

History lesson: The town council's Big Day Out will give residents a chance to catch up with the past

# Ammanford Castle? No, we'd never heard of it either!

**A**MMANFORD'S best kept secret is about to be revealed at last! Tirydail motte and bailey – dubbed Ammanford Castle by some – is about to be tidied up and opened to the public. Teg James turns page one of the town's history book

RESIDENTS enjoying Ammanford Town Council's Big Day Out on July 12 will be invited to take a short detour – to view a castle few locals have ever seen!

Tucked away behind the former Cartref nursing home in Tirydail Lane is a dramatic earthwork built during the 12th century when Norman invaders were threatening to attack the area.

After 900 years, all that remains is a 20-foot mound with semi-circular ditches under a canopy of tall trees.

But it was once a wooden keep and granary rising to three storeys and surrounded by mighty circular palisades with a deep 'killing ground' in between (though thankfully its use may have been more symbolic than defensive).

The castle was the first building ever constructed in Ammanford that we know about.

Richard Jones, of Dyfed Archeological Trust's heritage management section, is organising the event to celebrate National Archaeology Week in partnership with Ammanford's Archeology and History Society.

Richard, who is also chair of the society, said the castle presented an exciting educational opportunity, especially for young people.

"I have been trying for years to get this site recognised as an important educational resource that highlights Ammanford's history," he told the *Guardian*.

"It is a scheduled ancient monument – one of 44 such sites in Carmarthenshire and quite typical of others found in the county.

"It is still in quite good condition, although part of the bailey was destroyed by the construction of the adjoining railway.

"Luckily it was used as a garden feature by a property called Tirydail House, which was built in the mid 19th century and became part of the nursing home.

"We have even been in contact with the descendant of the owner.

"We still don't know the name of it though some local people have called it Ammanford Castle and it's a name that seems to stick.

"The society in Ammanford has volunteers and we are hoping that Carmarthenshire Council and the Health Authority will help us to tidy the site in time for the open day on July 12.

"It should be an excellent event. One of the main attractions will be a show by a medieval re-enactment society.

"There will also be contributions from various other groups, including the Archaeology and History Society, Brynaman History Society, Amman Valley Railway Society and Brecon Beacons Geo Park.

"Dyfed Archeological Trust will also bring their expertise on the day with demonstrations, exhibitions and a competition.

"The open day gives visitors a chance to have a look at a piece of their history they not have been previously aware of.

"They will also have a chance to talk to archaeologist about the site and their work, while the town's children will be invited to dress up for a Best Knight and Best Lady competition."

● For more information see [ammanhist.org.uk](http://ammanhist.org.uk)



**DIGGING IN:** Richard Jones, of Dyfed Archaeological Trust's heritage management group, at the site of the old castle behind the former nursing home in Tirydail Lane.

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