

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT Y BEUDY, MATHRY PEMBROKESHIRE

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Paratowyd gan Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer Mr Lindsey Morris, Y Beudy
Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Mr Lindsey Morris, Y Beudy



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Gan / By

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1.0 SUMMARY

An evaluation of a small plot of land in the village of Mathry in Pembrokeshire, was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new house on the site. Two trenches were cut within the development area, down to the top of natural geology. No archaeological features were revealed within the trenches.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In line with planning policy Wales 2002 and Welsh Office Circular 60/96 'Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology' and 61/96 'Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas', a full archaeological condition was attached to a planning application (04/0211/PA) for the construction of a house on land adjacent to Y Beudy (NGR SM8794632097) at Mathry, Pembrokeshire.

The site lies within the centre of Mathry which was an important centre in Early Medieval Wales. Finds of stone-lined (cist) graves have been found outside the confines of the present churchyard, which is about 65m south of the evaluation site. This, combined with possible evidence of a large outer 'Bangor' enclosure, suggests that there is potential for the survival of Early Medieval archaeological remains in the area.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Two trenches were dug within the approximate area of the footprint of the building. The location of the trenches was dictated by the limited space within the development area and the presence of a sewage pipe towards the northern half of the site.

The trenches were dug with a JCB, using a 1.5m toothless ditching bucket. The approximate position of the trenches is indicated in Figure 1. Trench 1 was 5.0m long while trench 2 was 6.5m long. The trenches were 3m apart. A trench was not dug in the car-parking area immediately to the south of the house plot.

The trenches were hand cleaned to look for any archaeological deposits or cut features.

4.0 RESULTS

The ground surface had been previously compacted. Topsoil was removed down to the interface with the natural geology of the area. In this location natural consisted of mid brown silt with shattered shale inclusions known locally as 'rab'. The topsoil was essentially the same material with a greyer silt with a higher organic content.

Yellow-grey silts lying just above the natural geology were excavated but were found to be remnants of topsoil that remained where the underlying geology sloped down slightly towards the north.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Despite reasonable potential for the presence of human burials or other archaeologically significant Early Medieval features or deposits, no such features were revealed within the trenches that were excavated.

APPENDIX: Early Medieval Mathry . PRN: 4578. NGR: SM 8793 3200

Early medieval A site, ie. high-probability early medieval origins. Churchyard occupied by the medieval Mathry parish church (PRN 4642), which was entirely rebuilt in the 19th century (as post-medieval PRN 17338). The site, and probably the location of the church was mentioned in an entry in the Llandaff Charters from the 6th century (Davies 1979, 96 no.127b). The entry records a gift of land 'to St Teilo', while the 'Mathry' place-name suggests that a church had already been established, ie. 'Mathry' is derived from a 'Merthyr' element is thought to denote early post-Roman origins (Roberts 1992, 42).

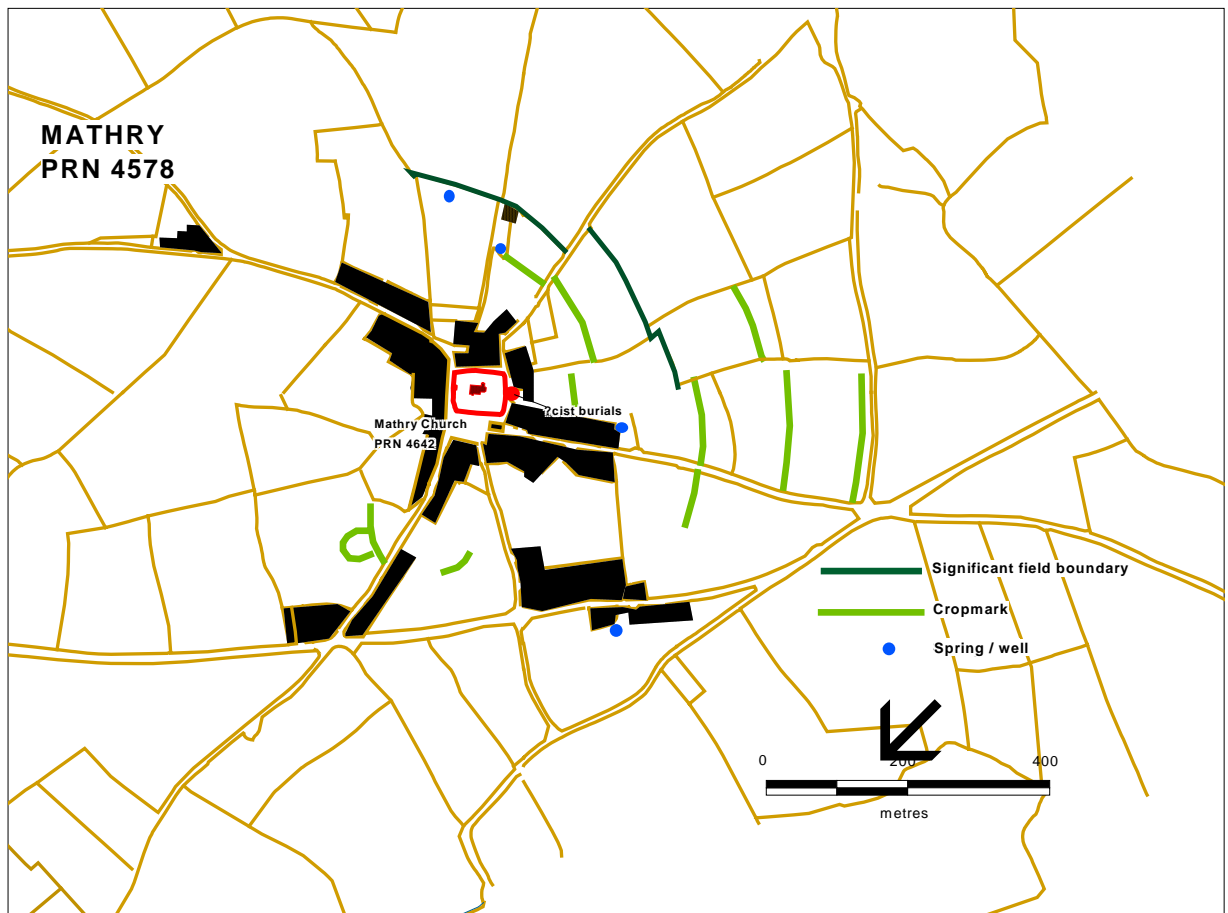
The early medieval church probably occupied the present churchyard, at least during the later post-Conquest period. The churchyard, which occupies a prominent hilltop, is uncompromisingly rectangular, but is small and may date to a period within which the circular enclosure was giving way to the rectangular enclosure ie. a shape based on the shape of the building itself (Preston-Jones 1992, 123). Cf. the rectangular yards at the early church sites at Llawhaden and Penally. It is nuclear to a 'radial' settlement, based on six routeways that radiate from the churchyard.

However, the churchyard lies within a possible very large, circular outer enclosure, up to 660m in diameter, preserved as field boundaries to the north (James 1992, 74; Thomas 1994, 480), and as intermittent cropmarks to the southeast and south. The boundaries are typical of the tall hedgebanks elsewhere in the vicinity, and it may be that they may merely represent field boundaries following the natural contours of the hilltop. None of the fields within the suggested enclosure, moreover, have ecclesiastical names in the Mathry tithe schedule of 1842. However, undated cist burials were recorded in 'several places near the churchyard' in the early 18th century (Fenton 1811, 17), while possible cists have been observed immediately east of the churchyard during the 20th century (James 1987, 71). The enclosure also contains a number of springs and wells.

During the 12th century, the benefice was the most important prebend of St Davids Cathedral and was called the 'Golden Prebend' (Lewis 1833), continuing a long-established association?. It was listed in the Taxatio of 1291. The tithes were formerly impropriated through an unusual form of tenure (Green and Barker 1912, 297); this, though possibly representing continuity of tradition, may have had early medieval origins.

There is a 5th-7th century Group I ECM in the church (PRN 2862), which may be +/- in situ?; the Latin inscription records an Irish name (Edwards forthcoming). The 'Holy Martyrs' dedication is probably derived from the 'Merthyr' element in the place-name. However, it is possible that it is derived from an original, 'Celtic' dedication to the so-called Seven Saints (or 'dwyfrwyr'), associated with St. Teilo and St. Dyfrig (Baring Gould and Fisher 1908, 405).

Mathry churchyard: sketch plan



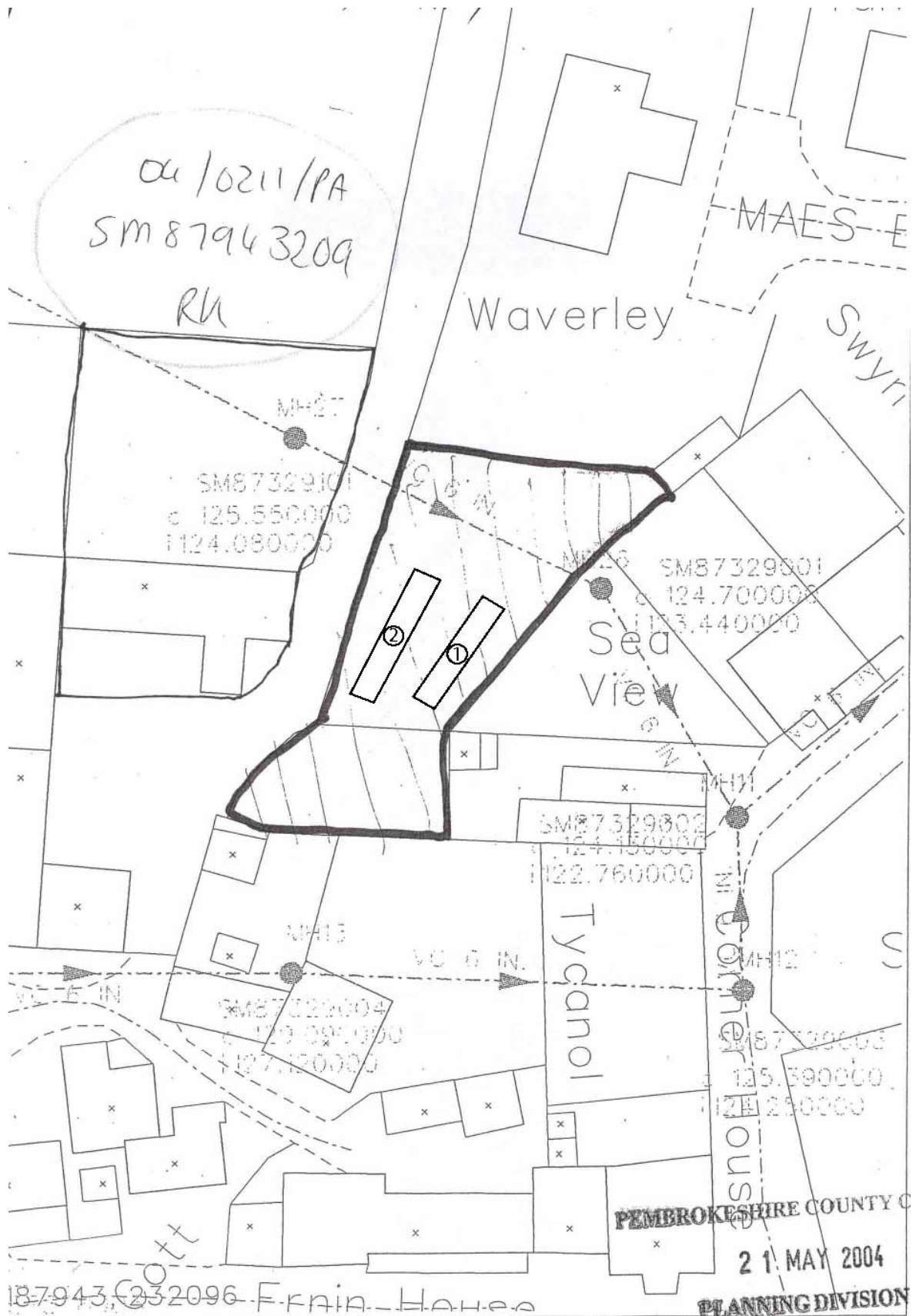


Figure 1: Plan showing approximate location of evaluation trenches



Photo 1: Trench 1, looking north



Photo 2: Trench 2, looking north

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on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

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