

# DANE HILL, SPITTAL, PEMBROKESHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION and WATCHING BRIEF

JUNE / AUGUST 2007



Prepared  
by  
Dyfed Archaeological Trust  
for  
Mr & Mrs R Davies



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**DYFED**  
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# **DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

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## **DANE HILL, SPITTAL, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF**

By

R Ramsey

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# **DANE HILL, SPITTAL, PEMBROKESHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**REPORT NUMBER 2007/47**

**July 2008**

This report has been prepared by R Ramsey

Position: Project Manager

Signature ..... Date

This report has been checked and approved by

on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position: Director

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**DANE HILL, SPITTAL, PEMBROKESHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION and WATCHING BRIEF**

**SUMMARY**

*A planning application (No.06/1289/PA) was submitted by Mr and Mrs R Davies to rebuild their garage and extend their house, Dane Hill, in Spittal, Pembrokeshire (NGR SM 9786322941). Both buildings lie within the Iron Age defended enclosure known as Spittal Rath (PRN 2471), a site of archaeological importance.*

*In order to protect the potential archaeological interests Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management, as advisors to the Planning Department of Pembrokeshire County Council, recommended that an archaeological condition be attached to the planning application.*

*The initial condition placed on the planning consent was that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken ahead of any groundworks for the house extension and garage rebuild in order to assess the extent character and vulnerability of any surviving archaeological remains.*

*Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned to carry out the archaeological evaluation and two evaluation trenches were excavated, but only relatively modern features and natural deposits were revealed. However, given the potential for encountering archaeological features or deposits during the more extensive excavation of the footings for the building programme, an archaeological watching brief condition was placed on the consent.*

*No archaeologically significant features or deposits were encountered during the excavation of the foundation footings for the extension to the house.*

*During the excavation for the new garage foundations part of the Iron Age rampart was revealed overlying a cut feature that may represent an earlier phase of the defended enclosure's structure.*



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project background**

A planning application (No.06/1289/PA) was submitted by Mr and Mrs R Davies to rebuild their garage and extend their house, Dane Hill, in Spittal, Pembrokeshire (NGR SM9786322941). Both buildings lie within the prehistoric defended enclosure known as Spittal Rath (PRN 2471), a site of archaeological importance.

Given this fact, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management, as advisors to the Planning Department of Pembrokeshire County Council, recommended that an archaeological condition be attached to the planning application, should it receive a positive determination, in order to protect potential archaeological interests.

Planning permission was duly granted with a condition stipulating that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken prior to any ground works being carried out for both the house extension and garage rebuild.

To comply with the condition Mr and Mrs Davies commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust (formerly Cambria Archaeology) Field Services to carry out the archaeological evaluation excavations in June 2007.

Following the evaluation, an on-site meeting with Mr. Charles Hill of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management was held, and it was decided that an archaeological watching brief should be carried out during the footing excavations for both the house extension and the new garage. Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned to carry out the watching brief during the ground works in August 2007.

### **1.2 The evaluation and watching brief methodology, and scope of the report**

The evaluation comprised the archaeological excavation of two trial trenches, one within the footprint of the proposed house extension and the other adjacent to, and south of, the original garage.

The watching brief comprised the attendance of an archaeologist on site during the excavation of the footings for both the house extension and the garage.

During the evaluation and the watching brief all archaeologically significant features and deposits were recorded and photographed, and, where relevant, measured plans were drawn.

This report summarises the archaeological background to the site and discusses the results of the evaluation excavations and the watching brief.

Any archaeological sites mentioned in the text that are recorded in the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified, for reference and location, by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and National Grid Reference (NGR). The HER is housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust (formerly Cambria Archaeology) at its offices in Llandeilo. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

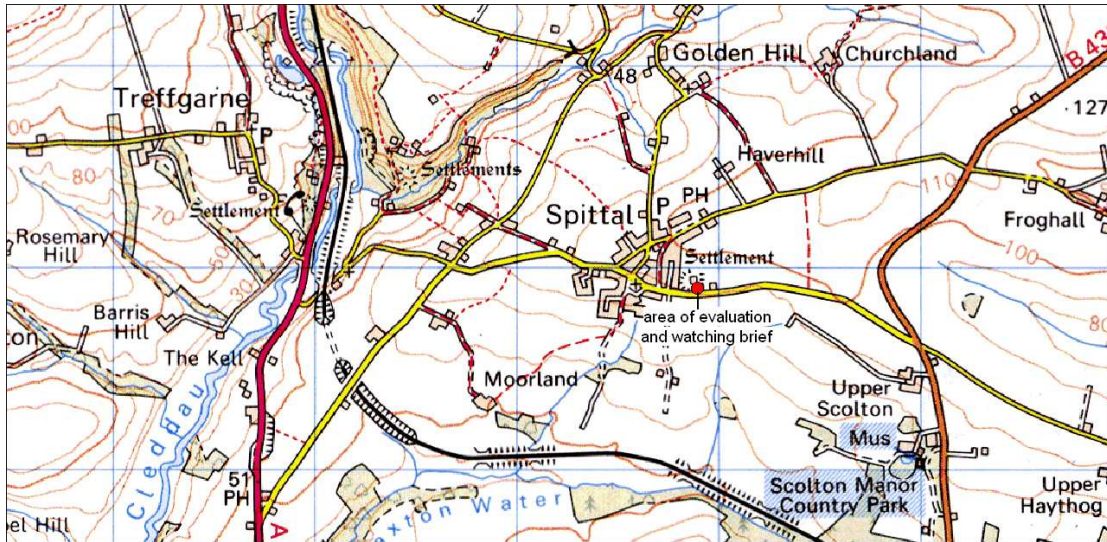


Figure 1: Location plan, based on Ordnance Survey

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## 2. SITE LOCATION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The small village of Spittal (Fig.1) lies 1 mile to the east of the A40 trunk road some 5 miles to the north of Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire. Dane Hill (Plate 1) lies on the eastern edge of the village, just below the crest of a gentle south-facing slope, tucked behind and overlooking properties known collectively as Spring Gardens. Dane Hill and its garage are both situated within the interior of an Iron Age defended enclosure (PRN 2471 NGR SM97872294). The enclosure, known now as Spittal Rath (Fig.2), is oval in shape and measures about 75m east to west by 65m north to south and has a single defensive bank enclosing an area of about 0.27 hectares. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW), after visiting the site in 1915 described the curving rampart as being *"....much disturbed by cultivation; at its best it rises 3 feet and falls 6 feet to the outer level. There are no indications of a ditch"* (RCAHMW 1915, p385). Today the enclosure bank is much more disturbed having been breached by an access drive on its western side, and heavily landscaped on its northern interior side as well as being planted with trees and incorporated into flower beds elsewhere along its length. Some of the relatively recently built houses in Spring Gardens have added to the destruction of the earthwork that had already taken place on its southern exterior. The building of Dane Hill, sometime in the 1930s, with its access drive, and the landscaping of the garden is likely to have been destructive to much of any previously surviving archaeology in the interior of the enclosure. The original garage itself, even before any rebuilding, slightly impinged on the interior side of the enclosure bank.



### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

Two trial trenches (Fig.3) were excavated in order to assess the presence or not of archaeologically significant features or deposits in the interior of the defended enclosure. Trench 1 was located on the building footprint for the extension to the house, whilst Trench 2 was excavated adjacent to the south side of the extant garage prior to its demolition.

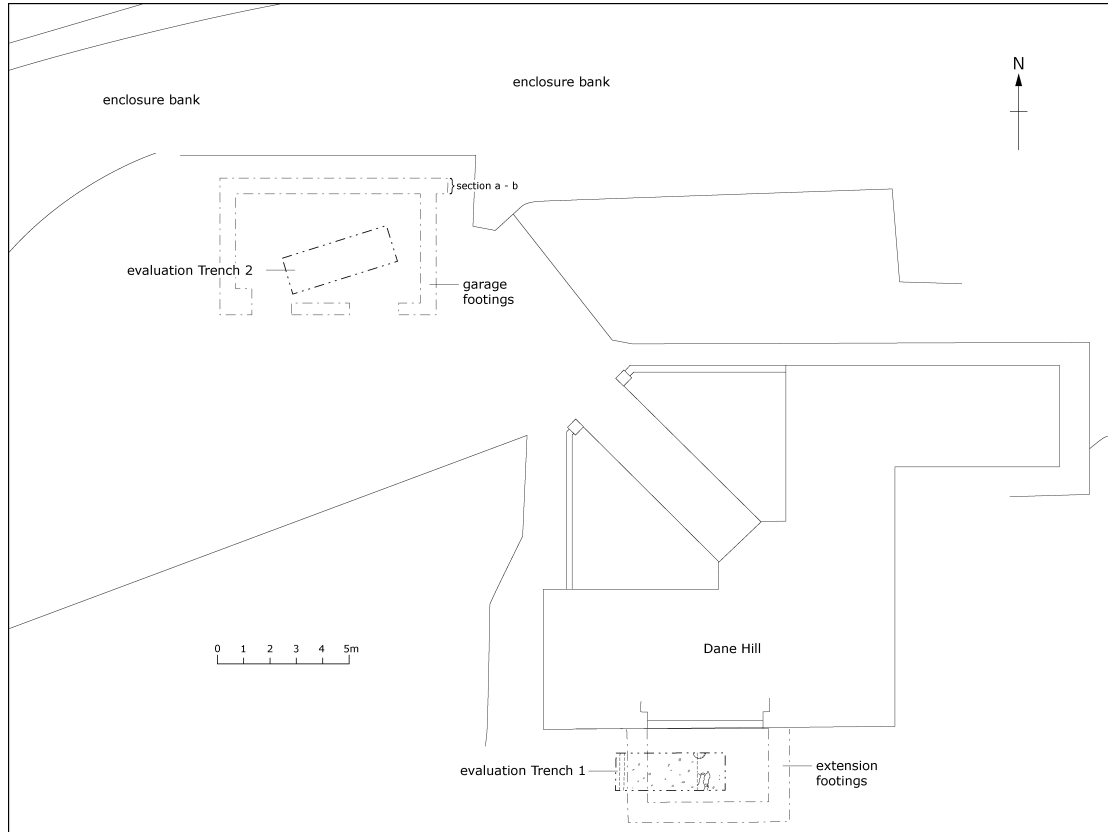


Figure 3: Overall site plan showing location of evaluation trenches and new footings.

#### 3.1. Trench 1

This trench (Plate 2) was hand excavated through the flagstone surface of a patio and was located some 0.9m from the rear (south) of the house. The trench measured 4.15m east to west by 1.4m north to south and was aligned parallel with the house.

Twenty-seven concrete flagstones each measuring 0.45m by 0.45m by 0.04m thick (context 100) were removed revealing a 0.13m deep compacted layer of yellowish brown sand mixed with 95% small angular stone fragments (context 101). This overlay a 0.09m deep orange brown silty clay soil containing a 60% coarse component mix of small angular stones, red brick and tile fragments, and general building demolition debris (context 102). These two layers (101 and 102) were obviously sub-base layers for the flagstone patio surface. The patio was built sometime in the early 1990s.

The removal of the patio layers revealed a 0.16m depth of humic orange brown silty clay soil containing 20% small angular stone fragments, and a mix of occasional coal, limestone and red brick fragments. This layer (context 103) appeared to be a remnant garden soil present prior to the construction of the patio.

Excavation and removal of layer 103 revealed a level compact surface (context 104). This layer was 0.18m deep and comprised a dark brown silty clay soil containing 80% large, medium and small angular stone fragments with occasional coal fragments. Once disturbed this layer broke up easily but had been purposely compacted, presumably during the original building construction, to create an area of hard standing adjacent to the back porch entrance to the house. At 3.1m along the excavation trench, from the western end and on its northern edge, a circular feature (context 107) was revealed which cut layer 104. This feature (Plate 3) was only half exposed, continuing beyond the northern edge of the excavation, but it was clearly circular, measuring 0.42m in diameter and 0.54m deep, with vertically cut sides and a nearly flat base. On excavation, 107 proved to be filled with building demolition debris in the form of broken brick, tile, and mortar fragments along with a high percentage of small angular stone fragments (context 106). The shape and form of 107 suggests that it was a posthole, and its location adjacent to the centre of the rear porch of Dane Hill may indicate that it once held a post that may have supported a verandah roof or other annexed area of the house, possibly covering part of the hard standing surface 104.

A test excavation (Plate 4) across the eastern end of the evaluation trench showed that the compacted layer 104 was laid directly over the natural subsoil (context 105), which comprised a yellowish brown silty clay soil containing c.70% small and medium sized angular fragments of shale. Presumed posthole 107 was seen to cut the natural subsoil but no other archaeological features or deposits were observed either within or overlying 105.

### **3.2. Trench 2**

This trench was opened up using a 2.8 ton tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. The trench measured 5.1m long by 1.6m wide and was situated parallel with, and 0.5m away from, the south side of the extant garage.

The turf and topsoil (context 200) was removed by machine and the trench was then hand cleaned, where necessary, to assess the presence of archaeological features and deposits. The topsoil, average depth 0.2m, was a dark reddish brown friable silty clay soil containing frequent small angular stones, occasional medium sized angular stones and some organic root material. A few sherds of 20<sup>th</sup> century glazed pottery were found in the topsoil. In places along the length of the excavation there were discrete layers of redeposited orange brown silty clay subsoil mixed into the upper 0.10m of topsoil, perhaps representing upcast deposits from the original excavation of the garage footings.





Figure 4: Aerial photograph from 1955 (Meridian Airmap), red arrow indicates features to south of garage.

Hand cleaning of the trench revealed a curvilinear cut feature (context 204) containing discretely placed small and medium sized angular stones (context 202), which appeared to have been set within the 0.24m wide cut 204 (Plate 5). During the machine excavation some of the stones had been displaced leaving their impressions in the reddish brown silty clay soil fill of 204 (context 203). In plan 204 was shown to be 2.3m long, extending beyond the centre of the south side of the excavation trench and continuing beyond the eastern end of the trench. On excavation, cut 204 was shown to be U-shaped, uniformly 0.23m deep along its exposed length and had been cut through the B-horizon soil (context 201) to slightly cut the natural subsoil (context 205). Not enough of this feature was exposed to fully characterise it, and it had been quite heavily disturbed and robbed of much of its stone fill. Whilst it cannot be ruled out as an Iron Age feature, judging from its relative superficiality it is perhaps more likely to have functioned as a garden feature or small boundary for the driveway access to the property. An aerial photograph taken in 1955 (Fig. 4) clearly shows some formal arrangement adjacent to the southeast side of the garage in the same location as the feature. No dating evidence was found in the fill of 204.

In order to check that there were no other archaeological features in the trench, soil horizon 201, a friable reddish brown silty clay soil containing c.10% small angular fragments of stone (shale), was machine excavated down to the natural subsoil. The average depth of the layer was 0.24m which, added to the average depth of the overlying topsoil, gave an average depth of the evaluation trench of 0.44m from the present ground surface down to the top of the subsoil. No other archaeologically significant features were revealed in the trench.

#### **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS**

As with the archaeological evaluation, the watching brief was divided between the area of the footings excavation for the house extension and the area of the footings excavation for the new garage. Both sets of footings were excavated by mechanical excavators (tracked mini digger and JCB) over the course of one day in August 2007.

##### **4.1. House extension footings**

The foundation footings excavation for the house extension were 0.80m wide and dug to a depth of 0.9m below the present ground level of the patio (Plate 6). The west and east wall footings projected from just to either side of the back porch for a distance of 3.5m before being connected by the 6.1m long east-west footing for the south wall of the extension.

The stratigraphic sequence encountered during these excavations was close to identical to the results found in Trench 1 during the evaluation. The exception was that in the south west corner of the trench the layer correlating with the hard standing layer (context 104) had been cut through and contained a high percentage of modern building demolition debris comprising red brick fragments, mortar fragments and shattered slate fragments.

No other archaeologically significant features or deposits were encountered and no further postholes were revealed to shed light on the function of the one seen during the evaluation (context 107). However, the demolition debris deposits revealed in the southwest corner of the footing excavation matched very closely the fill (context 106) of posthole 107. It appears likely that these demolition deposits represent former elements of a structure (a verandah perhaps) that may have covered the hard standing area revealed during both the evaluation and the excavation of the footings.

No finds were recovered.

##### **4.2. Garage footings**

The former garage was demolished prior to an archaeologist attending the site to undertake the watching brief. An area measuring 12m east to west by 8m north to south, and encompassing the footprint of the demolished garage, was cleared by machine (with a toothless bucket) of turf, topsoil and small trees to enable the setting out of the foundation trench for the new garage.

During the ground clearance some apparently recently deposited material (context 402), which formed a modern bank, and other dumped surface material lying on the south side of the enclosure rampart were also removed, revealing a clean south facing vertical section along part of the interior of the enclosure rampart (Plate 7). The section was 0.7m high (c.0.65m above the present ground surface) and revealed the structure of the rampart as a dark reddish brown silty clay soil containing about 65% small and medium angular stone blocks (context 403) overlain by a 0.2m depth of turf and dark brown silty clay topsoil (context 401). In plan the stony rampart material 403 was seen to extend into the cleared area for an average distance of 1m but extending further at both the western and eastern ends where its limits were shown to curve distinctly, respecting the line of the extant rampart. At the northeastern edge of the cleared area a vertical west-facing section was exposed showing modern bank material 402 overlying the rampart material 403 (Fig.5 and Plate 8).



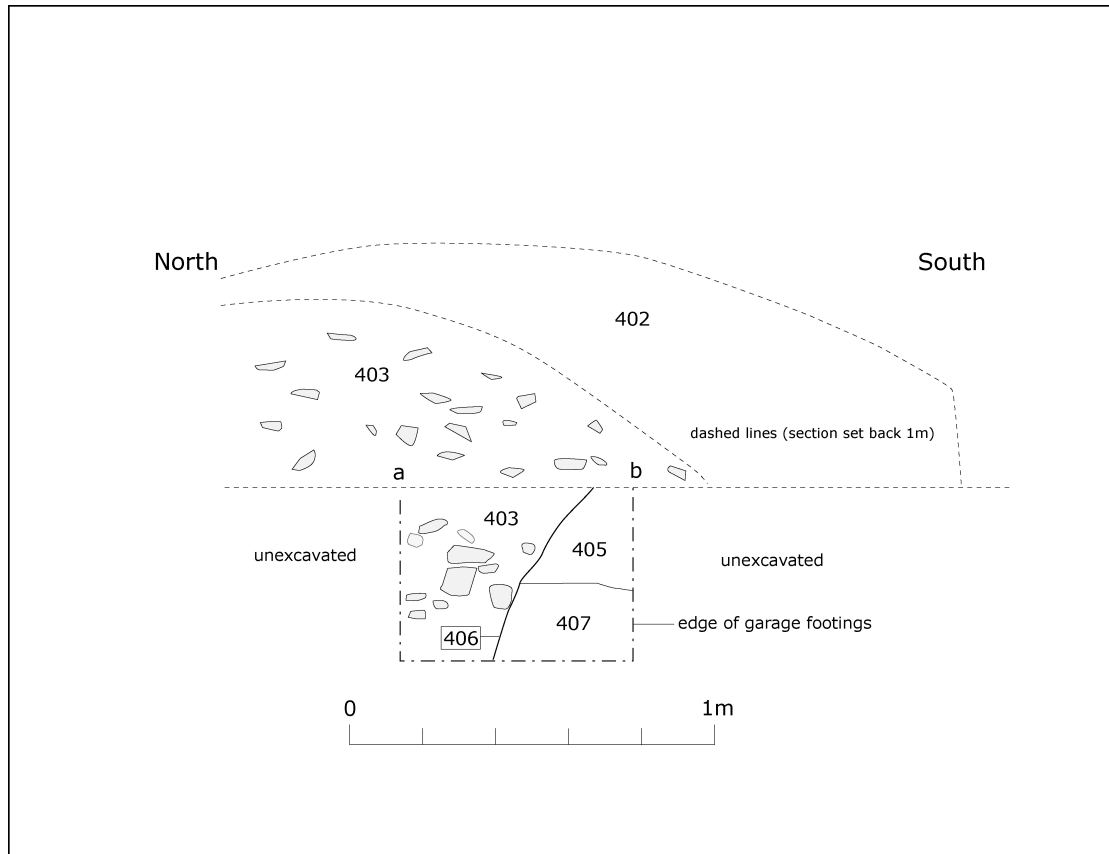


Figure 5: West facing section across part of the rampart, showing contexts.

The footings excavations for the new garage were carried out by a machine using a toothed bucket and comprised a near continuous 0.6m wide trench around the footprint of the new garage (Fig.3 and Plate 9). The southern length of the east-west aligned trench was cut to leave two unexcavated entrance areas: the more westerly was 1.5m wide whilst the other was 2m wide. The depth of the footings was 0.5m throughout the excavations. The stratigraphic sequence throughout the southern length of the footings was the same as that found during the evaluation in Trench 2, with 0.2m of topsoil (context 404, same as 200 in Trench 2) overlying a 0.24m depth soil deposit (context 405, same as 201 B-horizon in Trench 2) which overlay a yellowish brown natural subsoil (context 407, same as 205 in Trench 2). No archaeologically significant features or deposits were observed in this part of the trench.

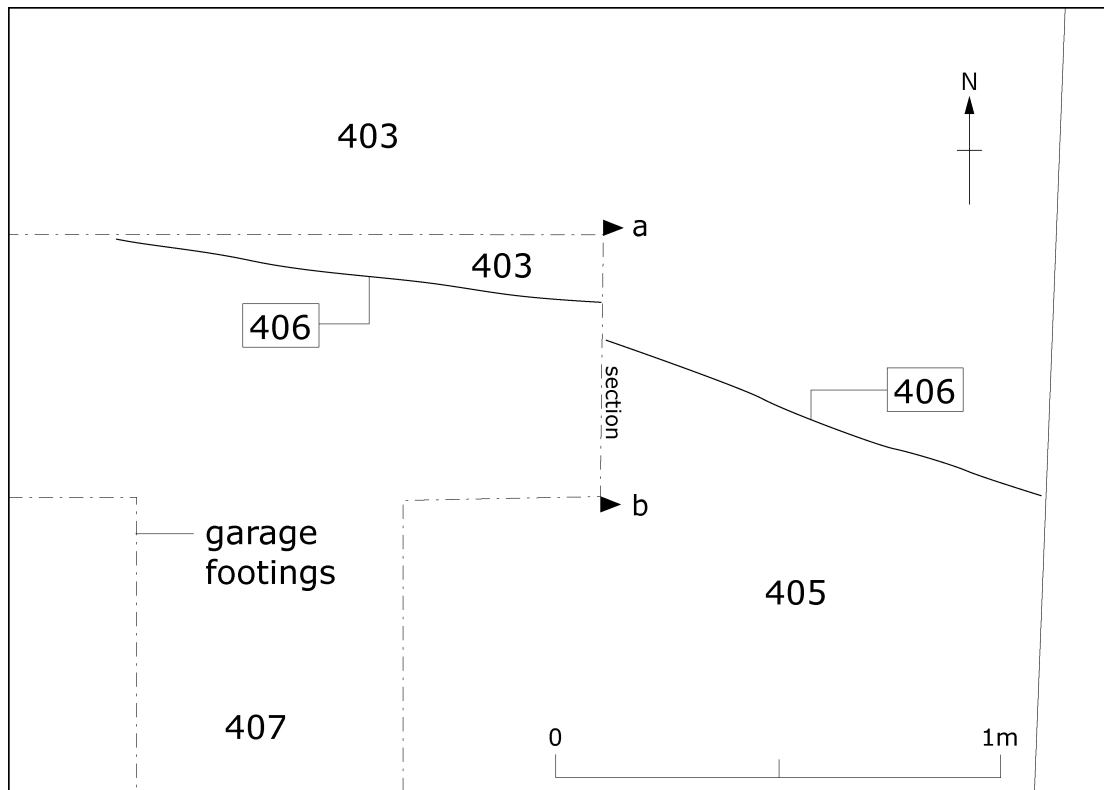


Figure 6: Plan of NE corner of garage footings trench showing cut feature 406 and associated contexts.

In the northerly length of the footings trench the stony rampart material 403 was further exposed, and at the northeast corner of the trench was shown to fill a linear cut feature (context 406). In plan, cut 406 was 1.2m long and continued beyond the northern and eastern edges of the trench; further hand cleaning of the previously cleared area to the east of the footing trench revealed the edge of 406 continuing into the revealed section and beyond (Fig.6). In the revealed section 406 was seen to be steeply cut through deposit 405 and into the natural subsoil 407 to an undetermined depth and width (Fig.5 and Plate 10). As far as this feature was exposed, it appeared to run parallel with the rampart and contained only rampart material 403; not enough of the feature was revealed during the watching brief to allow full characterisation, but it clearly pre-dates the construction of the enclosure rampart. Interpretation is difficult, however it may represent an earlier phase of the defended enclosure's construction or possibly an earlier pre-existing feature re-used during the construction of the enclosure. Archaeological excavations undertaken at Woodbarn Rath (PRN 3558, NGR SN017170), near Wiston in Pembrokeshire, revealed pre-existing features and deposits sealed beneath its ramparts and although such features are rare this can be cited as a parallel example (Vyner 1986). Unfortunately, a combination of modern ground disturbance and the limited extent of the groundworks for the new garage footings at Dane Hill did not enable a buried soil to be identified beneath the rampart material.

No other archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the garage footings excavation, and no finds were recovered.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The evaluation excavations showed that no archaeological features associated with the Iron Age enclosure were present in those locations tested and that, in the case of Trench 1 especially, it is likely that the construction of Dane Hill would have been destructive to any archaeological features or deposits that may have previously been present. It is also possible that the garden landscaping and access track to Dane Hill will have compromised much of the interior of the enclosure's archaeology.

During the watching brief, the clearance of the area close to, and on the edge of, the ramparts on the north side of the enclosure enabled a clearer characterisation of the makeup of the defensive bank and exposed the earlier cut feature 406, suggesting earlier occupation than the extant rampart. No dating evidence in the form of artefacts or soil/charcoal samples was forthcoming during either the evaluation or the watching brief.

The evaluation and watching brief covered only a very small percentage area of the whole enclosure leaving the possibility that significant archaeological features and deposits may have survived elsewhere on the site. Indeed, the slight excavation undertaken shows that in addition to the enclosure rampart itself significant archaeological features and deposits may well remain sealed and protected beneath it.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**



Plate 1: Dane Hill looking north, note rampart to right of the house



Plate 2: View of Trench 1, looking east





Plate 3: View of presumed posthole 107, looking north



Plate 4: View of north facing section of test excavation in Trench 1





Plate 5: View of curvilinear feature 204, looking south



Plate 6: View of house extension footings, looking east





Plate 7: Revealed south facing section along interior of rampart



Plate 8: West facing section showing later bank 402 overlying rampart 403





Plate 9: View of excavated garage footing, looking southeast



Plate 10: View of west facing section showing cut 406 and rampart fill 403 to left of 0.5m scale

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **Databases**

The Regional Historic Environment Record, housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust in Llandeilo

### **Published and Unpublished**

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### **Cartographic**

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Ordnance Survey, Old Series 1 inch to 1 Mile Sheet 40 1819

### **Aerial Photographs**

Meridian Airmaps SM92SE 190/220 Frame Nos. 10299 and 10300 published 1955

DAT Oblique AP 89-018 06/07/89

DAT Oblique AP 89-208.26 28/07/89