

LONGOAR BAY, ST ISHMAEL'S, PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, MARCH 2005



The site looking from the east, just right of centre

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Ar gyfer PCNP
Prepared by Cambria
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Mawrth 2005
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LONGOAR BAY, ST ISHMAEL'S, PEMBROKESHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION, MARCH 2005

Gan / By

Neil Ludlow

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Project Record No. 54023

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1.0 SUMMARY

In March 2005, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) commissioned Cambria Archaeology to excavate five evaluation trenches at Longoar Bay, St Ishmael's, Pembrokeshire (PRN 44703; NGR SM 8495 0632). A number of cist burials had been observed eroding from the cliff face, adjoining the Coast Path National Trail, and trial trenches excavated for the 'Extreme Archaeology' TV series had located three more burials, one of which was C¹⁴ dated to the 7th-9th century AD. Furthermore, a Group II EMS, also dateable to the 7th-9th centuries AD, had been used as a lintel slab over one of the cists. In addition, aerial photographs showed what appeared to be a rectangular cropmarked enclosure around the site, containing a possible second, subcircular enclosure. Geophysical survey by the 'Extreme Archaeology' team failed to pick up any evidence for these cropmarks.

Three of the evaluation trenches were positioned over the line of the cropmarks but no evidence for any underlying features was present and their origin remains unknown. Only one trench showed evidence for a cist burial, while another contained a large pit of unknown function and date. In two of the trenches the ploughsoil lay directly above the bedrock; the other three showed intermittent traces of a buried soil.

More cist burials may be present, but were missed by the evaluation trenches. Alternatively, the burials may be confined to a small area near the cliff edge. Further evaluation is recommended, to establish the extent of the cemetery, in order to inform PCNP in preparing an integrated management plan for the site.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Longoar Bay is one of three sites on the Pembrokeshire coast within which cist graves have been observed eroding from the cliff edge. The other two are at St Bride's (PRN 7606; NGR SM 8021 1094) and St Anthony's Chapel, Angle Bay (PRN 35095; NGR SM 851 030). All three lie within the environs of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Trail, managed by PCNP.

The cemeteries present a number of management issues. All three occupy unstable cliff edges, subject to coastal erosion or to land-slips through the action of ground-water. This has resulted in the net loss of the archaeological resource at all three sites, while the exposure of human remains presents issues of respect, taste and decency at sites frequented by both walkers and holidaymakers.

It is PCNP's intent to prepare integrated, strategic management plans for all three sites. However, the sites are not just affected by cliff erosion. Other issues include footpath erosion, agriculture including ploughing and, at Longoar, the long-term effect of the conifer plantation. In addition, the unstable cliffs mean that the National Trail must be re-routed when it becomes unsafe. The first stage of the management plan is therefore to establish the extent, and nature, of the cemeteries.

This programme began with the excavation of five evaluation trenches at Longoar Bay. The work was undertaken by Cambria Archaeology on behalf of PCNP, during March 2005.

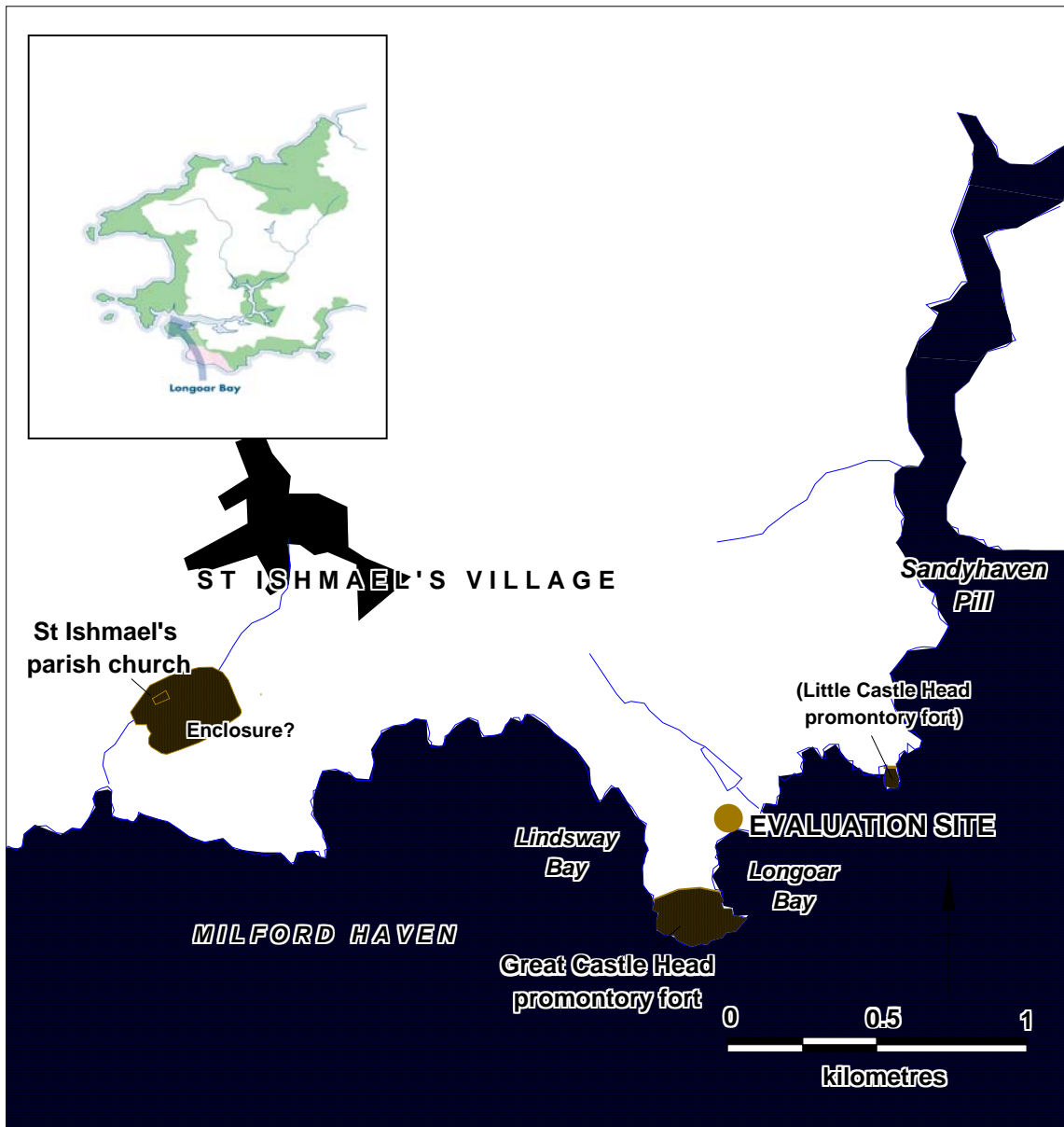
2.1 Site location

Longoar Bay lies in the parish of St Ishmael's, Pembrokeshire, at NGR SM 849 062. It is a deep coastal bay of the *ria* of Milford Haven, cut into the Devonian Old Red Sandstone coastal cliffs that form the east side of the headland called Great Castle Head. The cliffs here are 10m - 13m in height (OD).

The site lies at the apex of the bay, occupying relatively level ground immediately at the top of these cliffs, at NGR SM 8495 0633 (Fig. 1). Generally, the ground follows a shallow downhill slope eastward to the cliff edge, which is fringed by the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail. The underlying solid geology is Old Red Sandstone (ORS), with no overlying drift deposits. To the south is a large field that has been under a varying agricultural regime including arable; it is currently set-aside. To the north is an area that was, until recently, also under the plough but has, in recent years, been planted with conifers (*Pinus sylvestris*). This extends northwards, as a moderate downhill slope, to a natural stream valley that has recently been dammed to create a pond. Between the apex of the bay and the mouth of this stream is a further, small headland, Chester Point, which is overgrown with gorse scrub.

Although exposed, the site's easterly aspect, particularly towards the valley, offers comparatively sheltered conditions.

Fig. 1 General site location map



2.2 Site description and history

Great Castle Head is a prominent headland projecting 700m into Milford Haven between Lindsway Bay to the west and Longoar Bay to the east (Fig. 1). The headland itself is occupied by a large, bivallate Iron Age coastal promontory fort called Great Castle Head (PRN 3006; SAM Pe416 Pem). The fort shows the eroded and altered remains of two banks and ditches on the north, landward side, which enclose an area of 3.28ha, although an unknown percentage of the interior will have been lost to coastal erosion.

The evaluation site (PRN 44703 in the Sites and Monuments Record for west Wales), which lies 225m NNE of the fort, is a cist-grave cemetery, ie. a cemetery within which burials take the form of stone-lined graves. Such graves are normally thought to be early medieval in date. The cemetery was first recorded in 2000 when a warden for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) noticed cist graves eroding from the cliff edge, after a cliff fall (Figs. 2 and 4). They were located at an average depth of 0.90m beneath the top of the cliff, at the apex of Longoar Bay (NGR SM 84953 06333), in an area of softer, unstable ORS bedrock. This area is suffering from an unknown rate of ongoing erosion, apparently through the effects of ground-water seepage and freezing. Phil Bennett, Archaeological Heritage Manager for PCNP, visited the site and identified three visible cist burials. Subsequent observations have identified a further four, at least.

Fig. 2 Photo of cliff edge, facing west, showing exposed burials



However, conversations with local people indicate that the cemetery had long been known locally. The antiquarian J P Gordon-Williams, former vicar of St Ishmaels, had mentioned in conversation with George Williams (former Field Officer with Cambria Archaeology), that he thought a church had lain somewhere on or near Great Castle Head, associated with 'possible cist graves'. Furthermore, he said that an EMS carved 'with a cross, a Chi-Rho monogram and a bow-and-arrow' had been found on the site, and had been deposited in Haverfordwest Museum. However, no supportive evidence was hitherto forthcoming, and attempts to trace the EMS met with failure; it is not included by Dr Nancy Edwards in her forthcoming catalogue of the EMS of west Wales (Edwards forthcoming).

Examination of an aerial photograph, taken before the conifers began to grow, showed what appeared to be at least two cropmark features apparently associated with the cemetery (Figs. 3 and 4). The most prominent of these was a linear cropmark that appeared to form the west and north sides of a rectangular enclosure (Cropmark A). The western limb appeared as a narrow line of lighter vegetation (ie. a positive cropmark, as if over a bank) in the set-aside field, running northwest from the National Coast Path for a distance of 28m before turning through 90° to run northeast as the northern limb. This was discernible for a distance of 45m, appearing to become a negative cropmark (ie. darker vegetation, as if over a ditch) in the conifer plantation.

The second possible cropmark appeared as a subcircular feature, Cropmark B, within the rectangular enclosure suggested above and centring on NGR SM 8492 0633. It appeared as a darker line of vegetation within the conifer plantation apparently forming a subcircular enclosure measuring 27m SW-NE and 19m NW-SE (enclosing 370 square metres). Its western side was 16m east of the west side of Cropmark A and its southern line was 8m northwest of the burials at the cliff edge.

Fig. 3 Aerial photo of site showing putative cropmarks



Fig. 4 Overall plan of site showing putative cropmarks and trench locations



2.3 Previous archaeological work

The site was visited in November 2002, as part of the Cadw Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites project (Ludlow 2003a). No cists were observed but much of the cliff face was, and still is obscured by ivy and other vegetation. A further visit was made in June 2003, by Polly Groom, now PCNP archaeologist, as part of a Tir Gofal HE2 farm visit (Groom 2003). Again, no cists were observed.

However, in 2003 Cambria Archaeology were contacted by Menthorn, a TV production company that were scouting for suitable locations to film a new TV series called 'Extreme Archaeology' that was to focus on archaeological sites occupying dangerous or extreme locations. Longoar Bay was suggested as a suitable site. One of the by-products would be the excavation and stabilisation of the exposed graves, should they be located.

Accordingly, the 'Extreme Archaeology' team undertook a four-day programme of work in November 2003. The three eroding cists were located, and were excavated, recorded and consolidated. The human remains were recovered, and two more burials were discovered (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Photomontage of burials exposed in the cliff face, facing NW



Further work was undertaken by the team including the excavation of two trenches on the cliff top. Firstly, geophysical survey including resistivity survey, magnetometry survey and ground-penetrating radar was undertaken on two areas of the site, one of them centred around the burials in the cliff edge, the other over part of Cropmark A. The aims were to identify any additional graves, to establish the extent of the cemetery and to test for anomalies corresponding to Cropmark A. Five anomalies were recorded in the first area, which were thought to represent cist graves. However, Cropmark A failed to show as a geophysical anomaly. The geophysical report is published on their website www.channel4.com/history/micro-sites/E/extremearchaeology. At the time of writing, the survey was wrongly titled 'Geophysical Survey conducted in Chepstow' (Watters 2003). The report does not, unfortunately, include a plan of the anomalies in relation to the rest of the site.

Two trenches were hand-excavated behind the cliff edge, over anomalies thought to represent burials. Again, there is no published location plan of the trenches and their archive has, as yet, not been seen. However, their approximate locations are known and one of the trenches is still visible as a depression in the Coast Path, shown in Fig. 4, at NGR SM 84948 06333. Fig. 4 also shows two possible locations for the

second trench, approx. 18m northwest of the cliff edge with its exposed burials. Both trenches were approx. 2m x 1m and approx. 1m deep. Both contained an adult burial (Fig. 6), and one also contained a child burial of which only the slab lining survived. Both the adult skeletons were in a poor state of preservation but Dr Alice Roberts, of Bristol Osteoarchaeological Research Unit, considered one to be a female (Roberts 2003). The other was of indeterminate sex. No signs of disease or injury were noted but again the condition of the bone has to be taken into account. Samples were taken for radiocarbon dating, giving dates which ranged from the 7th to the 9th century (Mower 2003).

Fig. 6 Extreme trench 1 under excavation, showing cist, facing west



The lintel stones of the cist in the second trench included a small, Group II Early Medieval Stone (EMS) bearing a simple incised Latin cross, of a kind roughly dateable to the 7th-9th centuries AD (Dr Nancy Edwards, *pers. comm.*). It had been laid face-down over the burial and was in remarkably good condition, with no apparent weathering (Fig. 7). This suggests that it may have been deliberately carved for use as a lintel-slab, contemporary with the burial, rather than being a re-used EMS. The slab was of limestone and measured 0.5m by 0.3m, and was 0.03m thick. It is currently in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, but it is intended to return it to St Ishmael's to be mounted, with two other EMS, in St Ishmael's parish church.

Fig. 7 The EMS used as a lintel slab over the cist burial in extreme trench 2



The overall results of the 'Extreme Archaeology' project were published in a short note in 'Archaeology in Wales' (Mower 2003). The fieldwork archive is still in the hands of one of the 'Extreme Archaeology' team members and it is intended to include their results in a forthcoming, fuller publication of the archaeology of the site.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The specific objective of the field evaluation at Longoar Bay was to attempt to determine the extent and character of the cemetery. This would help to inform the preparation, by PCNP, of an integrated, strategic management plan for the site.

Three evaluation trenches were originally planned. Although the geophysical evidence for the cropmarks appears to have been negative, the first would be dug across the line of the possible linear cropmark to assess its presence and form, and to test for the presence of burials within the enclosure that it suggested. A second trench would be dug outside this possible cropmark to confirm that no burials lay outside the suggested enclosure. The third trench was located across the line of the possible circular cropmark to establish its presence and form. In the event, two more trenches were excavated – a second trench across the line of the possible circular cropmark, and a trench in the vicinity of the exposed burials in an attempt to establish their northward extent.

4.0 METHODOLOGIES AND RESULTS

4.1 Methodologies

Five trenches were excavated. The first three trenches, T1 – T3, were machine-excavated using a JCB with a 5ft toothless grading bucket, to the bottom of the ploughsoil. The trenches were then hand-cleaned and recorded.

The other two trenches, T4 and T5, were hand excavated to the bottom of the ploughsoil, then hand-cleaned and recorded.

All archaeological features were sample excavated. All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using an open-ended numbering system. Significant archaeological features and deposits were planned at 1:20 scale, photographed in digital format and bulk-sampled for palaeoenvironmental material where appropriate. Section drawings were at 1:10 scale. Drawn records were related to published boundaries. It was not anticipated that any cist burials encountered would be fully excavated.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 Trench 1 (T1)

T1 was located at NGR SM 84899 06324, in the set-aside field (Figs. 4 and 8). It was positioned across the line of the possible linear cropmark to assess its presence and form, and to test for the presence of burials within the enclosure that it suggested. It was aligned at right-angles to the NW-SE limb of the possible cropmark, and measured 10m NE-SW, with a width of 2m.

The top of the weathered ORS bedrock was encountered at an average depth of 0.27m throughout the trench. It lay directly beneath the ploughsoil with no intervening horizon, and no buried soil was encountered. No artefacts of any kind were encountered, and possible evidence for human activity was limited to two or three small charcoal flecks at the base of the ploughsoil.

4.2.2 Trench 2 (T2)

T2 was also located in the set-aside field, at NGR SM 84894 06315 (Figs. 4 and 9). It was positioned outside the possible linear cropmark to confirm that no burials lay outside the suggested enclosure. It was aligned parallel to, and 6.4m to the west of the NW-SE limb of the possible cropmark, and measured 7m NW-SE, with a width of 2m.

The top of the weathered bedrock was encountered at a depth of 0.18m at the northwest end of the trench, dropping to 0.48m at the southeast end. It similarly lay directly beneath the ploughsoil with no intervening horizon, and no buried soil was encountered. No artefacts of any kind were encountered, and possible evidence for human activity was limited to five or six small charcoal flecks at the base of the ploughsoil, in no particular concentration.

Fig. 8 Photo of Trench T1, facing SW



Fig. 9 Photo of Trench T2, facing NW



4.2.3 Trench 3 (T3)

T3 was located at NGR SM 84931 06329 (Figs. 4, 10-13), within the conifer plantation, 6.8m from the cliff-edge and 16m west of the exposed burials and the 'Extreme Archaeology' trenches. It was positioned across the southern arc of the possible circular cropmark to establish its presence and form. It was aligned NW-SE, measuring 5.5m in length and 2m in width.

The ploughsoil was deeper here, the trench being located in an area of soil build-up close to the cliff-edge, where the plough apparently turned. The top of the weathered bedrock was encountered at a depth of 0.51m at the northwest end of the trench, dropping down to 0.76m at the southeast end.

However, a buried soil (102) was encountered throughout the trench (Fig. 12). It was concentrated particularly at the north and south ends, but occurred in patches throughout. It comprised a red-brown silty clay loam. There were very few inclusions, but at the north end of the trench it contained 25% small fragments of shattered ORS bedrock and some charcoal flecking.

The bedrock was deeply fissured and weathered. In addition, a lens of finer, decayed bedrock (103) presented itself as a long tongue extending northwest to a sharp apex towards the end of the trench. This comprised a sandy matrix containing 80% very small ORS gravel fragments, varying from grey-green to deep orange around the edges, and appears to represent the natural infill of a deep fissure. It represented a softer substrate into which a pit, (101), had been excavated. This pit also cut buried soil 102.

Pit 101 was half-sectioned (Figs. 12 and 13), the western half of the fill being left *in situ*. However, in plan it appeared to have been suboval/subrectangular, measuring 1.7m N-S and 1m E-W. It was semicircular in profile, with a rounded bottom, and averaged 0.95m in depth.

The fill, (100), was a homogeneous greyish red-brown silty clay with 25% medium-large angular stones, mainly ORS and a small number of charcoal flecks, but with a concentration in the centre of the fill. This was bulk-sampled for possible future palaeoenvironmental analysis.

*Fig. 10 Photo of Trench T3, facing SE, before excavation of Pit 101
(visible as a soilmark)*



Fig. 11 Photo of Trench T3, facing SE, after half-excavation of Pit 101



Fig. 12 Plan of Trench T3 after excavation of Pit 101

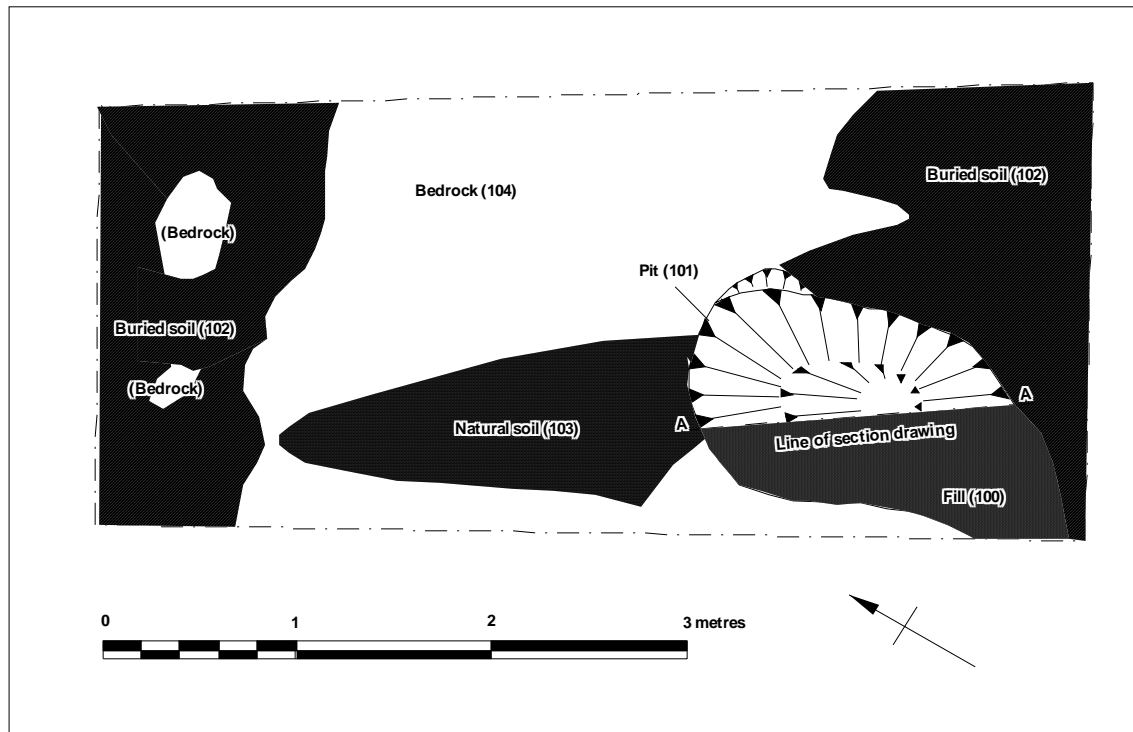
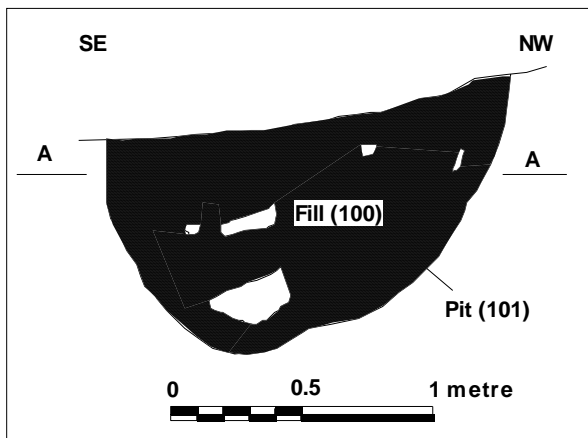


Fig. 13 Section drawing and photo of Pit 101, facing west



4.2.4 Trench 4 (T4)

T4 was located in the conifer plantation, at NGR SM 84914 06327 (Figs. 4 and 14) It was positioned across the western arc of the possible circular cropmark. It was aligned SW-NE, measuring 3.6m in length and 1.5m in width.

The top of the weathered bedrock was encountered at an average depth of 0.25m throughout the trench. However, a buried soil (105) was encountered at the southwest end of the trench, extending for 0.75m into the trench. It comprised a red-brown silty clay loam, with very few inclusions, similar to the buried soil in T3.

Fig. 14 Photo of Trench T4, facing SW



4.2.5 Trench 5 (T5)

T5 was also located in the conifer plantation, at NGR SM 84951 06343, and closer to main body of the cemetery to test for further burials (Figs. 4, 15-17). It was positioned 12m north of the exposed and recorded burials to establish their northward extent. It was aligned N-S, measuring 2.7m in length and 1m in width.

The top of the natural soil was encountered at an average depth of 0.38m throughout the trench. However, the natural did not comprise weathered bedrock as in the other trenches, but a greyish, sandy clay loam gravel matrix with 70% angular, thin fragments of laminated and decayed bedrock. A test pit in the centre of the trench established that this natural soil extended for a depth of at least 0.2m.

In the southern half of the trench, this natural soil was overlain by a buried soil, (106), similar to that observed in T3 and T4. It was cut by a possible cist burial (Figs. 16 and 17). This was not fully excavated and presented itself as a grey-brown fine loamy sand soilmark, (107), in the southwest corner of the trench, with two ORS slabs, (108), laid horizontally, extending across the top of the soilmark from the trench section. Both slabs, at 0.15m in thickness, were possibly rather thick for lintel slabs, but the voids beneath them suggested that they covered a burial.

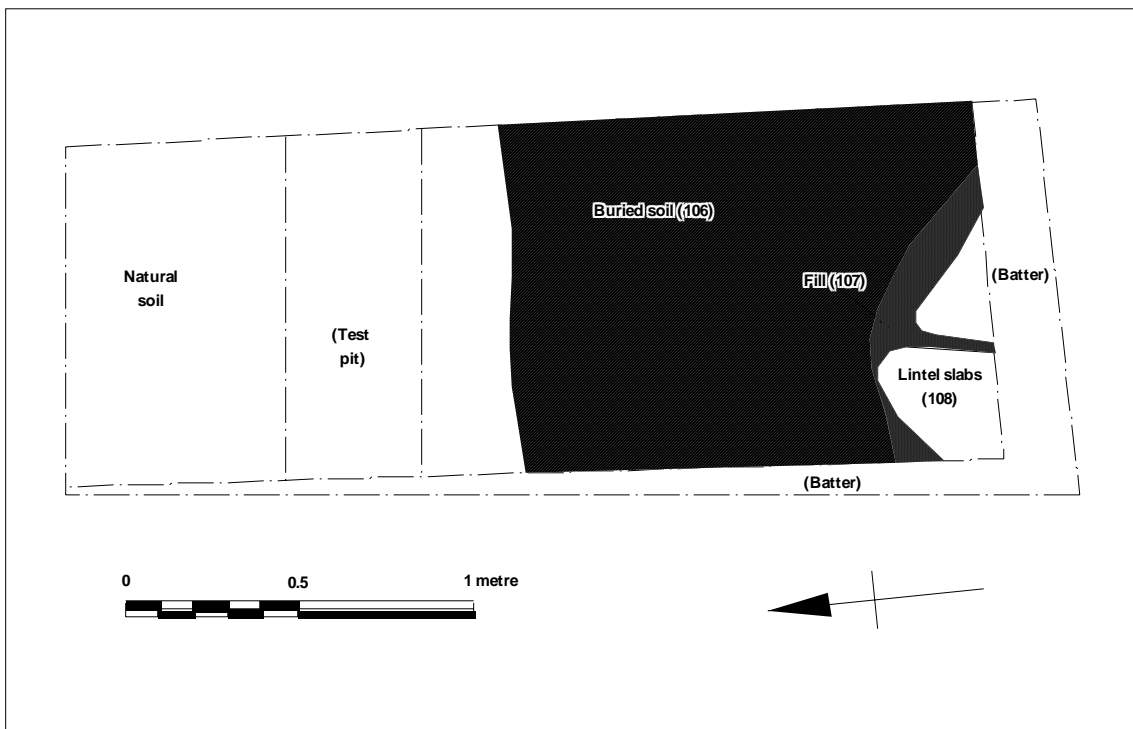
Fig. 15 Photo of Trench T5, facing south



Fig. 16 Photo of possible cist in Trench T5 (north at top)



Fig. 17 Plan of Trench T5



5.0 FINDS

The only artefact encountered was a large flint core, showing evidence of knapping, that was recovered from the ploughsoil in T5

6.0 DISCUSSION

No evidence for either of the cropmarks was observed in any of the trenches. In T1 and T2 the ORS bedrock lay directly beneath the ploughsoil with no intervening horizon, and no buried soil was encountered. This suggests either that no human activity had taken place here, or that any occupation horizon had been truncated by ploughing. However, the ploughsoil was only 0.3m deep on average, suggesting that ploughing has always been relatively superficial. A line of exposed bedrock crossed T1 to form a slight N-S ridge. However, it is unlikely that this was the cause of the linear cropmark and no explanation for the feature visible on aerial photographs is readily forthcoming.

The presence of buried soil in T3-T5, all excavated within the conifer plantation and closer to the exposed and recorded burials, suggests that human activity may have been confined to this area. However, no evidence for the possible circular cropmark was encountered and this too lacks a ready explanation.

The slabs visible at the south end of T5 lie only 12m north of the exposed burials and appear to represent the lintel-slabs of a cist grave. No further slabs were noted in this trench, halfway along which the buried soil appears to run out, and it may mark the northeastern extent of burial. This would suggest that the burials are concentrated in the area where they have been previously exposed and recorded.

However, the cist cemetery at Angle, mentioned above, appears to comprise concentrations of burials spread across a wide area, with intervening areas without evidence of burials. Such 'zoning' might also be present at Longoar Bay, ie. the evaluation trenches may have been positioned in sterile areas between burial concentrations. Nevertheless, the general absence – or minimal presence - of buried soil in the trenches has to be taken into account.

If the burials are indeed concentrated in one relatively small area then much of the cemetery may have already been lost to cliff erosion. Local sources suggest that burials have been exposed in the cliff section since at least the 1930s but the active, ongoing nature of the erosion has been noted, and these burials can hardly be the same ones exposed in 2000-2003. It may then be that very little of the cemetery is actually left.

The pit in T3 was only half-excavated but produced no artefacts or evidence of its nature. The fill was homogenous throughout, suggesting that it was deliberately backfilled in a single event. The fill was bulk sampled from an area with a concentration of charcoal, but whether this will be sufficient to provide a C¹⁴ date remains to be seen. The pit may or may not be contemporary with the cemetery, but it is unlikely that the cemetery would be used for any other contemporary purpose, such as storage etc., and it is therefore likely that the pit either pre-dates or post-dates burial on the site. If the pit was evidence for any earlier burial, such as an Iron Age crouched burial, this would have been observed - even within the half of the fill that was excavated. It may be that the pit represents a storage pit, possibly prehistoric, and therefore associated with an earlier occupation of the site – possibly relating to activity at the Great Castle Head promontory fort.

With only one C¹⁴ date so far obtained, no conclusions can really be drawn about the longevity of the site. However, comparisons can be drawn with other sites. The Sites and Monuments Record for Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire lists

records of 35 long-cist cemeteries or possible cemeteries in west Wales (James 1987). They have usually been chance observations and there is normally little indication of their date; at the time of writing, only seven have produced any form of absolute dating evidence. Two of these dates - at Cilgerran and Eglwysrw - are post-Conquest (Ludlow 2000). Excavations at Eglwysrw churchyard, in 1996, revealed forty-six medieval inhumations. The fills of two of the cist graves, and a feature cut by one of the dug graves, produced pottery dateable to the late 12th - 13th century at the earliest. A cist grave at Cilgerran churchyard, opened in the mid 19th century, contained 13th century coins (Anon. 1859, 350). Meanwhile, the re-use of a Group II EMS as a lintel-slab over an undated cist at St Patrick's Chapel, St Davids (Hague 1970, 47), suggests a later rather than earlier date. Some excavated long cist cemeteries have, in England, produced almost exclusively post-Conquest dates, for instance the 11th-16th-century cemetery at Winchester Cathedral (Kjølbye-Biddle 1975, 87-108). The tradition was remarkably persistent in Scotland, too, represented by 13th-14th century cists at Jedburgh Abbey (Youngs *et al.* 1985, 220-221), and possibly at Iona (Reece 1981, 104), while similar post-Conquest dates have been suggested in Cornwall (Preston-Jones 1984, 157-177). Moreover the presence of 'headstones' at the cemetery site on Ramsey Island (one of them a re-used 8th-9th century inscribed stone) suggests a post-medieval cist tradition that has been alluded to by, *inter alia*, Charles Thomas (Heather James, *pers. comm.*)

Nevertheless, the other five dated cist cemetery sites in west Wales have produced pre-Conquest radiocarbon dates. A cist cutting the defensive bank at Caer, Bayvil, an 'undeveloped' cemetery site within an Iron Age enclosure, produced a radiocarbon date, recently calibrated to AD 650-890 at 2 sigma range (James 1987, 72 and Fig. 12, no. 18, Petts 2000, 301). A date of cal AD 880-1020 was obtained from a cist at St Brides cemetery, exposed by marine erosion (James 1987, 72 no. 34). This latter site may lie inside a large enclosure containing both the parish church and a medieval chapel. Finally, a cist from the churchyard of Llanychlwydog parish church, in association with five Group II and Group III EMS, produced a date of cal AD 853-1004 at 1 sigma range (Murphy 1987, 88 n. 24; James 1987, 72), but recently recalibrated to AD 810-1160 at 2 sigma range (Petts 2000, 304). A cist burial exposed during housing development at Croesgoch, near Llanrhian on the St Davids peninsula, produced radiocarbon dates of cal AD 370 - 600, at 2 sigma range (Ludlow 2003b). An early medieval date was obtained from a burial at Brownslade, Castlemartin, but may not be from a cist.

Cist burials in west Wales lie in two distinct concentrations, along the north coast and St Davids peninsula, and around the west end of Milford Haven. It has long been recognised that this distribution pattern is similar to that of Group I ECMs, ie. the Latin-inscribed, Ogam-inscribed and bilingual stones of the 5th-7th centuries. The context and epigraphy of these stones is generally accepted as belonging, in the main, to late Roman or post-Roman settlement from Ireland (Edwards 2001, 17; James 1987, 64), the settlers having become Christianised soon after their arrival (Thomas 1994, 105-6). However, the post-Conquest and later pre-Conquest dates obtained from the other five west Wales cemeteries had hitherto failed to provide any firm chronological link between cist-burial and this late Roman or post-Roman settlement and the dates from the Croesgoch burial are by far the earliest dates yet recorded in a west Wales cist cemetery. However, it should be noted that due to a plateau on the calibration curve between AD 450 and AD 530, the period between the late 5th century and the mid 6th century produces wide distributions of radiocarbon dates, meaning that radiocarbon dating is not wholly reliable (Petts 2002, 27). Nevertheless, the Croesgoch dates confirm the view that long-cist burial

was being practiced during a period contemporary with the erection of Group I ECMs. Taken together, the evidence from Croesgoch and Eglwyswrw strongly suggests the longevity, and continuity of early medieval burial traditions in Wales, at least in north Pembrokeshire, which remained among the most persistently 'Welsh' regions of west Wales. The post-Conquest cists at Eglwyswrw exhibited varying degrees of slabbing, but a large number were fully slabbed lintel-cists identical in form to the Croesgoch cist. The form itself therefore persisted unchanged, in north Pembrokeshire at least, for at least 600 years.

The C¹⁴ date from Longoar Bay, and the EMS, show that the cemetery was in use during the later pre-Conquest period. What else can be suggested regarding its context and disuse? The cemetery lies only 225m north of Great Castle Head promontory fort (see Fig. 1). In Pembrokeshire, occupation of a number of promontory forts has been proved to have extended into the late Roman period. None has conclusively been demonstrated to extend into the early medieval period. However, we do know that this happened elsewhere in west Wales - at Coygan Camp, Carmarthenshire for example (Edwards and Lane 1988, 45-6). More importantly, a number of inland forts are associated with church or chapel sites. Nevern parish church, for example, sits at the foot of an iron age fort, and the former St Leonard's Chapel near Haverfordwest was actually built between the ramparts of a fort. Burials, as opposed to occupation, have been recorded at a number of other forts. So it is interesting to speculate whether Great Castle Head fort continued to be occupied throughout the Roman period, and well into the early middle ages - perhaps as late as the 9th century AD, the latest date-range from Longoar cemetery.

Burial continued into the 9th century and may have continued up until the Norman Conquest of Pembrokeshire c.1100 AD, when native settlement patterns - and religious traditions - underwent a radical upset, with the plantation of settlements of external colonists, and the Normanisation of the Church. This may provide a context for the abandonment of both cemetery and fort.

However, the cause may not have been quite so dramatic. Longoar Bay is only just over a mile from St Ishmael's parish church (see Fig. 1). St Ishmael's is an early site - it is recorded, as 'Lan Ysmael', in a 9th century text of the 'Welsh Laws', when it was listed as one of the seven 'bishop-houses' of Dyfed (Ludlow 2003a). It has been suggested that the text may record an even earlier list, from the 6th century AD, each bishop-house apparently being based on one of seven subkingdoms established in the 5th century by the Irish settlers (Charles-Edwards 1971, 247-62). The small churchyard lies within a larger, well-defined, rectangular enclosure, which may represent the monastic precinct (Fig. 1). Undated cists were observed within this enclosure during pipe-laying in the 1980s (Ludlow 2003a). There are also two EMS in the church, which may come from the site.

The church may have been deliberately established as a monastery. It is a favoured site, sheltered, and with an abundant supply of fresh water. It may have ceased to be monastic before the Norman Conquest, when the parish church system was gradually becoming established. It certainly was just a parish church by the 12th century. It will have exerted a powerful influence on its hinterland - smaller churches and burial grounds will have become abandoned as it established its pre-eminence, which in time led to the parish church having the sole burial rights for the parish. So competition, rather than conquest and displacement, may lie behind the abandonment of the Longoar Bay cemetery.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation revealed no evidence for the cropmark features that were apparent from the aerial photograph, and their origin remains, at present, unknown. One trench revealed a possible cist grave towards the cliff edge, in the area where other cist burials are known to exist. Another trench revealed a large pit, with a homogenous fill, but this produced no dating evidence and neither its function nor date are known.

The extent of the cemetery is still to be properly ascertained. All the evidence so far obtained suggests that the burials are confined to a fairly small area around the eroding burials. However, this has yet to be proven and further work will be required in order to establish its extent. It is unfortunate that the 'Extreme Archaeology' report on the geophysical survey (Watters 2003), which picked up anomalies relating to graves, was not accompanied by a location plan, and approaches have been made to its author in the search for more information. This could be crucial in deciding the nature and extent of any further work.

In the interim, one possibility could be the total excavation and archaeological sterilisation of the area at the cliff-top. However, it is recommended that this forms part of an integrated management plan, as other management issues require resolution – coastal erosion is not the only threat to the site. Whilst ploughing in the field subsequently under set-aside appears not to be affecting any archaeological features or deposits, the affects of the conifer plantation on below-ground remains will become increasingly negative.

Cambria Archaeology will be examining the cist cemeteries at Angle and St Brides during Summer 2005 and it is suggested that the results of the Longoar Bay evaluation are published alongside the results from this forthcoming work. Approaches are being made to the 'Extreme Archaeology' team members on order to include their results in this publication. Finally, the EMS recovered during the 'Extreme Archaeology' project - which is currently in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales - may be returned to St Ishmael's and mounted, with two other EMS, in St Ishmael's parish church, as part of a current Cadw project focussing on the protection and promotion of Early Medieval Stones.

8.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The archive, indexed according to the National Monuments Record (NMR) material categories, will be deposited with the Sites and Monuments Record for Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, curated by Cambria Archaeology, Shire Hall, 8 Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire. It contains the following: -

- A.1.** Copy of the final report
- A.4.** Disk copy of report

- B.1.** Context record - paper

- C.2.** Site drawings

- D.1.** Catalogue of site photographs

- G.1.** Source documentation

- I.4.** Final report - disk

- M.1.** Non-archaeological correspondence

There is no material for classes **E, F, H, J, K** and **N**.

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