LAND AT BRYN HIR, TENBY, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

September 2006

Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Pembrokeshire County Council

REGISTERED ORGANISATION IFA

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

REPORT NO. 2006/114
PROJECT RECORD NO. 62157

October 2006

LAND AT BRYN HIR, TENBY, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

By

Richard Ramsey

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: cambria@cambria.org.uk
Website: www.cambria.org.uk

LAND AT BRYN HIR, TENBY, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

REPORT NUMBER 2006/114

October 2006

This report has been prepared by R Ramsey

Position: Archaeologist

Signature ..... Date 25/10/2006

This report has been checked and approved by K Murphy

on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position: Principal Archaeologist

Signature ..... Date 25/10/2006

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report

LAND AT BRYN HIR, TENBY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

Proposals by Pembrokeshire County Council to develop land at Bryn Hir, Tenby (NGR SN 1268 0173) led to an archaeological assessment and geophysical survey being undertaken at the site, and the results of those in turn led to the recommendation that an archaeological evaluation be carried out.

The evaluation excavations revealed archaeological features in the locations identified by the geophysical survey. Trackways, field boundaries, and a potential building platform were among the archaeological features and deposits that were recorded.

Amongst its conclusions the report suggests that archaeological mitigation may be required in those areas that contain archaeological features, unless they can be excluded from any development proposals.

INTRODUCTION

Following on from the findings of the commissioned archaeological assessment and geophysical survey undertaken by Cambria Archaeology field services on land at Bryn Hir, Tenby (NGR SN 1268 0173) during February and March this year (Page 2006), Pembrokeshire County Council are continuing to take forward plans to develop residential sites at Lady Hill Park, Upper Hill Park and Sperricomb Lane.

As archaeological advisors to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Cambria Archaeology Heritage Management recommended that, in view of the potential impact of development on the archaeological resource, an archaeological field evaluation would be required prior to the determination of a planning application. This is in line with Government policy as contained in Planning Policy Wales, March 2002, Section 6.5, and Welsh Office Circular 60/96 – *'Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology'* paragraphs 11, 12, 13 and 14*.*

Pembrokeshire County Council commissioned Cambria Archaeology field services to carry out the archaeological evaluation in September 2006.

The scope and aims of the evaluation

The main aim of the evaluation was to more fully characterise the extent of the below ground archaeological resource, or potential resource, that had been identified during the assessment and geophysical survey as lying within the proposed development area.

The project was also aimed at providing enough information on the archaeological resource to enable assessment of the likely impact of the development proposals on that resource, and to help inform future management decisions in areas that may require further archaeological work.

It is important to realise, however, that the trial excavations only represent a small percentage of the whole development area and that even though their choice of location was well informed their scope is somewhat limited.

Report outline

This report briefly describes the physical environment of the area before detailing the results of the evaluation excavations. The likely impacts of the development proposals are discussed and recommendations for further archaeological works are given. Detailed descriptions of the total known archaeological resource can be found in the previous assessment report (Page, 2006).

Abbreviations used in this report

Any references to sites in the text that are recorded on the county Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). References to cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets throughout the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the rear of the report.

THE EVALUATION AREA

The Bryn Hir development site (Fig. 1) occupies *c.*10ha (*c.*25 acres) of farmland centred on NGR SN12700175. The plot is irregular and defined by existing roads and trackways on its east and west side and by the Lady Hill housing development and an existing field boundary on its south side. The north end is formed by an existing field boundary.

The site is divided into three areas by Sperricomb Lane, which enters the site from the northwest and runs southeast to a point at NGR SN12710168 before turning northeast and running to the northeast edge of the site. Another lane, Blind Lane, runs south from the point at which Sperricomb lane changes direction. Slippery Back cycle way forms the eastern boundary to Upper Hill Park.

Topographically, the area slopes down to the south and southwest from high ground in the north with commanding views towards Caldey Island and Tenby from the slope of Upper Hill Park. All three areas are currently under pasture, but have been ploughed in the past.

The solid geology is represented by Millstone Grit shales from the Upper Carboniferous period. No drift deposits have been recorded for this area, and the soils are typical brown earths from the Neath association (British Geological Survey, 1994).

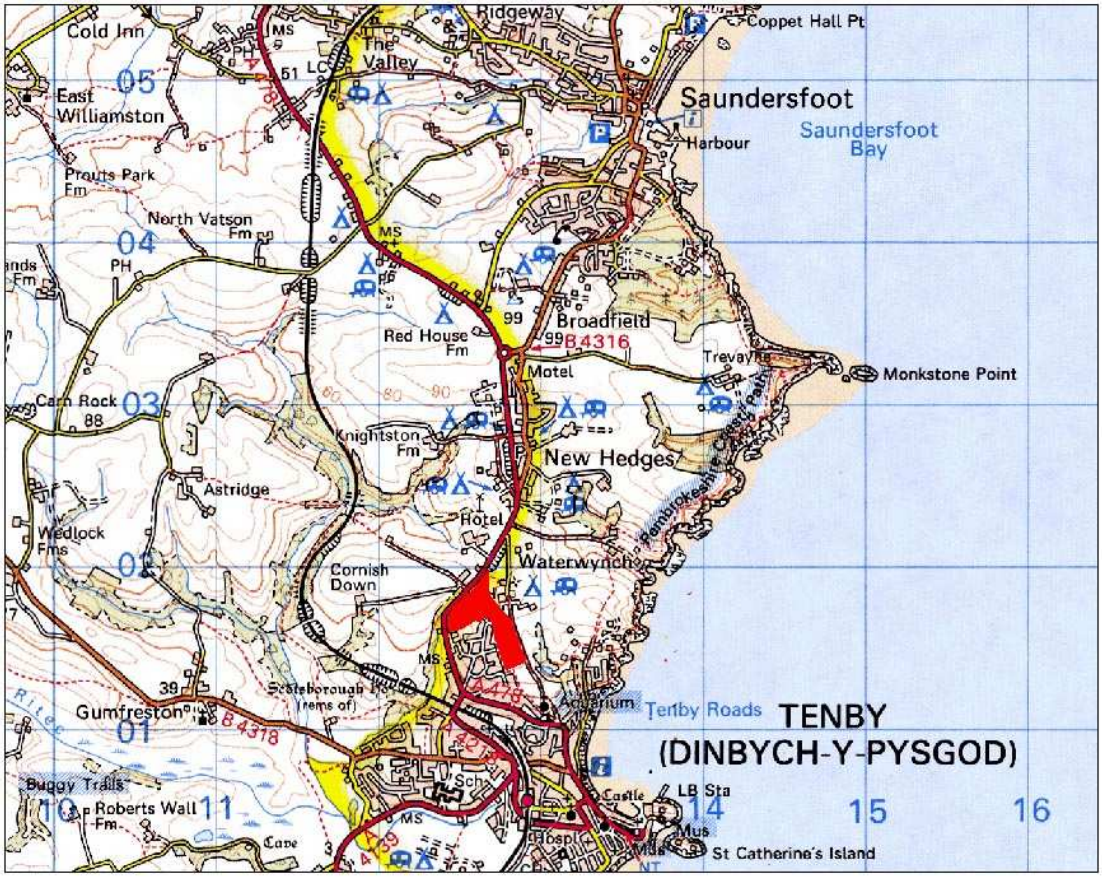

Figure 1: Location map of proposed development area on the north edge of Tenby

METHODOLOGY

Nine trenches (Fig.2) of varying size were excavated using a JCB with a toothless grading bucket. In all trenches the turf and ploughsoil were removed by machine down to, at least, the top of the natural subsoil. Where archaeological features or deposits were revealed they were cleaned by hand, photographed, drawn to scale and then either wholly excavated or test excavated to establish as far as possible their true character. During excavation all revealed deposits and features were described on context record forms and allocated their own individual context number. After excavation, all features were photographed again and then planned at 1:20 scale and, where relevant, sections were drawn to a scale of either 1:10 or 1:20.

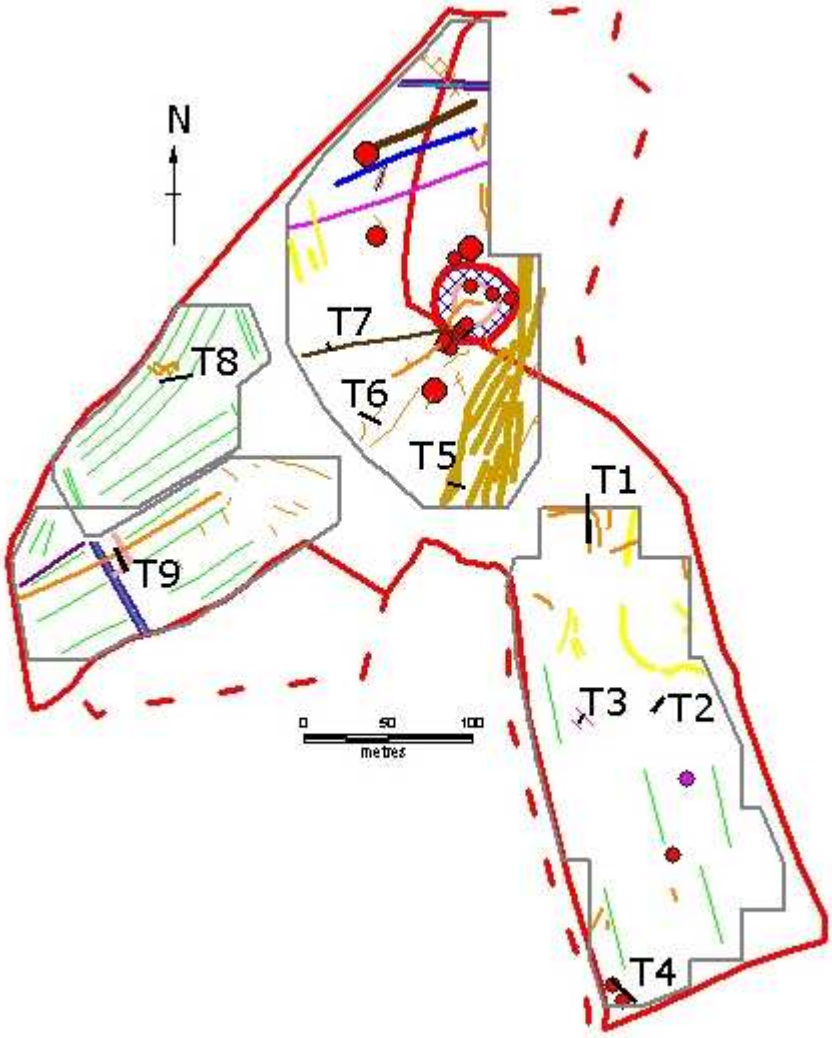

Figure 2: Location of trial trenches and plot of features identified during the geophysical survey

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

For the exact location of the excavation trenches see Figure 2.

Trench 1

This trench was located close to the northern boundary of Upper Hill Park specifically to investigate the features identified there during the geophysical survey. The anomalies recorded here during the geophysical survey appear to indicate the presence of an enclosure that may be associated with the remains of a row of cottages, Upper Windmill Park (PRN 56481). The trench measured 28.0m by 1.6m, aligned north-south, and was positioned as near as possible to the location of the recorded anomalies. Removal of the turf and ploughsoil, average depth 0.30m, revealed two linear features (Fig.3). A 1.46m wide ditch (context 103) was cut into the natural subsoil to an average depth of 0.19m and located some 11.0m south of the north end of the excavation trench (Plates 1 & 2). The ditch, aligned east to west, had parallel gently sloping sides and continued beyond both edges of the excavation. It was filled with a friable orange brown silty clay soil containing less than 5% coarse components of shattered shale, the occasional fragment of coal and several sherds of pottery of late medieval or early post-medieval date (context 104). It is likely that this feature relates to one of the linear anomalies identified during the geophysical survey that was tentatively interpreted as a former boundary ditch.

An irregular linear feature (context 108) aligned NNW-SSE was revealed in the subsoil extending from beyond the northern end of the excavation for some 10.60m before continuing beyond the east side of the trench (Plate 3). The sides of this feature were sloping fairly uniformly at 45 degrees, although it varied in width along its length, and its average depth was 0.12m. Three test pits were excavated at discrete intervals along the length of this feature and all showed a uniform fill (contexts 105, 106 and 107) consisting of a greyish brown silty clay soil containing 10% small to medium size angular shale fragments, occasional coal fragments, many fragments of shattered glass and pottery (2%), oyster shells, and one flake of flint. The potsherds were of varying dates from post-medieval to Victorian. The ploughsoil (context 101) contained similar proportions of coarse components and finds to the fill of 108. This feature may represent an informal trodden access path leading to and from the settlement of Upper Windmill Park.

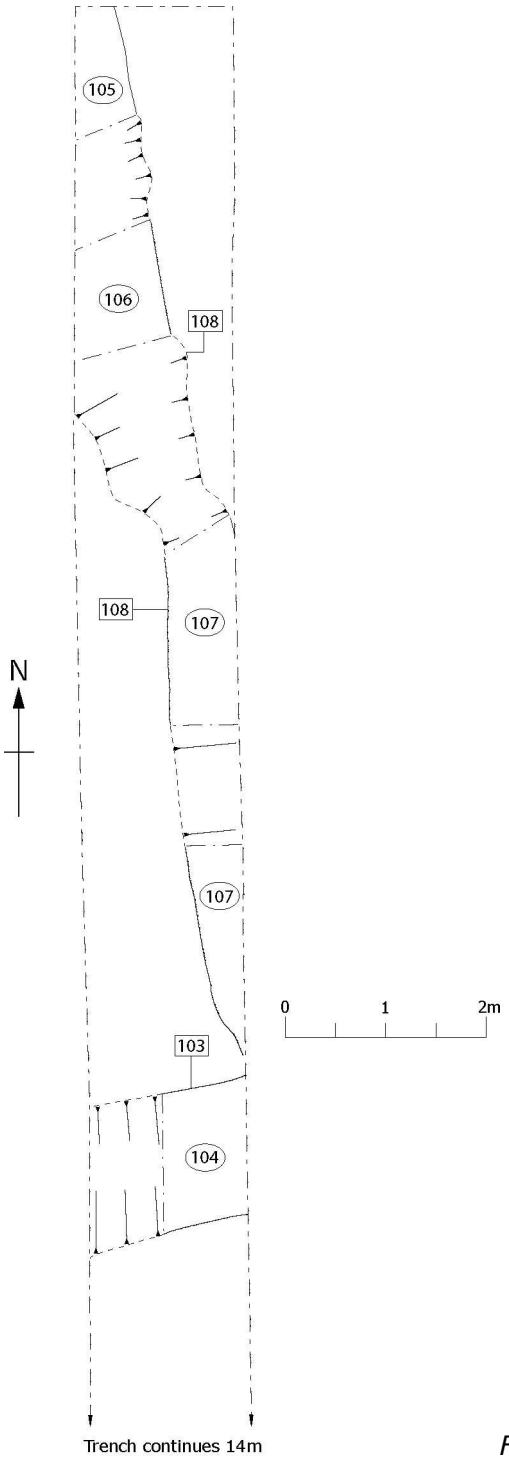

Figure 3: North end of Trench 1

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned roughly northeast - southwest and measured 10.70m by 1.80m. A linear feature (context 203) crossing the trench from east to west, 0.55m wide and 0.47m deep with irregular steep sides, was revealed in the bedrock some 3.65m north of the southerly end of the excavation. The fill was a compact friable silty clay soil containing 30% angular shale fragments. There were a few fragments of charcoal present in the upper part of the fill and a small fragment of flint. The feature had the appearance of a naturally occurring fissure in the bedrock, however the presence of charcoal and the flint flake in the fill leave open the possibility that this could be archaeologically significant. Further investigation will be required to resolve this question. The only geophysical

survey evidence for this part of the site showed anomalies that may be interpreted as likely geological features.

Trench 3

This small trench, measuring 6.0m by 1.7m, was positioned to test the character of two parallel linear anomalies identified during the geophysical survey and also a hollow shown on the Ordnance Survey first edition 6 inch map. Removal of 0.25m of turf and ploughsoil revealed a deposit of dark brown silty clay soil containing a mix of large stones, glass bottles and pottery fragments which together made up 60% of the deposit. All the pottery and bottle fragments were of 19th century or early to mid 20th century date. Other than this rubbish dump no other features were noted in this trench. A representative sample of the glass and pottery from the dump material was retained.

Trench 4

This trench, which measured 19.5m by 1.6m, was positioned in the southwest corner of Upper Hill Park at the southern edge of the proposed development area. Two 'spike' anomalies interpreted as possible pits, and a linear feature were identified here during the geophysical survey. Removal of the turf and topsoil, average depth 0.25m, revealed only shattered shale bedrock with no intervening deposits. No archaeological features were seen to cut the degrading natural bedrock. It seems likely that the linear feature identified here during the geophysical survey is geological or geomorphological rather than archaeological, although nothing specific was observed during the excavation. The two pit-like features may have avoided detection because of the limited extent of the trial trench, and could be just beyond either side of the north-south aligned excavation.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was positioned to evaluate the series of strong and intensive linear anomalies identified here during the geophysical survey and interpreted as former trackways. The trench measured 9.5m by 1.7m and was aligned roughly east - west. Removal of the turf and topsoil to an average depth of 0.30m revealed two linear features (Fig.4) cut or eroded into the very compact light orange clay subsoil.

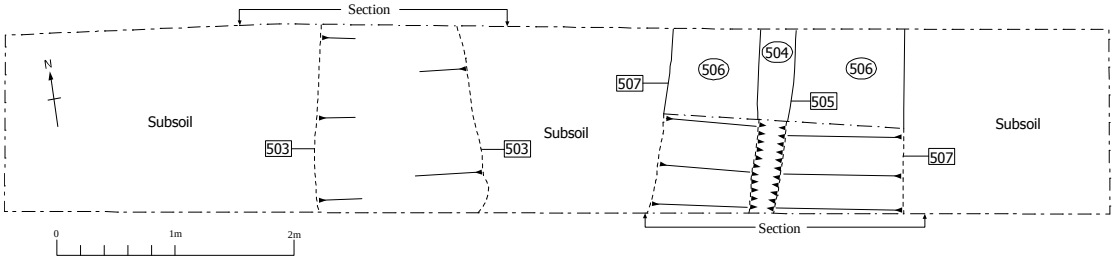

Figure 4: Plan of excavated features in Trench 5

The more easterly feature (context 507) was 2.7m wide with gently sloping sides and was 0.35m deep with a flat, slightly sloping base (Fig.5 and Plate 4). The fill of this feature (context 506) was a friable dark orange brown silty clay soil containing less than 20% small angular fragments of shale, several coal fragments, two sherds of white glazed pottery, and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe. The deposition lines observed in the section suggest a gradual silting up of this feature rather than an episode of backfilling. A vertically sided slot ditch (context 505), 0.22m wide by 0.9m deep with a flat base, had been cut through

fill 506 and the base of 507; this feature was not observed in plan until the fill of linear feature 507 had nearly all been removed during the excavations. The slot continued beyond both sides of the excavation and was dug along the centre of the base of 507. The resultant section (Fig.5) established that 505 was a later feature rather than a component part of feature 507. The fill of 505 (context 504) was differentiated from that of linear feature 507 to the extent that it contained medium sized angular shale fragments, albeit as only 3% of the coarse component total, and no finds.

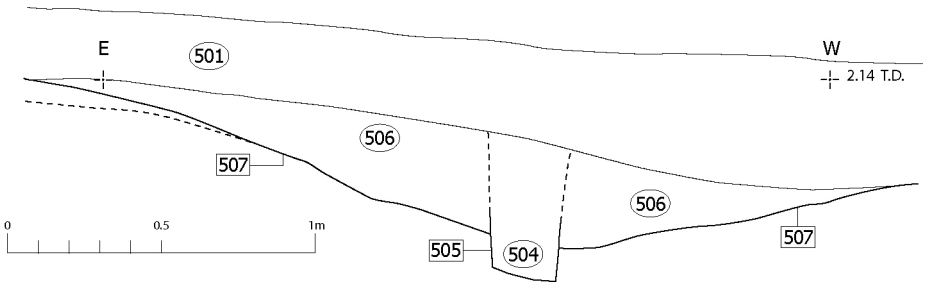

Figure 5: Section through cut feature 505 and path 507

The evidence suggests that linear feature 507 is derived from erosion, or wear, rather than being purposely cut. If it is a former path or trackway, as suggested by the geophysical survey results, then the lack of stone metalling implies informal, but frequent, use over time. The later cut feature 505 may represent part of a field drainage system, or perhaps a foundation cut for a substantial fence.

A second linear feature (context 503) was revealed 1.10m to the west of 507. This feature, 1.8m wide by 0.27m deep, was aligned north to south and continued beyond both sides of the excavation trench. During machining this feature was over-cut and only its stone filled base was seen in plan, the rest being recorded from the sections (Plate 5). The western side sloped at an angle of about 45 degrees with its east side sloping much more gently, giving a flat-based concave profile (Fig.6). The fill of this feature was a dark orange brown friable silty clay soil containing 20% small angular fragments of shale, about 2% inclusions of burnt clay and occasional charcoal fragments (context 502). The base of this feature, at the interface with the compact subsoil, was particularly stony with many of the stones pushed into the clay subsoil. It is possible that these stones acted as an *ad hoc* metalled surface, which may add credence to the interpretation of this feature as a former path or trackway.

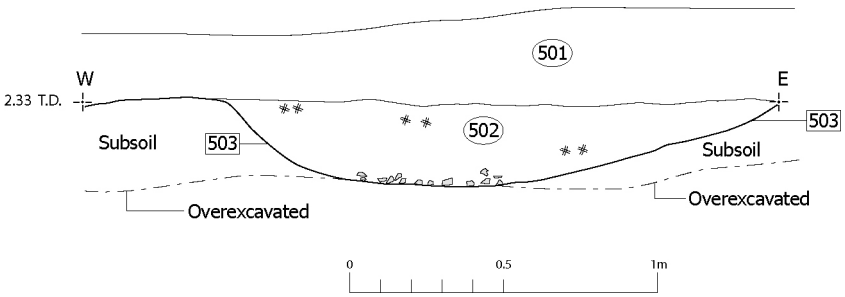

Figure 6: Section through feature 503 showing possible stone metalling on its base

Trench 6

This trench, measuring 14.0m by 1.7m, was positioned to pick up the linear anomalies identified here during the geophysical survey. The geophysics results indicated the possibility of there being below ground evidence of a former land division. Removal of the turf and topsoil, to an average depth of 0.25m, revealed an orange brown silty sandy natural subsoil containing 30% small angular fragments of shattered shale. No archaeological features or deposits were observed.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was positioned to investigate an extensive linear anomaly that runs from west - east from Sperricomb Lane to the Howell's Castle enclosure (PRN 3673), and was picked up during the geophysical survey. The excavation measured 4.75m by 1.60m and was aligned roughly southwest to northeast. The removal of turf and ploughsoil to a depth of 0.30m revealed two parallel linear ditches, 1.5m apart, cut into the shale bedrock (Fig.7)

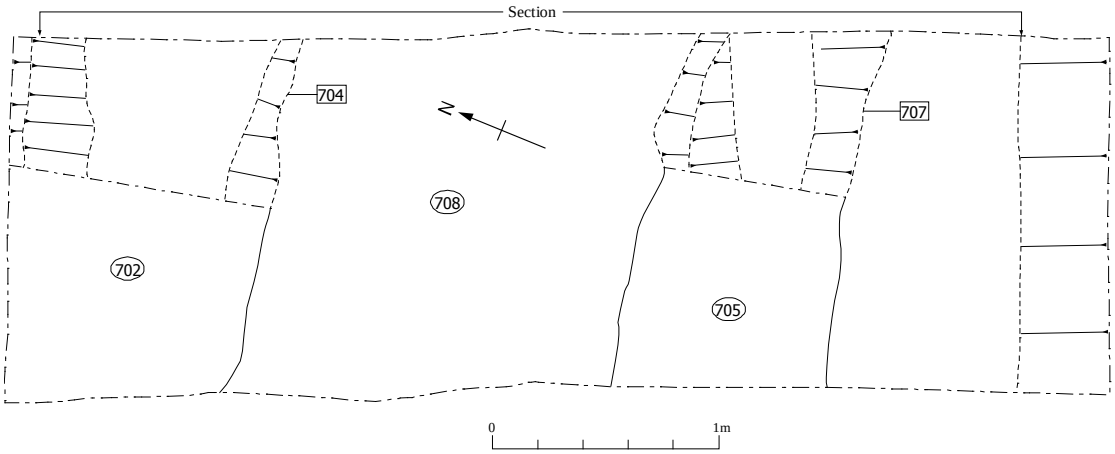

Figure 7: Features revealed in Trench 7

The ditches were aligned southwest - northeast and continued beyond both sides of the excavation. The more southerly ditch (context 707) was 0.90m wide and 0.20m deep with a concave base and sides cut at angles of about forty-five degrees. There were two distinct soil layers filling this ditch. The lower fill (context 706) was a friable orange-brown silty clay soil containing 60% small angular fragments of shattered shale and the occasional small fragment of coal. In section (Fig.8) this deposit, maximum depth 0.12m, exhibited lines of deposition that were sloping down from the western side of the ditch cut. The upper fill (context 705) was also an orange-brown silty clay soil but the percentage of coarse component shattered shale was only 10% with a small presence of coal fragments. The more northerly ditch (context 704) was at least 1.2m wide and 0.25m deep, its exact width was not established as it extended beyond the northwest end of the excavation trench but its lower northwest side was exposed and it exhibited a slope of about forty-five degrees. The southwest side of this ditch cut was almost vertical and the base was flat, although it sloped very gradually down to the west. This ditch also had two distinct soil fills both of

which mirrored the quality and angle of deposition of the fills in ditch 707 (Fig.8 and Plate 6). During the machine excavation of this trench the top of the shale bedrock separating ditches 704 and 707 was slightly over-cut, but the resultant sections showed degrading shale and the true extent of both ditches.

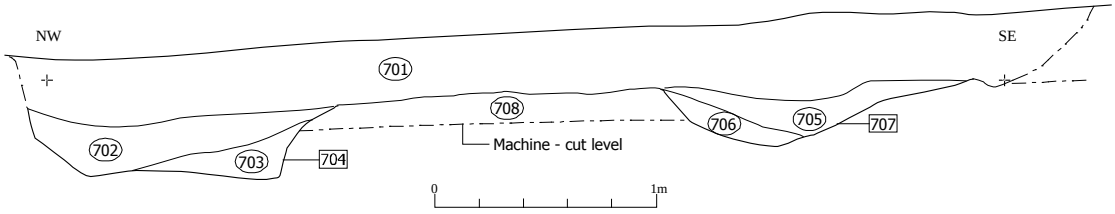

Figure 8: Sections through boundary ditches 704 and 707

The configuration of these ditches is consistent with them being interpreted as having functioned as drainage ditches positioned on either side of a former boundary bank or hedgebank. The lower fills of both ditches appear to be previously upcast bank material that had been weathered and re-deposited as a primary fill into the ditches. The upper fills of both ditches also exhibited lines of deposition but whether these represent layers of natural deposition, or tip lines is an open question. The linear anomaly identified during the geophysical survey is certainly long enough, and the correct shape, to represent a major field boundary. No field boundary is marked here on the first edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1890 or subsequent editions. No dating evidence was found in the lower fill of either ditch but two small sherds of pottery were found securely stratified within the upper fill (context 702) of ditch 704. The potsherds, one of which is green glazed, are probably mid to late medieval in date, and have been retained for further analysis.

Trench 8

This trench was positioned in an attempt to characterise anomalies that the geophysical survey identified as potentially representing a former enclosure. The trench measured 20.0m by 1.65m and was aligned east - west. Removal of an average depth of 0.25m of turf and ploughsoil revealed a mixed yellowish-orange grey compact yet friable subsoil to a depth of 0.10m. Along the length of the trench the subsoil overlay degrading shattered shale bedrock. No archaeological features were shown to cut the natural bedrock and there were no intervening archaeological features or deposits present between the ploughsoil and the natural bedrock. It is possible, or even likely, that the excavation trench was positioned too far south of the anomalies.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was positioned down-slope towards the southwest end of Lady Park at a point where the ground appears to flatten out. The geophysical survey had identified an L-shaped anomaly being crossed by a long linear anomaly here. The trench measured 15m by 1.6m, aligned northwest - southeast, and was set at a right angle to the linear anomaly and as close as possible to the assumed position of the L-shaped anomaly.

Turf and topsoil to an average depth of 0.30m was removed revealing an L-shaped ditch (context 902) cut into the degrading shale bedrock (Fig.9 and Plates 7 and 8). The ditch was 0.60m wide and 0.14m deep at the southeast end of the excavation, beyond which it continued for an unknown distance. This cut feature extended for some 6.35m into the excavation trench from the southeast on a

northwesterly alignment before appearing to turn at a near, but curving, right angle and continuing beyond the northeast side of the excavation trench. The northwest edge of the ditch, as far as it was exposed, was straight. For most of its length the presumed southwest side of the ditch was beyond the edge of the excavation trench, but was seen to become wider towards the northwest. As well as becoming wider, the ditch also became gradually deeper towards the northwest and northeast, reaching a maximum depth of 0.40m. In section the ditch had sides sloping at *c.*45 degrees and was flat bottomed. The southwest facing profile was slightly different, however, in that the bottom of the ditch was more concave. For most of its northwest-southeast length the ditch was filled solely with an homogeneous friable light orange brown silty clay soil (context 903) containing 40% small angular fragments of shale, occasional coal fragments and several sherds of pottery. At its northwest end, and where it continued beyond the edge of the excavation to the northeast, there were two distinct soil layers filling the ditch. The upper fill (context 903) overlay a friable light orange brown silty clay soil (context 908) containing 65% small angular fragments of shale and 2% medium sized rounded stones, occasional coal fragments, and some pottery. The pottery in the lower fill (context 908) has been tentatively dated as medieval and earlier than that found in the upper fill (context 903).

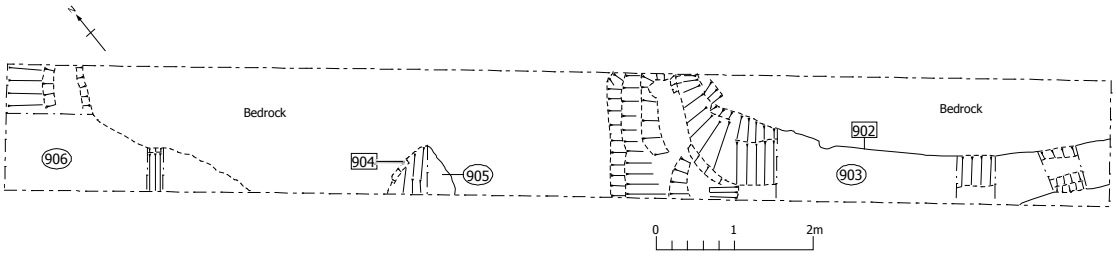

Figure 9: Plan of excavated features in Trench 9

Although the evidence is fairly sparse it is tempting to interpret the rock-cut ditch as the outer ditch of the corner of an enclosure or, given the sudden levelling of the hillslope in the vicinity, as the drainage ditch for a building platform. Further excavation is necessary before full and conclusive characterisation can be achieved.

Two other features were revealed at, and towards, the northwest end of the trench in the form of depressions in the bedrock (contexts 904 and 906), neither appeared to be archaeologically significant and they were interpreted as naturally occurring.

DISCUSSION

The results of the evaluation have shown that many of the features identified by the geophysical survey are archaeological in origin. The evaluation has revealed evidence in the form of ditches, former land boundaries and the large pottery assemblage of medieval and post-medieval settlement in many parts of the site.

The extent of settlement within the evaluation area was greater in the past with cottages at Upper Windmill Park, the possible settlement identified in Trench 9, and Sperricomb Cottage. By the time Sperricomb Cottage was constructed, sometime between 1811 and 1840, the cottages at Upper Windmill Park had been abandoned. Upper Windmill Park Cottages were shown on a 1740 plan of the area, but the possible settlement in Trench 9 was not shown, suggesting that it had been abandoned by the mid-18th century.

The sunken tracks excavated in Trench 5 were part of what the geophysics survey revealed to be an extensive system of braided tracks leading up the hill past the Howell's Castle earthwork. This system of braided tracks is typical of informal routes on sloping ground that is liable to become wet and slippery, with new paths being made when old paths became too wet or rutted. The stones in base of track 503 in trench 5 appeared to have been laid in an effort to overcome this problem by creating a solid metalled surface. They are components of a route leading from the coast and town at Tenby (although their origins are probably prehistoric and therefore considerably predate the town) that is now partly maintained and formalised in Blind Lane.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation trenches were successful in revealing the potential archaeological features identified during the geophysical survey. Indeed, the results of the evaluation show very positively the value of geophysical survey as a technique for identifying the presence of below ground features whether they are archaeological or geological.

In all the trenches where definite archaeological features were revealed it is remarkable how very close to the surface they lay, being on average not much deeper than 0.30m and lying at the base of the ploughsoil at its interface with the natural subsoil. This, of course, has implications for any future building development at the site and its impact on the archaeological resource. Only the most shallow of groundworks would have no destructive effects and even simple turf and topsoil stripping would reveal archaeological features where anomalies have been identified.

Enough of the archaeological resource was revealed during the evaluation to negate the need for further evaluation. The results of this evaluation have shown that the geophysical survey results for the Bryn Hir site are a very good guide to below ground features and deposits and should development at the site go ahead use can be made of both sets of results to develop a programme of mitigation.

It is suggested that specific features, for example the potential building platform or enclosure revealed in Trench 9 and the remains associated with the former settlement at Upper Windmill Park at the north end of Trench 1, would require further excavation or, preferably, should be avoided altogether if the development goes ahead.

SOURCES

Written

Page N 2006 'Land at Bryn Hir, Tenby: archaeological assessment' (Unpublished Cambria Archaeology client report. Copy held in HER)

Sabin D & Donaldson K 2006 'Bryn Hir, Tenby, Pembrokeshire: Magnetometer survey' (Unpublished report for Cambria Archaeology, copy held in HER)

Cartographic

British Geological Survey Geological Map of Wales: 1:250000 1st Edition 1994

Ordnance Survey, 1:10560 Pembrokeshire Sheet XLI SE 1ST Edition 1890

Ordnance Survey, 1:10560 Pembrokeshire Sheet XLI NE 1ST Edition 1890

Ordnance Survey, 1:10560 Pembrokeshire Sheet XLI SE 2nd Edition 1908

Ordnance Survey, 1:10560 Pembrokeshire Sheet XLI NE 1ST Edition 1908

Ordnance Survey, 1:10560 Quarter Sheet SN10SW 1970

Ordnance Survey, 1:50000 Sheet 158 First Series 1974

Plate 1 *Ditch 103 before excavation, looking West-southwest*

Plate 2 *North end of Trench 1 showing 103 in foreground and 108 beyond, view to north.*

Plate 3 *North end of Trench 1 after excavation. View to south.*

Plate 4 *View south-southwest shows section through probable path 507 and slot trench 505*

Plate 5 *Section through 503,Trench 5. View to north-northeast.*

Plate 6 *Sections through boundary ditches704 and 707 in Trench 7. View to north.*

Plate 7 *Partially excavated ditch 902 in Trench 9. View to southeast.*

Plate 8 *Partially excavated ditch 902 in Trench 9. View to northwest*