

Unlocking Our Coastal Heritage Project Black Head Promontory Fort, Nr St Austell, Cornwall



As part of a wider project funded by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and administered through DEFRA, the South West Coast Path team (SWCP) and the National Trust (NT), a number of archaeological sites have been selected in order to better conserve, enhance and manage them. The sites

were chosen on the basis that they were on or adjacent to the South West Coast Path and that they are currently at risk of being irreparably damaged or lost, or could be made more accessible for wider audiences. This strand of the project (Strand 1) is entitled “*Unlocking our coastal heritage – protecting the cultural corridor*”.

The site of Black Head comprises the remains of a Promontory Fort. The site is difficult to graze through access and stock welfare issues and has become overgrown. In the 19th century a Rifle Range was built across the site with the butts in the centre of the fort, the remains of this are prone to vandalism. It was selected so that targeted survey and consolidation work could be undertaken which would in turn provide a valuable amount of information for both engagement and future management.

The site is a small but very prominent headland dividing St. Austell Bay from Mevagissey Bay, offering wide ranging views along the coast in both directions. The headland is joined to the mainland by a narrow neck, almost forming an island. In the late prehistoric period, perhaps 2200 years ago it was defended by cutting massive ditches across the neck forming a type of site known as a Cliff Castle or Promontory Fort. The site is difficult to graze through access and stock welfare issues and has become overgrown. In the 19th century a Rifle Range was built across the site with the butts in the centre of the fort, the remains of this are prone to vandalism and require consolidation and further interpretation. The proposed work will include scrub clearance to help conserve the structures and make them more visible, access improvements (clearance of paths and creating a safe beach access path), a new interpretation panel. A survey will be undertaken of the structures of the Victorian rifle range, improve understanding of the site, to ascertain what works is required to repair them and establish the feasibility of re-roofing part of the target area to provide shelter for walkers and fishermen.



