CARDIGAN CASTLE, CARDIGAN, CEREDIGION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust For: The Cadwgan Trust





DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2010/57 RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 100048

> Tachwedd 2010 November 2010

CARDIGAN CASTLE, CARDIGAN, CEREDIGION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Gan / By

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Summary

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by the Cadwgan Trust to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Cardigan Castle, Cardigan, Ceredigion (SN 1776 4591) in advance of the proposed construction of a restaurant.

Two trial trenches were excavated, Trench 1 located to the east of Ty Castell, within the grounds of Cardigan Castle, and the Trench 2 located to the east of Bridge Street, to the south-west of the rear extension of Ty Castell.

Trench 1 was located on the site of the former Fernery, which was located to the east of Ty Castell. The east and west walls of The Fernery were revealed, which were of fairly substantial construction, of local stone and mortar. A slate slab floor was also recorded between the walls of the structure, although these may have been a later addition associated with the creation of a yard area or patio following demolition of the superstructure of the Fernery.

Trench 1 did not reveal any conclusive medieval archaeological levels. As with other areas of the castle site, the trench has demonstrated that there is no demonstrable medieval archaeology closer than c.1.4m to the current ground surface. It is likely that the line of the medieval curtain wall of the castle runs through the area of Trench 1, although all evidence for the curtain wall and any associated remains have been completely removed from the area during 19th century landscaping work.

Trench 2 was restricted by existing services and a concrete slab, and further constrained by water ingress during excavation. A stone built wall was revealed along the south-eastern edge of the trench would appear to correspond with a wall associated with the former No. 1 Bridge Street or smaller auxiliary building as seen on the 1906 OS 2nd Edition 1:2500 map. A possible cobbled surface recorded within the trench may represent a yard area or path surface outside of the structure.

Although only 19th century and later remains were recorded within Trench 1 such remains are still of archaeological and historical significance associated with the development of the castle. Depending upon the depths required for the construction of the proposed cafe, there may still be a potential for deposits beneath 1.4m depth being impacted upon by the development.

The area around Trench 2 will still contain remains of other former structures on the former Bridge Street frontage and also presumably evidence of fills of the medieval castle outer ditch. Such remains may include water logged fills within the ditch, which could contain significant environmental information and also the preservation of organic material such as wood or leather.

INTRODUCTION

Project commission

The Cadwgan Trust commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to undertake an intrusive archaeological evaluation comprising the excavation of two hand dug trial trenches at Cardigan Castle, Cardigan, Ceredigion (SN 1776 4591).

A brief for the evaluation was prepared by the Cadwgan Trust archaeological consultant. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was then prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to provide further details on the methodology of the proposed works. The WSI was approved by the Cadwgan Trust archaeological consultant prior to the archaeological works commencing.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services carried out the archaeological evaluation with the aid of two local volunteers between the 12^{th} and 17^{th} August 2010. The work complied with the WSI.

Scope of the project

The evaluation was designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the two excavated trial trenches, in order that an assessment of the impact of the proposed restaurant development on the archaeological resource can be determined.

The results of the evaluation will be used to inform the scope of any further archaeological works that may be required in mitigation of the impacts of the proposed development. The feasibility of a future community excavation at the site was also assessed by the evaluation.

The following specific objectives for the two trial trenches were also highlighted in the Brief and the WSI:

Trench 1:

- To characterise and record the remains of The Fernery;
- To establish the nature and depth of surviving medieval deposits; and
- To characterise the character of the foundations of Ty Castell.

Trench 2

- To characterise the nature of the upper deposits in the castle ditch; and
- To establish the nature and depth of the foundations of the extension of Ty Castell.

Report outline

This report summarises the evaluation results and the conclusions based on those results.

Abbreviations

Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record¹ (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

 $^{^{\}mathrm{1}}$ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Shire Hall, Llandeilo, SA19 6AF

THE SITE

Cardigan Castle (PRN 1082) is located at the southern end of Cardigan High Street (NGR SN 1779 4591). It is bounded by Bridge Street to the south and The Strand to the south-east. The evaluation area was located to the east of Ty Castell which lies on the southern side of The Green, a small road which leads into the main Castle area (SN 1776 4591).

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CASTLE

(taken from Poucher 2009)

In 1093 Roger de Montgomery, the Earl of Shrewsbury, claimed the lordship of Cardigan and launched an invasion. Roger built a castle 'Din Geraint' somewhere near the mouth of the Teifi, but his death in 1094 meant success was short-lived. It is unlikely that the original motte and timber castle was located on the same site as the present castle. It is considered most likely that this was located around 1m downstream in the area of Old Castle Farm.

Although the site of Roger de Montgomery's castle is not known, De Clare's castle of c.1110, was almost certainly built on the same site as the current castle. Originally built of earth and timber, the castle was well sited, resisting repeated attacks until it finally fell to the Lord Rhys in 1165. Rhys strengthened the castle by rebuilding it in stone. It changed hands several times until the early $13^{\rm th}$ century when William Marshall and Robert Waleran began a period of substantial rebuilding, remains of which can still be seen today. By this time the castle had become a centre of Royal control. In the 1270s it became an administrative centre both for Cardiganshire and the new Principality of Wales. The importance of the castle began to decline in the $14^{\rm th}$ century, although it remained a prominent feature of Cardigan's townscape and civil administration for many years.

The layout of the earth and timber 12th century castle remains obscure, although it is likely to have sat in the gardens in front of Castle Green house. This castle was rebuilt in stone in the 1170s, and repair, rebuilding and improvements were added periodically until a major period of rebuilding in the mid 13th century. Archaeological work has revealed something of this 13th century stone castle. The castle walls ran along the cliff-top, the cliff itself now obscured by the high walls that were built around the site in the 19th century. Towers projected outwards to the base of the cliff, some of which are still visible. The main north tower has been incorporated into a later house, protected by a deep ditch to the north. Remains of a castle gateway or bailey entrance have been revealed underneath the Green Street cottages. Further buildings would have stood within the castle but evidence of them has remained elusive. It is possible an outer bailey of the castle also extended to the north, up to the line of St Mary's Street.

In the 19th century the castle was redeveloped. Castle Green Mansion house was built within the castle grounds, incorporating the main north tower of the castle (Figures 2 and 3). The ruinous walls were demolished and replaced by the high walls that are visible today. The bases of towers that projected out from the castle walls to the base of the cliff are still visible.

The 1906 Ordnance Survey map clearly shows Ty Castell, with the outline of The Fernery on its eastern side (the location of Trench 1 crosses through the middle of this). Buildings are also seen to the west of Ty Castell in the area of Trench 2.

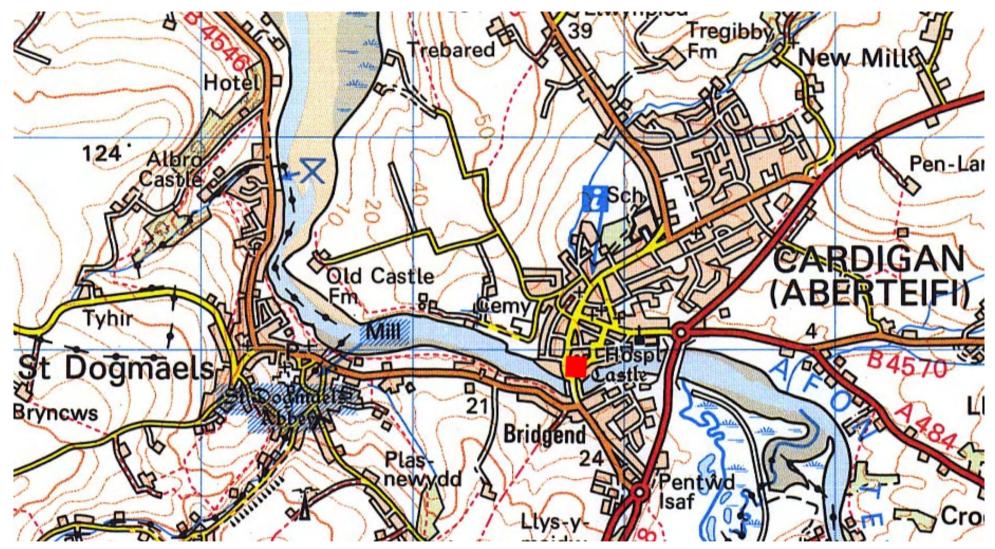


Figure 1: Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey. The site is marked by the red square.

Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd., The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

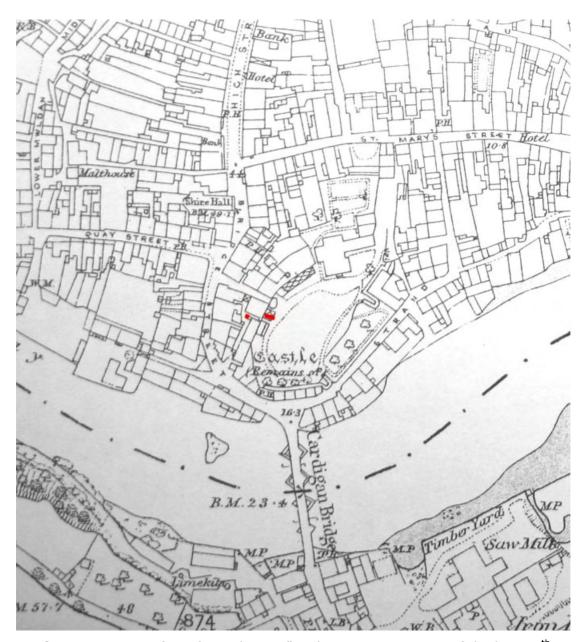


Figure 2: Extract from first edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of the late 19th century. Trench locations marked in red.

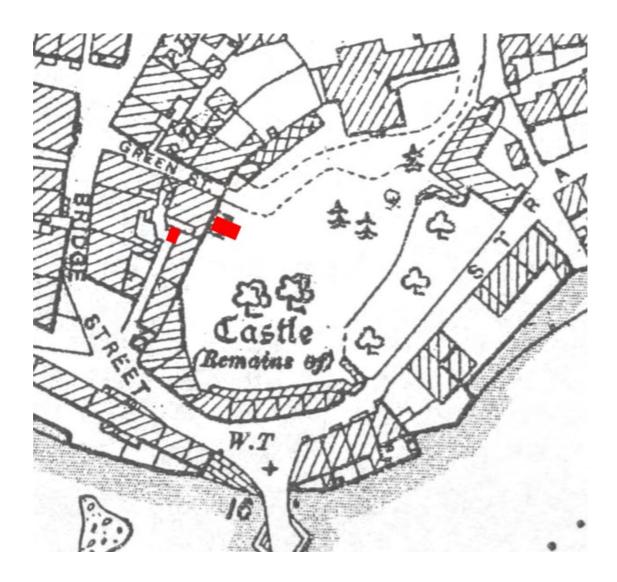


Figure 3: Detail extract from 1906 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey map, showing location of evaluation trenches.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used was as laid out in the WSI. In summary two trenches were hand excavated.

Trench 1 measured $c.7m \times 1.2m$ and was located within the castle grounds, across the site of the 'The Fernery', a former glasshouse built in c.1830 and demolished in 1931. The trench was located adjacent to the eastern wall of the property known as Ty Castell which lies on the southern side of Green Lane. Due to the presence of dense vegetation and roots it was not possible to excavate the trench to the 10m length as originally proposed within the Brief and WSI, in agreement with the Cadwgan Trust archaeological consultant.

Trench 2 measured roughly 1.2m square. The trench lay outside of the castle, in an area thought to have been located within the line of the former castle ditch. The trench location is at a significantly lower level than that of Trench 1. The trench was excavated against the wall of the modern extension of Ty Castell. The trench location was severely restricted by the presence of services and the size of the trench was reduced from that originally proposed in the Brief and WSI, in agreement with the Cadwgan Trust archaeological consultant.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), 1994, revised 2001).

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

Trench 1 (photos 1 to 7; Figure 4)

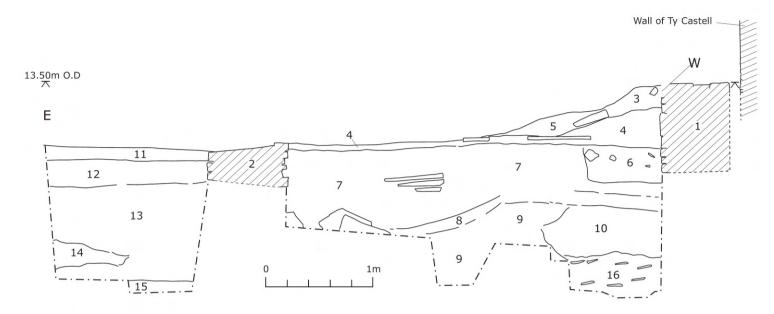
The trench was located directly adjacent to the east wall of Ty Castell (Photo 1). Following limited removal of topsoil the top of the surviving western wall of The Fernery was revealed (context 1; Photo 2, 3 and 4). Further excavation revealed the eastern wall of The Fernery (context 2), which survived at a lower level than that to the west, possibly as result of later landscaping of the garden area (Photo 2 and 4). The western wall had been built directly adjacent to the wall of Ty Castell (Photo 2, 3 and 4). The Fernery was far more substantially built than expected, comprising large mortared stone walls. It was therefore not possible to ascertain any information regarding the foundations of Ty Castell, as they were covered by the wall of The Fernery. The walls of the Fernery sat on rubble and layers of soil, silty clay, slate/shale and rubble.

Between the two walls of the Fernery was a rough slate slab surface (context 5; Photo 2). It is considered that this floor is later than The Fernery although any relationship between the floor and the eastern wall had been truncated. The slate slabs may have formed an external yard / patio area as defined by the former stone walls. The slabs were laid on backfilled soils and rubble (contexts 4 & 7), the same as those through which the Fernery walls had been built (Photo 4). A few sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from these layers, although more recent material was also noted and by comparisons elsewhere in the castle, it is almost certain that these layers date to the early 19th century when extensive landscaping was taking place.

Excavation then continued through the various rubble layers (contexts 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 & 14). Due to the substantial nature of The Fernery walls, they were not removed and were left in-situ. No archaeological features were noted during excavation of these rubble layers.

At c.1.45m below the current ground level in the east end of the trench (Photo 5 & 7), c.6m east of Ty Castell, these 19th century levels gave way to an orange-brown silty clay containing mortar flecks, pieces of shale and charcoal and occasional sherds of medieval pottery (context 15). The change in character of the deposits and the presence of a number of sherds of medieval pottery, without the modern debris seen in the layers above, would suggest that this may be an in situ medieval deposit. It should also be noted that the layer was of a mixed character indicating that it has been disturbed. This may suggest that it is either an archaeological feature such as a pit, or that it is possible it has been redeposited and dates to the 19th century as with the layers above. Owing to the depth of the trench it was not possible to investigate this layer any further.

Closer to Ty Castell it was not possible to consistently excavate down to 1.5m for health and safety reasons (Photo 6 & 7). However, some small test pits at the base of the trench within this area indicates that the 19th century rubble deposits get thicker towards the house (contexts 9 and 16). This is also apparent in the slight eastern slope visible from Ty Castell.



- 1- Stone built wall with white lime mortar (wall of Fern House)
- 2- Stone built wall (Fern House)
- 3- Topsoil, sand and rubble
- 4- Topsoil
- 5- Slate slabs possibly part of Fern House floor
- 6- Foundation trench for wall 1. Brick and mortar in soil fill
- 7- Mixed layer of loose dark soil, stone, slate etc
- 8- Orange-brown silty layer with stones
- 9- Mixed layer of loose dark soil and stones. Similar to 7
- 10- Broken slate, shale and stone with many voids. This layer slopes down steeply from south to north
- 11- Topsoil
- 12- Topsoil mixed with small stones (19th cent. deposits)
- 13- Dark soil, stone, slate etc. Similar to 7 and 9 (19th cent. deposits)
- 14- Orange-brown, silt with stones, similar to 8
- 15- Very mixed layer mostly orange-brown silt with patches of clay, mortar fragments, charcoal, slate/shale and large stones this could be an in situ medieval deposit, but not certain. It is very mixed, which suggets it is disturbed or redeposited. Contains sherds of medieval pottery
- 16- Broken slate and shale in orange-brown sandy clay. Similar to 10

Figure 4: Trench 1, north facing section, with context descriptions



Photo 1: Location of Trench 1, before excavation, with Ty Castell in background, viewing west



Photo 2: Slate slab flooring within Fernery, viewing west

10

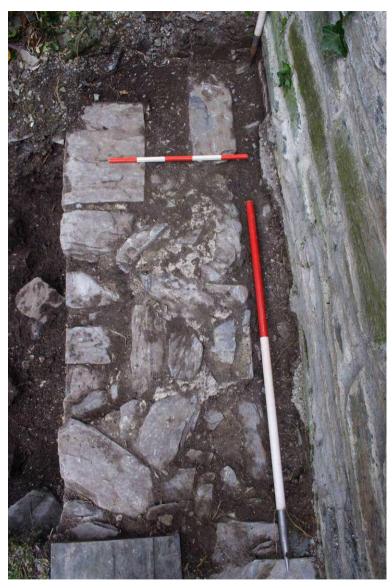


Photo 3: Western wall of Fernery, abutting wall of Ty Castell, viewing north



Photo 4: Overview of Trench 1 showing exposed walls of Fernery following removal of slate slab floor, viewing east



Photo 5: Eastern wall of Fernery, viewing west



Photo 6: Trench 1 excavated to maximum depth to the east of Ty Castell, viewing south-west



Photo 7: View south-west across Trench 1 showing fully excavated Trench 1, with Fernery walls visible and Ty Castell to rear

Trench 2

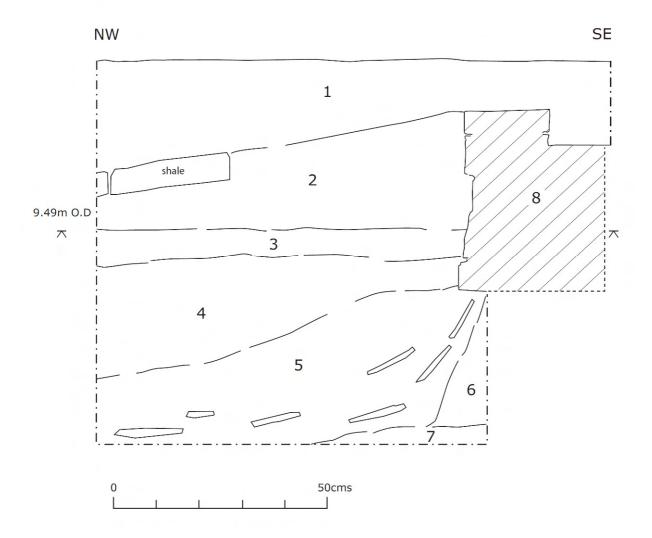
The trench excavated to the south-west of the rear extension to Ty Castell was restricted due to services, drain covers and concrete slabs (Photo 8).

Excavation of the trench revealed a thicker topsoil than seen in Trench 1 (context 1). Beneath the topsoil along the south-eastern end of the trench, a substantial stone wall was revealed (context 8). The wall appeared to be the outer wall of a former structure that was located adjacent to the Ty Castell extension.

Below a subsoil (context 2) comprising debris of 19th and 20th century date, a possible cobbled surface was revealed (context 3). This possible surface was insubstantial and removed.

The trench was excavated to a depth of c.0.9m at which point water ingress covered the base of the trench and excavation had to be abandoned. The material removed from the trench to this depth consisted of rubble layers and shattered shale bedrock.

It was not possible to investigate the foundations of the rear extension of Ty Castell within the trench due to health and safety considerations and other constraints.



- 1- Topsoil
- 2- Mid-grey silty clay with coal, mortar and 19th/20th cent. pottery fragments
- 3- Light orangey-grey silty sand with rounded pebbles (surface?)
- 4- Grey silty, sandy claywith pebbles and shale
- 5- Orangey grey, clayey silt with shale, mortar, large stones and occasional charcoal flecks
- 6- Orange-grey, silty clay with mortar
- 7- Shattered shale. Difficult to tell whether bedrock or redeposited
- 8- Stone built wall. (No. 1 Bridge St or smaller auxiliary building as seen on 1906 OS 2nd Ed. 1:2500)

Figure 5: Trench 2, south-west facing section, with context descriptions



Photo 8: Location of Trench 2, before excavation, with Ty Castell extension behind, viewing north-east



Photo 9: Stone wall revealed in the eastern side of Trench 2



Photo 10: Trench 2 after completed excavation, with wall to the east and water ingress, viewing south

DISCUSSION

Trench 1

Although it was considered possible that medieval remains survived directly beneath the flooring of The Fernery, this was not the case. As with other areas of the site, as seen from the evidence of the 1988 Ove Arup work, the trench has demonstrated that there is no demonstrable medieval archaeology closer than c.1.4m to the current ground surface. The presence of any medieval archaeology at this depth is also uncertain, as it was not possible to excavate into the deposits to confirm their date.

As noted in the Brief, it is likely that the line of the medieval curtain wall of the castle runs through the area of Trench 1, and that in 1988 a machine-excavated trench was opened around 10m to the south of Trench 1, which revealed rubble, almost certainly associated with early 19th century landscaping, down to a depth of 2.7m. Below this depth natural sands and gravels were encountered. It is possible therefore that the curtain wall and any associated remains have been completely removed from the area during this 19th century landscaping work.

The substantial nature of The Fernery walls was such that it was not possible to gain any information on the foundations of the property of Ty Castell. Any further development proposals in this part of the site is likely to need the full removal of The Fernery walls. The slate slab floor seen within The Fernery was set within topsoils and is thus considered to be a later addition to the structure, possibly associated with the reuse of the area as a yard or patio area following demolition of the structure. The slabs seem to have been limited to within the area between the walls, indicating that the walls would have been visible to some degree when the flooring was laid.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was restricted by existing services and a concrete slab. The trench was also constrained by water ingress through the side of the trench at a depth of c.0.9m.

The stone built wall revealed along the south-eastern edge of the trench would appear to correspond with a wall associated with the former No. 1 Bridge Street or smaller auxiliary building as seen on the 1906 OS 2nd Edition 1:2500 map (Figure 3). The possible cobbled surface recorded within the trench may represent a yard area or path surface outside of the structure. The building post-dates the disuse of the main castle external ditch, which would have passed through this area.

Further evidence for this building and others in the vicinity is likely to survive in the area, although these will have been partially truncated by later services etc. It is still possible that remains of the outer castle ditch survive in the area beneath the later deposits. The ditch, if present, may contain significant waterlogged environmental remains associated with medieval and earlier post-medieval activity in the area, as indicated by the water that seeped into the edges of the trench. Other material that may survive in such wet conditions could include leather or wood.

Community Excavation Possibilities

Although Trench 1 failed to demonstrate any confirmed archaeological deposits of medieval date above 1.4m in depth from the present ground surface, the potential for such remains below this level still exists. The material above includes rubble and demolition layers as well as remains of The Fernery and

possible garden features. Such remains are still of archaeological and historical significance associated with the development of the castle, and the recording of such remains should still be undertaken and would provide an ideal opportunity for a community archaeological project (although unlikely to be a particularly long or complicated phase of archaeological work). Depending upon the depths required for the construction of the proposed cafe, there may still be a potential for deposits beneath 1.4m depth being impacted upon.

The area around Trench 2 will still contain remains of other former structures on the former Bridge Street frontage and also presumably evidence of fills of the medieval castle outer ditch. If any development works were proposed within this area, then further archaeological works would need to be carried out to better characterise the nature of the remains.

SOURCES

Database

The Regional Historic Environment Record, housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Shire Hall, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF

Published and Unpublished

Poucher 2009, Cardigan: 900 Years of History at the Home of the Eisteddfod, Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Cartographic

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 2nd Edition Cardiganshire Sheet XXXVIII.5 1906

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 Quarter Sheet SN14NE 1963

Ordnance Survey 1:50000 Landranger Sheet 145 1995

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RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2010/57 RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 100048

> Tachwedd 2010 November 2010

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Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadad sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

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