

**PLOT 13 MAES MYNACH, ST DOGMAELS,  
PEMBROKESHIRE.  
(SN 16660 45818)**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**July 2010**



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust  
For: Mr. Chris Thomas of Thomas and  
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## **PLOT 13 MAES MYNACH, ST DOGMAELS, PEMBROKESHIRE, ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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## **CONTENTS**

	<b>SUMMARY</b>	1
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	2
	<b>1.1 Project Commission</b>	2
	<b>1.2 Scope of the Project</b>	2
	<b>1.3 Report Outline</b>	2
	<b>1.4 Abbreviations</b>	2
	<b>1.5 Illustrations</b>	2
<b>2</b>	<b>THE SITE</b>	3
	<b>2.1 Location</b>	3
	<b>2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background</b>	3
<b>3</b>	<b>WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS</b>	5
	<b>3.1 Watching brief methodology</b>	5
	<b>3.2 Results</b>	5
<b>4</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	6
<b>5</b>	<b>SOURCES</b>	7

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

<b>Figure 1:</b>	Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey	8
<b>Figure 2:</b>	Extract of 1838 tithe map of St Dogmaels showing site location	9
<b>Figure 3:</b>	Extract of 1 <sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 showing site location	10
<b>Figure 4:</b>	Extract of 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1907 showing site location	11

## **TABLES**

<b>Table 1:</b>	Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales	12
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## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

<b>Photo 1:</b>	Pre-excavation photo showing development site following vegetation removal	14
<b>Photo 2:</b>	Photo showing section of redeposited topsoil and subsoil.	14
<b>Photo 3:</b>	Photo looking south showing natural exposed at south of site.	15
<b>Photo 4:</b>	Photo facing north with piece of post medieval floor tile visible within the buried subsoil.	15
<b>Photo 5:</b>	View north west of building plot with front foundation excavated.	16

**PLOT 13 MAES MYNACH, ST DOGMAELS, PEMBROKESHIRE,  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**SUMMARY**

*Planning permission was granted for the construction of a new dwelling at Plot 13 Maes Mynach, St Dogmaels (NGR SN 16660 45818; Planning Application Number 09/0506/PA). A requirement for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during groundworks at the site was placed on the planning permission following advice from the archaeological advisors to the planning authority. Mr Thomas, the applicant, commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to carry out the watching brief in July 2010.*

*The planning condition was placed on the development due to the building plot lying in close proximity to the Medieval Abbey of St Dogmaels, which also has probable early medieval origins. The Mwtshwr road located to the south of the development is also considered to have a medieval origin. The name 'Mwtshwr' is thought to be a place name for an early medieval ecclesiastical settlement or land under the ownership of such a settlement. Due to the archaeological potential of the site an archaeological watching brief was required. The aim of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological remains that might be exposed, damaged or destroyed by the development.*

*The development area measured c.30m x 35m. The footprint of the proposed building was excavated down to the natural subsoil by machine to form an L shaped building footprint which measured 12.8m along its back foundation to then continue 7.5m along its eastern side. The front of the house measured in total 10.8m across to then return along its western boundary 9.9m. This was then followed by the excavation of the foundations for the building. No archaeological features were identified within the developments plot. The site area had been previously covered with redeposited topsoil and subsoil which may have originated from other developments within the Maes Mynach area. Potentially the area had been previously topsoil stripped before this other material was laid across the site area.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Commission**

1.1.1 Planning permission was granted by Pembrokeshire County Council for the construction of a new dwelling at Plot 13 Maes Mynach, St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire (NGR SN 16660 45818; Planning Application Number 09/0506/PA). A requirement for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during groundworks at the site was placed on the planning permission following advice by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management (DAT-HM), the archaeological advisors to the planning authority. Mr Thomas, the applicant, commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services (DAT-FS) to carry out the watching brief in July 2010.

1.1.2 The condition has been placed on the development as the site lies close to the medieval core of St Dogmaels village, and around 200m to the west of St Dogmaels Abbey. Maes Mynach itself leads to the north of Mwtshwr a road of probable medieval origins. The Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record also records the site of a dwelling, named 'Mwtshwr', and that there is a local tradition that an early medieval monastic settlement was located here. The word 'Mwtshwr' is regarded by some as indicative of early medieval ecclesiastical activity. The 'Mwtshwr' place-name may also represent an area of early medieval sanctuary, or ecclesiastical ownership, or the boundary thereof. Thus the potential for below ground archaeological remains associated with early medieval and later settlement may be present within the proposed development area.

1.1.3 Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by Mr Thomas to undertake the watching brief in July 2010, to fulfil works. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), detailing the proposed works, was prepared by DAT-FM and approved by the planning authority prior to the archaeological works commencing.

### **1.2 Scope of the Project**

1.2.1 The scope of the project was laid out in the WSI as follows:

*"Archaeological attendance and recording during groundworks associated with the construction of a new dwelling within the development area at Plot 13, Maes Mynach, St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire. The groundworks may entail ground reduction, footings excavation and installation of services, all of which may expose, damage or destroy any underlying archaeological remains, if present."*

### **1.3 Report Outline**

1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background before summarising the watching brief results and the conclusions based on those results.

### **1.4 Abbreviations**

1.4.1 Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER<sup>1</sup>) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

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<sup>1</sup> Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

## **1.5 Illustrations**

1.5.1 Record photographs are included at back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale and are illustrative only.

## **2 THE SITE**

### **2.1 Location**

2.1.1 Building plot 13 at Maes Mynach is located at the eastern edge of the village of St Dogmaels (NGR SN 16660 45818) and is situated 270 metres to the east of the medieval Abbey of St Dogmaels. The plot is positioned on a gentle north facing slope, which falls sharply towards the development plots northern boundary.

2.1.2 St Dogmaels is located 1.5km to the west of Cardigan on the southern bank of the river Teifi within Pembrokeshire.

### **2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background**

2.2.1 The origins of St Dogmaels Abbey can be traced back to the early medieval period, although all the extant upstanding remains are medieval or post medieval. A previous geophysical survey was undertaken to the south of the abbey buildings which produced results indicating a curving bank which could be evidence for an early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure (PRN 1222, NGR SN 1640 4590). Other evidence which could point to an early medieval date of origin for the site are six Group I-II Early Christian Monuments which are located in the Parish church within the Abbey's ground which could suggest a 6<sup>th</sup> century date of origin for the site. It has also been considered that the early medieval ecclesiastical site could have been situated elsewhere. The site is also dedicated to the Celtic St Dogmael who is thought to have been the founder of the site, again indicating an early medieval foundation.

2.2.2 The Medieval abbey of St Dogmael (PRN 1090, SN 1641 4586) belongs to the Tironensian movement which was based on the teachings of St Benedict. The movement was very successful in Scotland, however, it was less so in England and Wales. St Dogmaels was considered the 'mother house' of two other priories situated in the south of Pembrokeshire, these being the priories of Pill and Caldey. The Priory was founded at St Dogmaels in 1115AD by the Norman baron of Cemais Robert Fitz Martin. It is documented that thirteen monks from France arrived at the priory to introduce continental style monasticism to the site. Five years later the priory was given the status of being an abbey and controlled three other Priories these being Pill, Caldey and Glascarreg in Ireland. Throughout the abbey's life changes can be seen in its build and structural alterations which are probably attributed to the changes in fortunes of the Anglo Normans through time (Rees, 1992, 187). In 1291AD the Abbey is listed as having 720 acres of arable farmland (Cowley, 1997, P273). Other examples can be found within England and Wales where large amounts of arable land was held by monastic settlements such as in Kent where in 1086AD 55% of arable land was held under ecclesiastical ownership. Examples can be seen such as in Canterbury where the monastic community constructed farm buildings, water mills, windmills, land drainage and soil improvements outside the abbey's boundary (Aston, 2000, P 131). This process probably occurred at St Dogmaels Abbey and through undertaking this venture the Abbey would gain much wealth from the surrounding lands. The site area at Maes Mynach could well lie within the arable lands surrounding the abbey. The Abbey of St Dogmaels was dissolved in 1536, along with other monastic sites in England and Wales within the reign of Henry VIII (Ramsey, 1998, P9).

2.2.3 The Medieval fulling mill of Cwmffrwd (PRN 12610, NGR SN 165459) is documented as being located 182 metres to the north-west of the development plot.

2.2.4 Maes Mynach itself leads to the north of Mwtshwr a road of probable medieval origins. The Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record also records the site of a dwelling, named 'Mwtshwr' (PRN 11,446, NGR SN 1684 4571), and that there is a local tradition that an early medieval monastic settlement was located here. The word 'Mwtshwr' is regarded by some as indicative of early medieval ecclesiastical activity. The 'Mwtshwr' place-name may also represent an area of early medieval sanctuary, or ecclesiastical ownership, or the boundary thereof. Thus the potential for below ground archaeological remains associated with early medieval and later settlement may be present within the proposed development area. Such remains may comprise below ground remains of timber buildings, plot boundaries or rubbish pits. Such features are likely to be present at a shallow depth below the ground surface at the interface between topsoil and natural subsoils. The archaeological sites, which are situated in the surrounding area, could indicate that there is potential for early medieval or medieval archaeological features to be present within the proposed development area.

2.1.5 The tithe map of St Dogmaels dated September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1838 depicts the development plot being located within field 193c which is listed as being owned by a Mrs Elizabeth James who also occupied the land at this time (Figure 2). The field is named Park Coed roughly translated as wooded area. The First Edition (1891; Figure 3) and Second Edition (1907; Figure 4) Ordnance Survey maps both show the development area as being located within an arable field. These maps all indicate that the area has remained undeveloped since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Watching brief methodology**

3.1.1 The watching brief comprised two site visits to monitor the removal of the topsoil and subsoil across the footprint of the building (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2010). The topsoil and subsoil were removed by a 360 degree excavator, using a toothless bucket.

3.1.2 In the northern part of the building plot a greater depth of topsoil/subsoil and redeposited natural was present. This was not entirely removed during initial groundworks which may have sealed any underlying archaeological deposits. It was therefore necessary to observe the excavation of foundation trenches within this area so that any archaeological remains present could then be recorded through viewing the sections of the foundation trenches.

#### **3.2 Results**

3.2.1 The building plot was located on a slight north-facing slope, which had been previously used to dispose of unwanted topsoil and subsoil, presumably associated with the construction of buildings within the Maes Mynach area. This mixed topsoil layer proved to be up to 0.89m deep in places (Photo 2). Vegetation was stripped across the development plot exposing the surface of this redeposited material (Photo 1). Natural ground was exposed in the southern part of the area beneath this material (Photo 3).

3.2.2 Following removal of the redeposited topsoil and subsoil a buried subsoil was observed within the excavated foundation trenches. This subsoil comprised a firm compacted mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional small pieces of angular shales and occasional small flecks of charcoal (Photo 4). One post-medieval floor tile was recovered from the subsoil (Photo 4). This layer measured c.0.46m in thickness. It should be noted that no buried original topsoil layer was noted beneath the redeposited topsoil and subsoil material. Potentially the site area had previously been stripped of this material.

3.2.3 The underlying natural undisturbed substrata comprised a dark grey silty clay. This was observed at a depth of c.0.89m to c.1.35m below ground level.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 The archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the development of a new dwelling at Plot 13 Maes Mynach, St Dogmaels revealed no evidence for medieval monastic archaeology within the development area. No indications of buildings, field drainage or any other evidence to suggest agricultural activities were revealed within the location of the development. No settlement evidence for early medieval settlement within the development was revealed either.

4.2 The footprint of the building had been stripped using a toothless bucket, to the required footprint depth and then the excavation of the foundations was observed and sections viewed. The foundation section edges were ideal to record ditches and other archaeological features that might be present within the plot, although no such features were observed.

4.3 The site area had been previously subject to deposition of topsoil and subsoil, presumably originating from other developments within the Maes Mynach area. It is unclear if the site had been previously disturbed through this activity, as although a buried subsoil was noted beneath the redeposited material, no buried topsoil was seen. Potentially the site area had previously been subject to a topsoil strip, which may have exposed, damaged or destroyed any archaeological remains which may have been present.

4. In conclusion, no significant archaeological features were revealed during the watching brief at Plot 13 Maes Mynach, St Dogmaels. The potential for archaeological remains to be present within surrounding areas cannot be discounted, some of which may be associated with the early medieval ecclesiastical settlement and later medieval Abbey.

## **5 SOURCES**

### **Map**

St Dogmaels tithe map of 1838

Ordnance Survey, 1891, Pembrokeshire Sheet II SE 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:10,560

Ordnance Survey, 1907, Pembrokeshire Sheet II SE 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1:10,560

Ordnance Survey, 1996, Cardigan and Mynydd Preseli. 1:50 000

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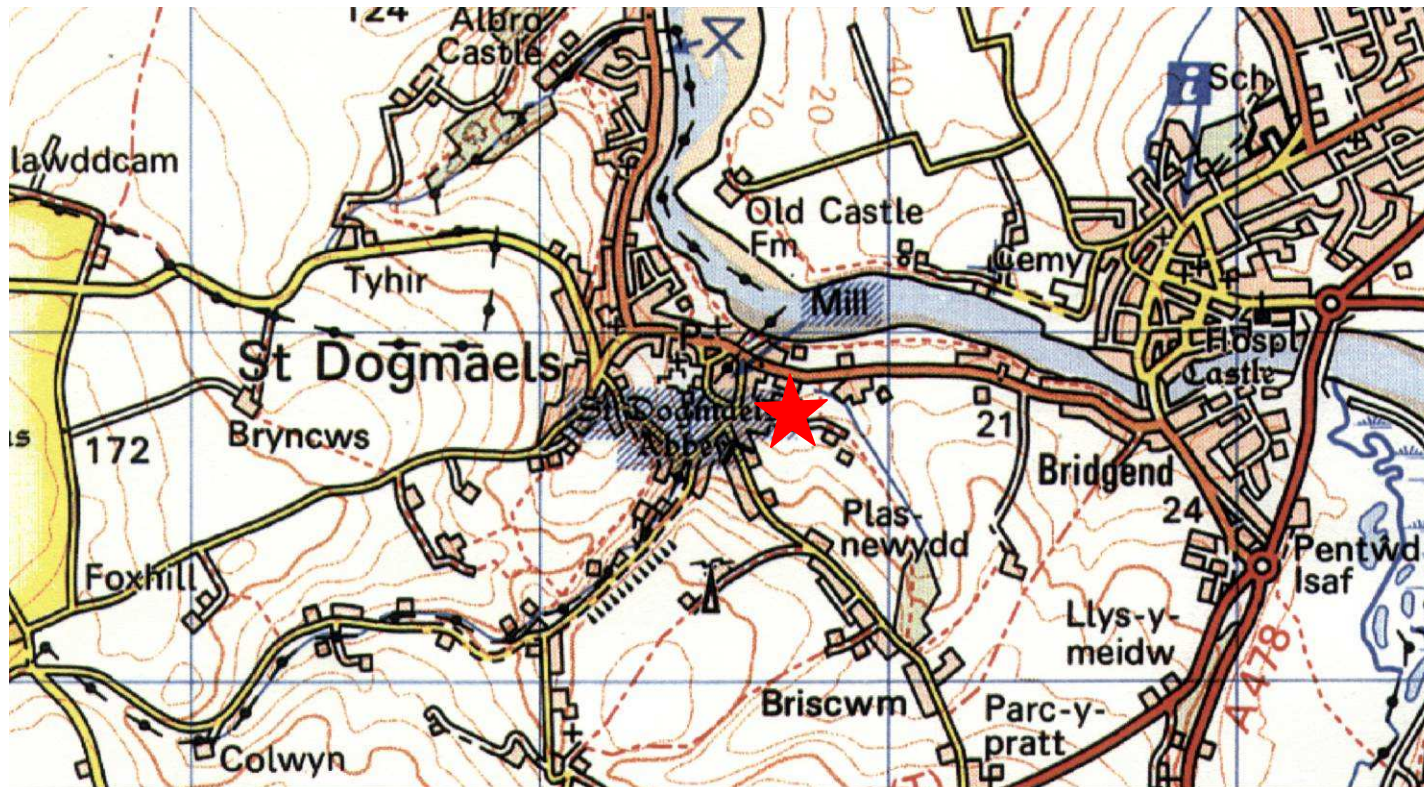
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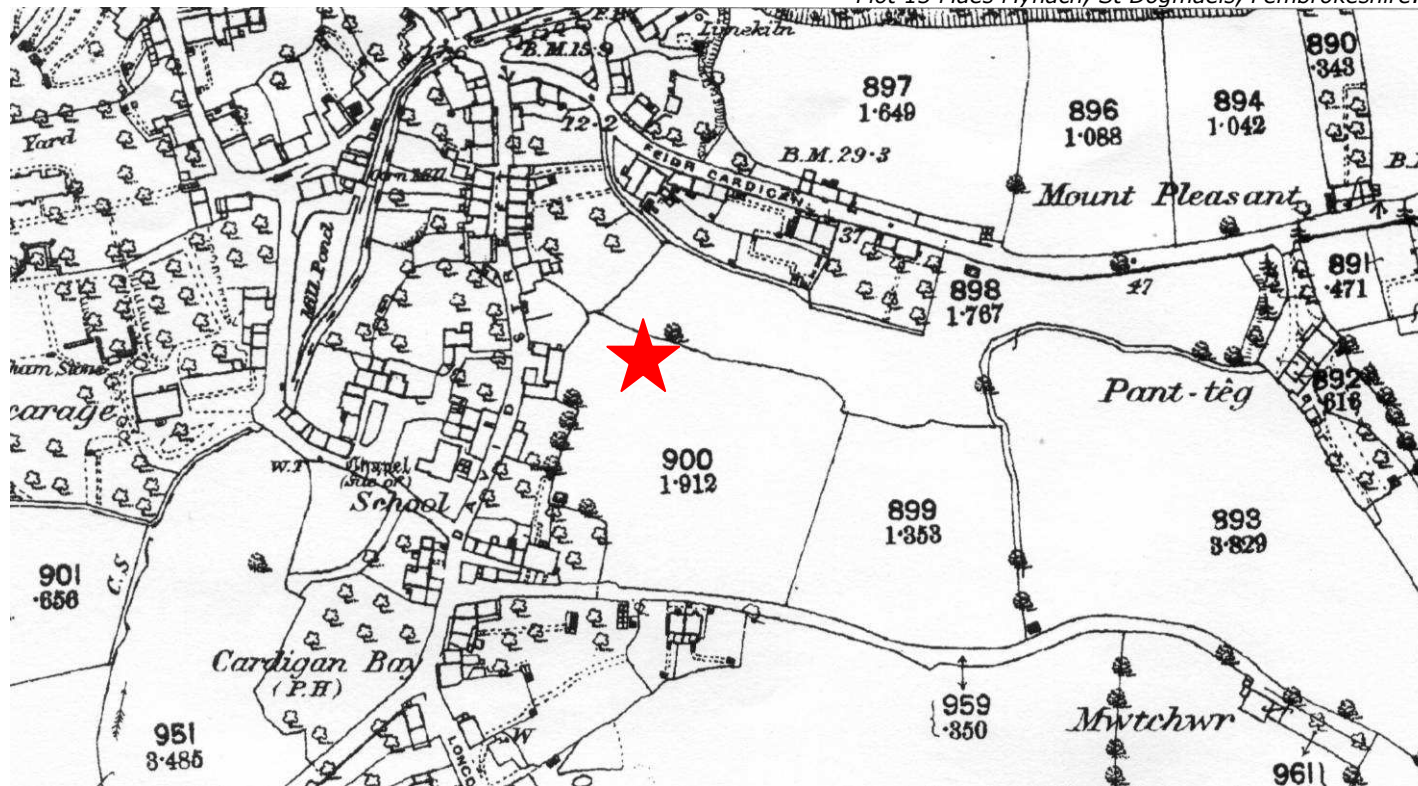


**Figure 1:** Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey.

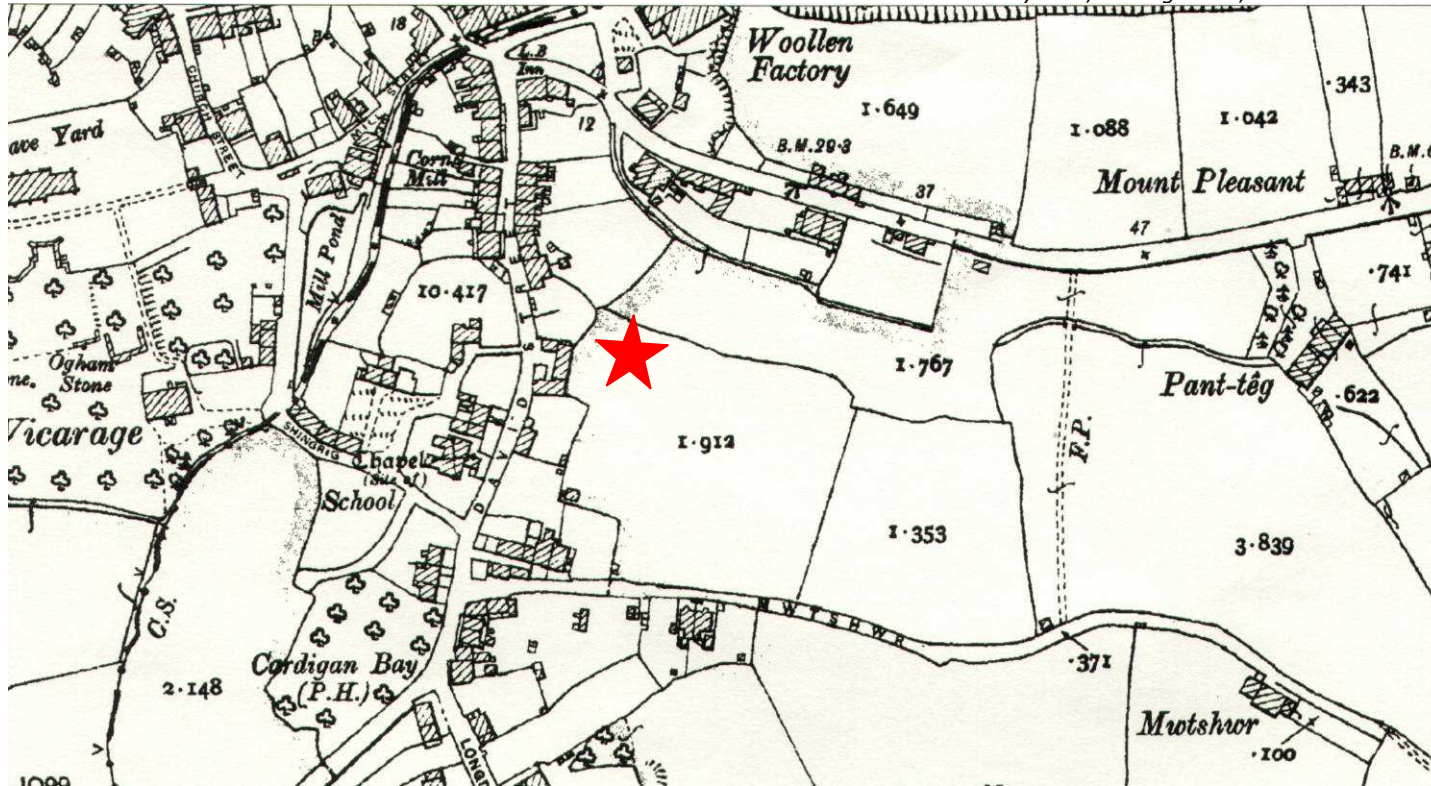
Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A



**Figure.2:** Extract of 1838 Tithe map, red star represents site location.



**Figure 3:** Extract of 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 showing site location.



**Figure 4:** Extract 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Ordnance Survey map of 1907 showing site location.

<i>Period</i>	<i>Approximate Date</i>
Palaeolithic	c.225,000 BC – 10,000 BC
Mesolithic	c.10,000 BC – c.3500 BC
Neolithic	c.3500 BC – c.2000 BC
Bronze Age	c.2000 BC – c.600 BC
Iron Age	c.600 BC – 43 AD
Roman	43 AD – 410 AD
Early Medieval	410 AD - 1066
Medieval	1066 - 1485
Post Medieval	1485 – c.1900
Modern	c.1900 onwards

**Table 1:** Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales.



**Photo 1:** Pre-excitation photo showing development site following vegetation removal.



**Photo 2:** Photo showing section of redeposited topsoil and subsoil.



**Photo 3:** Photo looking south showing natural exposed at south of site.



**Photo 4:** Photo facing north with piece of post medieval floor tile visible within the buried subsoil.



**Photo 5:** View north west of building plot with front foundation excavated.

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on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

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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*

*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*