town via lanes, alleys and the two beaches means that much of this later development is highly visible and has a disproportionate impact on perceptions of the town.

*The former Bible Christian chapel, Church Street.*



## The character areas

### 1: Church, Carn Thomas & Buzza Hill

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 1)

Substantial houses and institutional buildings in their own grounds around the low ridge forming the eastern extent of Hugh Town. Trees, garden greenery, open spaces and prominent landforms contribute a strong ‘natural’ element.

The higher ground at the eastern end of the isthmus – Buzza Hill, Carn Thomas and the low ridge behind the church - forms a strong topographic boundary to the historic settlement, dividing Hugh Town from the remainder of St Mary’s. This break is emphasised by the uninterrupted skyline presented by each of the natural landforms (excepting Buzza Hill’s landmark windmill), in contrast to the townscape behind which they rise. The two roads linking the town with Old Town and the rest of its hinterland thread through the area, which thus acts as a gateway to the settlement.

Initially outside and later on the margin of the historic settlement, this area has been the location for a number of institutional buildings: St Mary’s Church in the late 1830s, Augustus Smith’s boys’ school at Carn Thomas, now used as a community fitness centre, in the 1850s, probably replacing an earlier school building in the same area, and the lifeboat house, also at Carn Thomas, of c. 1900. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this aspect of the area’s historic character was reinforced with the building of the islands’ hospital on the south east side of Buzza Hill in 1938 and provision of an electricity generating facility in a disused quarry nearby at about the same time. The Isles of Scilly’s first secondary school was constructed close to Carn Thomas in the 1960s and in the late 1990s a new health centre has been built on a



*St Mary's church from Buzza Hill. This hill, the massive granite outcrop of Carn Thomas, to the left, and rising ground behind the church, together form a strong topographic boundary to Hugh Town.*

ridge-top site close to the hospital on the southern fringe of the character area.

The area is also notable for some substantial houses, including the Chaplaincy, probably of the 1830s or 1840s, adjacent to the church; the now demolished house known as the Rookery, at the east end of Higher Strand, was probably of the same period. Two late 19<sup>th</sup> century villas, Field House and Mundesley, lie at the east end of Church Street and a few other late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses are dispersed along Church Road, representing development, albeit on a limited scale, of Hugh Town's 'suburbs'. The stylish 1930s house now again known as St Mary's Hall occupied the last portion of the former open space

*The gate to the Chaplaincy, Church Road. Greenery and good quality boundary features are characteristic of the area.*



at the east end of Church Street. Several of the buildings in the area have good quality boundary features; for example, granite ashlar gateposts to the Chaplaincy, a low ashlar wall on the Church Street elevation of the Godolphin Hotel and dressed granite walls topped by ornamental railings fronting Field House.

Gardens and grounds around some of these buildings, particularly those near the church, provide an important 'green' element and sense of space in the area. The presence of larger trees around the Chaplaincy emphasises the effect of the higher ground here, providing a transition between Hugh Town and the countryside beyond. This natural element in the character of the area is enhanced by the prominence of Carn Thomas, itself a striking granite rockform, and the open heathy summits of Buzza Hill and the ridge behind the church. These vantage points offer striking views across the town to the Garrison and its historic buildings and a wide sweep to seaward. Buzza Hill's prominence was acknowledged in prehistory through the construction of a group of substantial stone burial monuments and in more recent times as the site of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century windmill, the tower of which was refurbished in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a memorial to Edward VII.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century much of the character area was divided into small bulb and potato plots. Most of this land has been built over during the past 40-50 years, predominantly with high density bungalow developments; the 1920-30s grey brick row at Porthcressa Terrace represents an earlier encroachment. There is some remaining small scale horticultural use on the east and south sides of Buzza Hill and the windbreak hedges around and between the fields provide an additional green element in the area.



*Post-war housing encroaching on flower fields south east of Buzza Hill.*

### Archaeological potential

The three earlier prehistoric chambered cairns on Buzza Hill represent the earliest known evidence of human activity in the Hugh Town area. One of these, although disturbed, survives as a standing monument, another probably underlies the windmill tower but the third is no longer identifiable as an above ground feature and may have been erased by stone robbing, quarrying or agricultural activity; sub-surface deposits are likely to survive. Another probable cairn is recorded in a field close to the Health Centre and a scatter of flintwork is known from garden finds in the Pilots Retreat area. There is significant potential for other remains and in particular it is possible that other funerary monuments may once have existed on the higher ground.

Documentary sources indicate the potential for other archaeological remains in the area. Troutbeck noted a 'piece of ground where strangers are buried' on the south side of Carn Thomas, north of the road; 'strangers' here probably referred to shipwreck victims and it seems likely that this site is somewhere between the former boys' school and the eastern end of Higher Strand. Troutbeck also reported 'a small village of cottages, called Down Derry' sited a furlong (200m) south of Carn Thomas and east of the road from Hugh Town to Old Town church (that is, in the area of the present church). The

place-name survived to be shown on the 1908 Ordnance Survey map. Remains of this settlement may survive below gardens in this area, as may deposits relating to an industrial building, probably connected with shipbuilding, shown north of the church on early photographs. There are former quarries near the summit and on the western and north eastern flanks of Buzza Hill which may preserve evidence of the winning of stone for local building.

Building survey and documentary research may more closely date construction of the Chaplaincy and Rookery and identify the location and any surviving structural remains of a school at Carn Thomas referred to by Woodley in 1822.

## 2: Church Street and the Parade

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 2)

Nineteenth century expansion from the historic core of the town: polite houses, terraces and institutional buildings in a formal townscape setting. There is an atmosphere of quiet and modest gentility, enhanced by a sense of space, good survival of high quality detail and the presence of well-ordered gardens, shrubs and palms.

This area is the product of the substantial growth which took place in Hugh Town from the later 18<sup>th</sup> century through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the form of which created a significantly different character for the

*Late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses at the west end of the Parade.*







*Fine stonework and a historic shop front at the west end of the Parade.*

settlement as a whole (see section 3). This is initially evident in the greater sense of space in the streetscapes: the Parade and Church Street are broad, certainly by contrast with the strongly enclosed streets and spaces of the older portion of the town (see character area 6). The gentle curve and slight widening of Church Street as it rises towards St Mary's Church, with the strong perspective effect provided by terraces and other buildings presenting long facades to the street, gives it the air of a 'designed' townscape, much more so than in other parts of the town. (In fact, the piecemeal development of this area over a relatively long period makes it very uncertain that this was the case.)

The width and openness of the spaces, for the most part uncluttered by street furniture and signage, are emphasised by the openings out of the Parade and Church Street - Ingram's Opening, Lower Strand, Well Cross, Back Lane and Buzza Street - and by many of the buildings being set back from the pavement line behind small gardens. The strong presence of greenery and garden colour is an important element in the character of the area.

The significance of the area within Hugh Town is emphasised by the presence of several institutional buildings: Augustus Smith's infants' and girls' schools of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Town Hall and Bible Christian chapel of the 1880s and 1890s. The architectural character of the area, however, is primarily established by its domestic buildings, a mix of terraces and individual houses. A few date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (on the north and east sides of the Parade, for example, and the cottage adjoining the Bell Rock Hotel), but the dominant element is a late Georgian and Regency styling originating in the later 1830s and 1840s.

While the overall sense of a distinctive architectural style is strong, however, there is also diversity and individuality throughout. Most of the terraces are set behind small gardens, for example, but one block on the south side of Church Street is set hard to the pavement, with bay windows projecting into the footway. There is also a mix of single and double fronted houses, of coursed dressed granite and render on facades and, while most buildings are of two storeys, these vary in height and there are also some of three storeys. Dormers break many rooflines. Throughout, however, the key elements are the modest scale and the sense of quality and polite prosperity. The latter is particularly evident in details such as the ornate railings, often set on dressed granite dwarf walls, which form a very significant element in Church Street.

*The high quality and good survival of detail is an important element in the character of the area.*





There is a high degree of completeness of historic fabric, making the three later 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the area particularly conspicuous. Park House, in a key position on the south side of the Parade, was completed in 1970 to provide local authority residential accommodation for the elderly. Although of granite, the semi-coursed rubble construction, modern fenestration and subsequent lean-to extension on the front elevation, do not maintain the strong air of quality in design and materials which dominates elsewhere in the character area. A similar assessment applies to Methodist Church House, added in 1962 to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace at the east end of Church Street and described in 1968 as ‘arguably the island’s most contemporary-looking building’.



*The museum and Lemon Hall, Church Street.*

The Isles of Scilly Museum, built in the late 1960s on a previously vacant plot, was a bold design of its period but its scale and horizontal massing are inappropriate to its high quality setting. The blank rectangular side elevations and inactive coloured panels facing the ground floor are over prominent in the streetscape.

#### **Archaeological potential**

Building survey and documentary research would be valuable in refining the chronology of development for this area. The area formerly associated with shipbuilding on the north side of Church Street may retain traces of industrial activity.

### **3: Town Beach, Thoroughfare and the Strand**

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 3)

An important visual ‘gateway’ to Hugh Town for arrivals by sea, this is the town’s historic working foreshore and related areas. Buildings and sites associated with maritime activity are set around a spectacular curving beach.

This area represents Hugh Town’s long history of working links with the sea, its origins in the sheltered landing place created by construction of the first quay at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequent expansion eastward along the shore was an important component in the settlement’s growth. The area now provides an important ‘gateway’ impression of Hugh Town for arrivals by sea, a striking setting created by the wide curve of the gently shelving sandy beach between the stonework of the old quay and natural rock form of Carn Thomas.

To the north west, the beach is fringed by the rear plots of buildings fronting onto the north west end of Hugh Street, the Bank and Thoroughfare. Troutbeck noted in the 1790s that high tides enter ‘some of the dwellers’ back court yards and houses, built on the strand’, and some of these yards, walled to keep the sea out, still survive, together with small stores and outbuildings. The almost continuous line of historic walling along this portion of the beach is a distinctive feature.

*Town Beach, viewed from the Garrison.*





*The north-west end of Town Beach, a key part of Hugh Town's maritime 'gateway'.*

Many of the shoreline plots in this zone have been developed in the post-war period to provide visitor accommodation, through a combination of new build and conversions and extensions to the rear of premises fronting the main streets. Designs and materials make little reference to the local context or to the high visual sensitivity of the area as a gateway. This portion of the character area, between the Mermaid Inn, adjoining the landward end of the quay, to Holgate's Green, at the west end of Lower Strand, was specifically identified as 'not particularly attractive' and targeted for action in the 1997 Conservation Area Partnership proposals.

Thoroughfare, set behind the shore, developed as a back lane to the north east of Hugh Street with openings onto the beach, now almost entirely infilled. It accommodates several historic buildings – houses, sheds, workshops, sail lofts,

*A mix of single and double-fronted terraced housing on Higher Strand. Few other historic buildings in Hugh Town face the sea.*



stores, etc - and substantial stone boundary walls; it is narrow, sinuous and accessed from the core of the town by a series of alleys. This topography and the few breaks in the building line on the seaward side create a strong sense of enclosure. This area has also seen insertion of utilitarian structures, conversions and extensions based on designs and materials without local associations, and this has done much to erode its character.

The solid and severe stone-fronted mid 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced housing along Higher and Lower Strand maintains a strong sense of a working association with the sea, facing out to St Mary's Pool



*Historic buildings on Thoroughfare, looking east to the lane at the rear of the north side of the Parade.*

across the informal grassed 'promenade' which was the main location for the town's 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century shipbuilding industry. These rows are notable for having been relatively little altered and survive with substantially less change and erosion of their historic character than most comparable industrial housing in Cornwall. This is particularly notable given their prominent 'sea-front' position and the degree of change experienced by many historic buildings in similar locations elsewhere.

### **Archaeological potential**

Activity has focused on the northern foreshore since the creation of Hugh Town and there is potential in this area for sequences of buildings, plots and boundary features. Investigation of standing buildings and documentary

research may provide evidence of function and dating. It is likely that parts of the shoreline around normal high tide range have been consolidated and provided with sea defences, with potential for preservation of earlier structures and of occupation debris having been incorporated in the make up. Remains of shipbuilding and related activity may survive as buried deposits in the intertidal area and on the 'green' fronting Lower and Higher Strand. There are documentary references to finds of human remains at the eastern end of the Strand, perhaps an extension of the customary burial place for shipwreck victims noted close to Carn Thomas (see Character Area 1).

#### 4: Porthcressa Bank

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 4)

Historically an open area behind the foreshore, used for shipbuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but with earlier small-scale settlement at the eastern end. The present character derives from a low density mix of residential, commercial and leisure uses which developed in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. An informal 'promenade' is set behind a popular bathing beach and there are fine views to seaward.

This is a level area lying between Hugh Town's 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century eastward expansion and the southern shore of the isthmus. A small settlement, separate from Hugh Town, lay below Buzza Hill from at least the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century but most of the character area remained open and undeveloped in the historic period. It is



*The cottage row at the south end of Buzza Street, successor to a small settlement in this area since at least the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. The curving rubble wall bounding the seaward frontage appears in the earliest photographs of the area, c. 1870.*

likely that the foreshore was a focus for small-scale maritime activity and during the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps earlier, it was used intensively for shipbuilding. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the area developed a leisure function, based around the fine bathing beach and spectacular views to the open sea. Later 20<sup>th</sup> century sea defences behind the beach have created an informal 'promenade' and grassed area with seating along the shore between the foot of Buzza Hill and Little Porth.

Historic fabric within this character area is generally small-scale and vernacular in style and material. The cottages at the seaward end of Buzza Street, successors to the earlier settlement in the area, have an informal, 'unplanned' quality, not least because of their orientation to the shoreline rather than to the rectilinear street layout. Around them lie a variety of wooden and stone outbuildings, porches and glasshouses, accompanied by robust rubble walls. This informality is enhanced by the proximity of heathy vegetation around the disused quarry on the slopes of Buzza Hill immediately to the east.

*The rubble-built former lifeboat shed was probably associated with the shipbuilding industry located in this area until c. 1870. It is now the focus for a cluster of small temporary buildings in a variety of commercial and service uses.*



Short cottage rows on Buzza Street and the east side of Ingram's Opening may have been linked to the development of shipbuilding in the area; the substantial outbuildings surviving on some of the rear plots of houses on the south side of Church Street were probably also to serve this or other maritime activities. These buildings, set gable to the street with substantial rubble walls between them along Porthcressa Road and the west end of Rams Valley, are a distinctive element of this area. Historic photographs and maps show a number of boatsheds along the shoreline, one of which survives. An unusual circular structure of unknown



*Post-war low density infill and commercial use of the former open area behind the beach.*

function is shown at the seaward end of Ingram's Opening on a number of late 19<sup>th</sup> century images but is not depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey maps of the area. It was probably demolished when the area was 'tidied' in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the post WWII period much of the former open area has been loosely infilled with a mix of residential and commercial buildings. These include a substantial L-shaped block of flats, originally constructed as public housing, a handful of bungalows, a glazed public shelter and toilets and a modern benefits office. At the western end, adjoining Little Porth, a beach cafe and guest house have been built in prominent positions close to the shore. This area has also seen extensive conversion and extension of earlier



*The landward side of the character area is partly bounded by substantial walling and outbuildings to the rear of properties on Church Street.*

buildings, with added storeys, flat roofs, external staircases and balconies with 'ranch-style' fencing. The diversity of scale, style and function of these buildings to some extent reflects the loose grouping and *ad hoc* quality of historic elements in the vicinity. In general, however, the designs and materials fail to enhance the historic character and quality of the setting.

#### **Archaeological potential**

The foreshore and intertidal area offers potential for archaeological deposits relating to shipbuilding and other maritime activity and for survival of traces of the sea defences first constructed in 1771 and renewed several times subsequently; the consolidated ground behind the defences may incorporate dumped domestic material. There may also be buried remains relating to the small post-medieval settlement in the

*Heathy vegetation and the windmill tower and disused quarry on Buzza Hill form a strong eastern boundary to the character area.*





vicinity. Investigation of standing buildings and documentary research could provide additional information on industrial and maritime activity.

### 5: Porthcressa post-war housing

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 5)

An area of later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing on the eastern slopes of the Garrison. The traditional form and quality of design and materials in some of the earlier public housing, together with the proximity of the development to the historic core of Hugh Town and Garrison defences, makes this a significant area in terms of the overall character of the settlement.

Development of this previously greenfield area began in the post WWII period, initially through action by the Council of the Isles of Scilly to provide much-needed public housing. The first developments were in Parsons Field and Sally Port and are notable for their modest historically-derived design and the high quality of materials and treatment. Subsequent development, both public and private, has covered the southern portion of the slopes of the Garrison and fringed the seashore at the west end of Porthcressa around Little Porth. The dense siting on

the sloping topography has created some interesting combinations of massing and roofscapes, now enhanced by mature gardens and small trees. Given the sensitivity of the historic and topographic setting, however, elements of the development have attracted criticism for their impact on the historic character of the area (see section 3).

### Archaeological potential

Two excavations in this area during development of public housing revealed important remains of the late Iron Age and Roman periods and indications of early medieval settlement in the near vicinity (see section 2). There have been finds of imported medieval pottery here, suggesting activity in the area before the founding of Hugh Town, and the western side of the character area provides the context for the nationally significant Elizabethan and later defences of the Garrison, including the rock-cut ditch fronting the Garrison curtain wall and extra-mural Lower Benham battery. Archaeological potential throughout this area should therefore be regarded as very high, with a presumption that proposals for ground-breaking on any scale within it should be subject to archaeological evaluation.



*This new quarter of Hugh Town developed in the post war period, extending over an area of fields and gardens between the historic core (top and right), the southern shore of the isthmus and the Garrison curtain wall (left) (CCC Historic Environment Service, 1987: ACS 1303.)*

## 6: The historic core: the Bank and Hugh Street

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 6)

The historic core of the settlement and still Hugh Town's commercial focus. A narrow main street and several small irregular 'squares' are for the most part strongly enclosed by stone-fronted or plain rendered buildings, creating a tight grained, strongly urban streetscape.

Hugh Town's initial focus as a settlement was around a landing place sheltered by the quay, below the entrance to the Elizabethan defensive complex on the hilltop. The location in the same area of a medieval chapel suggests that there may have been an earlier phase of activity on the site. Hugh Street represents an early, probably planned, expansion from this nucleus, laid out to the south east along the isthmus (see section 3). Further expansion along this axis, together with infilling of the original open area near the quay, created a long, narrow, slightly sinuous street, interrupted by several irregularly-shaped 'squares'.

Within this area buildings are predominantly two-storey and small in scale. One of the few larger historic buildings is that occupied by the Co-Operative, which is made uncharacteristically prominent in the streetscape by its stark external

*The view north west along Hugh Street. The strong contrasts of sunlight and shadow in the narrow streets contribute to the marked sense of enclosure.*



decoration, prominent signage and lack of detailing. Buildings are generally set tight to the pavement edge and the continuous granite or plain rendered facades create a strong sense of enclosure, a tightly grained and strongly urban space. This is not entirely unrelieved: there are openings off the street into alleys and lanes, and sudden glimpses to the sea via the narrow slip alongside the Atlantic Hotel and from the space fronting Tregarthen's Hotel; a group of whitewashed vernacular cottages in greenery-filled gardens on the south east side of the Bank comes almost as a surprise in the otherwise rather sombre townscape.



*The 'square' at the east end of Hugh Street. Plain architectural forms, with good quality stonework to front elevations, rubble to the sides. The building on the right is one of a number of historic examples in Hugh Town of shopfronts inserted into domestic buildings.*

There are two particularly prominent buildings in the area: the fine mid 18<sup>th</sup> century house built for the Godolphin steward, now the Bishop and Wolf pub, and the eccentric late 19<sup>th</sup> century Post Office building in Hugh Street, which stands out because of its massive stonework and curious external 'Swiss chalet' roof timbering. There are distinctive historic structures throughout the area, however, predominantly of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, although Pier House is said to incorporate a single storey 17<sup>th</sup> century structure. There is also an unusually strong representation of good quality 1920s and 1930s building in Hugh Street (see above, this section and



*Richardson and Gill's mid 1920s terrace introduced a formal 'designed' element and strong perspectival aspect to this part of Hugh Street.*

section 3). Key elements throughout are the use of coursed, dressed granite or plain render, predominantly in pale tones, on the major elevations. There are a number of bay windows to ground or first floors, plus some examples where the bay is carried from ground floor to roof level, and generally good quality simple sashed fenestration. There are also examples of classically influenced elaboration around doors, including the columned porch to the Lloyds TSB building and pilasters and cornice on the main entrance to the Atlantic Hotel. Overall, however, the area has a lower level of ornamental detailing than the Parade and Church Street (see above).

This character area has functioned as the commercial focus of Hugh Town over a long period and it is still the location for most of the shops, banks, restaurants, cafes and pubs; in 'season' it is the area of the town most frequented by visitors, with a consequent sense of movement and



vitality. There are some good historic shopfronts in the Bank area and towards the eastern end of Hugh Street, some of which represent 19<sup>th</sup> century conversions to the ground floors of houses. There has been some loss of historic fabric at the south east end of the area, along Silver Street and on the 'island' block between it and the Parade, partly to provide new retail premises.

### **Archaeological potential**

As the oldest part of the settlement, this area is likely to offer important evidence of the origins and subsequent development of the town, including its possible medieval antecedents in the form of the chapel and possible burial ground. There is some potential for earlier deposits: some accounts claim that the Roman shrine now on Tresco was recovered from close to the Bank; two possibly Roman column sections and bases in a garden opposite the Atlantic Hotel remain of uncertain origin.

There is likely to be evidence for successions of post medieval structures, plots and boundary features throughout the area, and for evidence of surfaces and activity from former open spaces such as the Bank. Documentary sources refer to a number of wells in the area; in addition to evidence of the structures themselves these may hold well-preserved organic remains. Standing buildings are likely to provide indications of sequences of adaptation and rebuilding and a detailed building survey in this area may also identify further fragments of the medieval chapel: part of a mullion window was found reused in a fireplace in a house near the Bank.

*Silver Street, looking south east. This area has seen more substantial redevelopment in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century than any other historic area of Hugh Town.*



## 7: Garrison Lane, Garrison Hill and Jerusalem Terrace

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 7)

Historic expansion from the early core of the town. Cottages and modern housing are dispersed along a network of lanes. Rubble boundary walls and greenery combine with the sloping topography and narrow lanes to create a strong sense of enclosure, interspersed with glimpses into colourful gardens and sudden vistas over town and seascapes.

The lanes which thread through this area represent early elements in the expansion of the town. Garrison Hill is obviously the direct route from the landing place and Bank to the Garrison gate; Garrison Lane, Well Lane and Jerusalem Terrace provided access to the fields and garden plots which formerly lay on the slopes of the Garrison.

Historic houses in the area are generally modest two storey buildings in coursed granite rubble, plain or whitewashed; some have particularly heavy quoins and lintels. There has been some replacement of historic structures and infilling of plots



in the post war period, including some plain and well-proportioned former public housing of about 1960 opposite the chapel in Garrison Lane. The area on the north side of Garrison Hill is occupied by successive extensions to Tregarthen's Hotel, now masking its original historic elements. The major landmark buildings within the area are the ashlar-fronted former Wesleyan Methodist chapel, which dominates the lower end of Garrison Lane, and the imposing Garrison gate and adjoining battery platform and curtain walling at the upper end of Garrison Hill.

*The steep slope of Garrison Hill links the Garrison gate with the historic core of the town at the Bank.*



Rubble boundary walls are a feature through much of this zone, some perhaps retained from earlier fields and gardens on the hill slope. These walls, with the lush greenery overhanging them from many of the gardens, combine with the narrow lanes and alleys and steep gradients to create a strong sense of enclosure. This is relieved by glimpses into gardens, or along joining lanes, and the sudden opening up of views across the roofs of the western end of the town to the bay below and the wider seascape towards the off islands.

Surfacing in the lanes is predominantly modern, with the exception of some fine granite flags at the Garrison gate and a

*Later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development on Garrison Lane. Narrow lanes, substantial rubble walls and overhanging greenery create a strong sense of enclosure.*





*Roofs, greenery and narrow glimpses of the sea from Jerusalem Terrace.*

flight of granite steps at the foot of Garrison Hill. An historic spout survives off Well Lane.

### Archaeological potential

One of the sites which provided excavated evidence for late prehistoric fields, settlement activity and cist burials in the south west portion of Hugh Town (see section 2 and character area 5) adjoins the south side of Garrison Lane and related deposits are likely to extend north; a rotary quern stone recovered from close to the former Wesleyan chapel in this area may provide evidence of this. The reputed find spot of a Roman granite altar on the slopes of the Garrison opens the possibility for a site of this period in the vicinity.

*Beneficial reuse of an historic building: the 1820s Wesleyan chapel in Garrison Lane now hosts the library, Tourist Information Centre and offices of the Council of the Isles of Scilly. Veronica Lodge, the former Garrison commanding officer's residence, is just visible on the skyline.*



Documentary sources suggest the presence towards the northern edge of the area of a number of significant features dating to the historic period, including the possible burial ground associated with the medieval chapel close to the Bank, the extramural battery at Mount Holles and a late 18<sup>th</sup> century tin prospecting pit alongside Garrison Hill. Standing buildings may provide evidence for the chronology of expansion from the early core of the town and boundaries and buried soils could incorporate evidence of use of the area as fields and garden plots. Garrison Hill may retain some indication of historic surfacing on the approach to the Garrison gate.

### 8: The Quay

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 8)

Successive phases of Hugh Town's quay mark major steps in the town's historic development. The distinctive fabric of the quay itself, together with the movement and activity associated with it, are key elements in many views from the town.

Hugh Town quay is physically and functionally separate from the town but clearly of fundamental importance to it. The structure itself records many of the town's and islands' significant milestones: initial construction accompanied Elizabethan fortification of the Garrison and created the sheltered landing place around which the settlement formed; refurbishment in the 1740s was part of the major expansion of the Garrison defences and military presence; the new, much larger, deepwater quay built in the late 1830s testified to Augustus Smith's aspirations for the prosperity of the islands; extension in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was required to serve the expanding flower trade and widening in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to facilitate modern handling methods. This sequence continues with the current proposals for the quay made in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century regeneration planning.



*Hugh Town's daily rhythm focuses around the arrival and departure of the Scillonian.*

The two arms of the quay represent significant pieces of historic engineering. The older structure is particularly distinctive with its facing of large vertically-set coursed rubble and surface of weathered cobbles, but the quality of construction indicated in the squared granite blocks making up the 19<sup>th</sup> century portion and breakwater walling at the landward end is also impressive. The sense of the quay as a 'place apart' from the town is reinforced by the curious dressed granite piers at the entrance, reputed to have been erected by Augustus Smith to emphasise his proprietorial control over access. If 'apart', though, the two historic quays, with the boat

*One of Augustus Smith's granite piers at the entrance to the quay.*



movements and activity around them, are key elements in many views from and to the town, an important component in shaping its distinctive setting. The rhythm of Hugh Town life is itself marked out by the brief bustle of pedestrian and vehicle traffic which accompanies arrival and departure of the *Scillonian* and inter-island launches.

### Archaeological potential

The quay structure itself holds evidence of its original construction and successive phases of repair, reconstruction and extension. A number of historic cannon,

*The distinctive stonework of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century quay.  
(Photograph: Eric Berry.)*



reputed to have come from the wreck of the 18<sup>th</sup> century warship *HMS Colossus*, have been set into the Augustus Smith quay as mooring posts. Some of these were moved in 1994 during operations to widen the quay but others remain *in situ*.

Rat Island, now partly overlain by the 19<sup>th</sup> century pier, may hold remains of a military blockhouse and breastwork referred to in documentary sources, and of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century site on which masonry was prepared for construction of the Bishop Rock lighthouse. A WWII pillbox known to have been built on Rat Island may be incorporated within the south-west walling of the storage complex west of the Harbourside Hotel.



## 9: The Garrison

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 9)

The character of the Garrison derives jointly from its well preserved multi-period complex of defensive works and associated structures and its role as an area of open green space and spectacular panoramic views bounding the western edge of the town.

Hugh Town lies in the same topographic relationship to the Garrison as many medieval towns do to a castle. In much the same way, the defensive complex on the Garrison provides a highly visible reminder of the historic background to Hugh Town's origins and location. Its major landmarks dominate the skyline in views from the east and did so from much of the lower part of the town before they were masked in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century by housing and flats built on the upper slopes of the Garrison. The physical presence of the historic area of the Garrison has almost entirely barred what might otherwise have been a large-scale expansion of the settlement westward onto the Garrison hilltop.

*Megalithic door framing on the early 17<sup>th</sup> century guardhouse.*



*Star Castle: the main entrance. The building is the focus of the early defensive complex on the hill and a prominent feature in distant views of the Garrison.*

The Garrison's present character derives partly from its significance as an historic site, an impressive, well preserved and relatively complete multi-period defensive complex. Ashbee has called it 'probably the most impressive work of its kind extant in England' and Star Castle has been called 'one of the most perfect Elizabethan structures in existence' (Richardson and Gill). The importance of the complex is reflected in the Grade 1 listing and Scheduled Monument designation of its major components.

The character and integrity of the historic elements of the Garrison have undoubtedly been eroded by the masking effect of the development which has taken place immediately in front of the curtain wall. It is arguable, however, that the dominant physical presence of the important historic structures which make up Hugh Town's western skyline has been diluted to a much greater extent by the prominence of the half dozen modern bungalows immediately behind the curtain wall.

The other essential component of the Garrison's character is its presence, within



*Views to the town from the Garrison curtain wall fronting Hugh House are partly obscured by the rear elevations and roofs of properties on the west side of Sally Port. Views to the Garrison from the east are also compromised by housing in this area.*

a few minutes of the town, as a large, airy, green space, with boundless views, providing walks and on which are located sports pitches and other recreation facilities. The restrictions on access to the area, either via the gate or sally port, add to its air of separateness, a place apart from the town.

Modern leisure uses of the Garrison echo those of the past. Heath noted in 1750 that roads created to serve the batteries provided convenient walks for the inhabitants. A century later Whitfield described the area west of Star Castle as a 'fragrant wilderness of furze, and heath, stocked with rabbits, and with a fine herd of deer . . . Nature is here perfect in her grandeur.' The deer were introduced by Augustus Smith who also provided seats for public use and perhaps intended the area as a public pleasure ground,

comparable with that which he created on Tresco. A circuit of the Garrison has been almost invariably the first walk urged on visitors by guidebooks from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The present use of part of the summit area as tennis courts and sports pitches also has an historic parallel: a bowling green existed here in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries 'for the recreation of the officers of the Garrison'. The use of Hugh House as a hotel in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and of Star Castle from the 1930s maintains the strong leisure theme in the Garrison's later historic character.

### **Archaeological potential**

The Garrison has received much more intensive archaeological investigation than any other part of Hugh Town but there is still significant potential for increased understanding and the area should be regarded as one of high archaeological sensitivity. Archaeological investigation which has taken place has been directed towards the military works and almost nothing is known of human activity on the Garrison prior to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Given the density of earlier occupation revealed elsewhere in the Hugh Town area – indeed, across Scilly as a whole – it is likely that the Garrison has more to reveal than a handful of worked flints and the single sherd of Roman pottery recovered during cable trenching between the Garrison gate and Star Castle!



## 6 Heritage-led regeneration and positive management of the historic environment

Characterisation of the historic environment of Hugh Town has produced a valuable dataset on the historic fabric, archaeological potential and townscape character of the historic town. This information can certainly be used as a conventional conservation and planning tool to define constraints, as a yardstick against which to measure new development and policy proposals and as the foundation of conservation management, restoration and enhancement schemes and policies.

More importantly, however, characterisation also reveals the essential principles underpinning Hugh Town's character. Regeneration planning which is informed and inspired by these principles can take a much more sure-footed and proactive approach to creating beneficial change, both reinforcing and enhancing existing character *and* ensuring that new developments are better integrated into the existing urban framework, more focused and ultimately more successful.

### Character-based principles for regeneration

Hugh Town's distinctive character is based on a unique combination of factors. Among these are its striking physical location and the unusual historical topography which this creates, the strong urban qualities it possesses despite its small size and the very high quality, distinctiveness and completeness of the historic built fabric. Combined with these elements are others which derive specifically from the town's island

location: the particular influence of climate and weather and the clarity of light and air, the range of facilities and services available, creating a degree of self sufficiency greater than for a mainland settlement of comparable size, and the very significant environmental benefits derived from low levels of road traffic.

A strategy for Hugh Town's regeneration soundly based on characterisation should incorporate the following as fundamental principles:

- Respect for the contribution which the physical setting and natural elements make to the unique character of the town.
- Recognition of the quality and distinctive character of Hugh Town's historic built environment, and a commitment to achieving equally high quality and distinctiveness in all future new build and the public realm.
- The need to reinstate character and quality in the built environment and public realm where it has been eroded by inappropriate past interventions.
- The potential for presenting Hugh Town as a place of high architectural quality, historic character and significance.
- The significance of Hugh Town as an exemplar of *sustainable* small-scale urban design and topography.

*Hugh Town's distinctive historic character and unique sense of place are important regeneration assets.  
(Photograph: Eric Berry.)*



## Regeneration and the historic environment: key themes for Hugh Town

Characterisation has highlighted regeneration and conservation opportunities both for the historic area of Hugh Town as a whole and for specific areas and sites. These opportunities may be grouped under the following broad themes.

### Creating a new urban 'quarter'

The identified needs for additional affordable housing and small-scale workspaces on St Mary's, if to be located in Hugh Town, could be met through creation a new urban quarter in the Porthcressa area, between Buzza Street and Ingram's Opening. This is currently underdeveloped by comparison with the rest of the historic area of the town, with the 20<sup>th</sup> century built component of the area contributing little to overall character and inadequately complementing the spectacular setting. New development in this area would continue the process of urban expansion, and particularly the formalisation of informal edge-of-settlement areas, which has characterised Hugh Town's history over the past 400 years.

This site is the only potential area for large-scale development within Hugh Town but presents obvious problems in terms of both its vulnerability to the

*The east end of Porthcressa Bank, potentially part of a new quarter for Hugh Town.*



consequences of climate change and the potentially prohibitive financial costs of site assembly. Alternatives could include further development around Old Town, reinstating its historic role as a centre of economic activity as well as population. Or, the example of dispersed small-scale settlements offered by the early hamlets around Hugh Town – at Donderry or Carn Thomas / Higher Strand, for example – could provide a model for new developments located elsewhere on St Mary's, bringing together affordable housing and workspaces. Either of these options would have implications for future transport policies on the island.

### Reinstating character and quality

The later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not altogether kind to Hugh Town's built environment. There are a number of structures of this period in the historic area of the town - some new build, others extensions and conversions - for which it is now clear that the design, materials and location were inappropriate to the quality of the environment in which they were placed. In consequence, there has been a significant erosion of the settlement's historic character and distinctiveness in some areas.

A commitment to obtaining the highest quality in all future changes to the built environment is essential, and a review of Article 4 directions aimed at strengthening control over such change would be beneficial. However, there is also a fundamental need for a programme aimed at repairing the mistakes of the past. This would incorporate relatively simple measures such as providing support for appropriate enhancement of external decoration or installation of more appropriate windows (as proposed under the Conservation Area Partnership). However, it could beneficially extend beyond this, addressing the impact on overall character made by poor quality alterations to modern buildings. The scale of the settlement means that these are frequently intimately set within historic



*Retail premises of the 1960s at the lower end of Garrison Lane. Appropriate redevelopment in such instances could enhance Hugh Town's distinctive sense of place.*

areas and amelioration of obtrusive features (for example, ranch-style fencing on flat roofed extensions) offers the greatest opportunities for short-term improvement in visual appearance.

### **Promoting beneficial change**

In addition to such remedial works, there is a strong case for the planned replacement of some structures, where this would make a significant contribution to reinstating and enhancing historic character, and, in certain instances, for seeking the permanent removal of buildings. The latter option may be regarded as bold and radical but is undoubtedly merited by the inappropriateness of some past development and the enhanced sense of quality and distinctive character which would result. This end might in some instances be achieved through an acknowledgement that particular structures should not be renewed at the end of their lifetime; in other cases strong arguments could be made for a proactive approach, seeking early demolition. Clearly, such an approach would require very substantial funding, backed by a robust policy and legal framework. It would also require a consultation process to ensure public support and identify priorities.

### **Enhancing the public realm**

Public realm works could make a significant contribution to maintaining and enhancing the sense of quality and special character within the historic core of Hugh Town. There is particular scope for a programme of repair and reinstatement of streetscape details, including historic surfacing, and the replacement of the present utilitarian street lighting and safety railings with designs which better reflect the quality of the environment. The low overall level of 'clutter' in street furniture and commercial and traffic signage is a very positive element of Hugh Town's character, but there are some locations where improvements could beneficially be made.

Overhead cables are prominent in some areas of the town, particularly around parts of character area 7 on the western slopes of the Garrison; undergrounding of cables here would significantly improve streetscapes and views out. Undergrounding may, of course, have implications for buried archaeology.

Boundary walls are a major feature of parts of Hugh Town. These are predominantly the boundaries of privately owned plots but have a significant impact on the character of the public space. It is important to encourage maintenance of traditional rubble walls but there are also opportunities to work with property owners to seek replacement of boundaries

*Gardens and greenery are important components of Hugh Town's character.*







*'Streets for people': low levels of vehicle traffic and associated signage are important elements of Hugh Town's appeal.*

in prominent locations utilising materials – for example, concrete blocks, pierced blocks and lapped timber panels – which do not enhance Hugh Town's sense of quality and place.

Hugh Town is particularly notable for its lush gardens, shrubs and palms and the contribution to its character made by nearby flower fields and green open spaces. The park at the Parade provides a colourful 'green' centre piece to the town. There are few obvious opportunities for additional greening and the primary need is to ensure the long-term future of larger green components within the present townscape.

### **Managing traffic and parking**

Consultation carried out for the Isles of Scilly Transport Strategy identified strong local concern at traffic levels on the islands. At the same time, traffic levels in Hugh Town are clearly extremely low by comparison with similarly sized mainland settlements; vehicle flows through the historic core generally reach significant levels only around the time of arrival and departure of the *Scillonian* and inter-island boat services. This, together with the low level of road markings and traffic signage in the town, makes a major contribution to its charm and quality. However, parking is relatively undisciplined and

conspicuous in certain areas. In this respect the juxtaposition of bus and commercial vehicle parking with a variety of signage and telephone boxes at the west end of the Parade is particularly obtrusive and detracts from the character of the area.

The traffic management scheme proposed for Hugh Town in 2002 would have introduced new parking and one-way restrictions, in combination with a substantially higher level of road markings and signage: eight new signs in the square fronting the Bishop and Wolf, for example, and approaching 15 around the Parade. An increase on this scale would have a major negative impact on the otherwise relatively uncluttered character of these areas. The Isles of Scilly Transport Strategy proposes a campaign to promote bus use, walking and cycling, together with measures to improve local public transport, as a step towards meeting public concerns on traffic levels and parking. The small-scale island location could provide a particularly suitable context for a vehicle share scheme, dial-a-ride services and low-energy forms of transport such as electric vehicles and bicycle rickshaws.

### **Promoting reuse of historic buildings**

High land values and demand for visitor accommodation within Hugh Town have tended to ensure that there is generally a high level of use in historic buildings. Some historic outbuildings, however,

*Historic outbuildings may offer potential for beneficial new uses.*





appear to be underused and offer potential for sensitive conversion as workspaces for crafts or knowledge workers, the presence of whom could add activity and interest to minor lanes and alleys in the town.

### Guiding future change

The revised Isles of Scilly Local Plan is to be supplemented by a Design Guide for the built environment. This will be extremely valuable in encouraging design which takes account of the particular character of its context. This principle has been conspicuously absent in almost all post WWII residential development around Hugh Town, much of which has taken the form of bungalows. Some of these are likely to require replacement in the foreseeable future and guidance on a new distinctively Scillonian vernacular for single storey dwellings could have a very significant impact in reducing the ‘anywhere’ aspect of much recent building.

Detailed planning guidance would be beneficial for prominent sites identified as significant regeneration opportunities (for example, the museum, secondary school, Carn Thomas school, SWEB station and chandlery), with the particular aim of

*‘Nowhere’, Old Town – a surviving example of a single-storey traditional dwelling. Design guidance for a successful new Scillonian vernacular should avoid pastiche but could beneficially be informed by the proportions, colour palette and low impact in the landscape of traditional building styles.*



*There is potential for greater emphasis on Hugh Town’s distinctive historic environment in marketing, promotion and interpretation.*

reducing uncertainty in the development process and promoting architectural excellence. Such advice will be essential if development on the scale of the possible regeneration area at Porthcressa Bank were to take place. The guidance should include detailed characterisation, strong urban design guidelines and, where appropriate, requirements for PPG16 evaluation of the archaeological resources and PPG15 assessment of existing buildings.

### Reviewing conservation designations

Hugh Town currently has more than 60 Listed Buildings, but there are a number of others which are of particular architectural or historic interest and merit consideration for statutory listing. There is also potential for a supplementary ‘local list’ to acknowledge the significance of and provide information about locally important historic structures. The ‘other historic buildings’ identified on Figure 5 (and in CSUS digital mapping) provides the baseline for such a list.

### Asserting Hugh Town’s historic significance

In order to fully capitalise on Hugh Town’s unique historic character as a factor in regeneration, it is important that the quality, completeness and interest of its historic built environment are recognised and promoted as a positive asset. The historic built environment of Hugh Town as a whole (not just the

buildings of the Garrison) should feature more strongly in promotional media, acknowledging the specific contribution it makes to the town's unique sense of place. In addition to the walking tours of Hugh Town currently offered there is potential for a town trail focusing on its historic buildings and distinctive urban topography.

It is also important that there is an emphasis on encouraging the widest possible local participation in the process of maintaining the quality and distinctiveness of the historic environment. Awareness could be increased by, for example, local commendation and awards for the sensitive handling of alterations to existing buildings and the creation of new boundary features.

### **Promoting Hugh Town as a model for small-scale urban design**

Hugh Town's undoubtedly successful urban qualities offer an exemplar for the design of small urban settlements elsewhere. Particular elements which may have wider applicability include its informal and intimate layout, distinctive spatial mixing of residential and commercial activity, strongly marked differences in character between relatively small areas, diversity of architectural forms and close relationship with landforms and physical topography.

Further, the Local Plan and IAP emphasise that care for the Scillonian environment and broad sustainability

*Maintaining the strong natural boundary to Hugh Town's eastern extent will help to emphasise the distinct urban identity of the settlement.*



measures are key aspects of Scilly's future. As these elements are implemented in 'green' policy and practice there is potential for Hugh Town to become and to be acknowledged nationally and internationally as an integrated model for sustainable urban living.

## **Regeneration in the character areas**

The following proposals are aimed at supporting regeneration. In some instances this is through specific opportunities, as at Porthcressa Bank (character area 4); in others it is through management measures intended to maintain and enhance historic character and the associated sense of distinctiveness, quality and place.

### **1: Church, Carn Thomas & Buzza Hill**

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 1)

Maintaining the present strong definition of this character area will reinforce the distinction between town and adjacent countryside and underpin the area's function as the major 'gateway' to Hugh Town.

#### **Maintain the strong natural boundary to the historic settlement area**

- Future development in this area to avoid further interruption or masking of the natural landforms and consequent erosion of their role in providing a strong visual break between Hugh Town and the area to the east.
- Develop a programme of new and replacement planting to ensure long-term continuity of the area as a 'green gateway' to Hugh Town; work with property owners to plan and carry out appropriate planting, maintenance and management.

- Avoid future development which divides or infills large gardens.

**Create public realm improvements**

- Enhance the eastern gateway to Hugh Town through additional landscaping and planting and / or creation of a distinctive feature at the entrance to the Porthmellon industrial estate (immediately outside the character area boundary).
- Create a new public access vantage point on the summit of Jackson’s Hill in any future redevelopment of the secondary school site. This would be a worthwhile additional amenity but will also reinforce the area’s identity and enhance perception of it as the formal ‘edge’ of Hugh Town.

**Provide comprehensive development briefs for major sites**

- If and when the present secondary school and / or SWEB power station sites become available for redevelopment, preparation of comprehensive development briefs will ensure that replacement enhances

the character of the area. In this respect, the scale, particularly the height, of future developments will require careful consideration. Both sites could beneficially incorporate a strong landscaping and planting element to reinforce the green natural component in the character area.

**2: Church Street and the Parade**

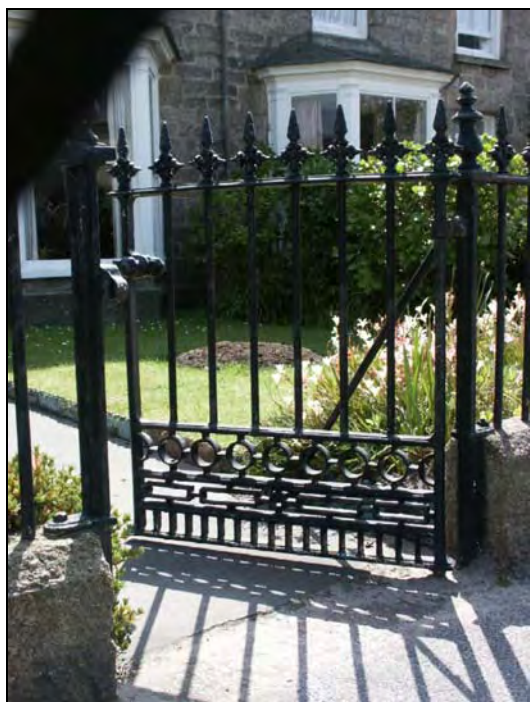
(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 2)

The primary significance of this area for regeneration is its quality, both in terms of its individual components and as a townscape of striking charm and character. It contributes very substantially to Hugh Town’s unique sense of place.

**Maintain and enhance historic detail**

- Develop a repair and reinstatement programme for detail elements, including railings and other ornamental ironwork, boundary walls and historic surfacing

*The high quality of railings and other historic detail elements in Hugh Town merits a comprehensive repair and reinstatement programme.*







*Town Beach – potential for reinstating character through an enhancement programme for elevations fronting the shore.*

### Create a new prestige building

- If and when the opportunity arises to replace the present museum building, provide a comprehensive development brief to ensure a replacement which contributes positively to the area's distinctive sense of architectural quality.

### 3: Town Beach, Thoroughfare and the Strand

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 3)

This area offers major potential for amelioration of 20<sup>th</sup> century erosion of quality in the built environment, with specific benefits in terms of enhancing Hugh Town's visual gateway from the north.

*Holgate's Green – opportunities for small-scale improvements to the public realm.*



### Enhance Town Beach 'gateway'

- Work with property owners to enhance existing building elevations on the seaward side through, for example, re-fenestration, appropriate external decoration and maintenance of rear boundary walls and outbuildings.
- Encourage appropriate redevelopment of buildings which detract from historic character and visual amenity.

### Enhance the public realm

- Replace the present railings on Holgate's Green with a design and quality of materials more appropriate to the setting.
- Emphasise the distinction between the historic character of Higher and Lower Strand with appropriate surfacing, street furniture and minor landscaping.

### 4: Porthcressa Bank

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 4)

This character area could offer a significant opportunity for substantial new development within the historic area of Hugh Town. It is also a significant element of the town's 'seaside' role, meriting some small-scale improvements to presentation.

### Assess the feasibility of a significant new development

- A key initial step towards significant regeneration development in this area would be a feasibility study, to include assessment of the threat from climate change and the financial viability of site assembly, proceeding to a master development plan for the area.

### Create public realm improvements

- The grassed area on the seaward side of Ingram's Opening would benefit from small scale landscaping and environmental improvements.



## 5: Porthcressa post-war housing development

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 5)

The significance of this area for regeneration is essentially in terms of its impact on Hugh Town's overall sense of character and quality. This could be enhanced by eventual replacement or removal of some present buildings.

### Enhance the public realm

- Use additional landscaping and planting to mask visually intrusive vehicle parking
- Work with property owners to improve boundaries where these are inappropriate to the quality of the major elements of the built environment (for example, pierced concrete blocks, lapped timber panels).

## 6: The historic core – the Bank and Hugh Street

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 6)

As with character area 2, the importance of this area for regeneration is in terms of its quality and distinctiveness; the small-scale urban experience which these areas offer is fundamental to the unique character and quality of Hugh Town as a whole. Potential short-term enhancements to the area include:



*The foot of Garrison Hill – an opportunity to enhance the quality of the pedestrian approach to Hugh Town's major historic attraction.*

### Reduce parking

- Parking in key spaces such as that below Tregarthen's Hotel, the slip beside the Atlantic Hotel, the west end of the Parade and Ingram's Opening is visually obtrusive. Measures to reduce parking levels could be carried forward as part of an overall transport strategy, incorporating measures for significant reductions in vehicle numbers within Hugh Town.

### Improve the external appearance of the Co-operative building

- The external treatment of the large historic building occupied by the Co-operative in Hugh Street, particularly the low level of detailing, current decorative scheme and commercial signage, make it over-prominent within this important streetscape.

### Review street signage and furniture

- There is potential to further reduce the already low level of street 'clutter' in the character area through a review of signage, telephone boxes and other items in the area around the Parade and Ingram's Opening.

*Parking is obtrusive in several key areas of the town.*

## 7: Garrison Lane, Garrison Hill and Jerusalem Terrace

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 7)

Minor public realm enhancements in this area would improve the visitor experience and reinforce the basic high quality of the historic environment in the area. As elsewhere in Hugh Town, however, character, distinctiveness and the sense of quality could be enhanced by replacement or removal of some present buildings.

### Enhance the public realm

- Improve the pedestrian approach to the Garrison, St Mary's major historic site, by reducing the current clutter of street furniture and utilities structures at the foot of Garrison Hill and replacing necessary elements with appropriate high quality designs.
- Encourage appropriate maintenance of distinctive boundary walls and replacement of inappropriate materials.
- Seek undergrounding of obtrusive overhead cables.

## 8: The Quay

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 8)

In addition to its economic significance, the quay is of major historic importance and an important landmark for the town and wider area.

### Respect for the historic fabric and visual significance

- There are current proposals to extend the quay to provide enhanced facilities for passenger and freight handling. This could include some reclamation of the area between Rat Island and the Garrison shore. Planning for this important regeneration project should be informed not only by a detailed understanding of the historic fabric of

the quays but also by a high regard for their visual prominence: any infilling of the area on the landward side of Rat Island is likely to have a major impact on the distinctive visual setting of the Garrison and the historic town.

## 9: The Garrison

(Fig. 7 and character area summary sheet 9)

Although physically separated from the town, the Garrison is a key element of Hugh Town's overall character and represents a major asset as both a visitor attraction and community amenity.

### Create a sustainable management regime

- English Heritage is producing a management plan for the archaeological resource in this area. Long term management of the Garrison would beneficially be guided by a comprehensive plan which, in addition to the historic environment, also takes account of the natural environment, public access and recreation, community needs and the interests of property owners and enterprises. Such a plan could also include an assessment of the potential for providing new community leisure facilities within the area and address potential means for mitigating past erosion of its historic character resulting from inappropriate development within and adjacent to the Garrison.

### Control vehicle access

- Strengthen controls on vehicle access to the Garrison in order to minimise accidental damage to the historic fabric of the gateway. Emphasise pedestrian priority and enhance the area's sense of a 'place apart'.

## Appendix 1: archaeological interventions

The following archaeological interventions are known for Hugh Town and the surrounding area:

- 1752** two chambered cairns on **Buzza Hill** excavated by William Borlase.
- 1949-50** excavation at **Parsons Field**, Porthcressa, revealed Iron Age / Roman cist grave cemetery, field system and occupation debris, and midden material relating to possible nearby early medieval settlement.
- 1960** excavation at **Poynter's Garden**, Porthcressa, of Iron Age / Roman cist grave cemetery, field system, a possible hut and occupation material.
- 1973** excavations within **Star Castle**, Garrison, by Isles of Scilly Museum.
- 1973-6** field investigation for Vivien Russell's 1980 archaeological checklist for Scilly.
- 1978** Ordnance Survey archaeological survey of Isles of Scilly.
- 1984-85** Institute of Cornish Studies Isles of Scilly SMR enhancement project.
- 1985** Institute of Cornish Studies watching brief on SWEB cable trenching at **Porthcressa Bank**.
- 1989-93** monitoring, archaeological recording and environmental sampling of cliff exposures of prehistoric occupation on the east side of **Porthcressa Bay**.
- 1990** CAU survey and recording of defences around **Garrison** shoreline.
- 1990** archaeological recording and environmental sampling of 17<sup>th</sup> century occupation debris and midden material at **Steval Point**, Garrison.
- 1990** CAU recording of intertidal remains of prehistoric field system and possible hut circle at **Porth Mellon**.
- 1991** large scale survey of **Garrison** walls for English Heritage.
- 1992** environmental sampling of intertidal peat samples at **Porth Mellon** by CAU and English Heritage.
- 1993** CAU watching brief on cable trenching within **Star Castle**, Garrison, and between the castle and Garrison gate.
- 1993** CAU Rapid Survey of **Garrison** defences.
- 1993-94** detailed building survey of **Star Castle**, Garrison, and documentary research for English Heritage.
- 1994** detailed review of CAU Sites and Monuments Record for **Garrison**.
- 1994** field investigation of **Steval Battery**, Garrison, and historical research for English Heritage.
- 1994** CAU watching brief at Westmount, Jerusalem Terrace, adjacent to site of post medieval battery at **Mount Holles**.

- 1994** watching brief by Council of the Isles of Scilly Assistant Planning Officer (Conservation) on installation of septic tank and associated pipe trenching at **Star Castle**, Garrison.
- 1994** watching brief by Council of the Isles of Scilly Assistant Planning Officer (Conservation) on trial pits and trenching at **new health centre site**, Hugh Town.
- 1998** archaeological supervision of clearance of rock-cut trench around **Powder Magazine Lamp Room**, Garrison.
- 1998** inspection by Council of the Isles of Scilly Assistant Planning Officer (Conservation) of cable trenches dug for installation of spotlights at **Star Castle**, Garrison.
- 1994-98** English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme review of scheduling, Isles of Scilly.



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