

## AN INTERIM NOTE ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON A TRENCH THROUGH PIG'S PARADISE, APRIL 2000

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### ABSTRACT

During trenching for new services a number of archaeological remains were found in a watching brief through the field known as Pigs' Paradise. These probably represent a boundary wall and part of an open fronted building and other domestic or agricultural activity near a late medieval house or farmstead. The considerable quantity of medieval pottery from an overlying soil suggests that these remains date from the 13th – 15th Century. A number of residual prehistoric flints indicate that there is also prehistoric activity nearby. Post-excavation work including examination of the finds is still in progress. This report represents an interim statement from the examination of the material to date, which may be revised in the final report.

Keywords: *Medieval, Prehistoric, Archaeology*

### BACKGROUND

In the late 1990s it became apparent to the Landmark Trust that the old water and electrical services, developed piecemeal over many years, were no longer able to cope with the demands placed upon them and grants were sought for the replacement of the system. The Island Manager discussed the route of the new pipe-trenches with archaeologists from the National Trust and English Heritage. It was immediately realised that the potential for archaeological discovery/destruction during the work was high and that a programme of archaeological mitigation should be devised. In particular it was recognised that the Castle, Pigs' Paradise and the village, Beacon Hill, and potential environmental deposits in St John's and Millcombe Valley were of particular archaeological sensitivity. It was agreed that the Landmark Trust would fund the necessary archaeological work required for Scheduled Monument Consent and that the National Trust would undertake a watching brief of trenches through Pigs' Paradise and Beacon Hill. The rest of the trenching would be monitored as much as possible during visits to the island. The work began in early April 2000 starting with the trench through Pigs' Paradise and at the time of writing is still in progress.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF PIGS' PARADISE

Pigs' Paradise, now used as the camping field (SS 1386 4412), lies immediately to the south of Bull's Paradise, an enclosed field containing many earthworks and the subject of a number of archaeological discoveries and excavations since the 19th century. It is here that the 'Giants' Graves' were located and where a substantial medieval building, possible chapel site, and later cemetery have been discovered (Gardner 1961, 1962,

1972, Thackray 1989, 108-117). The whole field of Bull's Paradise is scheduled as an Ancient Monument (No 27645). It is known that some medieval remains were also found in Pigs' Paradise in 1973, during the construction of The Quarters. A rescue excavation of one weeks duration was conducted by the Committee for Rescue Archaeology in Avon, Gloucester and Somerset (CRAGS, now disbanded) with the help of members of the Lundy Field Society. Two walls and a cobbled surface were identified associated with 13th century pottery. A possible earthwork house platform was also surveyed nearby. A number of unstratified flints, identified as predominantly Mesolithic were also found (J.S. Bennett c. 1973 unpublished manuscript and K. Gardner *pers comm.*). Unfortunately the excavation was never published but attempts are being made to locate the site archive. As no plans, drawings or detailed photographs are available at present the precise location of the above features and how they relate to the features excavated in April 2000 is unknown.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING IN PIGS' PARADISE 2000

The trench though Pigs' Paradise had to be rather larger (1.50m wide) than the other pipe trenches to accommodate heat exchange pipes between the new site of the generator (in the farm buildings) and the boiler room. During topsoil stripping quantities of pottery were apparent especially in the southern half of the field and it was agreed that a few days would be available for the southern part of the trench to be archaeologically excavated.

A dark soil up to 0.40m deep was excavated by hand and the majority of finds were retrieved from this material. The soil is a homogenous layer overlying the archaeological features. At the northern end of the area examined in detail (towards the centre of the field) a stony layer was associated with a narrow gully and other features including a large roughly rounded granite block with a level surface which appeared to be a post-base. Although the stony layer did not have a convincing 'surface' this group of features has been tentatively identified as part of an open fronted building. Further down the trench a number of small pits and scoops were excavated. Just to the east of the northern block of Quarters a slightly larger pit and a wall (1-2 courses high, 0.55m wide, orientated roughly NW-SE) were excavated. The wall was not associated with any recognisable surface and may therefore be a boundary wall rather than the wall of a building.

#### THE FINDS

Approximately 1450 sherds of pottery were recovered together with 2 lead weights, 1 copper alloy buckle, 13 fragments of iron, 2 spindle whorls (1 a fragment) and 77 flints. The finds are in the process of being conserved and marked and await detailed examination. Mr John Allan of Exeter Museums kindly undertook a preliminary assessment of the pottery and provided the following information. The majority of the pottery dates to the 13th -15th centuries, being predominantly cooking pots and some jugs as would be expected in a collection of this date. Most of the pottery (approximately 80-90%) is a North Devon medieval coarse ware, which was produced in Barnstaple, and also probably in Bideford and other smaller North Devon Towns such as Great Torrington. Other fabrics represented are from the Bristol area, including a green glazed decorated ware from Ham Green and a ware probably from the Nether Stowey area. One sherd appears

to be from Spain. This is a very important and interesting collection, and the quantity is unusually large for such a small area.

### CONCLUSIONS

The interpretation of archaeological features and deposits is always problematic when excavated in this way, as only a thin slice of the site is examined in a position determined by construction needs rather than archaeological considerations. However, (bearing in mind all the limitations) important results have been achieved. There is clearly a late medieval house or farmstead in the immediate vicinity of the trench, producing a considerable quantity of finds in relatively good condition. The trench appears to have cut through a boundary wall and a post-supported structure, possibly an open fronted building such as a linhay, with perhaps a working or agricultural area between, probably part of the curtilage of the house or farm.

### FURTHER WORK

The trenching work was still underway when this report was written. The watching brief will continue and a full archive report will be produced at the end of the work in the autumn. It is hoped that the some environmental sampling and analysis of the soils will be undertaken. It is also intended that the pottery will be examined and identified over the summer with some of the fabrics thin sectioned to determine their geological source. We are very grateful to the Lundy Field Society for agreeing to help fund the forthcoming pottery report. A Final report will be published when all the work has been processed and specialist reports received.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A particular debt of gratitude is owed to Anthony Cutler, a member of the Lundy Field Society, who happened to be on Lundy at the time and gave excellent help on site, working long hours in some appalling weather. Thanks are also due to all the island staff, particularly to Paul Roberts the Island Manager, and to Nick Jeffrey who operated the machine, for their help and interest during the work. Caroline Thackray, National Trust Archaeological Adviser, has also given help and encouragement particularly with the post-excavation work. The work was supported and funded by the National Trust, my employers, and the Landmark Trust who provided my accommodation.

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*Editors note: It is anticipated that the full report on the work described above will feature in the 2000 Annual Report.*