

Assignment 4: Critical Reflection of Roles and Responsibilities

This essay refers to a project which is still being undertaken but is nearing completion. As such the information from the latter stages of work has yet to be published. However as the project has been very public facing and results from the first two stages of work are public or have been disseminated (Cornwall Archaeological Unit, 2021), the site is not anonymised, although some individuals within the project have been made anonymous. Bude Storm Tower (Figure 1) is an early 19th century building originally built as a coastguard lookout which is positioned atop a cliff on the south side of the beach at Bude. The building was moved in the late 19th century because of the threat of coastal erosion (Sturgess, 2021, p. 8). The building is now being moved again due to the erosion of the cliff below.



Figure 1 The front elevation of Bude Storm Tower prior to dismantling.

The project has been undertaken in several stages and has involved a wide number of different stakeholders. At Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) the work has been undertaken as three separate projects; a Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken in 2020 (Parkes), a Historic Building Record undertaken in 2021 (Sturgess) and a Watching Brief and post-works Building Record project which is currently underway. The watching brief part of the works are now understood to be complete and the building is currently being rebuilt, and the final part of the site work expected to be completed early in 2024.

My involvement with the project began in 2021 when the initial Historic Building Record was undertaken. As I hold a good relationship with the author of the initial Heritage Impact Assessment, conversations were had with the responsible officer to ascertain any information about the site which wasn't included in the Heritage Impact Assessment report. My role with this part of the project was to undertake the fieldwork along with the project manager, where I undertook the site photography and assisted with the analysis of the building. After the fieldwork was completed my responsibility lay with the archiving of the project report and images. Due to a high workload at this time myself and the project manager, who was also managing most of my other work, had a discussion and it was decided that I would not contribute to the writing of the report, due to time constraints and I would focus my time on another project. I did have some involvement with the creation of the report however as I was responsible for the editing and annotation of the initial site drawings which comprised a floorplan, roof plan, elevation drawings, and because of the nature of the project, sectional elevation drawings had been made of the internal wall faces. The alteration of the drawings included the addition of features in the ground surrounding the site (which I also photographed), metal fixings and cracks. While on site I was responsible for taking the site photographs, ensuring correct exposure, camera settings and good composition to accurately record each face of the building along with important architectural details. During the site visit, the tower was open to the public with many holiday makers wishing to visit and take pictures at the site. As we were representing Cornwall Council and the interests of the town council, it was essential that we conducted ourselves in a professional manner whilst on site. Whenever interested members of the public approached us, we were friendly and informative about the work we were undertaking and the reason for it. In some cases my colleague took the time to speak to the public about the work we were doing whilst I continued to undertake the photographic survey. The presence of the public proved problematic during the photography of the interior which is small and dark, and with two

staff members, and artificial lights there was little room for the public to access the space at the same time. We attempted to block the entrance off with a ranging rod, however this was simply ignored by some visitors who came into the confined space with us. In hindsight it would have been better to have arranged to have a more appropriate means of closing off the entrance, and provided signage to tell visitors why they were being asked not to enter the building at that time. It could also have been arranged with the local community for a volunteer to be in attendance at the site to speak to the public whilst we undertook our work to improve efficiency and ensure site safety. At the end of the project I was given the responsibility of creating and submitting the digital archive to the Archaeology Data Service (hereafter ADS). To do this I renumbered the image files sequentially in two digit format from 01 to 84. Previously this had been done manually by my colleagues, however I utilised Adobe Bridge to automate this process and save time, and remove the element of human error in sequencing the numbers of files. The file names were then set out in the ADS raster metadata template and accompanied by mandatory metadata statements such as keywords and copyright information.

I took on a more autonomous role in the third CAU project at the site, undertaking the several watching briefs that were required prior to and during the rebuilding work taking place at and near to the tower.

The first of the watching briefs was undertaken in September 2022 when initial boreholes were made in the ground at the intended site for the tower, to test the suitability of the ground for siting the structure. This event was attended by a large number of stakeholders; the overarching project manager, a structural engineer, an ecologist, an archaeologist (myself), representatives from the town council and the borehole technicians. My role in this stage of the work was to monitor the soil retrieved from the boreholes to ascertain the stratigraphy of the site, retrieve any finds that might be brought up by the cores, and plan the locations of the sites of investigation. I had to work and communicate closely with the technicians and the ecologist, as the ecologist needed to inspect the ground prior to the borehole being taken. Once the borehole had been taken I asked the technicians to pause work so that I could record the dimensions and location of the borehole (as measured off nearby features such as fencing and a bench), and photographing and recording the soil within the cores. During the work any questions offered by approaching members of the public were answered by members of the town council and the site was clearly marked off from public access with fencing. At the end of the fieldwork I was told by the structural engineer that the logs for the boreholes would be sent around to everyone once they were available in a few weeks. After a few weeks we had not received the logs and so I contacted the engineer for an update, who confirmed that they were still to arrive. Several months later the logs had still not arrived so I contacted the engineer again. I was informed that they had been sent around but that we had been missed off the email, and the logs were sent to me without delay. These will be used to inform the forthcoming report.

The second watching brief was undertaken in May 2023 during the excavation of two small square pits which were created to fix timelapse cameras at the site, one at the existing site of the tower and one at the new site for the tower. The CAU project manager had liaised with the construction workers who were now on site and arranged a place and time for me to meet them. Upon arriving at the site I met the site manager and discussed the work that was being undertaken and explained what I needed to see. The excavation of the two pits were undertaken by the labourers on the site and I discussed my requirements for the pits for the purposes of making any records if features or finds were encountered. The first pit was dug to the required dimensions with straight sides and a flat bottom. As the first pit was close to the tower there was an expectation that the historic metallised surface that partially survived around the tower might extend into this area of excavation.

This was the case, and after discussions with the labourers on site it was agreed that they would take their morning break so that I could record the sections of the trench that had cut through the metallised surface. This ensured efficient working on the site and minimised any disruption that my work might have on their timescale. The second pit was situated in the same location as a nearby bench which had been temporarily removed. The bench had a concrete base which required breaking. As this would take some time, extending into the next day, I discussed the best course of action with the site manager and my manager (over the telephone). It was agreed that the small area of soil to the side of the concrete base, which the excavation area extended over, would be excavated by hand so that I could ascertain the stratigraphy at this location and determine the disturbance caused by the modern concrete bench base. It was determined that the insertion of the base had likely destroyed any archaeology in this position, and therefore I made the judgement, with agreement of my manager, that I would record the area that had been excavated that day (by photography, a measured section drawing, descriptions of the contexts and location on a plan) and leave the rest of the pit to be excavated without monitoring.

The third watching brief was also undertaken in May 2023 and was undertaken during the soil stripping at the new site for the tower. There was a large team of labourers present on the day as well as representatives from the town council and the site manager. As the previous work at this location – the bore holing and timelapse camera pit – had suggested there was no archaeology in this area, I did not need to intervene with the work taking place. Due to the elevated position of the site the topsoil is very thin, and therefore the removal of the turf took the excavation down to the subsoil, with the decayed bedrock not far below that. The stripping of the site revealed no finds or features, and as the excavation was being taken down deeper than any possible archaeology, I decided with agreement of the project manager that monitoring the rest of this phase work was not required. Photographs were taken and the extent of the excavation measured.

After these three watching briefs undertaken during the groundwork, the dismantling of the existing tower was monitored in stages. Due to scheduling issues, the first part of this, during the removal of the roof was undertaken by the project manager. We had a conversation over the telephone after this stage fieldwork to keep me informed about what had happened on site.

The most recent phase of fieldwork that has been undertaken was a site visit during the dismantling of the base of the tower. My main responsibility with this visit was to ascertain how the base of the building was constructed, and to record this photographically and in note form. The site manager had been in touch with the CAU project manager prior to the site visit and he had informed them that several coins and other modern artefacts such as sweet wrappers had been found during the dismantling of the building. Once I had finished recording the dismantled tower base, myself and the site manager visited the town council office where the coins and other items had been taken. The intention was to display the coins in the town museum and therefore the coins were left in the hands of the town council. Before leaving I photographed the coins and other items and the site manager informed me where each coin had come from. This information will inform the final report once the project is completed.

The final phase of work is anticipated to be undertaken in the upcoming months, once the tower has been rebuilt. As part of the WSI (Sturgess 2022, not yet publicly released) we have stated that we will undertake a building record after it has been rebuilt and it is anticipated that this piece of fieldwork will be attended to by myself and the project manager.

Bibliography

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