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EXCAVATION AT HAYGUARD LANE, HAVERFORDWEST, 1978 and 2003

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SUMMARY

Small-scale excavations in 1978 and 2003 in a plot of land immediately to the north of Haverfordwest Castle revealed what appeared to be a substantial counterscarp bank to the defensive ditch of the castle. The bank probably dates to the late 13th century and sealed a trackway, pits, post-holes and gullies of slightly earlier date. Other similarly dated features were located beneath deep topsoil away from the bank. Construction of the six houses now on the site was designed to ensure that these important archaeological deposits were preserved. This report includes an account of the 2003 excavations and those directed by Michael Freeman in 1978.

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Cambria Archaeology prior to a proposed development within a small former garden (SM 952 157) just to the north of Haverfordwest Castle on the northern edge of Hayguard Lane, Haverfordwest (Fig. 1). The work was undertaken for Mr A L Philips as part of a planning application for six dwellings.

The proposed development was just outside the north wall of the castle and within the walled medieval town. This area's past is likely to have been closely linked with that of the castle, which was founded early in the 1100s, redeveloped in the late 1200s, utterly decayed by 1577, not defended in the Civil War and ordered to be slighted in 1648. It became the county gaol in 1780. This history is very well covered by a number of recent publications (for example Miles 1999) and, given the limited scope of this project, it is not intended to go into more detail here.

The excavation site (c 40m x 28m) lay in a plot on the north side of a lane, Hayguard Lane, first recorded in 1791 (Charles 1992, 642), with a step down from the lane into the plot. On the south side Hayguard Lane is approximately level with adjoining land (a rough parking area, a small office and workshops). To the south of these is the curtain wall of the castle. The results of the excavation indicate that the lane and these buildings stand over the in-filled castle ditch. The ground inside the castle is substantially higher. The excavation site was on a largely artificial terrace, 25m wide, sloping gently down from south to north, then more steeply away to the north.

Early plans do not show any buildings on the plot and there have been no substantial developments since the surveying of the tithe map in 1842, when the plot was recorded as a garden. However, two small buildings are

shown on the tithe map, one on the south-west corner of the plot and one on the north-east. Their function is not recorded on any map, though a note in the 1978 excavation archive states that they were late 18th or early 19th summerhouses and that they were demolished in 1973. Robert Kennedy, the former curator of Pembrokeshire Museums, remembers them as stone-built structures (he called them garden houses) about 6m square, with gothic windows. He also recalls the plot was known as Larner's Garden. Greenhouses and a small building alongside Hayguard Lane first appear on the Ordinance Survey 1971 edition. In 1978 three small huts stood alongside the lane within the plot.

In 1978, Michael Freeman, on behalf of the Pembrokeshire Museum Services, undertook a small-scale excavation within the garden. Four trenches, T1-TIV were excavated (Fig 1) which revealed gullies cutting through occupation deposits that apparently sealed a collection of post-holes, beam slots and a group of three hearths, which were thought to be associated with some 'small industrial processes'. An assemblage of medieval, as well as later, pottery was recovered, which was believed to include imported wares from France, Bristol and Somerset, dating to the 13th century. Sketch plans and sections were made, although no post-excavation reporting took place.

In the summer of 2003, as part of initial site clearance prompted by the new development proposal, a small test trench (not shown on the plans) was dug on the southern part of the site, in the same location as later excavation Trench Two (Fig 1). This trench appeared to show that the southern part of the site had been scraped down to the underlying geological deposits. However during November 2003, when a two-man team spent just over two weeks excavating part of the southern side of the plot where the new buildings were to be placed, this initial assumption was found to be incorrect, as substantial medieval deposits were discovered beneath these 'geological deposits'.

This short report includes an account of both the 1978 and 2003 excavations.

EXCAVATIONS

The 1978 excavation

Friends of Pembrokeshire Museum undertook these excavations under the supervision of Michael Freeman. The site archive including artefacts was deposited with Pembrokeshire Museum Service at Scolton Manor Museum, Haverfordwest. The archive consists of a notebook containing lists of deposits and features and sketch plans and sections, and un-numbered black and

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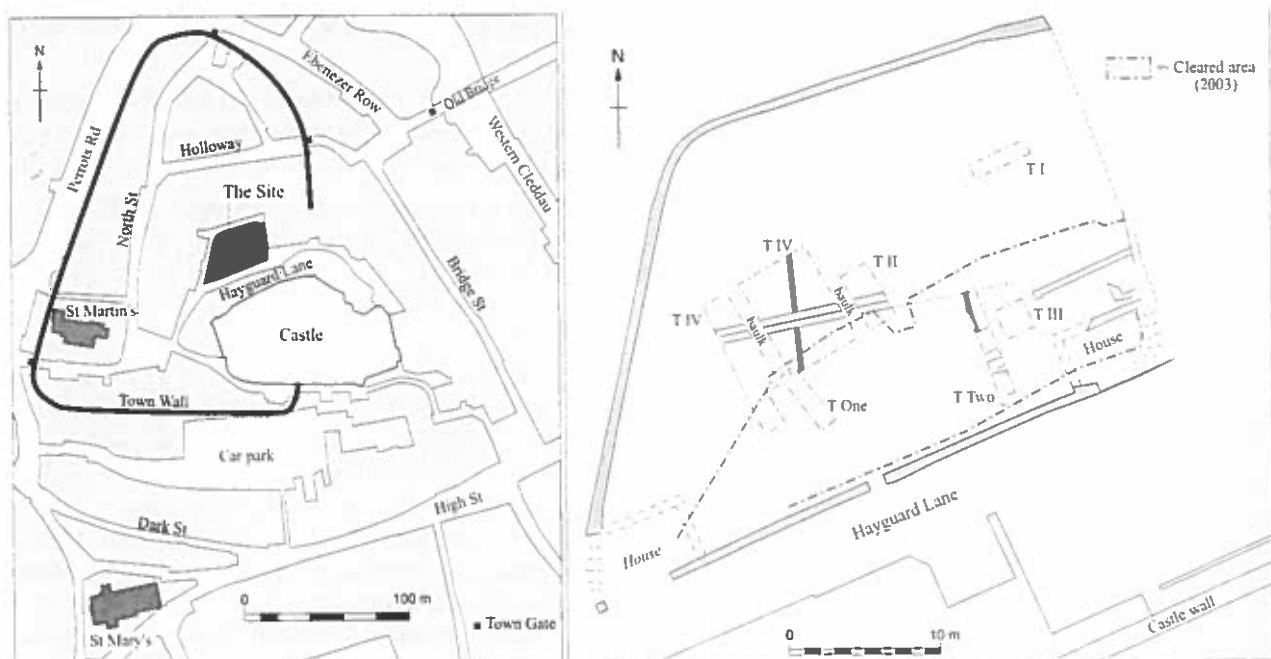


Fig 1 Location and site plan with 1978 and 2003 trench locations

white photographs. There are no measured drawings due to the limited resources and time. Although slightly confusing, the site record numbering has been retained here so that it relates to the archive. Trenches II and IV, for instance, started with separate sequences of numbers, but as the excavation progressed the western part of trench II was combined with trench IV and thenceforth the numbering followed the Trench IV sequence.

Trench I (Fig 1, TI) was hand dug (1m x 4m) partly on the site of a demolished glasshouse. Undisturbed geological deposits were reported at 1.6m below the surface. Above these was a brown loamy soil containing coal and charcoal and a quantity of medieval pottery and 18th century and/or later material.

Trench III (Fig 1, TIII) There are few details in the excavation archive about this trench. Its dimensions and depth are not known and there are no finds recorded. On removal of the topsoil a deposit of clean rab (shale) was encountered. At the time it was considered that a bulldozer had deposited this a few years previously. The 2003 excavations demonstrated that this was erroneous; the clean rab was probably part of the counterscarp bank recognised in Trench Two.

Trenches II and IV (Fig 1, TII and TIV) were excavated on the only available flat piece of land in the centre of the plot. Trench II measured 2m x 4m and was hand-excavated down to geological deposits. Trench II was extended as Trench IV; the upper deposits were removed by machine. The total excavation measured approximately 8m x 7m. The position of these trenches was not precisely recorded in the excavation archive and therefore their location provided in Figure 1 is approximate. Also, it has not always been possible to relate the artefacts to context, and some re-numbering of contexts was necessary. Where this has been done the context is prefaced with an F to denote feature.

Results and interpretation Trenches II and IV (Fig 2, not all numbers shown)

Phase 1: 12th – late 13th century

In Trench II there were two natural deposits (27 and 28) in the south-east corner. Early features would appear to include mixed clay (some burnt), charcoal and stony patches (26), possibly below a later pit or hollow (F11). To the north of this there was a bright yellow stony clay layer (15) of apparently redeposited natural. Four adjacent possible post-holes (F6, F7, F9, F10) also appear quite early. Three of these possible post-holes (F6, F7, and F10) had similar black fills and their dimensions are broadly similar, so they could be associated. Against the north section of the trench there was a similar soil fill but with more stones 'sitting in a depression' (F8).

In Trench IV the earliest features appeared to consist of three hearths (F2, F4 and F7), all cut into or lying directly on subsoil. However, it is possible that one of these hearths (F4) is later and overlies layer (14). There are a number of early post-holes (F5, F6, F8, F10, F14, F15, F17 and F18); the depth of cut of these in the natural suggests some at least are truncated. Probably equivalent to layer 14, but separated by later gullies, was layer 10. However there is no evidence to suggest that layer 14 produced any pottery whereas layer 10 produced 223 sherds, mostly 12th – 13th century date, but with some Saintonge ware (9 sherds) indicating a post-1240 date.

Also recorded on the sketch plan is a possible pit or spread (F11) belonging to Phase 1, although it appeared to overlie one of the hearths (F4). It produced some medieval pottery, but none closely datable.

Above the hearths there was a layer of sticky black soil (9 = 17 in Trench II). This layer produced just over 100 sherds of pottery dating to the late 12th – 13th century, including one sherd of Saintonge (a possible inkpot)

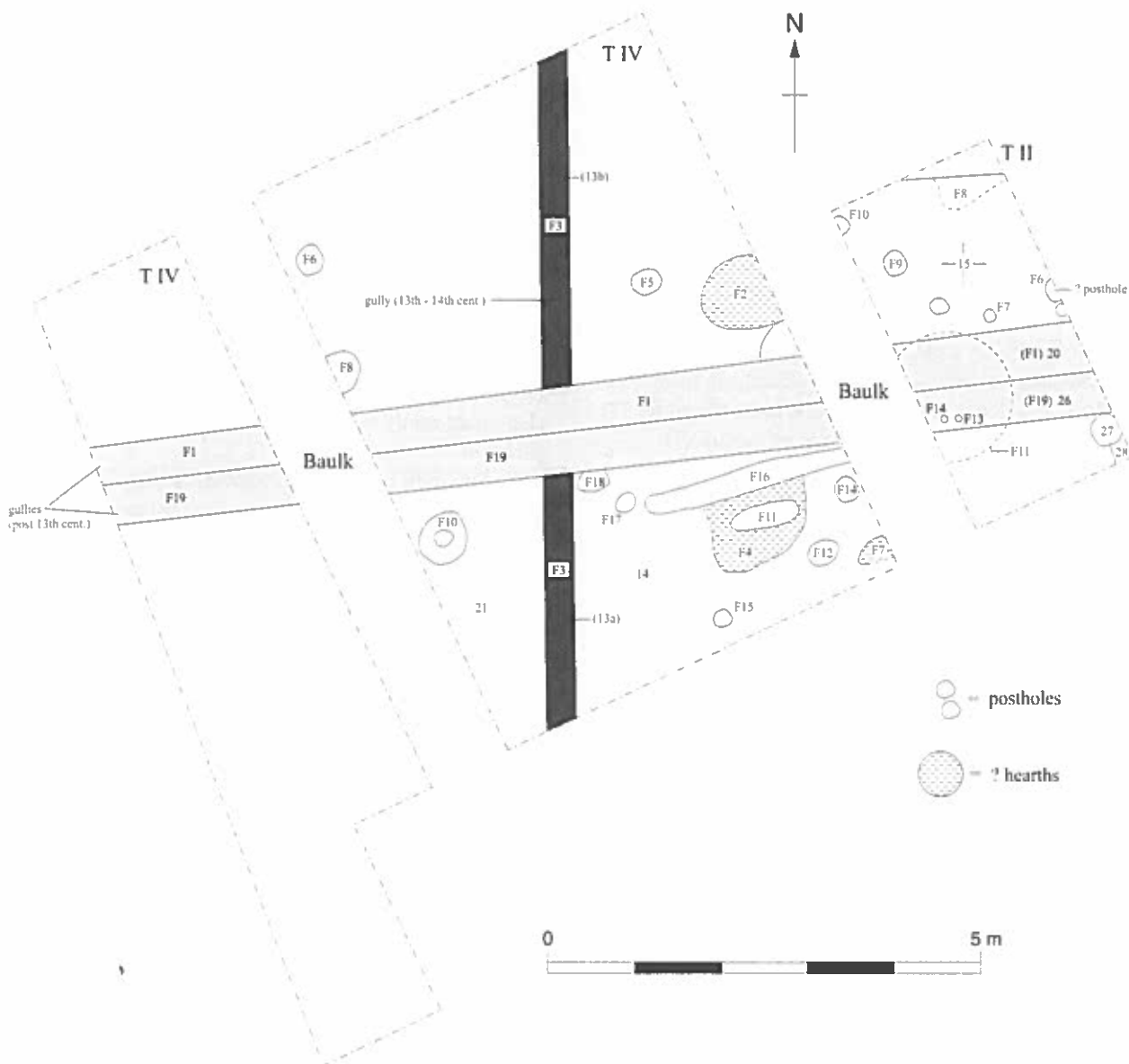


Fig 2 1978 Trenches II and IV

indicating a post-1240s date, and also two slate spindle whorls. It would appear that north of the later east-west double gullies (F1 and F19) was Layer (6) equivalent to this sticky black soil (9). Layers (6) and (9) were cut by a north-south gully (F3).

Phase 2: 12th – early 14th century (Trench IV)

This phase comprises the gully (F3) which cut north-south across the site through black sticky soil layers (6) and (9), with at least eight stake holes along its east side (not planned). The fills (13a and b) of this gully produced nearly 80 pottery sherds of similar date to the layers through which it cut, including 13 sherds of Ham Green jugs, likely to be late 12th century to c 1300 and, again, Saintonge ware. This feature is probably a property boundary.

Phase 3: 12th – early 14th century

This is when the double east-west gullies (F1) and (F19) were cut across both trenches II (fill 20) and IV, through

the fill of the north-south gully (F3). Both of the double gullies (F1) and (F19) were open when the activity of Phase 4 takes place.

Phase 4: 12th – early 14th Century (Trench IV)

This phase comprises layers described as ditch silt (11) being re-deposited on the site. No other records for 25 and 26 (probable re-deposited ditch silts) have been traced other than in provisional phasing. Layer (11) lay above the sticky black layer (9).

Phase 5: Late 13th century (Trench IV)

A massive dump (7) and (8) of broken and smashed rab (shale) lay over (11), the black sticky soil layers (6) and (9) and some of the pits, post-holes and gullies described above. In 1978 this was considered a modern deposit, but the 2003 excavations demonstrated its medieval origins as a counterscarp bank.

Phase 6: 18th Century?

This appears to be when the lower, northern part of the site is levelled with fine brown stony topsoils (Trench II, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 14; Trench IV, 5/1, 5/2 and 5/3) to bring the ground surface up to that created by the dumping of the rab (7) and (8) in Phase 5, probably when the site is being turned into a garden (from the early 18th century, given the latest pottery recovered). The whole area, including the rab deposit (7) and (8), was covered by a layer of soil (4).

Phase 7: 18th–20th Century (Trench IV)

This includes the period when the buildings in the garden are built and demolished, creating a layer of mortar (3) below a layer of rubble (2), covered by topsoil (1).

The 2003 excavation

The 2003 excavation took place in two weeks of November during good weather. The original proposal for the development was for six semi-detached houses, however, as the result of conclusions drawn from the initial test trench in the summer of 2003, this was modified to a terrace of six houses along the southern edge which was therefore stripped of its topsoil by a mini digger to the top of the presumed subsoil.

The area of the proposed houses (10m × 35m) was stripped, but the far western end was untouched since this was the proposed location of the access drive and was also covered by a spread of very recent debris and rubble from the western garden house (Fig 1). The eastern end of the site was dominated by the remains of the garden house and associated features. Along the northern edge of the strip there was a much deeper deposit of garden soil; this was removed onto the top of the presumed subsoil.

It soon became obvious that the top of the presumed subsoil was not an undisturbed natural deposit, and therefore a small trench (Trench One) was cut through it. The presumed subsoil was up to 1m thick and overlay stratified archaeological deposits. A second, larger trench (Trench Two) was then opened to examine these archaeological deposits. A metal detectorist screened the stripped area, spoil tip. Trench One as excavated and Trench Two after machining; nothing of any significance was detected.

Trench One

This was machine-excavated down to the top of what appeared to be a medieval layer of mottled clay silt (120) and then hand-cleaned. The silt layer (120) produced three sherds of Dyfed gravel-tempered ware of medieval date. Above this there was a dirty shale layer (119) and above this there was a layer of loose clean shale (118). No further investigation took place.

Trench Two (Figs 3 and 4)

This trench was machine-excavated through the loose stone layers; the deeper parts were excavated by hand.

The earliest feature was a sunken track-way (126) consisting of a series of east-west ruts (127, 128 and 129) worn in the mudstone/shale bedrock (Ordnance Survey 1974). These ruts were filled with very dark brown, almost black, wet silts (115, 122 and 123). The fills were not easily distinguished from each other and, given the soft nature of these deposits, it is likely that they were intermixed by traffic. These silty deposits contained a large number of potsherds (97) suggesting a date in the 1200s but with one sherd of Saintonge ware indicating a date later than c 1240s. These silty layers also contained fragments of decayed wood. The uppermost of these layers (115) contained a few hazelnut shells and a few flecks of a bluish substance that appeared 'industrial', but also could easily be a natural mineral: this has not been analysed.

On the north side of the trackway ruts lay an apparent bank (152/153/154) of orange clay and below this, natural clay shale. This bank appeared to be formed by the slope of the land to the north and, on the south, by the erosion caused by the trackway (only fully visible in section on the east side of the trench (Fig 3). This 'bank' may have been added to by deliberate depositing of more material (145). Through this bank was cut a narrow north-south drainage ditch (112) c 0.6m wide. Given the bottom level of this ditch, it can be assumed that it drained the trackway (126) but not its deepest rut (129). There was a deeper part of the drainage ditch to the south of the bank; this contained a lower darker fill (130). A few sherds of pottery dating from the 12th century to c 1300 were recovered from the fills (111 and 130) of the drainage ditch.

A cut (134), possibly for a ditch running east-west, but equally perhaps the edge of a pit, lay in the southern end of the trench, western side only. The lowest fill (133) seen in this cut was disturbed natural gravel. Above this the next layer (109) also extended down to the trackway hollows to the north. This layer produced three sherds of pottery, two of which are likely to be late 12th to 13th century.

Above the silts filling the trackway ruts there was a very compact layer (113) of crushed stones, almost certainly a metallised surface. On the south side of this metallising there appeared to be a gully (131), the lower fill (132) of which contained some poor quality coal fragments. The fill above (124) contained a lot of fine crushed stone and produced pottery from the late 12th to 13th centuries. Above this there were three more layers (110, 136 and 137) up to the level of the metallising, totally infilling the gully. Only the lower of these layers (110) produced any pottery, again of late 12th century to c 1300 date. Above these were several layers, mostly of shaley stone or soil and shaley stone, tipped from the south to the north, apparently rapidly. The northernmost of these layers in-filled a gully (149) at the far north end of the site, which ran approximately east-west and cut the north-south drainage gully (112). The tops of these layers were obviously truncated, probably when the garden was created.

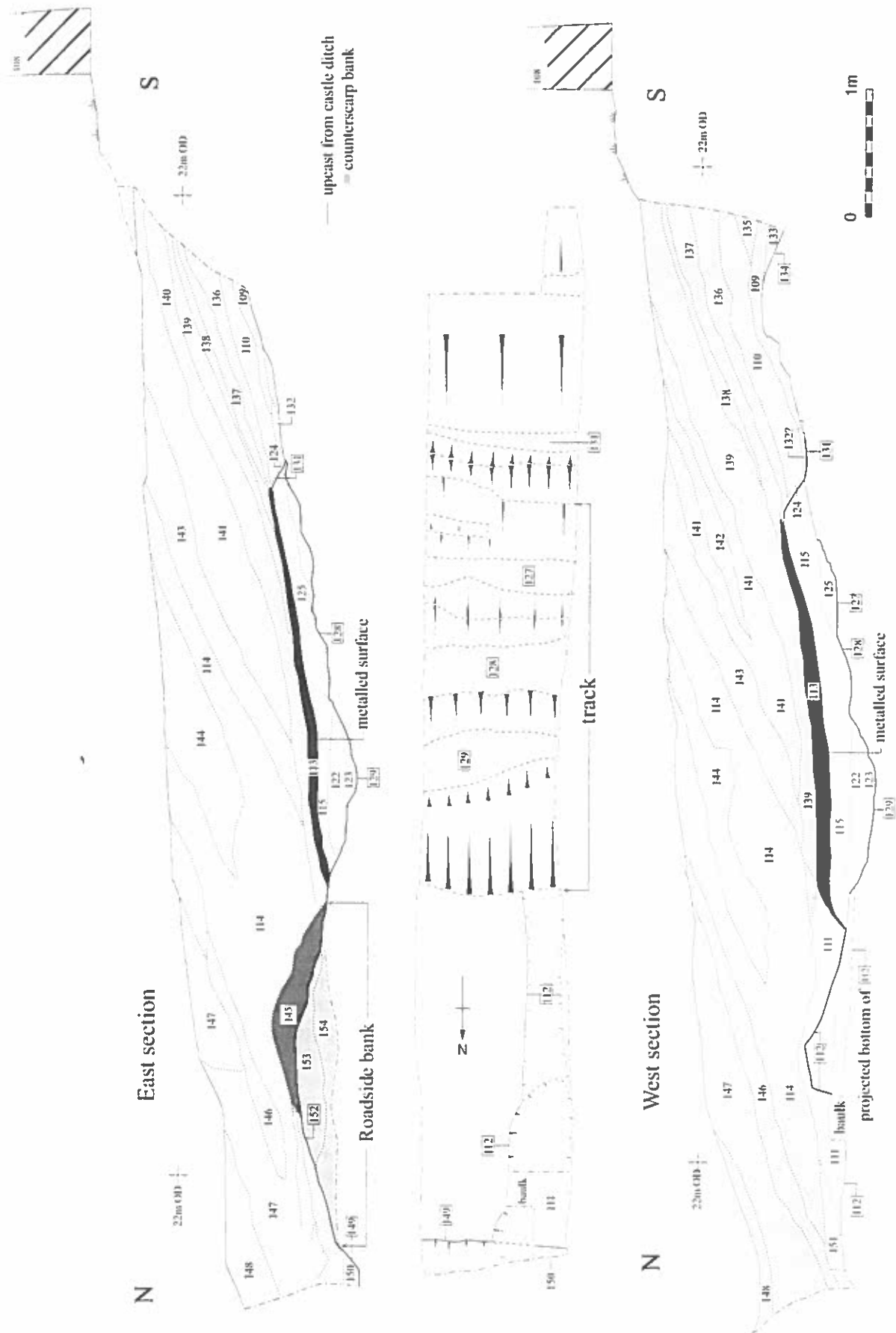


Fig. 3 2003 Trench Two sections and plan



Fig 4 2003 Trench Two as excavated. View SE. Scales 1m

The Garden Building

The detritus from above the garden building in the south-west part of the plot was cleared. This revealed the partial remains of a rectangular mortared-stone building (Fig 1) part of which survived above ground level in the southern boundary wall of the garden. The building was rectangular, 4.5m × 7.25m. To the north there was a retaining wall, holding back shaley layers (similar to those seen in the upper part of Trench Two).

Interpretation

It would appear likely that if Trench One had been continued it would probably have yielded similar results to those of Trench Two. The worn trackway in Trench Two consisted of at least three distinct ruts, the deepest of which was to the north, where the natural slope of the land would have caused this side of a vehicle to dig in more, a situation that would become more extreme as erosion took place. The ruts then filled with wet silt and it is likely that this wetness led to the digging of the north-south drainage ditch, cut through the raised edge of what had become a puddled, shallow sunken way.

The pit or ditch (134) at the south end of Trench Two would appear to be contemporary with the worn trackway. It was at least partially filled in before the metalled trackway was laid.

The holloway was replaced by a metalled track-way with at least one drainage gully running along its southern edge. It seems unlikely that there was a similar gully on the north side of the metalling, at least at this point, as any surface water could get away through the drainage ditch. The southern gully appeared to become silted and the drainage ditch to the north must have been at least partly silted before the east-west gully (149) was dug at the far north of the site.

The whole of this area was then rapidly covered over with many layers of stone and soil forming a bank over 5m wide from south to north and up to 1m high (as surviving). This bank is the dump of rab (7) and (8) discovered in the 1978 excavation. The layers of stone and soil of this bank filled the east-west gully (149) at

Fabric	Sherd Nos.	Percentage
MA Dyfed gravel tempered	733	47
MB Dyfed gravel tempered, glazed (? HGJ copy)	150	10
MC Pale/green glazed (? S. Wales coal measures)	31	2
HGJ Ham Green jugs, late 12th-1300	133	8
HGCP Ham Green cooking pots	213	14*
Minety, imported from Wiltshire late 12-13th	21	1
Llanstephan, wheel-thrown jugs 13-15th	2	-
LWW Llanstephan white ware late 13-14th	217	14*
LPW Llanstephan painted ware (Santnge/Rouen copies)	32	2
Bath Fabric A, thin-walled, reduced, in Wales 12-13th	3	-
Saintonge, green-glazed/polychrome, SW French, 1240+	9	0.6
North Devon, thin-walled cooking pots	2	-
Normandy Gritty, dated 1070-1250 at Southampton	1	-
MWW Misc. White Wares (?N French + Engl/Welsh)	18	1
Misc (med)	2	-
Total	1567	99.6%

* probably over-represented by sherd count especially LWW which mostly occurs in tiny sherds.

Table 1: 1978 Overall Site Quantification (medieval vessel wares)

the northern end of Trench Two. This is comparable with the findings of the 1978 excavation where the rab dump partially filled the double gullies (F1 and F19). Indeed, gully (149) and gullies (F1 and F19) may be one and the same.

The quantity of stone and soil to form such a substantial bank must have come from major works, probably the digging of a later defensive ditch around the northern side of the castle. The castle was founded soon after 1108 but re-modelled just prior to 1290 (Cathcart King 1999, 34-36). The soil from this ditch must necessarily have been placed to the outer side, forming a counterscarp bank.

Fabric	Sherd Nos.	Percentage
MA Dyfed gravel tempered	98	68
MB Dyfed gravel tempered, glazed (?HGJ copy)	4	3
MC Pale/green glazed (? S. Wales coal measures)	3	2
HGJ Ham Green jugs, late 12th-1300	28	19
HGCP Ham Green cooking pots	8	6
Saintonge, green-glazed/polychrome, SW French, 1240+	1	0.6
LPW Llanstephan painted ware (Saintonge/Rouen copies)	1	0.6
MWW Misc. White Wares (?N French + Engl/Welsh)	2	1
Total	145	100.2%

Table 2: 2003 Overall Site Quantification (medieval vessel wares)

The approximate date for the pottery assemblages sealed beneath the bank is 1240 – 1270 AD which provides an archaeological date for the digging of the ditch and construction of the counterscarp bank, which conforms well with that derived from historical argument.

POTTERY

A full archive report has been prepared by Dr Paul Courtney and is in the site archive. It is summarised in tables 1 and 2.

Discussion: 1978 pottery

Over half of the medieval pottery by sherd count from the site was local cooking pots (Fabric MA). Ham Green jugs and cooking pots along with Minety glazed wares (probably tripod pitchers). Llanstephan white wares jugs (imitating Saintonge mottled green) and painted ware jugs (imitating Rouen ware) were also present. The small percentage of local jugs (9 per cent) was noticeable, though their place was taken to some extent by Llanstephan wares. This, and the absence of Bristol Redcliffe ware, tends to point to limited evidence for 14th and 15th century occupation. However, the presence of Saintonge and Llanstephan ware jugs points to at least some occupation extending into the second half of the 13th century. The percentage of local and other jugs, of later date, is higher in the general soil levels (I 6 and IV 5/1-3 but not II 9) suggesting these layers are possibly slightly later than the smaller feature groups

from trench IV. An approximate date around 1260-80 can be suggested for the main features in Trench IV on the presence of Saintonge and Llanstephan jugs. However, lack of clear evidence for wheel-throwing in the local wares (MA and MB), low amounts of local jugs (MB) and the poor quality of their glazes all suggest termination of activity well before 1300, though it is difficult to be chronologically precise.

In addition, the total absence of late medieval and transitional ceramics, for example, Bristol Redcliffe, Newport-type, Malvern, Merida and Cistercian wares, is notable. A single high-fired bichrome sherd (Misc fabrics) from I 9 and two sherds of 16th century-type Somerset ware from IV 5/2 are the only ceramics likely to date from the 15th–16th centuries; though a single Cologne/Frechen sherd could date from the end of that period. There were also only four (medieval) ridge tile fragments from the site. Only a few sherds of 17th century and later ceramics were present suggesting little activity in this period unless this was due to collecting policy.

Discussion : 2003 pottery

The pottery from this part of the site seems very similar in date and type. It is dominated by local cooking pots and Ham Green jugs. A few local jugs also occur along with a few Ham Green cooking potsherds. A single sherd from a Saintonge green glazed jug was also recovered. Overall the finds suggest a date in the late 12th to 13th century. The small percentage of local jugs, lack of evidence for wheel-throwing, absence of Bristol Redcliffe ware and the dominance of Ham Green jug sherds all point to a date in the mid 13th century or earlier. The sherd of Saintonge from I 15 suggests a date after c1240 when its export to Britain first becomes common (Allan 1984, 23; Brown 2003, 26). Overall a date around c1240-70 seems likely for much of the ceramic deposition on the site.

DISCUSSION

Owing to the small scale of the excavations it was not possible to characterise the pre-counterscarp bank deposits with confidence. Given the location of the site is likely that they were associated with the emerging medieval town, rather than with the castle. However, the wide range of 12th and 13th century wares in the pottery assemblage is, perhaps, more likely to be associated with a castle or other large institution, as the assemblages from purely domestic sites are normally dominated by locally produced Dyfed Gravel tempered ware. Having said this, excavations in south-west Wales towns have been confined mainly to smaller settlements such as Newport and Wiston (Murphy 1994 and 1995) where large quantities of imported wares would not be expected. In Haverfordwest, one of the major ports of medieval Wales, a large selection of imported pottery in domestic contexts would perhaps be the norm, although this has not been tested by large-scale excavation. The general character of the archaeological deposits is also indicative of domestic occupation, with a trackway bounded by slight timber

buildings, if the post-holes can be interpreted as such.

The trackway discovered indicated some considerable wear. From the west it presumably ran from adjacent to St Martin's church and the western town gate eastwards possibly to an earlier gateway of the castle, although now there is no evidence for such a gate. In the 13th century the trackway and associated buildings were swept away and covered by a massive bank, up-cast, one assumes, from a large defensive ditch dug between the excavation site and the castle. The most likely period for this remodelling of the castle is the late 13th century, when Queen Eleanor (who is known to have taken a particular interest in Haverfordwest Castle and who died in 1290), ordered the construction of the curtain wall and towers (Cathcart King 1999, 36).

The construction of the counterscarp bank rendered the site useless for any other purpose until the early 18th century when the ground was levelled to create a garden by the dumping of topsoil on the north side of the plot and by the removal and flattening of the top of the bank.

The six new houses on the site have been designed to protect and preserve the underlying and important medieval archaeological deposits.

The site developer, Mr A L Philips generously financed the 2003 excavations. He supplied the machinery and a driver for the topsoil stripping and trench digging. The excavations were undertaken by the author with the assistance of Gwilym Bere. Hubert Wilson of Cambria Archaeology produced the final drawings.

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