

# **AMMANFORD CASTLE, TIR-Y-DAIL**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION,  
MAY-JUNE 2002**



Report No. 2002/49

Report Prepared for:  
CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL



A R C H A E O L O G

**CAMBRIA**

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CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 2002/49  
PROJECT RECORD NO. 44889

JUNE 2002

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By

Neil Ludlow

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## **AMMANFORD CASTLE, TIR-Y-DAIL**

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, MAY-JUNE 2002**

#### **PROJECT RECORD NO. 44889**

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

*A proposal by Carmarthenshire County Council to construct a new extension at Cartref, Tir-y-dail, Ammanford, required an archaeological evaluation before to the planning application could be determined. The proposed extension, to the west of the present building, is in an area of high archaeological potential, extending into the scheduled area around the standing remains of the medieval Ammanford Castle (SAM No. CM067). Scheduled Monument Consent was therefore required for the evaluation.*

*Ammanford Castle is represented by an earthen mound, probably a 'motte', which is c.6.5m tall, with a basal diameter of c.35m. Its summit would probably have been occupied by a timber tower. To the north of the motte is a small, triangular or crescentic enclosure – possibly a bailey – measuring some 38m east-west and 15m north-south. Both are overgrown and tree-covered.*

*The relatively small size of this enclosure led to the suggestion that a larger bailey, containing ancillary buildings, may have occupied the level ground to the south of the motte within which the proposed development is located and the site of the evaluation. The evaluation comprised two trenches, adjoining at right-angles, measuring 22.75m x 1.8m and 13m x 3m. Both were machine-stripped down to the topsoil/natural soil interface and then hand-cleaned.*

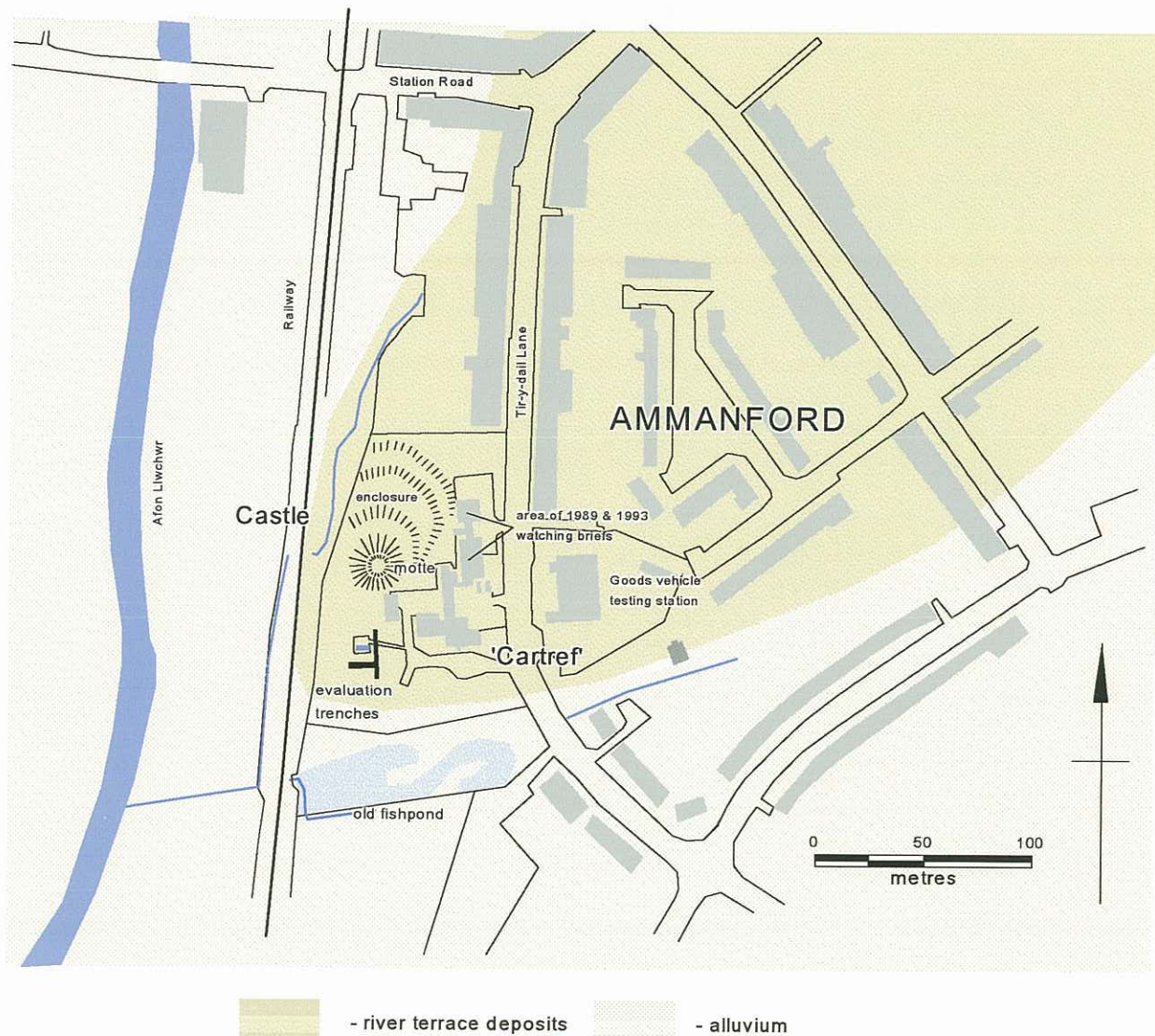
*The evaluation revealed three, possibly five pre-19<sup>th</sup> century archaeological features, none of which is at present more closely dateable although charcoal samples were taken from two. None of the features appears to relate to any formalised occupation of the site, strongly suggesting that the proposed development area does not occupy a castle bailey. The level platform on which the site lies was proved to be natural in origin, as a glacial river terrace. Taken together, the historical and archaeological evidence suggests that Ammanford Castle was established by the late 12<sup>th</sup> century Lord of Deheubarth, Rhys ap Gruffudd, and was occupied for little more than a decade. Any bailey may then have been represented by the small enclosure to the north of the motte.*

*It is therefore unlikely that the castle ever received masonry defences and the loose pieces of Old Red Sandstone rubble in the area of the motte and enclosure are probably derived from the post-medieval Tir-y-dail House, which occupied the site of 'Cartref'.*

## 2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Ammanford Castle (PRN 831; SAM CM067) occupies the edge of a bluff or glacial terrace, lying some 4m above the floodplain on the east bank of the Afon Llŵchwr (Fig. 1), at NGR SN 6241 1247. The solid geology is represented by the Coal Measures but, in Ammanford, these are overlain by undifferentiated river terrace deposits (Geological Survey 1977, Sheet 230). These drift deposits, glacial in origin, form a 'tongue' beneath the castle site itself which extends a short distance southwestwards of the castle into the alluvium of the Afon Llŵchwr, accounting for the sharp downhill terrace 50m south of the castle.

*Fig. 1 – The Tir-y-dail area of Ammanford showing the castle and evaluation site (drift deposits from Geological Survey 1977, Sheet 230)*



Otherwise, the castle site slopes gently downhill from north to south, between approximately 36m and 35m OD, but the lie of the land is generally level. David Cathcart King suggested that 'the advantages of the site are not obvious' (King 1965-6); however, it may have controlled a former fording place on the Llŵchwr, while its strategic position has been commented on (see Section 3.1 below). A railway line forms the west edge of the site.

The castle lay within the curtilage of the former Tir-y-dail House, a gentry house from the later 18<sup>th</sup> century at least (Locksmith 1999, 242), in the area now occupied by Cartref Tir-y-dail Day Centre (and the Goods Vehicle Testing Station on the east side of Tir-y-dail Lane). The area to the north of the Day Centre has been subject to numerous building projects in recent years possibly resulting in damage to below-ground deposits associated with the castle.

The most visible feature on the site is the large tree-covered earthen mound immediately northwest of the Day Centre (Figs. 1 and 2). The mound is c.6.5m tall, with a basal diameter of c.35m, and there is a hollow in the summit measuring 15m in diameter and 2m in depth. Possible traces of a ditch around the mound can be seen in the overgrown area on the south side, where it may have been deliberately filled in.

To the north of the mound is a small, triangular or crescentic enclosure measuring some 38m east-west and 15m north-south, and also tree-covered. It forms a level platform, steeply scarped, c.3m higher than its surroundings. However, there is no clearly defined ditch from which the earth that it is made from could have been quarried, apart from a shallow depression, c.14 metres wide, on the north side. It has been suggested that the west side of the enclosure may have been damaged or truncated by the construction of the railway (Cadw SAM file, 1986), but any damage is unlikely to have been significant – the present west side lies on the scarp down to the Afon Llŵchwr floodplain. The earliest map that shows the castle was drawn after the railway had been constructed (see Fig. 4).

When the Commissioners visited the site, in c.1917, the ditch around the mound appears to have still been open, being described as *'a clearly defined moat, about 10 feet in width, now much choked with rushes'* (RCAHM 1917, 8 no.32). The Commissioners also noted that *'there are now no signs of masonry or foundations, but tradition speaks of some stone structure as having once stood on the mound....'*

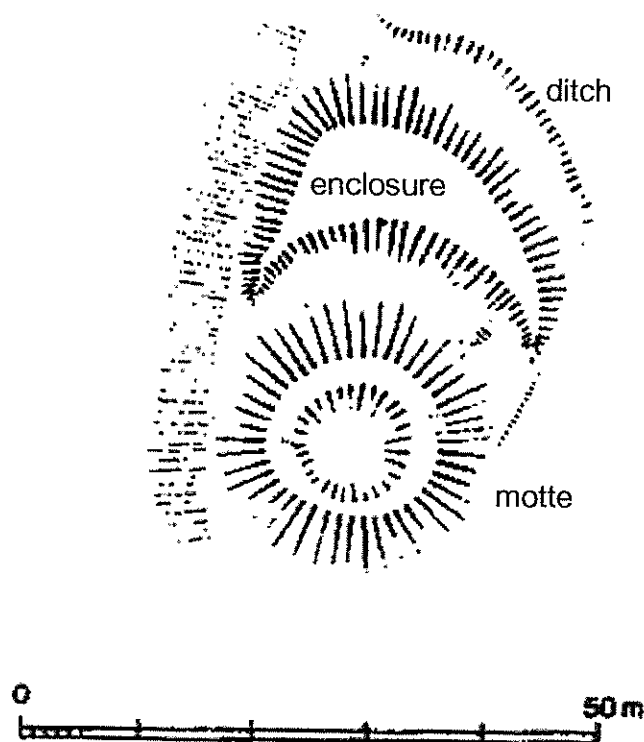


Fig. 2 - Paul Davis' plan of Ammanford Castle  
(reproduced, with the author's permission, from Davis 2000, 21)

The castle was described by David Cathcart King in 1965 - *'(the mound) seems to be a ringwork, and not just a mutilated motte. The cup (ie. the depression in the summit) is deep, probably down to the natural level, and there is no sign of attack from without. The surrounding bank is level, and fairly wide.... There are numerous large waterworn pebbles... The ditches (sic)... may have been filled in towards the south (where the scarp is somewhat cut back) and the east, the sites near the house. The main ditch survives on the north, and is carried round on to the west as a mere step on the general slope. Beyond the ditch on the north is a narrow crescent-shaped bailey with no bank – a feature that at once suggests masonry defences, as the bailey has little or no advantage over the ground outside it. Close examination here, as elsewhere, is very difficult; brambles are everywhere...'* (King 1965-6).

King's account is erroneous in several important respects, probably due to the overgrown nature of the site, much of which has since been removed. In a recent account, Dr Roger Turvey has described the castle as a motte-and-bailey, not a ringwork, and the depression in the centre of the mound certainly does not descend to ground level. Turvey goes on to note that *'the impressive size of the motte's remains (which probably gave rise to Mr King's mistaken description) would suggest that Ammanford may be one of the more significant of the 43 known castle sites in Carmarthenshire.'* (Turvey 1994, 1-2). The present report agrees with the suggestion that the mound is in fact a motte. The central hollow in the motte might be the work of late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquarians who may have excavated the mound thinking it to be a bronze age round barrow (Ken Murphy, Cambria Archaeology, pers. comm.) although there is no record of such an excavation. In contrast, Paul Davis has suggested that the hollow is a modern feature such as a fishpond or water tank (Davis 2000, 27), but this is at best speculative; however, the remains of brick- and pipe-work can be seen on the motte summit and may have been associated with such a feature.

The generally small size of the enclosure to the north of the motte has led to suggestions that it did not represent the castle bailey, but rather a defensive 'hornwork' facing the level ground to the north of the castle, similar in location and general form to the hornwork at eg. Llandovery Castle. It has been suggested that the bailey may have lain elsewhere ie. on the level glacial river terrace to the south, which terminates as a steep scarp slope 50m south of the motte and faces falling ground. In addition, a natural stream runs from east to west along the foot of this scarp, to join the Afon Llwchwr. This stream was, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (possibly after the construction of the railway in 1841), dammed to create an 'S'-shaped fishpond. It was suggested that the pond may have been converted from the banks of a bailey ditch. This suggested bailey was the site of the 2002 evaluation, and the suggestion and its implications, and the outcomes, are fully discussed elsewhere in this report.

A number of loose pieces of Old Red Sandstone rubble (ORS) lie loose in the area of the motte and enclosure, while the perimeter of the motte appears to be largely composed of large, waterworn pebbles. This, coupled with a strong local tradition, has led to suggestions that the castle received stone defences at some point during its history. However this appears unlikely. It will be argued below (Section 3.0) that the castle was only occupied for a short period of time – not long enough to become established as a permanent residence. In addition, the waterworn pebbles are a characteristic of the underlying glacial river terrace deposits, which probably represent the main material from which the motte was constructed. Finally, the ORS rubble may in fact be derived from one or more of the several phases of the post-medieval Tir-y-dail House.



### 3.0 SITE HISTORY

#### 3.1 Medieval history

Ammanford Castle has no documented history (King 1988, 54). It lay within Cwmwd Iscennen, Cantref Bychan, which remained nominally independent of Anglo-Norman rule until 1277 (Rees 1953, xv). However, the remainder of Cantref Bychan was brought under Anglo-Norman control, by the lords of Llandovery, in c.1115 and the castle may therefore represent the *caput* or centre of an early attempt to establish Iscennen as an Anglo-Norman lordship. Alternatively, it may be a Welsh castle.

Turvey has pointed out that its location in the extreme southern portion of Cantref Bychan and occupying a salient position at the northern tip of the common frontier of the lordships of Gwyr and Cydweli, is a strategic one (Turvey 1995, 108). It is also close to the confluence of the rivers Amman and Llŵchwr, which define the borders of the three lordships. Turvey suggests that the castle was built to delineate and defend this vulnerable frontier by a 12<sup>th</sup> century lord of Cantref Bychan. From c.1115 to 1158, and again in 1159-62, these lords were Anglo-Normans, the FitzPons and Clifford lords of Llandovery. From 1162 onwards, Cantref Bychan was under the control of the Welsh, in the form of Rhys ap Gruffudd ('The Lord Rhys'), who Turvey favours as the founder of Ammanford Castle (*ibid.*). His argument largely rests on the fact that the lordships of Gwyr and Cydweli were in Anglo-Norman hands throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and so only a native lord would need protection from this direction. It is certainly in keeping with Rhys' castle strategy, and he was well acquainted with motte-and-bailey construction. It also means that Ammanford Castle's primary role was military, rather than domestic, and was unlikely to have been accompanied by any civil settlement. Indeed, Rhys' confirmation as lord of Cantref Bychan in 1171, and promotion to the position of Justiciar of South Wales, effectively brought an end to the need for his castle strategy. If he was the founder, Ammanford Castle may therefore only have been in use between c.1162 and 1171.

#### 3.2 Post-medieval history

Whoever the founder, it is likely that the castle was abandoned fairly soon after its erection, in common with many earthwork castles. It may have been succeeded as a habitation by Tir-y-dail House, which formerly stood on the site of 'Cartref' i.e. immediately to its east.

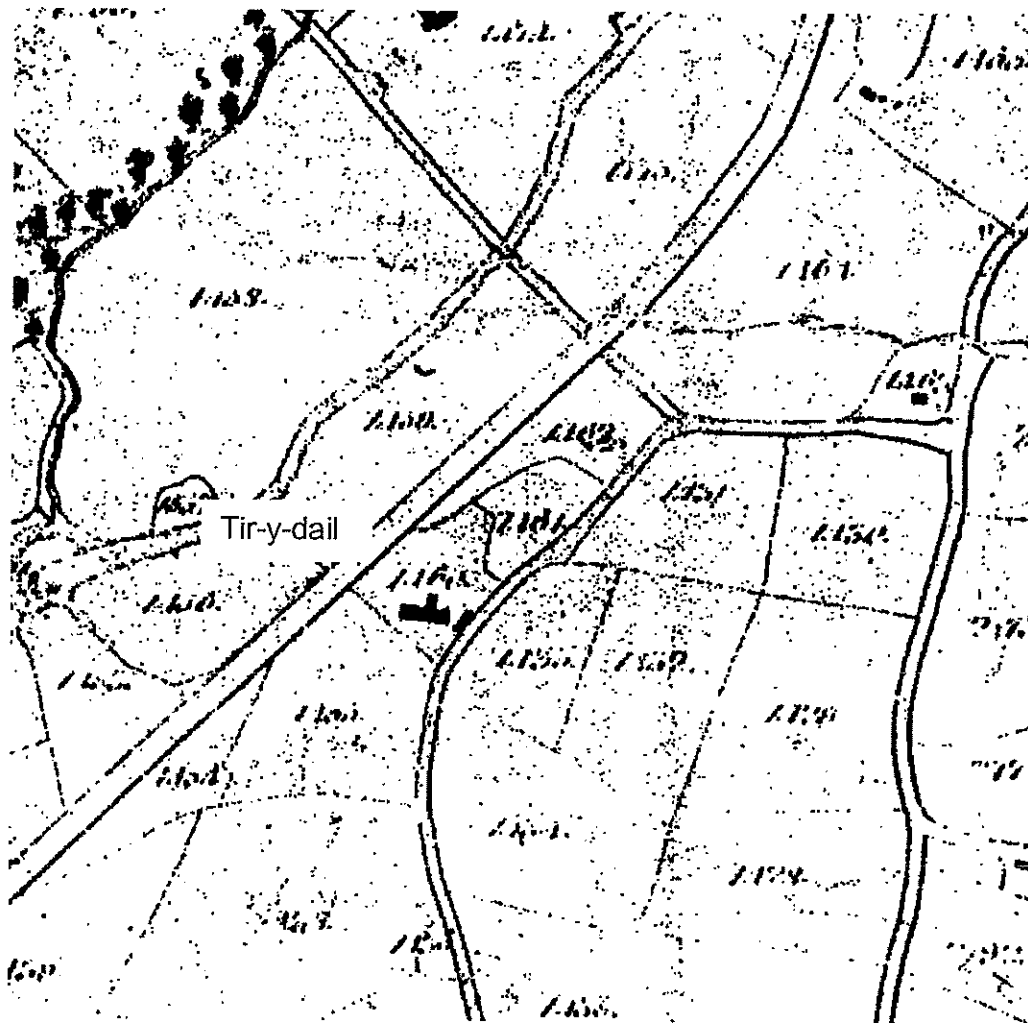
Tir-y-dail (or 'Ty'n-y-dail') was a large and important farmstead and gentry house, but its history is unfortunately somewhat vague. It is not mentioned, under this name at least, in an early 17<sup>th</sup> century survey of Iscennen lordship (Rees 1953, 286-303). A routeway is marked on the site of the present Tir-y-dail Lane on Emmanuel Bowen's map of 1729, but nothing is indicated on the site of the house which appears to be first recorded in 1774 when the owner, Lord Dynevor, commissioned Mathew Williams to prepare a map of the holding (Locksmith 1999, 242). However, the site may have been occupied at an earlier date and the transition of occupation from castle to high-status residence may have been more-or-less direct. Ty'n-y-dail translates as 'the house in the leaves', and there appears to be no real substance to the suggestion that the 'dail' element is related to the Irish *dail* or administrative centre (Locksmith 1999, 5-6, 240), although the idea is a tempting one. The early post-medieval history of the site forms an interesting topic for further study.

The house was depicted, and labelled 'Tyndale' on the Ordnance Survey original surveyor's drawing of 1812, but not in any detail. Nor is any detail shown on the Ordnance Survey Old Series 1" map of 1831 wherein the house is labelled 'Ty'n-y-dail'. However, both maps appear to suggest an extensive building complex on the site.

Tir-y-dail was, by 1841, under lease or rental to Thomas W. Lawford (Locksmith 1999, 242), the son of an influential nabob and member of the Drapers Livery Company, London, who had acquired Carreg Cennen House in c.1806 (Nigel Lawford, *pers. comm.*). It was depicted on the tithe map of Llandybïe parish, in 1841, when the holding occupied most of modern Ammanford - which was then entirely rural. A large house is shown on the map, but is in an entirely different location than any of the subsequent buildings, lying NE-SW across the southeastern corner of the present 'Cartref' site, in the area of the present driveway (Fig. 3). A second building lay on frontage of the roadway (the present Tir-y-dail Lane), again depicted roughly on the site of the present drive entry. The railway was newly-constructed in 1841 (Morgan 1958) and is shown running along the west side of the site.



Fig. 3 – part of Parish of Llandybïe, Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1841.



Lawford, who appears to have purchased Tir-y-dail, was regarded as a progressive farmer and introduced a number of new agricultural and horticultural techniques, establishing Tir-y-dail as something of a 'model farm'. The Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1875 (Fig. 4) shows that the buildings shown in 1841 had gone, having been replaced by a large square structure – presumably the house – on the site of 'Cartref', and a large home farm, forming a quadrangle on the site of the present Goods Vehicle Testing Station. The latter had been an empty plot in 1841. These developments may have been the work of Lawford, as may have been the old fishpond mentioned above (Section 2.0). However, it is locally said that these works, and other gentrification including the landscaping of the grounds, tree-planting, and the establishment of secluded walks, were preparatory to the occupation of the residence by one of Lord Dynevor's daughters, which never materialised (Locksmith 1999, 247).

Moreover, by 1855 Lawford – who had rented two other local farms, Dyffryn and Meddynfych – was bankrupt. He was forced to sell all his holdings and the estate was broken up. Tir-y-dail House was purchased by a Scotsman named Brodie, who in 1870 kept a bailiff in a house known as 'The Bothi' (which survives to the south of the Vehicle Testing Station), a gardener and a shepherd (Anon., n.d.). The house was obviously still a holding of some importance, comprising 335 acres (Locksmith 1999, 247). After Brodie's death, the house was leased by a number of individuals.

Fig. 4 – part of Ordnance Survey, 1:12500, Carmarthenshire Sheet XLVIII.11, First Edition, 1875.

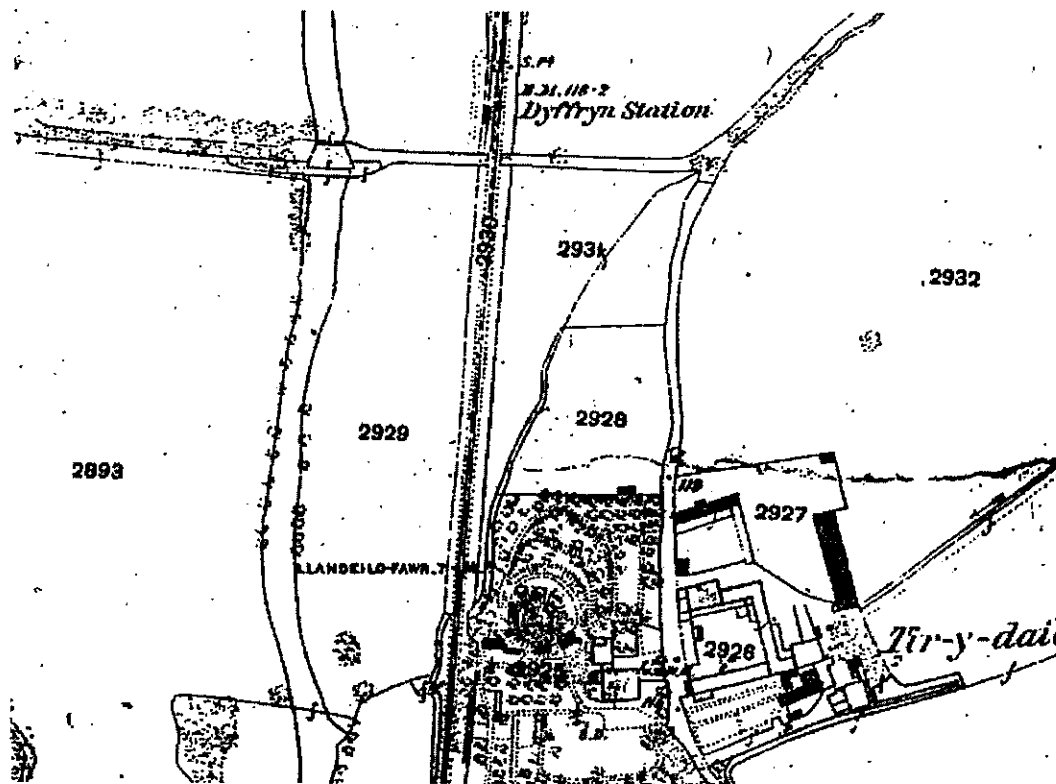
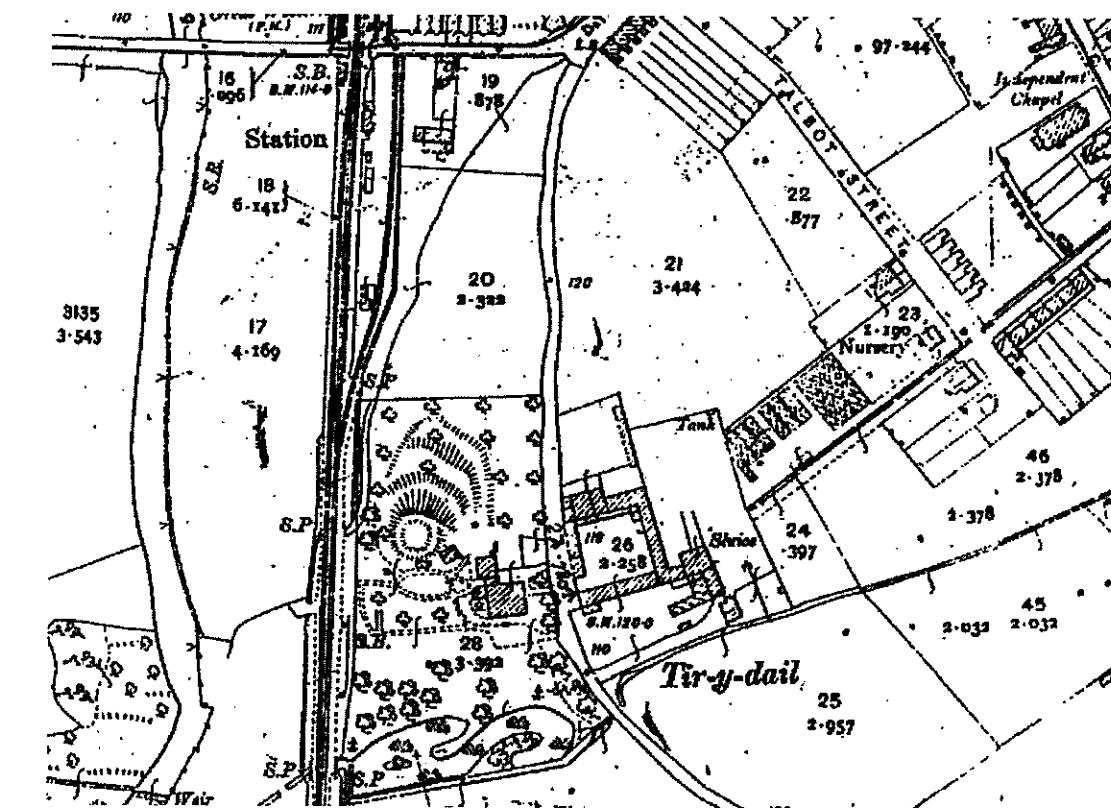


Fig. 5 – part of Ordnance Survey, 1: 12500, Carmarthenshire Sheet XLVIII.11, Second Edition, 1906.



Tir-y-dail is shown more-or-less unchanged from 1875 on the Ordnance Survey 25" maps of 1906 (Fig. 5), and 1916. At a subsequent date, the 19<sup>th</sup> century house was demolished and the present stone building (now Cartref Day Centre) was constructed. The exact date is not known - in 1937 the house was occupied by David Richards JP, owner of the local Dynevor Tinplate Works, while it was requisitioned by the army during the 1940s, and was again occupied in 1946 (*ibid.*).

Carmarthenshire County Council acquired the present building, but not the home farm, in the early 1950s, opening it as a children's home in 1953 (*ibid.*). The home farm had been demolished by 1964 when the present Goods Vehicle Testing Station building was depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map.

In 1982 Tir-y-dail house was re-opened as the Cartref Day Centre (*ibid.*), and some of the present landscape features, such as the pond, were established. An NHS-managed centre was built onto 'Cartef' in 1989-90, and was itself extended in 1993.

### 3.3 Previous archaeological work

An extension was built onto the north end of the 'Cartref' building in 1989-90, in order to accommodate the present NHS block. A geophysical survey was carried out over the proposed development area, which recorded at least five anomalies. As a result, an archaeological watching brief was carried out on the groundworks (Murphy 1989), by Cambria Archaeology/Dyfed Archaeological Trust (see Fig. 1). The only feature of archaeological significance encountered was a bank following the line of the east side of the motte, continuing the line of the possible ditch on the north side of the enclosure, and probably representing a counterscarp bank. It survived to a height of about 0.40m. The natural subsoil was observed to comprise banded fluvio-glacial gravels (which form the river terrace). These contained lenses of what the watching archaeologist regarded as anthracite dust, naturally derived from the surrounding Coal Measures deposits (*ibid.*), similar in appearance to charcoal. Similar lenses were recorded during the 2002 evaluation (see Section 5.2).

A further watching brief was undertaken in March 1993 (Ludlow 1993), again by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, on the groundworks associated with an extension on the north end of the NHS block (see Fig. 1). This area had been landscaped, as a lawn, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the trenches did not reach down into the underlying deposits. No archaeological features were observed.

#### 4.0 EVALUATION AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A proposal by Carmarthenshire County Council to construct a new extension at Cartref, Tir-y-dail, Ammanford, required an archaeological evaluation before the planning application could be determined. The proposed extension, to the west of the present building, is in an area of high archaeological potential, occupying the suggested site of a possible castle bailey (see Section 2.0 above) and extending into the scheduled area around the standing remains of the castle (SAM No. CM067). Scheduled Monument Consent was therefore required for the evaluation.

The aim of the evaluation was to ensure that, where possible, important archaeological remains were preserved either *in situ* or by record. The first stage, therefore, was to identify the location and nature of surviving archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

To achieve this the archaeological evaluation consisted of two parts - a desk-based assessment followed by trial trenching. The desk-based assessment assessed the potential impact of the proposed construction work by developing an understanding of the surviving archaeological remains on site.

The purpose of the trial trenching was to assess the character and extent of surviving deposits within the proposed development site. The trial trenching was also undertaken in two stages. Initially a single north-south trial trench (T1) was excavated in the area of the proposed development, to record the depth at which archaeological deposits were encountered and also investigate a sample of those deposits in order to understand the activities and processes that had taken place on the site in the past. The location of T1 was determined through consultation between the client, the archaeological curators and Cadw. It was to measure 25m x 1.8m, its north end lying opposite the present Portakabin on the site (see Fig. 6). However, this location would have brought the northernmost 3m of the trench into an area of thick vegetation and a Magnolia tree. It was therefore decided to move the trench further south, and limit its length to 22.75m.

Following the observation of two, possibly four archaeological features within the trench, a further east-west trench measuring 13m x 3m was opened up (T2), to the west of, and adjoining, T1, in order to fully elucidate the character and extent of the archaeological deposits on the site (see Fig. 6). The location of T2 was partly determined by the physical constraints of the site – ideally, it would have been situated along the northern half of T1, in the area to be occupied by the proposed building itself, but this area is occupied by a pond, a greenhouse and thick vegetation (see Fig. 6).

The objective of the evaluation was to suggest recommendations in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on important archaeological remains. This report will outline suggested mitigation strategies for the development.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGIES

### 5.1 Desk-based assessment

A search was undertaken of the County Sites and Monuments Record, Llandeilo, and the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth, for information on known sites within, and around, the survey area. Cartographic sources held in national repositories and county records offices were examined for information regarding the development of the historic landscape of the site. Searches were carried out of primary historic documents held in national and county archives and other repositories for information relating to past land-use and the historic development of the site. Secondary, published sources, such as previous archaeological reports and local histories, were studied for relevant information regarding the history and development of the site. Searches were also carried out of readily available technical data (i.e. borehole logs; geological survey data) to provide information regarding the below ground deposits on the site and their potential to contain archaeological information. Finally, aerial photographic coverage of the site was examined to provide information regarding the later land-use and changes to the site.

### 5.2 Trial trenching

Both trial trenches were excavated to the top of the surviving archaeological deposits, by a mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket. Following mechanical excavation, the trenches were cleaned by hand in order to determine the presence and extent of any archaeological deposits. The minimum number of features required to determine the character of any archaeological deposits were excavated and recorded. In each trench, an area was excavated through the natural subsoil, to the maximum depth allowed under health and safety regulations,

All features and deposits were recorded by *pro forma* archaeological context record sheets, scale drawings and photography. All features and deposits were numbered using the open-ended numbering system in accordance with the Cambria Archaeology Field Operations Recording Manual. All significant deposits were recorded by scale drawing, and the sections of the trenches were drawn at 1:50 scale. Features containing deposits of environmental or technological significance were sampled. All artefacts, ecofacts and samples were retained and related to the contexts from which they derived. Samples were taken from deposits with potential for palaeoenvironmental material and an initial assessment of the potential of those samples was carried out. Sensitive material is stored in appropriately stable conditions.

The trenches were surveyed in relation to the rest of the site using an EDM total-station theodolite. The survey was output so that it could be related to the existing plans of the proposed development.

## 6.0 EVALUATION RESULTS

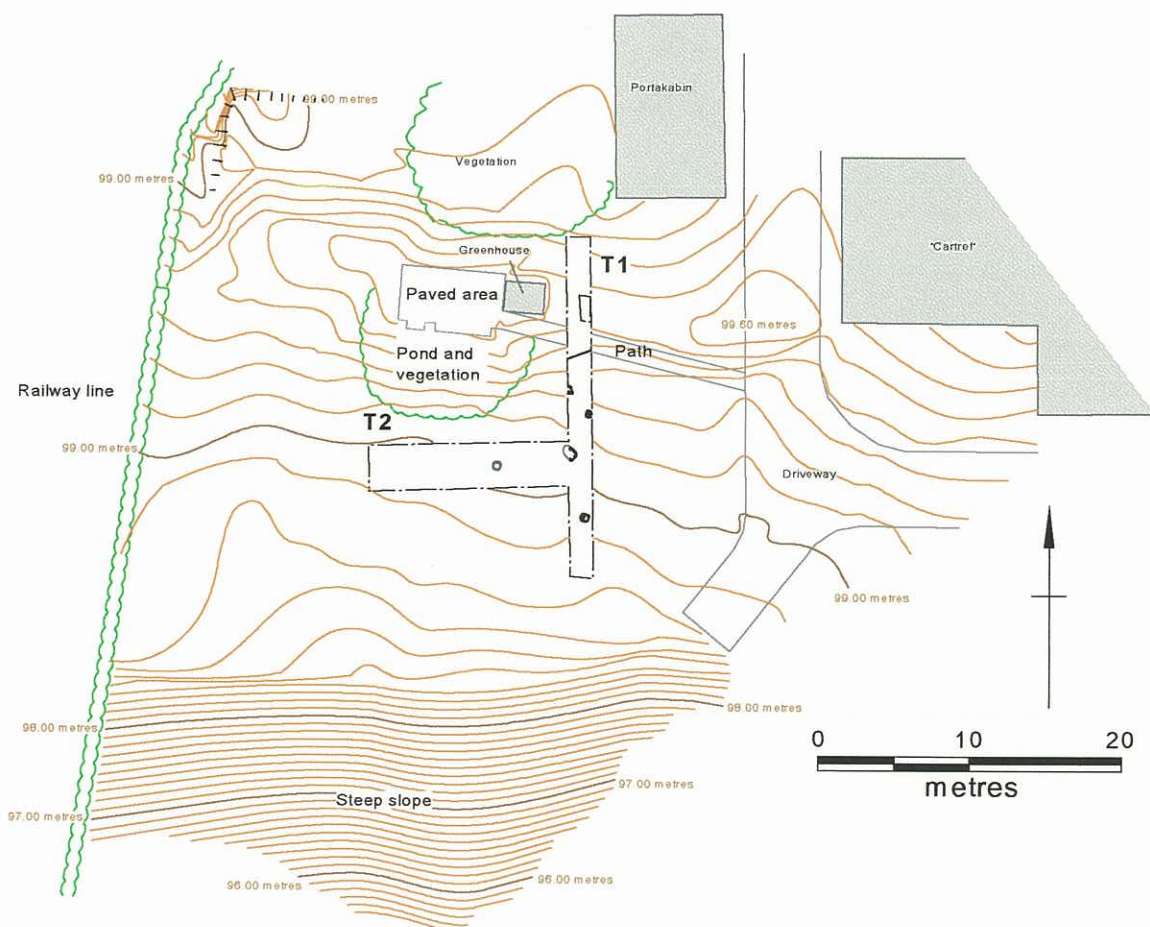
### 6.1 Trench 1 (T1)

Trench 1 was located north-south through the proposed development area. It was 22.75m long and 1.8m wide. It was excavated to an average depth of 0.5m, the level of the uppermost archaeological features – which were cut through the natural soil.

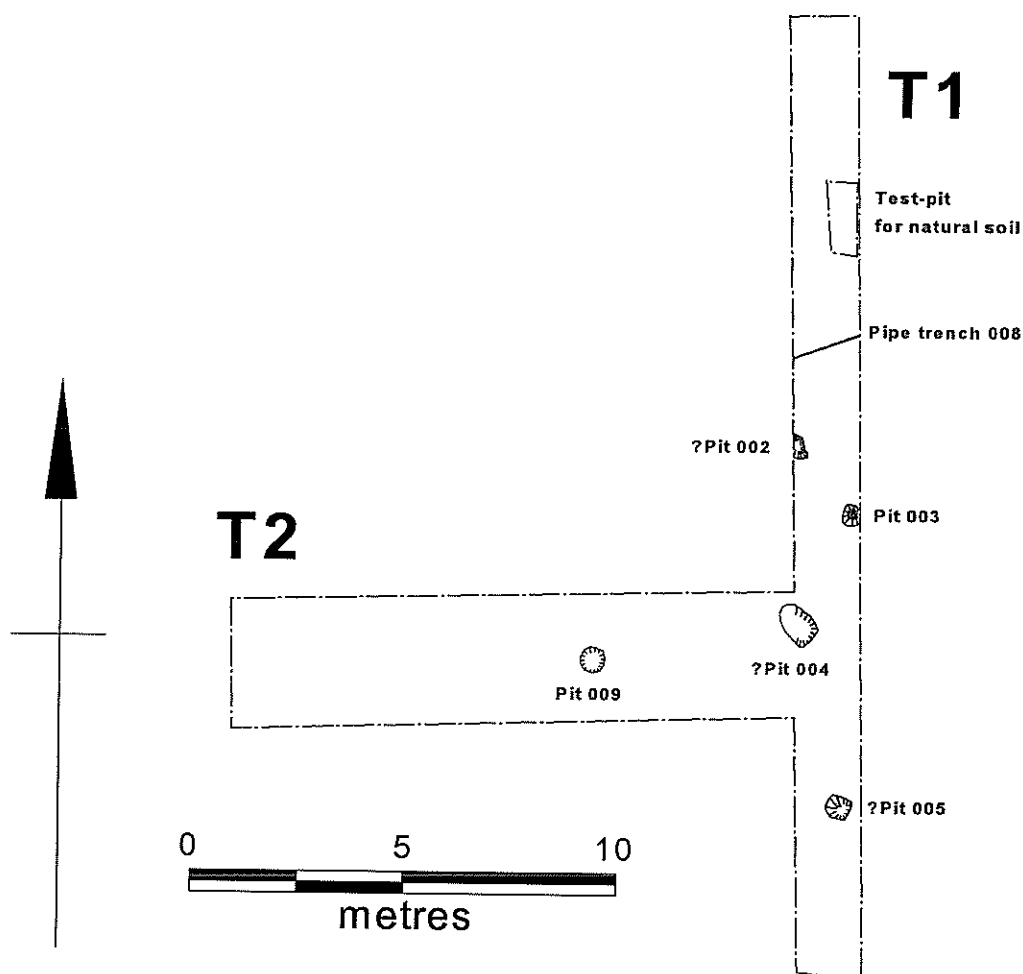
#### *The natural soil*

The natural soil comprised a thinnish horizon of boulder-clay (Context 006), averaging 0.2m in thickness, which graded into the topsoil i.e. exhibited continuous development into the present soil, with no evident truncation or significant interruption. The boulder-clay, which was present throughout the trench, overlay a deep deposit of banded fluvio-glacial gravels (007). Their depth was not ascertained although a test-pit, 1.2m deep, was excavated through them at the north end of the trench (see Figs. 7 and 8); it is likely that they form the main component of the glacial river terrace on which the site lies (see Section 2.0, Fig. 1) and

*Fig. 6 – Topographic survey of site showing evaluation trench locations  
(levels based on survey by Carmarthenshire County Council)*



*Fig. 7 – Detailed plan of evaluation trenches*



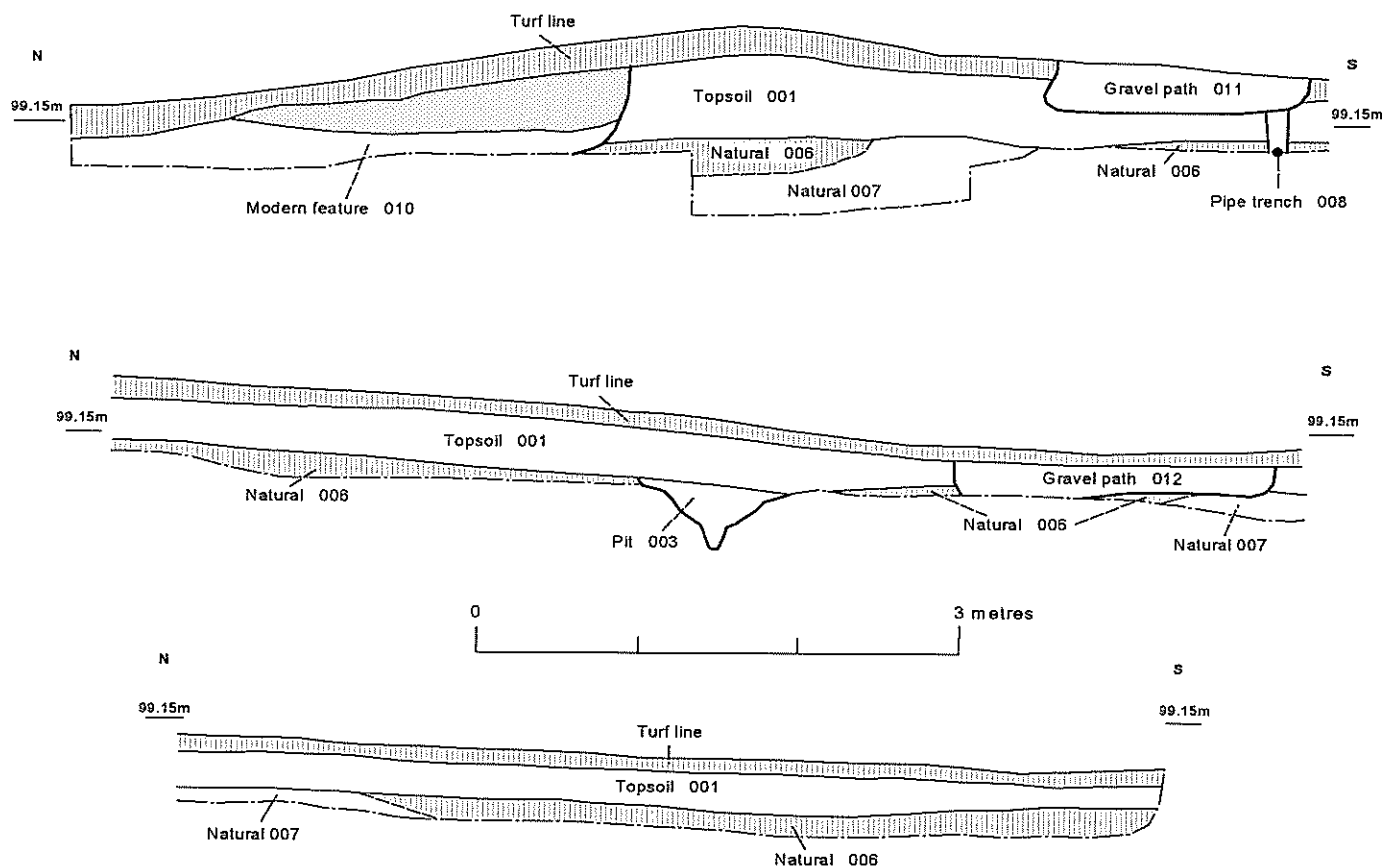
so they are likely to be very deep indeed. The main component of gravel deposit 007 was a large percentage - 70% - of rounded pebbles, worn by fluvio-glacial action, and a smaller percentage of small, angular, shale fragments. The sparse matrix comprised mid grey-brown, loose, silty clay. Unstructured lenses of a dark material, with the appearance of charcoal, occurred throughout the deposit. Murphy (1998) suggested that similar lenses occurring north of the site might be glacially derived from naturally-occurring anthracite deposits (see Section 3.3), but at least some of the lenses may comprise naturally-occurring manganese. Samples were taken and may be available for future analysis.

The natural horizons reflect the present surface topography (Fig. 6), ie. a level 'platform' representing the river terrace, which dropping down to the south and west beyond the evaluation trenches. A linear, east-west area of higher surface levels, which can be seen towards the north end of the trench in Figs. 6 and 8, was thought to perhaps represent the counterscarp bank of the motte ditch. However, these higher levels are also represented by the natural profile and represent a natural topographic feature.

Lying on the surface of 006 were two small flints (each 7mm by 4mm), which had the appearance of man-made flakes but were without visible evidence of having been worked.



Fig. 8 – Running section of trench T1, east side  
 (levels based on survey by Carmarthenshire County Council)



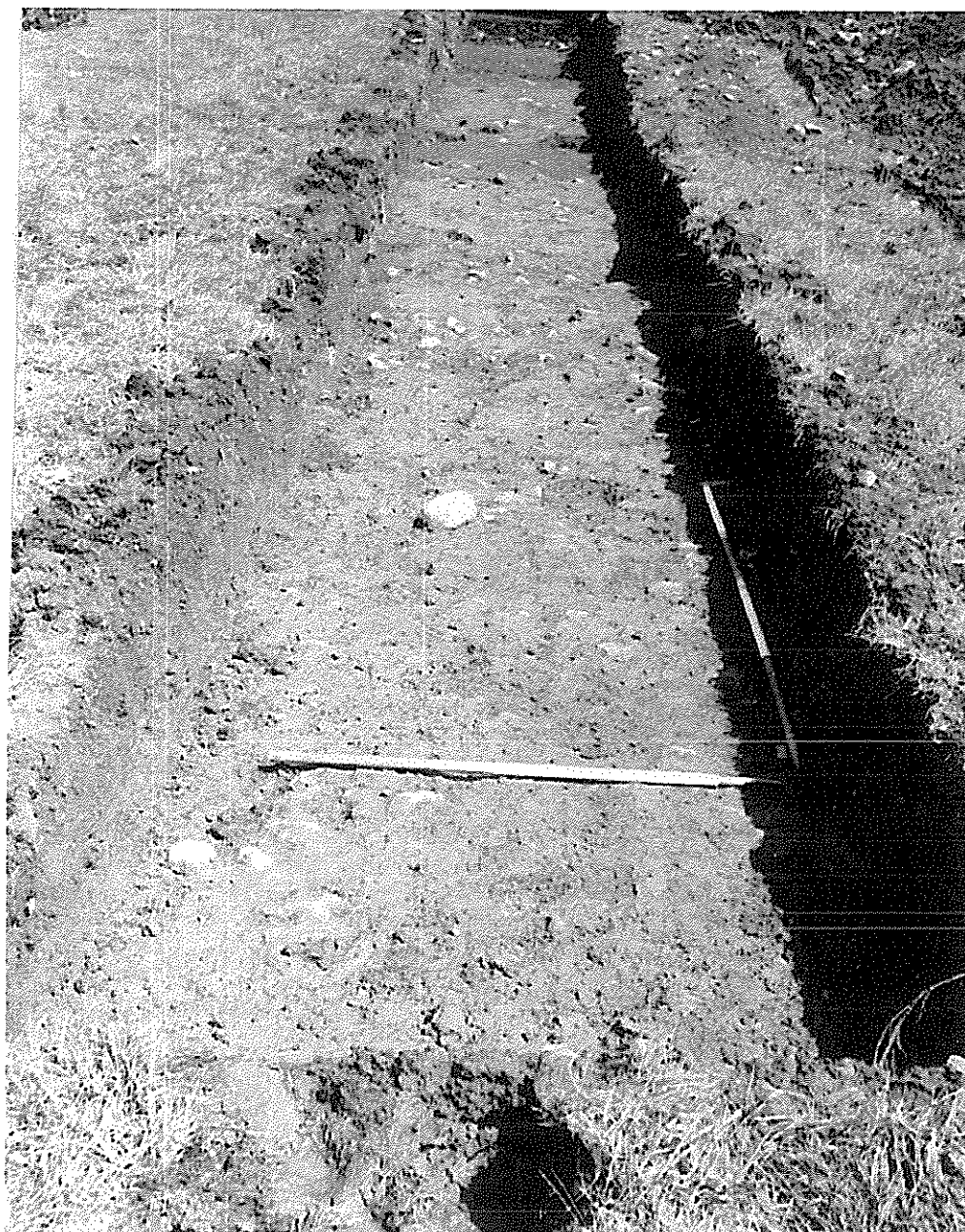
### Archaeological features

Cut through boulder-clay horizon 006 were up to four possible features (Figs. 7 and 8), although only two of these features are entirely convincing. The four are described below, from north to south (see Fig. 7).

Feature 002 presented a small, subangular soilmark, 0.50m in diameter, which was thought to represent the fill of a small pit. When excavated, this 'fill' was found to be identical in character to the underlying natural gravel 007 and therefore probably represents a lens of gravel 007 lying within boulder-clay 006.

Feature 003 was a definite man-made feature, being a pit measuring 0.60m in diameter and 0.40m deep. Its profile was stepped, being shallow in the upper half and steep in the lower, terminating as a 'V'-shaped bottom (see Fig. 8). It was cut directly into 006, from below the topsoil 001, and filled by a clay-loam similar to 006. Its profile suggests that it was possibly a small post-pit, or a stakehole widened in its upper half when the stake was forcibly removed. The fill contained no artefactual material.

*Fig. 9 – Photo of Trench 1 after excavation, from the south*



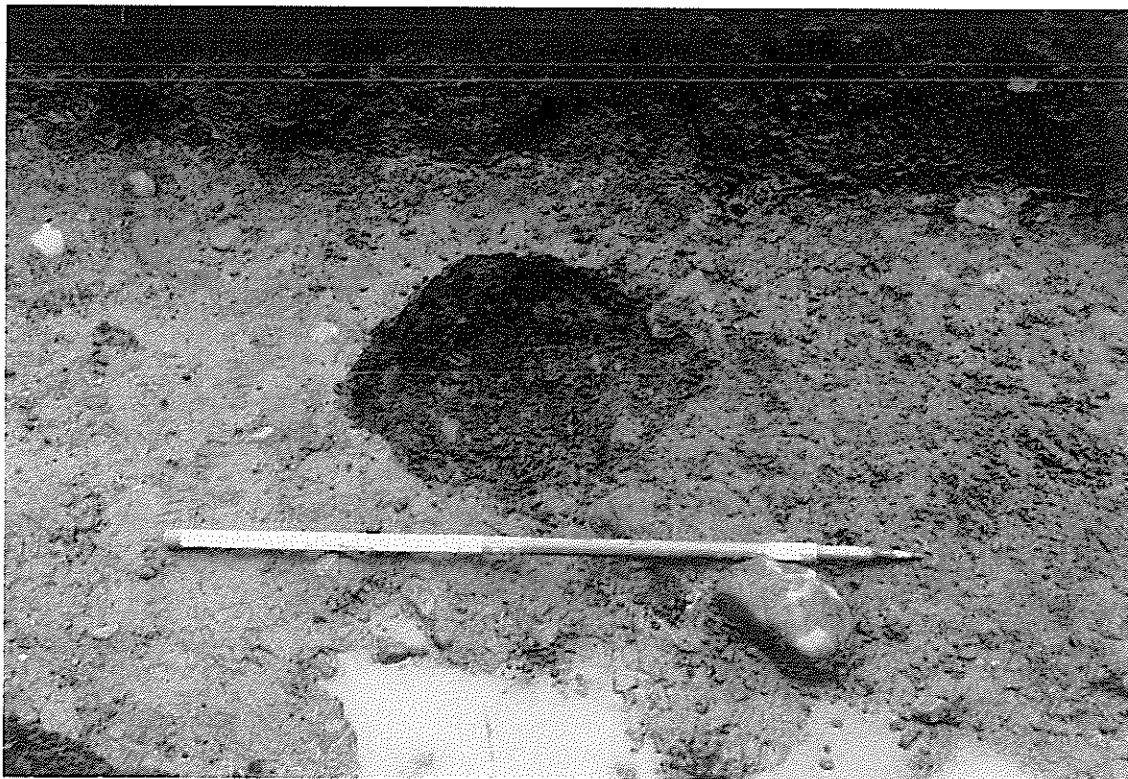
Feature 004 was, like 002, a subangular soilmark (measuring 0.95m north-south by 0.55m east-west) composed of material similar to natural gravel 007. On excavation, it appeared to fill a cut defined by an edge on its northeast side. However, this edge became poorly-defined to the south and 004 may be another lens of gravel 007 lying within boulder-clay 006.

Feature 005 was, in contrast, a definite man-made feature but of uncertain form. It appeared as a small soilmark of charcoal and burnt soil, measuring approximately 0.15m in diameter, which, when excavated, was found to be an amorphous fill. Eventually an area measuring 0.60m in diameter was excavated to a depth of 0.10m was excavated, but no well-defined edge was encountered. The feature thus remains of unknown form or function. Again, the fill contained no artefactual evidence, but sample of the burnt material were taken and may be available for future analysis.

*Fig. 10 – Photo of feature 003, from the west*



*Fig. 11 – Photo of feature 005, from the west*



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*The topsoil and later features*

Throughout the trench, boulder-clay 006 graded into a dark, humic topsoil 001. This produced four sherds of Dyfed gravel-tempered ware, of probable 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century date. It was cut by four features, all of which are then later than the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century.

At the north end of the trench, a large, deep feature (010) was cut, from beneath the present turf line, right through into the natural soil. The extent of the feature was therefore not observed but it measured at least 1.8m east-west, 3.5m north-south and 0.6m in depth. The upper part of the fill had been machined-off along with the topsoil, but was recorded in section (Fig. 8). The fill comprised two deposits, an upper deposit of loose, waterworn pebbles with no defined matrix, and a lower fill of fine gravel and ash. No artefactual material was present, but the fills, and the feature, post-date the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century and may be associated with 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping projects.

At a point lying between 7.60m and 8m from the north end of the trench, a copper water-pipe ran across the bottom of the trench to supply the pond, to the west, from 'Cartref'. The narrow trench for the pipe (008), containing a dark fill similar to the topsoil, was recorded in section (Fig. 8). Both the pond and the trench belong to the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The pipe trench was itself truncated by a shallow cut 011 which contains the fine gravel bedding for the concrete-slab path leading from 'Cartref' to the pond. This is cut through the present turf line and is thus a comparatively recent feature.

A similar, but earlier path (012) was observed cutting the topsoil 6m further south (Fig. 8). It occupied a shallow cut, averaging 0.2m in depth and measuring 2m in width (north-south), cut from beneath the present turf line and containing small cobbles and cinders. This would appear to be the path shown on the Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1875 (see Fig. 4), and again in 1906 (see Fig. 5), which is probably mid 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin.

No other artefacts were recovered from Trench 1.



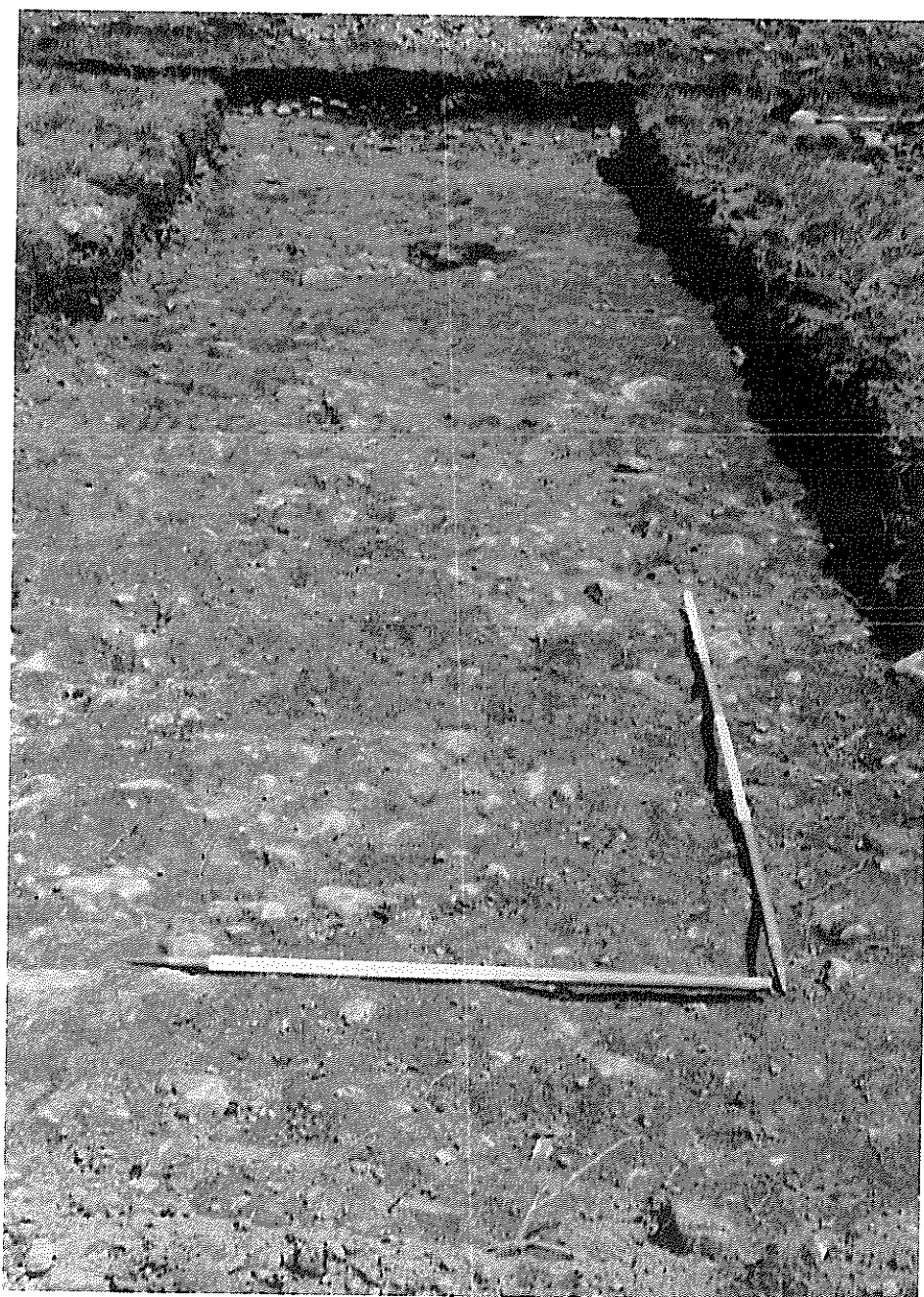
## 6.2 Trench 2 (T2)

Trench 2 was located east-west at a right-angle to, and adjoining, the west edge of T1, between 6m and 9m from its southern end. It measured 13m by 3m and was similarly excavated to an average depth of 0.5m, the level of the uppermost archaeological features – which were cut through the natural soil.

### *The natural soil*

The natural soil was identical to that in T1, and similarly formed a level horizon. A larger flint, measuring 8cm in length, was recovered from the surface of 006 but again was without visible evidence of having been worked.

*Fig. 12 – Photo of Trench 2 after excavation, from the west*



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*Archaeological features*

Cut through the natural boulder-clay 006 was a single archaeological feature (Fig. 7). The feature, 009, was a shallow pit measuring 0.60m in diameter and 0.15m deep. It was a definite man-made feature with a fill of charcoal and burnt soil. The fill contained no artefactual evidence, but sample of the burnt material were taken and may be available for future analysis. The feature appears to be a pit, of unknown function but possibly deliberately cut to receive the burnt fill.

*Fig. 13 – Photo of feature 009, from the west*

*The topsoil*

The topsoil was identical to that in T1. It was cut by just one archaeological feature - the southern edge of path 012 observed in T1 ran all the way along the northern edge of the trench.

## 7.0 DISCUSSION

Of the five pre-19<sup>th</sup> century features excavated, only three - 003, 005 and 009 - are definitely of man-made origin. They form a dispersed pattern, and only one - 003 - can be interpreted as having a structural origin. No artefactual evidence was recovered from which the features could be dated although samples were taken from two and may be available for future analysis. Nevertheless, none of the features can at present be attributed to the medieval period, and none appear to be associated with formal structures such as may have occupied a castle bailey.

Is there any remaining evidence for a castle bailey in the area of the evaluation? The answer appears to be no. Occupation would probably have given rise to a denser assemblage of features than that observed in the trenches. There is, moreover, no visible physical evidence for any earthwork bank or ditches around the evaluation area. It was suggested in Section 2.0 above that the old fishpond at the south end of the site may have been adapted, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from a medieval ditch and bank. However, the pond lay at the foot of the steep scarp slope that forms the southern end of the level 'platform' on which the site lies. This 'platform' was, prior to the evaluation, thought to represent part of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping. However, it was revealed to comprise fluvio-glacial gravels, representing a natural glacial river terrace, dropping down to the south and west beyond the evaluation trenches.

A linear feature thought to perhaps represent the counterscarp bank of the motte ditch was also found to be a natural topographic feature.

The evidence then appears to suggest that the surviving small enclosure to the north of the motte did represent a bailey. However, the form of the castle may not have followed that of the classic motte-and-bailey. Evidence from the evaluation appears to support Turvey's view that it was only briefly occupied (and therefore probably not rebuilt in stone), and if constructed by Rhys ap Gruffudd its function may primarily have been military, not manorial, in contrast to the castles established under the Anglo-Normans (see Section 3.1). The range of ancillary buildings required in such a castle may have been considerably less than those in manorial castles. The relatively small size of the Ammanford enclosure may reflect this lesser requirement.



## 8.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation revealed three, possibly five pre-19<sup>th</sup> century archaeological features, none of which is at present more closely dateable. None of the features appears to relate to any formalised occupation of the site, strongly suggesting that the proposed development area does not occupy a castle bailey. The level platform on which the site lies was proved to be natural in origin as a glacial river terrace. Taken together, the evidence suggests that Ammanford Castle was established by the late 12<sup>th</sup> century Lord of Deheubarth, Rhys ap Gruffudd, and was occupied for little more than a decade. Any bailey may have been represented by the small enclosure to the north of the motte.

Nevertheless archaeological features were present, even if their date and context is unknown. They occurred at an average depth of 0.5m below the present ground level. Wall-footings and services might be located to minimise their impact on the archaeology. In general it is not felt that the archaeological features in themselves are of sufficient significance to prevent the development. However, it is recommended that the preliminary topsoil strip of the site is monitored by a watching archaeologist and the exposed horizons hand-cleaned by the archaeologist where appropriate, followed by targeted recording if archaeological features are revealed. Confirmation will have to be obtained, from Cadw, that the scheduled area is to be revised to permit the development.

Ammanford Castle is an important site. It is the oldest construction in Ammanford; none of the present fabric of the town's other medieval site, St Davids Church, Betws, is any earlier than the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It may also have been a Welsh castle. If so, it joins the comparatively few Welsh castles, which include the celebrated local sites at Carreg Cennen, Dinefwr and Dryslwyn – castles that were instrumental in the development of Carmarthenshire's cultural identity.

It is the setting of Ammanford Castle that is most under threat from this, and previous developments. Less and less of the castle is now visible from the road, the view being almost entirely blocked by buildings. The road is the only vantage point from which the castle, which occupies private land, can be seen by the public. This should become a consideration in any future proposed developments at the site. In addition, the little that is visible is under dense vegetation. Consideration may also be given to a structured programme of clearance, enhancement and ultimately, heritage promotion through improved access, interpretational panels etc.

## **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **10.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION**

The archive, which will be indexed according to the National Monuments Record (NMR) material categories, is held by Cambria Archaeology, Llandeilo, and contains the following:-

- A. Copy of the final report and disk
- B. Context forms and field notes
- C. Copies of planning specifications and site drawings
- D. BW photographs
- E. List of finds
- G. List of references
- J. Final drawings
- L. General administrative notes
- M. Project correspondence

There is no material for classes F, H, I, K and N.

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**AMMANFORD CASTLE, TIR-Y-DAIL**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, MAY-JUNE 2002**

**REPORT NUMBER 2002/49**

**JUNE 2002**

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Signature ..... Date .....

This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position Deputy Director

Signature ..... Date.....

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