

# **High Bank, Porlock, Somerset**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for The Rural Housing Trust**

by Jo Pine and Sian Anthony

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HBP 02/31

**April 2002**

## Summary

**Site name:** High Bank, Porlock, Somerset

**Grid reference:** SS 8847 4685

**Site activity:** Evaluation trenching

**Date and duration of project:** 18th April 2002

**Project manager:** Jo Pine

**Site supervisor:** Jo Pine

**Site code:** HBP 02/31

**Area of site:** c.560 sq m

**Summary of results:** No archaeological features or finds were revealed.

**Monuments identified:** None

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with the Somerset County Museum Service in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 23.04.02 Steve Preston ✓ 23.04.02
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# High Bank, Porlock, Somerset An Archaeological Evaluation

by Jo Pine and Sian Anthony

**Report 02/31**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at High Bank, Porlock, Somerset (SS 8847 4685) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ian Gillespie, Development Manager, The Rural Housing Trust, 10 Langley Court, Beedon, near Newbury, Berkshire, RG20 6RY.

A planning application has been made to Exmoor National Park Authority for the construction of two semi-detached houses on the site. A field evaluation has been requested to provide information on the archaeological potential of the site that could be used to draw up a mitigation strategy to minimize the effects of development on any archaeology that may be present.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and Exmoor National Park's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved Mr R Wilson-North, Archaeological Officer, Exmoor National Park Authority. The fieldwork was undertaken by Jo Pine and Sian Anthony on the 18th April 2002 and the site code is HBP02/31. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Somerset County Museum Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located near to the centre of Porlock, a small town in Porlock Bay on the coast of North Somerset, to the east of Minehead (Fig. 1). The site is located on a slope indicating that colluvium may have accumulated that may have buried archaeological features. The underlying geology is lower Old Red sandstone (IGS 1979) with the geology observed in the trenches confirming this as a red-brown clayey silt with occasional small sandstone rocks. The height above Ordnance Datum is 29.78m.

## **Archaeological background**

The site lies on the margins of the historic core of Porlock which is known to have existed from at least middle Saxon times and was subject to two Viking raids. Bronze Age material has been recovered from the north of the settlement indicating earlier prehistoric activity in the area. A watching brief carried out during service laying in the High Street in 1993 revealed medieval and post-medieval deposits (R. McDonnell, pers. comm.)

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. Specific research aims were to determine if any archaeologically relevant levels have survived on site, to determine if any deposits of any period exist, especially of Bronze Age, Saxon or Medieval date. Deposits of the latter periods would be important in helping to determine the early topography of the settlement.

Two trenches were proposed, both situated on the footprints of the proposed houses. The trenches were to be 8m long and 1.6m wide. They were to be dug with a tracked mini-digger with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

## **Results**

The two trenches were dug in the positions shown in Figure 3. The trenches were 1.6m wide and 8m in length. Spoilheaps from both trenches were examined for finds.

### Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench was aligned east-west. The stratigraphy consisted of a small turfline (0.05m) onto a mixed level of made ground and topsoil (0.3m) onto red-brown clayey silt (0.35m) onto a mix of loose angular rock and stones in reddish brown silty clay (0.17m). The trench was excavated into the natural to confirm the geology and reached 0.87m in depth.

### Trench 2. (Plate 2)

Aligned NNE–SSW, the stratigraphy consisted of turf (0.08m) onto a topsoil/ made ground mix (0.19m) onto red-brown clayey silt (0.34m) onto a mix of loose angular stones and rock in red-brown silty clay (0.28m). The trench reached 0.89m in depth.

### **Finds**

No finds were revealed in this evaluation.

### **Conclusion**

There were no archaeological features or finds revealed during this evaluation. It is likely that the large made ground/ topsoil mix layer was created recently during construction of the nearby Fire Station which has been levelled and lowered compared to the evaluation site. On the basis of these results, the site does not have any archaeological potential.

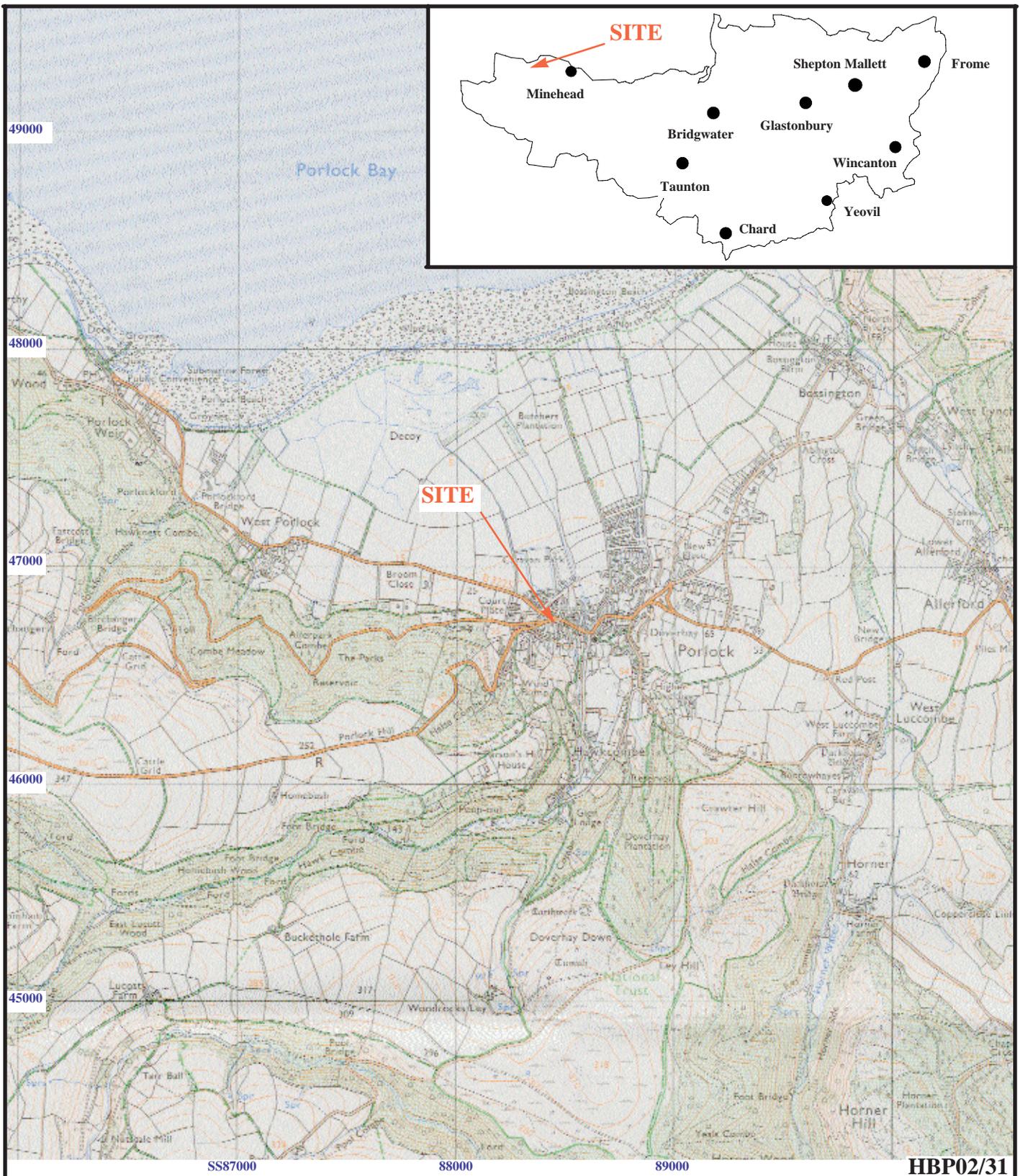
### **References**

IGS, 1979, *Institute of Geological Sciences*, 1:625 000, South Sheet Third Edition (Solid)  
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

**APPENDIX 1: Trench details**

0m at west or south-west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	8.0	1.60	0.87	Turflite (0.05m) onto made ground/ topsoil mix (0.3m) onto mid reddish brown clayey silt (0.35m) onto loose angular stones and rock in mid reddish brown clayey silt (0.17m).
2	8.0	1.60	0.89	Turflite (0.08m) onto made ground/ topsoil mix (0.19m) onto mid reddish brown clayey silt (0.34m) onto loose angular stones and rock in mid reddish brown clayey silt (0.28m).



**High Bank, Porlock, Somerset, 2002**

Figure 1. Location of site within Porlock and Somerset.

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# High Bank, Porlock, Somerset



Figure 2. Location of site within Porlock.

# High Bank, Porlock, Somerset

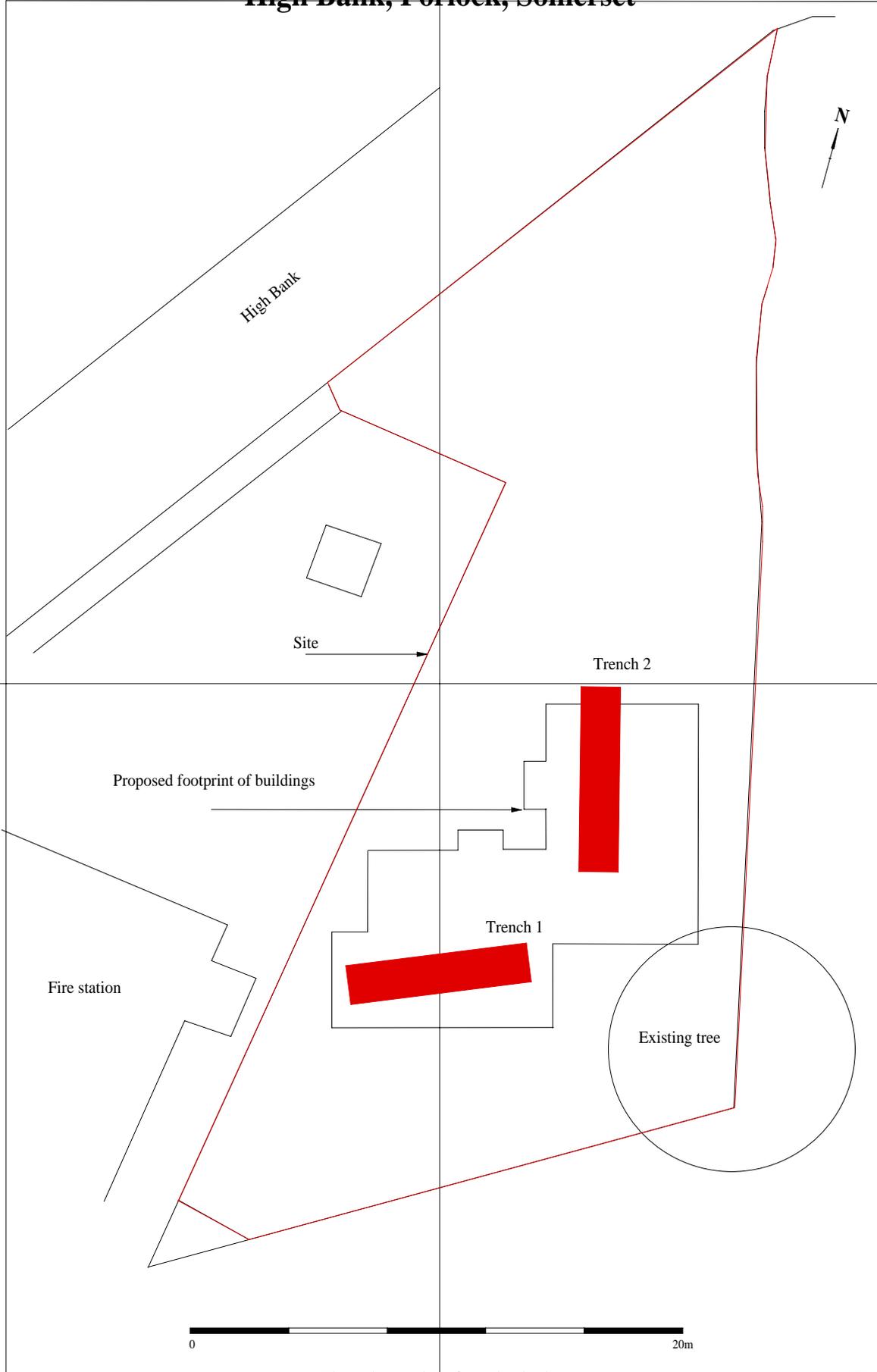


Figure 3. Location of trenches in site.



Plate 1. General view of site and Trench 1, looking north.



Plate 2. Trench 1 looking east, vertical scales 2m.