

## **Amroth Castle Farm Medieval Building – PRN 107832**

### **Site visits by Dyfed Archaeological Trust in 2015 & 2016**

#### **Site Visit 21<sup>st</sup> August 2015**

Andrew Parkin (Glastir Advanced Contract Manager) sent through details of a masonry structure situated within a land parcel to the east of Amroth Church, St Elidyr, located at NGR SN16450791 (Figure 1).

The masonry remains of a building which consists of two parallel barrel vaulted structures at the southern end of a rectangular building. The building is very ruinous with only one standing wall remaining on the east longitudinal side, which contains evidence of one narrow splayed window and the possible sill of at least one, possibly two more. Further structures lie to the north of the building, containing a curved corner. Other structures to the east of the building appear to be butted up to the main structure.

The building would appear to be historically significant, in containing two barrel vaults which suggests a medieval building tradition. In south Pembrokeshire stone vaults were often used to provide substructures for first floor halls or solars. There is no obvious sign of a cross passage. It is curious in that there appears to be no record of it either in the HER or NMR or from a quick assessment of antiquarian records (Fenton). The owner believes that locally it has been referred to as 'the old church' and he also speculates that a reference to Knights Templar in the area might be related. On an initial assessment it is thought to be late medieval domestic in character.

#### **Threats:**

Currently the structure is very overgrown, with saplings and mature trees growing out of the masonry. Clearly this is contributing to the deterioration of the structure but some of the roots embedded in the building will also be holding it together. At present it is extremely difficult to establish the form and nature of the building due to vegetation. Ideally the vegetation should be removed, however this would have to be done with extreme care not to damage the structure. Unless consolidation of the masonry is being undertaken it would be best just to cut back the vegetation which is adding weight to the structure. It has been suggested by the owner that there are enclosures around the building, but during the site visit the state of the brambles and undergrowth inhibited any assessment of this.

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**Figure 1:** The location of the building shown on the current 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (outlined in red).



**Figure 2:** The building identified on the 1845 Amroth Parish Tithe Map (outlined in red).



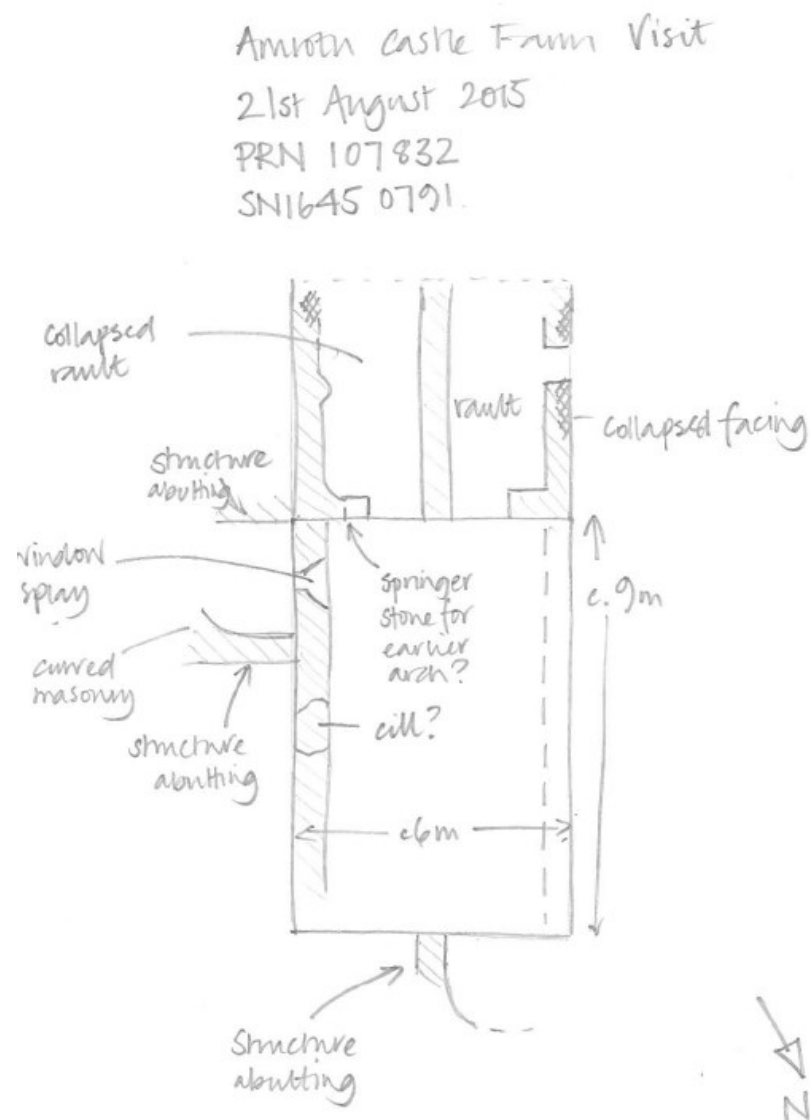
**Photo 1:** Looking south towards the vaults in 2015. 1m scale



**Photo 2:** Looking towards the vaults from the north showing arch in stonework to left of ranging pole; visible in 2015. 1m scale



**Photo 3:** Splayed window in the east wall, from the interior, visible in 2015. 1m scale



**Figure 3:** Sketch plan drawn in 2015 (not to scale).

### **Site Visit 15th & 16th December 2016**

During 2016 a large tree growing within the east side of the vaulted structure collapsed across the structure approximately from east to west and ended up lying across the top of the 2 vaults. This caused extensive damage to the eastern vault (Photo 2) including the destruction of a possible window within the east wall recorded in 2015 (Photo 8). Fortunately the western vault remained intact although its roof showed signs of weakening. The collapsed tree was removed in sections by tree surgeons on 15th December 2016. As part of this process the saplings growing within and around the ruin were cut down to ground level, as was all other vegetation. This revealed the ruin more clearly (Photos 5-7). It appeared that the ruin had been built on an area of raised ground, to the south and west of which the ground dropped away to become very wet and boggy. A number of walls and possible structures associated with the ruin (Figure 3) were sketched in plan; some of which obviously postdate the vaulted structure. Not recorded in Figure 3 are the walls that form an arrangement of sub-rounded enclosures or small fields to the southeast of the vaulted structure, as it was not possible to record their full extent in the time available. They are unusual in size and form, and together with the other walls recorded in closer vicinity to the vaulted structure, suggest that the site could have undergone a number of changes of use over its lifetime.

The vaulted undercroft may well have had an upper room that served as a solar; a style common to medieval buildings in Pembrokeshire, as also seen at Carswell and West Tarr vaulted houses in the Penally area, and Lydstep Palace, all of which are thought to date from the 14th/15<sup>th</sup> century. The solar was designed as the family's private living and sleeping quarters.

The vegetation clearance within the vicinity of the ruin could allow for a unique opportunity to record in detail the ruin and its relationship with the surrounding enclosures before it becomes obscured by vegetation again.

F Murphy December 2016



**Photo 4:** Looking roughly south towards the vaults in 2016 showing the damage caused to the eastern vault by the collapsed tree that can be seen lying across the top of the structure.



**Photo 5:** Looking approximately SE in 2016 towards the west wall of the western vault showing the branches of the fallen tree overhanging the ruin.



**Photo 6:** Looking approximately west in 2016 showing the roots of the collapsed tree that grew within the east wall of the ruin.



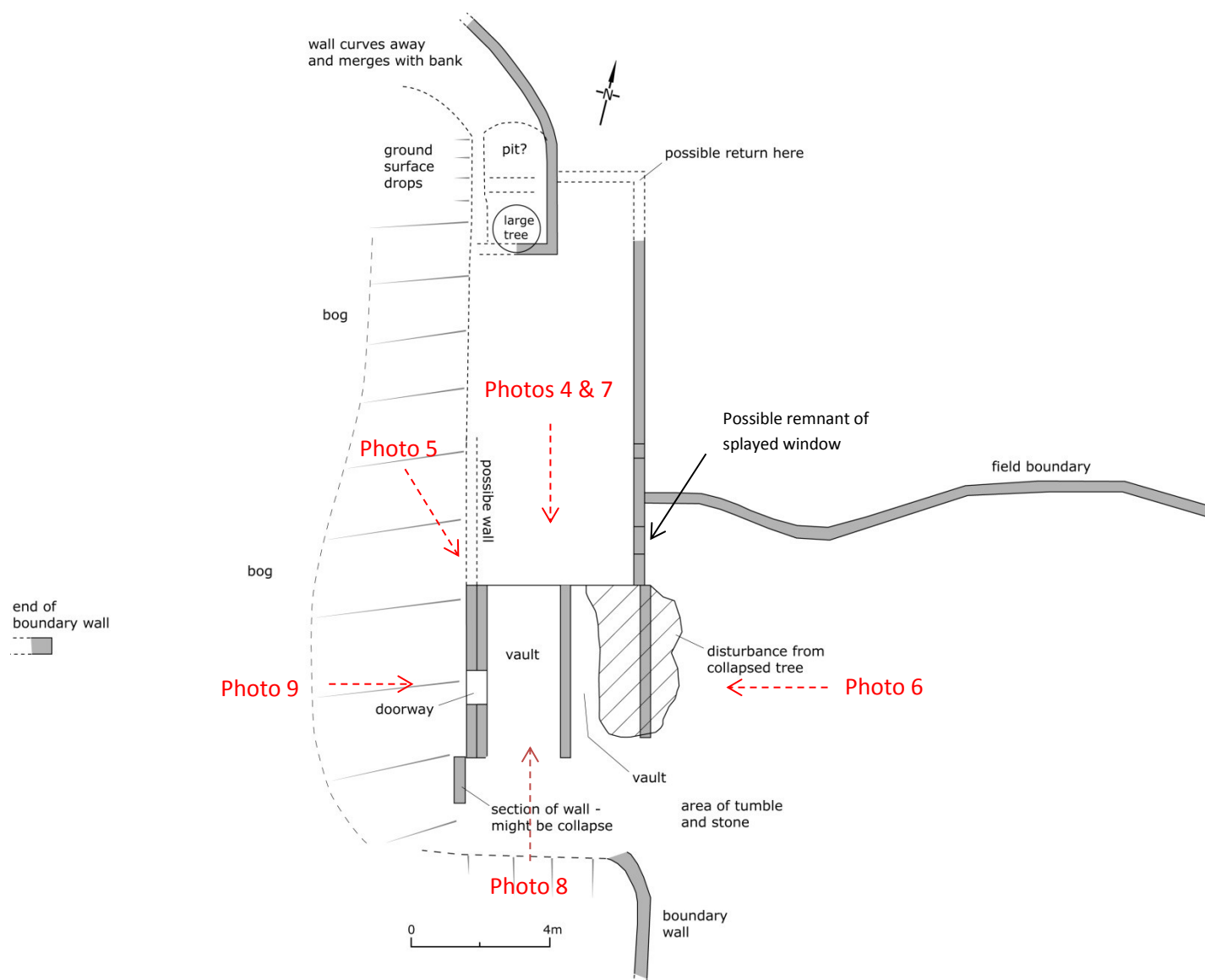
**Photo 7:** Looking south in 2016 towards the vaulted structure after the removal of the collapsed tree and clearance of the surrounding vegetation. 1m scale



**Photo 8:** Looking north in 2016 at the vaulted structure showing the extant western vault after the removal of the collapsed tree and clearance of the surrounding vegetation. 1m scale



**Photo 9:** Looking east in 2016 showing the doorway into the western vault after the removal of the collapsed tree and clearance of the surrounding vegetation. 1m scale



**Figure 4:** Sketch plan drawn in 2016 showing the position of photographs in report taken during the site visits in 2016.