

Hafod Flower Garden 'Mariamne's Garden', Hafod Estate Ceredigion Archaeological Evaluation



Prepared by
Cambria Archaeology
For
Hafod Conservation Partnership



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Hafod Flower Garden 'Mariamne's Garden', Hafod Estate Ceredigion
Archaeological Evaluation

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**HAFOD FLOWER GARDEN, 'MARIAMNES GARDEN', HAFOD ESTATE
CEREDIGION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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SUMMARY

Cambria Archaeology were commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation within 'Mariamne's Garden' (NGR SN 7639 7319) on the former Hafod Estate, Ceredigion with an aim to establish the presence, location and structure of paths within the walled garden.

A detailed survey has already been undertaken on the area but recent scrub clearance has allowed greater access to the site. Four trenches of varying sizes were opened up across the garden in areas thought likely to contain pathways. The pathways were revealed in three of trenches, showing them to be constructed of loosely laid quartz stone, in relatively good condition and lying just below the thin topsoil. A series of fourteen test pits were then opened up to confirm the lines of the pathways revealed in the trenches. All the pathways were then photographed and planned and tied into the pre-existing survey.

INTRODUCTION

Following on from the findings of the commissioned archaeological assessment and topographical survey undertaken by Cambria Archaeology Field Services on the former Hafod Estate, Pontrhydygroes (NGR SN 7639 7319), Hafod Conservation Partnership are continuing to take forward plans to restore elements of Mariamne's Garden.

Cambria Archaeology field services were commissioned in October 2007 to undertake limited excavation to establish the presence, location and structure of paths within the walled garden to inform further restoration programmes.

Report outline

This report briefly describes the physical environment of the area before detailing the results of the evaluation excavations.

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

Mariamne's Garden occupies c.0.16ha (c.0.4 acres) of recently cleared rough ground centred on NGR SN76397319. The area is defined around the northern edge by a low stone wall, and to the south by the steep valley slopes. The garden lies roughly 500m due east of the former mansion house, separated by a low ridge, with views across the steep valley to the south.

Topographically the area of the garden is irregular in plan and occupies the upper slopes on the northern edge of the Ystwyth Valley, incorporating some gentle and moderately southward sloping areas, along with terraced platforms and rocky outcrops.

The area had been cleared of scrub and was now covered by rough grass with some planted heather and several dispersed mature trees.

METHODOLOGY

Four trenches of varying size and fourteen small test pits were hand excavated. In all the trenches the turf and topsoil were removed to the top of the archaeological deposits, which included the path surfaces. The trenches were cleaned by hand, photographed and drawn to scale where the pathway and any other archaeological deposits were visible. All the trenches and test pits were marked on a plan of the garden and tied into previous survey work undertaken in the area.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

For the locations of the excavation trenches see Figure 2.

Trench 1

This trench was located across a probable path terrace already picked up in previous survey work to investigate the form and condition of the path. This terrace was quite distinct, measuring roughly 1.2m wide, running along the lower edge of the main upper section of the garden. A corresponding path is shown on the 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888. The trench measured 2.7m by 0.5m and was aligned northwest – southeast. Removal of the turf, leaf mould and topsoil, up to 0.1m thick, revealed remains of the pathway and a slumped retaining wall.

The path measured c.0.65-0.7m wide and was located to the northern end of the terrace running east-west. The path surface was made up of loosely laid angular quartz stones, with an average size of 50mm x 30mm x 30mm, simply laid on to the loose silty subsoil. The stones were not removed but the stone band appeared to be only one or two stones thick. The southern (downslope) edge of the terrace has clearly eroded and slipped downslope, and it is likely that the path was originally wider on this side.

Around 0.7m to the south and further downslope from the path and terrace several loosely laid flat stones were revealed. These stones measured on average 200mm x 100mm x 50mm, and appear to be the remains of a coarse revetment wall that has clearly slipped downslope over time. Remnants of this revetment wall are still visible further west along the lower edge of the terrace.

Trench 2

This trench was located in the northern part of the garden in an area that was thought likely to contain a pathway climbing the slope connecting an upper pathway running along the northern wall of the garden and a viewpoint/seat located on a small rock outcrop. This pathway is marked on the 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888 and this gradient would appear to be the only obvious choice for a pathway to traverse the slope.

The trench measured 2.1m by 0.5m and was aligned north-south across the sloping ground. Between 0.05 and 0.1m of turf and leaf mould were removed overlying the subsoil, but no trace of a pathway was revealed. The lack of any quartz stones within the trench and the immediate area suggests that there may have been no formal surfacing to the path, or that it has completely eroded due to the nature of the sloping ground in this area.

Trench 3

This trench was located at the eastern end of the garden across a level terrace area that may have contained two pathways, according to the 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map three pathways met in this area. The trench measured 7m by 0.6m and was aligned northeast-southwest across the terrace. Removal of c.0.1m of turf, leaf mould and topsoil revealed a wide central pathway and the edge of a further pathway to the southwest.

The central pathway measured at most 2.04m across and it was located approximately 2.38m to the southwest of the rock face to the northeast. The path surface was made up of loosely laid angular quartz stones, with an average size of 50mm x 30mm x 30mm, simply laid on to the loose silty subsoil, the same as the path revealed in Trench 1. The southwestern edge of the quartz-stone path was intermingled with an area of large flat loosely laid stones. These stones vary from 150mm x 80mm x 30mm up to 400mm x 200mm x 30mm, and appear to form part of a surface rather than a collapsed revetment wall. The edges of the path appear slightly splayed, being wider to the northwest than the southeast. The greater width of the pathway in this area may indicate this was indeed where pathways converged.

Approximately 1.4m further to the southwest the edge of a second path was revealed. This path was also made up of loosely laid angular quartz stones, with an average size of 50mm x 30mm x 30mm, simply laid on to the loose silty subsoil. The revealed edge of this path was disturbed by root action but it appeared to be curving, suggesting the path continued to run in a more southwesterly direction out onto a rocky outcrop where it meets with another path running towards some rock-cut steps taking the pathway down onto a lower terrace (a path marked on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map). The curve also suggested the path may have followed the contours to meet with the path visible within Trench 1.

Trench 4

This trench was located close to the gateway in the southeastern wall of the garden on a level terrace that was thought to have contained a pathway. The 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows a pathway running along the inner edge of the garden wall in this area. The trench measured 1.8m by 0.5m and was aligned northwest – southeast to run across the terrace. Removal of a thin layer of turf, vegetation and topsoil revealed pathway crossing the centre of the trench.

The path measured c.0.8m wide, running in a roughly northeast – southwest direction. As with all the other revealed paths this was also made up of loosely laid angular quartz stones, with an average size of 50mm x 30mm x 30mm, simply laid on to the loose silty subsoil.

Test pits

As the trenches revealed that the pathways appeared fairly intact and lying just below the surface it was decided to open up several small Test pits (c.0.3m by c.0.3m) to test for the presence or absence of the pathways around the garden.

Test pits 1-3 were opened up along the terrace that ran along the lower edge of the main garden area (across which Trench 1 was dug). All three test pits showed remains of the quartz-stone path running along this terrace, corresponding with the pathway shown on the 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.

Test pits 4 & 5 were opened up to the east of Trench 3 to locate a continuation of the central pathway in this direction. The northern edge of the path was picked up in Test pit 5 suggesting the path ran around to the east to connect with the path climbing to the upper northeastern level. No path was revealed in Test pit 4 indicating there was no direct path connecting that revealed in Trench 3 with the gateway in the garden wall to the south.

Test pits 6-11 were located to the northwest of Trench 3 to attempt to pick up the continuation of the central pathway running in a northwesterly direction. The edge of the path was picked up in Test pit 8, and the path was also revealed in Test pits 10 & 11 indicating the pathway curved quite steeply to the north from the central path revealed in Trench 3 to run close to the nearby rockface and then on towards the viewpoint/seat.

Test pits 12, 13 & 14 was opened up along a possible terrace running along the northern part of the garden, in an attempt to locate the upper path as shown on the 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. The path was picked up in all three Test pits indicating it ran along this terrace and around the northern side of a mature tree that still stands in this area.

CONCLUSIONS

Many of the garden pathways survive in relatively good condition lying directly below the thin layer of turf, leaf mould and topsoil that covers the site. Where revealed the paths were constructed of loosely laid angular quartz stones, with an average size of 50mm x 30mm x 30mm, simply laid on to the loose silty subsoil. Within Trench 3 a stone-laid surface was revealed along the edge of the quartz stones, that may also have been part of the pathway surface. No distinct path edging was identified, other than a collapsed rough revetment wall on the downslope side of the path revealed in Trench 1.

The trenches and test pits allowed the lines of many of the pathways to be established. Many of these paths correspond to the general routes shown on the 1:2500 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1888. However, excavation has revealed in greater detail the arrangement of the paths as they converge around the area of Trench 3, and excavations also show no evidence of a constructed pathway connecting the viewpoint/seat with the upper path as shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, although evidence of this may have been eroded away.



Plate 1: South-east facing shot of Trench 1. 1 x 0.5m scale



Plate 2: North-east facing shot of Trench 2. 1 x 0.5m scale.



Plate 3 (left): South-west facing shot of Trench 3. 1 x 1m scale.

Plate 4 (below): Close-up of central pathway.





Plate 5: South-east facing shot of Trench 4. 1 x 0.5m scale.



Figure 1: Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey.

Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

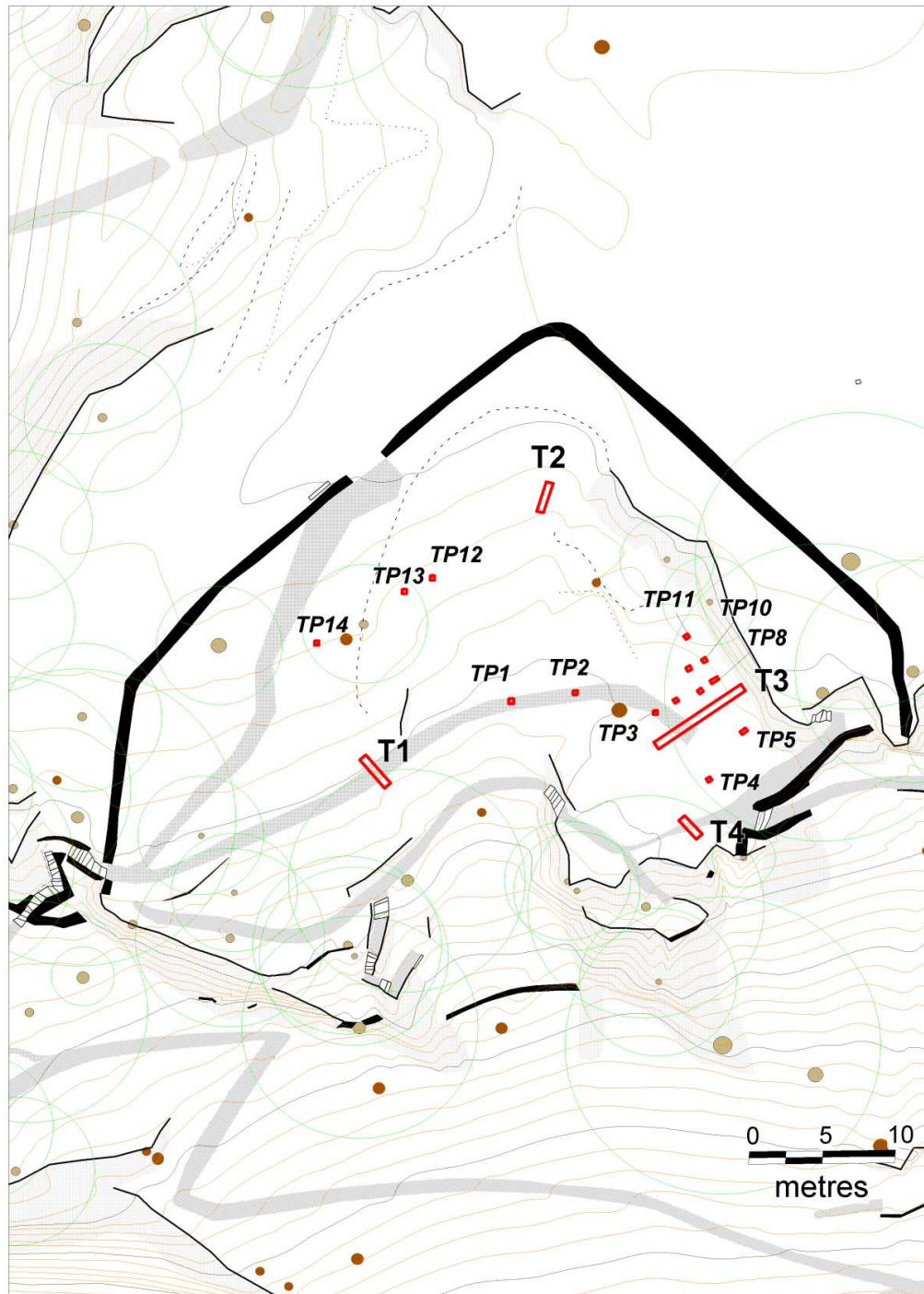


Figure 2: Location of Trenches and Test Pits (in red), overlaid on previous survey results.

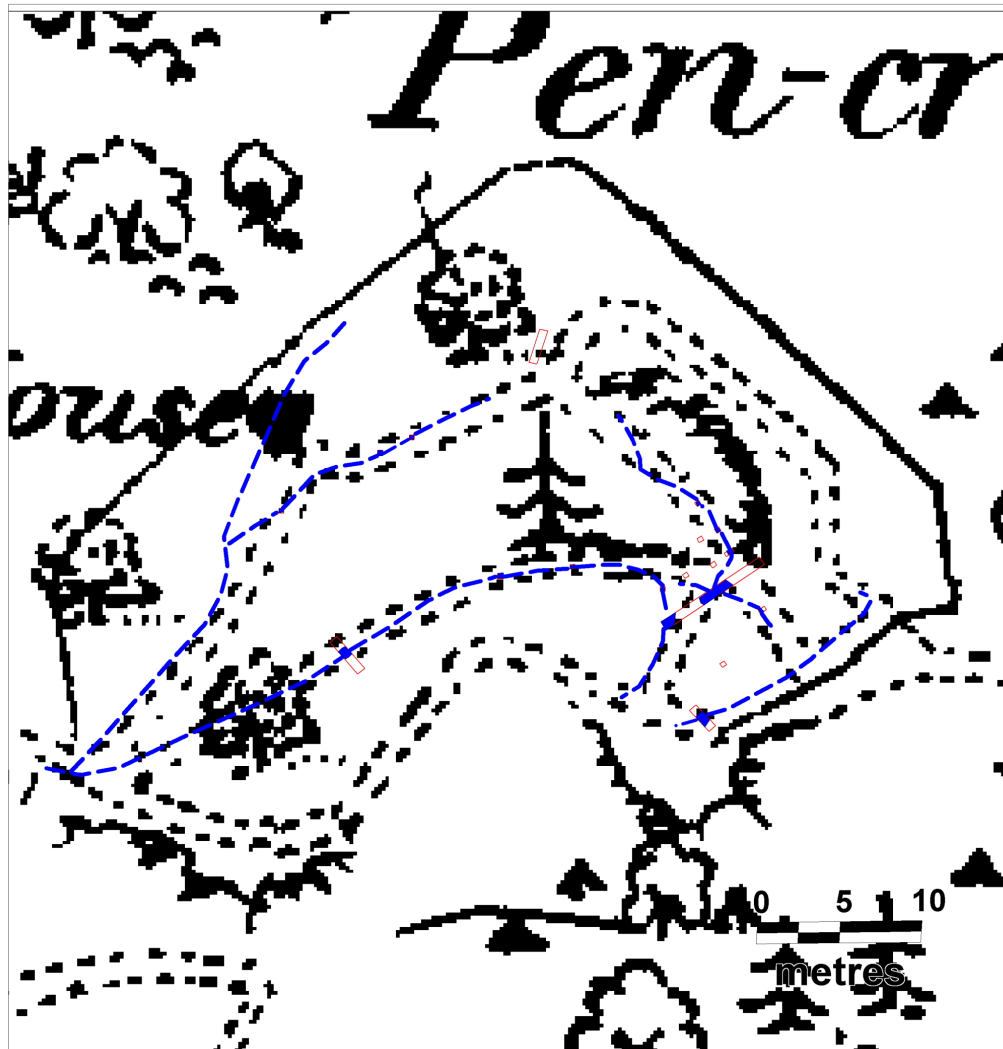


Figure 3: Copy of the OS 1:2500 1888, showing paths surveyed at that date. Overlaid on it are the position of trenches and pits, with blue dotted lines showing the path alignments confirmed by excavation.

Appendix 1

HAFOD CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Mariamne's Garden: Specification for limited excavation

Purpose

To establish the presence, location and structure of made paths within the walled garden.

Requirements

3-4 trial pits to be opened, across suspected path lines. These are expected to be no greater than 1.5 m square, and 15-20 cm deep.

To record the excavations by photography and drawings as appropriate.

To locate the positions of the trial pits on the existing SMR GIS records of the Garden, and provide the Partnership with data that can be entered in to its own (ArcView) GIS.

To provide a brief written report of the methodology and findings.

JJMacve
3.10.07

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by Philip Poucher

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Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by

ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
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Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau sydd
gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

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