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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY THE
DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

PROPOSED SEWAGE DISPOSAL WORKS AT
DALE PROMONTORY FORT

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Dale Promontory Fort is the earliest dated later prehistoric defended settlement in south-west Wales and one of the earliest in the whole of Wales and is therefore of national importance.
2. Trial excavation on the site of the sewage disposal works revealed the presence of probable archaeological features although this was 'low quality' archaeology: the nature of the features was uncertain and little detail was preserved. But given the importance of the site further archaeological investigation is considered necessary, albeit on a selective, rather than total basis.
3. Estimated costs are £6866 including clearance, ground survey, geophysical survey, selective excavation, and post-excavation and report work. These costs are based on the assumption that the archaeological investigation has to be completed before any contractors begin work on site. However, it should be pointed out that costs could be reduced if the archaeological work could be dovetailed into the contractors programme (see Recommendations).

INTRODUCTION - THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF DALE FORT

Dale Promontory Fort (SM 82120521: DAT PRN 2986) is a multiphase site although its main period of occupation was as a defended settlement in the Later Prehistoric period. The settlement occupies Dale Point, a promontory projecting into Milford Haven. The promontory is cut off by a single line of bank and ditch, with traces of an outer counterscarp bank and with an entrance lying toward the centre. The bank and ditch lie on the narrowest but also the lowest part of the promontory: the land rises to the west and particularly to the east (within the enclosed area), the latter rising to a ridge which forms the end of the promontory. The ridge has been greatly modified by a Victorian fort, now in use as a field studies centre, which has presumably destroyed much of the earlier archaeology of the site.

The area enclosed by the Later Prehistoric defences, some 3.1 ha, makes Dale Promontory Fort the seventh largest Prehistoric defended settlement in Dyfed. As such it forms one of a group of large defended settlements which characterise coastal south west Pembrokeshire and which contrast with smaller examples which are the norm in more inland areas of the county.

The defences, entrance and an extensive area to the rear of the defences were excavated by the late Professor W. F. Grimes in the 1960s and 1970s. A complex sequence of occupation was revealed. In 1987, prior to the restoration of areas excavated by professor Grimes, further work was carried out by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

The site has a very long history, beginning in the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (c 2500-1700BC) followed by a series of defensive phases in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, and occupation in the Romano-British period. The sequence and radiocarbon dates render the site of national importance. This applies to the whole of the area of the promontory contained within the outer defences, excepting those parts which have been built over or otherwise levelled by the post-mediaeval fortifications and later works.

THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED SEWAGE DISPOSAL WORKS

The proposed works lie some 18m beyond a bastion projecting from the wall of the Victorian fort, on the northern slope of the ridge, immediately downslope from the summit which has here been artificially flattened to give a clear field of fire to ordnance mounted on the bastion. The area is heavily overgrown with bracken and brambles. Before excavation it seemed possible that features corresponding to the bank and ditch of an inner defensive system ran around the ridge just below its flattened top. However, the interpretation of these features was not certain and excavation did not resolve them into a bank and ditch.

THE EXCAVATION

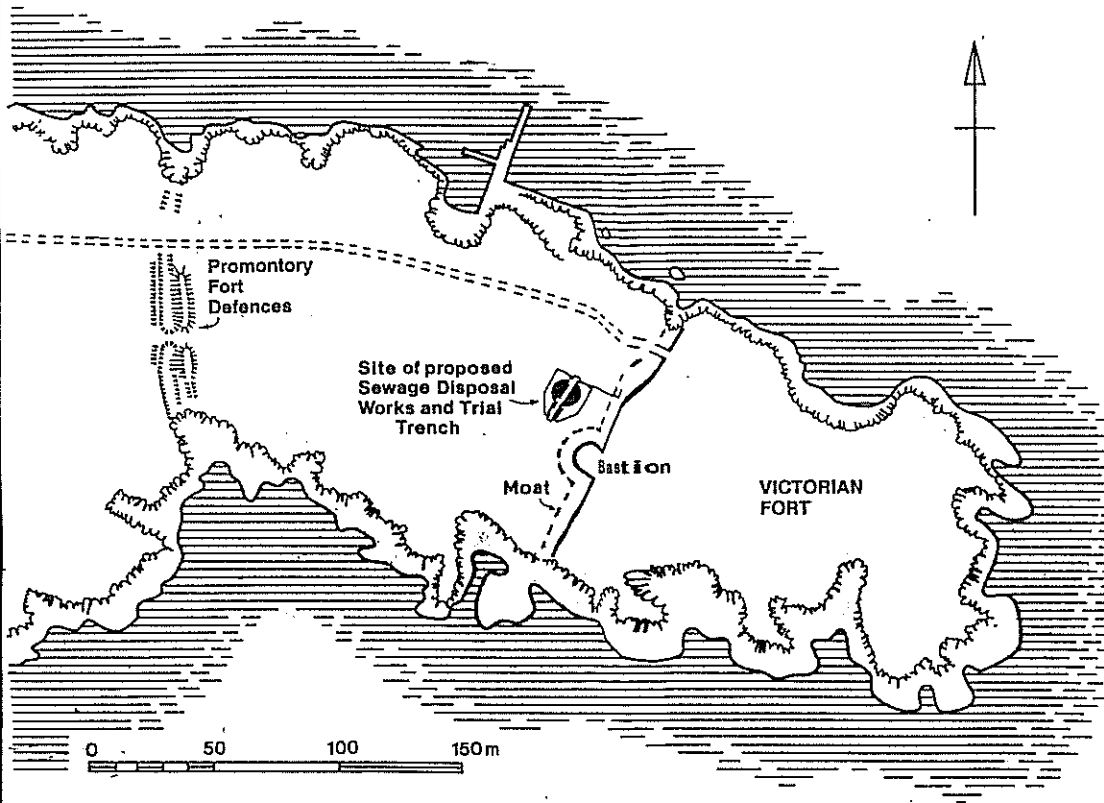
A trial excavation (funded by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments) was carried out in October-November 1991 to determine the nature of any archaeological deposits and to determine whether or not it was necessary to carry out larger scale excavations. To this end a trench, some 1.6 m wide and 20.6 m long, was excavated along the whole of the north-south axis of the threatened area and for a short distance beyond. The initial removal of litter and topsoil was by machine followed by hand excavation.

The excavation revealed the existence of two platforms, 7 and 9, terraced into the hillside. (With hindsight, platform 9 and perhaps 7 can be seen to be present as surface features). The platforms had regular bases - flat in the case of 9, slightly sloping in the case of 7. Only a small area of the platforms were revealed and their extent is therefore unknown - they were probably eroded on the downhill side - but the relationship of 7 to 9 suggests that, if the platforms were contemporary, 9 measured 6 - 7 m across. The fill of platform 9 was completely featureless although 7 contained displaced traces of the debris resulting from human occupation - some burnt stone 'potboilers,' probably produced in cooking operations, and a little charcoal. The only other possible archaeological features were two pits or hollows, which were very doubtfully man-made.

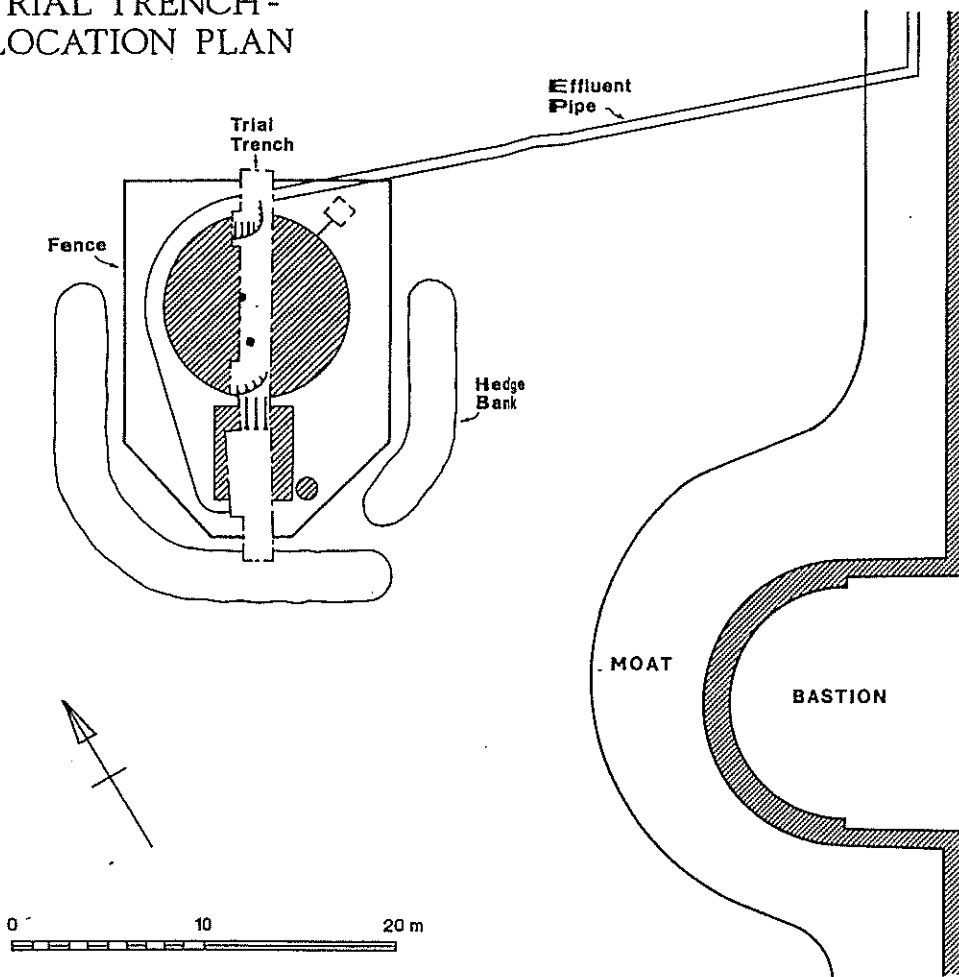
Features similar to 7 and 9 are quite often found on Prehistoric settlements which occupy sloping ground and functioned as building platforms. They were formed by cutting into the hillside, the resulting spoil being thrown out downslope, to form an overall level platform: at Dale any such redeposited (and relatively unstable) material on the downslope may have been eroded away. The type of building to be expected on such a platform would be a round dwelling house. These commonly had plank built walls set in foundation gullies or walls supported by rings of stakes; sometimes the roofs were supported by internal posts set in post-holes: internal surfaces and occupation deposits would also be present.

Interpretation of features 7 and 9 as building platforms, although possible, is not proven. The fills of the platforms at Dale would be expected to have protected any structural features from erosion. Yet, despite careful excavation, no such features were found with the exception of the two doubtful pits. There was a little occupation debris but this was in the fill of 7 only. While featureless building platforms are not unknown on equivalent sites to Dale they are rare. Furthermore platform 9 is very small for a building platform.

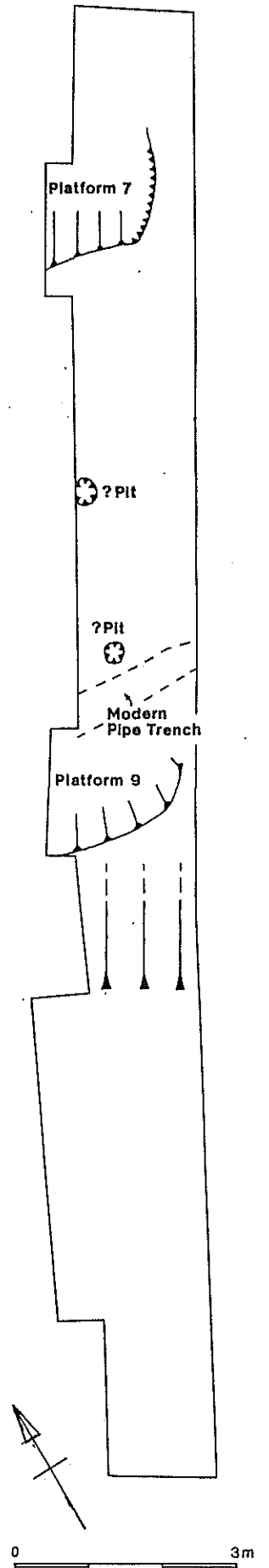
a: DALE PROMONTORY FORT



b: TRIAL TRENCH-
LOCATION PLAN



c: TRIAL TRENCH-
EXCAVATED
FEATURES



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although archaeological features are present, this is 'low quality' archaeology - little detail is preserved and the nature and date of the features remains uncertain. While other more substantial structures, for instance 4-poster storage structures, could exist beyond the area excavated there is no evidence for this. However, the importance of the site itself warrants some degree of further excavation. As a result of consideration of a number of options, and assuming that the archaeological work must be completed before the construction contract begins, the following recommendations are made:

(1) The site should ideally be completely cleared of vegetation and a conventional ground survey carried out. The ground survey should be backed up by geophysical survey.

(2) This should be followed by selective excavation. Assuming that the platforms can be located as surface features or by geophysical survey, they should be partially excavated - eg with a trench across the centre - and one or two of the platforms should be more extensively excavated.

2. If it were possible to have the whole area cleared of topsoil, by the contractor for the sewage works scheme, under archaeological supervision, there would be no need for the Trust to clear the site beforehand, or carry out a Geophysical Survey. Following removal of topsoil by the contractor, the excavation period could be reduced to two weeks. The overall saving on the estimate as submitted, assuming costs of topsoil removal were borne in the construction contract, would be in the order of £2500.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust
November 1991

Estimated costs

Site clearance and survey

Worker's wages 2 wks + £190 wk	380
Strimmer hire 4 days x £16 day	64
Machining (spoil removal) 4 hrs x £14.1 hr	56
Transport 2 wks x £12.5 wk	<u>25</u>
	525

Geophysical Survey

Min £350, maximum £700	700 ¹
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Excavation

2 site workers and director for 4 weeks,
plus 'setting-up' time

Director's wages 5 wks x £313 wk	1565
Workers' wages 8 person-wks x £190	1520
Volunteers 3 vols x 3 half days x 4 wks x £3.5 half day	126
Machining	113
Travel £12.5 wk x 5 wks	63
Portakabin 5 wks x £23.50 wk + delivery	141
Excavation Materials	20
Photographic Materials	<u>20</u>
	3568

Post-excavation

Director's wages 5 wks maximum x £313 wk	1565
Travel	10
Materials	50
Photographic Materials	25
Draughtsperson 2 x £211.52 wk	<u>423</u>
	2073

Summary

Clearance, survey	525
Geophysical Survey	700
Excavation	3568
Post-excavation	<u>2073</u>
	£6866

Note 1 This depends upon whether the geophysical survey team (from Bradford) are already working in Dyfed.

DAT November 1991