

ST ISHMAEL DESERTED MEDIEVAL VILLAGE, CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS 2018 SHORT INTERIM REPORT



2018 investigations at St Ishmael (photo courtesy of Pete Francis)

Prepared
For: Cadw



Archaeological Trust



DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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April 2019

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CARMARTHENSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS 2018
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Gan / By
Fran Murphy and Alice Day

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CONTENTS

CRYNODEB		1
SUMMARY		2
INTRODUCTION		3
SUMMARY RESULTS		6
Building 4		6
Building 5		7
Building 7		9
Building 8		12
 APPENDIX 1:	Selection of images of volunteers working on the project	 14
 FIGURES		
Figure 1:	Site Location Plan	4
Figure 2:	Approximate layout of identified buildings since 2010 overlain on 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map	5
Figure 3:	Overall plan of Building 7	8
Figure 4:	Overall plan of Building 8	13

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CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL

Cynhaliodd cloddio archeolegol pythefnos yn hydref 2018 ymchwilio a chofnodi nifer o adeiladau cerrig yn yr anheddiad canoloesol anghyfannedd yn St Ishmael, Sir Gaerfyrddin. Ariannwyd y cloddio gan grant gan Cadw.

Datgelwyd elfennau o'r adeiladau gan erydiad arfordirol ers 2011, ac ymchwiliwyd yn rhannol i'r rhain ym 2017. Ym 2018 targedodd y cloddio'r adeiladau sydd fwyaf mewn perygl o'r erydiad hwn.

Gwnaed y cloddio gyda chymorth cyfanswm o 36 o wirfoddolwyr unigol a roddodd gyfanswm o 122 diwrnod gwirfoddol i'r prosiect. Darparwyd teithiau o'r cloddio i gyd-fynd â Blwyddyn y Môr; a ddarparwyd yn bennaf trwy raglen gwaith allanol YAD.

Rhagwelir yr adroddir yn llawn ar ganlyniadau'r gwaith a wnaed yn 2017 a 2018 y flwyddyn nesaf.

SUMMARY

A two week archaeological excavation in the autumn of 2018 undertook further investigation and recording of a number of stone buildings within the deserted medieval settlement at St Ishmael, Carmarthenshire. The excavation was grant funded by Cadw.

Elements of the buildings have been revealed by coastal erosion since 2011, and these were partially investigated in 2017. In 2018 the excavation targeted the buildings most at risk from this erosion.

The excavation was undertaken with the help of a total of 36 individual volunteers who gave a total of 122 volunteer days to the project. Tours of the excavation were provided to tie in with the Year of the Sea; that were mainly provided through DAT's outreach programme.

It is anticipated that the results of the work undertaken in 2017 and 2018 will be reported upon in full next year.

INTRODUCTION

This interim report provides information on the Cadw grant funded investigations undertaken during 2018 by Dyfed Archaeological Trust and volunteers at the deserted medieval village site at St Ishmael, Ferryside, Carmarthenshire (centred on NGR SN 3625 0798; Figure 1). A final report for these multi-season investigations, which commenced in 2017, will be completed in 2019/20 upon completion of the post-excavation work.

The deserted medieval village has been known since at least 1896. It is a site that is suffering from constant coastal erosion, as well as rain water erosion running through the dunes leading to their destabilisation.

Archaeological recording has been carried out by various organisations since 1912. These were summarised in last season's interim report along with a discussion of possible documentary references, and information concerning its past and current topography and geoarchaeology.

The site comprises a number of substantial stone building remains (Figure 2) as well as evidence for timber structures, boundary walls and other features. The stone buildings survive as the bases of stone walls, surviving in places to almost 1m in height, being generally of around 5m in width but of differing lengths.

This season's investigations were undertaken between 24th September and 6th October 2018.

In total 36 individual volunteers were involved on the project. Between 8 and 12 volunteers were involved on the project each day giving a total of 122 volunteer days given to the project. The excavations were directed by James Meek and Fran Murphy, with assistance from Hubert Wilson, of Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

A Dig Diary was maintained throughout the works providing information via the DAT website, with additional posts also put on the DAT Facebook site. These contained numerous images of both the archaeology and volunteers working on the project. A sample of these images is included in Appendix 1.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan for St Ishmael Deserted Medieval Village, Ferryside, Carmarthenshire (centred on NGR SN 3625 0798)

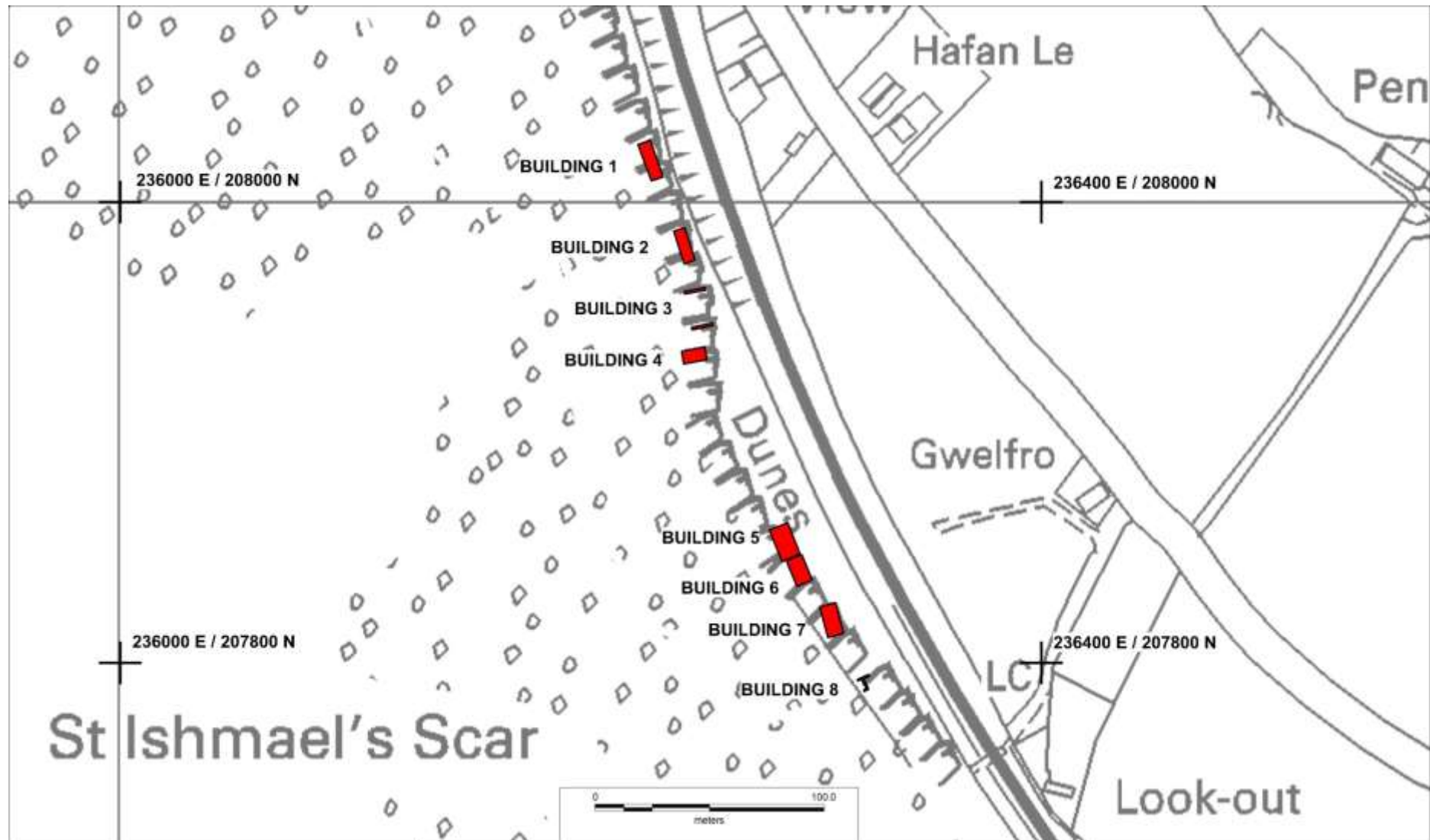


Figure 2: Approximate layout of identified buildings since 2010 overlain on 1:10000 Ordnance Survey map

SUMMARY RESULTS

Building 4

Only a remnant of the one east wall of Building 4 survives in the dune edge and it seems unlikely that this will endure another winter's storms (Photo 1). The surrounding area was cleared and a number of features cutting the red clay were revealed all of which contained medieval pottery. One of these features was a possible linear drain to the south of the building (Photo 2).



Photo 1: The remaining remnant of the east wall of Building 4



Photo 2: Nik excavating a possible linear drain to the south of Building 4

Building 5

A small trench was excavated into the deposits visible on the dune edge to the north of Building 5. A number of sherds of medieval pottery were found, along with animal and fish bones (Photo 4). The individual layers all contained charcoal and samples of the deposits were taken for possible future analysis and carbon dating.



Photo 3: Rob and Ruth excavating a sample of the deposits visible on the dune edge to the north of Building 5



Figure 3: Overall plan of Building 7

Building 7

The stone and shingle covering Building 7 were removed. It was clear that the southwest corner of Building 7 had suffered noticeable erosion over the winter (Photo 4).



Photo 4: The west wall of Building 7

Layers of sand and clay that had built up against the outer west wall of Building 7 were removed. A blocked doorway was discovered in the wall (Photo 5), outside of which a paved area was constructed from large red sandstone slabs that ran under the stone blocking of the door. The outer face of the west wall was fully revealed and the wall was shown to have an average extant height of c.0.4m. The northwest cornerstone proved to be of substantial size (Photo 6).



Photo 5: Bryony cleans the paved area outside the blocked up doorway on the west side of building 7



Photo 6: Jude drawing the west wall of Building 7 – note the substantial corner stone of the northwest corner of the building

A surviving floor layer at the southern end of Building 7 was uncovered (Photo 7). As recorded in 2017, the beaten clay and ash floor contained few finds other than crushed cockle and mussel shell – it was remarkably clean. Photo 8, taken by one of the volunteers, Peter Francis, using an aerial drone, shows Building 7 at the end of the excavation.



Photo 7: The surviving dark beaten clay and ash floor within Building 7 can be seen to the right of the 2m scale; this material was removed to the left of the scale in 2017.



Photo 8: Aerial view of Building 7 at the end of the excavation
(photo courtesy of Pete Francis)

Removal of the clay floor revealed an earlier stone structure running below the south wall of Building 7 (Photo 9). It appeared that this earlier structure was completely obscured by a thick layer of clay when Building 7 was constructed, so it is unlikely that the two are related. No evidence for a date for the earlier structure was unearthed, and its function is not known. It is formed of several linear single courses of stone embedded into clay.



Photo 9: The earlier stone structure running under the south wall of Building 7

Building 8

Stones and shingle were cleared from Building 8, which lies to the south of Building 7. In contrast to Building 7 the walls of Building 8 do not survive well (Photo 10).



Photo 10: The north-south (best surviving) wall of Building 8.

It was uncertain whether the face of this wall was the inside or outside of a building. What appeared to be the remains of a large pit were revealed to the east of the wall (Photo 11); the uppermost deposit of which contained ash, stone, numerous mussel and cockle shells, animal bone and one piece of pottery. Indications of earlier features in this area, cut by the large pit, were also revealed indicating a possible occupation sequence.



Photo 11: A large pit in the area to the east of the north-south wall of Building 8 after cleaning of overburden.



Figure 4: Overall plan of Building 8.

APPENDIX 1: Selection of images of volunteers working on the project



Clearing the shingle after all the larger stones have been removed from across Building 7



Cleaning the area of Building 7 for a first round of photographs



Haley, Marilena, Lyn and Hannah clear shingle from the remains of Building 8



Veronica and Michael carefully remove more sand from the outside of the west wall of Building 7



Arthur, Ian, Ruth, Hannah, Peter and Trevor trowelling the area of Building 8



Brian, Hubert, John, Jon and Hywel working in Building 7



Joan, Paul and Ian trowel the area to the east of the north-south wall of Building 8



Rob revealing the earlier stone structure underlying the south wall of Building 7



Christiane and Fiona drawing the west facing elevation of Building 7



Joan and Jon complete the drawing of the west facing elevation of Building 7.

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Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by: K Murphy

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: Trust Director

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date 5/04/2019

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

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any
comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report

