

THE TYTHE BARN, CASTLE ROAD, KIDWELLY CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



Prepared
by
Dyfed Archaeological Trust
for
Mr Norman Aubery



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REPORT NO.2008/77
PROJECT RECORD NO.93843

July 2008

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By

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CARMARTHENSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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SUMMARY

This report has been produced by Dyfed Archaeology Field Services in response to a request from Mr Norman Aubrey to provide an archaeological evaluation ahead of a proposed enlargement of an existing cottage, The Tythe Barn, Castle Road, Kidwelly (NGR SN40830702).

The proposed extension lies to the rear of the cottage, which is located c.33m to the southwest of the medieval Kidwelly Castle and within the Scheduled Area of the medieval town. All development within a Scheduled Area requires Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) from Cadw and they requested that a small-scale archaeological trial evaluation should be carried out to provide enough information to inform the SMC process.

A number of significant archaeological features were discovered during the evaluation. They include a stone-built hearth of probable post-medieval date that was constructed over a shallow pit filled with heat-affected clay, which may have been the base of an earlier oven or kiln. A pit of probable medieval date was also recorded.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

A planning application was submitted by Mr Norman Aubrey to build an extension to a cottage, The Tythe Barn, Castle Road, Kidwelly (NGR SN 40830702). The proposed building plot lies within the medieval borough of Kidwelly, in close proximity to Kidwelly Castle (PRN 1622; NGR SN40900700: Cadw ref: CM002)). The site is situated within a part of the medieval town (PRN 5329; NGR SN408070) that is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Cadw ref: CM209).

Any development within a Scheduled Area requires Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) from Cadw and they recommended that a small-scale archaeological evaluation should be carried out to provide enough information to inform the SMC process.

To comply with the condition Mr Norman Aubrey commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to carry out the archaeological evaluation in June 2008.

1.2 The evaluation methodology and scope of the report

The primary objective of the evaluation was to assess the character and extent of surviving deposits through archaeological trial trenching in order to determine the condition, distribution, extent and significance of any archaeological features within the proposed development area.

The evaluation comprised the excavation of one trial trench. The trench was stripped of topsoil and modern material using a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. Once identifiable archaeological deposits or features were revealed the trench was cleaned by hand and the features were sample excavated. All significant features and deposits were recorded, photographed, and, where relevant, measured plans were drawn. All finds were retained for analysis and two charcoal samples from pit fill (1016) were retained for possible radiocarbon dating.

This report summarises the location and historical background of the site and discusses the results of the evaluation.

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

2. SITE LOCATION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Location

The site is situated on the north east side of Castle Road, between the rear of The Tythe Barn and the castle moat. The centre of the site, which is not Scheduled, has had gravel laid across the surface and is currently used as for car parking. The fringes of the site are rough grass.

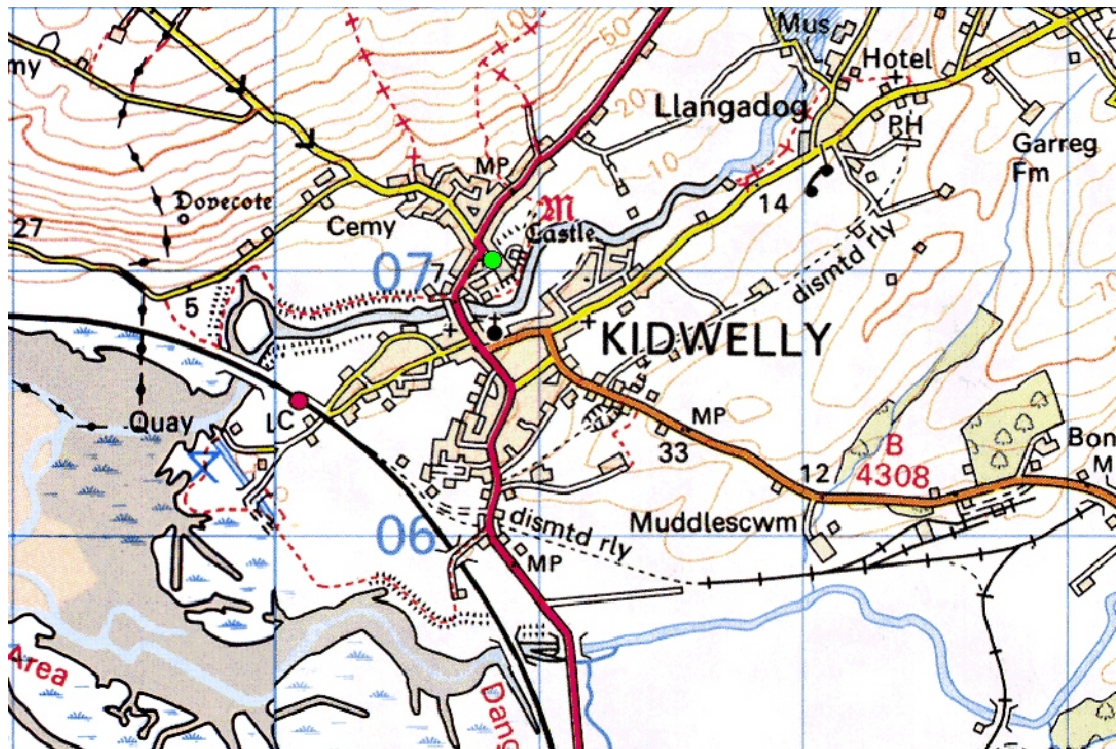


Figure 1: Location plan showing the evaluation site (green circle).

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2.2 Historical background

The site is situated to the south west of the castle and is within the medieval town. The site is also within the scheduled area of the town. The castle is the most easterly of the three major coastal castles of Carmarthenshire (along with Llanstephan and Laugharne) and is sited at the mouth of the Gwendreath river (Avent 1991, 167). The first castle was constructed following the colonisation of the area by Henry I in 1106, who later granted it to Roger Bishop of Salisbury who was his chief administrator. That early castle was constructed mainly in wood, with construction in stone occurring in 1275 (Hughes, 1999, 23-24). The early town was close to the castle but it expanded southwest through time. The growth of the town can be attributed to Flemish settlers who were renowned for their expertise in the cloth trade. The town reached its full expansion in the 14th century; however, in 1403 due to its wealth it caught the attention of Owain Glyndwr whose forces overran the town's defences and set fire to the town. Although Glyndwr's forces destroyed the town they did not manage to breach the castle walls. The town was left in a decayed state after this attack and in 1444 is described as being 'waste and desolate'. Later development appears to have

happened in the new town whereas the old town failed to be rebuilt (Soulsby, 1983, 152-154). The evaluation is situated in the old town.

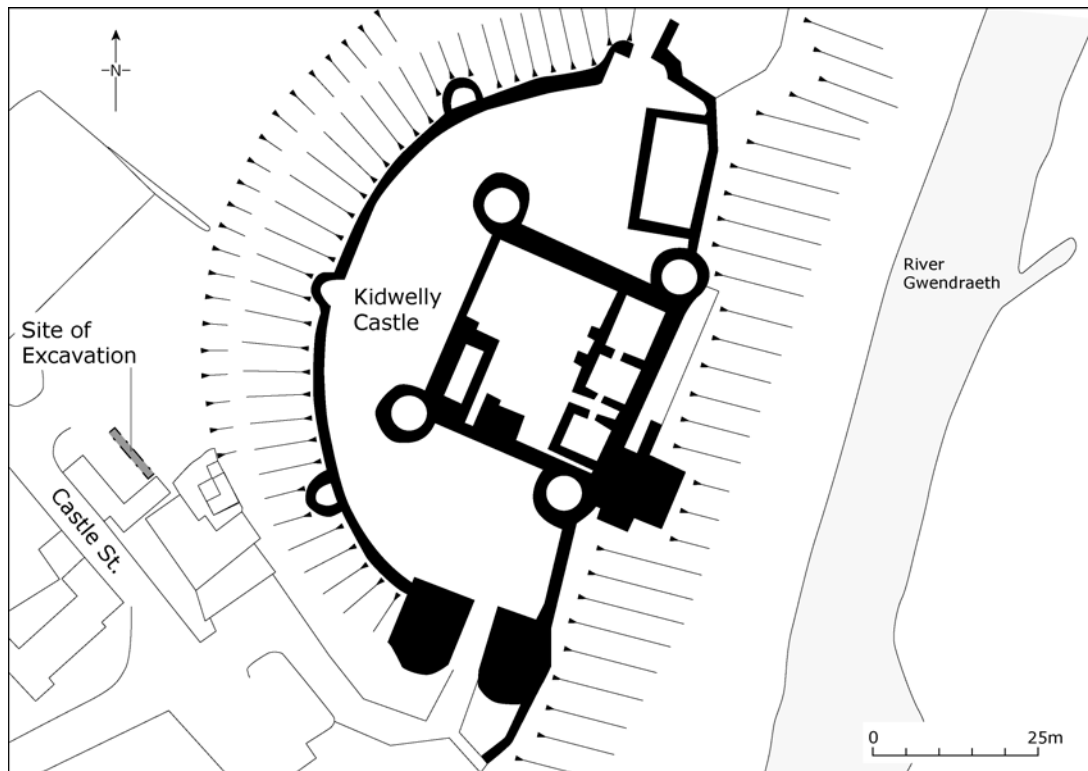


Figure 2: Location plan showing the evaluation site.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1 The Evaluation Trench location

The trench measured c.9 m in length and c.1.2m at its maximum width. The Trench was positioned so that it would follow the line of the wall foundation for the northeast side of proposed building in order to minimise disturbance. Removal of up to 0.5m of gravel (1001) and topsoil (1002) revealed several features along the trench. Most were cut into a stiff yellow/orange stony clay (1003), which appeared to be the 'natural' horizon and was not investigated.



Plate 1: General view southeast along the trench showing Hearth 1012 and heat affected clay 1020.

3.2 Descriptions of revealed features and deposits

The following descriptions are given in context number order.

3.2.1 Ditch or pit 1005 and fill 1004 (Fig. 3; Plates 7, 8 and 9)

A large ditch or pit (1005) curved from northeast to south across the southeast end of the trench. The ditch was up to 1.2m wide and 0.7m deep at its deepest

point. The form of *1005* changed from its northeast - southwest length, where it had a vertical northern side and a very shallow-sloping south side a rounded base and was c.0.25m deep, to its north - south length, which was up to c.0.7m deep and had a flat base and steeply sloping east side. This difference suggests that it had been recut at least once, or that the larger north - south length was a later feature cutting an earlier shallow ditch or gully.

It was filled with a single deposit of black brown humic soil containing abundant stone (which increased with depth), animal bones, post-medieval and modern pottery and coal fragments (*1004*).

There was nothing in the form of the feature, or its fill, to suggest a former function, nor was its full extent established. The fill *1004* contained domestic rubbish and this suggests that it was, at least in its later phases, used as a rubbish pit.

3.2.2 Gullies *1007* and *1009* and fills *1006* and *1008* (Fig. 3; Plate 9)

Two very ephemeral dark stripes in the middle of the trench were investigated as possible gullies (*1007* and *1009*). Excavation showed them to be irregular and in places difficult to trace. Gully *1007* ran northeast - southwest across the trench and was c.0.3m wide x 0.1m deep, although its southern edge was not certain. It was filled with light yellowish brown silty clay containing a few charcoal flecks.

Gully *1009* was smaller, c.0.1m wide x c.0.05m-0.1m deep, and much less distinct than *1007*. Its fill was similar to that filling *1007*. It ran northwest - southeast and it was not clear whether it had been truncated by *1007*.

There was nothing in the form of the gullies, or in the nature of their fills to suggest a former function or date.

3.2.3 Feature *1011* and fill *1010* (Fig. 3; Plate 9)

Part of a curving linear cut feature (*1011*) was recorded in the north corner of the trench. The exposed portion was roughly aligned northwest - southeast and it extended beyond the northeast edge of the trench. This feature was only partially excavated, which revealed a sloping side that continued beyond the trench edge and despite a shallowing of the slope it was not clear if the base was reached. The excavated section, 0.3m deep, was filled with black/brown silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal, some burnt daub and brick (*1010*). One sherd of late medieval or early post-medieval pottery was recovered from the fill.

The full extent and form of the feature were not established, but it appeared to be the edge of large pit that extended northeast beyond the trench.

3.2.4 Hearth structure *1012* (Fig. 3: Plates 1, 2, 4 and 6)

The northeast end of a stone-built structure was uncovered at the northwest end of the trench. The exposed section of the structure measured c.1m northwest - southeast x c.0.4m northeast - southwest and consisted of seven rows of pitched stones surrounded by thin slabs, which were also pitched to give a thin edging to the structure. The pitched stones had been removed from the northwest half of the interior revealing a surface of flat-laid stones. The remaining interior stones appeared to have been bonded with clay.

The edging stones were only present on the southwest and northeast sides and both sides had packing stones against their outer faces, presumably to keep them

vertical. The northwest side had been damaged by later activity (including post hole 1019 – see below), which, it is assumed, removed some of the interior pitched stones and the northwest edging stones.

The probable packing stones against the outer face of the edging stones suggest that the structure was constructed in a shallow pit. Based on the excavated section of the structure it is thought to be the remains of a pitched stone hearth, which presumably would have been inside a now lost building. However, there were no obvious floor layers associated with the structure, nor was any other evidence for a former building recovered.

3.2.5 Pit 1015/1021 and fills 1013/1020 (Fig. 3: Plates 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)

Hearth 1012 had been constructed over a pit (1015/1021) filled with orange heat-affected clay (1013/1020). The pit extended beyond the southwest edge of the trench, but the exposed section measured 2m northwest – southeast x 0.4m x 0.12m deep. The pit sides were gently sloped towards a flattish base. The fill was stiff dark orange clay containing small sub-angular stones and a small fragment of a copper alloy object that might be either part of a pin or a piece of wire.

The clay fill had been heavily heat affected, but interestingly there was no charcoal suggesting that the clay had not been in direct contact with a fire. With such a small section exposed it is not possible to be certain about a function for this pit, but the heavily heat affected fill suggests that it may have been industrial rather than domestic in origin.



Plate 2: Shot Northwest of Hearth 1012. Also showing heat affected clay 1020 in section and pit 1017 in the corner of the trench.

3.2.6 Pit 1017 and fill 1016 (Fig. 3: Plate 2)

This feature appears to be a shallow pit. The exposed section measured 0.4m northwest – southeast x 0.3m x 0.07m deep. It had been cut into the supposed

natural (1003) and had very shallow sloping sides, which extended beyond the trench edges. It had a single fill of charcoal rich silty clay, which contained fragments of burnt bone and shell (1016). Too little of this feature was exposed to make any assumptions regarding its function or form. A sample of the fill has been retained for possible radiocarbon dating.

3.2.7 Posthole 1019 and fill 1018 (Fig. 3: Plates 2, 3, 5 and 9)

The northwest side of hearth 1012 had been cut by a circular posthole, c.0.27m diameter x 0.23m deep. The posthole had vertical sides, except for the northwest side that was slightly sloped. It was filled with black/brown silty clay containing a small amount of charcoal flecks (1018).



Plate 3: Vertical shot of posthole 1019 and flat-laid stones in hearth 1012.

3.3 Discussion

With so little exposed within a single evaluation trench it is not possible to be certain about the full extent and character of the past activity on the site. However, the complex of features at the northwest end of the trench indicates at least three phases of activity. The earliest features on the site are thought to be pits 1011 and 1015/1021, both of which are cut into the 'natural' (1003) and may be of medieval date. Pit 1011 produced one sherd of probable medieval pottery.

Neither pit was exposed enough to determine their full form, extent or their functions, although, the heat-affected clay fill (1013/1020) of pit (1015/1021) indicates a temperature higher than might be expected in a domestic context and, therefore, it may have been a kiln base.

The small pit 1017 may also belong to this early phase.

Hearth 1012 was constructed over pit 1015/1021 after it had gone out of use. The form and size of the hearth suggests that it may have been domestic, although there were no traces of any associated floor layers. The hearth is

possibly post-medieval in date. The northwest side of the hearth was subsequently disturbed by posthole 1019.

Other features of the site included the two possible gullies across the centre of the trench 1007 and 1009, which are of uncertain date or function, and the large ditch/pit 1005 of probable post-medieval or early modern date at the southeast end of the trench.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has shown that extensive and potentially significant archaeological remains survive below ground within the footprint of the proposed extension.

The most significant remains, including features of possible medieval date, occur at the northwest end of the trench, where they are encountered at c.0.5m below the current ground level. The post-medieval or early modern pit 1005 at the southeast end of the trench is c.0.3m-0.4m below current ground level. Given these depths, it may be possible to engineer the new extension in such a way that it can be constructed above the significant archaeological remains.

If this is not possible, further archaeological works may be required.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 4: Shot northwest of hearth 1012 and heat affected clay 1013 and 1020.



Plate 5: Shot northwest of posthole 1019 and heat affected fill 1020.



Plate 6: Shot northwest of Hearth 1012 and heat affected fill 1013.



Plate 7: Shot south west of curvilinear ditch 1005.



Plate 8: Shot northeast of ditch 1005



Plate 9: Shot south east of excavated trench.

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SOURCES

Published sources

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Maps

Ordnance Survey 1997 Landranger Swansea and Gower/Abertawe a Gwyr. Sheet 159. 1:50000

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REPORT NUMBER 2008/77

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Position: Archaeologist

Signature Date

This report has been checked and approved by Nigel Page
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position:

Signature Date

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comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report