

# Council for British Archaeology

Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig

**Wales/Cymru**



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<http://www.councilforbritisharchaeologywales.wordpress.com/>

# Manifestations of Empire: Palaeoenvironmental Analysis and the End of Roman Wales

*Tudur Davies\*, Stephen Rippon\*, and Andy Seaman+*

This twenty-month project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council aims to explore how the agricultural landscape of a lowland region of western Britain was affected by the major changes that characterized Western Europe between the 3rd to 8th centuries AD. This period saw a series of profound socio-political transformations, including the end of Roman Imperial control, extensive population movement, climate change, religious conversion, and the emergence of the early medieval kingdoms. In Britain, these changes span the boundary between what are traditionally seen as two separate periods of research: the Romano-British and early medieval. Unfortunately, this compartmentalised research tradition, combined with methodological limitations, have hindered development of a proper understanding of the processes at play, and the nature, speed, and extent of change, and as such their effect upon the landscape remain contentious within both history and archaeology (see, for example, the lively debates in Collins and Gerrard 2004; Haarer 2014). Indeed, the debate has now reached an impasse, due in large part to a lack of historical sources, archaeologists' over-reliance on the evidence from a handful of key sites, and their limited understanding of the landscape context of these sites. Progress has also been stifled by methodological problems, with much research focusing on the identification of settlement continuity (in terms of simple location) at the expense of exploring site function. Palaeoenvironmental approaches have long been identified as a viable approach to solving these problems (eg Dark 1996), but limited datasets and methodological constraints have inhibited the realisation of this potential.

In this project we will overcome these problems by studying the Roman and early medieval periods together, and using an innovative programme of high resolution pollen analysis to investigate changes or continuities in agriculture and land-use associated with a range of settlement foci. Our research is focusing on clusters of sampling sites from within the environs of two regional power centres in south-east Wales: Caerwent Roman town and Dinas Powys early medieval hillfort. We will examine how land-cover, as reconstructed through the pollen record, related to patterns of land-use and associated agro-economic regimes between the 3rd and 8th centuries AD, with particular emphasis placed on examining levels of arable, pastoral, and woodland indicator species. Through this we hope to gain important evidence about the changes characterised by the use and abandonment of these settlement foci.

Our research is focusing on South East Wales because this region represents a rare example of a part of the Western Roman Empire, which, although ‘Romanized’, was not subject to ‘barbarian’ incursion following the Empire’s collapse in the 5th century, and where early medieval power structures and political institutions developed as the result of indigenous processes. Thus, our hope is that the research will contribute to wider debates about the transformation of the Roman World by providing an important comparative case study.



*Figure 1: Dr Tudur Davies (post-doctoral researcher, University of Exeter) examining one of the pollen cores (credit: T. Davies).*

## References

Collins, R. and Gerrard, J. (eds.) 2004: *Debating Late Antiquity in Britain, AD 300-700*. Oxford: Archaeopress, BAR British Series 365.

Dark, P., 1996: Paleoeological Evidence for Landscape Continuity and Change in Britain c.AD 400–800. In K. Dark (ed.), *External Contacts and the Economy of Late Roman and Post-Roman Britain*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 23–52.

Haarer, F. (ed), 2014: *AD 410: The History and Archaeology of Late and Post-Roman Britain*. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

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# Commemorating the Forgotten U-boat War around the Welsh Coast 1914-18

## Nautical Archaeology Society Field School – Traeth Bychan, Anglesey (22nd – 24th June)

Over the weekend of 22nd -24th June the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) ran a field school at Traeth Bychan on Anglesey based around the wreck of the steam-trawler Cartagena. The event formed part of the “Commemorating the Forgotten U-boat War around the Welsh Coast 1914-18” project that is currently being run to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The project is being co-ordinated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Cartagena was one of 60 steel trawlers built in Canada during WW1 and designed to trawl for mines laid by German U-boats around the coast of the UK. After the war the Cartagena was sold to the Brazilian Government to be used as a conventional trawler for fish, but having left Fleetwood in January 1928, it never made it to Rio de Janeiro.

The wreck was discovered by sport divers in the late 1980 around 6-miles off the north east coast of Anglesey.

Over the course of the field school weekend, 7-dive clubs brought along their club boats and 31-divers made 44-dives on the wreck which lies upright and mostly intact in ~37m of water. The weekend coincided with the start of the summer’s outstanding weather and the site conditions proved exceptional with underwater visibility of ~10m.



*Launching one of the club ribs across Traeth Bychan Beach*

The venue for the field school was kindly provided by the Red Wharf Bay Sailing & Water Sports Club on Traeth Bychan Beach, and in addition to the diving activities the field school also provided a series evening talks in their club house which included:

Friday 22nd

Deanna Groom (RCAHMW) – “Commemorating the Forgotten U-boat War” project

Nigel Cossons (Chester British Sub-Aqua Club) – Steam-trawler Cartagena

David Hopewell (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust) – Coastal Archaeology around Anglesey

Melanie Taylor (Manchester Diving Group) – Royal Yacht Mary

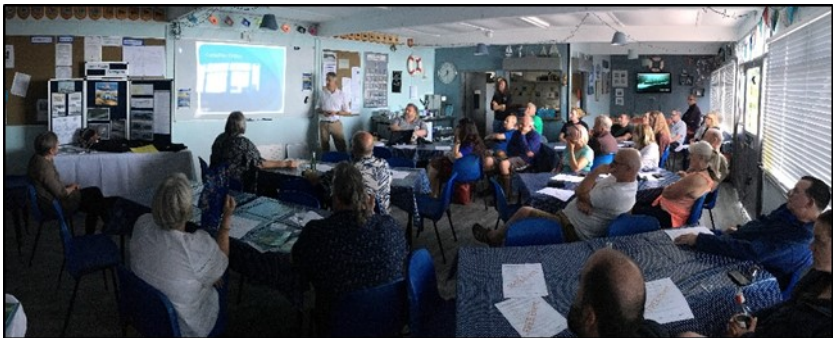
Saturday 23rd

Dr Michael Roberts (Bangor University) – 2D Multibeam Sonar Imaging of Shipwrecks

Lowri Roberts (Wessex Archaeology) – Royal Charter

Brian Minehan (NAS Chairman) – Discovery is just the Beginning

William Turner (Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit) – The Bronze Bell Shipwreck



*Above: Nigel Cossons providing an evening talk about the History of the Cartagena*

During the day on the Saturday and Sunday, the divers and members of the general public who happened by were invited to participate in a variety of free events including:

Intertidal surveying using a plane table and total station

Underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) piloting

Demonstration of photogrammetry

Excavation and artefact recording

Trying your hand at tying knots

Reading maritime signal flags

Small artefact laser scanning

Sand sculpture competitions

Various events for kids

As a legacy from the weekend a pair of geocaches were hidden close to Traeth Bychan Beach containing information about the project, the field school and the wreck of the *Cartagena*.

A second field school is currently being planned to be run in South Wales during 2019, and to be kept informed about this event please contact Ian Cundy at:

[MADUdiving@gmail.com](mailto:MADUdiving@gmail.com)

These field schools form only part of the overall U-boat project and for further information see:

<https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/WalesUBoatWar>

Ian Cundy (July 2018)

Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit



*Left: Students perfecting their excavation techniques during the weekend*

## CBA Wales' Archaeology in Wales Conference 2018: a resounding success!

University of Wales Trinity St David Lampeter hosted CBA Wales' first ever Archaeology in Wales conference on the weekend of 31st August–2nd September, supported by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales and the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. Friday's workshops included an exploration of forensic archaeology with Dr Karl Harrison; 'how to' sessions on community archaeology (with Dr Ian Brooks, Ken Murphy, Karen Lowry and Jenny Hall) and Heritage Impact Assessment with Dr Cyllene Griffiths; and an introduction to dendrochronology with Dr Rod Bale in the dendro lab – with a chance to have a go at dating part of a medieval shipwreck!



An evening social in the Student Union was accompanied by the Archaeological Pub Quiz of the year, with the winners awarded CBA Wales' highly-coveted golden trowel award! Saturday saw a series of talks on current projects and fieldwork in Wales, with an opportunity to browse heritage exhibitions and trade stands. In the morning we heard from Will Davies (Cadw) about new research, recording and emergency conservation works at Ruthin Castle. Ashley Batten (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust) outlined the fascinating new discoveries – including one of Wales' largest medieval cemeteries – uncovered during the ongoing Wylfa Newydd Project. Dr Toby Driver (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales) summarised the CHERISH Project (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands) – an exciting five-year cross-border project exploring heritage assets in Welsh and Irish coastal waters – and explained how new research, such as the high resolution LiDAR capture of six Welsh islands, has considerably advanced our understanding of these exposed and at-risk archaeological environments.



After lunch we heard from Alice Day (Dyfed Archaeological Trust) about investigations of past designed landscapes at the National Botanic Gardens of Wales, and how the newly-formed Young Archaeologists Club have been able to contribute to the work. Dr James January-McCann (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales) discussed his work compiling and maintaining the list of Historic Welsh Place Names. The afternoon was rounded off by Rhys Mwyn who talked about bilingualism and community archaeology. Delegates later had a tour of the heritage on the university campus, before the Conference Dinner with key note address by Professor Carenza Lewis.

On Sunday there was a choice of field trips: either Dolaucothi Gold Mines to experience the Victorian and Roman levels and see areas not normally open to the public, or a visit to the Preseli hills and a hike up to Carn Goedog (see front cover) – contested source of the Stonehenge bluestones – with a chance to explore the evidence and hear all about the latest developments from leading expert, Professor Mike Parker-Pearson. Despite a rather drizzly walk to Carn Goedog, an enjoyable time was had by all and we were able to see the quarry site for ourselves.

The sun reappeared for the concluding part of the Preselis trip: a stop-off at the Bluestone Brewery, followed by a visit to the iconic Pentre Ifan burial chamber. Conference feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we hope it will become a regular event in Wales' archaeological calendar!

For more pictures and to download a copy of the conference programme see our website at

<https://councilforbritisharchaeologywales.wordpress.com/newsandevents/>



## 20th-century Roundhouse Excavated at Castell Henllys

Harold Mytum and James Meek

University of Liverpool and Dyfed Archaeological Trust

During July 2018, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) sponsored a community excavation of the site of the roundhouse originally excavated by the first author in 1987, with reconstruction under his direction in 1988. The building was called the Earthwatch house to commemorate the organisation that supplied many of the volunteers who helped build it. The roundhouse was later renamed the Meeting House and was used for storytelling and lunch breaks for schools under PCNP management.



*Reconstructed Earthwatch roundhouse that was subject of the excavation after being dismantled.*

This year, the house was dismantled so that it could be rebuilt, though it was still structurally sound. By the time the archaeological project commenced, the roof and most of the wall had been removed, but part of the southern wall remained in place. Following the methodology devised during excavation of the first roundhouse to be reconstructed and then rebuilt in 2017, the site was cleaned, loose artefacts collected, and excavation and recording began.

The roundhouse was originally constructed with a wattle wall supported by posts set in a continuous trench which was relatively shallow on the northern uphill side, but was significantly deeper on the southern, downhill arc. The top of the wall was joined by a continuous wall plate. Excavation examined the wall trench, locating the rotten parts of the already moved wall posts as these had partially or completely rotted off at ground level.

It was noticeable how many of these post pipes had been utilised by rodents that buried down through these very soft deposits to create nests, often filled with artefacts such as plastic string, sweet wrappers, and chewed up textiles. In prehistoric contexts, these voids were probably also colonised, and artefacts, charcoal etc could easily be carried down into such voids whilst the building was in use and as it was dismantled.



*North-western arc of wall trench and eaves-drip gully; note the finds marked in the floor surface.*

PCNP excavated an eaves-drip gully around the reconstructed house (none was found in excavation) and this was also excavated, largely filled with matted grass roots. It had not been maintained, and clearly it became a preferred location for vegetation with enhanced levels of rainwater derived from roof runoff. If gullies were to be kept open they must have been carefully maintained in the past to prevent this colonisation. It is also notable that a deposit a few cm thick accumulated between the eaves-drip gully and the wall line. This was largely formed as trample of daub materials in the roundhouse construction, but accumulated further as material was blown or washed under the eaves. In addition, mounds of material accumulated either side of the doorposts – the product of brushing out of the interior.

The interior of the roundhouse was extremely informative. This was in part because, having been built on a slope, managers have at various times attempted to create a more level floor, leading to a build-up of deposits in the southern half of the floor. Those areas near the door and in the northern half where floor surfaces were not maintained had been eroded into the subsoil, but on the south several floors were preserved.

Large numbers of finds were trampled into the floors, and against the wall to the south (where it had been particularly dark inside the reconstruction) large numbers of finds were recovered. These included many sweet wrappers, plastic straws, pack lunch items, and plastic bottle caps. Larger items were also lost and were buried under floor make-ups. These included metal cutlery, gloves, a pair of socks, spectacles, a carving knife, and a knife made for one of the participants of the Surviving the Iron Age TV series that was filmed on-site.



*Southern-western arc of wall trench; note accumulation of deposits in the round-house interior.*

## **Studying the impact of climate change on the historic landscape of the Dysynni Valley**

The Dysynni Valley is a glacial U-shaped valley on the west coast of Wales (Fig. 1), and is designated as a Landscape of Special Historic Importance due to its long and rich history of human settlement. Most known archaeological sites are in the uplands. However, complex cropmarks, field boundary morphology, and the location of archaeological find-spots indicate that there remains a wealth of uninvestigated archaeological evidence on the valley floor.

Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in GIS, my doctoral research assesses the vulnerability of the Dysynni Valley historic landscape to projected impacts of climate change. The HLC is informed by geophysical surveys, historic and modern maps, and examination of aerial photographs of the study area, identifying early medieval barrows, possible Roman double-ditched square enclosure and several circular enclosures, revealing previously unknown areas of human activity and settlement on the valley floor (Fig. 2). Large areas of the coastline are characterised by military activity, such as shooting ranges, lines of pillboxes, and an army training camp, or by the remains of maritime industry (e.g. fish traps, jetties, and harbours). These areas are considered more vulnerable to some of the impacts of climate

change than those further from the coast or at higher altitudes, My research will assess the vulnerability of this historic landscape to climate change, using a vulnerability index, highlighting areas that should be prioritised for further research, monitoring and management.

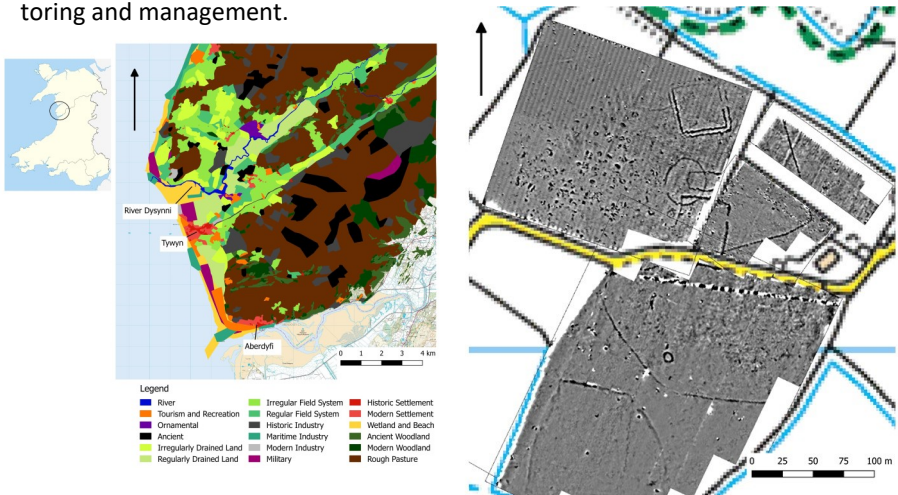


Figure 1. (left) Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Dysynni Valley, Gwynedd  
 Figure 2.(right) Provisional results of geophysical survey near Brynchrug in the Dysynni Valley, 2 miles of northeast of Tywyn  
 Isobel Cook University of Sheffield. Email: imcook1@sheffield.ac.uk

## Happy 90th Birthday CPRW!

13th October 2018

CBA Wales is delighted to help CPRW (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales) celebrate their 90th birthday at their forthcoming day conference at the renowned St Fagans Museum. CBA Wales will be giving a presentation about the sustainable re-use of historic agricultural buildings.

Itinerary:

- Arrive early to explore the fascinating St Fagans Museum
- 1pm – buffet, displays and networking with CPRW trustees
- 2pm – talks by top speakers from:
- CPRW, the first 90 years, a summary
- CALM (Campaign Against the Levels Motorway) – the M4 Diversion
- Campaign for Better Transport
- Council for British Archaeology

Further information and booking details available on the CPRW website:

<https://cprw.org.uk>



## Llys Dorfil interim report

*A.M & W.T Jones*

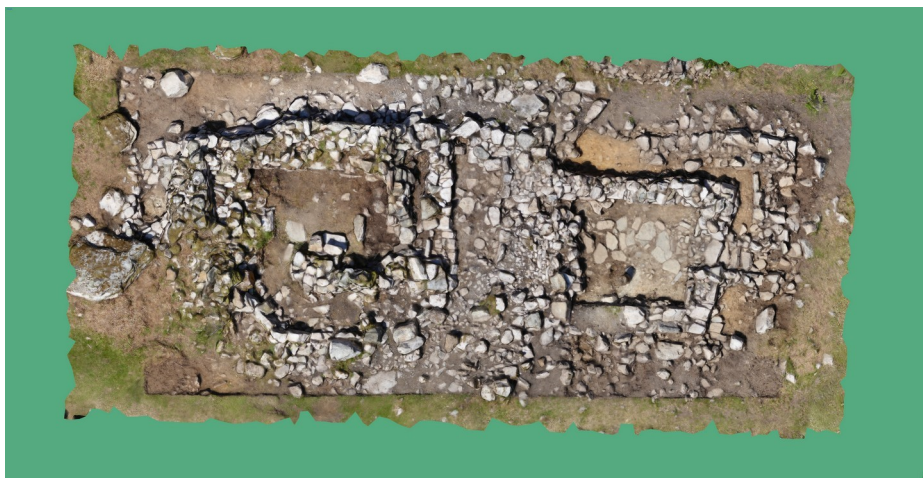
The Bro Ffestiniog Archaeological Society, mostly comprising of amateurs, decided to excavate the site of Llys Dorfil, an early enclosed settlement. With a membership of about 50, half of them took part in the actual excavations.

The site lies at a height of c 475' (145m) OD on ground that slopes to the east down towards the river Bowydd. NPRN 402403. Grid Reference SH69574447.

According to a National Dictionary of Wales, "CYMRU - Hanesyddol, Parthedegol a Bywgrahyddol" by Rev. Owen Jones, 1875. Volume 1, page 349 .....

"In the lower end of the valley, and just above Tyn-y-Cefn, there is an ancient place, known as 'Llŷs Darfil', the old court stands on the north side of the river Bowydd, the rock above it, is called Pen llŷs Darfil. It is assumed that Llys Derfel is the true meaning. This is probably the old dwelling of Derfel gadarn; who was the son of Hywel ab Emyr Llydaw, and according to Dr Pughe, the brother of St Dwywe. Derfel was a brave warrior at the time of King Arthur, distinguishing himself at the battle of Camlan in 542"

Pre-excavation work was done by Dr Ian Brooks, MCIfA, FSA (eas) Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd. with CABFFAS member Simon Anthony providing drone shots of the site.



This year's excavation concentrated on the area that was damaged by a fallen tree. Anything arising from the excavation was referred for a professional opinion from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, also from Kathy Laws, Ian Brooks, Ken Brassil and Rhys Mwyn who are members of the Bro Ffestiniog Archaeological Society.

The ground around the orthostatic stones at Llys Dorfil has eroded away, leaving them exposed and unstable; some of them have already toppled over. It was found that these stones were laid on the boulder clay natural with no apparent foundation. The logical conclusion is that the orthostatic stones were the foundation. The orthostatic stones were laid in a trench giving them the stability that was needed to build on. Two parallel walls were found, one was 0.8m wide, with a gap of 0.4 of a meter.

The question of whether the walls were multi-period or built at the same time



There are six reasons for not choosing the multi-period option.

The foundations were the same.

The alignment was the same.

The construction was the same.

The fact that the entrance steps were erected through the two parallel walls.

The fact that there was no fireplace on the ground floor.

The very poor ground floor is also a factor in this reasoning.

On the southern side of the small courtyard (LLDSB) a pivot stone was found in situ, suggesting that a doorway or a gate had been located there.

### Cistfaen – Cist burial

The first indication of a grave was the alignment of three stones, one east-west and the other two running north-south.

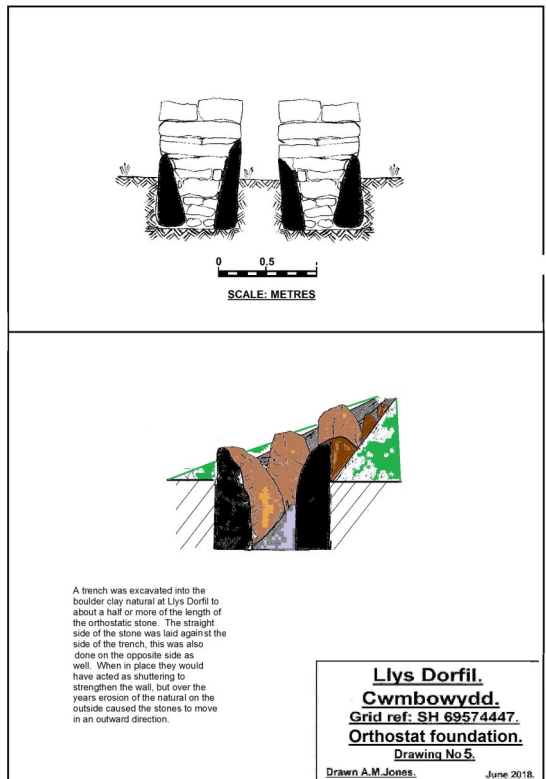
A trial trench was excavated which revealed the other east/west stone on the south side of the grave, which had been toppled over, with its base more or less in situ. The cap stone was also discovered in place though it had sunk slightly, the reason for this slump was that it was positioned inside the cist stones and not resting on the top of them. The weight of the capstone was about half a tonne. There were a lot of smaller stones packed tightly around it. The consensus was that the grouping of the stones was not natural. Some of the archaeologists were not convinced it was a cistfaen, but when asked what it could be, the reply was negative.

A sondage was dug on the outside of the grave to ascertain the natural. There was 10 cm of black topsoil lying on a reddish subsoil which was on the boulder clay natural. The depth of the natural was the same level inside and outside the grave.

Nothing was found inside apart from some fibrous organic matter, charcoal and some flakes of iron.

None of these things were found in the sondage.

**The dig will be continued in 2019, beginning at the end of May.**



**CBA WALES/CYMRU Autumn Business Meeting and  
Annual General Meeting  
Saturday November 24th 2018**

**The Royal Oak, The Cross, Welshpool SY21 7DG**

Members and non-members are welcome to attend the morning's proceedings. Coffee will be available from 10.30.

**Business meeting: 11:00  
Annual General Meeting 11:30**

Nominations for Vacancies:- Chairman

Secretary

Membership secretary

Ordinary committee members – up to 4 vacancies

The meeting will be followed by a committee meeting to include any newly elected officers and members.

## **Newsletter Editors**

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

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*or*

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