



CAMBRIAN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECTS

St Brides View, Solva, Pembrokeshire

Archaeological Appraisal and Walkover Survey



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Report No. 647

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Archaeological Appraisal and Walkover Survey

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Contents

Summary	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Site Description	1
3. Desk-based Assessment	1
3.1 Documentary Sources	1
3.2 Cartographic Sources	2
4. Archaeological Walkover Survey	3
5. Discussion	3
6. Conclusion	4
7. Bibliography	4

Figures

Fig. 1	Location of Site
Fig. 2	Proposed layout of houses at Harbour High
Fig. 3	OS 1 st Edition map of 1889 showing proposed development plot
Fig. 4	OS 2 nd Edition map of 1907 showing proposed development plot
Fig. 5	OS map of 1953 showing proposed development plot
Fig. 6	View NE along the main plot
Fig. 7	View SE across the drive of Harbour High towards the Gribin Promontory Fort and Dinas Fawr

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Summary

In September 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects undertook an Archaeological Appraisal of the site of a proposed housing development at and adjacent to Harbour High, St Bride's View, Solva, Pembrokeshire. The proposed development lies within an area of known archaeological significance and it was therefore considered to have archaeological potential. The documentary and cartographic search revealed that despite being located close to a number of Iron Age defended enclosures no archaeological features are known within the plot proposed for development. The walkover survey did not identify any obvious earthworks or features of archaeological interest. It is therefore considered that the site has low archaeological potential.

1. Introduction

In September 2010, Cambrian Archaeological Projects was commissioned by Tim Colquhoun of Tim Colquhoun Architects, Kilgetty, Pembrokeshire on behalf of Ian Bowey of St Bride's View, Solva to undertake an Archaeological Appraisal of the site of proposed development at and adjacent to Harbour High, St Bride's View, Solva (Grid Ref: SM 7987 2415) (Fig. 1). The proposed development comprises the construction of six houses (Fig. 2).

The village of Solva lies within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park in an area of known archaeological significance, with five probable Iron Age Enclosures and Promontory Forts recorded along the coast 2km either side of Solva. The 1st Edition OS map of 1889 depicts the area of proposed development adjacent to a location called 'The Fort'. While no recorded archaeological evidence of a Fort is known from this area of Solva, Zoe Bevans-Rice of Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Heritage Management requested that an appraisal of the archaeological potential of the site be carried out. This was to be achieved through an examination of all documentary and cartographic sources pertaining to the site, and a walkover assessment of the proposed development area.

2. Site Description

The proposed development site lies on the western side of Solva Harbour, on level ground above the cliff at approximately 60m AOD. The underlying geology is Carboniferous Limestone (British Geological Survey 2001).

3. Desk-based Assessment

3.1 Documentary Sources

The Dyfed Archaeological trust HER lists 25 Listed Buildings and one Scheduled Ancient Monument within a 3km radius of the village of Solva.

The majority of the Listed Buildings are post-medieval houses, although 9 lime kilns are also recorded. These are thought to be nineteenth-century in date and relate to the period when Solva was a major centre of lime production (Driver 2007). Between 1750 and the mid-1800s Solva was a busy and vibrant harbour, with a population of over 1000 servicing 30 trading ships and working in the 9 warehouses (Driver 2007).

The Scheduled Ancient Monument is the Solva earthwork enclosure that lies on a ridge of land to the north-east of the harbour. The enclosure is roughly D-shaped and measures 100m by 84m. It is defined by both scarps and banks and is thought to be Iron Age in date.

The National Monuments Record held at the RCAHMW lists six further probable Iron Age sites within 3km of Solva:

1. Dinas Fach Promontory Fort – an elongated promontory located 2.8km to the south-east of Solva. A 20m stretch of bank and ditch with a central causeway entrance positioned at its northern end. Within the interior 14 probable house platforms are visible. Excavations in 1939 produced Samian pottery and occupation debris.
2. Gribin Promontory Fort – a roughly pear shaped enclosure located on the eastern side of Solva Harbour. The enclosure measures 56m by 74m and is defined by scarps, the remains of stone walling and ditches. Internal features are also recorded.
3. Gribin Hillfort – an oval enclosure located between the Gribin Promontory Fort and Solva Enclosure on the eastern side of the Harbour. The enclosure measures 96m by 31m and was only discovered in early 2010.
4. Porth-y-Rhaw Promontory Fort – a complex of earthworks located on an extremely eroded promontory 1.3km west of Solva. These form a segmented enclosure with an entrance on the eastern side. Excavations in 1996 and 1997 revealed substantial Iron Age/Romano-British occupation within the enclosure.
5. Porth-y-Bwch Promontory Settlement – three circular house platforms located on a promontory 1.5km south-east of Solva. A shell midden and the possible remains of bank and ditch defences are also recorded on the promontory.
6. Y-Castell Enclosure – an inland promontory enclosed by a bank with a possible enclosure on the south-western side. It is located 1.2km north-east of Solva.

A series of earthen banks defining a rectangular field system is also recorded in the NMR. Located immediately to the south-east of the Gribin Promontory Fort, it is possibly contemporary.

A Neolithic chambered tomb is located 1.2km east of Solva within pasture at St Elvis' Farm. The site survives as two capstones each supported by an upright.

3.2 Cartographic Sources

The OS 1st Edition Map of 1889 (Fig. 3) shows the main area of the proposed development site as an elongated strip of land to the rear of houses on the southern side of the village. The site of Harbour High also lies within a large square field. Both of these fields lie within a patchwork of small and large square fields occupying the cliff top. To the east of the proposed development area, a narrow track (the modern St Brides View) separates the fields from a series of houses that occupy the gentle slopes on the top of the cliff. Two lines of shading indicate probable breaks in the slope. This area is labeled as 'The Fort'.

The 1907 2nd Edition OS map (Fig. 4) depicts the area of proposed development as unchanged. The land immediately to the east is again labeled as 'The Fort', however there is no depiction of shading indicating a break in slope.

By 1953, the OS map (Fig. 5) depicts Harbour High as having been constructed in the north-eastern corner of the large square field. No changes are depicted to the main proposed development plot. The area to the south-east is again labeled as ‘The Fort’.

4. Archaeological Walkover Survey

A site visit and walkover survey was carried out on the 7th August 2010 in dry and sunny conditions. The ground was wet following several days of rain, and the main area of the site was covered by long grass and weeds. The main field proposed for development was examined, with a traverse made across the centre and around the edges. The plot containing Harbour High was more difficult to examine thoroughly owing to the remains of the house and building debris. To the south of the house the remainder of the plot is covered by gorse and was not fully examined.

The proposed development site lies on a gentle south-east facing slope. The majority of the plot is fairly level, with a steeper slope immediately to the east of Harbour High. To the north-west, the ground rises up, blocking views. Immediately to the south-east of the main plot is a row of late twentieth-century houses. These houses block views eastwards from the proposed development site, but it is clear that there would have been extensive views towards the Gribin Forts from this location. Views from Harbour High extend over the Gribing Forts towards Dinas Fawr.

The main plot proposed for development is rectangular in plan, orientated north-east/south-west and measures 130m by 30m. It comprises rough, uneven grassland and is bounded on the north-western and north-eastern sides by scrubby hedges. The land owner described how the topsoil from the field was stripped off during the construction of one of the adjacent houses in the early 2000s – this would account for the undulating nature of the field.

The plot containing Harbour High is roughly square in plan, measuring 50m by 30m. The house and driveway occupy the northern half of the plot, while the southern half is overgrown with gorse and weeds. A line of scrubby hedgerow trees bounds the eastern end of the plot, adjacent to the road.

Two images of the plot are included here, the first (Fig. 6) looking north-east along the main plot from Harbour High, and the second (Fig. 7) looking across the drive of Harbour High towards the Gribin Promontory and Dinas Fawr.

5. Discussion

The desk-based assessment looked at an area 3km in all directions from the proposed development site. The HER and NMR record 34 sites of historic and archaeological interest, 25 of which are post-medieval, seven are Iron Age and probable Iron Age, and one is Neolithic.

The most significant known sites are those of the Iron Age Promontory Forts and Hillforts, which form a line of defended enclosures along the coast to the east and west of Solva. The identification of a new site in early 2010, on the eastern side of the harbour at Solva demonstrates that there were probably more enclosures along this stretch of coast in the Iron Age, with some still unidentified and others lost to erosion. The field systems located close to the Gribin Forts could be contemporary,

demonstrating the use of the wider landscape for agriculture. Further field systems could be preserved in the modern hedgerows and field boundaries.

The cartographic evidence indicates that both plots proposed for development have been for agriculture since at least the late 1800s, lying outside the main area of housing at Solva. Only in the mid-twentieth century was Harbour High constructed within the corner of a large field. The earliest map of Solva, dated to 1889, shows the land immediately to the south-east of the plot as called 'The Fort'. This name is shown on all the later maps, up until the late twentieth century. While the earliest OS map also shows two lines of shading that could represent earthworks within a field to the south-east of the proposed development plot, these do not appear on later maps. It is possible that these in fact represent natural breaks in the slope.

The site visit did not identify any features of archaeological potential within the main proposed development plot or in the grounds of Harbour High.

6. Conclusion

No evidence was revealed during the documentary or cartographic research to suggest that remains of a fort or other features of archaeological significance exist on the proposed development site. The area of land depicted as 'The Fort' on the OS maps lies to the south-east of the proposed site. It is not clear why this part of the landscape was called 'The Fort' as there do not appear to be any earthworks on the site to indicate the presence of an enclosure. However, with the concentration of defended enclosures around Solva the presence of another, unknown, site cannot be ruled out.

It is considered that the archaeological potential of the proposed development site is low.

7. Bibliography

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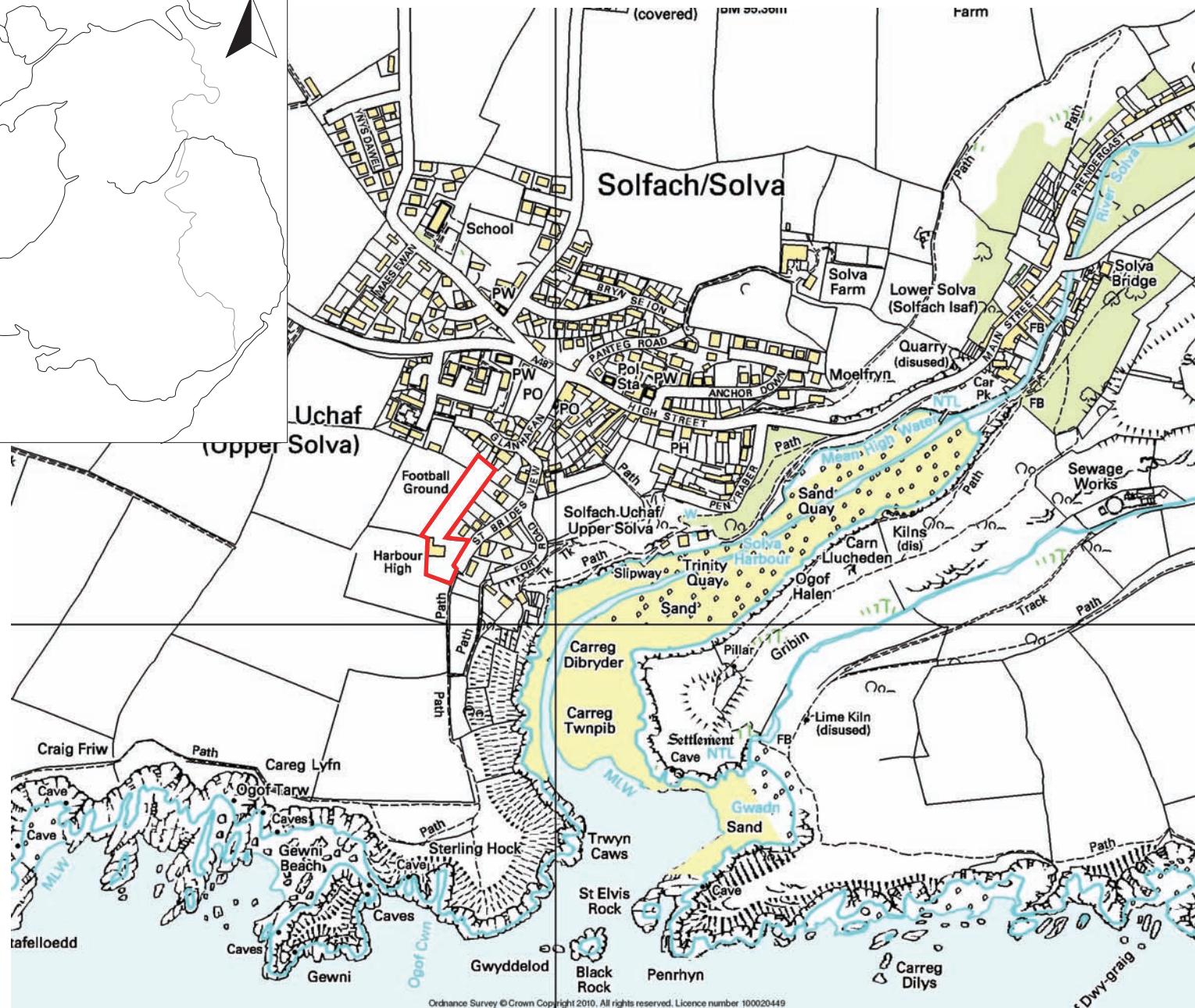
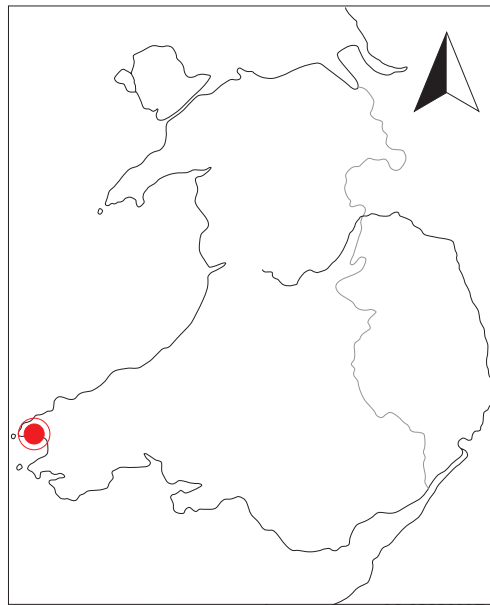
All NMR records and aerial photographs accessed via www.coflein.gov.uk - accessed 8th August 2010.

Maps Consulted:

1889 OS 1st Edition Map

1907 OS 2nd Edition Map

1953 OS Map



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Fig. 1
Location of site

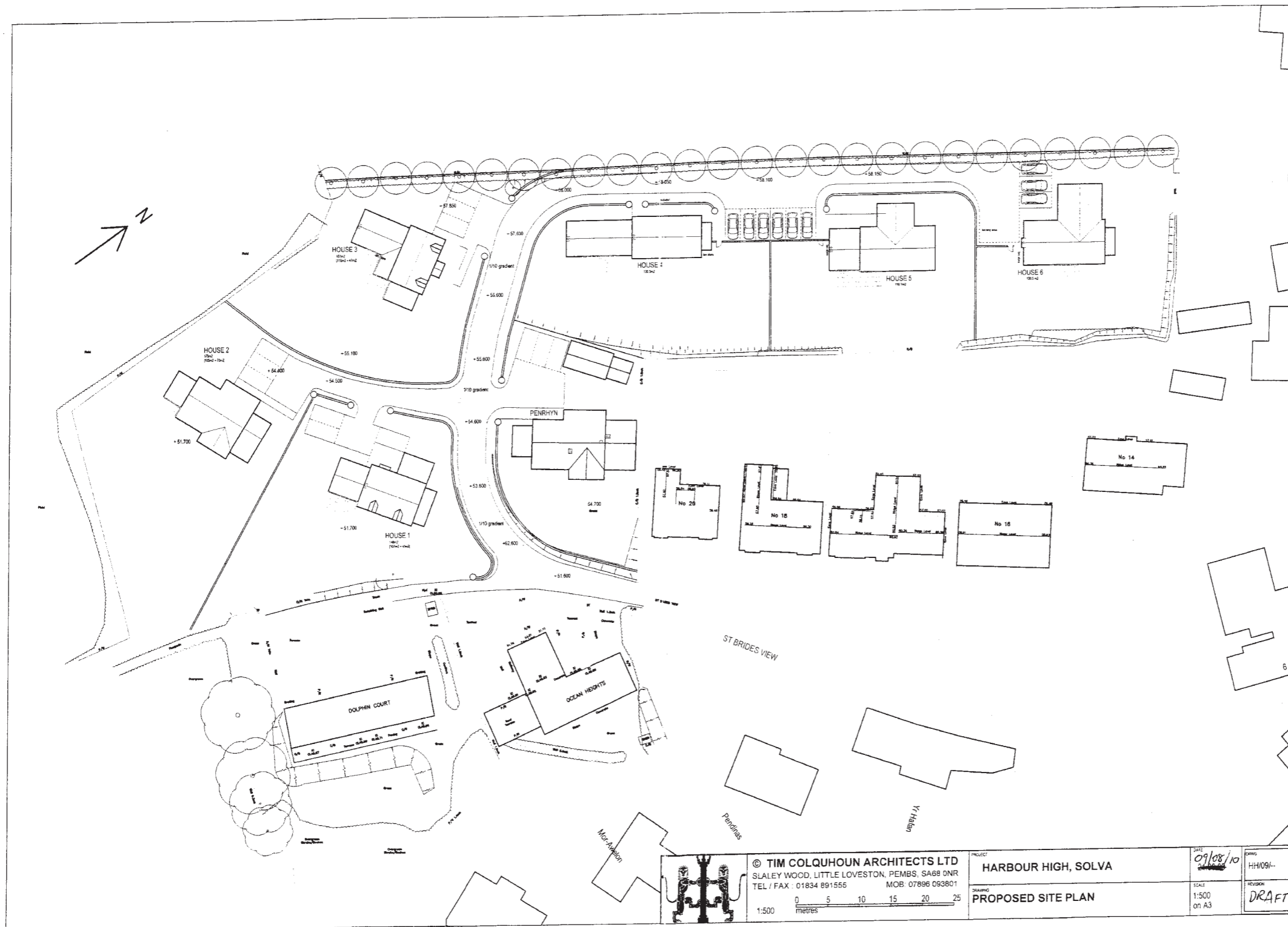
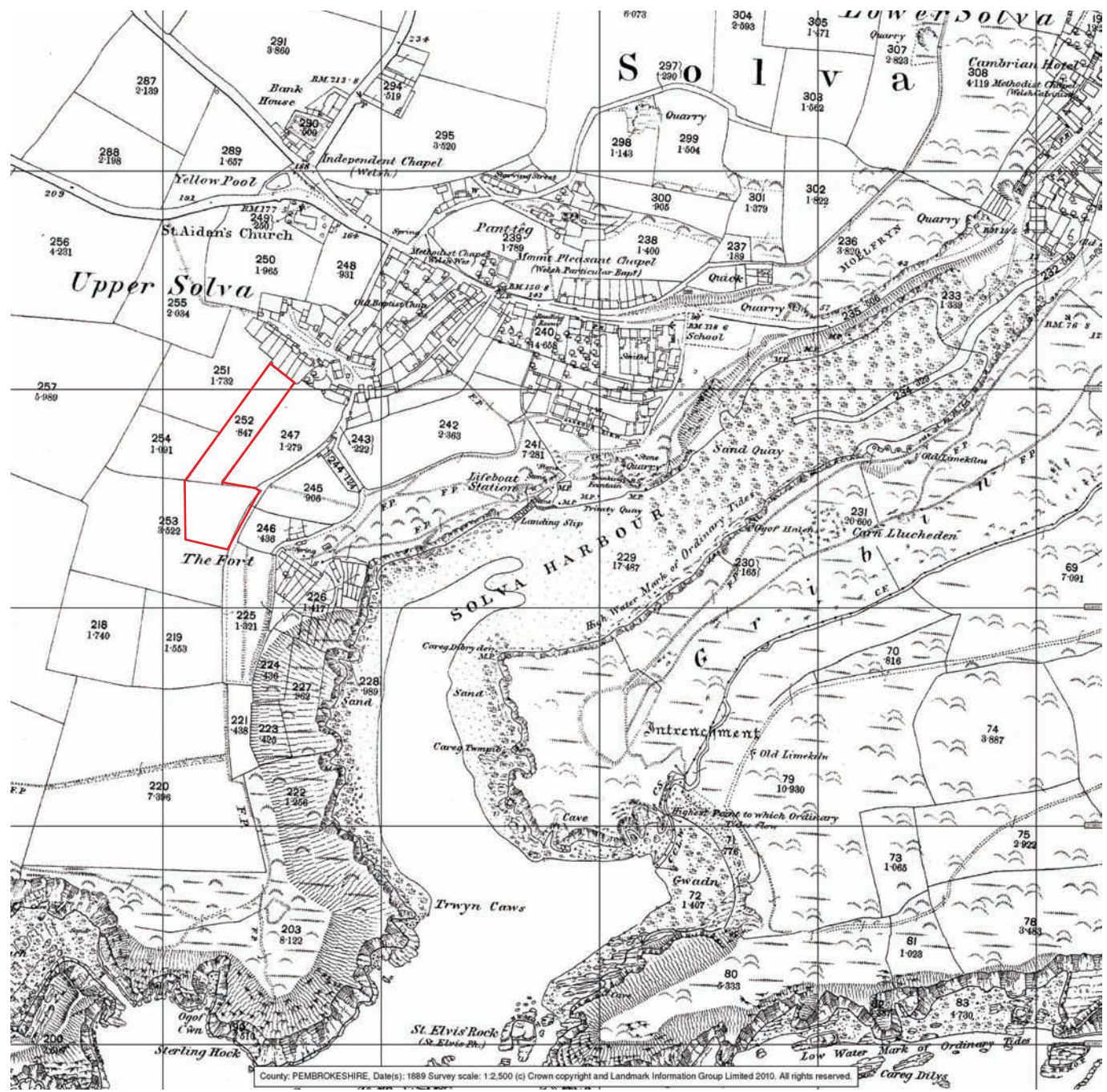


Fig. 2
Proposed layout of
houses at Harbour
High

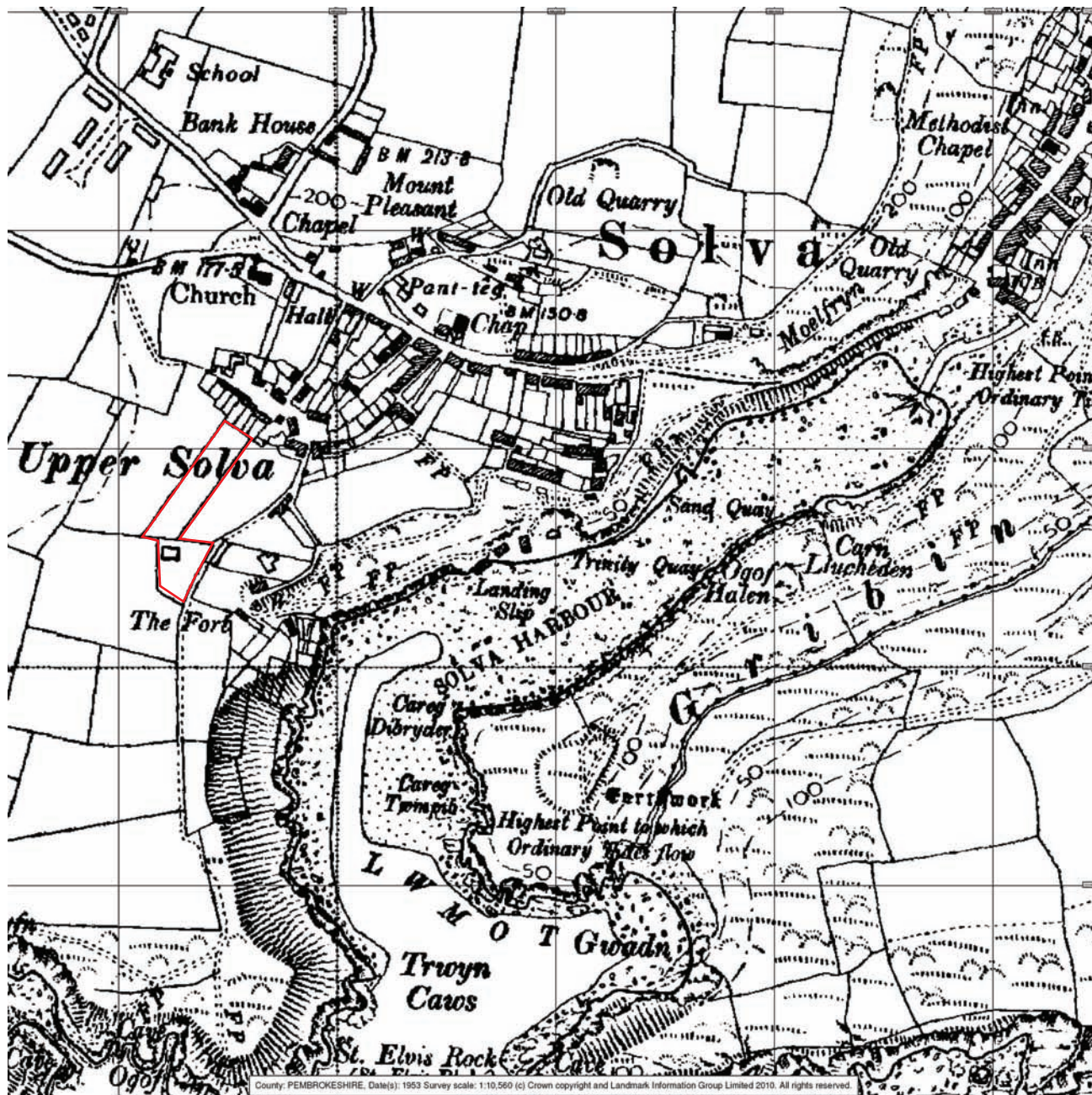


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Fig. 3
OS 1st Edition Map
of 1889 showing
proposed
development plot



Fig. 4
OS 2nd Edition Map of 1907 showing proposed development plot



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Fig. 5
OS Map
of 1953 showing
proposed
development plot



Fig. 6
View NE along
the main plot



Fig. 7
View SE across
the drive of
Harbour High
towards the Gribin
Promontory and
Dinas Fawr



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