

Council for British Archaeology

Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig

Wales/Cymru



St Dyfnog's Well, looking east (Plate 1, page 6)

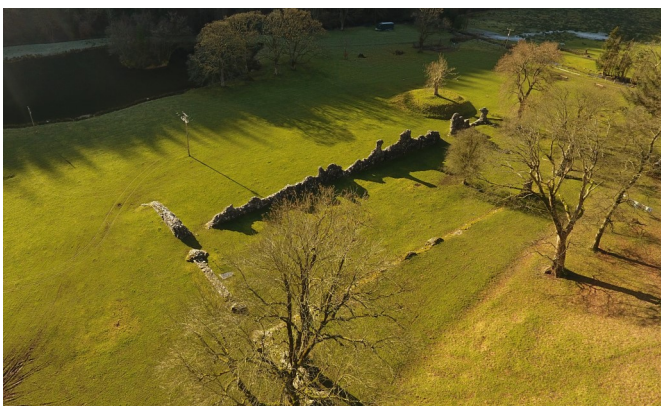
Newsletter 59 Spring 2020

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

New insights at Cwmhir Abbey, Radnorshire

Abbeycwmhir Heritage Trust has announced the launch of a four year community heritage project to 'Demystify Cwmhir Abbey' in Radnorshire. While the Trust has delivered public talks and field trips and taken an active part in research to do with the Abbey, its archaeology and its place in the national heritage of Wales for many years – this new project aims to bring new impetus to the understanding of the Abbey. The trigger for this new activity has come from the findings of two recent aerial surveys that suggest previously unknown potential buried structures within the Abbey precinct.

In the dry summer of 2018 Toby Driver from Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales took reconnaissance aerial photograph across the Abbey precinct from a FlyWales 4-seater Cessna aircraft (<https://rcahmw.gov.uk/wales-wide-drought-reveals-further-lost-archaeological-monuments>). This flyover identified a series of cropmarks immediately to the west of Home Farm at Abbeycwmhir that resembled a medieval graveyard. In the following summer Clywd-Powys Archaeological Trust funded by Cadw, excavated the site and found direct evidence of the medieval graveyard.



Left: The Abbey ruins. (Photograph: Julian Ravest)

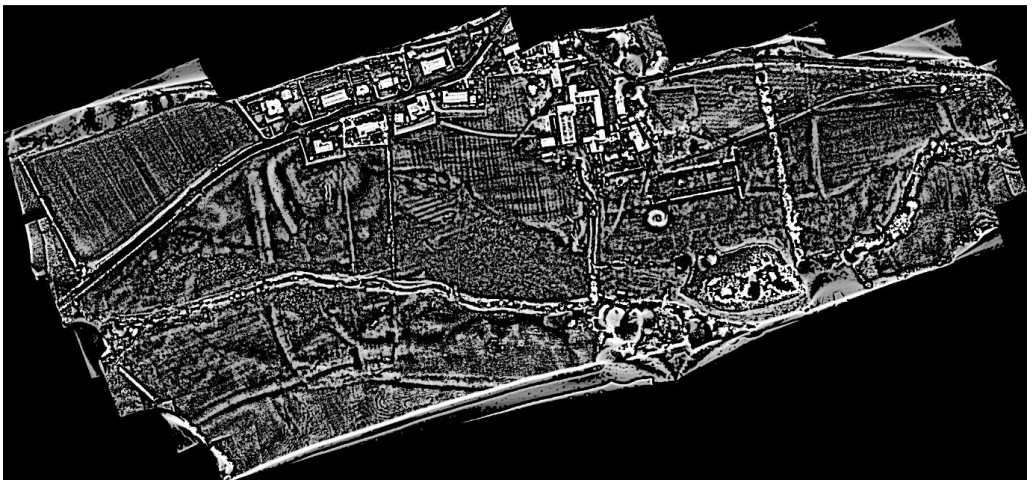


Right: CPAT archaeologists led by Chief Archaeologist Nigel Jones undertook the 2019 Abbey excavations which revealed evidence of burials. (Copyright: Julian Lovell)



Aerial photograph of Home Farm, Abbeycwmhir (Crown Copyright: RCAHMW)

A photographic and photogrammetric survey of the whole Abbey precinct and adjacent areas was undertaken using a drone. Nearly 200 photographs with a ground resolution of around 2.5cm/pixel were taken in normal light and used to create a 3-D digital model of the precinct area. Areas of special interest were covered at higher resolution by flying lower. Various computerised processes were employed to reveal aspects of the site for the first time. Together they show the complex impact of human intervention over some 850 years.



Photogrammetric image of the Abbey precinct. The existing Abbey walls are to the right of centre of this image. (Photogrammetry: Julian Ravest)

Two features among many are especially noteworthy. The first are marks of walls of a rectangular building in the transept area east of the Abbey ruins. A treeline cuts across the walls. These walls, despite being sub-surface, subtly alter the shape of the surface and can be picked up by the very sensitive photogrammetric techniques used. This building is most likely a post-reformation house that will be investigated further. The second are features at either end of the precinct which are interpreted as defensive earthworks put up by the Royalist garrison during the Civil War. When the parliamentarians captured the Abbey in 1644 they despoiled the site, removing any possibility of it being fortified again. The present state of the Abbey with its reduced walls is most likely due to this action. (Articles of the findings of the photogrammetric survey and of the Civil War assault on the Abbey are in the 2019 Transactions of The Radnorshire Society.)

Given the exciting new evidence from this aerial photography, Abbeycwmhir Heritage Trust has launched the 'Demystify' project to include a range of community heritage activities, geophysical surveys and excavations, further drone surveys and heritage research. With regard to the latter, the Trust is thrilled that Arts and Humanities Research Council funded Sacred Landscapes of Medieval Monasteries project at Strata Florida has invited the Trust to collaborate with their work and so the 'Demystify' project will be able to look at Abbeycwmhir and its Home Grange in the light of the understanding of sacred landscapes developed by Prof David Austin and his team.

For more information see www.abbeycwmhir.org and www.abbeycwmhirhistory.org.uk or contact history.cwmhirabbey@gmail.com

Festival of Archaeology 2020 – in July and October!

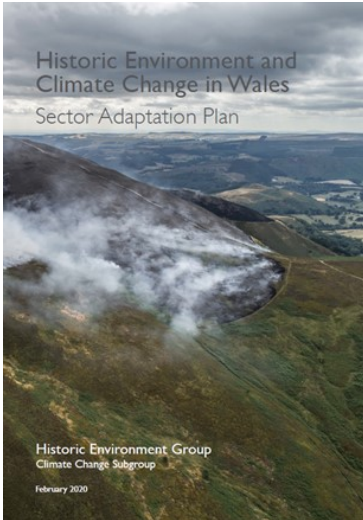
In response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) has decided to make some changes to the 2020 CBA Festival of Archaeology and it will now be taking place in two parts:

Digital events 11–19 July

On the ground events 14 October–1 November

This year's Festival theme is Climate and Environment. For more information see <https://festival.archaeologyuk.org/>

The Historic Environment sector in Wales addresses climate change challenges



Some of Wales' most iconic historic sites and landscapes are threatened by warmer temperatures, rising sea levels, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events.

The recently launched Historic Environment and Climate Change in Wales Sector Adaptation Plan highlights the need for collaboration and action across all sectors that will improve understanding; build adaptive capacity and increase the resilience of the historic environment – so that it can be enjoyed by future generations.

The Historic Environment Group (HEG) is a national forum, led by Cadw, that consists of public sector bodies, representatives of voluntary sector organisations and owners of historic sites. The HEG Climate Change Subgroup was charged with assessing and reporting to HEG on how the historic environment sector in Wales should address the challenge of climate change. The adaptation plan which has come out of this work highlights case studies where climate change is impacting sites and landscapes across Wales and where new approaches are being developed. <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/climate-change/adapting-to-climate-change>

The plan results from extensive consultation with stakeholders and sits alongside the recently published Welsh Government climate change adaptation plan for Wales, Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales. <https://gov.wales/prosperity-all-climate-conscious-wales>

Cadw has also published guidance on Flooding and Historic Buildings in Wales - which provides advice on ways to establish flood risk and prepare for possible flooding by installing protection measures. It also recommends actions to be taken during and after a flood to minimise damage and risks. <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/climate-change/flooding-and-historic-buildings-wales>

Community Excavation at St Dyfnog's Well, Llanrhaeadr, Denbighshire

Ian Brooks (Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd) and Samantha Jones (Cymdeithas Cadwraeth Llanrhaeadr YC Preservation Society)

In advance of the restoration works on St Dyfnog's Well, Llanrhaeadr, Denbighshire; Cymdeithas Cadwraeth Llanrhaeadr YC Preservation Society commissioned a community excavation and survey of the surviving remains to act as baseline data for the restoration.

St. Dyfnog's Well is situated within a natural topographical bowl roughly 200 metres to the west of St. Dyfnog's Church in the village of Llanrhaeadr, Denbighshire. The rectangular pool is approximately 6 x 3.8 m in size and is thought to be approximately 1.2 m deep (Plate 1: see front cover). It is fed by two springs, one of which outcrops above the pool and has formed a tufa "waterfall" from its outfall to the pool. At the eastern end of the pool is a small, footbridge and the end of a stone-built bypass culvert. At a slightly higher level, there is the remains of an earthen leat linking the springs to Llanrhaeadr Hall.

The site is traditionally linked to St Dyfnog, a Celtic saint of the late seventh or early eighth centuries AD and has been assumed to be a site of medieval pilgrimage. There are a number of descriptions of the site from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries including those of Fenton (1808) and Pennant (1883) which suggests the pool was originally surrounded by an outer enclosure and hint at the possibility of other buildings on the site.

Three small trenches were dug in September 2019, one at the eastern end of the pool, near to the bridge (Tr 1); one across the earthen leat (Tr 2) and the third on the platform, approximately 5 m above the western end of the pool (Tr 3). Tr 1, revealed a rough wall (Plate 2) which would have been part of the outer enclosure recorded in the antiquarian descriptions. This wall has a worn area on part of its top surface suggesting the location of the access point to the pool and was clearly cut by the construction of the bridge over the outfall, demonstrating more than one phase of post-medieval modification of the site. All of the finds from this trench were of post-medieval date, leaving some doubt as to the medieval use of the site. Indeed, no medieval material was found in any of the trenches. Tr 2, revealed no unexpected archaeology.



*Plate 2:
Wall in Tr 1*

Tr 3, proved to be somewhat surprising. The western end of the trench had a cut platform, partly filled with fragments of hand-made brick and post-medieval ceramics and glass, thought to be one of the buildings associated with the well. At the eastern end of this trench, however, was a cut into the underlying limestone interpreted as a quarry (Plate 3). Unlike any of the other contexts on the site this feature contained no post-medieval material, but did contain 479 knapped fragments of chert and two rounded cobbles with impact damage on their ends. There is a line of small chert nodules at the base of the quarry and the quarry face has areas of red staining suggesting the possibility of fire setting. It would therefore seem likely that this is a prehistoric quarry for the extraction of the Carboniferous chert. If so, this is thought to be the only known example of a prehistoric quarry in Wales.

In all 35 local volunteers took part in the excavation, whose help is gratefully acknowledged. The project is financed by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and the Robert Kiln Charitable Trust.



*Plate 3:
Possible prehistoric
quarry*

Operation Pill Box

Kathy Laws, National Trust

In October 2019 a team made up of National Trust rangers and volunteers began work on the Second World War Pill Boxes near Ogwen Cottage, Snowdonia. The two pill boxes are part of an extensive set of anti-invasion defensive features which date to the early period of World War II (1940-41). They formed part of Western Command Stop Line No. 23, which ran from Bangor to Porthmadog. The defences are located at the south end of Nant Ffrancon, where they defend the strategically important Ogwen Pass between Bethesda and Capel Curig. The surviving structures include two pill-boxes, including one that defends Llyn Ogwen, six spigot mortar emplacements, three infantry positions and an incomplete alignment of eight anti-tank blocks. The defences are known to have been manned by the Bethesda Home Gard.

A local volunteer has been carrying out research and working in the field to locate previously unrecorded elements of the defences and find out more about them and those who manned them. This phase of work seeks to clear out the pill boxes, re-route a footpath which is causing erosion, carry out consolidation works and fit some gates to prevent stock getting into the structures.

The defences are a Scheduled Monument requiring Cadw permission to be in place before work could start. Archaeological recording before, during and after the work is being undertaken by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

Work began with the pill box adjacent to Llyn Ogwen (Pill Box A). The entrance to this one had been deliberately blocked with soil and stones. The archaeologists felt that this probably happened soon after the pill box went out of use in the 1940s. These have now been removed and a much larger than anticipated entrance with stone and concrete steps revealed. Several bullet casings, dating to 1942, were recovered inside the pill box along with the cast concrete plugs for closing the embrasures (firing holes).

Work is on-going with the team working on moving the footpath up hill a little, away from the pill box entrance, repairing the stone-work at the corners and edges of the pill box, re-instating the stone wall in the approach to the entrance, and re-establishing the turf camouflage covering on the roof.

Clearance has also been carried out to the second pill box (Pill Box B). This was simpler as all that was need was the removal of a build up of goat manure from inside and some stones removed from the base of the entrance passage. The manure has been placed on the roof of the pill box to help re-establish the turf cover camouflage. The recovered stone will be used to repair one corner of the pill box, where stone has been lost and to rebuild a blast wall which protects the entrance. This pill box has clearly been used to house stock in more recent times and seems to have been cleared of contemporary objects, although much modern rubbish was recovered. One bullet casing and a 1943 half penny were, however, recovered nearby.

Left top: Pill Box A prior to conservation work;

Left bottom: Pill Box A making a start on unblocking the entrance;

Right: Pill Box A entrance re-instated and gate fitted.



NATIONAL PANEL FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES IN WALES

Introduction of a Box Fee for the Deposition of Archaeological Archives in Welsh Museums

Archaeological fieldwork often results in the creation of an archaeological archive. By its very nature, archaeological field excavation destroys its own evidence by removing objects from their original archaeological contexts. As observations in the field can never be repeated, the process of excavation must be carefully registered and documented. The objects found during the work along with environmental data and the documentation recording the original find circumstances comprise what is collectively known as an archaeological archive.

Archaeological archives are generated in a number of ways. The primary method is through commercial archaeological work instigated and undertaken as a condition of planning as deemed under the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The planning process will require the archaeological investigation of the development site ahead of the building work commencing. A condition of such planning consent will be the deposition of a well-ordered archive in a suitable repository. Other methods include research excavation, community archaeological work and grant funded work.

It is essential that any potential repository designated to receive archaeological archives is contacted ahead of work commencing to establish whether or not they will potentially accept the archive. In most instances the relevant local museum will be identified as the repository, although the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) will accept paper, documentary and digital archives and archives where there is no finds component requiring permanent retention. Note that RCAHMW does not currently apply a deposition charge for this service.

Up until now Wales has not charged for the deposition of archives with museums. In contrast, deposition charges have long been levied in England. The National Panel for Archaeological Archives in Wales proposes that museums should introduce a box deposition charge for archaeological archives generated as a result of all archaeological excavation and evaluation work taking place around Wales.

A box charge is seen as a fair levy as the developer, community or researcher should pay a reasonable amount towards the long-term costs of storage reflecting that there is more to the cost of archaeology than excavation and publication.

The proposal is to introduce a standard charge across all Welsh museums for the deposition of a box containing archaeological archive. The money obtained would enable the museum to provide the archive with the care required for its long-term preservation. Ensuring that the archive remains accessible to researchers and to those who may wish to use it. It is proposed that money obtained through the introduction of such a charge would be put back directly into the care of the archaeological collection.

A standard box charge will be introduced in all museums across Wales (including the National Museum) for all projects that commence on or after 1st April 2020 and that the price will be reviewed after five years. Charges will **not** be made retrospectively for projects that have already commenced. Charges will not be introduced at this time for the deposition of archival materials with RCAHMMW.

Museums in Wales will make a charge of £100 + VAT per standard unit deposited. A unit will be defined as:

- A small finds box
- A bulk finds box
- A large unboxed object
- A documentary archive box
- A roll of documents/drawings

Museums working closely with the archaeologists should accept the archaeological archive only in the context of the National Standards for the Collecting and Depositing of Archaeological Archives in Wales 2017, the museum's acquisition and disposal policy and the museum's policy and guidelines for the deposition of the archaeological archives. <http://www.welshmuseumsfederation.org/en/news-archive/resources-landing/Collections/national-standard-and-guidance-for-collecting-and-depositing-archaeological-archives-in-wales-2017.html>

2020 CBA Wales Spring Meeting and Public Events

It will come as no surprise to our members that we are postponing our usual Spring meeting and forthcoming events due to the current situation with coronavirus. We had an interesting programme lined up for this period and we are very sad that we will not have the opportunity to share the wonderful archaeology of Wales with you all.

The news is not all bleak, however. In line with the government advice to continue to get regular exercise, on your daily walk or run you might want to consider visiting or researching your local heritage sites (whilst continuing to respect social distancing, of course!). Our Archaeology in Wales bumper 2 year issue should either be already with you or on its way. There are also plenty of resources online and the CBA is sharing these so that people of all ages can continue to engage with archaeology from home. Access these via our blog (<http://blog.archaeologyuk.org/>). For those with younger family members (or for those who are just young at heart) the Young Archaeologists' Club website has many fun and exciting things to do (<https://www.yac-uk.org/things-to-do>). Finally, The CBA Wales website (<https://councilforbritisharchaeologywales.wordpress.com/>) is signposting links specifically related to Archaeology in Wales. If you have any suggestions, please do let our Director know via email: cyllenegriffiths@archaeologyuk.org.

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Archaeology in Wales

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