

THE PEMBROKESHIRE CEMETERIES PROJECT, 2005



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For PCNPA



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**THE PEMBROKESHIRE CEMETERIES PROJECT,
2005**

Gan / By
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sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

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SUMMARY

Evaluation trenching was undertaken at West Angle Bay (PRN 35095; NGR SM 85 03), where cist burials have been observed eroding from the cliff-face. It was undertaken by staff from Cambria Archaeology and PCNPA, assisted by students from Cardiff University. In addition to the cliff-face burials, five definite, and six possible cist burials were revealed in the field to the south. They were confined to an area within a substantial stony bank, represented by an oval earthwork. This bank is cut by all the exposed burials but is probably constructed over an earlier cemetery, suggested by the presence of human bone within the make-up of the bank. A deeper excavation through the bank also revealed an earlier feature, possibly a boundary ditch, following its alignment. A number of trenches were excavated between the cemetery enclosure and the cliff face, but no further burials were encountered.

One of the burials in the enclosure yielded an 8th-10th century radiocarbon date, as did the bank itself. Just how the burials within the enclosure relate, chronologically, to the cliff-face burials is, until comparative dating evidence is obtained, uncertain, but the sequence may be –

Phase 1 – unenclosed burials in an open field (including the cliff-face burials?)

Phase 2 - formalised burial plot established, enclosed by a ditch?

Phase 3 - boundary bank constructed, redefining the cemetery site and disturbing earlier burials

A fourth phase might be represented by the establishment of St Anthony's Chapel, which was not identified, but may lie within the enclosure just to the north of the evaluation trench.

In addition to the work at West Angle, the five exposed burials at St Brides (PRN 7606; NGR SM 8021 1094) were recorded, and the current cliff-face was surveyed. At least five more burials have become exposed since the site was visited in 2002.

INTRODUCTION

The Pembrokeshire Cemeteries project emerged from the Cadw-funded Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites assessment (DAT 71), in which a number of 'at risk' coastal cemetery sites were identified (Ludlow 2002). They included cist cemeteries at West Angle Bay (PRN 35095; NGR SM 85 03), and at St Brides (PRN 7606; NGR SM 8021 1094) both of which are clifftop sites suffering from coastal erosion. Both sites lie within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) and have been recognised by the Park Authority as being threatened.

A programme of intrusive evaluation was undertaken at West Angle Bay where up to three groups of burials have been noticed eroding out of the cliff-face on the south side of the bay, and which was known to be the site of a medieval chapel and possible cemetery enclosure. A smaller recording project was undertaken at St Brides where a cemetery, comprising cist- and dug-graves, is eroding out from the low coastal Old Red Sandstone cliffs on the east side of St Brides Haven.

The fieldwork was carried out by Cambria Archaeology, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) and 10 students from the University of Cardiff as part of an accredited archaeology degree course. It was supervised by Neil Ludlow of Cambria Archaeology, with assistance from Marion Page and Helen Milne, also of Cambria, and from Polly Groom, Archaeologist (PCNPA). It was part-funded by Cadw, the remainder being funded by PCNP and through the provision of the students. PCNPA had already provided a grant to evaluate the cist cemetery at Longoar Bay, St Ishmael's, Pembrokeshire in early 2005 (Ludlow 2005).

Fig. 1 - Location map showing West Angle Bay and St Brides

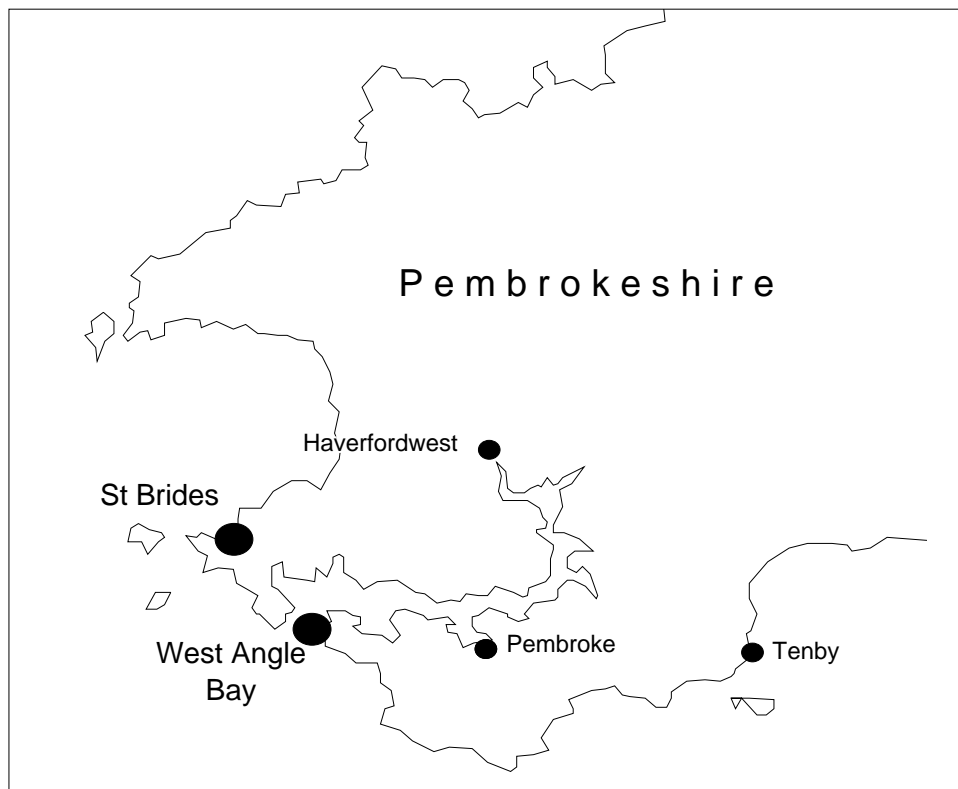
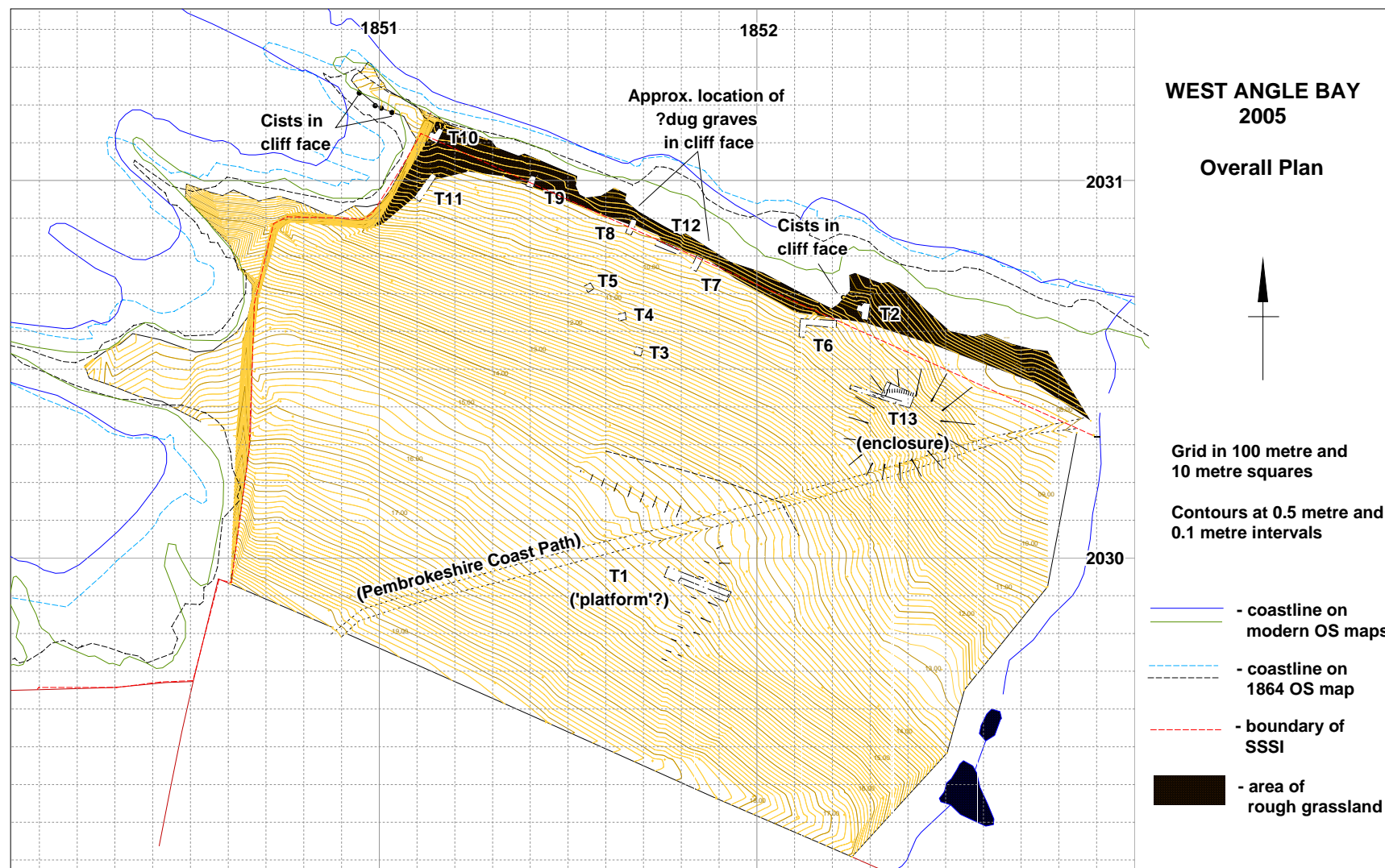


Fig. 2 - West Angle Bay site plan



WEST ANGLE BAY EVALUATION

The West Angle Bay site is represented by a large, rectangular field that slopes downhill from 19.5m OD at its southern end, to 7m OD at the top of the coastal cliffs that form its northern end. The east side of the field is also defined by cliffs, from which it is separated by a substantial bank with earth-fast stone facing in areas. The Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail cuts diagonally across the field. There is also an unofficial path around the edge of the field.

Three cist burials were first noted eroding from the cliff edge, at NGR SM 8514 0739, in the 1990s. In 1997, a skull was seen to be weathering out of one of these graves (Fig. 3), and bone was retrieved by Heather James, formerly of Cambria Archaeology. However, a cemetery has long been known to occupy the site. A chapel dedicated to St Anthony, now gone, was mentioned in the locality in a will of 1500 (RCAHM 1925, 12) and the field was labelled 'Old Church' on the tithe map of 1844. An enclosure is marked in this field as a dotted line, and labelled 'Burial Ground (Site of)', on the Ordnance Survey 1st and 2nd Edition 1:2500 maps of 1879 and 1908 (Pembs. Sheet XXXVIII.8).

An initial site walkover was undertaken in summer 2001. The three known cists were observed, in form much as they had been in 1997 but without any visible bone (Figs. 2 and 4). In addition, a second group of what appeared to be four cist burials were observed at NGR SM 8502 0312, at the far northwestern extremity of the site, in the south face of a narrow promontory defining a cove (Fig. 2). They were very small, and appeared to be aligned north-south. This area is divided from the remainder of the field by the field boundary, which curves around the cove that it therefore appears to post-date.

Fig. 3 - The cists at NGR SM 8514 0739, in 1997, showing skull



Fig. 4 - The cists at NGR SM 8514 0739 in 2001, from west



*Fig. 5 - The rectangular 'platform' from the northeast,
in November 2005*



The visit was undertaken when the hay crop was at its tallest. Nevertheless the vague outline what appeared to be a rectangular platform was noted at NGR SM 8850 030, approximately at the centre of the field (Figs. 2 and 5). The site was visited again in February 2005, when further soilmarks appeared to be present in the cliff section at both cist groups, and at a possible third location, at NGR SM 8509 0309. It was not possible to discern whether these represented dug graves or the fills of other types of features. The rectangular platform was again seen, albeit equally vaguely.

Initially, the 2005 evaluation concentrated on this platform. However, the hay cut which was undertaken just prior to the commencement of the evaluation revealed a slight oval earthwork at NGR SM 8515 0304, averaging 20m in diameter (Figs. 2 and 6). This earthwork - which had not been noticed on earlier site visits - corresponded with the feature labelled 'old burial ground' and marked with a dotted line on the old OS maps.

Aerial photographic coverage of the area was examined in as part of the Cadw Coastal Survey (Murphy and Allen 1998), when no features were observed in the field. It had initially been anticipated that selective geophysical survey would be undertaken by volunteers from Lampeter University. Unfortunately this was ultimately not possible to undertake.

Fig. 6 - The oval earthwork (cemetery enclosure) from the east, in November 2005



Aims and objectives

The primary objectives of the evaluation were -

- 1 - to map the known cist burials in the cliff face
- 2 - to test for the presence of an earthwork enclosure at the supposed platform site, any burial within, and to test whether it was the site of the chapel recorded in the sources. This would also involve assessing the survival and importance of any below-ground remains.
- 3 - to test the oval earthwork to ascertain whether this was a burial enclosure and/or the chapel site. This would similarly also involve assessing the survival and importance of any below-ground remains.
- 4 - to test for the presence of further burials between the platform and the cliff-edge cist burials
- 5 - to establish the relationship between all these elements.

The fifth objective would establish the extent and spatial organisation of the cemetery. It would examine the relationship between the various elements of the site, would look at the chronological relationship between cliff edge burial and burial within the field and would also, it was hoped, test for any differences in the burial rite, or other developments, over time and space.

The achievement of these objectives will enable the preparation of a comprehensive management plan for the site. This has hitherto been impossible, as neither the nature nor the extent of the site were known.

Methodologies

One large trial trench, and several smaller test pits/trenches, were initially envisaged (Fig. 2). The large trench (T1) would investigate the apparent earthwork platform, while two of the smaller trenches (T2 and T10) were located close to the cliff edge in the area of the cist groups. A series of three test pits (T3 - T5) were also excavated between T1 and the cliff edge, to test the area between. The ploughsoil was considered to be shallow throughout the field and all were hand-excavated.

Negative results from these trenches led to the extension, by machine, of T1, and the machine excavation of six further trenches (Fig. 2). A 360° mini-digger with a grading bucket was used. All were excavated to the base of the ploughsoil and then hand-cleaned. All proved more-or-less sterile bar the last, T13. This was excavated within the oval enclosure, which had only been recognised during the course of the evaluation. Excavation revealed it to be the site of a cemetery enclosure. Machine excavation stopped, the trench was hand-cleaned and then extended by hand into a small, open-area excavation.

All archaeological features were hand-excavated, and recorded using an open-ended numbering system. They were planned at 1:20 scale and photographed in digital format. Section drawings were at 1:10 scale. Drawn records have been related to published boundaries, and to Ordnance Survey datums.

An associated programme of outreach work was undertaken by PCNP staff. An excavation open day was held, and visits by local schools was encouraged. The site lies on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail, and so was easily accessible to the public. On-site presentations were provided for the many visitors. Much of this was undertaken by the students themselves who, with PCNP staff, also dealt with the extensive media coverage.

It was not intended to recover large quantities of human bone. Two samples for radiocarbon dating were recovered, and all exposed bone was taken off site for re-burial. Buried soils suitable for environmental analysis were sampled after consultation with Astrid Caseldine of Lampeter University, palaeoenvironmental advisor to Cadw.

At the end of the excavation the trenches were back-filled and left to re-vegetate naturally.

Land-use and constraints

The entire site lies within a farm that is subject to a Tir Gofal agri-environmental agreement and consent was obtained from CCW prior to excavation. The project was also discussed with the Tir Gofal Project Officer. The main part of the field has, in the recent past, been used primarily for grazing, but has apparently been ploughed for root crops during the earlier part of the 20th century. From 2005, the field will be cut for hay as part of a Tir Gofal management agreement.

The coastal strip, for a distance which varied between 4m and 10m inland, is uncut and uncultivated, with some small patches of scrub and grown out hedgerow species. It is a SSSI (32WWH, Angle Peninsula Coast). The cliff-edge trenches were to be partly located within this SSSI, so consent was obtained from CCW prior to excavation, and these trenches were carefully deturfed and re-instated with minimal damage to the flora.

Results

Trench 1 (T1)

T1 was located on the eastern edge of the apparent platform, at NGR SM 8510 0300, where it appeared to be defined by a slight north-south bank, 8m wide and up to 32m long from north-south (Fig. 7). This was interpreted as possibly representing a plough-damaged enclosure bank.

An area measuring 18m east-west and 3m north-south was deturfed, and hand-stripping begun. However, the increasingly apparent negativity of the results meant that only the northern half of the trench was totally excavated down to the natural soil, which was encountered at a depth of 1 metre.

Above the natural, the deposits appeared to consist entirely of undifferentiated ploughsoil and no clear evidence for a bank was observed. However, the depth at which the natural soil was encountered, and the presence of features cutting through it, suggest that the platform itself may yet prove to be an artificial feature. These features included a number of small soilmarks that were observed in the natural at the west end of the trench, one of them apparently containing burnt material. In addition, a possible north-south soilmark was observed towards the west. However, due to time constraints these features were not excavated.

Fig. 7 – Trench 1 under excavation, from southwest



Trench 2 (T2)

T2 was located at NGR SM 8514 0307, 4m to the east of the cliff-face cists observed in the 1990s. It measured 4m north-south, and 1.5m east-west, with a 1.5m long extension on its west side. Removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.4m.

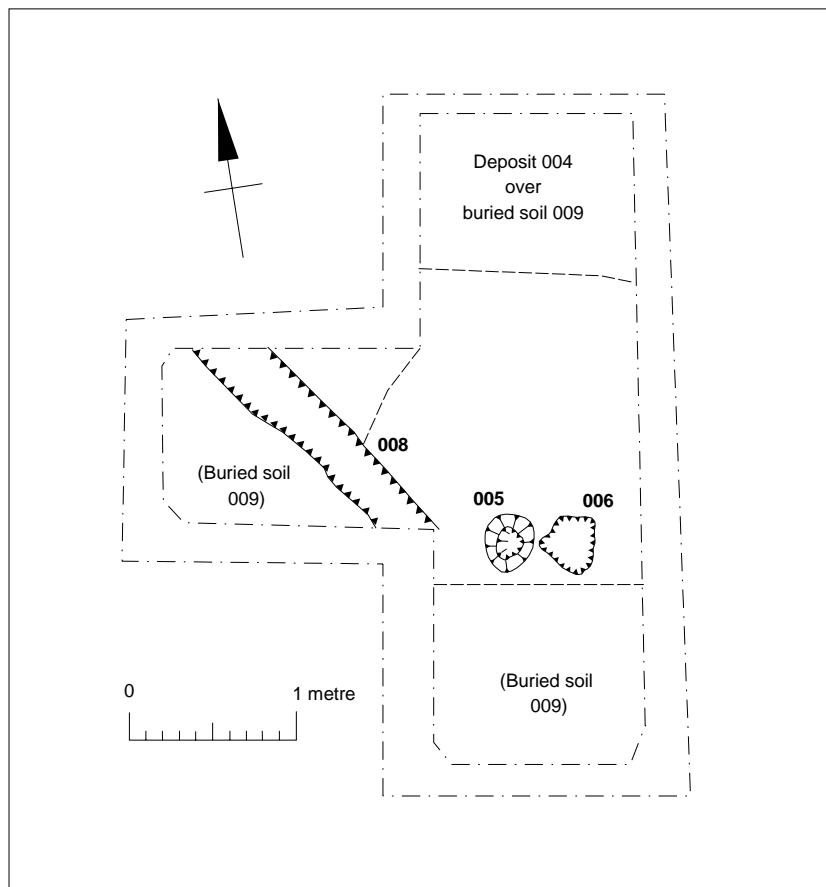
No burials were encountered. However, the trench did exhibit a number of archaeological features (Figs. 8 and 9). At the north end of the trench, the natural was directly overlain by a compact, black, gravelly layer of mixed stone, concrete fragments and a tarry substance (004), which also filled a narrow slot (008) running diagonally across the trench. This deposit appeared to represent a deliberate hard stand and may be associated with a similar deposit seen in T11. Both may relate to WWII defences of Milford Haven. Feature 008 cut a buried soil horizon (009), which had formed over the undisturbed natural soil.

Lying centrally within the trench were two small interlinked features, (005) and (006), rather amorphous in form and filled with blown sand. It appeared to represent an animal burrow that was dug prior to the deposition of the tarry material; the buried soil was absent from this part of the trench.

Fig. 8 – Trench 2 after excavation, from south



Fig. 9 - Plan of Trench 2



Trenches 3-5 (T3 - T5)

Three test pits were hand excavated at NGRs SM 8508 0306 (T3), SM 8508 0307 (T4) and SM 8507 0308 (T5). Each measured 2m square.

In T3, the southernmost, natural soil was encountered at a depth of 0.3m. No archaeological features were observed. In T4, which was similarly sterile, the natural also lay at a depth of 0.3m. However the ploughsoil in the northernmost test pit, T5, was much deeper, the top of the natural being 1m deep. It was much disturbed, possibly by plough damage, and may reflect an early ploughing horizon.

Trench 6 (T6)

T6 was located southwest of T2 at NGR SM 8513 0307, 3m south of the cliff-edge and 6m south of the cliff-face cists observed in the 1990s. It was L-shaped in plan, measuring 9.6m east-west and 4.8m north-south, with an average width of 1.8m. Removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.35m.

No burials were encountered. However, the trench did exhibit archaeology in the form of a gravelly deposit, similar to that in T2, occupying the northwest part of the trench (Fig. 10). This appeared to have a well-defined circular plan, but was

incompletely exposed as it ran beneath the edges of the excavation. It was not excavated, and its nature and purpose are unknown although, like the deposit in T2, it appears to represent a hard stand, clearly dating from the 20th century and possibly WWII in origin.

A parallel row of three intermittent soilmarks running east-west in the eastern half of the trench were part-excavated to assess their nature. They probably represent plough-marks. Some of them were deep, but all were amorphous and the large, dislodged large stones that gave rise to these features were seen in two of them. Similar ploughmarks were seen in T7 and T8.

Fig. 10 – Trench 6 from west, showing hard stand in foreground (after machine-stripping), and part-excavated ploughmarks beyond



Trench 7 (T7)

T7 was located on the cliff-top at NGR SM 8510 0308, 3.1m in from the cliff edge. It measured 4m north-south, and 2m east-west. Removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.45m.

No burials were encountered. However, the trench did exhibit a number of features, some of them possibly archaeological (Fig. 11). A series of two soilmarks running east-west at the north end of the trench probably represent plough-marks similar to those in T6. In addition, two small features excavated in the centre of the trench may be pits; one of them contained a flint flake.

Fig. 11 - Trench 7 from north, showing possible pits at centre, and unexcavated ploughmarks beyond



Trench 8 (T8)

T8 was also located on the cliff-top, at NGR SM 8510 0308, 3.1m in from the cliff edge. It measured 4m north-south, and 2m east-west. Removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.45m.

No burials were encountered. However, four soilmarks were observed, which on excavation proved to be amorphous and probably represent ploughmarks.

Trench 9 (T9)

T8 was again located on the cliff-top, at NGR SM 8508 0309, 2.2m in from the cliff edge. It measured 4.3m north-south, and 2m east-west. Natural soil was encountered at an average depth of 0.35m. No burials, or any other archaeological features, were encountered.

Trench 10 (T10)

T10 was located at NGR SM 8503 0312, 10.5m to the east of the western group of cliff-face cists observed in promontory in 2001. It was a reverse L-shape in plan, measuring 4m north-south and 3m east-west. The trench was located hard-up against the east side of the field boundary bank which here was 1m high and faced with mortared stone on its east side. Local tradition has it that the facing represents the remains of a stile. A linear hollow running north-south along the east side of the bank here was taken to be the silted remains of a ditch, running out at the cliff-edge immediately to the north.

Removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.35m. No archaeological features were observed (Fig. 12), and the apparent ditch probably represents weathering of the ploughsoil by rainwater collecting at the base of the bank and running downhill to the cliff edge.

Fig. 12 - West limb of Trench 10, from north, in the area of the linear hollow



Trench 11 (T11)

T11 was located to the south of T10, at NGR SM 8503 0310, 5m east of the field boundary (Fig. 13). It measured 8m north-south, and 1.7m east-west. The natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.45m. No burials were encountered but a small soilmark was observed in the natural towards the north end of the trench. Due to time constraints this feature was not excavated.

Trench 12 (T12)

T12 was located on the cliff-top, between T7 and T8, 4m in from the cliff edge at NGR SM 8509 0309. It was aligned east-west, measuring 6.9m by 1.3m. Removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural soil, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.3m. No archaeological features were observed.

Fig. 13 – Trench 11 after cleaning, from north



Trench 13 (T13)

Trench 13 began as a machine-excavated trial trench, 1m wide and running east-west for 13m. The observation of burials at its east end led to the excavation of an area measuring 8.2m east-west by 4.5m north-south, centering on NGR SM 8515 0305 (Figs. 2 and 14).

Beneath the ploughsoil, which averaged 0.20m in thickness, was an area of earlier ploughsoil or slopewash (038), with an average thickness of 0.20m, which was differentiated from the ploughsoil by slight leaching. 038 had itself been much disturbed by later ploughing and its relationship with underlying contexts was obscured in places (Figs. 14 and 15).

The burials

Removal of 038 revealed five burials and six possible burials. The certain burials all appeared to have been cist graves, mainly utilising rough slabs of native rock presumably gathered from the beach below the site. They appeared to have employed widely differing methods of construction, although the extensive plough damage to the site had penetrated to this level and much disturbance to the cist slabs had occurred. The possible burials may also have originally been in cists but the bone appears to have been much displaced. None of the burials, moreover, occupied well-defined grave cuts. Nevertheless, all burials appeared to have been established from the same horizon, beneath 038. Four of the certain burials had been disturbed by the initial machine-dug trench. All were markedly small. From west to east, they were -

Burial (049), a cist burial aligned southwest-northeast and represented by side- and lintel-slabs, but with no apparent basal slabs. Only its eastern half lay within the excavated area and its lateral dimensions were not recovered, but it was 0.40m deep (Fig. 15). It contained the much-decayed - and apparently displaced - remains of an inhumation, of which only the ribs were clearly identifiable.

Burial (040) was a cist burial aligned southwest-northeast and again only represented by side- and lintel-slabs, with a foot-slab at its east end. Its west end was truncated by the initial machine-dug trench and this, coupled with its obscure grave-cut and displaced slabs, mean that only its width and depth could be discerned - 0.40m wide and 0.30m deep. It contained a burial comprising the best-preserved bone encountered on the site, comprising both femorae, and both tibiae and fibulae. Samples of these were taken for radiocarbon dating.

Burial (066) was largely seen in section but whose soilmark (065) was visible in the bottom of the machine-dug trench, also aligned southwest-northeast. The grave-cut was clearly visible in the section and was 0.40m wide, but it was not bottomed. There appear to have been neither side- nor basal-slabs, but a flat stone seen in the section may be a lintel slab (Fig. 15). Within the section were noticed a skull including part of the cranium, mandible and teeth. This would suggest that the burial extended for some distance into the machine trench, but the soilmark does not, while no other bone was observed during trench excavation here and so the skull may have been previously displaced to lie at the wrong end of the cut.

Burial (056) was a well-built, well-preserved cist burial aligned properly east-west. Side-slabs were present, including end-slabs, but as in the others, no basal slabs were present. Lintel slabs also appeared to have been absent and none were observed during trench excavation; they may have been previously displaced by ploughing or had even been deliberately removed (see discussion

below). No grave cut was visible around the cist, which differed markedly from the others both in the good quality of its construction and the material used, which is finer-grained than the native rock allowing the slabs to be semi-dressed. The overall dimensions of the cist itself were 1.1m long, 0.3m wide and 0.3m deep. There was no trace at all of a burial. This may be due to the extremely corrosive nature of the soil, all bone on the site being more-or-less decayed, but coupled with the apparent absence of lintel slabs the possibility of deliberate removal must be considered (see discussion below). Samples of the earth fill were taken for phosphate analysis.

The fifth certain burial, (043), lay east of the machine-dug trench, and ran beneath the eastern edge of the excavated area. It appears too have occupied a proper and distinct grave cut, averaging 0.7m in width. Only the western 1.3m of the grave was revealed. Two large slabs at the western end may be the remains of cist-slabs, probably lintel slabs - it is highly possible that the rest had been displaced by ploughing. However, it is fairly certain that there could never have been basal slabs, as in the rest of the cists on the site. Human remains were limited to one mandible, properly located at the west, least damaged end of the grave.

The six possible burials mainly presented themselves as concentrations of human bone, of variable form, but none could be properly resolved. They may therefore either represent disturbed burials, or bone displaced and relocated from elsewhere, presumably also by plough-damage. Again from west to east - Context 053 was represented by an assemblage of human bone, apparently lying between two adjacent slabs, but all rather amorphous; the bone comprised a cranium, with mandible and teeth, 4-5 ribs (RH?) and one other rib (LH?), all damaged and jumbled, although the skull appears to have been lying properly to the west. Other bones may have been present, but badly decayed. Context (060) was represented only by a skull, with its mandible still articulated, and therefore likely to be *in situ* although no other bone was observed in its immediate vicinity. Context (059) was represented by a number of bone fragments lying within a poorly defined cut that was roughly 0.40m wide; the skull, which was much decayed and largely represented by 'bone-earth', lay properly at the west end while the remains of both femorae were identifiable 0.40m to the east. Other bone fragments were also present, but unidentifiable. Of all the possible burials, this is the most likely to be *in situ*, though much disturbed, and the large flat slabs to the east may represent its disturbed lintel slabs, though no side slabs were discerned. Context (47) was represented only by what appeared to be the west end of a cut; this was rather amorphous and petered out to the east, but may be associated with an alignment of flat slabs further east and represent a further disturbed cist grave, although no bone was observed. Finally, context (055) in the southeast corner of the site appeared to represent a cut, truncated by burial 043, that may have been a further grave; it was 0.45m wide but ran beneath the edge of the section. Other concentrations and alignments of slabs may represent the lintel-slabs, or possibly basal-slabs of yet further cist burials. The stony fill (036) and cut (057) beneath it, in the centre of the excavated area, may represent a further burial although this is far from certain and the nature of this feature is unknown.

Fig. 14 - Plan of Trench 13

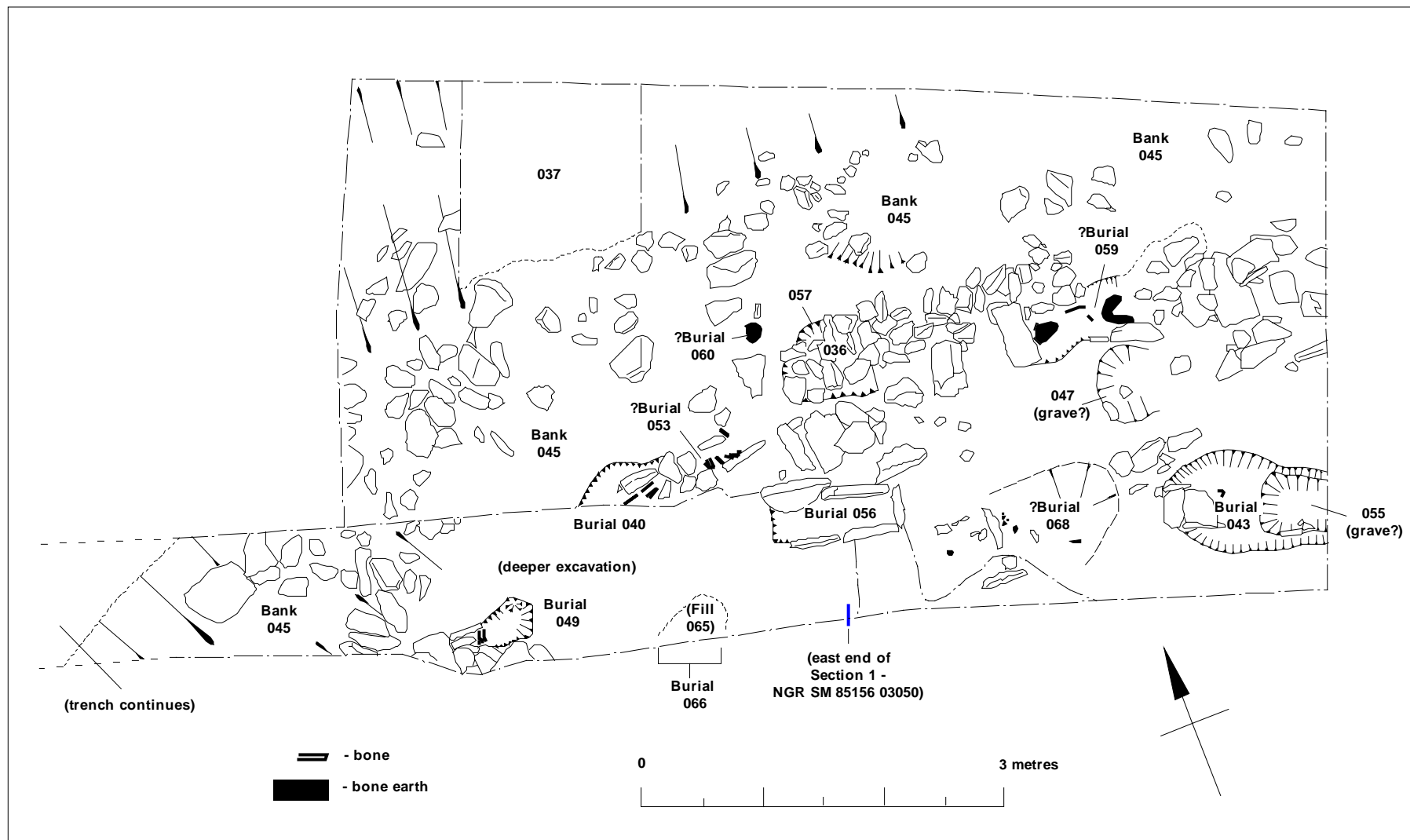
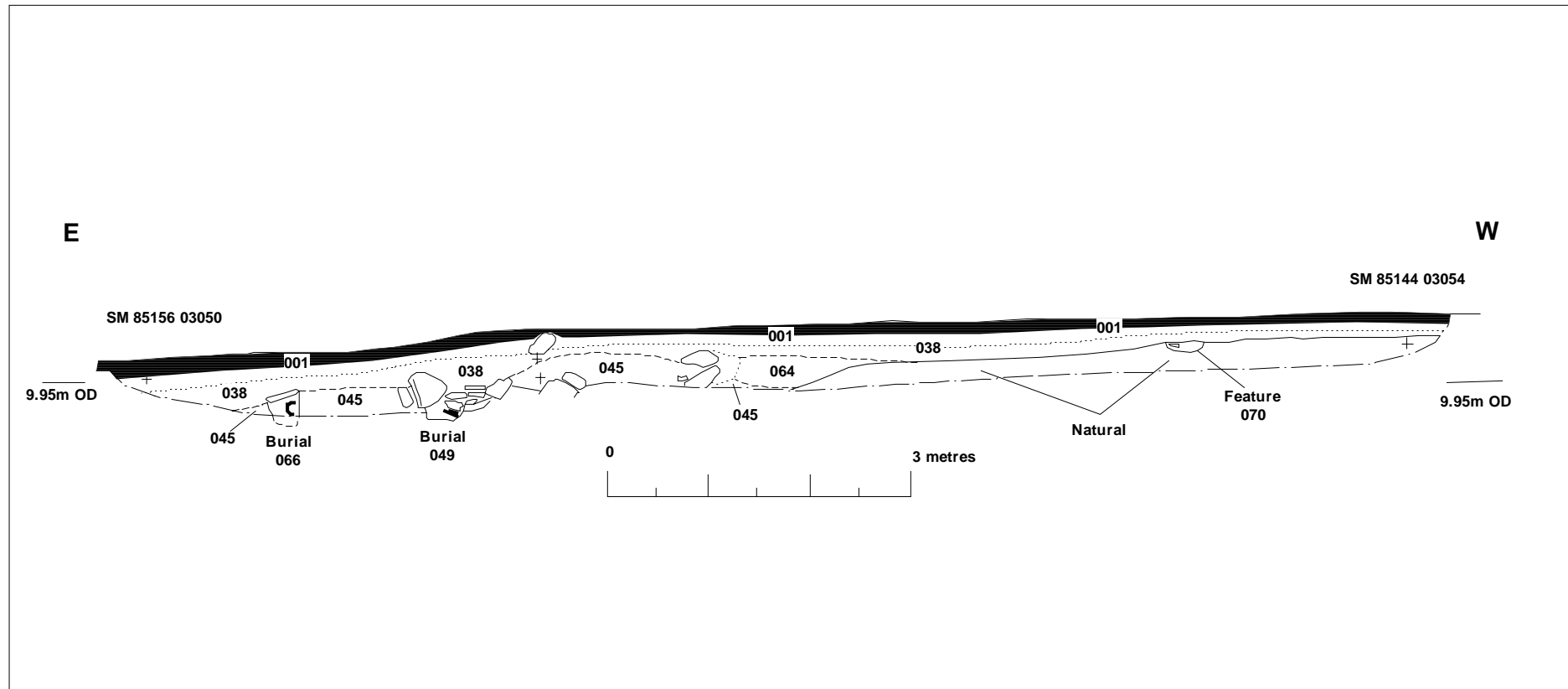


Fig. 15 - Section along south side of Trench 13



The enclosure bank

All the burials occupied the interior of an oval enclosure defined by the earthwork bank noted before excavation commenced. The excavated area contained one arc of the bank, the make-up of which was cut by all the burials. This bank make-up, (045), comprised friable/compact clay loam, containing a large percentage of stones. These were again locally-sourced and ranged in size from small stones to very large boulders, particularly on the west side. The bank so formed was fairly low relative to the interior of the enclosure (0.2m higher at its highest point), suggesting that it had been turbated and its level raised by successive burial. externally, however, the bank displayed a marked downhill slope, dropping by 0.3m, although rising again as a kind of counterscarp around its periphery. In this area, a layer of fine clay loam with few coarse components, (037), which was 0.4m thick, appeared to represent a slopewash deposited over 045 but lying below 038 (Figs. 7 and 10). To the southwest, however, a much more gravelly, darker soil (064) occupied the same horizon (Fig. 8). This had the appearance of a deliberate deposit.

Bank material 045 itself contained some fragments of human bone (sampled for radiocarbon dating), suggesting that it had been derived from an earlier cemetery; this is discussed below.

The earlier ?ditch

To the west, in the area of the initial machine-dug trench, bank material 045 could be seen to lie directly on the natural soil which here comprised abraded bedrock. At this point, the natural dipped down sharply, from a depth of 0.6m, to run beneath the bottom of the trench. This appeared to represent the edge of a ditch that predated the construction of the bank.

A *sondage*, averaging 1m in depth, was therefore excavated through 045 along the west side of T13 (Figs. 16 and 17). 045 was seen to be 0.55m thick here at the crest of the bank, and it overlay a more clayey and yellower deposit, (061), which was 0.2m thick and may represent an earlier bank. This in turn sealed a similar deposit (061), rich in charcoal and burnt material, that filled a feature, (062), cut through the natural soil. The feature exhibited a shallow slope to a flat bottom, which was 0.2m deep where bottomed. It was only partly excavated and only its northwest edge was seen. However, this edge appeared to respect the line of the later bank 045 and it is suggested that it represents a ditch, perhaps belonging to a ditched cemetery enclosure preceding the banked enclosure (see below).

Other features

Few other features were observed, and none outside the enclosure bank with the exception of a small cut feature (070) that was seen in the southern section of the initial machine-dug trench (Fig. 15). This was very slight, only 0.4m east-west in the section, and 0.1m deep. It contained a few small-medium stones. Its nature is unknown.

Fig. 16 - Trench 13: plan of sondage

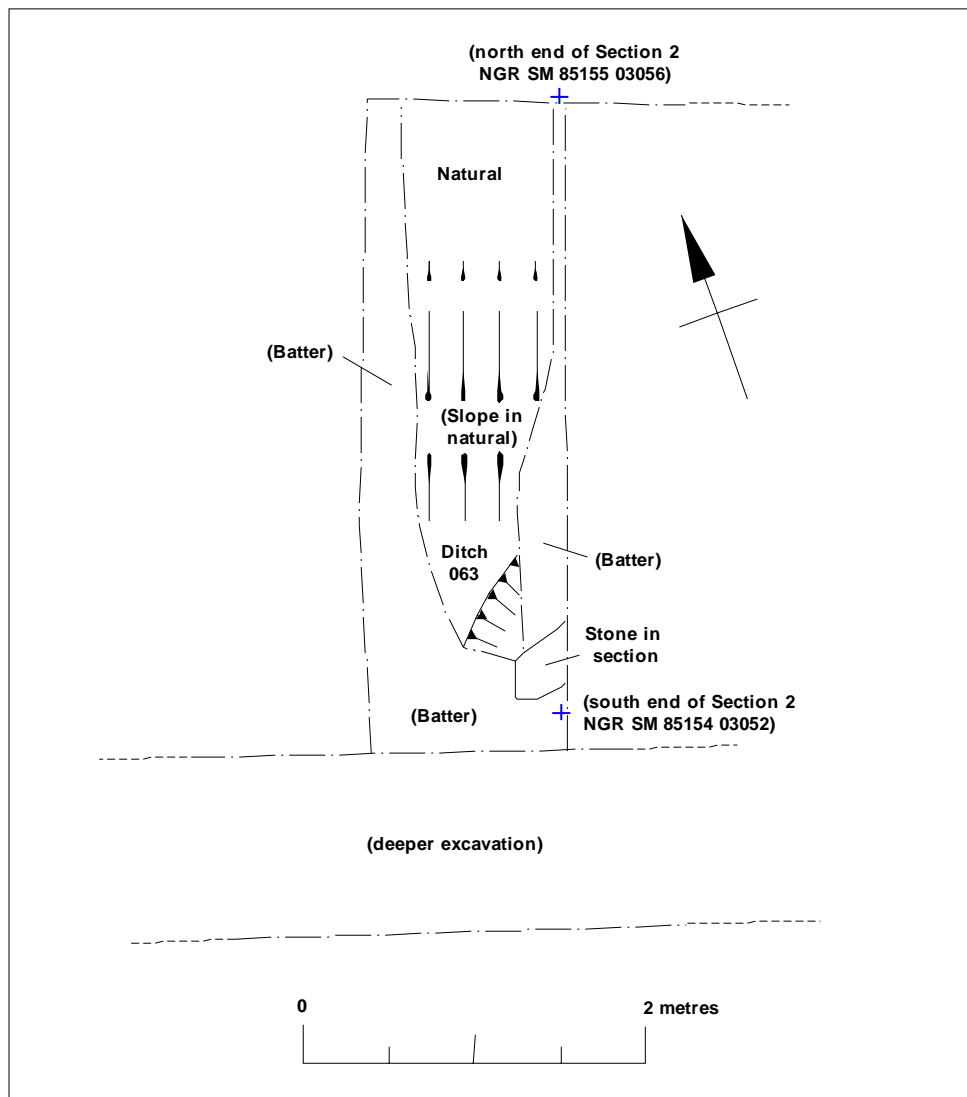


Fig. 17 - Trench 13: section along east side of sondage

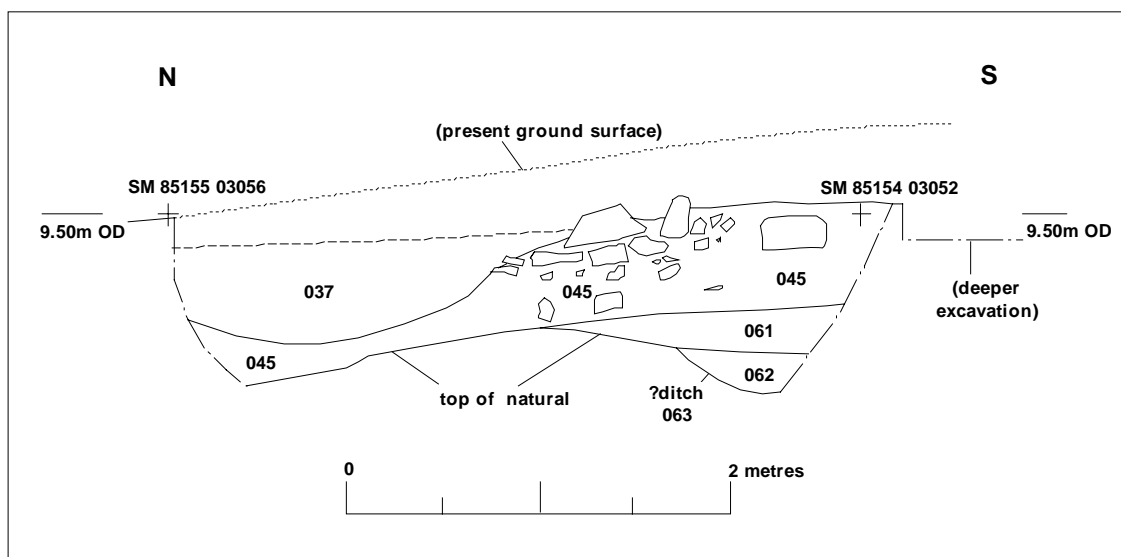


Fig. 18 - Trench 13 from the east at completion of excavation



Fig. 19 - Trench 13 from the west at completion of excavation



Fig. 20 – Trench 13: ?burial 053 from southwest



Fig. 21 - Trench 13: sondage from north, showing ditch 063 at far end



Discussion

At present, up to four groups of burials have been identified on the site. Three of them lie within the cliff-edge (nb. the third group were not identified during the evaluation and have not been precisely mapped on Fig. 2). The fourth occupies the enclosure (T13). The nature of the 'platform' and features investigated in T1 cannot, at present, be determined. There are three possible interpretations -

- 1 - that the burial groups represent zoned areas of the same cemetery
- 2 - that they are the eroding edges of a cemetery which was not zoned but uniformly spread throughout the field
- 3 - that they are the remains of more than one cemetery, in use at different times.

The enclosure (T13)

The burials in T13 were seen to occupy one quadrant of an oval enclosure, represented by a stony bank. All five certain burials may have been cist burials, but were in the main badly disturbed. Nevertheless, it seems that the majority comprised lintel-slabs, side-slabs and end-slabs, but no base-slabs. One burial, 066, may only have comprised lintel slabs. Some of the six possible graves may represent dug-graves. However, in all cases, grave cuts were extremely difficult to discern, due partly to later disturbance but also probably due to the nature of their fills. It is not known for sure whether the displacement of the burials is entirely due to plough damage or whether other factors have been involved.

Cist 056 was of much better construction than the remainder, with semi-'dressed' slabs, possibly imported. It lacked both lintel-slabs and any trace of an inhumation. It is possible that it represented a high-status individual whose remains were exhumed for reburial, or possibly even for display. Samples were taken from the grave bottom for phosphate analysis, a method which tests for phosphate traces of human bone. This may reveal whether a burial was ever present in the grave.

It was noticeable that only the two excavated burials furthest away from the enclosure bank were orientated properly east-west. The remainder followed the arc of the bank to run southwest-northeast, suggesting that available space within the enclosure was limited when they were excavated.

Radiocarbon dates of Cal AD 720-740, and Cal AD 760-960, at 2 sigma range, were obtained from burial 040, which cut the enclosure bank (see Appendix, Lab. No. 2082 67). The bank material 045 appeared to be derived from an earlier cemetery, possibly ditched, and contained human bone fragments. A radiocarbon date of Cal AD 780-980, at 2 sigma range, was obtained from these fragments (see Appendix, Lab. No. 2082 68). The discrepancy is notable, but may not be of great concern. The sample from 045 was very small, while the unreliability of early medieval radiocarbon dates, particularly from the early part of the period, has been remarked upon (Petts 2002, 27).

All burials within the enclosure appear to have been small, with regard to their cuts (where discernible), the cists themselves (where complete) and, where bone survived to any meaningful degree, the skeletons themselves. This suggests that those observed may represent infant burials. Given that they occupy the latest horizon encountered within the enclosure, it may be that they represent the re-use of the enclosure as a *cilleen*, or infant burial ground, as occurred in otherwise disused cemeteries in early medieval Ireland and elsewhere (Page forthcoming).

Just how the burials within the enclosure relate chronologically to the cliff-face burials is, until dating evidence is obtained, uncertain, but the sequence may be – Phase 1 – unenclosed burials in an open field. These may include the cliff-face burials, which may represent the desire to be buried in ‘wild, isolated places’ that characterises early post-Roman burial in other parts of western Britain (Preston-Jones 1992, 122)

Phase 2 - formalised burial plot established inland, enclosed by a ditch?

Phase 3 - boundary bank constructed over this ditch, from earth derived from the Phase 2 cemetery, redefining the cemetery site and disturbing earlier burials

A fourth phase might be represented by the establishment of St Anthony's Chapel, which was not identified, but may lie within the enclosure just to the north of the evaluation trench.

A similar small oval enclosure was noted around the late medieval chapel at St Justinian's, St Davids, in 2001 (Ludlow 2002). Nevertheless, St Justinians lies within the Lordship of Pebidiog which was held, largely under Welsh tenure, by the Bishops of St Davids and which constituted a ritual landscape of pilgrimage and devotional chapels (James 1993). Its origins may be early medieval, but its cult associations persisted into the late medieval period when the present chapel was built. Angle was, by contrast, an Anglicised lordship in which a Anglo-Norman church had been established, by the late 12th century at least, within a contemporary planted settlement (just east of West Angle Bay at NGR 8663 0290) - a church which had become parochial by 1291 at least (Ludlow 2000). Quite how a native cemetery site would have fitted within the Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical framework, to the extent that it was (re-)used as a late medieval chapel, is unknown, but the presence of another possible early medieval ecclesiastical site in the parish, re-used for a later chapel site (St Mary's Chapel), is of note. Perhaps the chapel was founded within the cemetery after a long period of disuse (a disuse also suggested by the possible use of the enclosure as a *cilleen*), but whilst a tradition of sanctity was still attached to the site. There is no suggestion that any contemporary burial was associated with the late medieval chapel and indeed, burial at West Angle would be unlikely during the later medieval period, when sole burial rights were exercised by the parish church.

A closer parallel may be furnished by Porth Clew Chapel, in Lamphey parish in South Pembrokeshire (Ludlow 2002). Here, as at Angle, a late medieval chapel was erected over the site of a cist cemetery, within a similar Anglo-Norman lordship (albeit also held by the Bishops of St Davids). So far, no dating evidence has been obtained from the cists. However, they are unlikely to be post-Conquest – native burial practices would doubtless have been among the first casualties of the Anglicisation of the lordship – and so it may be that, as at Angle, a chapel was erected over a site with a tradition, though long-abandoned, of sanctity.

The remainder of the site

Returning to West Angle, none of the bone from the burials eroding from the cliff-top has been dated. Furthermore, the nature of the group at the end of the promontory, at NGR SM 8502 0312, is unknown. They appear to be very small and aligned north-south. Are they all infant burials? It was common practice for unbaptised infants to be buried on unconsecrated ground, and not necessarily oriented, well into the historic period (Page forthcoming). However, the possibility of the enclosure having been used as a *cilleen* has been raised above, and it may be that these burials are earlier than those to the east, from a period before the Christian burial rite had become formalised (Dr John Blair, *pers. comm.*).

The absence of burials in any of the trenches between the cliff edge and T13 suggests that the cists currently eroding from the cliff-edge may be the last remnants of the open cemetery. However, it may be that more burials are present on the periphery of the field, but were not encountered. Nevertheless, it is of note that evaluation work undertaken at the eroding cliff-edge cemetery at Longoar Bay, St Ishmaels, on the opposite side of the Haven, yielded only two burials (Ludlow 2005). So perhaps these coastal cemeteries do represent a diminishing, and threatened, cultural resource.

The results of the evaluation can be viewed alongside St Brides (see below) and the recent work undertaken at Longoar Bay, where cist burials were encountered but where no firm evidence for an ecclesiastical enclosure has yet come to light. Taken together, the work has, if anything, revealed how little we still know of these individual sites, and how little we know of Pembrokeshire coastal cemeteries generally. Not one has been investigated in enough detail to provide a clear picture of its form and development, and no one site can – on present knowledge – be said to represent a type with which other sites can be compared. Much investigative work, both intrusive and geophysical, still needs to be undertaken.

Note - A number of samples were taken for palaeoenvironmental analysis. One of the requirements for the Cadw's contribution to the project was that this work would be undertaken by Astrid Caseldine of the University of Wales, Lampeter, as part of Cadw's environmental programme. This means that the analysis, and any radiocarbon dating of the samples, will not be undertaken until the 2006-7 financial year. The phosphate samples taken from cist 056 will be analysed as part of the same programme.

ST BRIDES RECORDING

A smaller project was undertaken at St Brides (NGR SM 8021 1094). Here a cemetery, comprising both cist- and dug-graves, is eroding out from the low coastal Old Red Sandstone cliffs on the east side of St Brides Haven, to the north of St Brides parish church (Figs. 23 and 25). A cist burial exposed in 1985 gave a radiocarbon date of 950 +/- 70 AD. A dug grave gave a recent date.

St Brides Church, the fabric of which is 14th century at the earliest, was listed in the Taxatio of 1291 (Record Commission 1802), when it was already dedicated to the 'Celtic' St Fraed (ie. St Bridget). It was possibly mentioned in an early 13th century source, as rendering a pension to Ewenny Priory, Glamorgan (Conway Davies 1946, 336). There are no known earlier documentary references. However a Group I inscribed stone, of probable 5th-7th century date (PRN 46854) was located on the shore, within the vicinity of the church, in c.1700 (Edwards forthcoming); it was subsequently lost. The present square, regular churchyard (PRN 27990), which may be post-medieval or late medieval, partly overlies the east half of a curving cropmark, running up to the HWM of St Brides Haven, visible on aerial photographs (Fig. 22). The cropmark describes a semicircle with a north-south diameter of c.70m, and appears to continue beneath the churchyard. It may former have formed a complete circle, part of the projected northern arc of which may have been lost to marine erosion. St Brides Church would appear to lie outside, or perhaps on the very periphery of, the enclosure. The enclosure would then appear to predate the church/churchyard. The topography and location argue against an iron age origin, and it probably belongs to an early medieval ecclesiastical site that is suspected in the vicinity.

The cist cemetery lies 50m to the north of the churchyard and would appear to lie beyond the projected enclosure, if it was circular, but may have occupied further enclosures or perhaps a concentric outer enclosure, hitherto unidentified but possibly also occupied by St Brides Church. It was associated with a medieval chapelry (PRN 3138) which, like the cemetery, was recorded by Edward Lhuyd in c.1700 (RCAHM 1925, 318); the remains of the chapel were still visible in 1833 (Lewis 1833), but it had been lost to coastal erosion by the late 19th century. The chapel appears to have been late medieval, but its association with the early medieval cemetery suggests earlier origins. Either the parish church, or the chapel, may have originated as a *capel-y-bedd*, ie. a late medieval chapel over an early medieval founder's grave. Possibly the status of 'primary church' switched from one site to the other during the pre- or post-Conquest period; in fact, it is possible that a building formerly occupied the centre of the enclosure, visible as an irregular rectangular cropmark on the aerial photo. At any rate, it was clearly a multiple church site.

Cists were observed eroding from the cliff-edge in 1985, when the radiocarbon date was obtained. The cemetery was visited in November 2002. The soilmarks of two, possibly three dug graves, and the slabs of a possible cist, were visible in the cliff section immediately north of restored limekiln PRN 23815, immediately west of the path between the village and Cliff Cottages (Fig. 25). The surface has been altered by the construction of the limekiln, obscuring earlier features, while there are the remains of a pond to the east of the track; burials may lie beneath both features. A low, raised platform is apparent immediately northwest of the limekiln, but this probably does not represent the site of chapel 3138 which, according to the sources, will have weathered out entirely. The graves were actively eroding out in 1985 and 1987, but the erosion appeared, in 2002, to be stable. However, at least five burials, and three further dug features that may represent further burials, were visible in 2005. In addition, the soil that is cut by the burials may represent the disturbed fills of further graves.

Fig. 22 - Aerial view of St Brides, from the southwest, showing the parish church and churchyard, the possible enclosure (arrowed), and the site of the cemetery (on the cliff edge left of frame)



*Fig. 23 - St Brides cemetery site, from the west (left of the limekiln at centre).
The parish church and churchyard are at right of frame*



Fig. 24 - St Brides: location plan of cemetery

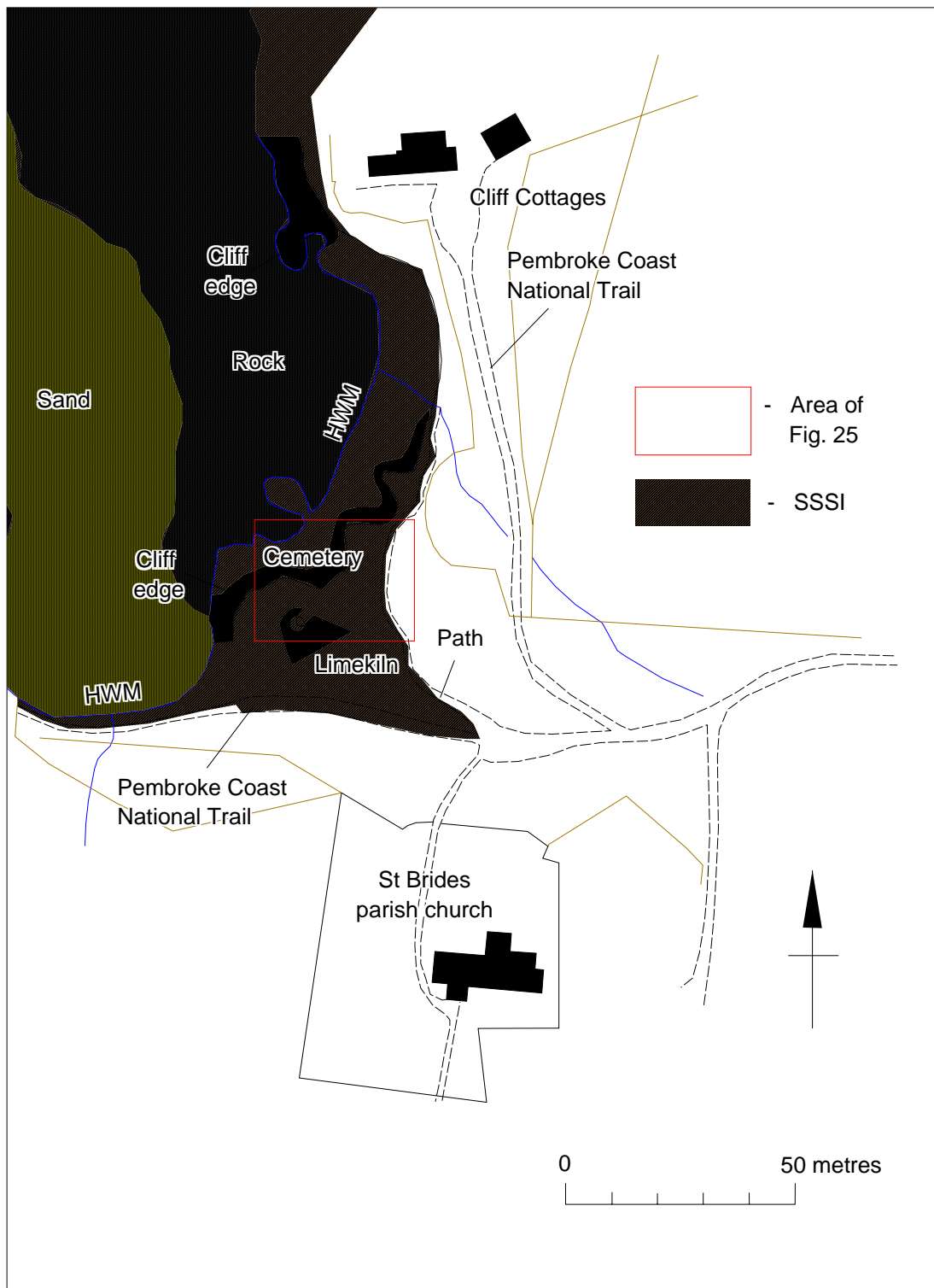
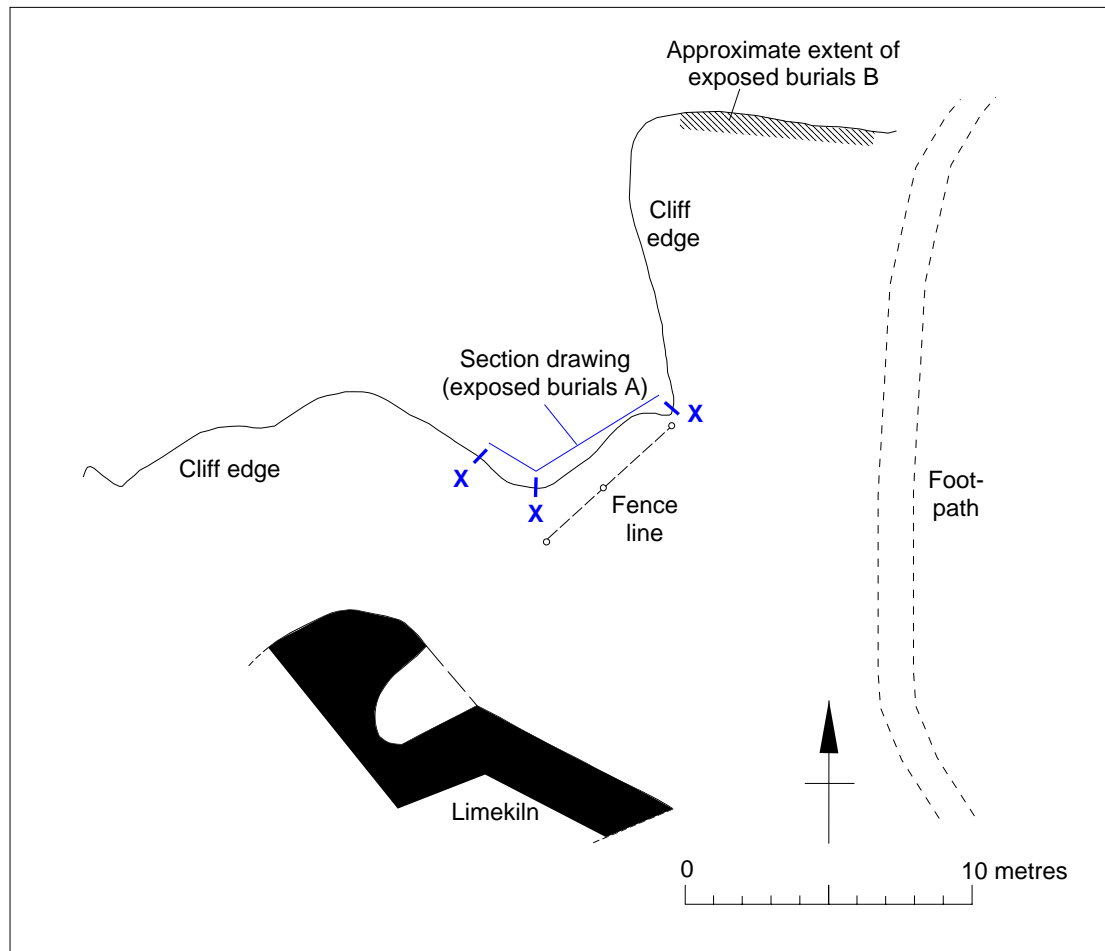


Fig. 25 - St Brides: plan of cliff-top showing location of burials and line of section drawing (X-X-X)



The clifftop at St Brides is, as at West Angle, occupied by the Pembrokeshire Coast Path and there are several other constraints. The entire area is a SSSI. The cliff edge has been altered by the construction of a limekiln obscuring earlier features, while there are the remains of a pond to the east of the path; burials may lie beneath both features. A low, raised platform is apparent immediately northwest of the limekiln, but this probably does not represent the site of the chapel that, according to the sources, will have weathered out entirely. The programme at St Brides was therefore envisaged as comprising just one, or at most two trenches to try to establish the extent of the cemetery. The burials would only be excavated if time permitted. The same general methodologies would apply, but it was not anticipated that any human remains would be taken off of the site.

In the event, time constraints meant that it was not possible to undertake any intrusive work. Instead the known burials, which lie at NGR SM 80210 10942, were drawn in plan and section, relative to fixed points, and photographed (Figs. 25–27, Burials A). They were seen to be intercut, with at least two and possibly three episodes of burial. In addition, it was observed that weathering of vegetation had revealed at least five more burials, also intercut, 8m to the northeast at NGR SM 80213 10944 (Figs. 28 and 29, Burials B). It is hoped that a future project can investigate all these burials more thoroughly, and that appropriate mitigation strategies can be drawn up. Again, understanding of the development of this site-type is crucial in both Wales and beyond.

Fig. 26 - St Brides: Section drawing X-X-X of the known group of burials at NGR SM 80210 10942 (Burials A), facing southeast

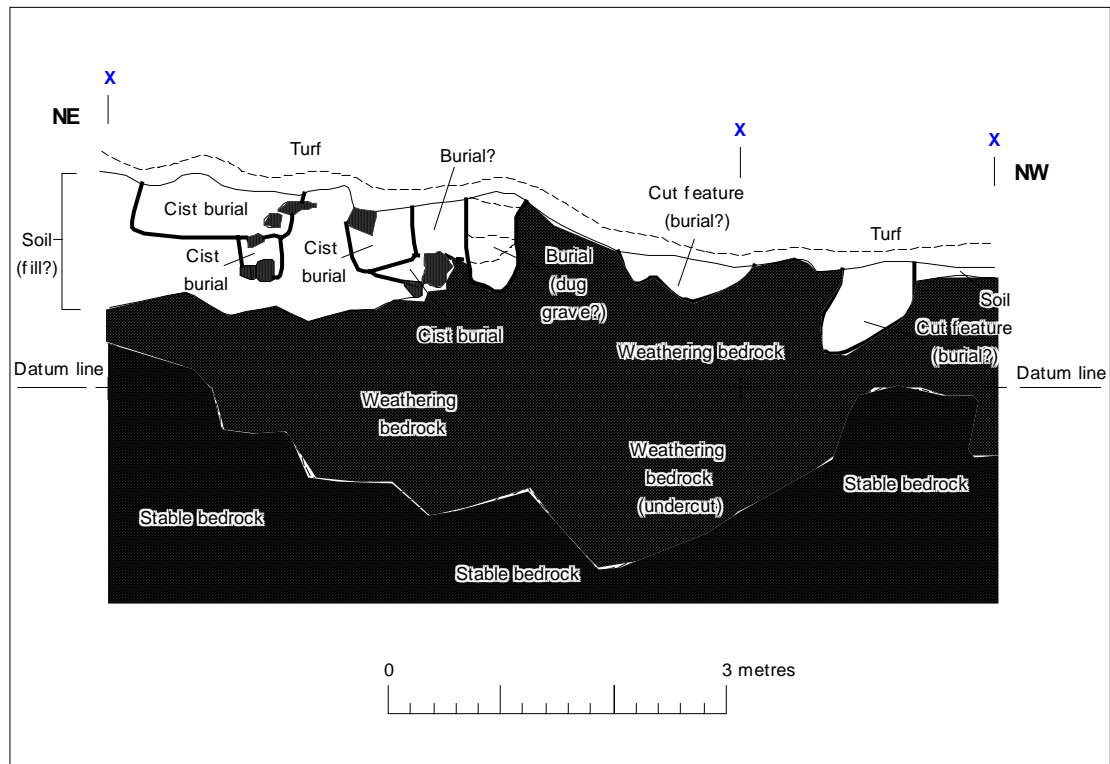


Fig. 27 - St Brides: the five known burials at NGR SM 80210 10942 (Burials A), from the northwest

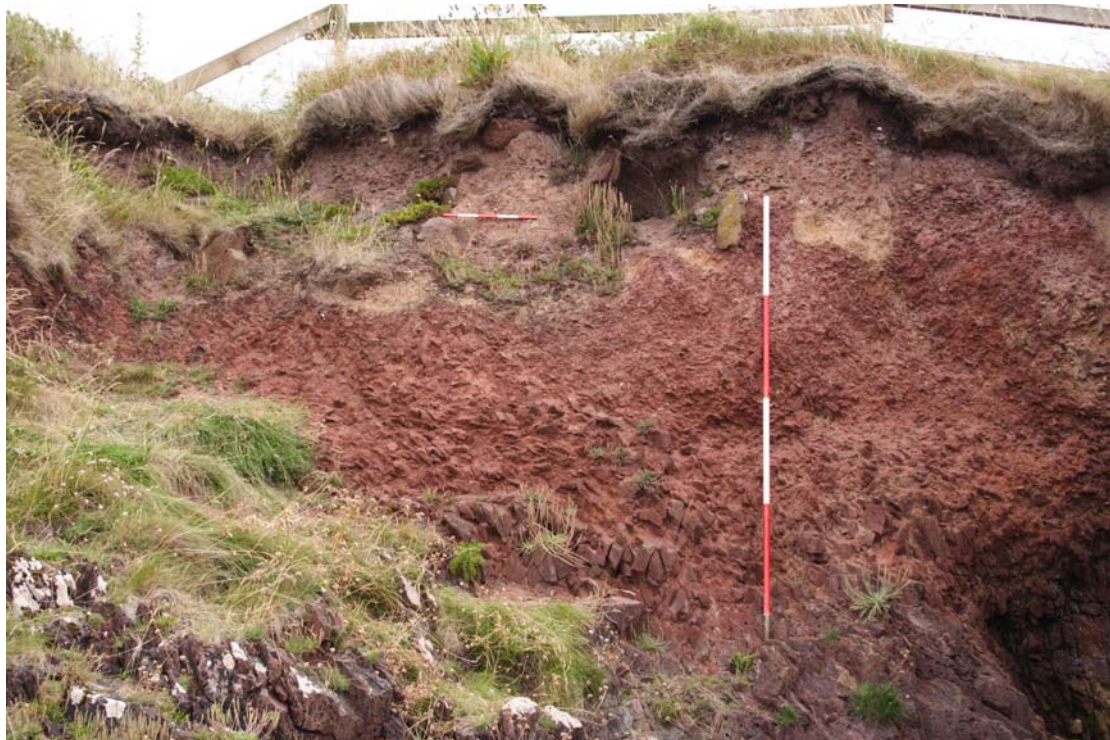


Fig. 28 - St Brides: east side of the newly-discovered group of burials, at NGR SM 80213 10944 (Burials B), from the north



Fig. 29 - St Brides: west side of the newly-discovered group of burials, at NGR SM 80213 10944 (Burials B), from the north



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CALIBRATION OF RADIOCARBON AGE TO CALENDAR YEARS

(Variables: C13/C12=-20.4:lab. mult=1)

Laboratory number: Beta-208267

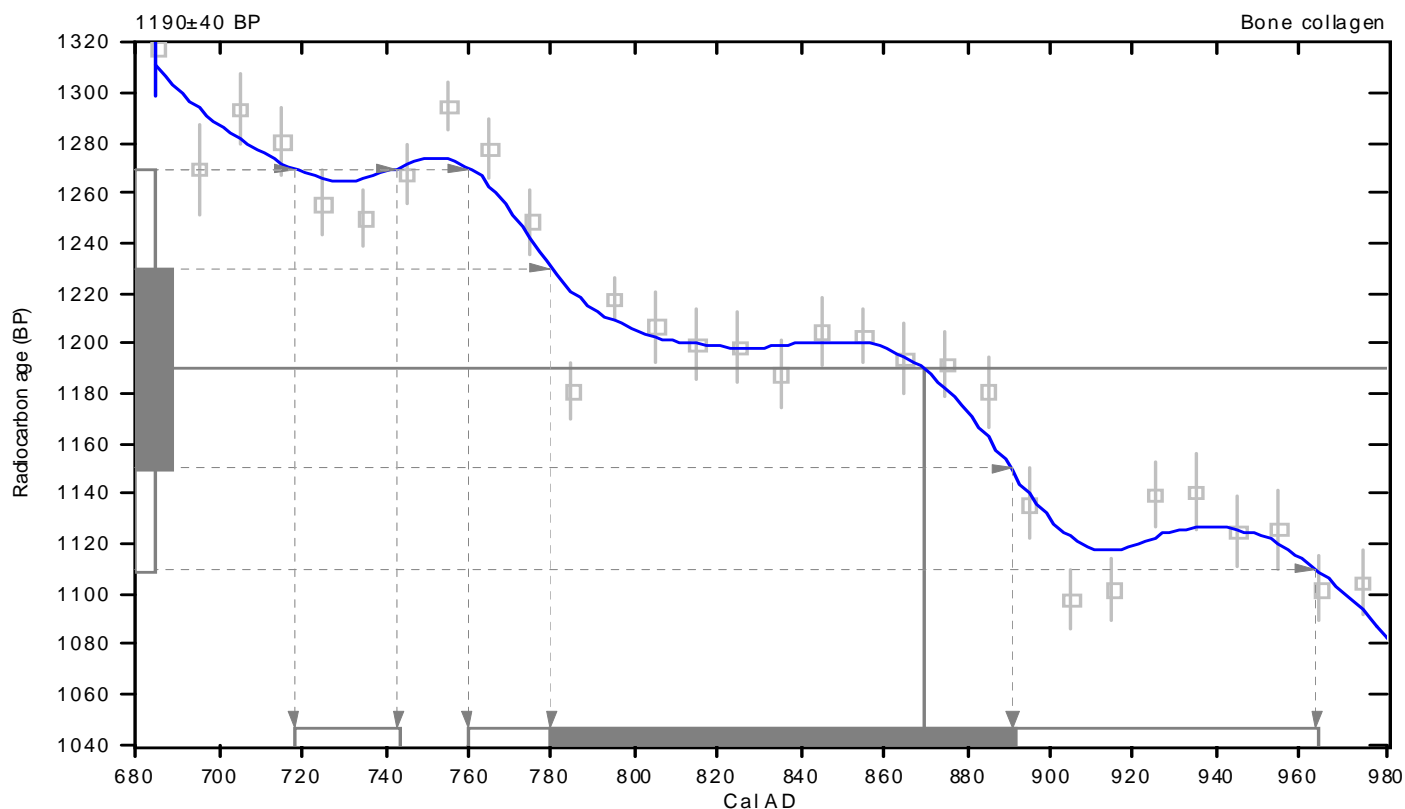
Conventional radiocarbon age: 1190±40 BP

**2 Sigma calibrated results: Cal AD 720 to 740 (Cal BP 1230 to 1210) and
(95% probability) Cal AD 760 to 960 (Cal BP 1190 to 990)**

Intercept data

Intercept of radiocarbon age
with calibration curve: Cal AD 870 (Cal BP 1080)

**1 Sigma calibrated result: Cal AD 780 to 890 (Cal BP 1170 to 1060)
(68% probability)**



References:

Database used

INTCAL98

Calibration Database

Editorial Comment

Stuiver, M., van der Plicht, H., 1998, Radiocarbon 40(3), pxii-xiii

INTCAL98 Radiocarbon Age Calibration

Stuiver, M., et. al., 1998, Radiocarbon 40(3), p1041-1083

Mathematics

A Simplified Approach to Calibrating C14 Dates

Talma, A. S., Vogel, J. C., 1993, Radiocarbon 35(2), p317-322

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CALIBRATION OF RADIOCARBON AGE TO CALENDAR YEARS

(Variables: C13/C12=-14.3:lab. mult=1)

Laboratory number: Beta-208268

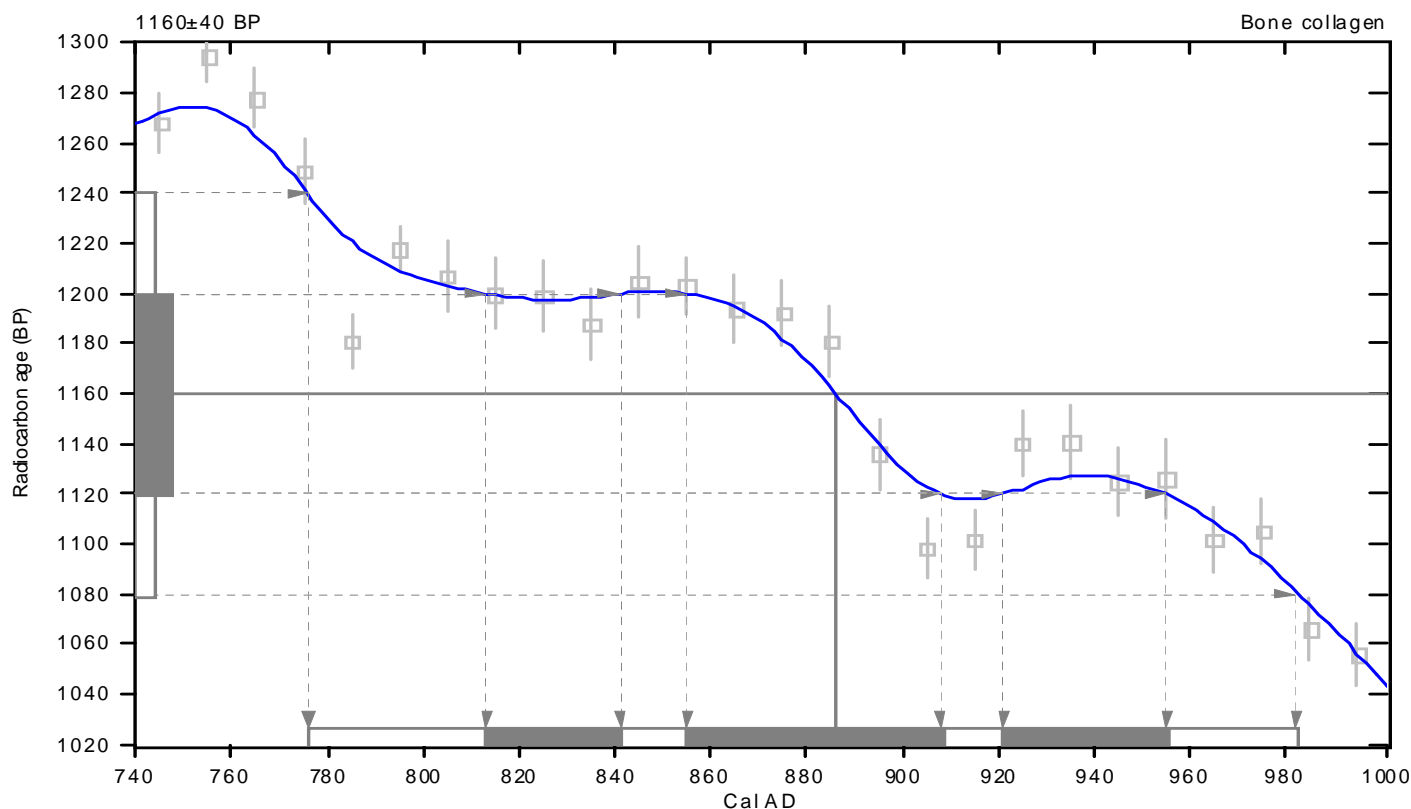
Conventional radiocarbon age: 1160±40 BP

**2 Sigma calibrated result: Cal AD 780 to 980 (Cal BP 1170 to 970)
(95% probability)**

Intercept data

Intercept of radiocarbon age
with calibration curve: Cal AD 890 (Cal BP 1060)

1 Sigma calibrated results: Cal AD 810 to 840 (Cal BP 1140 to 1110) and
(68% probability) Cal AD 860 to 910 (Cal BP 1100 to 1040) and
Cal AD 920 to 960 (Cal BP 1030 to 1000)



References:

Database used

INTCAL98

Calibration Database

Editorial Comment

Stuiver, M., van der Plicht, H., 1998, Radiocarbon 40(3), pxi-xiii

INTCAL98 Radiocarbon Age Calibration

Stuiver, M., et. al., 1998, Radiocarbon 40(3), p1041-1083

Mathematics

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