Blockhouse Cottages, Tresco, Isles of Scilly

Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological recording

Client: Tresco Estate
Planning ref: P/21/018/FUL

1 Project background

This document sets out a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) by Charlie Johns, Heritage Specialist, for historic building recording and archaeological watching brief to support the application P/21/018/FUL at Blockhouse Cottages, Tresco. It is drafted in response to consultation comments dated 19th March 2021 provided by the Local Planning Authority's Development Management Archaeological Advice Officer (DMMAO).

2 Site location and description

Blockhouse Cottages are situated on the north-east coast of Tresco, Isles of Scilly (NGR SV 8962 1543) at the south east reaches of Old Grimsby Bay, to the south west of the Old Block House, from which they derive their name. The application site covers an area of approximately 0.25ha. The area surrounding the Blockhouse Cottages is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as being located in a character area of 'low lying dunes and heath.' To the north east, the ground level increases to the site of the Old Block House, which is located in a character area of 'headland and hilltop heathland,' and is a dominant feature in the landscape. From this site, Old Grimsby Bay curves round to the north east and is characterised as a 'sand and shingle beach.' The land to the south of Blockhouse Cottages is 'open pasture fields.'

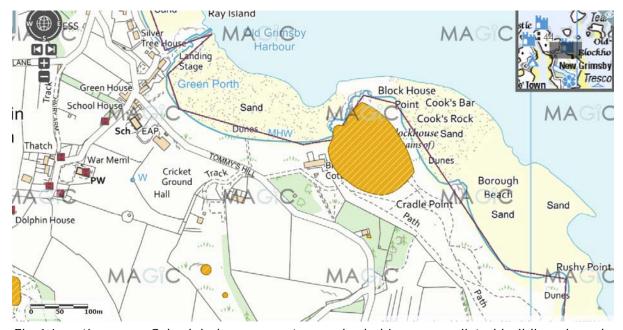


Fig 1 Location map. Scheduled monuments are shaded in orange, listed buildings in red.

3 Historic building background

Blockhouse Cottages are a row of five unlisted, mid-19th century cottages. The existing cottages are not tied in their use, but their current condition and marginal standard of habitability has meant that they have typically been used as last choice accommodation for seasonal island workers. The cottages are characterised by their traditional linear form

with two gable ends, projecting service extensions and a single storey lean-to at each end. The slate roof line is punctuated with five regular chimney stacks and the elevations have been covered in modern pebble dash render. The cottages were built with thick granite walls, with small cellular rooms and minimal windows to create compact 'no frills' living spaces for islanders, while offering protection against the harsh coastal conditions

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) records the Blockhouse Cottages as 'a row of cottages west of the blockhouse built originally for the crew and their families of the Seven Stones lightship - first anchored on the Seven Stones reef in 1841. A notable feature of the cottages is the fact that all their windows face inland away from the sea' (MCO30191).

4 Archaeological background

Blockhouse Cottages are situated approximately 10m west the edge of the scheduled area of the remains of the Tudor blockhouse built on a low headland at the south east edge of Old Grimsby Harbour. The blockhouse was built between 1548 and 1552 and survives as a raised gun platform with adjoining living quarters built of randomly coursed granite walling with more regular quoins. It was defended from landward attack by a single close rampart around the western and southern crest of the headland's summit. Two outer lines of defensive rampart occur on the lower slopes, bringing much of the headland into the defended area. The blockhouse is a Listed Building Grade II (List entry Number 1219196) and a Scheduled Monument (List Entry Number 1013662).

In July 2015, a stone structure was uncovered at low tide on the beach at Green Porth, approximately 60m north of the Cottages. This was recorded by Charlie Johns and Katharine Sawyer and thought to be the remains of a quay associated with the Blockhouse (not yet entered into the HER).

Exposed in the dune face on the east side of Blockhouse Point are the remains of stone-faced walling and an old land surface (OLS) which are recorded in the HER (MCO30186 and MCO30187). The site was first discovered in 1979 by amateur archaeologist Michael Tangye, who suggested that the walling could have formed part of a defensive awork predating the 16th century Blockhouse. During 1985, the remains were recorded by fieldworkers from the Institute of Cornish Studies. Who took photographs and made sketch section drawings. When the site was visited by Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) in 1988 and 1990 moderate erosion was found to have occurred. More walling was exposed in 1991 and further recording was carried out by CAU in July 1992 (Ratcliffe 1993, 65–69, fig 14). Apparently, this lower land surface was considered to at the right level to be prehistoric or Romano-British in date.

The HER also records that a number of prehistoric flint scrapers and waste flakes have been found in the vicinity of Blockhouse Point as well as a stone macehead, now in the Isles of Scilly Museum (MCO30194).

Approximately 255m south west of the Blockhouse Cottages is a scheduled prehistoric round cairn (List Entry Number 1016187). 270m to the south east is a scheduled Postmedieval animal-driven crushing mill (List Entry Number 1016186). Approximately 75m to the south east is a scheduled post-medieval smugglers' cache (List Entry Number 1016188).

In 2003, significant Late Bronze Age settlement remains covered by medieval middens were revealed during groundworks for the playing field at Dolphin Town, approximately 300m west south west of the proposal site (MCO56768; Taylor and Johns 2009–10).

5 Assessment of archaeological potential

The archaeological potential of the general area is considered to be high, but groundworks for the foundations of the Blockhouse Cottages are likely to have destroyed or truncated any prehistoric, medieval or early post-medieval archaeological remains. There may be

archaeological evidence relating to the construction of the cottages in the mid-19th century and truncated features or stray finds from earlier periods.

The old land surface recorded is the HER (MCO30187) is located on the other side of the carn on which the Blockhouse is built and is unlikely to extend into the proposal area. The Lyonesse Project concluded that many of the deposits recorded as 'old land surfaces' in the last quarter of the 20th century are in fact weathered periglacial head material, stained black or brown, which do not contain any organic material, microfossils or pollen. The Blockhouse Point 'OLS' was not sampled by this project (Charman *et al* 2016, 31, 155).

The areas of greatest archaeological potential area in the gardens closest to the Blockhouse where evidence for the outer lines of defensive rampart may survive, but again these might have been destroyed or truncated during the construction phase or subsequent cultivation.

On balance, the archaeological potential of the site of the Blockhouse Cottages is assessed as low to moderate but the potential of the gardens and any previously undisturbed ground affected by groundworks for the proposed development is considered to be moderate to high.

6 Aims and objectives

The project will comprise the recording of the important details of Blockhouse Cottages prior to any other works on site. Subsequent groundworks will be monitored as an archaeological watching brief.

6.1 Historic building recording

The principal aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the buildings.

The objectives are to:

- produce an accurate record of the building and its external and internal features prior to alterations (Level 2 as defined by Historic England 2016);
- better understand the functions and historic development of the building; and
- outline key features and fittings which are of high significance.

6.2 Archaeological watching brief

The site-specific aims for the archaeological watching brief are to:

- establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains:
- determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered;
- establish the nature of the activity on the site;
- identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site;
- provide further information on the archaeology of the site from any archaeological remains encountered; and
- report on the findings to an appropriate level.

7 Research questions

The proposed archaeological recording, comprising a historic building record and archaeological recording has the potential to contribute to the following research aims of the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Research Framework (Johns 2019).

Research Aim 12: Widen our understanding of Scillonian material culture of all periods.

Research Aim 18: Continue to collect evidence for past climate change and sea level changes together with their effects on peoples' relationships with landscapes and the sea.

Research Aim 20: Improve our understanding of prehistoric and Romano-British settlements, monuments and landscapes.

Research Aim 22: Improve our understanding of medieval and later settlements, buildings and landscapes.

8 Methodology

The recording will involve the following phases of work:

- 1. Desk-based study
- 2. Historic building recording
- 3. Archaeological fieldwork
- 4. Analysis and archiving
- 5. Report production
- 6. Archive deposition

8.1 Desk-based study

Prior to the commencement of on-site works, the project archaeologist will familiarise themselves with the site by examining the information held in the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, on the 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps of the area, and in any relevant publications.

8.2 Historic building recording

The equivalent of a Level 2 Building Survey (as defined by Historic England 2016) will be produced. The work will be guided by the Chartered Institute for Archaeology's *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*. Recording will include external and internal architectural features and room detail annotated to copies of existing measured external elevations and floor plans supplied by the client.

The recorder will consider:

- site layout and organisation;
- function:
- materials, method of construction;
- fenestration;
- internal arrangements;
- original fixtures and fittings;
- subsequent fixtures and fittings;
- · evidence of use and status; and
- date/period of initial build and subsequent alterations.

Analysis of the fabric will be undertaken on site (recorded as notes) to allow a description to be written up at the archive report stage. Measured floor plans and elevations of the building will be annotated to show phased development and architectural detail. Photographic recording will include colour photography using a digital camera (with a resolution of 10 million pixels or higher).

The photographic record will comprise:

- general views;
- all external elevations:
- all internal room spaces;
- examples of structural and architectural detail;
- Methodology for the archive standard photography is as follows:
- photographs of details will be taken with lenses of appropriate focal length;
- when necessary, a tripod will be used to take advantage of natural light and slower exposures;
- difficulties of back-lighting will be dealt with where necessary by balancing the lighting by the use of flash.

A metric scale will be included in all views, except where health and safety considerations make this impractical.

8.3 Archaeological fieldwork

An archaeologist will be present during all groundworks associated with the development, unless circumstances dictate a different approach. If work is carried out by machine, where

possible a toothless ditching bucket will be used for the removal of any overburden until the first archaeological horizon is exposed. This will then be hand cleaned and recorded as appropriate. Any surviving remains which will be disturbed or destroyed by the development will be archaeologically excavated and recorded. Any significant features or layers identified in plan or section will be recorded using the following methodology:

- (a) each feature or layer will be assigned a context number from a continuous block of context numbers and recorded on a standard *pro forma* context sheet, where possible noting the location, extent, nature, character and stratigraphic relationships of any archaeological evidence revealed;
- (b) location will be plotted onto a 1:100 plan (drawn in 4H pencil on gridded drafting film);
- (c) if appropriate the feature/layer will be planned at 1:20 scale or recorded in section at 1:10 scale (unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate);
- (d) scaled digital colour photographs will be taken. In the case of detailed photographs, a north arrow will be included, where appropriate. A photographic register detailing the feature number, location, direction of shot and other relevant information will be drawn up.
- (e) all finds, where appropriate, will be retained and placed in sealable plastic bags which will be labelled immediately with the site code (TBC 21) and context number if appropriate. They will be removed from the site for processing and conservation where necessary, in preparation for analysis and archiving.
- (f) if human remains are discovered they will initially be left in situ and reported to the DMAAO and the appropriate authorities (including the Coroner). If burials are encountered their legal status will be ascertained and recording and/or removal will comply with legal guidelines. If they are to be removed this will be done with due reverence and in accordance with current best practice and legal requirements. The site will be screened from public view during excavation and, once excavated, the human remains will not be exposed to public view. If human remains are not to be removed their physical security will be ensured by back-filling as soon as possible after recording.
- (g) in the event that objects containing precious metal(s) are encountered, the coroner will be informed as per the provisions of the Treasure Act 1996.

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standards and guidance for an archaeological watching brief will be followed in the execution of the project.

The Historic England Science Advisor for the South-West (Hayley McParland 0117 975 0689, Hayley.McParland@historicengland.org.uk) will be consulted for advice, if necessary.

Finds work, sampling, etc will be guided by the CIfA Guidelines for Finds Work and the Historic England Centre for Archaeology Guidelines on Archaeometallurgy, Environmental Archaeology and Geoarchaeology.

If significant archaeological deposits are exposed all works will cease and a meeting will be convened with Tresco Estate and the DMAAO to discuss the most appropriate way forward.

8.4 Analysis and archiving

During this phase the results of the fieldwork will be collated for archiving. This will involve the following tasks:

- washing or other cleaning of finds, where appropriate
- marking of pottery and other finds, where appropriate, with the site code and context number • indexing of site drawings and photographs;
- identification of finds, with the assistance of specialists from Cornwall Archaeological Unit and/or elsewhere, if appropriate (details of specialist consultants are included in Appendices B and C).

8.5 Report production

A report presenting the results of the historic building and archaeological recording will be produced within a time period, not exceeding six months, to be agreed between Tresco Estate, the DMAAO, the Isles of Scilly Museum and Charlie Johns.

The report will have the following contents:

- a concise non-technical summary of the project results
- the aims and methods adopted in the course of the investigation
- the results of the historic building recording with details of significant features annotated on existing measured external elevations and floor plans if appropriate.
- a discussion of archaeological findings in terms of both the site-specific aims and the desk based research
- a location map, a drawing showing those areas examined as part of the archaeological recording, and copies of any archaeological plans and sections. All plans will be tied to the Ordnance Survey national grid
- all specialist reports and assessments
- a summary of the archive contents and date of deposition
- a context register with brief descriptions will be included as an appendix
- copies of the project brief and the approved WSI will be included as an appendices.

The DMAAO will advise, within four weeks of receipt of the report, whether full publication in an appropriate journal is required. (A contingency for this will be included in the estimate for the work.)

A digital copy of the report in PDF format will be submitted to the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record.

Digital copies will be provided to the Planning Department of the Council of the Isles of Scilly, Tresco Estate and the Historic England Archive in Swindon.

A record of the investigation will also be set up on the Historic England/ADS online index (OASIS).

8.6 Archive deposition

A site archive will be prepared, in accordance with the Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (Historic England 2015), upon completion of the project.

The Isles of Scilly Museum have agreed to accept the archive, which will include a copy of the written report. This will be deposited within two months of the completion of the full report.

Confirmation of the deposition of the archive and a summary of its contents will be supplied to the DMAAO.

9 Monitoring

Groundworks will not commence until written approval for this WSI has been received from the DMAAO. Notification of the proposed start of work will be given to the Local Planning Authority and the DMAAO, in writing, if possible, at least one week in advance.

Work is anticipated to start in November 2021 and the DMAAO will be kept regularly informed of progress. Any variations to this WSI will be agreed with the DMAAO, normally in writing, prior to them being carried out.

10 Copyright

Copyright of all material gathered as a result of the project will be reserved to Tresco Estate and Charlie Johns. Existing copyrights of external sources will be acknowledged where required. Use of the material will be granted to the client.

11 Project staff

Charlie Johns BA, MCIfA is the archaeological contractor for the project. He is a heritage specialist based in Cornwall. A c.v. of his relevant qualifications and experience is at Appendix A of this document. If any archaeological finds or features come to light for which he does not have the necessary resources, he will contact Dr Andy Jones at Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council, for advice and assistance.

Details of Cornwall Archaeological Unit are included in Appendix B and the external specialists, who have agreed to provide contingency support for the work outlined in the WSI, are included in Appendix C.

12 Health and safety statement

Prior to on-site work commencing a general Risk Assessment and a specific Covid-19 Risk Assessment will be carried out and liaison with the contractors will be undertaken to ensure a safe system of work in relation to the archaeological recording.

13 References

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- Ratcliffe, J. 1993. Fieldwork in Scilly 1991 and 1992, Truro (Cornwall Archaeological Unit)

Charlie Johns Heritage Specialist 12 April 2021

Appendix A: Curriculum Vitae for Charlie Johns BA, MCIfA

Now a self-employed heritage specialist, I have undertaken archaeological work in Scilly since 1991. I was CAU's Senior Archaeologist for the islands between 2002 and 2018 and have carried out numerous historic building recording and watching brief projects.

Projects in Scilly include: the Bryher sword and mirror burial excavation in 1999 (Johns 2002–3), the Isles of Scilly Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey (Johns *et al* 2004); the off-islands quays refurbishment in 2007 (Johns and Sawyer 2008); Dolphin Town Playing Field archaeological recording in 2003 (Taylor and Johns 2009-10); St Agnes Affordable Housing archaeological recording in 2009/10 (Taylor and Johns forthcoming); the Lyonesse Project (Charman *et al* 2016); Heritage at Risk services for the Council of the Isles of Scilly and Historic England (2016–18), the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Research Framework (Johns 2019); photographic survey of intertidal features at Crab's Ledge and Bathinghouse Porth, Tresco (Johns *et al* 2020) and research into St Nicholas' Priory, Tresco (Johns and Camidge 2021). I helped to establish local Community Archaeology Group in March 2014 and continue to help organise events.

I am a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Publications relating to Scilly

- Barnett, R L, Charman D J, **Johns, C**, Ward, S, Bevan, A, Bradley, S L, Camidge, K, Fyfe, R M, Gehrels, W R, Gehrels, M J, Jackie Hatton, J, Khan, N S, Marshall, P S, Maezumi, Y, Mills, M, Mulville, J, Perez, M, Roberts, HM, Scourse, J D, Shepherd, F, and Stevens, T, 2020. Nonlinear landscape and cultural response to sea-level rise, *Science Advances*, **6**, 1–10
- Taylor, S R and **Johns, C,** forthcoming. A Late Bronze Age Settlement at Higher Town, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, *Cornish Archaeol*
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- Neal, D S, and **Johns, C**, 2018. Excavations at East Porth, Samson, Isles of Scilly, 1970–71, *Cornish Archaeol*, **57**, 33–72
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- **Johns, C,** 2003. *An Iron Age sword and mirror burial from Bryher*, St Mary's (Isles of Scilly Museum Publications)
- Ratcliffe, J, and **Johns, C,** 2003. *Scilly's Archaeological Heritage*, Truro (Twelveheads press)
- **Johns, C**, 2002–3. An Iron Age sword and mirror burial from Bryher, Isles of Scilly, *Cornish Archaeol* **41–42**, 1–79

Appendix B: Cornwall Archaeological Unit

If necessary, a suitably experienced field archaeologist from Cornwall Archaeological Unit may be subcontracted to assist with the archaeological recording. Details of their qualifications/experience will be provided to the DMAAO in that eventuality.

Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) is part of Cornwall Council. CAU employs 20 project staff with a broad range of expertise, undertaking around 120 projects each year.

CAU is committed to conserving and enhancing the distinctiveness of the historic environment and heritage of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by providing clients with a number of services including:

- Conservation works to sites and monuments.
- Conservation surveys and management plans.
- Historic landscape characterisation.
- Town surveys for conservation and regeneration
- Historic building surveys and analysis.
- Maritime and coastal zone assessments.
- Air photo mapping.
- Excavations and watching briefs.
- Assessments and evaluations.
- Post-excavation analysis and publication.
- Outreach: exhibitions, publication, presentations.

CAU is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and follows their Standards and Code of Conduct.

http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa

Appendix C: Specialists

Carl Thorpe BSc will undertake initial finds processing, identification and cataloguing and has carried out similar work for Scillonian projects over the last two decades including the Isles of Scilly Electrification Project (Ratcliffe 1991), the Bryher cist burial, Tresco Playing Field and the off-island quays refurbishment.

John Allan MPhil: Medieval/post-medieval pottery specialist: John is the leading authority on medieval and post-medieval pottery in south- west England and author of many publications. He will carry out the pottery assessment and analysis in the event of significant medieval or post-medieval pottery being recovered.

Henrietta Quinnell BA, MIFA, FSA: Prehistoric, Roman, post-Roman pottery: Henrietta is a freelance pottery specialist and the leading authority on prehistoric pottery in the southwest. She will carry out the pottery assessment and analysis in the event of prehistoric

pottery being recovered.

Dana Challinor MA, MSc: Freelance Charcoal Specialist: Dana's main area of expertise is charcoal analysis and wood species identification, but she also has experience with charred plant remains. She has produced numerous assessment and evaluation reports, as well as reports for publication in journal and monograph formats and was formerly Head of the Environmental Department at Oxford Archaeology. She will undertake assessment and analysis of any suitable charcoal samples, including identification of samples suitable for radiocarbon dating.

Ralph Fyfe, PhD: Palynologist: Ralph is lecturer in environmental change in the School of Geography at the University of Plymouth. He has carried out numerous archaeological evaluations for a variety of organisations, including English Heritage, County Councils, National Parks and Archaeological Consultancies and will undertake assessment and analysis of pollen samples if required.

Claire Ingrem PhD: Animal bone specialist: Claire is an experienced freelance animal bone specialist who will carry out assessment and analysis of animal bone if required.

Julie Jones BA: Archaeobotanist: An experienced freelance archaeobotanical specialist based in Bristol, Julie has carried out palaeoenvironmental assessments and analyses for numerous HES projects.

Laura Ratcliffe, BSc: Conservationist: Laura was formerly based at the Royal Cornwall Museum where she is the museum's Collections Manager and is now the lead on the Penwith Landscape Partnership. Laura will carry out the assessment and conservation of pottery and metalwork on a freelance basis if required.

Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory: Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC): Samples for radiocarbon dating will be sent to SUERC.