



DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST NEWSLETTER 2022



2022

Welcome to Dyfed Archaeological Trust's 2022 Newsletter. We began creating a Newsletter last year in order to keep you all up to date with our work and it was certainly successful. We hope you have all had a great year, we certainly have...

This year the Trust employed several temporary members of staff due to the large amount of work we had on our plate. Several new members of staff were employed during our work at the A40 road improvements, Haverfordwest Friary and Haverfordwest Castle excavations.

As a result we have had a few changes in staff this year. Emma Jones who has been with the Trust for several years left for pastures new, we wish her all the best for the future, and she will be sorely missed.

In October Charlie Enright, formerly of DAT Field Services joined the Heritage Management section of the Trust, along with Erin Lloyd and Alex Powell. All three will be working on the many Heritage Management Projects we currently have.

In April 2022, The Coastal Uplands: Heritage and Tourism Project was officially launched. This is an Aberystwyth University, Dyfed Archaeological Trust and University College Dublin partnership project. Jessica Domiczew began her role as the Project Officer for DAT's element of the project.

Helen Gant, a regular DAT Volunteer has also joined the Trust in order to complete our historic farmsteads project and to assist with recording finds for the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Heritage Management archaeologist Jenna Smith welcomed a new arrival in January 2023, we wish the new family all the best.

After many years with the Trust, Hubert Wilson is finally retiring! We thank him for all the years of dedicated, hard work he gave to the Trust and hope he enjoys all his newly found free time.



**Volunteers hard at work in the sunshine at Porth y Rhaw
Promontory Fort.**

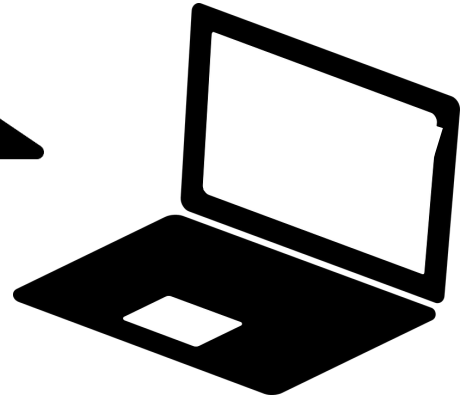
Our Year in Numbers



Over **113**
Archaeological
Projects have been
undertaken



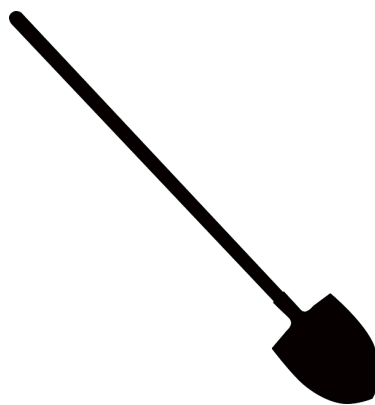
As advisors to our local
planning authorities, we
have processed and
assessed over **4000**
Planning Applications



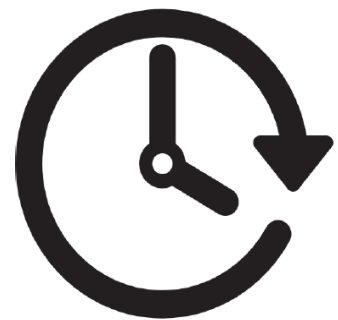
We have added over
2000 new core records
and over **100** new event
records to the Historic
Environment Record



We have had over **100**
enquiries regarding the
Historic Environment, or
archaeological finds.



We have added over **90**
finds to the Portable
Antiquities Database.



Over **170** volunteers
gave more than **1100**
days of their time over
the last year. Thank you
all so much!



DAT carrying out a walkover survey in an area of early coal workings in the Brecon Beacons



Haverfordwest Friary

October 2022 saw the end of an eight-month archaeological excavation at the site of the former Ocky White Store in the middle of Haverfordwest. The site had been occupied by an iron foundry in the 19th century but beneath this evidence for a medieval cemetery was revealed associated with the Dominican Friary of St Saviours, founded in the mid-13th century, whose location has never been accurately ascertained.

A large team of archaeologists excavated the remains of more than 300 burials as well as remnants of what we suggest was a first phase of the friary church demolished in the late 1300s when grants allowed for the construction of a larger church and monastic complex of buildings to the south and west. The area of the earlier phase of the church then became a cemetery serving the local community, in use into the 1600s. This cemetery was eventually covered with debris from the demolition of the later church to the south.

The burials included children, a reflection of the high infant mortality rate at the time, but also comprised both male and female adults, demonstrating the use of the cemetery by the townspeople at large.

However, within the surviving vestiges of several stone crypts at the eastern end of the early friary church were several burials, including one in the northeast corner that had had a pewter vessel and plate placed in the hands of the buried individual, that we believe represent a chalice and patten indicating that this was the burial of a priest.

At the western end of the excavation area a large north-south wall with huge foundations was revealed to the west of which were a group of carefully stacked burials with their feet placed right up against the wall. Comparisons to similar sites suggests that this was a common practice within the walkway of the cloister which often lay to the west and south of the church.

Evidence for features predating the friary included several fire pits and a possible kiln.

The skeletal remains, and all other finds, including beautiful decorated medieval floor tiles that would have come from the friary church, were cleaned at a nearby disused shop by an army of volunteers working in conjunction with Trust staff. The project generated huge interest in Haverfordwest and the surrounding area. Many people visited the shop which was open to the public every day to allow them to see and experience this side of the excavation process.

All the skeletal remains will be analysed by Cardiff University, providing insights into how people at this time lived and died, their occupations, and even where they came from, before all are reburied in consecrated ground.

This is the first major archaeological excavation to have taken place within the boundaries of the medieval town of Haverfordwest and is proving a unique opportunity to gather information about the continuous development of this thriving town through the ages, and its vital connection with the Western Cleddau River.



The site of the excavation was between two buildings.

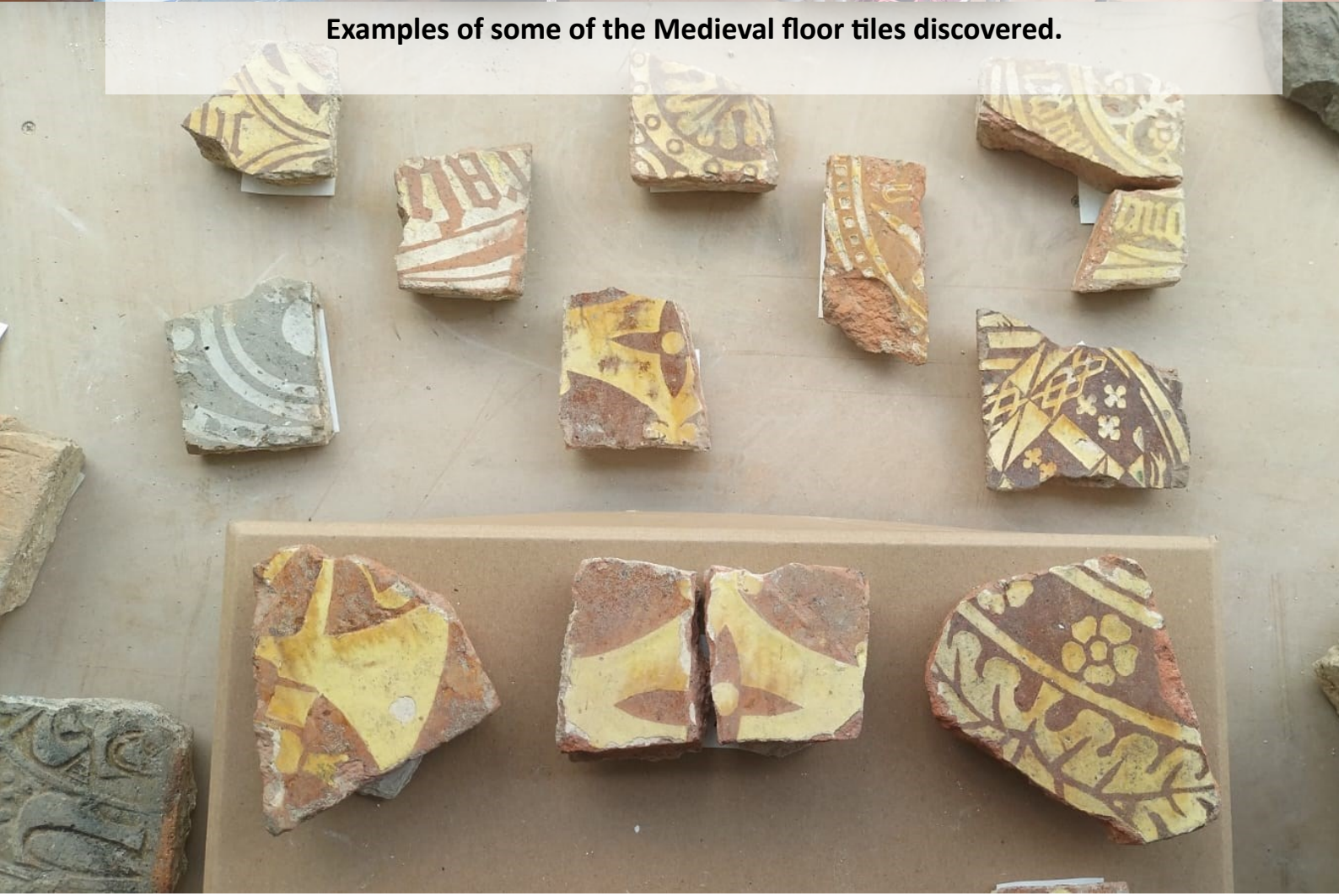
307 skeletal remains were recovered in total.





A few of our many volunteers cleaning the finds.

Examples of some of the Medieval floor tiles discovered.





**A Medieval chess piece. It is made of jet and represents a Bishop.
It is decorated with linear, dot and circle decoration.**



Porth y Rhaw Promontory Fort

August of 2022 marked what is likely to be the final season of excavation at Porth y Rhaw Iron Age promontory fort in Pembrokeshire. The seven-week excavation was funded by Cadw with additional generous contributions from the National Trust, The Nineveh Trust and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. This was the third season of excavation in recent years. Previous seasons focussed on the entrance and roadway leading into the fort. This year's excavations focussed on a large stone-built roundhouse partially uncovered by DAT's excavations in the 1990s.

The stone-built roundhouse lay immediately to the south of the entrance and is thought to date to the Romano-British period (AD 43-410). The roundhouse had two entrances, an impressive front entrance, with massive threshold stone facing the entrance to the fort, and a smaller entrance at its rear. Its circular stone walls, of 1m in width, were constructed of large boulders and were partly terraced into the slope. With a diameter of 12 metres it is amongst the largest recently excavated roundhouses in Wales. Within, it had a stone-lined drain which swept around the interior wall-edge before exiting under the wall. During its lifetime it appears that the roundhouse was rebuilt or renovated several times.

Surprisingly, the excavation revealed that the roundhouse was not in fact a house in the domestic sense, instead it appeared to be some form of craft centre concerned with metal production. Rather than a large central hearth, it had as many as 14 smaller smithing hearths, often with accompanying stone anvils for the working of metal.

In the area surrounding the stone-built roundhouse was a density of earlier features. These comprised numerous postholes and drainage gullies of earlier Iron Age structures, including earlier roundhouses. Finds from the dig included glass beads, waste glass, spindle whorls, Roman pottery, and a large amount of ferrous and non-ferrous metal-working waste and slag.



The remains of the Romano-British roundhouse at Porth y Rhaw.



A volunteer finds a stone spindle whorl.

A visit from the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, Dawn Bowden .





Aerial shots of the site taken by Toby Driver, of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales as part of the CHERISH Project





**Some of the finds this year included, a blue glass bead and fragments Roman pottery ,
one a mortarium rim with the maker's stamp.**



Llanddewi Velfrey—A40

Archaeological works were required during the upgrading of the A40 trunk road between Llanddewi Velfrey and Redstone Cross, Pembrokeshire. From November 2021 to June 2022 a team of nine archaeologists excavated a wealth of archaeological features in the first phase of fieldwork.

Initially work focussed on a complex rectangular enclosure defined by a phases of palisade ditches. A palisade is typically a fence or defensive wall made from wooden stakes, or tree trunks. Within the outer enclosure lies a smaller rectangular enclosure/structure, also once defined by a palisade fence.



Left: *Aerial photograph of the enclosure complex.*



Right: *Aerial photograph showing detail of stake-holes within the larger enclosure palisade trench.*

Interpretations of these remains include a house with surrounding enclosure or a mortuary enclosure dating from the earliest part of the Neolithic, some 6000 years before present. Both are extremely rare forms of archaeological remains, with very few examples recorded in west Wales. It cannot be overstated how much our knowledge of this period will be enhanced by the current excavations.

Some 100m east of the enclosure complex at least 14 Neolithic pits were identified and excavated. Although heavily truncated by ploughing the shallow pits contained a range of finds. Eleven pits contained pottery that appeared early Neolithic in date, although the identification may change once the whole assemblage is studied. In addition, the pits held flint flakes, stone axe fragments, quartz crystals, stone pebbles, and deposits of burnt hazel shell, which bodes well for environmental analysis and further radiocarbon dating.

Right: *Pottery fragment from a Neolithic pit.*



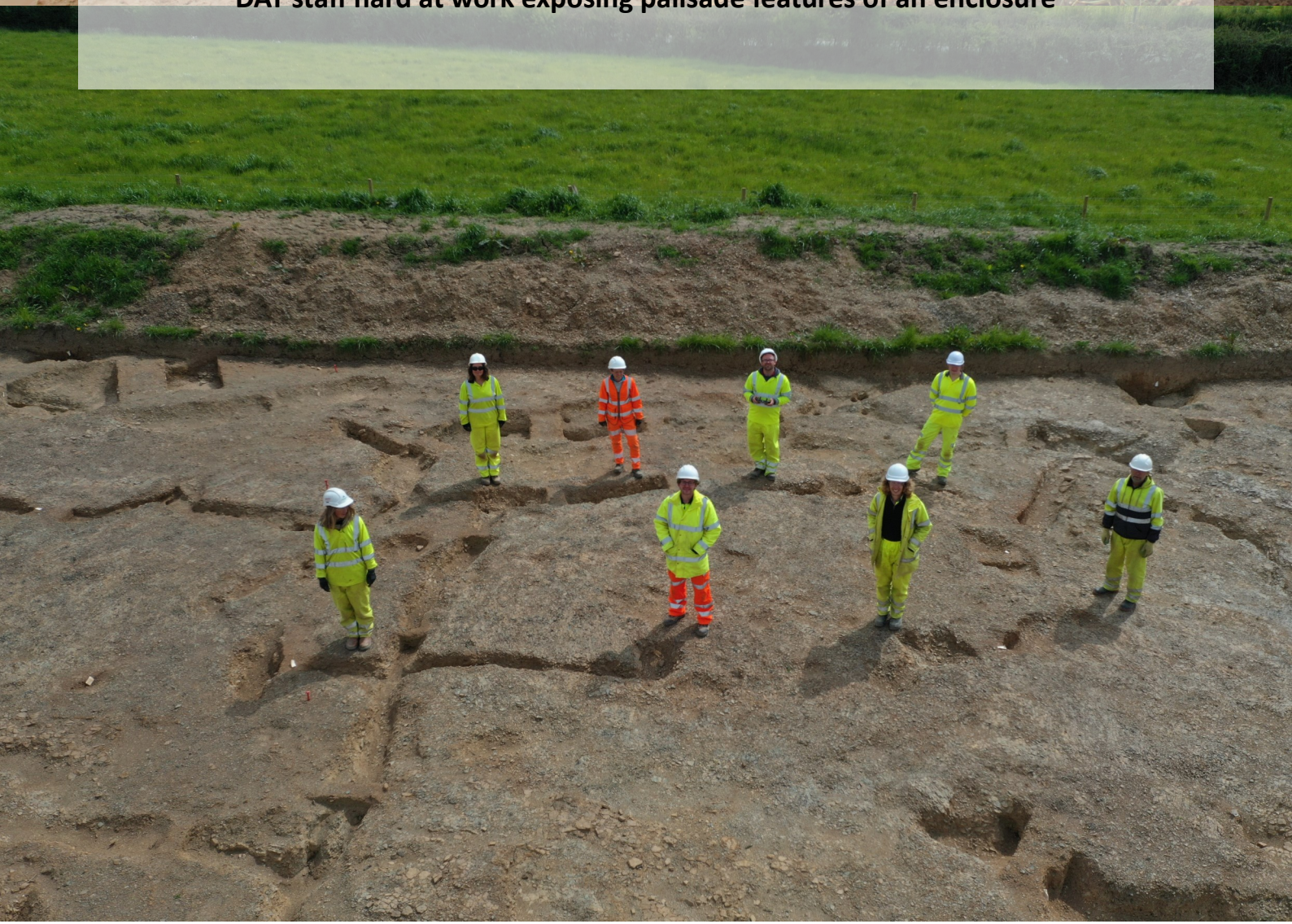
In contrast, a further three pits were probably Bronze Age in date and contained what we think could be 'cushion' stones, small square shaped stones with rounded corners used in metal working. The stones appear to be made of local shale, one stone has been broken in two, another shows evidence of possible scratched decoration and all show evidence of being shaped. These are extremely rare objects that we think are the first to be found in Wales. A second phase of excavation has now commenced.



Left: *An example of a possible 'cushion stone'.*



DAT staff hard at work exposing palisade features of an enclosure





The picture above shows several excavated post holes and below, a broken stone axe head that was found on site



Coity Castle—Bridgend

This long running project finally came to a close following the completion of a two-year long conservation project and submission of a draft building-survey report in September. The castle originated in the early 12th century, with upstanding masonry remains of four main periods, the earliest being curtain walling and integrated keep. The castle saw major development during the 14th century, heightening the curtain wall, remodelling the keep and internal gatehouse, adding an extensive domestic range within the inner ward, and rebuilding the outer ward defences in stone. The early 15th century saw a period of rebuilding following a damaging siege by Owain Glyndŵr in 1404-5, along with an extension to the castle chapel. The final period of major works came in the Tudor era, with extensive refurbishment of domestic areas within the inner ward, heightening the domestic range and keep. Absentee owners from the 17th century onwards led to its gradual decline, finally coming into Ministry of Works ownership from the 1930s, and ultimately Cadw. DAT carried out an archaeological programme of historic building recording in association with the renovation work, which included repointing and repairs to walls and conservation of dressed stone. The views were spectacular!



Check out the fabulous sketchfab image of Coity Castle here—

<https://sketchfab.com/aerial-cam/collections/coity-castle-ae23cdaa6e514f2f997f4bdbe637c328>

Climate Change and the Historic Environment

The effects of climate change are already being experienced by communities in Wales, with more severe weather events having far reaching consequences on lives and livelihoods and our historic features and landscapes. Over the last ten years the Trust has been working to assess the issues associated with climate change, gaining an understanding of the risks to different historic assets in different locations, helping to inform work to mitigate the loss or damage of our heritage.

Our initial research began with developing a strategic approach for assessing the impact of climate change on the historic environment of Wales. This involved identifying and assessing the sensitivity of historic assets to climate change on which to base a risk assessment, and looking at the likelihood and impact of the risks identified: Assessing the potential impact of climate change on the historic environment of Wales, <https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/climatechange.pdf>

A group of representatives of the historic environment sector in Wales have formed a Climate Change Subgroup and they are charged with assessing and reporting on how the sector should address the challenge of climate change. The Historic Environment and Climate Change in Wales Sector Adaptation Plan is a high level, strategic document with the objective of encouraging collaboration and action to increase knowledge and understanding, increasing capacity and building resilience: <https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/climatechangesectoradaptation.pdf>

More recently the Trust has carried out a pilot project using GIS as a basis for identifying and understanding the threats and impacts of climate change at a national, regional and site scale; Climate Change Adaptation Pilot Project 2020-21: <https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/climatechangeadaptationpilot2020-21.pdf>

Heritage along the coastline of Wales is clearly at risk, particularly as difficult decisions are having to be made about which areas can be defended from sea level rise and which will be allowed to be left to follow natural processes. The Trust is keeping our records as complete as possible, to ensure that correct information is available to decision makers. Climate Change and Shoreline Management Plans:

<https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/climatechangeshoreline2021-22.pdf>



Llawhaden Bridge

Recognising that both climate change and biodiversity loss are inextricably linked, work to improve the health of our rivers has sometimes necessitated the removal or modification of historic features such as weirs. The Trust is currently working on recording historic features within rivers and riparian environments to ensure that we can provide the best information and advice in advance of such schemes: Rivers and Riparian Environments 2021-22

<https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/climatechangerivers2021-22.pdf>

The Trust has been investigating and recording important sites where climate change is already taking its toll before their secrets are lost for ever. These include St Ishmael, St Patrick's Chapel and Porth y Rhaw, which have revealed incredible new information about our past and given opportunities for volunteers to be involved in the whole process from beginning to end, and for visitors to observe sites of national importance being recorded – perhaps you might have visited or even worked on one of them? St Patrick's Chapel, Porth-y-rhaw Coastal Promontary Fort and St Ishmael Medieval Village.

<https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/stpatricksfinalreport2022.pdf>

<https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/discovery/projects/porth-y-rhaw-coastal-promontory-fort/>

<https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/stishmaelpublishedreport.pdf>



Weir downstream of Llandeilo Bridge

News

The St Patrick's Chapel excavation final report has finally been completed! We would like to thank all the contributors for their hard work in getting this report finished, and to all our dedicated volunteers who worked on this project over the years. We hope you enjoy reading the report which can be found here—

<https://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/stpatricksfinalreport2021.pdf>



Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park



The University
Of Sheffield.



In 2022, we got confirmation that a project at Pen Dinas, Aberystwyth was going ahead!

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 hillfort that dominates the heights above the town of Aberystwyth and its neighbour Penparcau.

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. In December 2022 an Outreach Officer was appointed on behalf of the Royal Commission and it is hoped that our first phase of work will begin in Spring 2023!

