

Continuing excavations at Strata Florida Abbey in 2009 by staff and students from University of Wales, Lampeter have begun to reveal the early phases of gatehouse construction.

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Nevern Castle Excavation 2009

Nevern castle is a 12th century castle overlooking the valley of the river Nefyr in north Pembrokeshire. Its large flat bailey is surrounded by massive banks and ditches and overlooked by one of the largest mottes in Pembrokeshire. At the eastern end of the bailey, perched above a deep gorge is the Inner Castle, a rock boss guarded by a rock cut ditch on which are the remains of a masonry tower and a surrounding wall. Though it may be founded on an early medieval site, the castle we see today is the one founded by Robert FitzMartin circa 1108/9. Control of the castle oscillated between the FitzMartin family and the Lord Rhys during the period 1135 and 1191, it was demolished in 1195 by Hywel Sais. It is a key site for Welsh cultural heritage, as it has it potentially contains buildings and defences constructed by the Lord Rhys; the earliest remains of a castle built by the Welsh. It also has the potential to reveal information about the lifestyle and interaction of the Anglo-Normans and Welsh occupants during the 12th century, arguably the period when 'modern' Wales started to be formed from the merging of these two groups.

Geophysical survey in 2005 and 2 weeks of excavation in 2008 showed that there were surviving archaeological remains of this 12th century castle still present on the site. A partnership between Nevern Community Council, who own the site, Dr Chris Caple from Durham University and The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park were able to attract SCIF funding from the Welsh Assembly, administered through Cadw, to excavate, conserve and develop the site during 2009 and 2010..

Four weeks of excavation, undertaken by students from Durham and Lampeter universities and local volunteers during June and July of 2009 revealed:

1. Archaeological remains are only present on the north and south sides of the bailey; medieval agriculture has removed all the archaeology from the centre of the site.
2. Two phases of wooden buildings are present on the north side of the site. These are probably from the early 12th century Anglo-Norman occupation of the site between 1108 and 1135.
3. Two large stone buildings are present on the south side of the site. At 6.5 x10m and 8m x 12m (at least) these are large

buildings. They are constructed of slate bedded, or more accurately, bedded with clay. They have doorways formed of finely carved blocks of local Pwntan stone. Whilst the clay bedded slate may be a local 'Welsh' building technique, accurately carved square sandstone blocks are an 'Anglo-



Nevern Castle: Masonry entrance to south range building 1

Norman' building tradition. These mid to late 12th century buildings represent a fusion of building styles and technology.

4. Three phases of wooden palisade are present on the top of the outer northern rampart.
5. The motte, almost certainly erected by Robert FitzMartin circa 1108/9, was originally surmounted by a wooden structure, probably some form of wooden tower, based on 4 large posts sunk into the top of the motte. Subsequently this was replaced in the mid to late 12th century with a large round tower; 9m in diameter with walls nearly 2 metres thick, again made of slate bedded in clay. This tower, probably originally two storey's high, now survives to a height of 1.5m in places. Since it lacks a doorway at this ground floor or basement level, it must have originally had a first floor entrance. Since rooms in towers including the basement are traditionally used as prisons, it is likely that when the Lord Rhys was held prisoner in Nevern Castle by his son Maelgwn in 1194, (recorded in the Brut y Tywysogyon – Peniarth MS 20) he was

held in this round tower basement.



Nevern Castle: The round tower

6. A second Nine Men's Morris board and two counters were recovered during the excavations. This joins the first Nine Men's Morris board and one counter discovered on the site in 2008. All were from 12th century contexts.



Nevern Castle: Nine Men's Morris board

The site has generated both local interest with over 120 local residents coming to the site's open evening, as well as visits from the whole of the Cadw inspectorate accompanied by Geoff Wainwright, the minister for Heritage Alan Fred Jones and senior staff from Cadw as well as the Pembrokeshire Historical Society. Further excavation will take place on the site next Easter and next summer. In the meantime research into the most effective way to conserve the round tower is underway.

*Chris Caple
Durham University*

Arolwg Ucheldiroedd Dwyrain Bannau Brycheiniog

Jenny Hall a Paul Sambrook o gwmni Trysor oedd yn gyfrifol am yr arolwg yma yn 2008, gyda chymorth grant gan y CBHC. Ffocws yr arolwg oedd yr ardal rhwng Cronlyn Neuadd a Thalybont ar Wysg, sef rhan ddwyreiniol Bannau Brycheiniog. Cofnodwyd dros 600 o safleoedd newydd mewn ardal rhyw 31 cilomedr sgwâr.



Nant y Llestri Cairnfield I (NPRN 246077)

Mae un grŵp o safleoedd wedi peri cryn ddryswch i'r gweithwyr maes. Ar ochr ddwyreiniol yr ardal, i'r gorllewin i Gwm Banw, cofnodwyd 10 grŵp o "garneddau", gyda rhwng 4 a 51 carnedd ymhob grŵp. Mae ffurf a chyd-destun y grwpiau yn eu gwneud yn dra gwahanol i unrhyw safleoedd eraill a welwyd yn yr ardal. Ceir rhai ar dir gwastad, rhai ar lethrau serth. Mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r carneddau yn hirsgwar, a rhai ohonynt yn dangos strwythuro syml i'w hadeiladwaith. Ar y cyfan maent yn garneddau isel, llai na 0.25m o uchder. Mae'r rhan fwyaf yn fesur rhwng 2 a 4m o hyd x 1 neu 2m o led. Yn gyffredinol maent yn rhedeg ar echel o'r gogledd-orllewin i'r de-ddwyrain.

Daethpwyd o hyd i'r grŵp fwyaf mewn darn o dir caregog ar Gefn Bach. Yma, roedd y cerrig naturiol wedi cael eu ad-drefnu i mewn i garneddau, ond ddim wedi cael eu clirio o'r neilltu. Mewn gwirionedd, roedd y carneddau yn gorwedd yn gymysg â strbedi o

gerrig naturiol. Mae hyn yn awgrymu nad "carneddau clirio" ydynt, gan nad oedd ymgais wedi ei wneud i glirio'r tir. Oes unrhywun arall wedi dod ar draws safleoedd neu garneddau tebyg yn unman arall yn y wlad?

Brecon Beacons East Upland Survey

Jenny Hall & Paul Sambrook of Trysor undertook this survey during 2008, grant-aided by the RCAHMW. It was focused on the area between the Neuadd Reservoir and Talybont on Usk, at the eastern end of the Brecon Beacons massif. Over 600 new sites were recorded in an area of 31km².

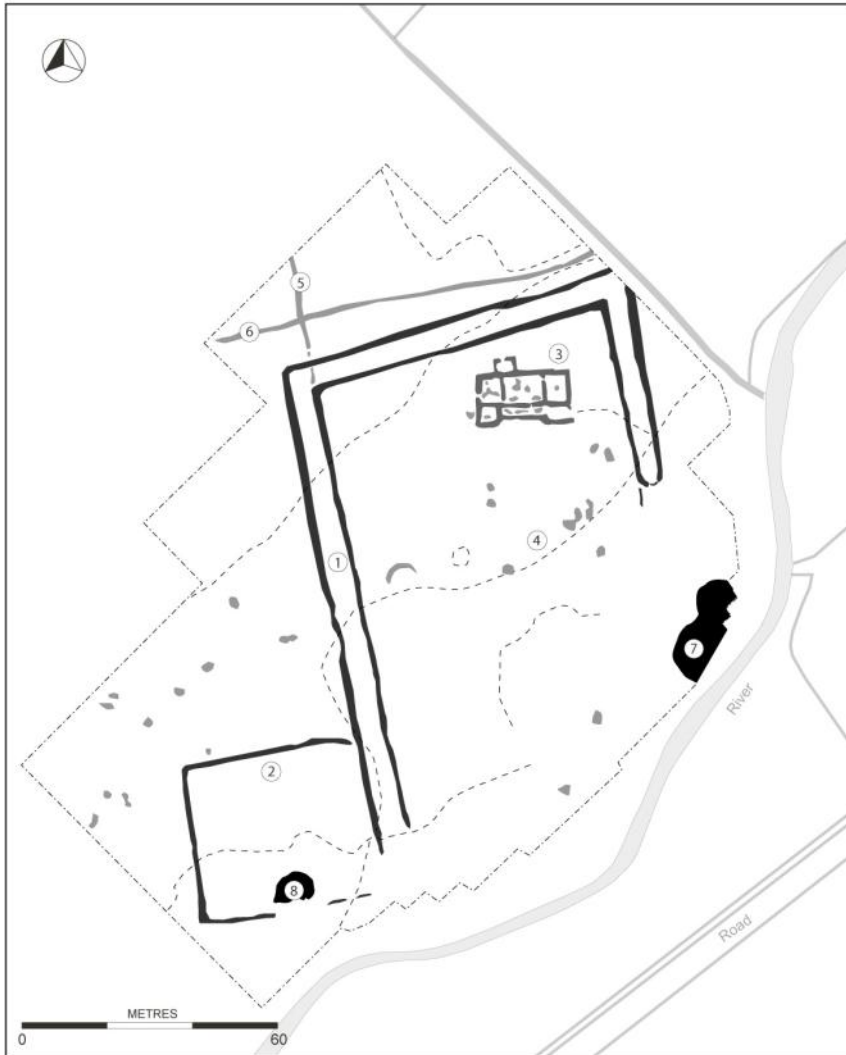
One group of features proved puzzling in the field. Concentrated at the eastern edge of the study area, to the west of Cwm Banw, 10 groups of stone "cairns" were recorded, ranging in size from a group of 4 to a group of 51. Their form and context makes them quite unlike any other features encountered in the area. They are found on moderate slopes or flatter ground, and most are rectilinear in shape; some displaying rough coursing. In general they are very low, less than 0.25m high. Most measured 2 to 4m long x 1 - 2m wide. In general their alignment was roughly NW-SE.

The largest group was found in a stony area on Cefn Bach, where the stone had simply been rearranged, not removed or cleared in any way, and natural stone stripes were intermingled with the constructed "cairns". This suggests that they are not merely clearance cairns, as clearance was not attempted. Has anyone else ever come across anything similar which could help explain their purpose?

*Paul Sambrook
Trysor*

Winged Roman building discovered in Ceredigion

The remarkable buried remains of what is thought to be winged Roman building, enclosed by a substantial enclosure over a hectare in size, has been revealed following geophysical survey of a cropmark site first discovered from the air. The site at Abermagwr near Trawsgoed, some 7 miles south-east of Aberystwyth, is the first villa-type building of its kind to be identified in the county, beyond the confines of the known Roman forts and fortlets which



Interpretation drawing, from geophysics, showing the winged Roman building and large bivallate enclosure near Trawsgoed, Ceredigion (©Gwynedd Archaeological Trust; Crown Copyright RCAHMW; NPRN 405315).

flank the north-south route of 'Sarn Helen'. Whilst parts of the enclosure and traces of a simple building had been known since cropmarks were seen from the air in the 1970s, it was the drought summer of 2006 which revealed the full extent of the large rectangular enclosure in fields to the north of Trawsgoed Roman fort.

In July 2009 David Hopewell, of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, together with Toby Driver carried out a two-day magnetometry survey across the site using a fluxgate gradiometer. It was initially thought that the rectangular enclosure and annex, built alongside a river, could be a late Iron Age or Roman sacred enclosure, perhaps once home to a temple; a handful of Roman temple enclosures are known in eastern Wales but none are west of the Cambrian Mountains. The cropmarks of the stone building showed a simple rectangular foundation. Because this was set at an angle within the enclosure it was thought unlikely to be a contemporary Roman building. It was felt more likely to be a lost medieval chapel because 18th century estate maps show a small field here named 'dol capel', or chapel meadow. No post-medieval buildings are recorded in this position on historic map sources.

Interpretation of the site changed drastically on completion of the survey. A winged building with three inner rooms and a south-facing veranda had appeared within the enclosure. With the central rectangular part measuring 22m x 7.5m, both the plan and dimensions fitted those of a small Roman villa. A villa would be expected in more settled and prosperous parts of Roman Wales, principally the south-east but also in parts of the south-west. In this part of mid Wales, a military zone maintained by the Roman fort at Trawsgoed until its abandonment by AD 130, a well-appointed villa less expected. However, a winged villa of similar dimensions is known from Llys Brychan at Llangadog in the Tywi Valley in Carmarthenshire, lying between the Roman forts of Llandeilo (Dinefwr Park) and Llandovery. Like the Abermagwr site, it too lies away from the course of the Roman road in foothills on the other side of a river.

The Royal Commission has been assisted with this survey by Dr Jeffrey Davies of Aberystwyth University, Richard Brewer of the National Museum Wales, and Gerald Morgan, historian of the Trawsgoed estate, as well as the landowner who willingly allowed access to his field. Further investigative work is now planned to attempt to date, and further understand, this discovery. The survey will be televised in the autumn of 2009 as part of the second series of 'Hidden Histories' on BBC2 Wales.

Dr Toby Driver
RCAHMW

New Research Project to study Monastic Wales



The new interdisciplinary research project "Monastic Wales" aims to establish a comprehensive monastic history of medieval Wales from the eleventh to the sixteenth century.

The first step is the creation of a website, which can be used as a research and teaching tool. From October 2009 visit www.monasticwales.org.



The religious houses of medieval Wales have long been overshadowed by their more numerous, generally more prosperous, and normally better documented neighbours east of Offa's Dyke. Yet their history is inseparable from the religious, cultural, economic, political, literary and urban

history of Wales during the period between the arrival of the Normans in the late eleventh century, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth. In an attempt to identify more firmly Wales's place on the monastic map of Europe, this new large-scale project seeks to establish a comprehensive monastic history of medieval Wales, the findings of which will be made available to scholars and students, as well as the wider public in two ways. First, as an initial stage, we aim to create and maintain a regularly updated and expanded website, which can be used as a research and teaching tool, and which will allow external participation. This website (www.monasticwales.org) – to be launched in mid October 2009 – comprises a full bibliography of primary sources and secondary literature, as well as links to relevant web-published material and reports on related work in progress. Second, following a workshop held to coincide with the launch of the website, we will be working towards publication of an interdisciplinary collection of work on Welsh monasticism, covering historical, literary and archaeological topics, as well as aspects of visual culture and manuscript studies.

The principal aim of this project, then, is twofold. It attempts to bring together the various strands of current and recent research on aspects of Welsh monastic history, and it aims to consider previously neglected areas of scholarship in the field. For the first time all the religious orders which were active in Wales during this

period will be considered together, including the mendicant and the military as well as the regular orders, male and female, and hospitals.

Professor Janet Burton, University of Wales Lampeter
(j.burton@lamp.ac.uk)

Dr Karen Stöber, Aberystwyth University (kes@aber.ac.uk)

Community Group Farm Survey at Dyffryn Crawnnon

This community survey is part of the annual fieldwork undertaken by



the Llangynidr Local History Society in the eastern Brecon Beacons area. This year the group decided to undertake an ambitious survey of over a dozen farms in the remarkable Dyffryn Crawnnon, a narrow, steep-sided valley and part of Llangynidr parish. The project has been funded by the Cambrian Archaeological Association and the CBA is run in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Wales Lampeter and with Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. Aiding the survey are a remarkable set of 16th century estate maps commissioned by the Earl of Worcester in 1587.

This collection, held at the National Library of Wales (Badminton 3), forms some of the best examples of their kind in the UK and formed the basis for an analysis by Bob Silvester of CPAT (*Lost Farmsteads*

Members of Llangynidr Local History Society survey the Mountain Wall above Tyle Farm, Dyffryn Crawnnon.

2006). This survey built on that information but in addition, during the first 5 days of the 3 week survey the team had already generated over 30 new archaeological records for sites never surveyed before, ranging from an ornamental gatepost in a gentry landscape to abandoned farmsteads and ruined sheepfolds. Alongside making a useful contribution to the Heritage Environment Record, the useful field recording skills generated by the field team will be put to good use in the future.

Dr Jemma Bezant
University of Wales, Lampeter

CBA Wales/Cymru News 2009

The return of the AGM to Shrewsbury seems to be being vindicated with last year's meeting being the best attended for a number of years. The afternoon symposium focused on recent fieldwork in Wales with excellent talks on the work along the route of the natural gas pipeline from Milford Haven to Brecon; excavations of a Neolithic settlement at Borrás quarry near Wrexham; and recent work at Holyhead. The Spring Business meeting was held in Wrexham, at Glyndŵr University. The afternoon symposium was organized in association with the Denbighshire Historical Society, but attracted few of its members. It was used to mark the first ten years of the Portable Antiquities Scheme operating in Wales. The Committee, as usual, met twice during the year, in January and June.

The continuing ill health of our part-time Conservation Coordinator (Development Officer) has meant that Central CBA in York has decided to temporarily take over much of the listed building work for Wales. It has also slowed plans to further develop the role of CBA Wales/Cymru in Wales. We, however, continue to be represented on the Historic Environment Group and to belong to Wales Environment Link. Currently there was no similar common voice for the heritage sector, but the creation of a 'Wales Heritage Link' or similar body is being considered. CBA Wales/Cymru has expressed an interest in being involved.

The production of Archaeology in Wales remains our largest commitment both financially and in terms of the amount of work involved in producing it. The difficulties experienced in finalizing the publication of Archaeology in Wales 47 further emphasized the need to be in a position where we have the funding in place to be able to pay for the technical side of its production, when necessary.

Evan Chapman
Secretary CBA Wales/Cymru

Newport Medieval Ship Open days

Newport City Council is once again opening the doors to this fantastic project by offering open days throughout 2009.

If you are interested in visiting the ship as a school or group visit please contact the Access Officer, Neil Stevenson, on 01633 215707.

Sunday 27th September 11 am – 4 pm
Saturday 24th October 11 am – 4 pm

Forthcoming Meetings

2009 AGM and Autumn Business Meeting will be held at the Gateway Centre in Shrewsbury on Saturday 17th October. The afternoon symposium will be on upland research in Wales and will be held in collaboration with the Upland Archaeology Steering Committee.

2010 Spring Meeting will be in Llandybie, Carmarthenshire, on the 6th March, co-host by the Ammanford Archaeological and Historical Society.

Carmarthenshire and Beyond

The latest volume in the Monograph Series of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society (No 8, 2009) has just been published and is now available to order, entitled studies in history and archaeology in memory of Terry James' (ISBN 978-0-906972-05-2), edited by Heather James and Patricia Moore. The substantial 334pp monograph is available at 19.95GBP plus 4.45GBP p&p, Cheques should be made payable to the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society. Terry was a lovely man and this volume is a fitting tribute. **For more information contact Heather James, Publications Officer, Braemar, Llangunnor Road, Carmarthen SA31 2PB, email h.james443@btinternet.com**

Exploration Tywi!

Celebrated for its picturesque landscapes and dramatic castles, the Tywi Valley still holds many mysteries. Exploration Tywi! is now providing an opportunity for everyone to explore the hidden secrets of the valley. Exploration Tywi! is a programme of public activities and events run by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust. Already through researching historic documents, a graveyard survey, and investigating old buildings, residents are collecting new stories of the valley's past; from its geological origins to the present day; from Prehistoric burials to World War II defences. Many other activities will happen over the next two years including archaeological excavations, geological survey and exploring the history and ecology of field boundaries. **To book for any of these activities or find out further information please contact: Alice Pyper - tel. 01558 825993 / email. a.pyper@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk**

THE NEXT DEADLINE FOR MATERIAL IS:

15th January 2010

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