

**Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru**  
**Royal Commission**  
**on the**  
**Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales**



**Romans Castle**

**County:** Pembrokeshire

**Community:** Walwyn's Castle

**NGR:** SM 8951 1058

**NPRN:** 305343

**SAM:** PE188

**Date of Survey:** March 2010

**Surveyed by:** Louise Barker and the Walwyn's Castle Local History Society

**Report Author:** Louise Barker

**Illustrations:** Louise Barker

© Crown Copyright: RCAHMW 2012

Comments or queries regarding the content of the report should be made to the author:

RCAHMW, Plas Crug, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1NJ

**Tel:** 01970 621200

**World Wide Web:** <http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk>



*During March 2010 the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and the Walwyn's Castle Local History Society carried out an archaeological survey of Romans Castle, an Iron Age defended enclosure situated within the parish of Walwyn's Castle in Pembrokeshire (NPRN 305343; SM 8951 1058). The survey was both timely and of help to Cadw as the earthworks of this scheduled monument (PE 188) had recently been uncovered for the first time in many years following the removal of a dense covering of gorse and blackthorn to aid the conservation and management of the monument (Fig 1).*



*Figure 1. Aerial view of Romans Castle in 2010, looking southwest (Crown Copyright. RCAHMW AP\_2010\_1116)*

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

Romans Castle is a relatively well known monument, having been noted by a number of antiquarians including George Owen in 1603 and Fenton in 1811, whom credited it as built by 'natives' at a time when 'Danes began to annoy the coast' (1811, 90). From an early date one of the principal points of discussion was its unusual name. Romans Castle first appears as a place name on Land Tax returns of 1793 and prior to this, variations on the name - including Reymerscastel, Remescastell and Ramscastell - had appeared in documents from 1376. The origin of the name is thought to be based upon a continental personal name (Charles 1992, 668).

Further archaeological interest in the monument is noted from the mid-nineteenth century, following a visit in 1864 by the Cambrian Archaeological Association. The subsequent report, suggests that the monument's condition was much as it is today, with part of the interior and sections of the exterior levelled for agricultural purposes. At this time Romans Castle was thought to be of 'Danish' origin, although there was some thought that it might be Roman, a point subsequently raised again on a second visit to the site in 1897 (1864, 346; 1897, 181).

There remains limited detailed study of the monument, although it does appear on a number of inventories and lists of defended enclosures and hillforts in Pembrokeshire (Laws & Owen 1910, RCAHMW 1925, 408 no. 1155; Nash-Williams 1933, 333; Crossley 1964, 187a), most recently as part of the pan Wales defended enclosures project (Murphy et al 2007, no. 3165). Measured survey has been undertaken by the Ordnance Survey, the most detailed at a scale of 1:2500, as depicted on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1874 (Fig 2). Subsequent visits and re-surveys by Ordnance Survey archaeologists prior to revisions of the map, notably in 1965 and 1975, provide one of the most valuable sources of information, as do the regular monitoring visits made by Cadw inspectors and field monument wardens (Ordnance Survey 495 card; Cadw Scheduled Ancient Monument Report PE 188).

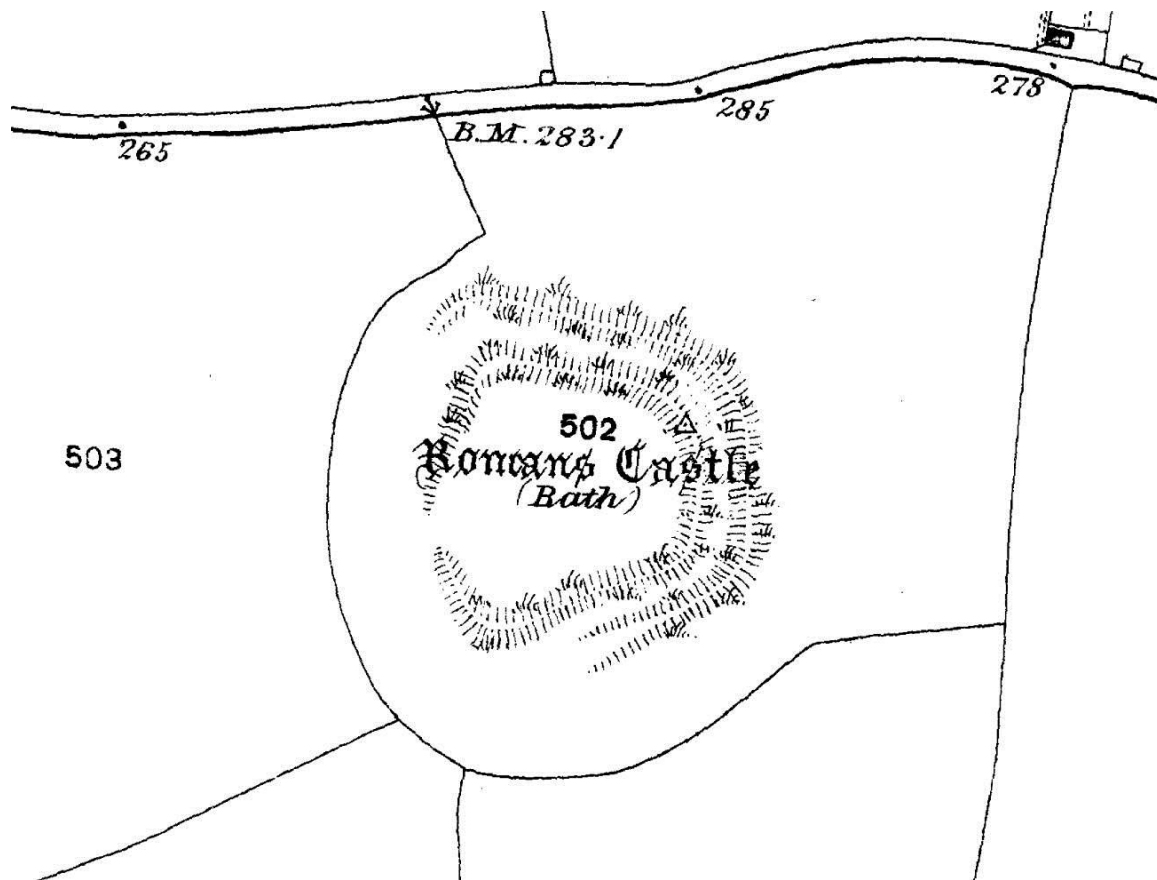


Figure 2. First Edition (1876) 25-inch Ordnance Survey depiction of Romans Castle (Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence Number 100017916)

As to the recent history of the site, one tantalising clue comes from a find, a short sword blade, ploughed up in 1879 and reported to the Royal Archaeological Institute (Baylis 1879, 385). The sword was described as being 11 inches long and double edged for 5 inches, with a studded and tapering ivory haft 6 inches in length. The guard of the sword was said to be 3½ inches long with a human head at each end. It was identified as *couteau de chasse* (hunting knife), and was thought to have been used as a plug or barrel bayonet, which were in use from 1671-1690. In more recent times, it has also been reported that the inner ditch of Romans Castle was used as a horse racing track (pers. comm. Walwyn's Castle Local History Society).

### ***Archaeological Description***

Romans Castle commands an extensive view, situated at the western end of a ridge that marks one of the highest points in the locality, some 90m above sea level (Fig 3). From the enclosure the ground falls steadily to the north, south and west, whilst to the east the ridge continues for 1.8km before dropping towards Johnston.



*Figure 3. A landscape view of Romans Castle looking northwest (Crown Copyright. RCAHMW AP\_2010\_1121)*



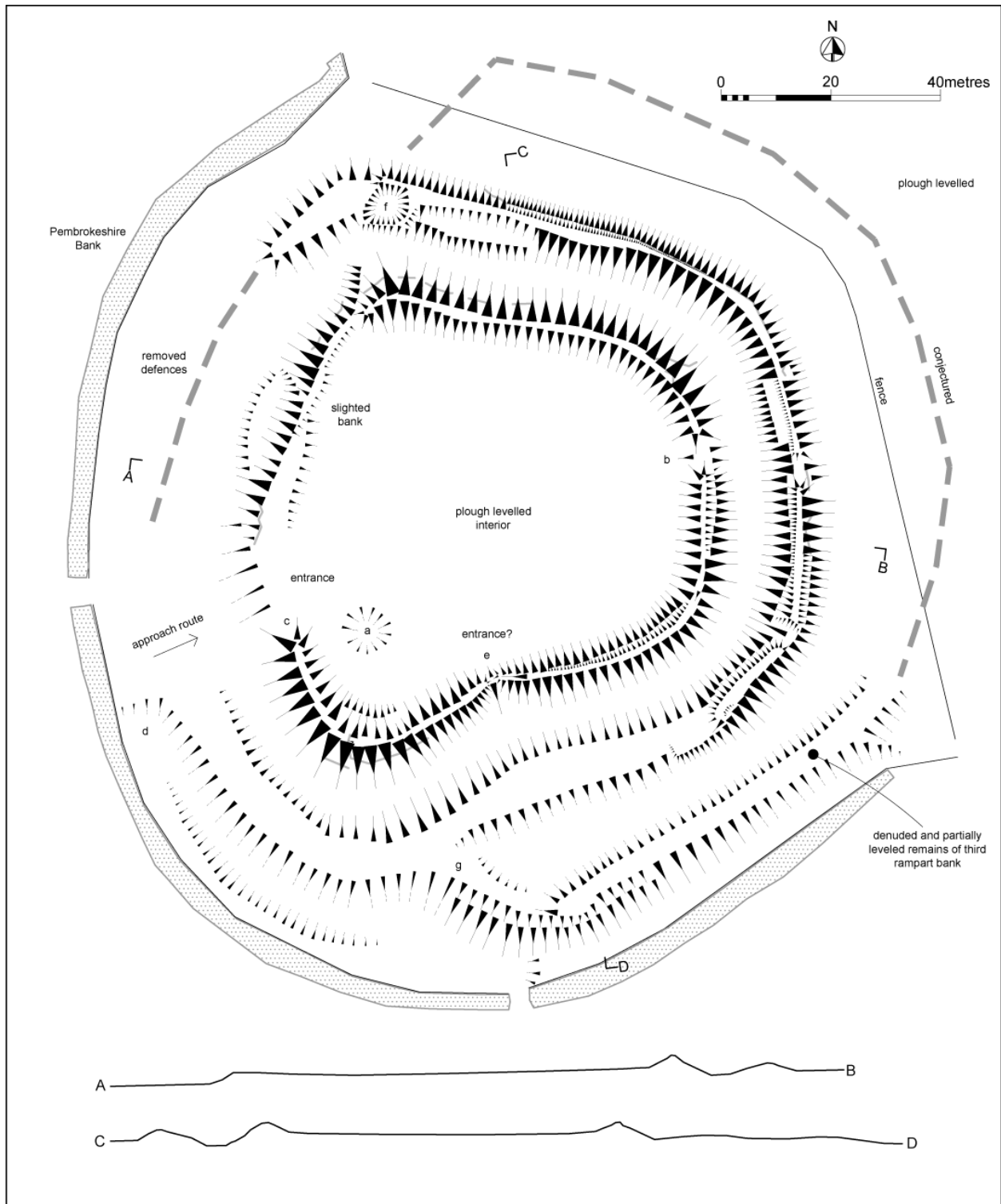


Figure 4. Royal Commission survey plan of Roman's Castle. 2010 (Crown Copyright. RCAHMW)

The monument occupies level ground at the end of the ridge and can be described as roughly pentagonal or wedge shaped. A series of earthwork defences, constructed across the level ground, enclose an interior of 0.35 ha (56m north-south by 73m east-west). This interior has previously been

ploughed and aside from a shallow pit, **a**, in the southwest corner, most likely the site of a cattle feeder, no extant features survive (Fig 4).

The recent survey suggests that the relatively complex series of earthworks that define the interior of the monument, originally comprised a concentric double bank and ditch system, cut by a main west facing entrance, with an additional third line of defence enclosing all but the west side. However, a definitive understanding of this arrangement, based upon the surviving earthworks, is impossible due to the removal of key sections during later agricultural activity. Geophysical survey and excavation would undoubtedly provide firmer conclusions on the exact arrangement. Similarly, little exposed evidence survives as to the nature and makeup of the defences that once topped the banks. Some small loose stones were exposed from erosion scars and in a few places there are breaks/steps in the banks which may indicate the remains of walling.



*Figure 5. Looking north along the line of the inner ditch defining the eastern side of the enclosure. (Crown Copyright. RCAHMW DS2012\_629\_008)*

The inner bank and ditch are the best preserved, with the bank, in one form or other, defining the complete circuit and the ditch some 5m wide, traceable on all but the west side (fig 5). The bank is some 11m wide and stands around 4.2m high from the base of the ditch and 1.7m from the interior. A 50m section of the western line of the bank has been levelled and survives as a west facing scarp 2m high. The levelling was presumably a result of the later agricultural activity, to provide access and more land for cultivation within the forts interior.



*Figure 6. Looking northeast through the main entrance with a possible secondary entrance, feature b, beyond. (Crown Copyright. RCAHMW DS2012\_629\_011)*

There are three interruptions/cuts through the inner bank. The first is a gap 1.5m wide on the east side at **b**. This would appear to correspond with the location of a trig point, as depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey plan (Fig 2) and therefore might be the result of its subsequent removal. However, an original feature such as a secondary entrance, leading down into the inner ditch cannot be discounted. The main entrance is on the west side of the fort, the southern side of which survives in the form of a clear rounded terminal, **c**. The corresponding terminal to the north has been destroyed; however, the earthworks suggest this would again have been

a simple gap design (Fig 6). If the feint trace of a terminal in the outer ditch at **d**, in line with this entrance is original then the approach to the fort appears to have been direct and from the south west.

Along the southern line of the inner defences at **e**, is a clear gap and pinch point (in-turn) mirrored in both the bank and ditch, and which may well mark an original in-turned entrance (as noted on the Ordnance Survey 495 card). Opposite this, to the north the defences also break from the natural curve and turn at a more sharply defined angle. Whilst these features may simply be the result of the construction technique another interpretation is that they provide evidence for phasing within the monument. Could Romans Castle have originated as a small circular hilltop enclosure with an in-turned entrance on the south side that was subsequently enlarged and enhanced to the west with a new entrance arrangement?

The monument's second bank is most clearly defined on the north and east sides, gradually becoming more denuded along the south and disappearing on the west. It is of varying condition with clear signs of erosion from animals and vegetation. The bank is around 12m wide with an inner face standing some 2.8m high and the outer face 1.9m high. In the northwest corner at **f**, a pit has been dug into the bank, perhaps evidence of a small quarry, adjacent to which a clear step has also been cut into the inner face of the bank; these are both likely to represent later modifications. There is no evidence for any gaps or entrances through this bank. The corresponding ditch survives in two sections on the south side, divided by what appears to be part of a third line of defence at **g**. This third line comprises a section of denuded bank 97m long that links with and runs from the second bank half way along the southern side. It stands just 1m high and is 9m wide and whilst the majority has been removed, the point at which it connects with the second bank, suggests this was never intended to enclosed the whole circuit, and perhaps enhanced and strengthened what would have been the more vulnerable east side of the fort, facing along the ridge.

Note must also be made of the Pembrokeshire bank that runs around the south and west sides of the monument between 30m and 40m from the inner bank. This is of some antiquity and clearly respects/mirrors the enclosure. It has been suggested that this may fossilise part of the defensive/entrance arrangement on the west side of the enclosure, perhaps even representing the remains of a concentric annexe (Murphy et al 2007, gazetteer No. 3165; James 1990, 295-298). The recent survey does not whole heartedly support this theory, and further investigation is needed to form a more definitive answer.

### **Conclusion**

Romans Castles is one of 367 prehistoric defended enclosures as recorded in Pembrokeshire during Wales's Defended Enclosure Project (Murphy et al 2007, 1). The monument could be classified as either a defended enclosure or hillfort, and based upon evidence from similar monuments across the region, an Iron Age date is likely, though evidence for earlier origins and later use cannot be discounted.



In form Romans Castle is in some ways comparable to Bullibera Hill Camp (otherwise known as Castle Lady Fort (NPRN 94106), situated on the Castlemartin Ranges 13km to the south, and like Bullibera would have had a highly visible impact on the surrounding landscape (Fig 7)

Within a local context Romans Castle is set within an area densely populated with other defended enclosures. Just 2.5m to the west is the river that runs to Sandyhaven Pill on Milford Haven. Set on the cliffs overlooking this river are a series of inland promontory forts and defended enclosures including Walwyn's Castle (NPRN 305342), Syke Rath (NPRN 305341), Capeston Rath (NPRN 305349) and Rickeston Rath (NPRN 305350). These are an interesting collection of monuments and together with Romans Castle an ideal study area in which to explore the development and relationship between sites.

*Figure 7. Bullibera Hill Camp (Crown Copyright. RCAHMMW AP2005\_2646)*

### ***Acknowledgements and Methodology***

The survey was carried out in March 2010 by the Royal Commission and members of the Walwyn's Castle Local History Society. A number of survey methodologies were used, including Total Station (Leica TCR1205), GPS (GPS sytem 500) and traditional tape and offset survey. The final survey plan at a scale of 1:1000 was produced in AutoCAD.

With thanks to the Walwyn's Castle Local History Society, Louise Mees of Cadw and the landowner for allowing us permission to carry out the work.

Romans Castle is situated on private land and is not accessible to the public.



## Bibliography and Sources

Baylis, T.H. 1879. Proceedings at a meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute, June 5 1879, *The Archaeological Journal* **36**, 382-386.

Cadw. Romans Castle Scheduled Ancient Monument Report (PE188) (available at the NMRW, Aberystwyth).

Cambrian Archaeological Association, 1864. Haverfordwest Meeting – 1864, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* **10** (3<sup>rd</sup> series), 337-358

Cambrian Archaeological Association, 1898. Report of the Proceedings at the fifty-first annual meeting, held at Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire on Monday August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1897 and four following days, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* **15** (5th series), 180-188.

Charles, B.G. 1992. *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*. Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales.

Crossley, D.W. 1963. List of Hill-forts and other earthworks in Pembrokeshire, *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* **20**, 171-206.

Fenton, R. 1811. *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*. London.

James, T. 1990. Concentric Antenna Enclosures – A New Defended Enclosure Type in West Wales, *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* **56**, 295-298.

Murphy, K., & Manwaring, M. 2004. *Prehistoric Defended Enclosures in Southwest Wales* (Unpublished Dyfed Archaeological Trust Report)

Murphy K., Ramsey P., Pucher P., & Page M. 2007. *A survey of defended enclosures in Pembrokeshire 2007* (Unpublished Dyfed Archaeological Trust report No. 2007/01)

Murphy, K., & Murphy, F. 2010. Iron Age Hillforts and Defended Enclosures in Southwest Wales, *Internet Archaeology*, **28**

Nash-Williams, V.E. 1933. An early Iron Age Hill-fort at Llanmelin near Caerwent, Monmouthshire. With a note on the distribution of hill-forts and other earthworks in Wales and the Marches, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* **88**, 237-346.

National Library of Wales: Oversize Atlas 319. Pembrokeshire Archaeological Survey 1896-1907. Dr Henry Owen and Edward Laws.

Ordnance Survey: OS 495 Card: Romans Castle (SM 81 SE 17) (available at the NMRW, Aberystwyth.)

RCAHMW. 1925. *An inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire. VII. – County of Pembroke*. London: HMSO