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Pen Dinas hillfort. © Crown Copyright: RCAHMW

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

RCAHMW U-boat Project Abercastle Field School Legacy Day

Ian Cundy, Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

During 2019 the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit ran a field school on behalf of the Nautical Archaeology Society at Abercastle in Pembrokeshire, South Wales. The field school formed part of Commemorating the Forgotten U-Boat War around the Welsh Coast 1914-18 that was a project co-ordinated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The field school took place over a 10-day period from 7th - 17th June 2019, with 90 divers and helpers attending, and was based around recording the remains of the wreck of the SS *Leysian*, which wrecked in the bay on 20th February 1917. The remains currently lie 600m from the slipway in Abercastle Bay in around 8 - 16m of water.

An image from the 2019 field school, superimposed with an impression of how the SS Leysian may have looked following the wrecking in 1917.

During the following year (2020), a Legacy Day had been planned to unveil a plaque to commemorate the wrecking of the SS *Leysian*, and to provide the local community with a report on what the field school managed to achieve. Unfortunately, these plans had to be postponed due to the Covid 19 pandemic, and it was not until 23rd April 2022 that the event was eventually able to take place.

On the Saturday afternoon, a slate plaque that had been provided by the local Mathry Community Council was unveiled by Dr Julian Whitewright, the Senior Maritime Investigator at the Royal Commission.

Dr Julian Whitewright introducing the unveiling of the commemorative plaque.

The day concluded in the Mathry Community Hall, where an evening talk was provided outlining what the field school managed to achieve, and a copy of the project's report was handed over to the community as a thank you for putting up with the field school back in 2019.

The plaque to commemorate the wrecking of the SS Leysian

A full copy of the report *Running a Maritime Field School at Abercastle, Pembrokeshire, South Wales as part of the U-boat Project: Commemorating the forgotten U-boat war around the Welsh coast (1914-18)* can be found at: http://www.madu.org.uk/Images/Abercastle%20Report.pdf
and a short video *A Day in the Life of an Underwater Maritime Archaeological Field School*, can be found at:
http://www.madu.org.uk/Images/Abercastle%20-%20A%20Day%20In%20The%20Life%20-%20Video.mp4

Bronze Bell (Tal-y-Bont) Shipwreck Information Leaflet

Ian Cundy, Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

The Bronze Bell (or Tal-y-Bont) wreck lies to the south of the Sarn Badrig Reef (St. Patrick's Causeway) between Barmouth and Harlech in Cardigan Bay. The wreck is named after the bell that was found on the site bearing the date 1677, and together with cannons and anchors, 43 blocks of Italian Carrara marble thought to be part of the cargo were also discovered.
The site is designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973), and many of the artefacts recovered from the site are now on display at a museum dedicated to the wreck in Barmouth. One of the marble blocks recovered from the site has also been carved and is on display on the quay side in Barmouth.

During September 2021, MSDS Marine were commissioned to carry out a re-evaluation and survey of the site as part of the on-going CHERISH Project, during which, the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit provided introductions and background assistance. Following a suggestion from MSDS Marine, MADU submitted the design for a leaflet to Cadw, to see if there would be interest in providing some general information about the wreck site and to help publicise the museum. Cadw's response was favourable, indicating that they were supportive of the idea, and to assist with the design and provision of bi-lingual leaflets, MSDS Marine, very kindly provided MADU with a grant as part of their Marine Protected Wreck Award Scheme.

English version: http://www.madu.org.uk/Images/Bronze%20Bell%20Leaflet%20-%20English%20version%205.pdf
Welsh version: http://www.madu.org.uk/Images/Bronze%20Bell%20Leaflet%20-%20Welsh%20version%205.pdf

Geraint Wyn Jones, Trustee of the Bronze Bell Shipwreck Museum in Barmouth, receiving copies of their new bi-lingual information leaflet from Ian Cundy of the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit.

Excavation of a Ring Cairn at Bryneglwys, Denbighshire

The Clwydian Range Archaeology Group (CRAG)

In May and July 2022 the Clwydian Range Archaeology Group, under the direction of Dr Ian Brooks, investigated a site overlooking the village of Bryneglwys, Denbighshire. The group had been approached just prior to the 2020 lockdown, through the local AONB warden, by a farmer keen to find out more about features on his land. Subsequently, in 2020 and 2021, a landscape and geophysical survey was carried out which identified a number of features worthy of further investigation.

Site

This was a large, sheep grazed field overlooking Bryneglwys village, on a North West facing slope with clear sight lines to the west along the valley of the Afon Morwynion and as far as Snowdonia, and backed by the Llantisilio Mountains. Historic Ordnance Survey mapping shows that prior to the 1950s this field had been un-enclosed heather moorland. The CRAG group looked at several of the features in the field, but concentrated their efforts on a slight mound with several large boulders just showing through the grass.

Features exposed (Fig. 1)

Two trenches were opened, the first, 5m x 5m, uncovered the Northern quadrant of the cairn; the other, 5m x 6m (with later extensions), the Southern quadrant.

Fig. 1 Photogrammetric aerial view (North to top right)

Just below the turf there was a ring of stones, approximately 7m x 6.5m in overall diameter and 1.5m wide. In the northern quadrant this consisted of a core of larger boulders (roughly 700mm x 400mm) surrounded by smaller stones. In the southern quadrant a similar line of large boulders may have formed an inner kerb, and there were hints of an outer kerb here too. There appeared to be a deliberate gap in the ring on the south side filled with smaller stones. In this space a charcoal rich spread was uncovered under the blocking stones.

The central area appeared to have been divided by a line of stones and contained a single small pit cut into the natural, which contained clean clayey soil. Also within the ring there was at least one discrete cremation burial, tightly packed within a circle of stones, containing charcoal, burnt bone and a well formed quartz crystal. These were overlying a large flint arrowhead that also showed signs of burning.

Outside the circle of stones there were at least four special deposits of cremated bone and charcoal, one almost complete pot, missing its rim, and possible fragments of another pot. A later field boundary, visible on the geophysics, and on the ground as a crop mark about 0.75m wide, respected the cairn, and ran adjacent to it on the South and SW sides. Over 150 sizeable pieces of quartz were collected from in and around the ring.

Finds

These included a number of hammer stones and worked flint flakes, including a 20mm blade broken from a larger knife; a finely worked barbed and tanged flint arrowhead **(Fig. 2)** which showed signs of having been burnt, and three intriguing flat circular stone discs approximately 100mm, 140mm and 160mm in diameter (referred to by the diggers as the pot-lid collection). All the flint found on the site was of high quality and probably imported.

This year's prize find was an almost intact pottery vessel **(Fig. 3)**, approximately 120mm in diameter, and placed upright in the ground to the north, just outside the main cairn ring of boulders. This was very fragile, and we called in the services of a conservation expert who has carefully lifted the pot intact for investigation in the lab. A substantial amount of burnt bone and charcoal was also collected for further laboratory analysis.

Fig. 2 Flint Arrowhead and crystal from the cremation

Fig. 3 Pottery vessel under excavation

Conclusion

CRAG hopes to continue work here next season and expresses its grateful thanks to the landowner for his support and enthusiasm. We also thank the volunteers and students who worked so hard through very hot weather this summer.

Exploring PEN DINAS: capital of Iron Age mid Wales

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

Dyfed Archaeological Trust in partnership with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales has received a £143,243 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund plus additional funding from Cadw for a two-year community project to learn more about the hill-fort that dominates the heights above the town of Aberystwyth and its neighbour Penparcau.

This aerial view shows how complex and impressive are the various entrances, ditches and banks of the Pen Dinas hillfort. © Crown Copyright: RCAHMW

Though excavated in the 1930s, this magnificent hillfort, like so many of the others that crown the hills of Wales, remains something of an enigma. Was it built for show, to demonstrate the power of the local Iron Age community, or did it serve a practical purpose as a place where cattle and grain could be safely stored? What activities did those who lived here undertake on this hilltop site?

The project will seek answers to questions such as these working with members of the Penparcau Forum and other community groups. The two-year project includes geophysical survey and excavation that will throw light on the ways in which our ancestors used the site.

The idea for the project arose from members of the local community, who have expressed a desire to know more about the hillfort and to see it better

maintained. Various community activities are planned, including working with local wildlife experts to clear bracken and gorse and improve the hilltop site for the rare plants, birds, invertebrates and insects that have a home at Pen Dinas.

Film making, pottery making, schools projects, guided walks and storytelling will all form part of this exciting project, which will culminate in a weekend festival to showcase the results of all these activities.

Christopher Catling, the Royal Commission's Chief Executive, said: 'we fully intend that this should be a model project in terms of consensual decision-making and co-production with our community partners. It is a failing of many 'community archaeology' projects that volunteers are secondary participants, whereas we want this project to show what can be achieved when the community itself is the primary driver, asking the questions and creating new knowledge in the process of answering them.'

Excavations run by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust in 2021, re-opening the trenches first dug in the 1930s using modern archaeological techniques.
© Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Development of Improved Resistivity Hardware

Dr Tim Southern

Background

Geophysical Survey Technologies Ltd (GST) have been developing ideas and improvements for "resistance survey" equipment to overcome all of the short comings we are aware of when using a twin array. We have been trying to build a resistance survey kit that has all of the advantages of the "Twin Array" but none of its disadvantages or its known problems of which some end users are unaware. These include the phenomenon of channelling where the location of the remote electrodes creates a low resistance channel between the remote electrodes and the measuring electrodes, and the problems associated with rotating the measuring frame through 180º.

Progress

GST has designed and manufactured a new survey frame which has produced very good results using existing commercially available electronics. GST has obtained, in comparative tests, far higher quality images than the Twin Array hardware. These comparative tests were done following an initial test at Pembroke Castle and involved many hours of further testing on sites in Wales.

The frame is light weight, easy to use, and comes with a mounting plate designed to take Geoscan Research RM-15 electronics. Additionally, there is an auxiliary instrument mounting plate that will allow Geoscan Research RM -4, RM-15, and RM-85 instruments to be fitted and can easily be modified to take other electronics.

The frame is far less tiring to use than a Twin Array including dragging its long cable across the survey area and gives very reproducible results. It is designed to fit in the boot of most modern cars even with the electronics mounted. It folds to make transporting easier and is height adjustable for operators of different heights.

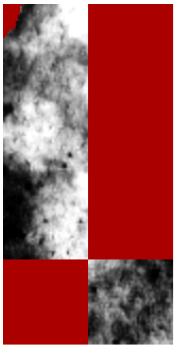
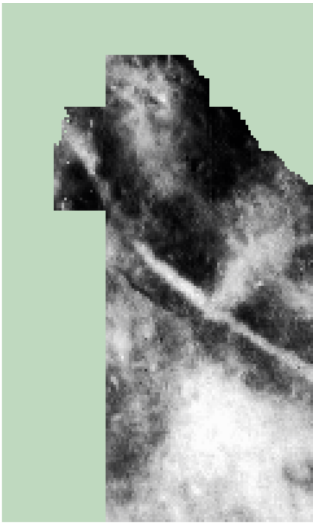


Figure 1, left, shows the type of detail obtained the Welsh test site. This image has white as high and the white areas can be seen as regular patterns from what could be the locations for roof supports.

The results were obtained using a standard Geoscan Research RM 15 electronics using 20 by 20 m grids with 2 points per metre in both directions and a parallel walking regime, with a current of 1 mA.

Twin Array, Parallel Walking



GST Methodology and Equipment

Figure 2, above, is a direct comparison with the Twin Array over another area in the test site. Both surveys used a parallel walking regime, Geoscan Research RM-15 electronics with a 1 mA current setting and under identical conditions. This figure has white as low. This test area demonstrated that "channelling" can occur within a Twin Array survey without the user being aware. It was picked up in a repeat survey with the remote electrodes to the opposite side of the survey area and showed, in this case, differences of up to 250 "pseudo" ohms in the survey area where the maximum was just over 700 and minimum around pseudo 300 ohms. The term "Pseudo" ohms is used because there is no means of knowing what the actual current is in the vicinity of the measuring electrodes, only the current injected into the soil.

The latest version of the frame is now undergoing independent final testing. Hardware will be available later in 2022, improved electronics are under development. The frame has been designed for modern manufacturing processes and GST intends to sell a higher performance frame at a comparable price to the existing frame. In the interim, we do have a small number of frames available for hire.

Contact details: Dr Tim Southern, enquiries@gstltd.com

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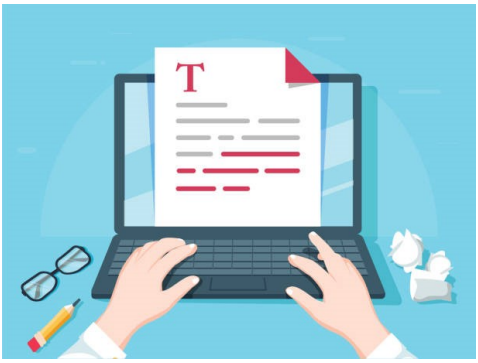

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