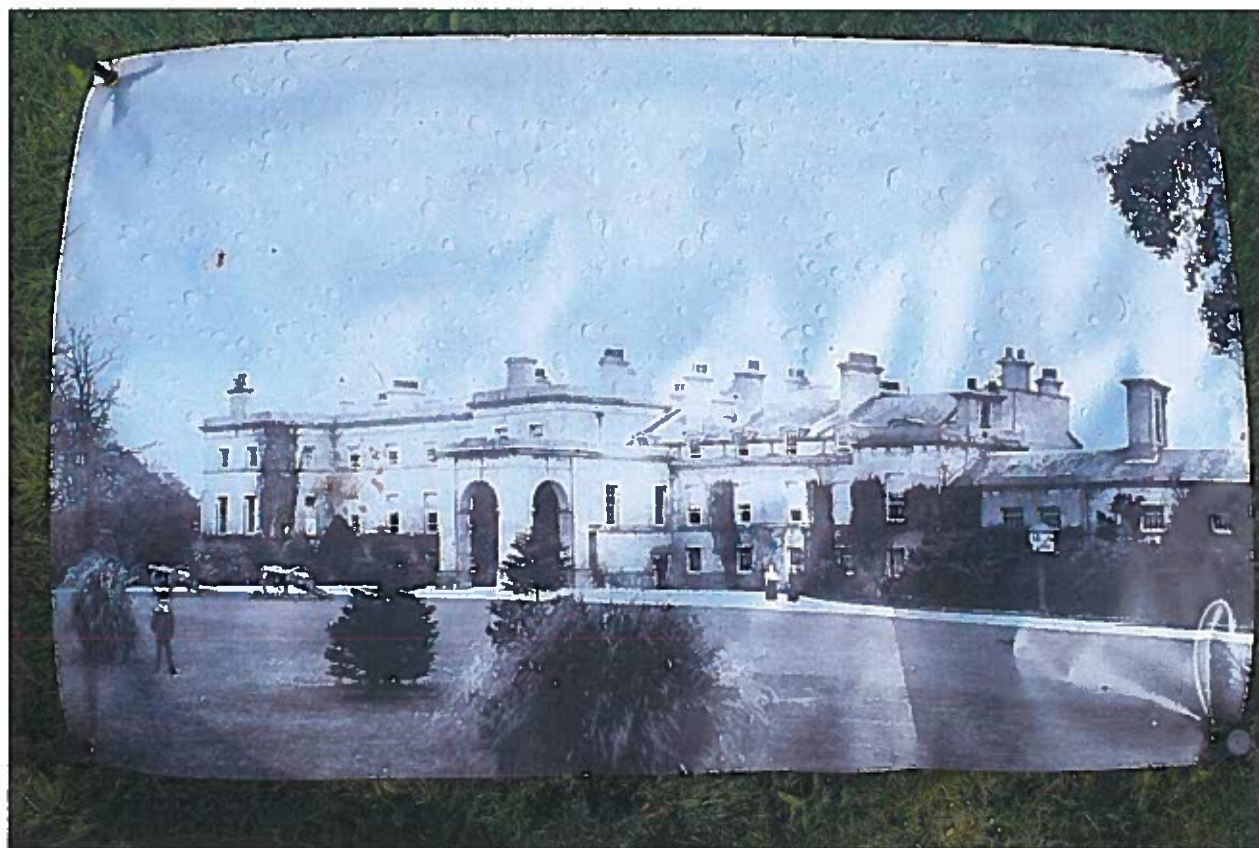


STACKPOLE COURT, STACKPOLE, PEMBROKESHIRE: COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION



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For: The National Trust



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**STACKPOLE COURT, STACKPOLE,
PEMBROKESHIRE:
COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

Gan / By

Philip Poucher

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Summary

The National Trust ran a Heritage Open Day at their Stackpole Court estate, Stackpole, Pembrokeshire (NGR SR 9775 9619), on the 10th September 2011. As part of the day's events an excavation was undertaken on the site of the former Stackpole Court Mansion, for which volunteers were invited to participate. Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned to assist in this excavation and provide supervision for the volunteers.

The site itself is an 18th/19th century mansion site that was demolished in the 1960s. The area now forms a turf-covered level terrace overlooking part of the estate grounds. Previous archaeological investigations on the site, undertaken by volunteers under the direction of the National Trust archaeologist as part of the Stackpole Rediscovered Project in August 2011 revealed wall foundations surviving intact just below the turf-line.

Two trenches were excavated during the Heritage Open Day, a 4m by 4m trench (Trench 1) over the main mansion site, and a 1m by 1m test pit (Trench 2) over the attached service wing.

Trench 1 revealed the remains of the outer eastern wall of main mansion building, measuring 1.1m wide, demolished to foundation levels. It also revealed suggested remains of the both the westward return of the main mansion wall and the line of the eastern wall of the service wing. All wall remains survived close to the surface under the current turf covering, and aligned closely to an anticipated layout derived from known surveys and plans of the building, suggesting these plans are reasonably accurate tools for locating the layout of the building

Internal floor levels were not revealed below the demolition levels, although external garden soils and a footpath or further wall foundations were recorded.

No building remains were identified within Trench 2, which may suggest a greater build-up of demolition and post-demolition material over much of the former service wing.

INTRODUCTION

Project commission

The National Trust ran a Heritage Open Day at their Stackpole Court estate, Stackpole, Pembrokeshire (NGR SR 9775 9619). As part of the day's events they planned to excavate an area of the former Stackpole Court Mansion, inviting volunteers to participate in the archaeological excavation. Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned to assist in this excavation and provide supervision for the volunteers.

The site itself is an 18th/19th century mansion site that was demolished in the 1960s. The area now forms a turf-covered level terrace overlooking part of the estate grounds, namely the former lily ponds. Previous archaeological investigations on the site, undertaken by volunteers under the direction of the National Trust archaeologist as part of the Stackpole Rediscovered Project in August 2011 revealed wall foundations surviving intact just below the turf-line.

The archaeological investigation was undertaken on the 10th September 2011 with a supervisor from Dyfed Archaeological Trust working alongside and supervising a total of 8 volunteers.

Scope of the project

The excavation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area.

Report outline

This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background before summarising 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).

Illustrations

Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

Acknowledgements

Numerous enthusiastic volunteers assisted in the excavation under the supervision of P Poucher of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust. The author would like to express his gratitude to the Claudine Gerrard and Gillian Wilkinson of the National Trust and Richard Crowest of Corvidae for their help and assistance.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Shire Hall, Llandeilo, SA19 6AF

THE SITE

Location

The Stackpole Estate is located in south Pembrokeshire, c.5km to the south of Pembroke and just to the west of the village of Stackpole (Figure 1). The site of the former mansion (PRN 6983) occupies a level terrace overlooking an artificially-flooded and wood-lined valley to the north and east. The valley runs out to sea at Broad Haven c.2.5km to the south.

The terrace and site of the former mansion occupies an area of c.0.5ha with lawns and woodland to the west. To the south lie still extant buildings that were formerly part of the mansion complex, including a brewhouse and the large former stable block that has now been converted into residential flats.

Geologically the area is underlain by Carboniferous Limestone of the Pembroke Limestone Group.

Archaeological Background

A manor house has stood within the Stackpole Estate since the medieval period, first founded by the Norman family of de Stackpole in the 12th century. The house passed to the Vernon family before being bought their former steward, George Lort, in the mid-17th century. Lort and his descendants became baronets and despite supporting the Royalist cause during the Civil War they retained Stackpole Court until it passed through marriage to Sir Alexander Campbell of Cawdor, in Scotland, in 1698. From 1735 Alexander's son rebuilt Stackpole Court, although apparently over the site of the extensive medieval cellars of the old house. Further enlargements were made to the house 1821 by the architect Sir John Wyattville (architect to George IV) and his assistant Henry Ashton. In all, this mansion apparently contained 150 rooms and was described by Major Francis Jones as 'one of the grandest houses in Pembrokeshire, if not all Wales' (Jones 1996, p196).

During the 2nd world war the estate was requisition for army training, and much of the estate ground remains in military use as the Castlemartin range. By this time the 5th Earl Cawdor spent most of his time back on his extensive Scottish estates. The costs of maintaining a large empty mansion at Stackpole along with onerous taxes proved too great, the contents were sold and dispersed of and the mansion was subsequently demolished in 1962.

Various service buildings remained intact, including the large stable block which has since been converted into residential flats. What is left of the estate is now owned by the National Trust and maintained by the Trust and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).

The area under investigation is the site of the 18th century mansion with its 19th century alterations. This consists a large mansion building, the outline of which is shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1908 (Figure 2), and detailed plans of the internal arrangements also survive. Attached on its southern side was the service wing which included accommodation for many of the servants, along with the kitchens and bakehouse.

Previous Archaeological Work

Various archaeological investigations and surveys have been undertaken within the grounds of the former Stackpole Court Estate. The mansion site itself has not been extensively examined archaeologically until recently. In August 2011 as part of the Stackpole Rediscovered Project the National Trust excavated a series of test pits across the area with the use of volunteers (results forthcoming). The

purpose of this work was to assess the state of preservation of the buried remains with a view to assessing the viability of eventually re-exposing the building for visitors. This work was able to identify several walls and mansion features that, although demolished, were in relatively good states of preservation below the covering turf layer. These remains appeared to survive at depths between 0.02m and 0.1m below the turf (C. Gerrard pers comm.).

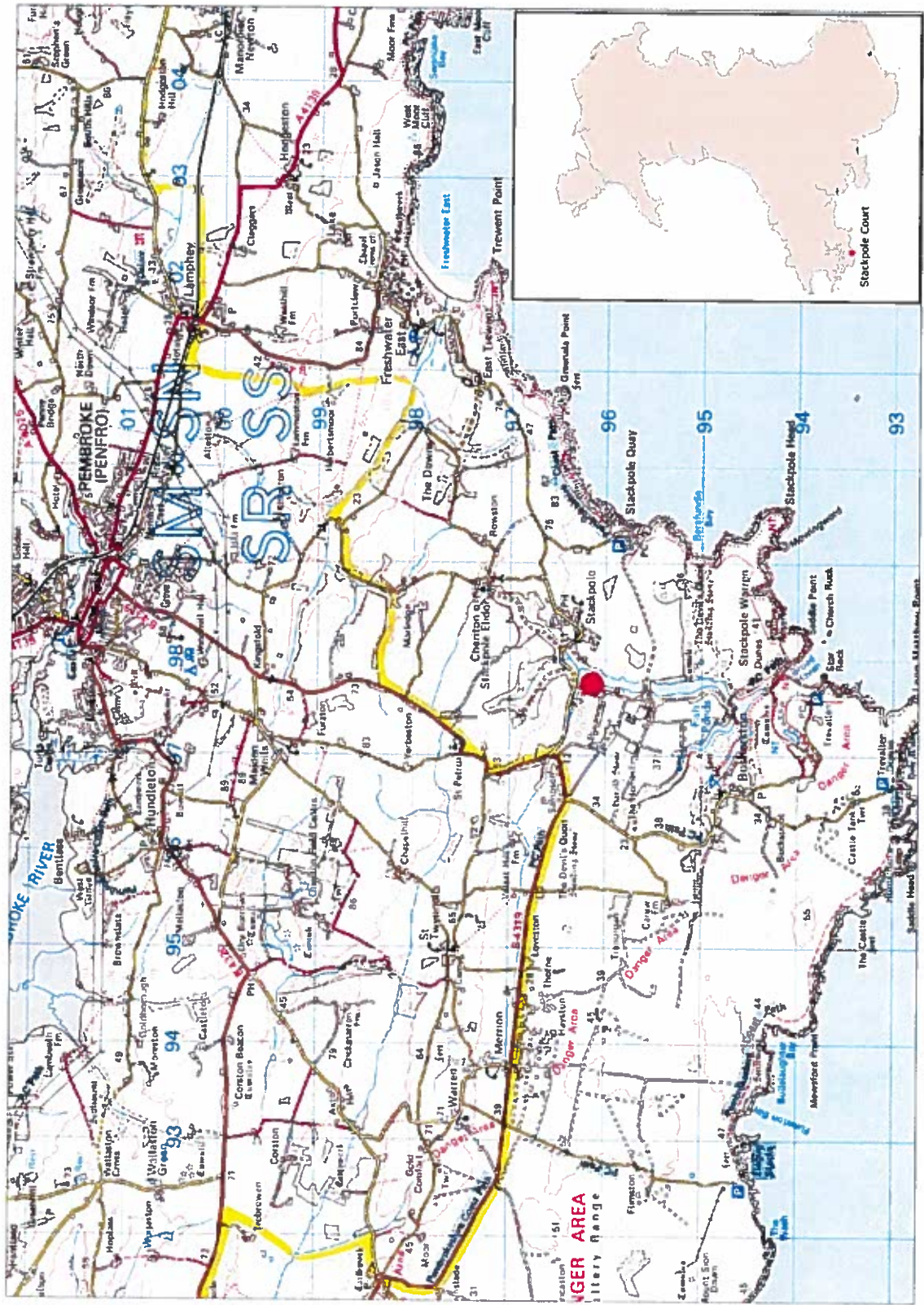


Figure 1: Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey.

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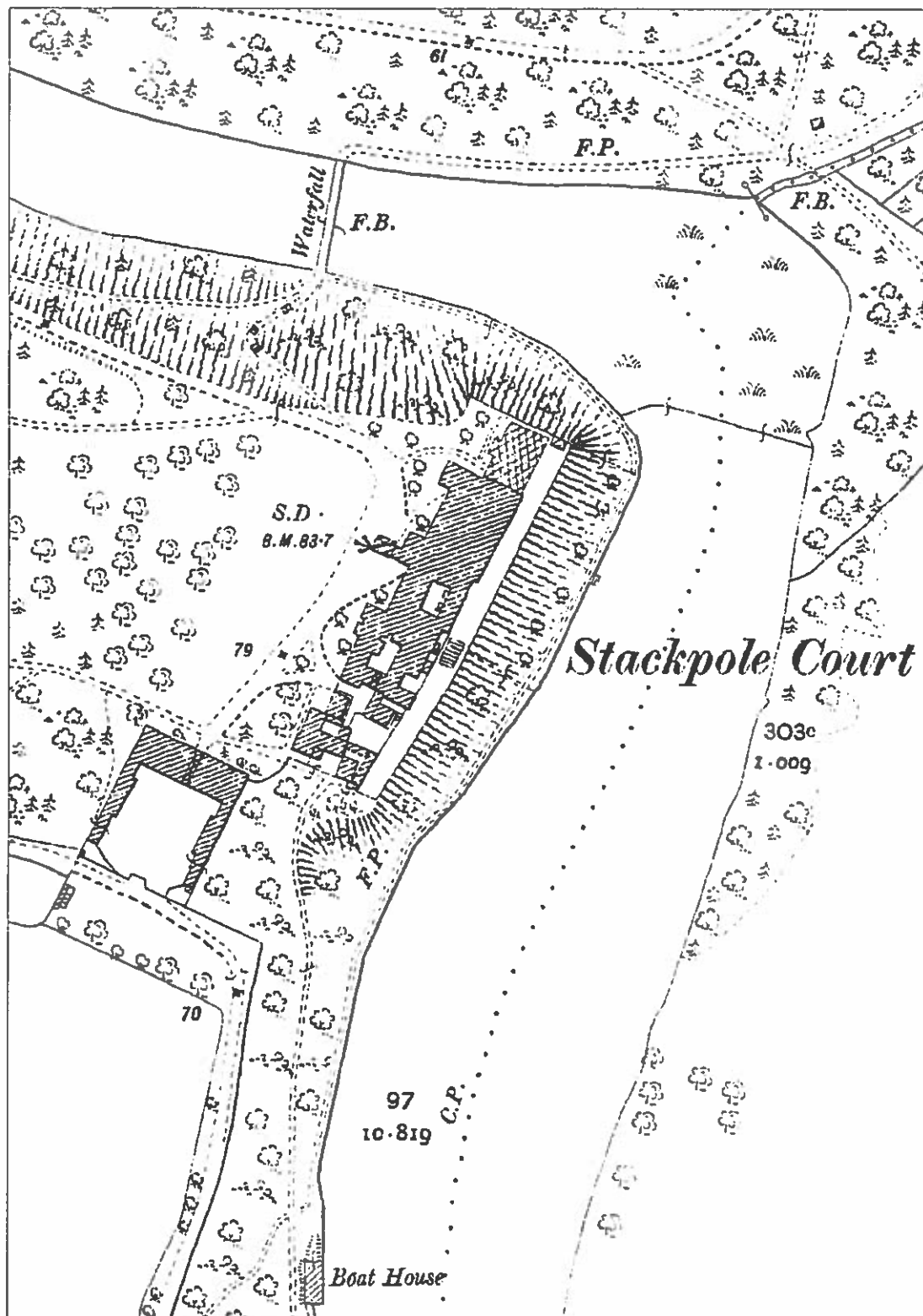


Figure 2: Extract from the 2nd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1908 showing the layout of Stackpole Court mansion and associated buildings.

METHODOLOGY

Initially it was proposed an area measuring up to 20m by 20m was to be excavated, located over the known remains of the mansion site. In the event volunteer numbers and time constraints meant two smaller areas were excavated, Trench 1 and 2 (Figure 3).

Trench 1 measured 3m by 3m and was opened up over an area on the eastern side of the building remains, where it was anticipated that the main mansion house met the service wing. This was also expected to be one of the original 18th century parts of the mansion.

Trench 2 was a small test-pit, measuring 1m by 1m, and was opened up within the area of the service wing, in an area anticipated to house the kitchens and part of the western wall of the complex.

All trenches were opened and excavated by hand. Detailed site notes and sketch plans were made during the excavation and photographs taken of all identified features and deposits.

The evaluation was undertaken on the 10th September 2011.

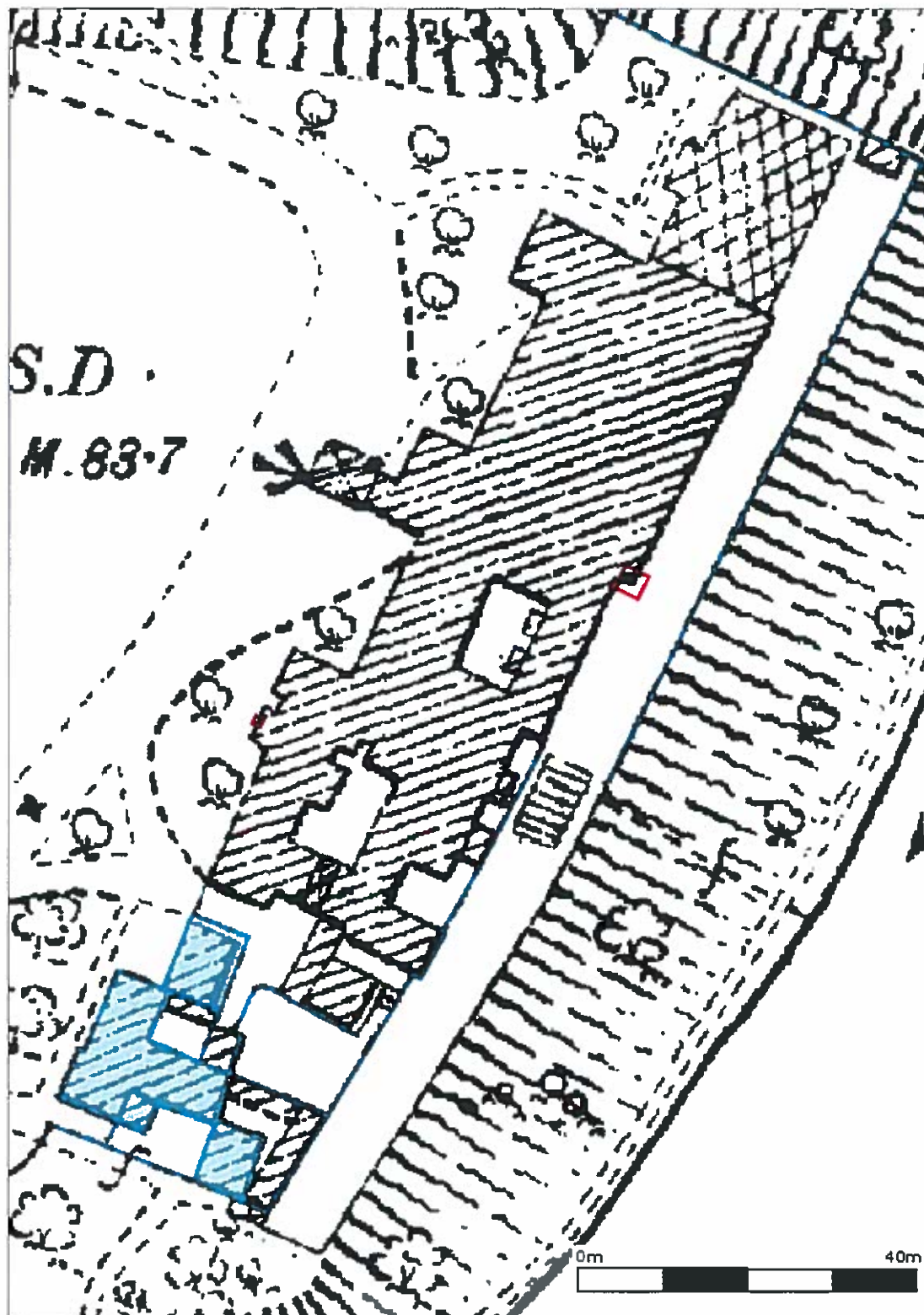


Figure 3: Trench locations, marked in red, overlaid on the site of Stackpole Court mansion as depicted on the 2nd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1908. Extant buildings and walls are marked in blue.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION RESULTS

Trench 1 (Figure 4)

Removal of the turf revealed a mixed stony topsoil of friable, mid grey-brown, clayey-silt (layer 100). This was at most 0.13m deep and contained a mix of medium to large angular fragments of stone and brick. Small fragments of mortar were also visible throughout. These inclusions all appear to derive from the demolition rubble spread across the site.

Finds from this topsoil deposit included fragments of unidentifiable brick, fragments of late 19th or 20th century flowerpot and a single bullet casing.

Almost immediately large stones became apparent just below the turf amongst the topsoil (photos 3 & 4). It was not possible within a single day to fully remove the topsoil from the entire trench but these large stones occurred on or close to the anticipated lines of walls (walls 105 and 106), and therefore it is thought likely they represent remains of these walls.

Wall 105 (photo 4) comprised two large stones situated tight against each other, the largest measuring 0.4m by 0.25m. No mortar or further structural features were noted but topsoil was not fully removed from this area. The largest stone lay just 0.45m to the north of the anticipated line of a side wall to the main entrance corridor. This side wall ran in a WNW – ESE direction and was anticipated to meet the main eastern wall of the mansion.

Wall 106 was less certain, but there appeared to be a concentration of larger stones amongst the topsoil deposit along the anticipated wall line. No mortar or in situ structural remains were revealed but topsoil was not fully removed from this area.

The topsoil was fully removed from a strip 0.6m wide along the northern edge of the trench (photo 5), which revealed clearer evidence of structural features.

Running in a NNE – SSW direction were the remains of a wall (wall 102 – photos 5 & 6). The wall consisted of large roughly hewn grey stone, roughly faced on both sides, with a rubble core set in a compacted yellowy lime mortar. The wall was 1.1m wide, and located on the alignment expected for the external eastern wall of the main mansion building.

To the west of wall 102, within the interior of the mansion, lay a deposit at least 0.45m wide of mixed soil and demolition rubble (layer 101), very similar to the topsoil deposit.

To the east of wall 102 lay a deposit of mid grey-brown clayey-silt (layer 103) with moderate small-medium sub-angular stone inclusions and the occasional fragment of charcoal. Although similar to the topsoil deposit this lacked the demolition rubble inclusions and appears to have been an original soil deposit along the outside of the main mansion house. This deposit was 0.85m wide.

The eastern edge of layer 103 was defined by a structural deposit of large, roughly hewn, grey-stones (?wall 104 – photo 7). These stones were unfaced and roughly set into a rubbly lime mortar. This deposit was at least 0.55m wide but extended beyond the limits of the trench, similar stones were visible amongst the topsoil along the same alignment throughout the trench. It followed the same alignment as the main mansion wall (102) but had an uneven surface. This may represent further foundations, but whether it is another wall or a pathway around the outside of the building is unclear. This feature does not appear on known plans of the site.

Trench 2

This trench contained a similar topsoil deposit of friable mid grey-brown clayey-silt (layer 200) with moderate inclusions of medium to large sub-angular stone and fragments of brown-glazed drainage pipe (photo 8). This deposit was slightly deeper at 0.18m thick.

Underlying the topsoil was a deposit of light-brown sandy-clay (layer 201), containing the occasional medium sub-angular stone and fragment of brick (photos 8 & 9).

Cutting through this deposit were the broken remains of a glazed clay drainage pipe (photo 9), running in a roughly NNW-SSE direction along the supposed wall line.

This trench was not excavated further. It had been positioned along the line of an anticipated wall, but no evidence of that wall came to light at the depths reached. It was decided to abandon this area in favour of Trench 1.

CONCLUSION

Trench 1 revealed the remains of the outer eastern wall of main mansion building, measuring 1.1m wide. It was not possible to excavate around the wall to determine if any courses of solid dressed stonework survived, but as none were apparent and the presence of other ground deposit indicates the wall had been demolished to foundation levels. The wall line was within 0.25m of the line laid out from known surveys and plans of the building, suggesting these plans are reasonably accurate tools for locating the layout of the building.

Although not fully revealed the presence of other significantly larger stones within Trench 1 also suggest remains of the both the westward return of the main mansion wall and the line of the eastern wall of the service wing also survive close to the surface in this area.

Where revealed the interior of the building at this point was still filled with a mix of topsoil and rubble, internal levels were not reached. Externally however the trench revealed a 0.85m wide strip of soil, possibly garden soil given the presence of flower pot fragments in this area. Beyond this appears to have the base of a footpath around the outside of the main mansion, as it runs parallel to the main wall. The full width of this feature was not revealed however, it is possible it forms the foundations to another wall.

Trench 2 did not reveal the line of the expected western wall of the kitchen area of the service wing. The presence of a drain may be part of post-demolition drainage works on the site suggesting expected wall remains may still be buried at greater depths. It was suggested that the ground level in this area was originally much lower, as shown by the roofline of the bakehouse visible on a nearby wall, and the ground level had been built up after the demolition of the house. The lack of any walls remains within Trench 2 may be proof of this.

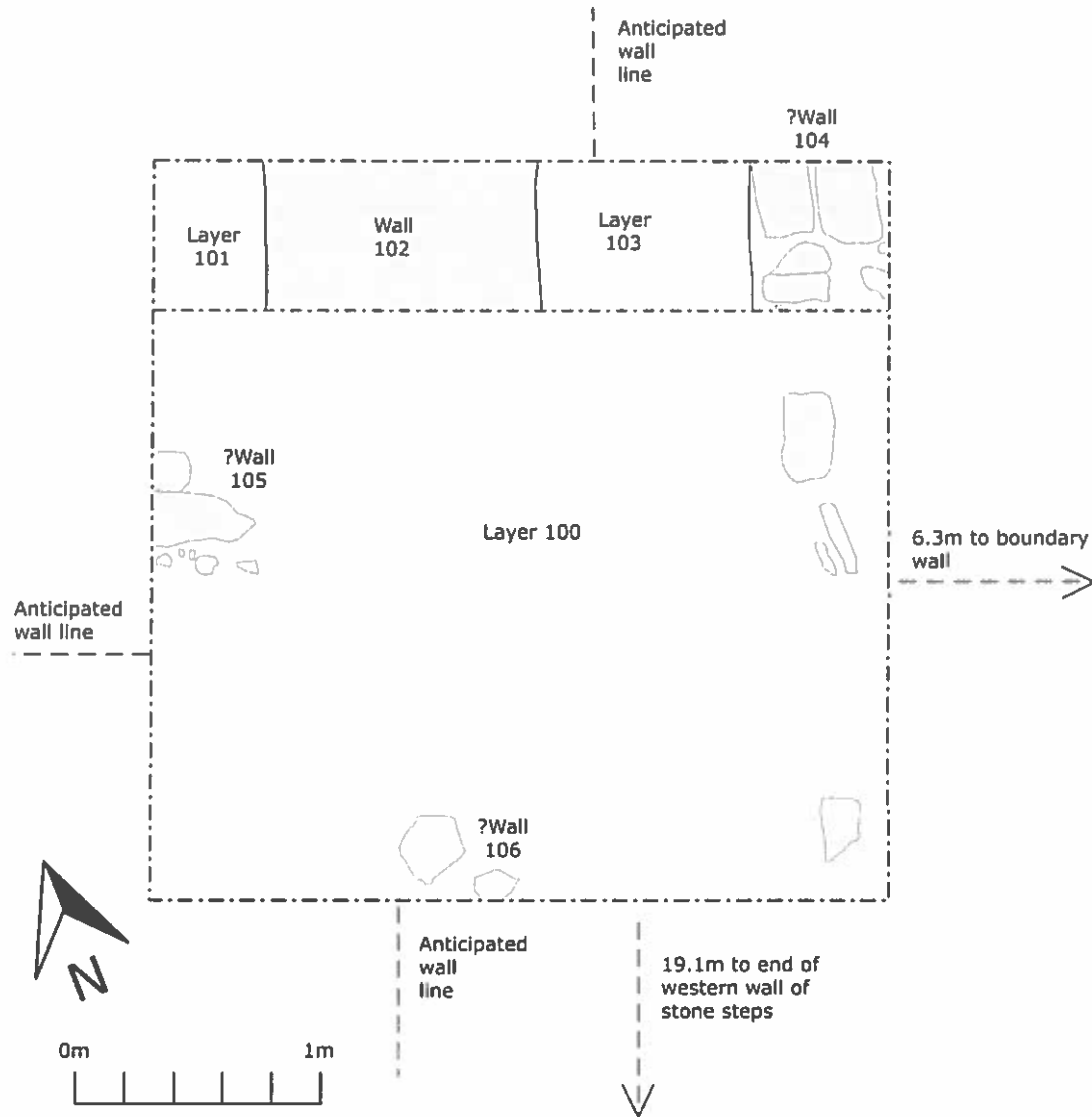


Figure 4: Plan of Trench 1.



Photo 1: General view of Trench 1 and the terrace formerly occupied by Stackpole Court mansion, looking N.



Photo 2: General view of Trench 1 and the terrace formerly occupied by Stackpole Court mansion, looking S.



Photo 3: Trench 1, looking SSW. 1m scales.



Photo 4: Possible wall remains of wall 105. 1m scale.



Photo 5: Area where topsoil 100 has been removed, showing wall 102 and possible wall 104 beyond. 1m scale.



Photo 6: Wall 102. 1m scale.



Photo 7: Possible wall or footpath foundation 104. 1m scale.



Photo 8: Trench 2 under excavation, looking SSW. 1m scales.



Photo 9: Deposit 201 and remains of the drain within Trench 2. 1m scale.

SOURCES

Database

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

Published and Unpublished

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Ordnance Survey 1908 1:2500 2nd Edition Pembrokeshire Sheet XLIII.5

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**Medi 2010
September 2010**

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on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

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