

Rhayader Castle, Rhayader (RD132)

Damage Assessment Report



By:
Ian Halfpenney
BA (Hons), MIFA



WELSH HISTORIC MONUMENTS

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Prepared for:

Dr. Sian Rees

Cadw

Plas Carew

Unit 5/7 Cefn Coed Park Nantgarw

Cardiff

CF15 7QQ

Date: **August 2007**

By:

Ian Halfpenney

BA (Hons), MIFA

CONTENTS:

NON – TECHNICAL SUMMARY

1.	INTRODUCTION	Page 04
2.	OBJECTIVES	Page 05
3.	THE SITE VISIT	Page 05
4.	CONCLUSIONS	Page 09

FIGURES:

Figure 01: Showing location of Rhayader Castle – **Page 04**

Figure 02: Showing location of excavated areas within Rhayader Castle – **Page 06**

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Photo 01: General view of Castle interior, looking NE – **Page 06**

Photo 02: View of excavation area 1, looking NE - **Page 07**

Photo 03: View of excavation area 2, looking ESE - **Page 08**

Photo 04: View of excavation area 3, looking NNE - **Page 08**

Photo 05: View of excavation area 4, looking N - **Page 09**

NON - TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The following report details the results of a visit made to Rhayader Castle following a report that unauthorised works were being undertaken within the scheduled area. The visit confirmed that work was being undertaken within the scheduled area, without the necessary Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC). Following an on site discussion between a Cadw representative and a member of the Town Council it was agreed that the site works would cease with immediate effect, the excavated areas would be infilled and the Council would apply for SMC.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 01)

Rhayader Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (RD132) and is located on the west side of Rhayader at NGRSN968/680. The Castle is set on a promontory immediately to the east of the River Wye. There is a natural scarp to the river plain on the south and west sides and a vertical cut ditch on the N side. Relatively little is known of the Castle and today the interior of the Castle is managed as a small area of recreational park and is covered by grasses and occasional broadleaf trees.

Records indicate that the Castle is actually owned by the XXXowner details removed at request of CadwXXX, but the site is managed by Powys County Council with Rhayader Town Council also involved in the site.

This visit was made in response to a call from a concerned member of the public who alerted Cadw to the fact that some form of excavation work was being undertaken within the scheduled area of the Castle.

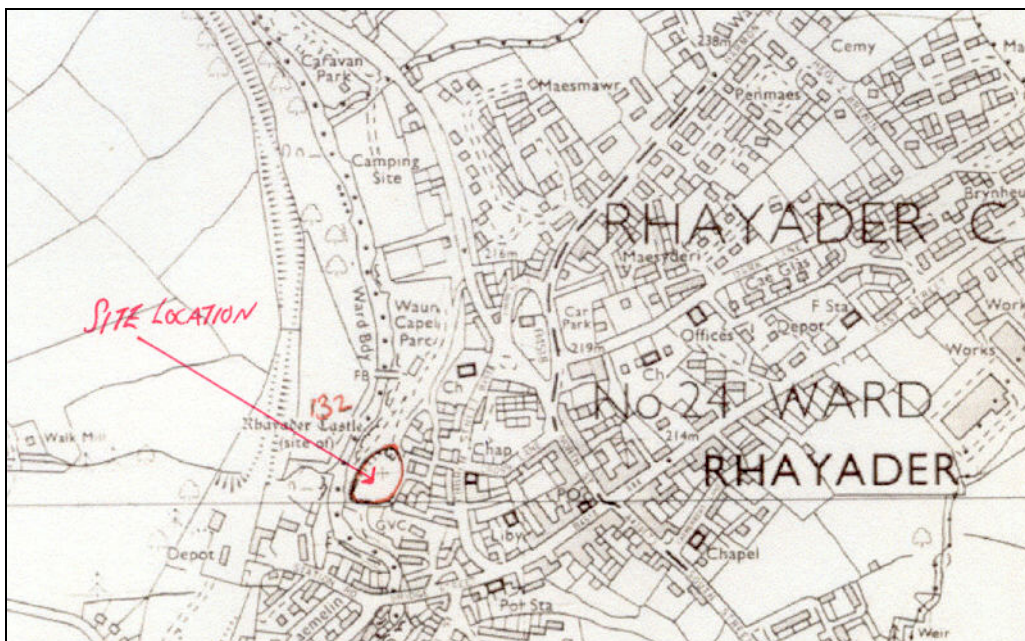


Figure 01: Showing location of Rhayader Castle

2. OBJECTIVES

To objectively record and report any damage/unauthorised works that have occurred within the scheduled area. To also report on any damage/unauthorised works within the immediate vicinity of the site, in respect of any adverse impact this may have had upon the monument and its setting.

3. THE SITE VISIT (Fig. 02) (Plates 01 – 05)

I visited the site on the afternoon of 13th August 2007. When I arrived on site there was a small flat bed lorry within the castle interior and two contractors. I spoke with the contractors and they informed me that they were undertaking works on behalf of Rhayader Town Council. The works involved the surface excavation of four areas within the Castle interior (Fig . 02) that were then to be infilled with concrete, which would act as the bases for benches and picnic tables. I informed the contractors that the works were within the scheduled area and as SMC had not been granted the works were unauthorised. One of the contractors then attempted to contact the Chairman of the Town Council. Unfortunately the Chairman was away on holiday but he did manage to contact another councillor (Mike Lloyd) who then subsequently came down to the site.

When Mr. Lloyd arrived on site I informed him that I worked for Cadw and that I was visiting in response to a call from a member of the public who was concerned that excavation work was being undertaken within the scheduled area. As SMC had not been granted I informed Mr. Lloyd that the works were unauthorised and in contravention of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Mr. Lloyd said that he was unaware that the works required SMC and that this was an oversight by the Town Council.

Following consultation (via telephone) with the Cadw Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Dr. Rees) I asked Mr. Lloyd to cease work on site and for the contractors to infill the excavated areas and that SMC would need to be applied for and granted before any work could resume on site. Mr. Lloyd agreed to this and I said that the relevant SMC forms would be forwarded to the Town Council Clerk (Mr. Barker).

As mentioned four areas had been excavated within the interior of the Castle. The contractor informed me that the plan had been to excavate out a base for each picnic table and bench and then to infill the excavated areas with concrete so that they could be used as bases for the tables and benches:

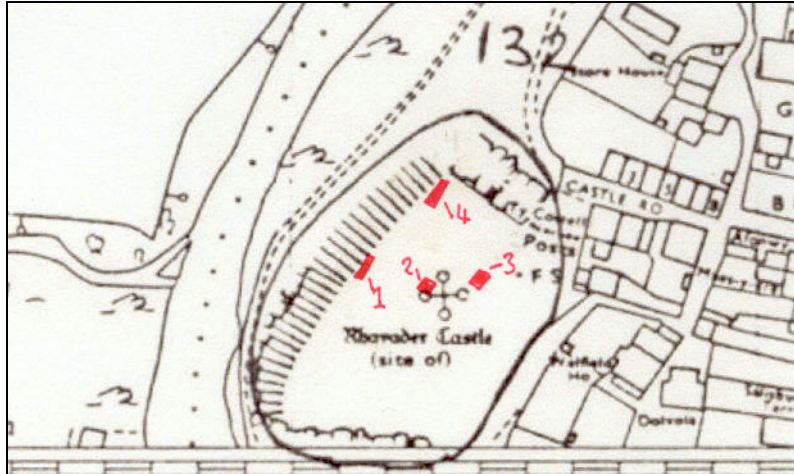


Figure 02: Showing location of excavated areas within Rhayader Castle



Photo 01: General view of Castle interior, looking NE

Area 1 – located at SN96819/68041 and measuring 2.2m (N/S) x 1.3m (E/W). Depth of excavation was 0.1m, which had removed the turf layer and topsoil. The underlying deposit was composed of a light brown silty clay containing a large amount of fractured shale inclusions. This excavation area had been dug through a previously undisturbed area of the site.



Photo 02: View of excavation area 1, looking NE

Area 2 – located at SN96838/68038 and measuring 1.9 x 1.9m. Depth of excavation was 0.15m which had removed the turf and topsoil and had exposed a mid brown silty loam with frequent shale inclusions. At the centre of this trench was an area of disturbance that according to the contractor had once been a child's play area. The disturbance consisted of modern rubble.



Photo 03: View of excavation area 2, looking ESE

Area 3 – located at SN96838/68045 and measuring 1.9 x 1.9m. Depth of excavation was 0.15m which had removed the turf and topsoil and had exposed a mid brown silty loam with frequent shale inclusions. There were also a number of late 19th/20th Century pottery sherds evident on the exposed surface. According to the contractor a concrete slab had covered this area and this is all that they had removed.



Photo 04: View of excavation area 3, looking NNE

Area 4 – located at SN96835/68060 and measuring 1.22m (N/S) x 2.1m (E/W). Depth of excavation was 0.1m which had removed the turf and topsoil and had exposed a mid brown silty loam with frequent shale inclusions. A pre-existing concrete slab that had been used as the base for a bench covered the majority of the exposed area. The only excavation that had taken place was around the north and west sides of the slab. The contractor said that the plan was to locate another bench on top of the slab but as the new bench was slightly larger than the previous one it had been necessary to excavate the ground surface so that additional concrete could be used.



Photo 05: View of excavation area 4, looking N

3. CONCLUSIONS

The site visit and report confirm that excavation work has been undertaken within the scheduled area of Rhayader Castle. No SMC had been granted, therefore these works were unauthorised by Cadw and in contravention of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Fortunately, the ground disturbance has been fairly minimal removing primarily the turf layer and thin topsoil 'A' Horizon. In addition three out of the four areas do appear to have been at least partially disturbed in the past.

Please Note: When I spoke with the contractor he informed me that the Council had also asked if he would employ a machine excavator to 'tidy up' the base of the rock cut ditch on the north side of the site as it had become overgrown and partially infilled with rubbish. As this ditch is within the scheduled area I informed the contractor that this work would also require SMC.