



The remains of an oak tree exposed at Abermawr



COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

**CBA Wales/Cymru**

CYNGOR ARCHAEOLEG BRYDEINIG

<http://britarch.ac.uk/cbawales>

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## Abermawr Research Group

The Abermawr Research Group (ARG) emerged out of Cadw's Arfordir scheme, specifically to research the Mesolithic site at Abermawr, north Pembrokeshire (SM 88194 34615). We are a voluntary group committed to a long-term investigation of the site with emphasis on widespread community involvement.

Abermawr was first recognised as a Mesolithic site as a result of the work carried out by CJ Dunne in the 1960s who found various lithic artifacts including blades, microliths and scrapers. Martin Lewis carried out fieldwork at the site in 1983 and took some sediment cores which provided a partial insight into the lithostratigraphy of the area. He obtained a number of radiocarbon dates derived from the peat layers at the site, the earliest of which was 7640BP. Abermawr is also one of the 36 Mesolithic sites in Pembrokeshire noted by Dr Andrew David in his PhD thesis (1990).

There is a valley bog adjacent to the lithic scatter area and it is possible that this has facilitated the preservation of organic artefacts. On occasion there are also extensive peat exposures on the beach which seem to correspond to the Mesolithic layer dated by Lewis. Visible at low tide, these peat horizons have perfectly preserved a submerged forest which is testament to the lost paleolandscape.

Abermawr may provide not only a significant insight into the Mesolithic of North Pembrokeshire but also that of West Wales, which is currently underrepresented in the archaeological record. The Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the National Trust, Cadw, the National Museum and Natural Resources Wales have been very supportive, and we hope they will continue to support the group's work in the future.



Peat and clay deposits exposed at Abermawr

Of these organisations the Dyfed Archaeological Trust has been particularly supportive thus far. They have trained us to monitor coastal erosion, set up a cataloguing system for our lithic finds, organised a test pit excavation, and mapped the submerged forest exposures .

ARG's primary objective is to find out whether or not there is a Mesolithic occupation site somewhere in the vicinity .

This investigation will be composed of several phases including –

- geoarchaeological survey
- test pitting
- excavation
- artifact analysis and curation

We will also be carrying out prospecting operations, mainly in the north of the county, and recataloguing the Pembrokeshire archaeological archive thus enabling our finds to be stored locally in an accessible format for research.

It is hoped that the project will be a stepping stone to work on other sites in the vicinity as only 2 of David's 36 sites have been excavated so far (Nab Head and Penpant ). We hope Abermawr will become the foundation of a larger project which will investigate the Mesolithic in south-west Wales and which will make a significant contribution to our understanding of the period with implications on a wider geographical scale.

For further information contact ARG via our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/AbermawrResearch/>) or by email at [fishingrhod@googlemail.com](mailto:fishingrhod@googlemail.com).



Test-pitting at Abermawr during June 2013

## Excavations at Presaddfed dolmen, Anglesey

This year, as part of the *Building the Great Dolmens* project, we examined the double dolmen at Presaddfed, near Bodedern, Anglesey. The project has been designed to consider the construction processes at dolmen monuments throughout Britain and Ireland. As such, we are not investigating the chamber contents of these sites, focussing instead on evidence for how they were built.

Excavations at other dolmen monuments in south-west Wales have revealed that the capstone for these monuments were most likely glacial erratics which were excavated from the earth and turned into monuments *in situ*. Was this also the case with sites in north-west Wales?

Presaddfed is an interesting site and perfect for exploring our research questions. It comprises two different types of stone – one clearly outcropping nearby (a mica schist), but the other seemingly more exotic (a conglomerate). Furthermore, geophysical survey did not suggest the presence of a pit near the two chambers. In order to explore how this site was built we opened a number of small trenches in order to try and resolve where the stone came from, and whether there was any evidence for the processes involved in the construction of the monument.

Two trenches were opened over outcropping stone close to the monument. Both had been quarried, but none of the stone removed was large enough to be any of the stones in the monument as it is today. These quarries could have produced smaller pieces of stone only. A flake of flint lying immediately on top of a quarried surface was suggestive that these quarries were utilised in prehistory.



Presaddfed during excavation, showing the collapsed northern chamber and the standing chamber to the south

We also opened two trenches close to the chambers. The smaller of the two trenches was placed close to the standing chamber. This trench had the remains of a large pit which was almost certainly created in order to extract the large capstone. A geologist confirmed that the capstone and two of the uprights, all conglomerates, were glacial erratics. Thus the construction of this chamber is in keeping with dolmen monuments elsewhere in Wales as the builders utilised local stone. What was remarkable about this pit, however, was that it had been recut by a substantial later feature. This later feature contained modern finds (18<sup>th</sup> century ceramics) and may relate to the reported use of this chamber as a house for an evicted tenant farmer.

The larger of the two was beside the collapsed northern chamber. Two intercut scoop hearths were found c1.5m to the east of the fallen chamber along with two postholes. Carbonised material from these will be identified and radiocarbon dated in due course. The most interesting result from this trench, however, was found in association with the only stone still standing in this chamber (indicated by the arrow in figure 2). This stone had clearly been placed into a socket cut into the subsoil. This chamber, therefore, was constructed in a different fashion from the southern chamber. At some point, even if just for a matter of hours, this chamber consisted of a single standing stone only. This is in complete contrast to other dolmens in Wales, but bears a striking resemblance to the construction of dolmens in Cornwall. Once we get dates back from the two constructional events associated with each chamber, this may date the sequence of construction here, and think about broader influences into Anglesey at the start of the Neolithic.

*Vicki Cummings and Colin Richards*



The two trenches close to the two dolmen at Presaddfed . (view looking NW)

## Archaeology in Mill Leat, Bute Park, Cardiff

Archaeological excavations were carried out during the recent works to reflood the Mill Leat adjacent to the west wall of Cardiff Castle. This work was carried out for Cardiff Council as part of the Bute Park Restoration Project which is supported by a £3.1m Heritage Lottery grant. The Mill Leat has been a watercourse since at least the medieval period, and is thought to have powered a watermill located close to the west gate of the castle, however remarkably little is known about the history of this part of Cardiff in the medieval and early modern periods.

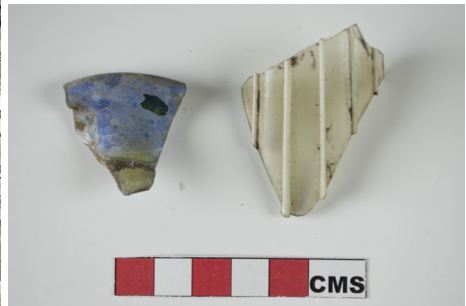
Archaeological excavations were carried out within the base of the Mill Leat following the discovery of waterlogged timbers and stone walls. Two parallel walls were identified on the western side of the leat. These are built from pebbles and worked stones, including some that may have been reused from the Roman fort, and bonded with lime mortar. No evidence was revealed to establish their age or their function, but they may relate to industrial activities taking place on the western bank of the leat.

A line of timber posts was also identified, extending for 50m along the western side of the leat. A 15m long section of these posts was excavated. The posts are a mix of fast growing coppiced oak and roundwood and had been worked to a point at the base. They had been hammered into the soft silts along the edge of the watercourse, forming a revetment, with at least three phases revealed in the excavation trench.

The waterlogged conditions within the leat have allowed the preservation of organic materials, large quantities of which were found around the wooden posts.



View of wooden posts and stone wall



Possible Venetian glass

The waterlogged deposit produced a sizable assemblage of leather, both utilitarian pieces such as shoe soles and straps/belts, and high status pieces such as a sword scabbard and a square of engraved leather. A belt which retained a brass buckle and acorn shaped strap end was also recovered. A proportion of the leather recovered may derive from a tannery that is known to have existed on the western side of the leat.

A large assemblage of pottery, glass, clay pipes, metalwork and slag was also found around the wooden posts. The pottery includes simple utilitarian vessels, cooking pots, bowls and jugs, as well as imported wares from Germany and the Mediterranean – the neck of a wine amphora from Iberia or Italy was found, complete with the stamped insignia of the owner or importer. Other, highly decorated pieces were also recovered. The glass assemblage includes both fragments of window panes (one complete with lead) and vessels, possibly cups. Two fragments have been tentatively identified as Venetian glass, imported from Italy and therefore of very high status. Other high status finds include pewter spoon fragments, a fragment of a spur and clay pipe bowls. The clay pipes have provided the best dating evidence so far, with one fragment stamped with a maker's mark which ties its manufacture down to John Rosse who was working in London in the early 1600s. The clay pipes are high status finds from this period as tobacco had only recently been introduced from the New World and was extremely expensive.

The mix of utilitarian and high status materials found during the excavations is significant. Many of the high status items recovered can only have come from the Castle, being beyond the means of the average sixteenth/seventeenth century resident of Cardiff. Other items, such as the leather waste and slag are probably by-products of the tannery and other industries located on the western outskirts of Cardiff. Interestingly, the discoveries suggest that the watercourse was seen by both the occupants of the Castle and those engaged in industry as an appropriate location for dumping waste, probably hoping that it would be washed downstream to the River Taff and then out to sea. The majority of the materials dumped in the leat probably did disappear downstream, but fortuitously some got caught up in the wooden revetments on the western side. Post-excavation work is just beginning, but the materials excavated are extremely important and will shed new light on a little-understood period of Cardiff's history.

*Dr Amelia Pannett*  
*Project Manager, Archaeology Wales*

## Archaeolegwyr Anturus Eryri

Archaeolegwyr Anturus Eryri (Snowdonia Adventurous Archaeologists) is a new group formed in 2013 aimed at enabling young people to independently explore and find out about historical sites and landscapes in north-west Wales. The project is being co-ordinated by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, in partnership with the Urdd, and is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural Resources Wales.

The project was launched in November last year, at Glan Llyn – The Urdd’s youth facility on the shores of Llyn Tegid, Bala: 18 young people attended the first residential *Adventure Heritage Weekend*. Saturday’s activities included a motorboat ride across Llyn Tegid where we discussed local folklore and examined the remains of an old jetty. We discussed the history of the Bala to Llanuwchlun narrow gauge railway, before embarking on a guided walk. Did you know that there is species of fish, the Gwynion, which, marooned during the last ice age, only exists in Llyn Tegid? We ended the day with a survey of a ruined farmhouse now surrounded with coniferous forest, above the south-eastern slopes of Llyn Tegid, discovering what we believe to be evidence of a cobbled courtyard. Despite a thunderous downpour on our way back down the mountain, our spirits remained high. Some of the young archaeologists even braved a return voyage across the lake – which was by now a cauldron of heaving, seething spray and waves, the storm having set in proper!

Thankfully the weather was a little more clement on Sunday. We spent most of the day at Castell Carndochan, a ruined medieval castle on an impressive igneous crag above the village of Llanuwchllyn. The young archaeologists carried out recording and survey work, identifying a D-shaped southern tower, a northern round tower, and rectangular central buildings. The castle was probably built by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (c. 1172-1240), in the thirteenth century, a Prince of Gwynedd and eventually de facto ruler over most of Wales.



During the course of the weekend the young people began planning a year-long programme of events. Activities pencilled in for the next few months include: a kayaking / canoeing heritage coastline trip and camp, a graveyard recording project, visits to World Heritage sites around the county, 'behind the scenes' museum visits, and presentation at the 2014 Urdd Eisteddfod. A second residential weekend will take place on 12-13 April 2014. The group will continue to develop the programme, along with learning new skills and building confidence to drive the project independently. We're off to a flying start and we're looking forward to exciting future activities.



Check out the Archaeolegwyr Anturus Eryri Facegroup group

If you're interested in taking part in the project contact Daniel Amor:

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Gwynedd Archaeological Trust:

[www.heneb.co.uk](http://www.heneb.co.uk) Twitter: @GwyneddArch

## Recent discovery's at Llanfifnan church Anglesey

The current church at St Ffinan's, Anglesey was built in 1841 but the excavation of an electricity cable trench uncovered the foundations of the demolished Medieval church. C.R Archaeology archaeologist Matt Jones uncovered a 7m section of a substantial stone wall which had survived to a height of three courses. The structure was approximately a metre in width and had been constructed using facing stones of local limestone and gritstone with a river cobble and clay core. A large block of limestone measuring 1m x 1m x 0.8m had been used as a cornerstone.

The Victorian Church was designed by John Welch and had been erected to provide extra seating for a growing congregation. Evidence of the church builders from this period were recovered during excavation and the iron cleats from a work boot and a tin button were found in the foundation trench backfill. Where the older church runs beneath the current building the Victorian builders appear to used the internal facing stones of the earlier structure whilst removing the most of the upper courses. There was some survival of lime plaster on the internal face of the Medieval wall along with evidence of a plaster floor or raised area within the north east corner of the building. A carved stone corbel from the earlier structure was found within rubble on the outside of the early wall.

A large quantity of disarticulated human remains were found dumped outside of the Medieval wall and these are believed to have originally been buried within the earlier building and were disturbed when the east-west wall of the later church cut through it.



The Victorian church retains some of the earlier features which have been incorporated into the current building including a Twelfth Century carved gritstone font and an intriguing carved gritstone block in the church wall which was identified by an eagle eyed member of the local Talwrn Historical Society.

Archive research has shed further light on the character of the Medieval church and although it is uncertain as to the exact age of the church, Nineteenth Century sources date its foundation to 620 AD. The wall uncovered during works is believed to belong to the same era as the aforementioned font although it may be earlier. Interestingly we have a description of the old building written in 1833 which describes it as “a small, neat edifice” and a rare railway map from c.1799 which contains an image of the old building.

*Matt Jones, C.R. Archaeology*

## Difficult Shoes to Fill – Please Help

John Kenyon has contributed a round-up of literature relating to the archaeology of Wales to *Archaeology in Wales* since 1996. The ‘Recent Literature Relating to Wales’ in *Archaeology in Wales* 52 was his final one, as he has now retired as Librarian of Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales.

I have somehow found myself with the job of trying to continue this round-up of publications. This is an appeal for help. Can you keep it in mind when you come across, or write, anything new relating to the archaeology of Wales, particularly if it is in a more obscure journal, or unlikely book, that I would very much appreciate having the reference passed on to me.

Evan Chapman (Curatorial Officer), Dept. of Archaeology and Numismatics,  
Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NP.  
[evan.chapman@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:evan.chapman@museumwales.ac.uk)

## Seeking a new Treasurer

At our AGM in October it will be time to hand over to a new treasurer after six very enjoyable years keeping CBA Wales/Cymru accounts in order. This is not a difficult task, but requires a level of organisation and attention to detail at regular intervals throughout the financial year. Should anyone out there be interested in joining the committee and taking on this role please do get in touch for more information.

Kathy Laws, CBA Wales/Cymru Hon. Treasurer  
[kathy.laws@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kathy.laws@hotmail.co.uk)

# ARCHAEOLOGY FOR ALL

Council for British Archaeology

## **CBA Wales/Cymru Business Meeting and Spring Symposium 2014**

**Saturday 5th March 2014**

Y Morlan Centre, Queens Road, Aberystwyth

*Business Meeting:* 11am—12.30pm

*Symposium:* 2.00pm - 4.30pm

### **Future Meetings**

The Autumn Business Meeting and AGM 2014 will be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October, at the Royal Oak, Welshpool.



Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig  
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### **Newsletter Editor**

Items for inclusion in the next newsletter should be sent to:

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