

# LAND AT GLANDY CROSS, CARMARTHENSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION

April 2007



Prepared by Cambria Archaeology  
For Mr Robin Wilson



# ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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MAI 2007

MAY 2007

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Gan / By

Dr Nikki Cook MIFA

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## **LAND AT GLANDY CROSS, CARMARTHENSHIRE**

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION April 2007**

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## **LAND AT GLANDY CROSS, CARMARTHENSHIRE**

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION April 2007**

#### **SUMMARY**

*Proposals to develop a plot of land at Glandy Cross, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN14272670) led to a request from the Local Planning Authority for an archaeological field evaluation to be undertaken as part of a pre-application determination, prior to a decision being made on Outline Planning Application No. W/14604.*

*A total of seven trenches were excavated, but no features of significant archaeological interest were noted.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Cambria Archaeology Field Services were commissioned by Mr Robin Wilson to undertake an archaeological field evaluation of a plot of land at Glandy Cross, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN14272670) in April 2007. This was part of a pre-application determination condition recommended by the Local Planning Authority, in advance of a decision being made for planning permission to erect dwellings on a former agricultural field behind existing dwellings to the west of the Cross Inn Public House, on the Glandy to Mynachlog Ddu road.

A specification was prepared in accordance with the *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 2001) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 2001), and was approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.

### **Scope and aims of the evaluation**

The main aim of the evaluation was to characterise the extent of the potential below ground archaeological resource, in order to assess 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 represent only a small percentage of the whole development area, and although 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. Conclusions are then presented.

### **Abbreviations used in this report**

Any references to sites recorded within the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Any published sources and other documentary or cartographic evidence used in writing this report are referenced within the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the end of the report.

## 2. THE SITE

The proposed development area at Glandy Cross, shaded red in Figure 1, comprises a field, c.0.75 hectares, and is located some 100m to the northeast of Meini Gwyr embanked stone circle and henge (PRN 990, SN14172658). This henge is one of a variety of prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments concentrated within the Glandy Cross area, which together comprise the largest prehistoric monumental complex in west Wales (Kirk and Williams 2000: 257).

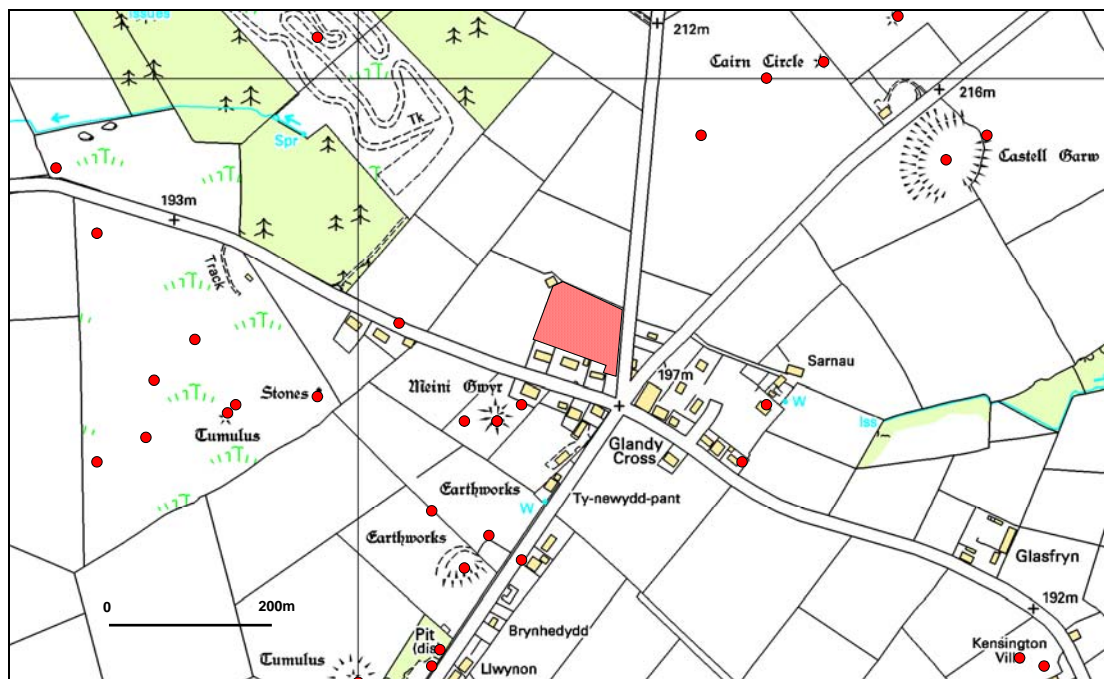


Figure 1 Location map of proposed development area at Glandy Cross in relation to known prehistoric sites (red dots)

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The Glandy Cross area has been the subject of antiquarian and archaeological enquiry since at least the 17th century, with the various round barrows, ring cairns, standing stones and enclosures clustered here periodically surveyed, excavated and classified by antiquarian authors such as Stukely (1776) and Fenton (1860), as well as more systematically surveyed by the Royal Commission (1917) and the Ordnance Survey (1967 onwards). WF Grimes also undertook work here (1938; 1939), with more recent archaeological recording conducted by Cambria Archaeology<sup>1</sup> between 1981 and 1992 in response to land improvement measures, residential development and a desire to evaluate the full extent and state of preservation of the known prehistoric archaeology of the area (see Ward *et al* 1987; Murphy 1990). The systematic assessment conducted by Cambria in 1991 and 1992 was grant aided by Cadw, and consisted of the comprehensive survey of surviving prehistoric earthworks and stone structures, and also included aerial survey, cartographic and documentary research, geophysical survey and targeted excavation. Furthermore, this work was shadowed by a research programme designed to investigate the chronological development and cultural affiliations of the Glandy Cross landscape, with the combined results published in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* (Kirk and Williams 2000). The Glandy

<sup>1</sup> Also known as Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

Cross area has been subject to additional archaeological attention in the form of a fieldwalking survey around the Yr Allor stones (PRN 1000, SN13952661) (Bestley 2000) and the Cadw-funded *Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Sites* project (Bestley and Ramsey 2001).

Glandy Cross is located on a northeast-southwest running ridge between the Eastern Cleddau and Afon Taf, on the southern flank of the Preseli hills. The distribution of monuments along the length of the ridge, and other stray finds, has led to suggestions that this may have been a major routeway in later prehistory (Grimes 1936: 3-7; 1963: 109, 141), with the possibility that this route may indeed have been used to transport the famous bluestones from the Preselis to Stonehenge (Thorpe *et al* 1991; Burl 1999).

Palaeoenvironmental evidence from excavations at an early Bronze Age barrow at Goodwin's Row (PRN 9754, SN14002614) suggests a developing open heathland environment in the later prehistoric period, with woodland clearance and grassland/hazel scrub in evidence (Caseldine, in Murphy 1990). Further excavations by Cambria in 1990 and 1991 also confirmed the presence of heath and scrub, suggesting an environment suited to pastoralism (Kirk and Williams 2000: 262). In many respects, little has changed here, other than gradual enclosure and the development of field systems in the 18th and 19th centuries, and, more recently, the increase in urbanisation.

Modern farming methods have taken their toll on the archaeological resource, with ploughing in particular eroding a number of known sites. A flurry of new building focussed around the crossroads at Glandy has also significantly altered the appreciation of the area as prehistoric ritual landscape. Indeed, the plot of land which is the focus of this report, whilst only lying 100m from the Meini Gwyr henge (PRN 990, SN14172658), is obscured by the late 20th century dwellings of Dan-y-coed, The Brambles and Maesglas, thus compromising the viewshed from the henge over to the Castell Garw bank-and-ditched enclosure (PRN 1024, NGR SN14722690). No archaeological work is recorded as having taken place during the building of these dwellings: however, prior to the construction of Bromeini (NGR SN14202662) excavations in 1985-6 revealed the presence of a number of small, shallow features in addition to three larger cut features filled with redeposited subsoil (Ward, *et al* 1987), which may have once held stone uprights.

The majority of evidence from previous archaeological investigations at Glandy Cross indicates a flurry of monumental construction and ritual practice dating to the Early Bronze Age (c.2200-1550 cal BC), although there is the potential for earlier activity dating to the Neolithic period, as evidenced by the rhyolite axe-factory (PRN 14810, SN13882668) and the enigmatic structure at Kensington Villa (PRN 13036, SN14842628) (Kirk and Williams 2000: 287). A continued ceremonial use of the area is suggested from at least the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age through to the early Iron Age (c.500 cal BC), suggesting a period of ritual use lasting some two thousand years.

In the light of this knowledge, an archaeological field evaluation was requested for the proposed plot of development land at Glandy Cross, in order to assess the presence of any archaeological features which might be associated with the known prehistoric monumental complex at Glandy.



### 3. SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS

A total of 7 trenches were excavated within the proposed development area, and were positioned to maximise the potential retrieval of information based on the results of an initial desk-based assessment of the site. The location of the trenches is illustrated in Figure 2.

Each trench was initially machine-excavated using a toothless grading bucket, 1.6m in width. In total, 215 square metres of the plot were excavated, giving an average coverage of 3% of the site, as outlined within the field evaluation specification<sup>2</sup>. Following machine excavation each trench was hand cleaned to determine the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits.

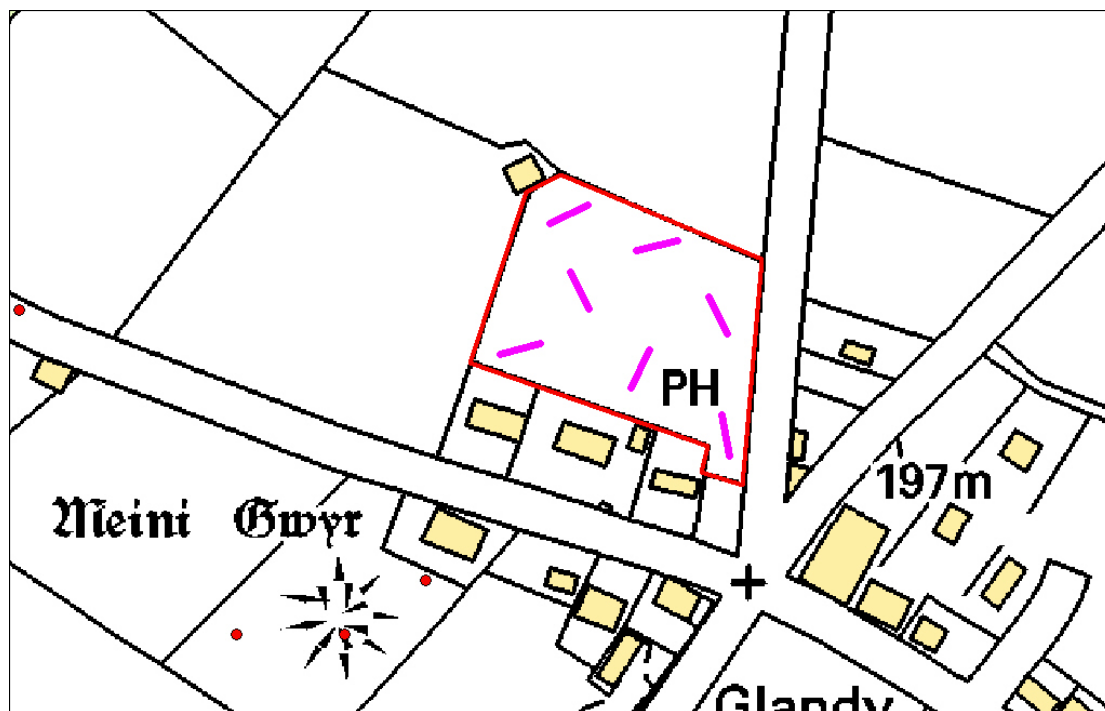


Figure 2 Trench location plan

#### Trench 1

18m x 1.6m. Plough soil/topsoil to a depth of c.0.2m. Orientated NE-SW. In Trench 1 an oval, dark brown silty clay deposit was noted (context 101), measuring c.0.41m (N-S) x 0.33m (E-W). When excavated, this was shown to be the fill of a small pit (context 102), which contained the remains of a small dog burial, represented by part of a skull and a few other bones in a poor state of preservation. The pit was cut through the ploughsoil and into the sub soil. Remains are likely to be of late post-medieval or modern date, and were not considered archaeologically significant.

No other features of archaeological interest were noted.

#### Trench 2

19.5m x 1.6m. Plough soil/topsoil to a depth of c.0.2m. Orientated NNE-SSW. Machining and hand-cleaning revealed four separate groups of stones, contexts 201-204 (group A-D), which looked to be potentially of archaeological interest.

<sup>2</sup> The plot of land itself totalled c.7484 square metres, i.e. nearly 0.75 hectares.

*Group A:* Context 201. A loose configuration of stones comprising a large recumbent slab, 1.3m long, 0.18m thick and 0.4m wide where visible, extending beyond the western edge of the trench, and accompanied by c.15 medium-sized angular stones. The stones occur within both the ploughsoil and the subsoil, but did not appear to have been set purposefully, or into any cut features. Some plough marks were noted on the upper exposed surface of the large slab, which lay a mere 0.05m below the existing ground surface.



Plate 1: Stone group A, looking W

*Group B:* Context 202. One large sub-triangular stone accompanied by three or four small and medium-sized stones. All the stones lay within the dark brown silty clay ploughsoil and appeared to rest on the subsoil. The group is considered likely to be a natural feature, and a result of glacial litter.

*Group C:* Context 203. A group of 12 or so medium-sized and small stones protruding out from the subsoil into the ploughsoil above. The larger stone appeared earthfast but the smaller ones were not, and the group did not exhibit any particular configuration.

*Group D:* Context 204. Initially revealed as a group of four medium-large stones apparently surrounded on its northerly edges by a number of smaller stone blocks (see Plate 3). Of all the stone groups uncovered during the evaluation, this appeared to be the most promising archaeological feature.



Plate 2: Stone group D, looking west

Following a site monitoring visit by the regional archaeological curator, it was requested that the trench be extended WNW-ESE on either side of stone group D (context 204) to further characterise the nature of the potential archaeological feature. As a result, two areas 3m x 3m were excavated by machine either side of the stone group<sup>3</sup>, but nothing of any archaeological significance was noted.



Plate 3: Trench 2 looking south, following the opening of the extension. Stone group D (context 204) visible in the foreground.

The apparent circularity of the smaller stones surrounding the larger stones in the group (see Plates 3 and 4) raised questions as to the origin of the arrangement, suggesting the stones may have been purposefully placed. However, the majority of the stones within the group were deposited within the topsoil and were not earthfast within the subsoil: the absence of any other associated archaeological finds or features led to the conclusion that this was most likely a natural feature.

No further features of archaeological interest were noted within Trench 5.

#### Trench 3

17m x 1.6m. Plough soil/top soil depth 0.2m. Orientated WSW-ENE.

This trench was machine-excavated and hand cleaned to a depth of 0.25m. No archaeological features were present within the excavated area.

#### Trench 4

17.1m x 1.6m. Plough soil/topsoil depth 0.2m. Orientated NW-SE.

As with Trench 2, two stone groups (group E and F – contexts 401 and 402) were recorded following machining and hand cleaning of the trench.

*Group E:* Context 401. This group consisted of one large slab, 0.8m x 0.7m, with three other stones visible, two of which extended beyond the edge of the trench. These stones were surrounded by animal burrows which were evident in both the topsoil and subsoil. Some of the burrows followed the outline of the larger stones, giving the appearance that the stones were set purposefully. However, excavation revealed that this was an illusion. Nonetheless, during the characterisation of one of these burrows, a rhyolite scraper of likely Neolithic date was recovered, but

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<sup>3</sup> See photo 3093 on accompanying CD.



could not be secured to a specific context. The stones are considered to be a result of natural rather than cultural agency.



Plate 4: Stone group E, looking SW. A rhyolite scraper was found within the animal burrow visible above the 1m scale (pictured right).

*Group F:* Context 402. A similar group of stones, which appeared to lie mainly within the topsoil, with a few earthfast into the subsoil. The stones exhibited no formal arrangement, and were considered to be natural.

No further archaeological features were noted within Trench 4.

#### Trench 5

17.2m x 1.6m. Plough soil/topsoil c.0.2m. Orientated NE-SW.

This trench was machine and hand-dug to a maximum depth of 0.3m. At the southwest end of the trench a small circular feature, 0.3m in diameter and 0.07m deep was noted and excavated, but was considered to be a natural feature (possibly a shallow shrub bole) rather than a ritual pit.

No further features of archaeological interest were noted within Trench 5.

#### Trench 6

17m x 1.6m. Plough soil/topsoil 0.2m. Orientated NE-SW.

As with Trench 5, this was machine-excavated and hand-cleaned to a depth of 0.3m. No archaeological features were present within the excavated area.

#### Trench 7

17.3 x 1.6m. Plough soil/topsoil 0.2m. Orientated NE-SW.

As with Trench 5, this was machine-excavated and hand-cleaned to a depth of 0.3m. No archaeological features were present within the excavated area.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The plot of land at Glandy Cross would appear to have been ploughed, but certainly not recently, nor seemingly very often. The scatter of glacial litter visible within Trenches 2 and 4, which is typical of the underlying geology of the area, would potentially have made ploughing in the era before modern machinery

reasonably difficult, without prior field clearance. During the archaeological field evaluation medium and large angular stones and slabs were noted within the ploughsoil, and many lay close to the existing ground surface.

A single find in the form of a rhyolite scraper was the only indicator of a prehistoric presence on the site, and is likely to be of middle-late Neolithic date (c.3000-2200 cal BC). This scraper is considered to have most likely originated from the rhyolite working area (PRN 14810) located 100m to the northwest of the Yr Allor standing stones (PRN 1000), themselves located c.300m to the west-southwest of the proposed development area.

The largely ephemeral nature of prehistoric archaeological features, such as pits, post-holes and stake-holes, means that such features are rarely encountered during this kind of field evaluation, and tend to be revealed instead during large area stripping. Given the proximity of the land at Glandy to the known prehistoric monumental complex, located within 100m of the site, the potential remains for other archaeological finds or features to be revealed during groundworks, which may relate to settlement and occupation during the later prehistoric period, when Glandy was the foci of ritual and ceremonial activity.

## **Acknowledgements**

Fieldwork was conducted by Richard Ramsay and Gwilym Bere. An EDM survey of the site was carried out by Hubert Wilson. Machining was undertaken by Russell Thomas of Efailwen.

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- Ordnance Survey - card index held at the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth, maintained by the RCAHMS

## **APPENDIX 1      CATALOGUE OF EVALUATION ARCHIVE**

The project archive has been indexed and catalogued according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories and contains the following:

- A.** Copy of final report
- B.** Records made during fieldwork, including context record sheets and site notes.
- C.** Site drawings.
- D.** Site photographs – catalogue, digital photos on CD, indexed by frame number with another copy in trench order.
- I.** Archive report, draft copies of final report.
- L.** Project specification.
- M.** Miscellaneous correspondence.

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

The archive is currently held by Cambria Archaeology Field Services, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, as project number 62809.