

# TIR-Y-DAIL MOTTE, AMMANFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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# TIR-Y-DAIL MOTTE, AMMANFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Gan / By

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**TIR-Y-DAIL MOTTE, AMMANFORD  
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**TIR-Y-DAIL MOTTE, AMMANFORD**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2010**

**SUMMARY**

*The earthwork remains of a timber castle lie hidden amongst undergrowth behind Cartref and Swn y Gwynt Day Hospital on Tirydail Lane, Ammanford. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, but poorly understood and little known. In order to raise its profile and assist in the formulation of a management plan to ensure its long-term survival, a small-scale community excavation was organised as part of a longer running programme of investigations at the site. The project was funded by Cadw and supported by Carmarthenshire County Council, the Hywel Dda Health Board, Ammanford Town Council and Ammanford Archaeology and History Society.*

*The castle site consists of a c.5m high motte with an unusual dished top, surrounded to the north by an inner ditch, a defensive bank or bailey platform with an outer ditch and counterscarp bank. The site is truncated to the north by rear gardens to existing properties, to the east by Cartref house, to the south by the landscaped grounds of Cartref and to the west by a 19<sup>th</sup> century railway. An interrupted linear trench was excavated across the motte summit and through the inner ditch, across the defensive bank/bailey platform, and into the outer ditch.*

*The excavation revealed the construction make-up of the motte. The evidence excavation suggests the dished summit appeared to be an original feature associated with the construction of the motte. Only one possible structural feature was revealed on the summit, in the form of a possible posthole. Some overlying post-medieval and modern layers were also recorded. The dished summit and lack of definite structural remains may suggest the motte was unfinished, however it is argued that this is not necessarily the case. Dished motte summits, although rare, have been recorded elsewhere and although it was apparent there were no masonry structures on the summit, the former presence of medieval timber structures cannot be discounted. Medieval structures are known without any deep or obvious foundations required in similar situations, especially when built on a layer of hard gravels and cobbling as was recorded here.*

*The outer bank or bailey platform was constructed of similar locally sourced gravel layers, with a stone-revetted inner face. No structural remains were identified within the trench across the bank. The original medieval profile of neither the inner nor outer ditches were revealed, but the inner ditch appeared to have been re-cut, possibly during the later post-medieval period when garden footpaths were created along the ditch. Both ditches contained waste deposits derived from the nearby post-medieval house and subsequent children's home.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Project Commission**

The earthwork remains of a timber castle lie in the grounds behind Cartref on Tir-y-Dail Lane, Ammanford. The site is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. CM067) but there is little recorded documentary evidence about this site and no known previous archaeological investigation of the earthworks themselves. The site is also little known, and therefore in an effort both to raise its profile and also assist in the formulation of a management plan to ensure its long term survival, a small-scale community excavation was organised as part of a longer running programme of investigations as the site passes into the hands of the local Town Council. The results of the archaeological investigation will not only help raise the profile of this site, but will be used to inform both the local Town Council and Cadw during the preparation of an appropriate management regime for the site.

The excavation was undertaken over the course of nine days between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2010, involving two archaeologists from the Dyfed Archaeological Trust working alongside and supervising several volunteers from the local community.

### **Scope of the Project**

The evaluation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area.

### **Report Outline**

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

### **Abbreviations**

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). SAM - Scheduled Ancient Monuments; NW - northwest; NE - northeast; SW - southwest and SE - southeast.

### **Illustrations**

Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

### **Acknowledgements**

Numerous enthusiastic local volunteers (T Coombe, P Zammit, R Hopkins, K Jones, M Bell, J Evans) undertook the excavation under the supervision of P Poucher and H Wilson of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust. Trust staff and the volunteers would like to express their gratitude to Cadw, Carmarthenshire County Council, the Hywel Dda Health Board, Ammanford Town Council, Ammanford Archaeology and History Society for allowing the excavation to take place and for their assistance during the works.

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

## **SITE LOCATION**

The site occupies the edge of a glacial terrace, lying some 4m above the floodplain on the east bank of the Afon Llwchwr at SN 6241 1247. The solid geology is represented by coal measures, overlain by undifferentiated river terrace deposits at this point. Glacial drift deposits form a 'tongue' beneath the castle site itself that extends a short distance southwest-wards of the castle into the alluvium of the Afon Llwchwr (see Fig.2), accounting for the sharp downhill terrace 50m to the south. Otherwise the castle site slopes gently downhill from north to south, between approximately 36m and 35m OD.

The castle remains consist of a motte c.36m in diameter, c.5m high, with a ditch around its northern edge (see Fig.6). Beyond this lies a wide defensive bank, or possible bailey platform, fronted by an external ditch and counterscarp bank to the north and east. The ditches are now infilled and the site lies under tree and scrub cover in ground behind Cartref (a former day centre) and Swn-y-Gwynt Day Hospital on Tir-y-Dail Lane, Ammanford, which now form the eastern boundary to the site. A railway line forms the western boundary to the site, beyond which lies the Afon Llwchwr. To the north lie rear gardens of properties fronting Tir-y-Dail Lane, and to the south lies the lawns and grounds of Cartref.



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following history is taken from a previous archaeological evaluation report on the castle (Ludlow 2002).

### Medieval History

Ammanford castle has no documented history (King 1988, 54). It lay within Cwmwd Iscennen, Cantref Bychan, which remained nominally independent of Anglo-Norman rule until 1277 (Rees 1953, xv). However, the remainder of Cantref Bychan was brought under Anglo-Norman control, by the lords of Llandovery, in c.1115 and the castle may therefore represent the *caput* or centre of an early attempt to establish Iscennen as an Anglo-Norman lordship. Alternatively, it may be a Welsh Castle.

Turvey has pointed out that its location in the extreme southern portion of Cantref Bychan and occupying a salient position at the northern tip of the common frontier of the lordships of Gwyr and Cydweli, is a strategic one (Turvey 1995, 108). It is also close to the confluence of the rivers Amman and Llŵchwr, which define the borders of three lordships. Turvey suggests that the castle was built to delineate and define this vulnerable frontier by a 12<sup>th</sup> century lord of Cantref Bychan. From c.1115 to 1158, and again in 1159-62, these lords were Anglo-Normans, the FitzPons and Clifford lords of Llandovery. From 1162 onwards, Cantref Bychan was under the control of the Welsh, in the form of Rhys ap Gruffudd ('The Lord Rhys'), who Turvey favours as the founder of Ammanford Castle (*ibid.*). His argument largely rests on the fact that the lordships of Gwyr and Cydweli were in Anglo-Norman hands throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and so only a native lord would need protection from this direction. It is certainly in keeping with Rhys' castle strategy, and he was well acquainted with motte-and-bailey construction. It also means that Ammanford Castle's primary role was military, rather than domestic, and was unlikely to have been accompanied by any civil settlement. Rhys' confirmation as lord of Cantref Bychan in 1171, and promotion to the position of Justiciar of South Wales, effectively brought an end to the need for his castle strategy. If he was the founder, Ammanford Castle may therefore only have been in use between c.1162 and 1171.

### Post-medieval History

Whoever the founder, it is likely that the castle was abandoned fairly soon after its erection, in common with many earthwork castles. It may have been succeeded as a habitation by Tir-y-dail House, which formerly stood on the site of 'Cartref'.

Tir-y-dail (or 'Ty'n-y-dail') was a large and important farmstead and gentry house, but its history is unfortunately somewhat vague. It is not mentioned, under this name at least, in an early 17<sup>th</sup> century survey of Iscennen lordship (Rees 1953, 286-303). A routeway is marked on the site of Tir-y-dail Lane on Emmanuel Bowen's map of 1729, but nothing is indicated on the site of the house which appears to be first recorded in 1774 when the owner, Lord Dynevor, commissioned Mathew Williams to prepare a map of the holding (Locksmith 1999, 242). However, the site may have been occupied at an earlier date and the transition of occupation from castle to high-status residence may have been more-or-less direct. Ty'n-y-dail translates as 'the house in the leaves' [or Tir y Dail - 'land of the leaves'] and there appears to be no real substance to the suggestion that the 'dail' element is related to the Irish *dail* or administrative centre (Locksmith 1999, 5-6, 240).

The house was depicted, and labelled 'Tyndale' on the Ordnance Survey original surveyor's drawing of 1812, but not in any detail. However, [it] appears to suggest an extensive building complex on the site (see Fig. 3).

Tir-y-dail was, by 1841, under lease or rental to Thomas W Lawford (Locksmith 1999, 242), a member of the Drapers Livery Company, London, who had acquired Carreg Cennen House in c.1806. It was depicted on the tithe map of Llandybie parish, in 1841 (see Fig. 4), when the holding occupied most of modern Ammanford – which was then entirely rural. A large house is shown on the map, but is in an entirely different location than any of the subsequent buildings, lying NE-SW across the southeastern corner of the present 'Cartref' site, in the area of the present driveway. A 2<sup>nd</sup> building lay on the frontage of the roadway (the present Tir-y-dail Lane), again depicted roughly on the site of the present drive entry. The railway was newly constructed in 1841 (Morgan 1958) and is shown running along the west side of the site.

Lawford, who appears to have purchased Tir-y-dail, was regarded as a progressive farmer and introduced a number of new agricultural and horticultural techniques, establishing Tir-y-dail as something of a 'model farm'. The Ordnance Survey map of [1889] shows that the buildings shown in 1841 had gone, having been replaced by a large square structure – presumably the house – on the site of 'Cartref', and a large home farm, forming a quadrangle on the site of the present Goods Vehicle Testing Station (see Fig. 5). These developments may have been the work of Lawford, as may have been the old fishponds [to the south of Cartref]. However, it is locally said that these works, and other gentrification including the landscaping of the grounds, tree-planting, and the establishment of secluded walks, were preparatory to the occupation of the residence by one of Lord Dynevor's daughters, which never materialised (Locksmith 1999, 247).

By 1855 Lawford was bankrupt. He was forced to sell all his holdings and the estate was broken up. Tir-y-dail house was purchased by a Scotsman named Brodie, who in 1870 kept a bailiff in a house known as 'The Bothi', a gardener and a shepherd. The house was obviously still a holding of some importance, comprising 335 acres (Locksmith 1999, 247). After Brodie's death the house was leased by a number of individuals.

Tir-y-dail is shown more-or-less unchanged from [1889] on the Ordnance Survey 25" maps of 1906 and 1916. In 1937 the house was occupied by David Richards JP, owner of the local Dynevor Tinplate Works, while it was requisitioned by the army during the 1940s, and was again occupied in 1946 (ibid).

Carmarthenshire County Council acquired the present building, but not the home farm, in the early 1950s, opening it as a children's home in 1953 (ibid). The home farm had been demolished by 1964 when the present Goods Vehicle Testing Station building was depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map.

In 1982 Tir-y-dail house was reopened as Cartref Day Centre (ibid), and some of the present landscape features, such as the pond, were established. An NHS-managed centre was built onto 'Cartref' in 1989-90, and was itself extended in 1993 [Swn-y-Gwynt Day Hospital].'

### **Previous Archaeological Work**

Prior to the extension to Cartref in 1989 a geophysical survey was undertaken on land to the north of the building, between the earthwork remains of the castle bank and outer ditch, and Tir-y-dail Lane (Lane et al 1989). This survey established a continuation of the outer ditch and counterscarp bank of the castle continuing southwards as far as Cartref, suggesting this may have been the eastern extent of the castle. The survey also identified linear anomalies that appeared to correspond

to paths depicted on the 1878 Ordnance Survey map, along with a further area of anomalies to the south of the pathways and to the northwest on the outer edge of the counterscarp bank.

As a result of the geophysical survey results an archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction works for the extension (Murphy 1989). A continuation of the counterscarp bank was confirmed, surviving to a height of c.0.4m. No other features of archaeological significance were identified within the natural subsoils of fluvio-glacial gravels.

A further archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction of Swn-y-Gwynt Day Hospital in 1993 (Ludlow 1993). The area had been landscaped as a lawn during the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulting in a greater depth of topsoil, subsequently the excavated trenches did not reach underlying deposits and no features of archaeological significance were noted.

A proposed western extension to Cartref in 2002 was preceded by an archaeological evaluation (Ludlow 2002). The proposed development was to extend into an area suggested as a possible location for a castle bailey, and within what was at that time part of the scheduled area. Two evaluation trenches were excavated, adjoining at right angles, measuring 22.75m x 1.8m and 13m x 3m. The evaluation revealed three, possibly five pre-19<sup>th</sup> century features although none could be closely dated. None of the features indicated formalised occupation of the site, and was thus thought unlikely to represent a castle bailey. However, only a relatively small area was investigated, under dry conditions, so the potential for further un-investigated archaeology remains. The level platform on which the site was located proved to be natural in origin, comprising a glacial river terrace.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Four trenches were initially planned across the site to investigate the motte, the defensive bank to the north and the outer counterscarp bank. Time constraints meant the outer counterscarp bank remains un-investigated but a series of three trenches were opened along a similar axis to investigate both the motte and the defensive bank (Fig 6).

Trench 1 was opened up over an area 5m by 5.3m on a relatively wide level platform on the northern rim of the motte summit. Initially Trench 2 was designed to cut a 1m wide section through the motte deposits, but this was modified to include a 1m wide extension to Trench 1 to the south (for 5.7m) to investigate the centre of the motte summit, and a 1m wide sondage within Trench 1 itself. The remaining length of Trench 2 was then reduced in size to a section 1m wide and 1.1m long cut into the northern face of the motte.

Trench 3 continued on the same axis as Trench 2, with a northeast-wards kink to avoid trees. This 1m wide trench ran from the centre of the motte ditch for 21m over the northern defensive bank and into the outer ditch to the north of the bank.

All trenches were opened and excavated by hand. Detailed site records were made on proforma record sheets and photographs taken of all identified features and deposits. Plans and sections were recorded by a combination of drawn records and detailed topographic survey by EDM.

Some charcoal sampling of selected deposits was undertaken, these have yet to be processed. Finds were sorted and labelled but have not yet been processed or examined by specialists.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION RESULTS**

### **The Motte**

The motte is circular, c.36m in diameter, and c.5m high. The sides are straight and steep, having kept their profile remarkably well, with a 30 to 35° slope (1 in 1.74 to 1 in 1.42). The height of the motte and angle of the slope is less to the east at a point where the lower ground level appears to have been raised, presumably by the construction of the neighbouring building, Cartref. A pathway cuts into the side of the motte along this more disturbed eastern side giving access to the summit (see Figs. 6, 9 & 10).

The summit of the motte measures c.20m across with a general very slight slope down to the northwest, but is dished in the centre. After a 'rim' that measures 2.5 to 4m across (at its narrowest along the southern edge), the centre of the summit drops by c.1.9m, in a sub-oval shape measuring 14m NE-SW by 12m NW-SE.

Rounded river cobbles are visible on the surface across the entire motte. To the southwest the upper edge of the motte is cut by a mortared stone and brick channel that cuts into the motte surface, running down the edge.

Around the northern side of the motte a ditch c.12.5m wide curves around its base, separating it from an outer defensive bank or possible bailey platform. As it approaches the eastern side of the motte, closest to the current Cartref and associated buildings, the ditch appears to have been filled in, with concrete and ash deposits visible on the surface. To the west the ditch appears to have been truncated by the railway line.

### **Trench 1**

Within Trench 1 (Fig. 8) a relatively thin layer of topsoil (101) covered the area, consisting of a friable, dark brown humic clayey-silt. This layer contained a variety of finds from late 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery fragments through to recent plastic items. This was shown to extend to the centre of the motte summit depression, although a greater depth of vegetation build-up had led to an increased humic content to the topsoil.

### **Modern features**

Two modern features were identified cutting into underlying deposits. To the east a roughly linear feature (111) of 1.6m width aligned east to west extended for at least 1.8m, although projected beyond the limits of the trench to the east and was disrupted by tree roots to the west (photo 6). The feature had shallow concave sides, was somewhat irregular in plan, with a gentle break of slope onto a mainly concave base. In total it was 0.35m deep, containing two fills. The lower fill (110) consisted of a friable mid-grey sandy-clay with abundant medium to large water-worn pebbles. This deposit was very similar to the gravelly deposits into which the feature was cut, but contained no finds although showed signs of tipping from the north. The upper fill (108), 0.10m thick, was a mid grey-brown silty-clay similar to the topsoil deposit, and containing some fragments of anthracite that may suggest a later post-medieval date. The function of this feature is unclear.

To the west a small pit (113) was partially revealed at the edge of the trench. The exposed part of the feature suggested it was sub-oval in plan, with steep, slightly concave sides and a concave base. The pit measured 0.9m wide, 0.4m deep and was cut into 106 and 102, both softer clayey deposits lying on top of the construction layers for the motte, their relative softness compared to the main stony deposits 103 and 104 (construction layers for the motte) presumably explain why the pit was dug here. The single fill of the pit comprised a friable mid brown silty-clay and contained the skeletal remains of an unidentified animal, although

bone size would suggest a small dog. The bones were reddened in places, suggesting the bones were of relatively recent date. This pit would therefore appear to have been dug specifically for the disposal of this animal, presumably at some point in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Post medieval? layers & features***

To the west a firm mid orange-brown sandy clay (102) overlies the stony motte deposits 103 & 104 (see below). These underlying motte deposits appear to drop away at this point but further excavation would be required to determine if the underlying motte deposits have been cut away and then infilled with 102, or merely drop away with 102 forming a later overlying layer. The latter is suggested as the eastern edge of 102 is irregular and appears to spread thinly over the rising motte deposits. Deposit 102 contained a rather specific range of pottery, including very soft unglazed red earthenwares and some possible Staffordshire or sgraffito ware – a reddish ware with a single sided yellow-glaze and hand drawn, incised brown-glazed line decorations. This pottery has not been closely dated but appears possibly 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century in date. This deposit is visible in Photo 7, on the left side of the trench.

North of this is a layer 1m long, 0.8m wide of mid grey-brown silty-clay (105) that overlies motte deposit 103 but its relationship with 102 and possible posthole 107 is unclear. The date of this layer was not established.

On the southwest edge of the motte a stone and brick-built channel was revealed cutting into the motte deposits (photos 15 – 18). The channel measures 0.3m across, 0.3m deep with a flat base formed by mortared stones and slates, and is cut into and follows the steep slope of the motte side. Mortared stone and bricks form the edges of the channel. At its northeastern end the channel is squared-off in brick with a slightly raised stone step. At its southwestern end the channel is capped with stone and is covered over by earth and gravels. The full length of the channel or where it emerges towards the base of the motte was not revealed. The area around the top of the channel was not excavated therefore it remains unclear what structure this channel may be associated with. The bricks used are very similar in size and appearance to bricks revealed in the outer defensive ditch (see below).

### ***Possible Posthole***

A possible posthole was revealed against the western edge of the trench (photos 11 – 13). The edge of the feature was best defined where it cut through stony deposit 104. This revealed a steep-sided edge to the east and north, with a concave base giving a depth of 0.45m. The western edge lay beyond the excavated area, and the southern edge was obscured by the later animal burial 113, but where revealed the posthole measured 0.7m across. The single fill comprised a soft mid orange-brown silty-clay (106), similar in appearance to deposit 102 but further excavation suggested it underlay deposit 102. The fill contained no finds or charcoal and this remains a somewhat uncertain feature as time constraints and the trench location meant this feature could not be fully excavated. This remains the only possible medieval structural feature recorded within Trench 1.

### ***Motte Deposits***

The stratigraphically earliest deposits excavated on the motte summit consisted of a series of three gravel and stone layers. The lowest consisted of a fine grey gravel layer (114), revealed close to the surface towards the western end of Trench 1, but appeared to both dip down to the east and follow the ground contours towards the

depression in the centre of the motte. The full extent of this layer was not revealed. As layer 114 dipped to the east it was overlaid by two further gravelly deposits (103 and 104) both containing large rounded river cobbles. These two deposits increased in thickness to the east and a sondage of up to 0.7m depth was excavated through them at their thickest point against the eastern edge of Trench 1 (photos 8 – 10). The lower deposit 104 comprised a layer of dark orange-brown sandy-clay gravels with c.60% large rounded river cobbles. This deposit also appeared to follow the slope down into the centre of the motte, although this was only revealed within the extent of the sondage. Layer 104 was overlaid by a very similar sandy-clay gravel deposit (103), but 103 contained generally smaller river cobbles. This formed a consistent layer 0.15m thick and was partially excavated within the trench extension into the centre of the motte, demonstrating this layer followed the contours into the central depression on the motte summit.

All three deposits were devoid of finds or charcoal flecks and superficially appear to be natural river gravels/cobble deposits but due to their location on the motte summit are clearly re-deposited. Although within the area excavated it could not be proved beyond doubt that these deposits did not relate to possible later post-medieval reworking of the motte summit, their gravelly nature and lack of any finds suggest they are a continuation of the alternating layers of re-deposited fluvio-glacial gravels that were shown to be part of the motte construction within trench 2 (see below). If they are therefore part of the original motte construction then the suggestion that they all slope towards the centre of the motte summit suggests the central depression is a feature of the original motte construction.

The presence of larger stones than is generally seen in the layer making up the motte construction may be an indication that these are the final upper deposits of the motte, intended as a foundation level for structures above. Wet weather experienced during the course of the excavation proved that this deposit was free draining.

## Trench 2

The northern section of Trench 2 dug into the side of the motte revealed alternating layers of orangey sandy-clay gravels, and greyer sandy-clay gravels, all sitting upon a sequence of clay layers with the occasional rounded stone and charcoal fleck inclusions (Figs. 8 & 10, photo 14).

The sequence ran from top to bottom;

- 204 - a dark grey-brown sandy-clay gravel 0.21m thick
- 205 - a mid orange-brown sandy-clay gravel 0.27m thick, very friable, almost loose in compaction.
- 206 - a dark grey-brown sandy-clay gravel 0.09m thick
- 207 - a mid orange-brown sandy-clay gravel 0.08m thick
- 208 - a dark grey-brown sandy-clay gravel 0.08m thick
- 209 - a mid orange-brown sandy-clay gravel but with larger rounded river cobbles, 0.11m thick
- 210 - a dark grey-brown sandy-clay gravel but with a higher concentration of gravel and slightly darker grey, 0.15m thick
- 211 - a light yellow-brown sandy-clay with occasional small rounded pebbles 0.05m thick
- 212 - a mid orange brown sandy-clay, more gravelly than the surrounding clay layers, 0.09m thick
- 213 - a light yellow-brown clay with occasional small and large rounded river stones and charcoal flecks, 0.06m thick.

The grey staining visible in some of the gravel layers may be evidence of increased soil content, but the alternating layers indicate care was taken in choosing the alternating bands of material in the motte construction. Each layer appeared relatively level in both the face and side sections of the Trench, although only a short side section was revealed.



### **Trench 3**

#### ***The Defensive Bank/Bailey Platform***

To the north of the motte, immediately beyond the ditch that surrounds the northern edge of the motte, lies a large earthwork bank, clearly part of the castle construction (Figs. 6 & 9). Prior to excavation it was unclear if this represented a wide defensive bank, or possible hornwork structure, or even provided a platform upon which the bailey could have been located. Trench 3 was positioned to investigate this bank, measuring 1m wide and running for 21m from the centre of the inner ditch between the motte and bank through to an outer ditch along the northern side of the bank.

The bank itself curves in a crescent shape with a steep southern face mirroring the curve of the motte. At its centre this southern face is sloped at c.35° (1 in 1.42) but it gets steeper to the east and west. At its central point it is also stepped on this southern face, forming a slightly southward sloping platform c.9.5m long and up to 2m wide.

The bank rises c.3.7m high from the inner ditch up to its summit which forms a relatively level platform. To the east where the bank is at its narrowest the summit measures only c.0.8m across. Only a short section is visible on this eastern side, truncated to the south, presumably by works associated with nearby Cartref. As the summit curves round to the north and west it gradually increases in width to a maximum of 11.5m wide, before dropping off suddenly to the west, possibly due to truncation by works associated with the nearby railway. There is a gradual slope of 0.2 to 0.5m down to the southwest on this summit.

The northern side of the bank falls away sharply c.3.3m down into an outer ditch c.14m wide and mirroring the line of the bank to the northeast. To the northwest the ditch falls away into a general slope down towards the railway, presumably caused by truncation from the railway construction works. To the east the ground levels off underneath the hard-standing behind the current day hospital, but a geophysical resistivity survey undertaken in 1989 (see above) indicates the ditch formerly continued around the eastern side of the motte as least as far as Cartref, and was presumably truncated from that point by the construction of the house.

A slight counterscarp bank is visible to the northeast of the outer ditch 0.4m high and up to 7.5m wide. Only a short section of this counterscarp bank is still visible as an earthwork, truncated to the north by the rear gardens of properties along Tir-y-dail Lane, and truncated to the east and south by the Day Hospital, however, the 1989 resistivity survey indicates this bank also extended around the east of the castle site at least as far as Cartref.

#### ***The bank***

A topsoil (301) 0.08m thick of mid grey-brown clayey-silt overlay a similar thin (0.05m) layer of mid grey-brown silty-clay (317) with a higher concentration of small rounded stones and grit. No features were visible cut into layer 317 and no finds were positively attributable from this layer. The few finds from the topsoil were all 20<sup>th</sup> century in origin, and it is possible some of these finds may have also come from layer 317.

These layers were removed across the summit of the bank within Trench 3, revealing a fairly uniform gravel layer (318) below, comprising a mid grey-brown sandy-silt with c.30-40% medium to large rounded river pebbles with a slight southwards slope. No features were discernable cut into this layer. A 1m wide test pit was further excavated down into the bank material (photo 19). At this point layer 318 was 0.18m thick, and overlay a 0.08m thick layer of mid brown sandy-silt with c.50% medium to large rounded pebbles (319). This deposit thinned out and

disappeared to the south. Underneath was another gravel layer (320) very similar in colour and composition to 318 but containing a higher quantity of larger river cobbles. A depth of 0.23m was reached but the base of the deposit was not revealed. No finds or charcoal were revealed amongst these gravel layers, but they appear to indicate the bank was constructed of alternating layers of locally sourced fluvio-glacial gravels, in a similar style to the motte construction.

The southern face of the bank was cleaned of loose topsoil down to the level of the slight platform, a height of c.1.1m (photos 20 – 21). This revealed a consistent face of medium to large rounded stones (315). This was unexcavated but clearly lacked the layering visible in the test pit excavated into the bank material and would therefore appear to represent a deliberate facing of rounded stones on the internal face of the bank.

At its base this stone facing sat on a charcoal rich layer (314) with the occasional small rounded pebble inclusion. This deposit was partially excavated in order to obtain a sample (not yet processed), and was revealed to be a relatively level deposit extending into the bank, although with a slight but distinct southward slope. This in turn overlay a consistent firm mid orange-brown sandy clay (308) mottled with siltier patches.

This mottled sandy-clay deposit (308) directly underlay the topsoil to the south of the stone-faced section of the bank. It continued to fall away to the south, although less steeply, and in a series of steps, before finally being cut by 307, a possible re-cutting of the inner ditch (photo 24). The occurrence of charcoal flecks within this deposit would indicate this is redeposited material, and not the natural ground level. Three very small fragments of modern glass were also recovered from this deposit, although this could be the result of root action prevalent in this area. Two small fragments of flint were also recovered from this deposit, one fragment having the appearance of a waste flake. These are likely to be residual finds however. Where excavated this layer was revealed as being 0.22m thick.

A small patch of stone (311) overlays this deposit close to the base of the stone-faced section, and would appear to represent slippage or tumble from the stone facing 315 (photo 24).

### ***Posthole 313***

Cut into 308 roughly 1.1m to the south of the stone-facing 315 was a posthole, underlying the topsoil (photo 25). The posthole was only partially revealed within the trench but would appear to be sub-square in plan, with rounded corners, and revealed in section to have steep, almost vertical sides with a moderate break of slope onto a concave base deeper at the southern end. The posthole measured 0.41m wide and 0.27m deep. It contained a single fill (312) of mid grey-brown gritty silty-clay, very similar to the overlying topsoil. No finds were recovered.

### ***The Inner Ditch - Ditch (re?)cut 307***

At the southern end of Trench 3 a linear cut was revealed, running in an east-west direction, slightly off the general curve of the inner ditch profile. This feature cut into layer 308, and into an underlying deposit 309 (Fig.11, photos 22 – 23). A 1.3m wide section of this feature was revealed within the trench, although the ground level formed by 308 into which it cut, also stepped down close to this point. The edge of the cut was straight-sided, with a depth of 0.64m, and contained several fills, in sequence from top to bottom (excluding the topsoil 301) these are;

- 302 – a dark layer of burnt material containing fragments of glass and burnt metallic objects. This filled a hollow caused by underlying materials subsiding into the ditch and overlies the ditch fills.
- 303 – A mid grey-brown clayey-silt very similar to the topsoil deposit and infilling the lower step in 308 and overlying the ditch fills. This deposit contained a large quantity of 20<sup>th</sup> century material including several toys and glass bottles of the 1950s to 1970s, presumably relating to a period when nearby Cartref was a children's home.
- 304 – The upper fill of ditch 307, 0.14m thick, consisting of a mid grey sandy-clay containing large quantities of complete and broken un-glazed terracotta plant pots and broken sheets of squared glass panes. These would appear to be the remains of greenhouses and their contents, possibly those recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> (1889) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (1906) edition Ordnance Survey maps.
- 305 – A small layer, 0.08m thick, of light brown-grey clayey-sand tipped in from the north. It included some small to medium rounded stones but also a small quantity of burnt clay or daub-like material.
- 306 – The lower fill, 0.5m thick, of light grey-brown sandy-clay but made up mainly of large rounded river cobbles. No finds were recovered from this deposit. It appears superficially similar to layer 103 from the top of the motte, and may therefore represent tumble into the ditch from the top of the motte, however, if this ditch was in fact a later recut these stones may represent some form of drainage along the base of the ditch.

A sondage was put into the base deposits revealed by this cut, demonstrating layer 308 continued to slope consistently down into the ditch. This in turn overlay a similar, but significantly stonier deposit (309) whose upper surface also sloped steadily southwards into the ditch. No finds were recovered from this lower deposit, which was not bottomed despite being excavated 1.14m below the current ground level.

### ***The Outer Ditch***

Topsoil up to 0.12m thick was removed from the outer ditch to the north of the defensive bank (photos 26 – 28). This revealed a deposit (327) of mid grey-brown silty-sand with abundant small to medium rounded pebbles. This sloped down to the north and would appear to represent part of the bank make-up material. As the banding of bank material revealed elsewhere was not apparent here, this may indicate that 327 perhaps represents washed down material on top of the original face of the bank and ditch profile, and therefore the original profile was not revealed during the excavation. However, this layer was taken as a base deposit of the excavation into the outer ditch, of which a section 2.3m wide and 0.8m deep was excavated. The sequence of revealed soil layers underlying the topsoil were as follows:

- 322 - Underlying the topsoil within the outer ditch was a similar soil deposit up to 0.29m thick but undulating along its base.
- 323 - A dump of loose light yellow-grey sand with brick inclusions against the outer face of the bank.
- 324 - A 0.14m thick deposit of ash and broken anthracite sloping gradually to the south indicating it was tipped in from the north. This would appear to represent cleaned-out hearth and fire deposits, presumably relating to occupation of nearby Cartref.
- 325 - A 0.33m thick deposit of light grey ash and anthracite from hearth and fireplaces, along with mixed building/demolition debris. The large quantity of finds included broken late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery and porcelain, glassware, sacking material and handmade red brick, very similar in size and shape to those found within the channel cut into the top of the motte.
- 326 - A layer of dark brown, loose, sandy-silt revealed at the base of the area excavated, but unexcavated itself. It also contained fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and glassware, along with some animal bone.

The outer ditch was not bottomed, but appeared to show a sequence of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century dumps of waste material relating to the occupation of adjacent Tir-y-dail/Cartref House. These were overlain by more consistent garden deposits presumably of later 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The excavated evidence demonstrates that the motte was built up in consistent layers from locally sourced fluvio-glacial gravels, presumably derived from the surrounding ditches. The regular coursing, and the regularity in the size and height of the motte indicate careful planning in its construction.

The dished nature of the top of the motte has led to several suggestions as to its cause, such as the results of previous excavations by late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century antiquarians (Turvey 1994) or a modern fishpond or water tank (Davies 2000, 27). A post-medieval stone- and brick-built channel cut into the southwest side of the motte summit clearly indicates post-medieval activity on top of the motte, as do finds recovered from deposit 102, but further work would be required in order to ascertain the extent of this activity. This excavation suggests the dish is in fact part of the original motte construction rather than later post-medieval or modern excavations. The construction of a motte requires material to be thrown upwards and inwards, so during the construction the interior of the motte would have a dished appearance, which may suggest that the motte here is unfinished. Also, with the exception of one possible posthole, which was neither conclusive nor firmly dateable, there was little positive evidence of structural remains on the motte summit.

This is by no means conclusive evidence that the castle at Ammanford was unfinished. Although unusual, dished motte tops are not unknown, for example Tomen Castell, New Radnor in Powys, has a pronounced dish on top of the motte (Higham & Barker 2004, 213). Many medieval timber structures also do not necessarily require many, if any, earthfast timbers in their construction. For example at Penmaen, Lismahon and Clough, drystone footings were used for timber superstructures and at South Mimms a timber framed tower stood on flint footings within a motte (*ibid*, 186-7). Excavated 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century timber stave churches in Norway have been shown to be substantial structures, but resting on foundations consisting simply of spreads of boulders and cobbles (*ibid*, 246-7). The range of towers found on castle mottes also varies considerably, from simple structures no bigger than a look-out post, as at Lismahon (*ibid*, 245), to impressive residential and military structures. As Ammanford appears to have been a militarily strategic castle, rather than a domestic lordly residence (Turvey 1994), it may follow that structures on top of the motte need not necessarily be substantial, such as a look-out post. The presence of significantly larger river cobbles on the motte summit, as opposed to the levels of finer gravels visible in the motte construction layers below, may also suggest these stones were deliberately designed to act as a foundation level for structures above. Any subsequent removal of timbers from a stony deposit such as this may also be difficult to identify archaeologically.

The lack of medieval finds may also be an indication of a lack of occupation, but medieval finds, especially of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, are characteristically rare even in known domestic contexts within Southwest Wales. However, the lack of foundations and any worked stone or general masonry demolition deposits would at least indicate no stone structure stood on the motte summit.

The outer defensive bank was constructed in a similar style to the castle motte, the size and scale of both undertakings suggesting considerable investment into this site. A stone facing on the inner southern face was evident, although this was less apparent on the outer face, but root disturbance in this area means nothing conclusive can be discerned for the external northern face. No indication of structures or further defences were identified on top of the bank, although it is very possible that the 1m wide section excavated may have missed significant archaeology, and further work would be required to confirm this.

The width of the bank would appear unusual for purely defensive purposes, especially as the width increases to the northwest from a rather narrow defensive

bank to the east. This provides a level surface sufficient to site buildings, and still well defended by a deep ditch and counterscarp bank beyond. A lack of archaeological activity discovered within the trench may be another indication for an incomplete nature of the site, but it may also suggest the main area of bailey activity was further to the northwest. The abrupt end to the bank to the northwest at its widest point, combined with an end to both the inner and outer ditches at the same point, would suggest this area has been heavily truncated, presumably by the construction of the adjacent railway line and the possible re-routing of the stream to flow through this area in the early – mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This could suggest that the castle bailey formerly stood mainly to the northwest of the motte, but has largely been destroyed, however, no detailed pre-railway surveys of the site exist to confirm this.

It has also been suggested (in Ludlow 2002, 5) that this defensive bank may be similar to the 'hornwork' recorded at the relatively contemporary Llandovery castle, which sat on the opposite side of the motte to the bailey (see Fig. 7). Such a feature is a somewhat unusual defensive arrangement for an early castle but could therefore be an indication that the two castles were built by the same person, namely Richard FitzPons, in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

A natural level terrace extends to the south of the motte seemingly providing ample room for a bailey, although previous archaeological investigations in this area suggests a lack of archaeological activity expected from bailey occupation (Ludlow 2002), however, topographically this still offers a promising location for some form of castle-related activity protected by sharply falling ground to the south. It is clear from the 1989 resistivity survey (Lane et al 1989) that large sections of the outer bank and ditch have been removed by the construction of Tir-y-dail House/Cartref, therefore further truncation in this area should be expected.

The original profile of both the inner and outer ditches remain to be determined. The clay layer 308 within the inner ditch appears to be a redeposited layer following a downward slope, presumably that of the edge of the ditch below. However, this layer may be part of the initial bank material, as a charcoal layer and gravels have been built up on top of it to form the currently visible defensive bank/bailey platform. Excavations through this clay layer revealed that the layer below appeared natural, but as no original ditch cutting was visible it is likely that this too is a ditch fill.

A ditch cut identified within the inner ditch clearly cuts into layer 308 and would suggest a later re-cutting of the ditch. The date of this is unclear, the lower fill was uniformly river cobbling, which bears great resemblance to the material found on the summit of the motte. Although initially it would appear to represent tumble from this deposit, such cobbles are no doubt easily found in this area. It is perhaps of significance that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Commission inspectors describe the ditch as waterlogged (RCAHMW 1917), and yet the 1889 Ordnance Survey map shows a garden footpath running around the ditch (see Fig.5). One possibility that suggests itself is that this cut was an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century re-cutting, filled with stone to provide drainage allowing drier and easier access for a footpath. No dating evidence came from this stony deposit but there was no great build-up of soil above this deposit to suggest a long period of abandonment and subsequent overlying deposits appeared to relate to 20<sup>th</sup> century activities. .

One of the main objectives of this excavation was to investigate the medieval remains, but it also yielded a great deal of information relating to the more recent history of the site. This footpath was part of a designed layout to incorporate these medieval remains into the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century pleasure gardens for the adjacent mansion house of Tir-y-dail/Cartref. The remains of 19<sup>th</sup> century garden buildings are still visible against the southern base of the motte, and the brick-lined channel on the motte summit may relate to use of these buildings, many of which appear to

have been greenhouses, arranged around the base of the motte (see Fig. 5). Hearth deposits and domestic rubbish recovered from the ditch fills appear to relate to the domestic life of this mansion. The demolished greenhouse remains discovered within the inner ditch may represent the end of the domestic life house in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The toys discovered in the layers above demonstrate the continued use of the house as a children's home from the 1950s.

This site therefore incorporates not only important medieval earthwork remains but also a range of later post-medieval and modern archaeology features that should not be overlooked when considering the future management of this site.

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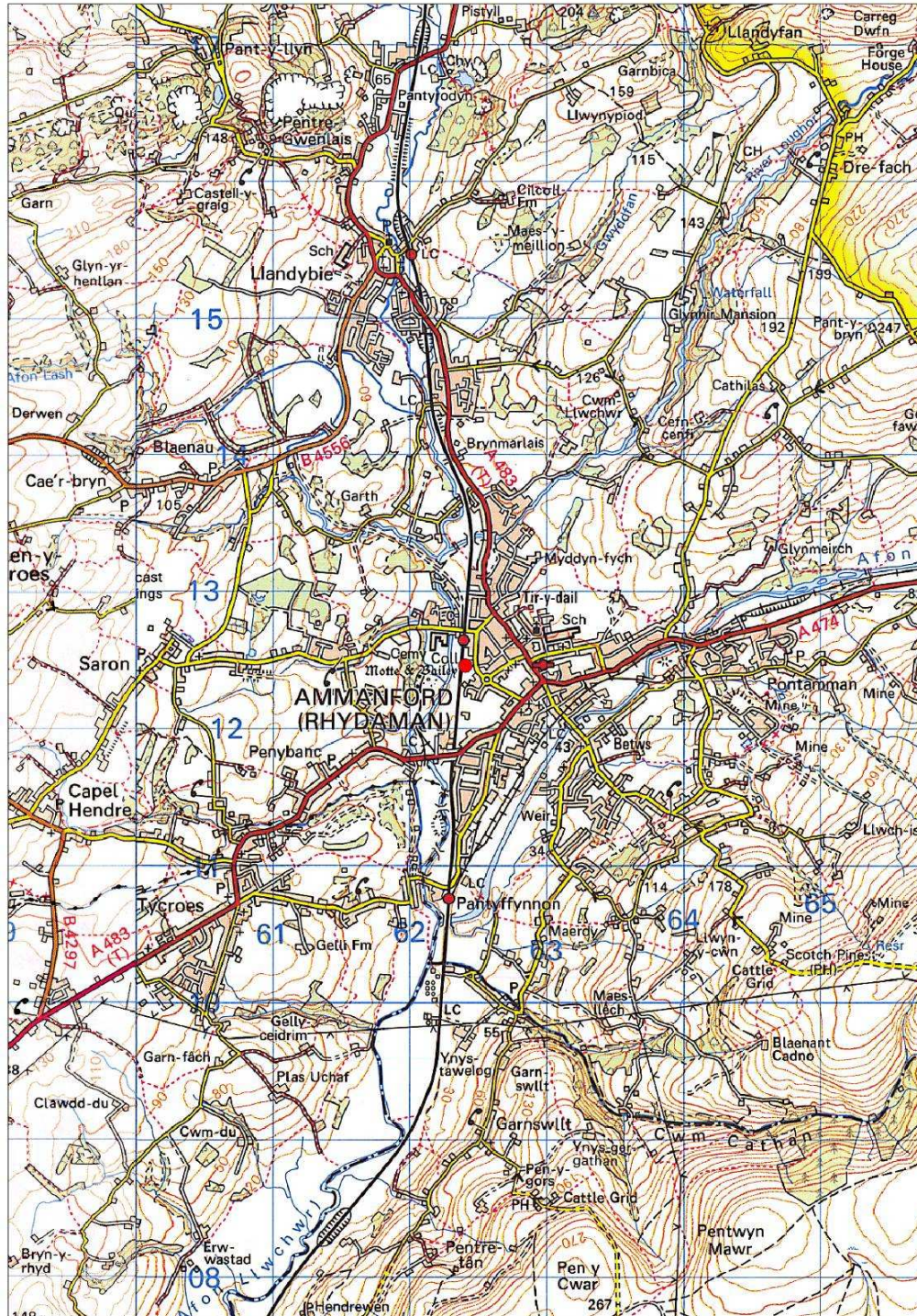
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### **Maps**

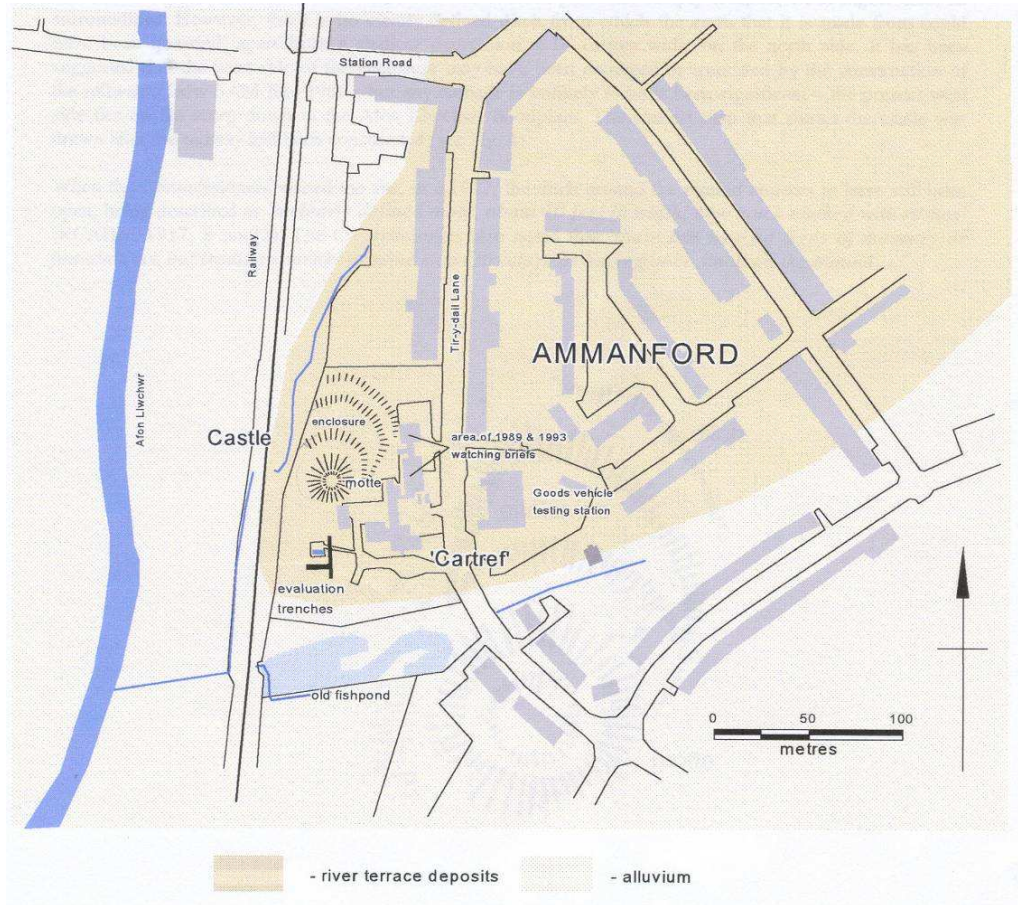
- Anon 1841 *Llandybie Parish Tithe Map*.
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- Ordnance Survey 1878 *1<sup>st</sup> edition 1;2500 Carmarthenshire XLVIII.7*
- Ordnance Survey 1906 *2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1;2500 Carmarthenshire XLVIII.7*





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

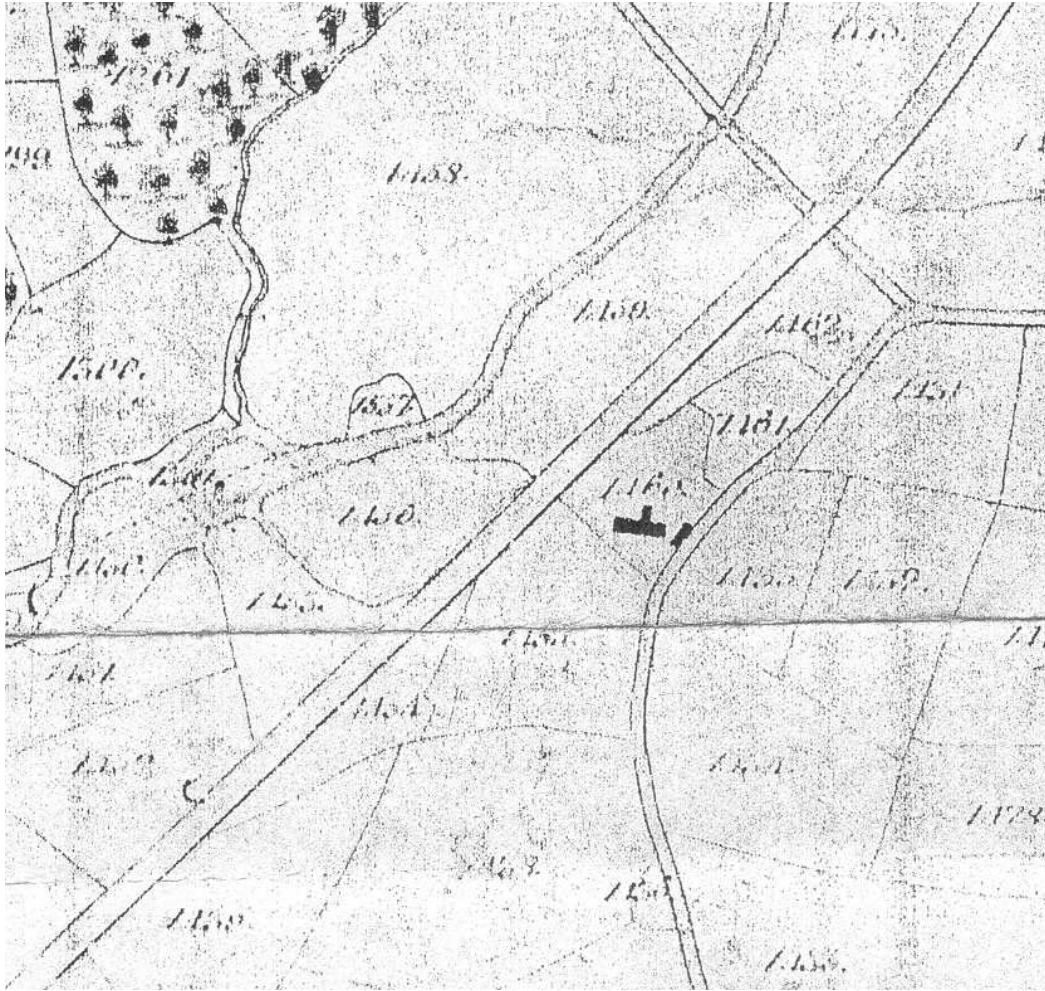
Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A



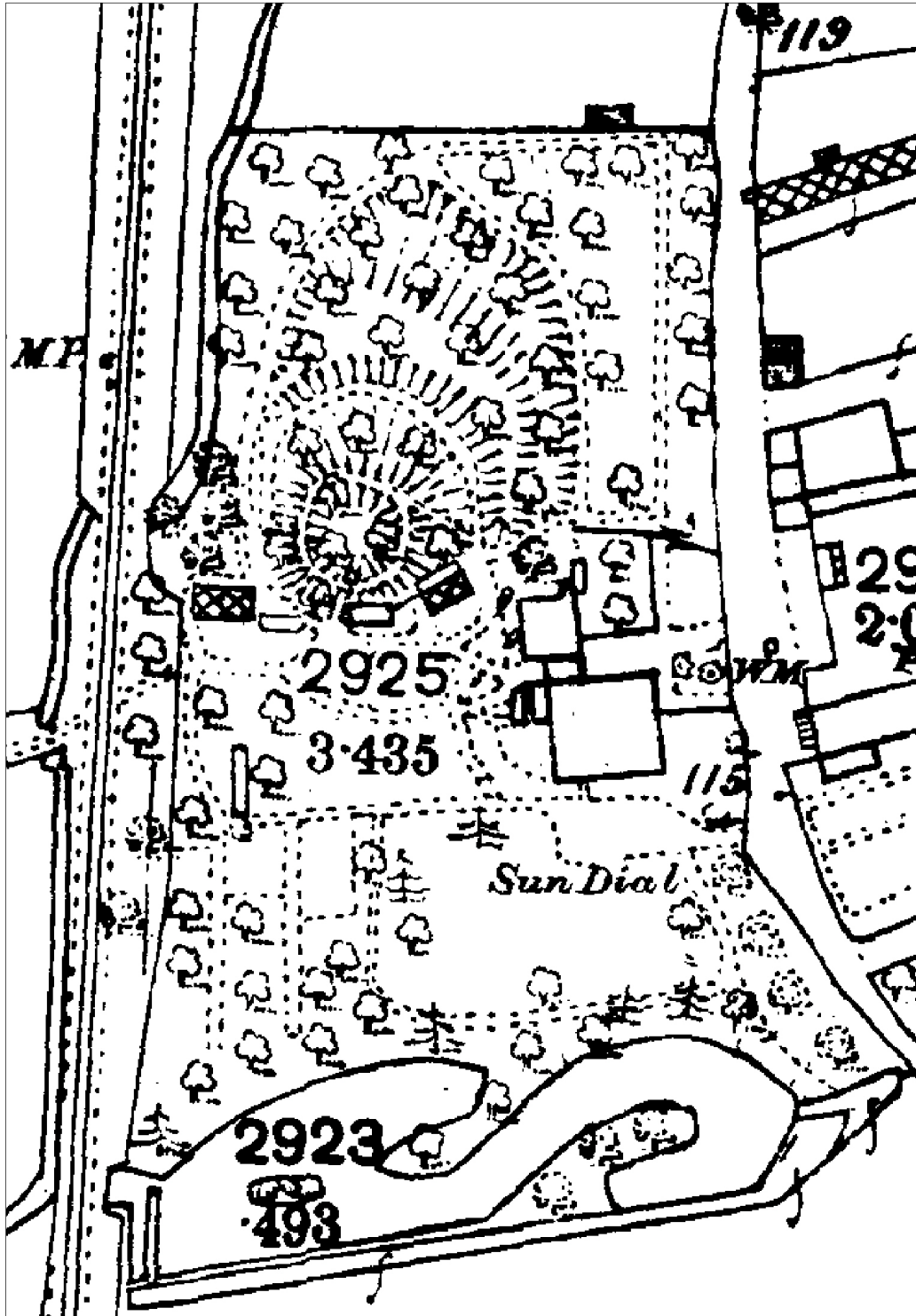
**Figure 2:** Location map showing geological deposits, taken from Ludlow 2002.



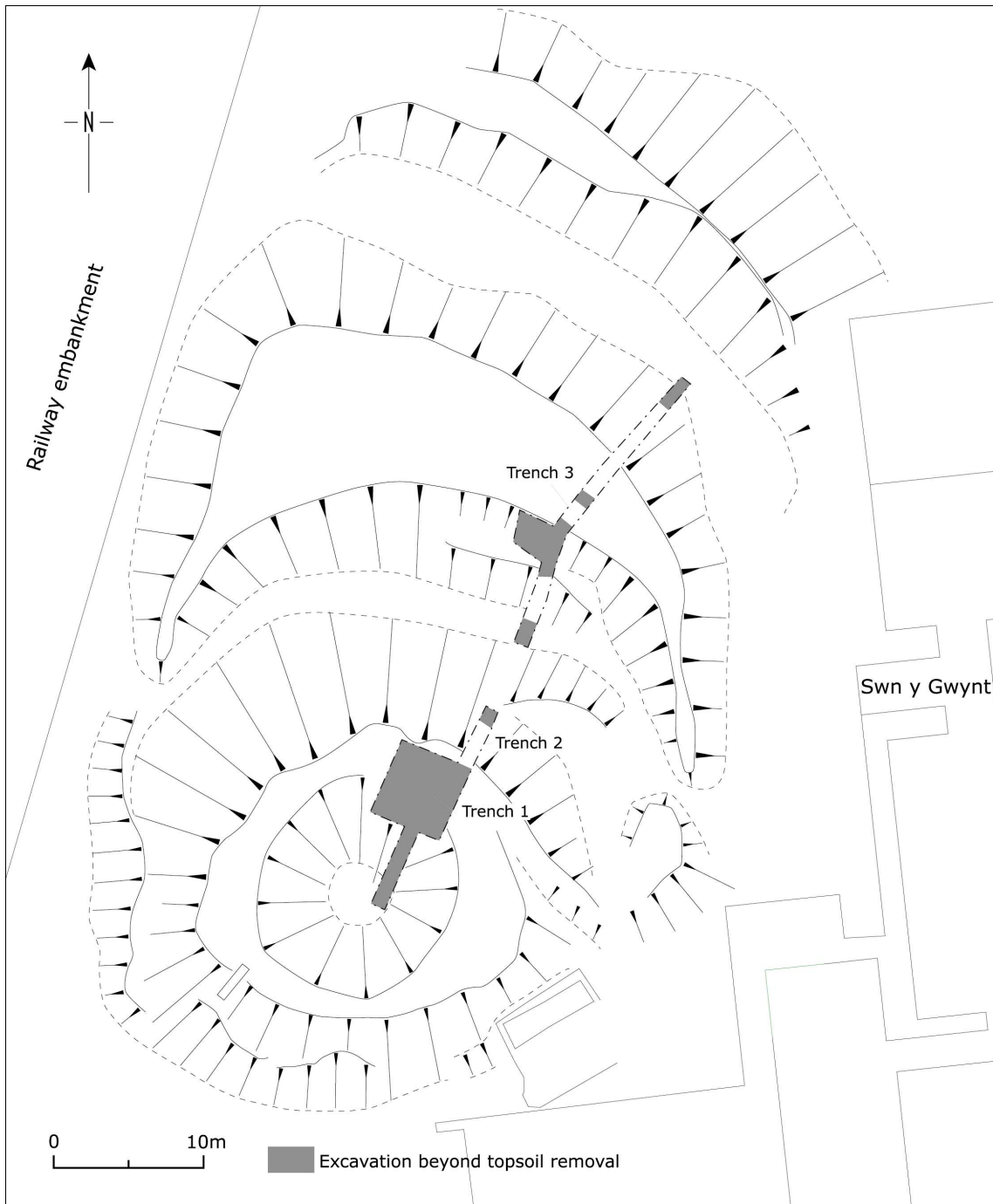
**Figure 3:** Extract from the Ordnance Survey original surveyors drawings of 1811-12, showing Tirydail house (labelled Tyndale) and Tirydail lane.



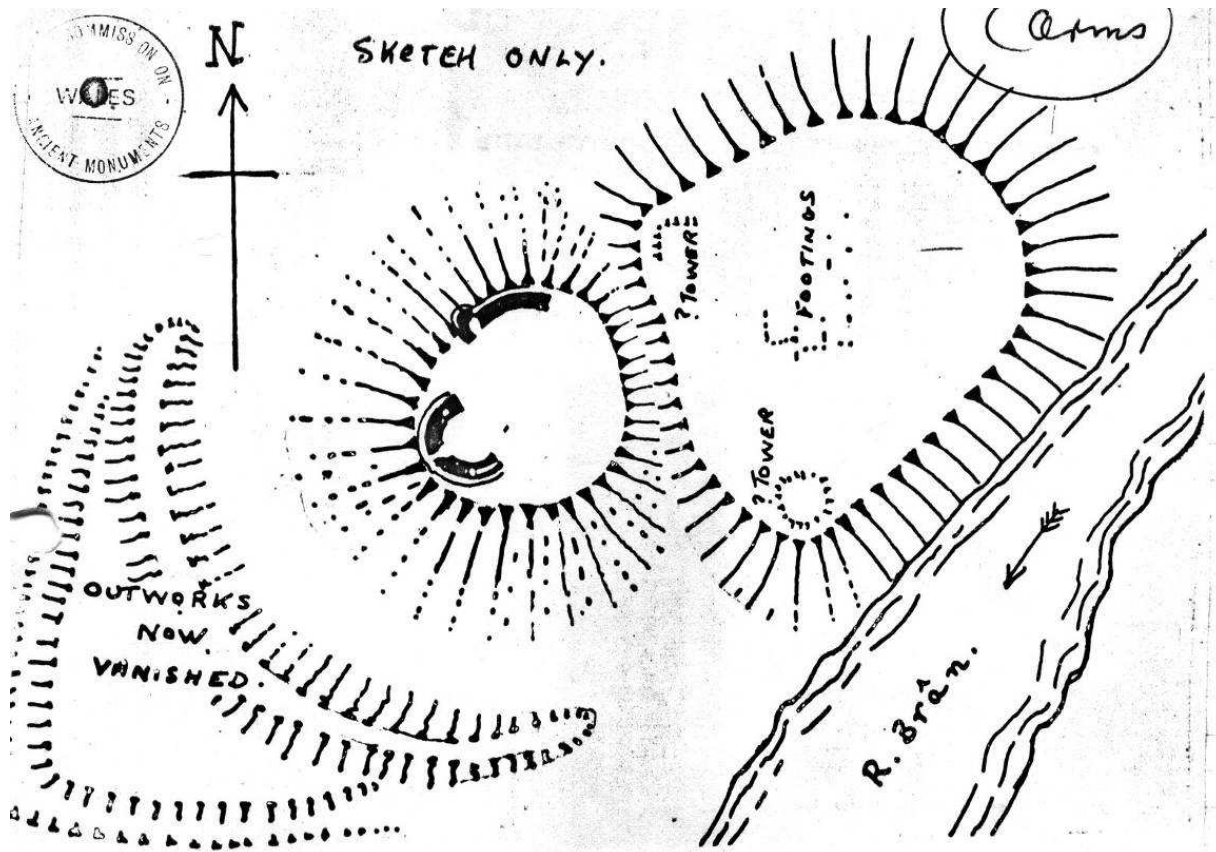
**Figure 4:** Extract from the Llandybie parish tithe map of 1841 showing Tir-y-dail house with Tir-y-dail lane on its east and the new railway line to the northwest with the river beyond.



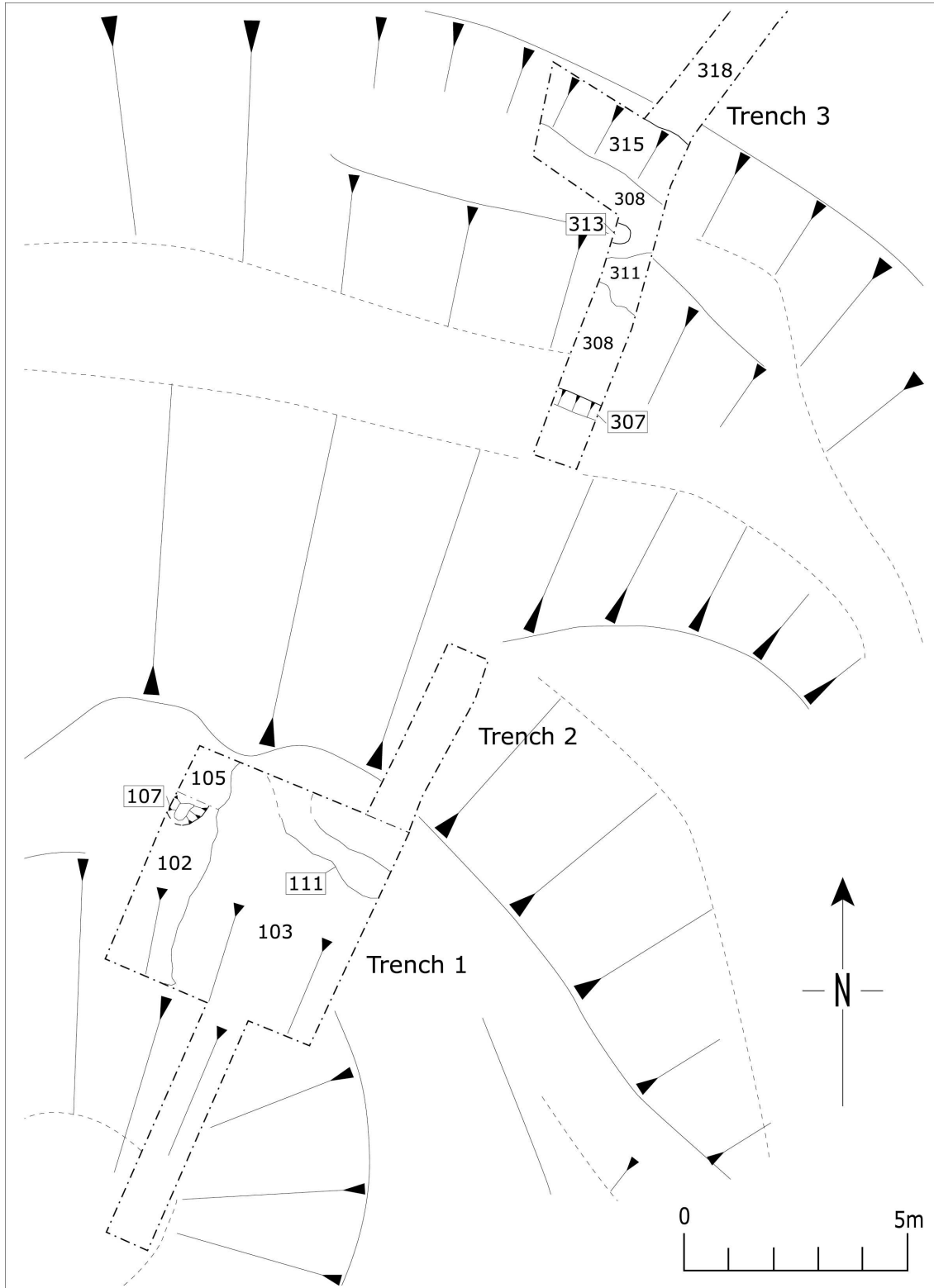
**Figure 5:** Extract from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1;2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1889.



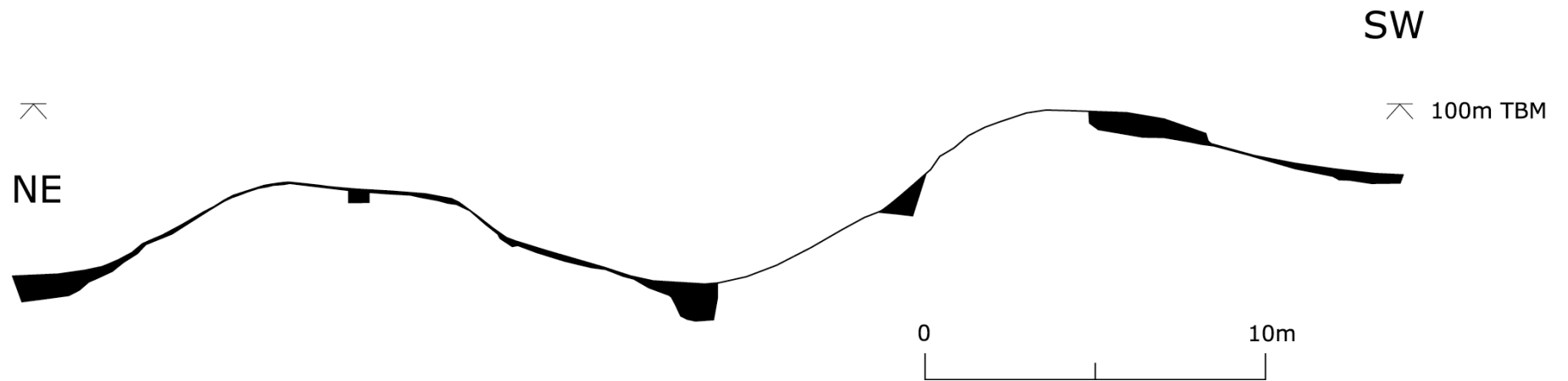
**Figure 6:** Plan of the castle earthworks and local topographical features.  
Trench locations are also shown.



**Figure 7:** A sketch plan of Llandovery Castle, made in 1980 by C.J.Spurgeon for C.A.A. and now held by the RCAHMW.

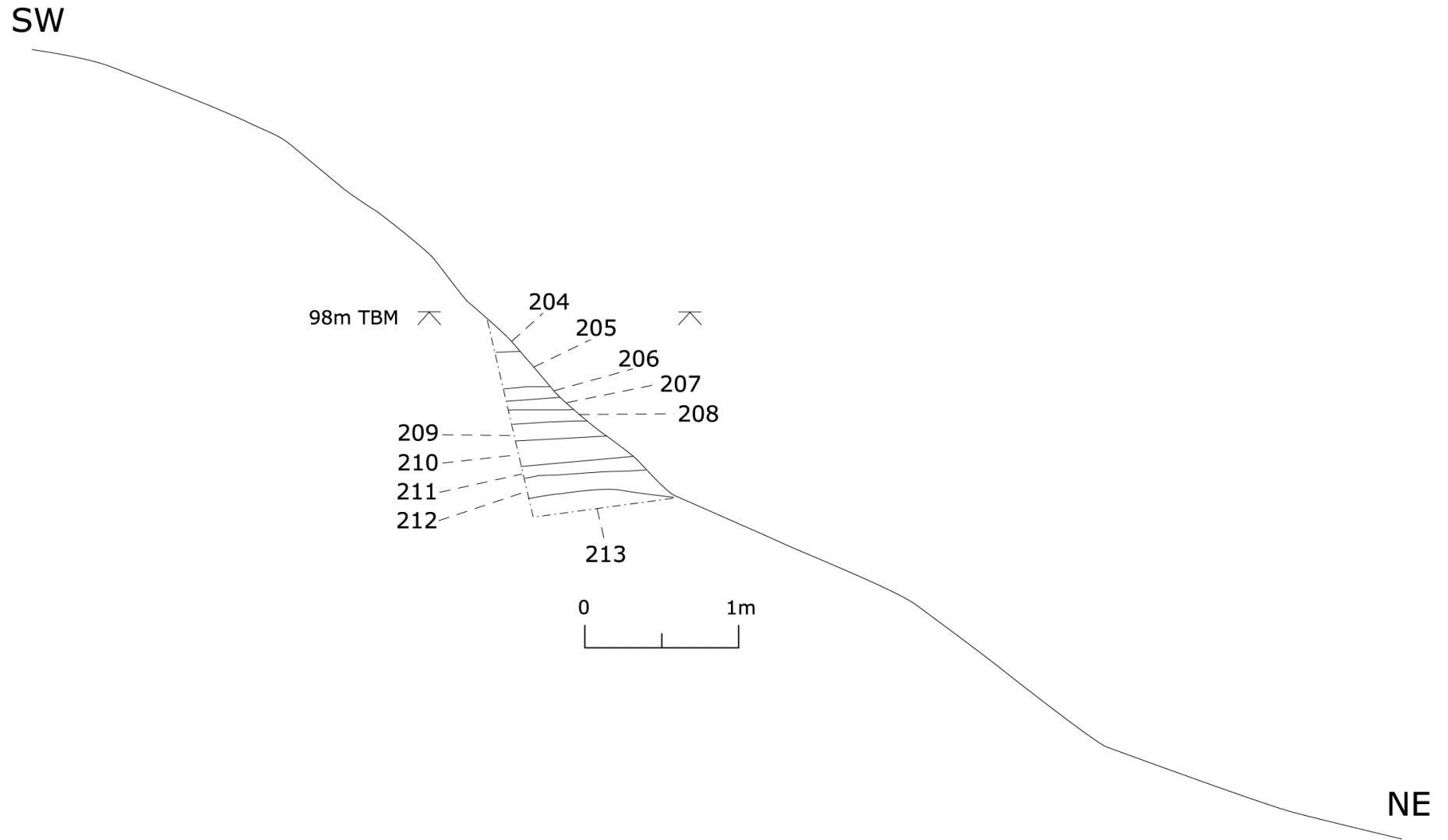


**Figure 8:** Trench plan showing contexts mentioned in the text

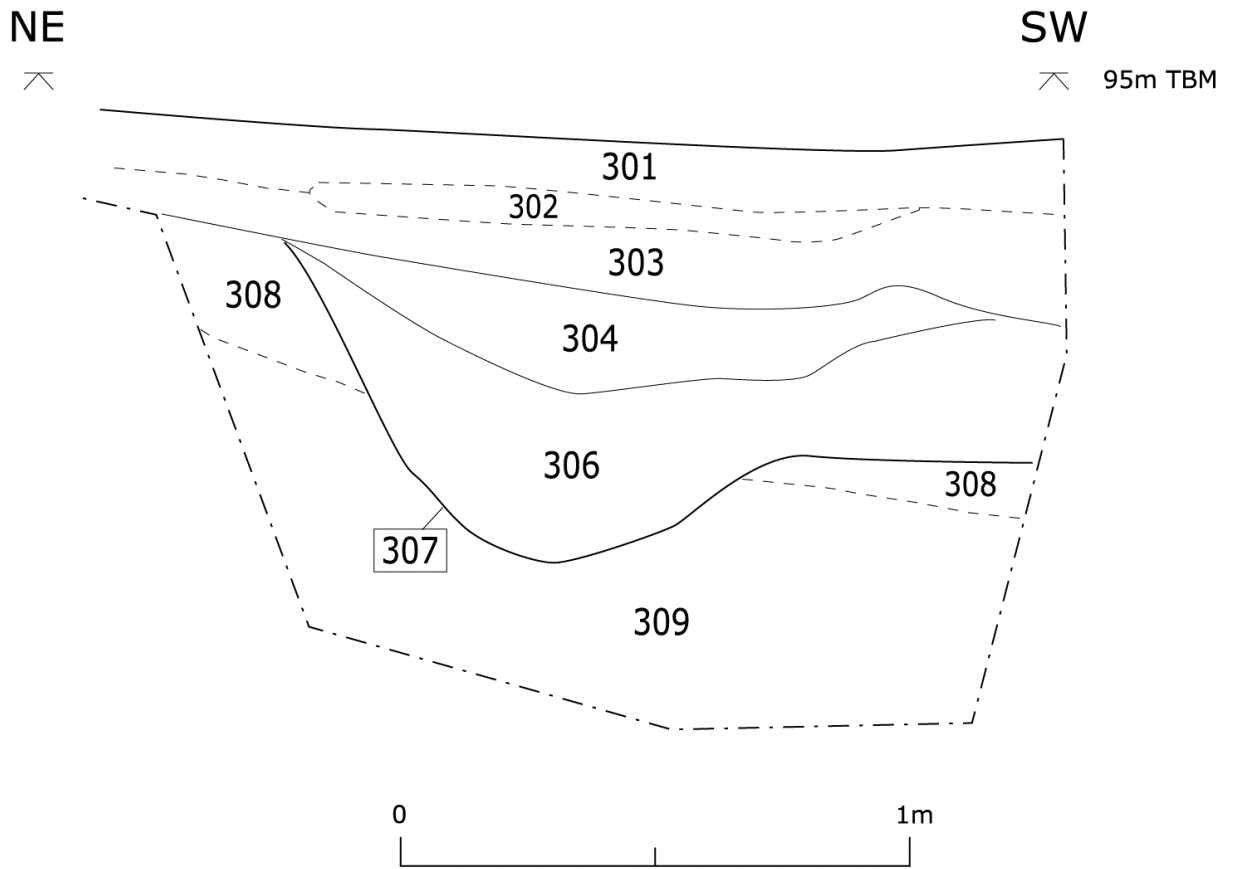


**Figure 9:** Profile of the motte (to the right), inner ditch and defensive bank/bailey platform (to the left). Excavated trenches shown in black.





**Figure 10:** Section of the revealed motte deposits within Trench 2.



**Figure 11:** Excavated section within the inner ditch (south end of Trench 3).



**Photo 1:** Removing the topsoil from Trench 1, located on the summit of the motte. View looking southeast.



**Photo 2:** Opening Trench 3 on top of the defensive bank in the foreground, looking southwest across the inner ditch with the motte in the background.



**Photo 3:** View looking southwest, taken from the base of the inner ditch looking up at the motte summit.



**Photo 4:** View looking down from the motte summit into the Trench 3 excavations of the inner ditch in the background.



**Photo 5:** Looking WNW across Trench 1. Stony make-up (103/104) of the motte already visible on the left. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scales.



**Photo 6:** Feature 111 visible as a darkened area on the summit of the motte. Looking ESE. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scales.



**Photo 7:** Looking NNE across Trench 1, showing the southern 1m wide extension of the trench into the centre of the motte.



**Photo 8:** Looking NNE at the southern end of Trench 1 in the centre of the motte, showing motte make-up deposit 103. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scales.



**Photo 9:** ESE facing shot of the section of the sondage within Trench 1, showing stony motte deposits 103 & 104. The stones removed from the lower level (104) within the sondage are piled behind the trench. 2 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 10:** Continuation of above.



**Photo 11:** WNW facing shot of the section of possible posthole 107, as revealed in the edge of Trench 1. 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 12:** ESE facing shot of possible posthole 107, showing the edge of the posthole cut through layer 104. The 0.5m scale lies on the edge of the excavation.





**Photo 13:** SSW facing shot of possible posthole 107. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 14:** SSW facing of the alternating layers visible in the motte section. 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 15:** NE facing shot of the stone- and brick-built channel on the southwest side of the motte. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 16:** SW facing shot of the same channel. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 17:** SE facing shot of the upper terminus of the same channel.  
1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 18:** NW facing of the inner face of the side wall of the same channel.  
1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 19:** NE facing shot of the defensive bank/bailey platform construction deposits revealed in the section of the sondage dug within Trench 3.



**Photo 20:** NE facing shot of the stone-revetting (315) on the southern face of the defensive bank/bailey platform. The horizontal scale marks the base of the revetting and break of slope. 2 x 1m scales.



**Photo 21:** WNW facing shot across the face of the stone-revetted southern face (315) of the defensive bank/bailey platform. 1 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 22:** SE facing shot of the southern end of Trench 3, showing the section through the inner ditch. The darker stony layers demarcate the later possible re-cut 307 with the lighter brown soils of deposits 308 and 309 below. 2 x 1m scales.



**Photo 23:** NW facing shot of the opposing section showing the possible re-cut 307 prior to the excavation of underlying deposit 308. 2 x 1m scales.



**Photo 24:** NNE facing shot along Trench 3, showing the stone revetting (315) to the rear, with stone spread 311 overlying 308 in front, which falls in a series of steps and through which a sondage has been partly cut in the foreground. 2 x 1m & 1 x 0.5m scales.



**Photo 25:** NW facing shot of the half-sectioned posthole 313. 1 x 0.5m scale.



**Photo 26:** NE facing shot down the external (northern) face of the defensive bank/bailey platform into the outer ditch beyond, showing the tree-root disturbance across the face. 2 x 1m scales.



**Photo 27:** NW facing shot of the section through the outer ditch deposits at the northern end of Trench 3. The ash- and charcoal-rich hearth deposits (324 & 325) are clearly visible. 2 x 1m scales.



**Photo 28:** NW facing shot of the section through the outer ditch deposits at the northern end of Trench 3. The ash- and charcoal-rich hearth deposits (324 & 325) are clearly visible. 2 x 1m scales.





**Photo 29:** N facing shot of the reinstated Trench 1.



**Photo 30:** NNE facing shot of the reinstated Trench 3.

# TIR-Y-DAIL MOTTE, AMMANFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

**RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2010/48**

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by

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Dyddiad / Date 14/1/11

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith  
This report has been checked and approved by

James Meek

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on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position:

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date

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

ymdiriedolaeth archaeolegol



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