

THE MAENCLOCHOG COMMUNITY EXCAVATION

Discovering the origins of Maenclochog

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Discovering the origins of Maenclochog

By

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SUMMARY

A two-week archaeological excavation was undertaken at Maenclochog in Pembrokeshire, (NGR SN083272) during the second half of September 2007. The excavation was undertaken by Cambria Archaeology working with members of the local community recruited by PLANED, with support from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and funding from PLANED from the WAG and EU Leader+ transnational project "Experience Pembrokeshire". The need for the project had been identified from the community's Action Plan.

The excavation aimed to discover evidence of the 'castle site' long believed by local people to be located on the present day site of the village car park and amenity centre. The wall of a manorial pound, the remains of the castle wall, a defensive bank and ditch, and evidence of a pre-Norman settlement were all revealed.

The excavation has shown that before the castle was built, there was an early medieval defended settlement on the site which was surrounded by a defensive bank and ditch. An early medieval settlement is a very rare find in Wales and interestingly provides evidence that people lived in round houses here, right up until the Norman conquest of Pembrokeshire, when Maenclochog Castle was built. Roundhouses are usually associated with the Iron Age and Roman periods.

There was considerable media interest in the excavation with numerous radio, television, newspaper and internet coverage. The site was also popular with visitors from the locality, pupils from local schools and those on holiday in the region, with over 400 people visiting the site.

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INTRODUCTION

Project background

The excavation at Maenclochog was a community led project resulting from public interest in the history of Maenclochog expressed during community consultation with PLANED (Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development) over plans to enhance the car park and amenity area, as outlined in the Maenclochog Community Action Plan.

The focus of the project was to discover more about the origins of the 'castle site' long believed to have been located on the site of present day Maenclochog's car park. The excavation was carried out by volunteers from the local community and staff from Cambria Archaeology. The objectives were to involve the community in discovering the history of Maenclochog while learning about and experiencing the processes involved in archaeological excavation, through practical participation. It is hoped that the excavation will become a catalyst for further historical research and other related activities undertaken by community members.

The project was funded by PLANED from the WAG and EU Leader+ transnational project "Experience Pembrokeshire". (which aims to encourage communities to celebrate their heritage and culture); and with support from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

This report describes what was discovered during the excavation, and what it can tell us about the history of Maenclochog. Words printed in blue are defined in a glossary of terms at the back of this report.

Methodology

Heritage consultants 'Trysor' were commissioned by PLANED to undertake a topographical and documentary survey of the car park area in September 2006. From this report, an excavation project was developed by Cambria Archaeology.

Prior to the excavation, several meetings were held which were organised by PLANED in conjunction with Cymdeithas Clochog, the local community forum, to explain the aims and practicalities of the project to the community, and to encourage participation.

The excavation took place within the car park, where it was believed evidence of the castle was most likely to survive. Trenches were located where they would hopefully provide useful information and were easily accessible, without disrupting use of the car park.

Standard archaeological techniques and procedures used for an 'evaluation excavation' were employed. Trenches were initially cut using a JCB, down to a level where archaeological deposits and features could be discerned. Features were then excavated by hand. Community participants were involved in all aspects of excavation, planning and recording, under supervision from staff from Cambria Archaeology.

The site of Maenclochog Castle, is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument, so no consent for the excavation from Cadw was required. The car park is owned by the community council, who were happy for trenches to be dug. Permission was also given by the Dadswells who own the neighbouring field, to excavate on their land.

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Maenclochog is one of a chain of Anglo-Norman 'planted settlements' along the southern foothills of Mynyddoedd Preseli (along with other settlements such as New Moat, Henry's Moat and Hayscastle). The shape of the village, planned around the parish church, with a castle at one end, and a main street lined by housing plots is characteristic of such settlements. The long, narrow fields that surround the village are also a typical survival of the medieval 'open field' system.

The car park is located at the southern end of the village, on an oval shaped plot of land. This was formerly the site of a 'manorial pound' where livestock was temporarily housed when in transit through the village, for local markets and fairs, or when stray.

That this was also the site of Maenclochog castle is suggested by the place name Parc y Gaer recorded in the 1839 tithe schedule. Richard Fenton, who visited the site in his 1810 Historical Tour of Pembrokeshire, describes the remains of Maenclochog castle as 'very trifling', suggesting that it may have been an 'exploratory fort' built on the site of an 'old British earthwork'. The reference to an 'old earthwork' suggests that the site may formerly have been the site of an Iron Age defended enclosure.

On the southern edge of the car park is a rocky outcrop from the top of which clear views over land to the south of the village are provided. In recent times, this rock outcrop has been identified as the supposed site of a castle 'motte', while the car park area was thought to be the castle 'bailey'.

As a planned settlement Maenclochog could have been expected to grow and develop, although this does not seem to have happened. It never achieved borough status, nor was there a recorded market or fair in medieval times (although many fairs and markets were held at Maenclochog later in its history).

The lack of growth may be reflected in the layout of the village, which appears to lack the carefully measured smaller 'burgage plots' of towns like Newport. While such a layout may once have existed, it may have broken down over the years as population dwindled. Alternatively, the settlement pattern may have evolved more organically, without an original blueprint apart from the castle, church and main street.

SITE HISTORY

Much has been written about the history of Maenclochog and its surrounding area, but the following review concentrates on the castle site and is largely based on the documentary research undertaken by 'Trysor' (Hall and Sambrook 2006). The lordship or manor of Maenclochog, within the medieval Cantref of Cemaes was held under Anglo-Norman tenure by the Roche family of Llangwm during the 13th and 14th centuries. A castle had been founded by 1215 when Maenclochog is mentioned in the Welsh chronicles as one of several castles destroyed by Rhys Ieuanc and his uncle in that year. The castle was 'destroyed' again in 1257 by Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg and Merydudd ap Owain (Jones 1941).

Despite these attacks, the castle may still have been in use when it was listed in an *Inquisition* of 1376 (HMSO). By the late 16th century the castle may have been abandoned, since it is not mentioned by the Elizabethan antiquarian George Owen (Pritchard 1906).

From at least the 19th century (and probably earlier), the castle site was used as a manorial pound. A map of Maenclochog dating to 1773, does not appear to indicate the presence of a manorial pound. Court Rolls of the Manor of Maenclochog from the 1830s-1850s record the use and maintenance of the pound. In 1870, the poundkeeper presented an estimate to the court for 'renewing the hedge round the pound of the Barony of Maenclochog... Repairing the cirrounding wall-which is mostly to be renewed....' (PRO, D/RTP/PIC/71).

In the late 1960s, shale rock 1 meter or more in depth, was dumped inside the pound to level up the ground surface, and the site was turned into the village car park. A photograph taken in the early 20th century (see photo 2) shows how the site appeared before that time.

Today, the appearance of the car park does not look much like the site of a castle. Only by climbing on top of the rock outcrop does one get an impression of the defensive strengths of the site.

Fenton's description of the site also suggests that prior to the founding of the medieval settlement, there may have been an Iron Age 'defended endosure' at the site.

The road running west from Maenclochog is marked as a 'supposed' Roman Road on the first and second edition Ordnance survey maps. This possible route for the Via Julia Maritima has now been discredited, as it was based on a document 'discovered' by 'professor' Charles Bertram in the 18th century. The document was later revealed as a forgery.

EXCAVATION PROCEDURES

Archaeological sites are formed by the gradual build up of layers of soil or structures such as walls, built one on top of the other. These layers represent different events happening over time. As the layers build up, the ground level rises. When a ditch or other 'cut feature' is originally dug, it will cut into the layers buried below it. The ditch will itself eventually fill up with soil and be buried below later layers of soil.

When excavating, archaeologists systematically remove the different layers of soil or empty the soil from a buried ditch. Working from the top, the latest layers are removed first, to reveal earlier layers beneath. By excavating each layer separately, archaeologists can recover clues such as charcoal, bone and pottery, which can provide dating evidence and reveal details of daily life in the past.

In this way we can work out the sequence of events that have resulted in the build up of layers. By finding dating evidence, we can work out when the different events happened, and thus discover the history of a site.

Each different layer of soil, or cut feature containing soil, is given a unique reference or 'context' number. This number is used to cross reference written records, photographs and finds. Because of this, archaeologists call different layers of soil 'contexts'.

The word 'feature' is generally used by archaeologists to refer to archaeological remains that represent a man made structure (such as a wall) or the traces of a past event (such as the digging of a ditch or posthole). Generally a 'deposit' is a layer of soil that is present as a result of human activity, while a 'layer' is naturally formed, but either word may be used.

Some other terms used in this report are explained in the glossary section of this report (page 15).

Once all the archaeological features have been excavated and recorded, they can be divided into groups based on shared characteristics, relationships, or the patterns they form. These groups of features can be compared with the results from other excavated sites of a similar type and period to suggest an explanation of what the features represent (such as parts of buildings, other structures or activities). However, because the trench only reveals some or part of all the features in the area, it can be difficult to decide for certain which features to group together, and exactly what they may represent.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

The descriptions in the following section will be more easily understood by referring to the plans, drawings and photographs in this report. Each different layer and feature is given a 'context number' for easy reference.

Trench 1 (see figures 4 and 5)

On the assumption that there was indeed a castle at the site, Trench 1 was located within the part of the castle known as the 'bailey'. Here, there would have been domestic and agricultural buildings, and open areas in which a variety of daily activities were undertaken.

The trench was positioned where there was enough room to store the excavated soil, allow safe working, and make the site accessible for visitors to watch the progress of the excavation.

With a JCB mechanical excavator, we removed a series of different soil layers down to a level at which we could begin to see archaeological features cut into natural geological soils 004.

The first two layers removed were the modern topsoil and the shale (001) deposited when the car park was made. Below the shale was a brown silt layer (002) which was the ground surface topsoil before 001 was deposited. At this point we began to look out for any objects that might relate to the use of the site as a manorial pound, but found nothing. Underneath the silt layer was a layer of stone rubble (003). This could have been the remains of a collapsed wall or building, but to make the digging easier, this layer was also removed with the JCB. It was underneath stones 003 that we first began to see patches of different coloured soils in the top of natural silt 004. This suggested there were archaeological features in the trench 1.20m below the modern ground level.

Having cleaned loose soil from the sides and base of the trench, it was possible to define the edges of different shaped features. As we cleaned, several pieces of pottery were discovered in the top of some of the features. The pottery has been identified as 'Dyfed Gravel Tempered Ware' (DGTW) which can range in date between the late 12th and early 16th centuries (see Appendix 1). A single fragment of 'Proto-Ham Green Ware' was, however, recovered from hearth feature 021. This can be dated to the 12th to early 13th centuries (see Appendix 1) and may suggest the DGTW pottery may also be of this date.

The first feature to be excavated (rectangular pit 012) was also the latest to have been created. Within this pit we discovered the articulated remains of two dog skeletons. We could see that the dog grave had been cut from immediately below the shale layer (001), but was cut through layers 002 and 003. We therefore know the dogs must have been buried before 1968 but after the medieval period (which is sealed beneath layer 003). The other features in Trench 2 are all either medieval or earlier in date.

Deposit 015 was a trampled surface of small pebbles, forming a half-circle (the other half lying beyond the trench edge). These may be associated with at least some of the features in group 016 (see fig 4). This was a group of 'stake-holes', originally formed by pushing wooden poles into the earth. The pattern they make suggests the stake holes may have formed a fence, running at an angle across the trench, possibly indicating a boundary between two properties or around an animal pen. Some of the stake-holes may also have defined the edge of surface 015, suggesting part of a circular animal pen or a small circular building with a floor (see photos 13 and 14).

Features 025, 045, 047, 049, 051 and 057 are probably all 'post-holes'. These were originally dug to hold a wooden post. Sometimes 'packing stones' were jammed in around the post to keep it firmly in place. Although the wooden posts had decayed away, some of these 'packing stones' were found in place in the postholes (see photos 9 and 12). Postholes 025, 047, 049 and 057 may form a row, or part of a large circle of post-holes that continues beyond the edge limits of the trench. Unfortunately we do not have enough evidence to say for certain what these features were part of.

To the south of the post-holes part of a long, thin, slightly curved feature (011) was cut across the trench. This was part of a larger circular ditch, only part of which lies within the trench. As this feature was excavated we noticed patches of darker earth and 'packing stones' which suggested that the trench was originally dug to hold a series of posts.

Together, these features represent the remains of the outside wall of a 'round house' constructed with wooden posts. Proof of this was found when we discovered an arc of small stake-holes (059) running around the inside edge of ditch 011. These are probably the remains of a 'wattle and daub' inner wall of the building. Stake-hole groups 061 and 063 form straight lines and may be the remains of wattle room divisions within the roundhouse.

The final clue that we had found a roundhouse was provided by an area of reddened earth in the southeast corner of the trench (feature 052). This feature was the remains of a fireplace, which would have been located in the middle of the roundhouse. Samples of the soil from this hearth (021) were taken for the recovery of charred plant remains and to obtain a Carbon ¹⁴ date (see discussion and Appendices 2 and 4).

Feature 066 appeared to be a rectangular cut, but once excavated, it was still not clear what this feature was. One possibility is that it was a worn area in the floor that became filled with silt when the roundhouse was abandoned.

Feature 020 is interesting because it marks the former location of a large boulder that was removed with the JCB at the start of the excavation before the roundhouse had been identified. This is unusual because it means the boulder must have been present when the roundhouse was in use. Whether it may have had a specific purpose or function is unclear. A second large rock with a flat top, apparently lying on the floor of the roundhouse, can be seen in the side of the trench to the left of the fireplace (see figure 5). This rock may have been associated with the fireplace, perhaps as somewhere to place cooking pots.

Trench 2 (see figures 6 and 7)

Again, on the assumption that there was a castle on the site, Trench 2 was located so that it would provide a cross-section through the castle defences. The first layers were again removed with the JCB mechanical excavator. The layers of soil were very different to those revealed in Trench 1.

The first feature discovered was the stone wall of the manorial pound (008). This was constructed from flat pieces of shale laid on their edges. This is a drystone wall building technique distinctive to the region. The upper courses of the wall and its inside face (055) were less well constructed, and probably represent repairs to the wall at various times (see figures 7 and 8 and photo 17).

Digging down against the face of the wall on the inside of the carpark, revealed the same shale deposit (007) as was found in Trench 1 (001), but beneath it pottery and glass including a French Burgundy type bottle dating to about 1820-

1900, and a small bottle of late 19th or early 20th century date were recovered from deposit 040.

As we dug down on the outside of the pound wall, it became clear that it was built directly on top of remains of an earlier wall. This wall was wider (about 2.20m) than the pound wall and was constructed differently, with an outer facing of horizontally laid stones (034), and a rubble core (009). Interestingly, this appears to be the same construction technique used in the wall around the churchyard.

Large foundation stones were jammed in along the base of the lower wall (034) which was built within a construction trench (035). A piece of 'DGTW' pottery was recovered from the fill of the construction trench, suggesting the castle wall was constructed no earlier than the late 12th century. We believe that this lower wall is the remains of the castle wall. At a later time the wall was demolished down to ground level, so that only the buried remains have survived. The stone from the castle wall was probably re-used to build the pound wall and other buildings in Maenclochog.

Two postholes were excavated in Trench 2. Posthole 047 was cut into the stones of the castle wall, and posthole 027 was cut through soils to the south of the wall. A third probable posthole (054) was also identified but not excavated. It appeared to be cut into the castle wall, but the pound wall is built over it (see photo 18 and fig 6 and 8). A C¹⁴ date was recovered from the fill of posthole 027, which returned a date of 1440 to 1640 AD (2 sigma calibration), which may help suggest when the castle was demolished (see discussion and appendix 4).

Outside the walls, the layers of soil were very different in character to those found in Trench 1. Deposit 005 was very dark, crumbly and organic. Modern glass, and pottery from this deposit indicate that it was formed relatively recently, probably from decomposed domestic waste that was dumped over the pound wall. Deposit 005 and the deposit below (037), were removed with the JCB, until the yellow clay deposit 036 was revealed.

Deposit 036 is thought to be the remains of an earth bank, made from the earth dug out of a large ditch (cut 041). Together these features would have formed a defensive ditch and bank that ran around the castle. Because the castle wall was cut into the defensive bank, the bank must have been built first. Deposit 037, which was a grey colour, may also have been bank material, or could have been laid down after the bank was demolished. It seems likely that the bank would have been demolished when the castle wall was built. A shallow gully (feature 030) in the surface of deposit 036 may be the remains of a muddy path formed during the construction or demolition of the defensive bank.

At the south end of the trench, deposits 013 and 032 appeared to be the upper fills of ditch (041). Pottery found in these deposits suggests that they were deposited between the 16th and 19th centuries, but no evidence was found to suggest when the ditch was originally dug out.

In the sides of posthole 027 it was possible to see a band of dark grey day (038) below the remains of the defensive bank (see photo 23). We thought this layer might be the ground level before the bank was constructed. We therefore removed the bank material to see if there were any archaeological features buried beneath the bank. Layer 038 was confirmed as a buried soil, lying on top of natural silty soil 039, but no features were revealed. A sample of the buried soil beneath the bank material was taken in the hope of obtaining charcoal for a C¹⁴ date and it returned a date of AD 880 to 1020 (2 sigma calibrated) (see discussion and appendix 4).

DISCUSSION

Having completed the excavation and obtained the results of specialist analysis of the pottery charred plant remains and C¹⁴ dates recovered from the site (see appendices), it is now possible to interpret the remains we discovered, compare them with evidence from other archaeological sites, and put them in an historical context.

Trench 1

As was hoped, evidence of at least one building was found inside the castle area. The pottery from this trench suggested the features were of the right date to be associated with the medieval castle (i.e. 12th century). The shape of the building, however, suggested it might be of Iron Age origin.

Roundhouses in a range of forms have been excavated. At some sites the evidence may not be well enough preserved to show how a roundhouse was constructed. At Maenclochog, however, preservation was good, and the style of construction was clear.

Some roundhouses have circular 'drip gullies' around the outside of the house, formed by water running off the roof (absent at Maenclochog). For the house walls, some have individual postholes arranged in a circle, for others the posts arranged in a continuous posthole gully (both examples may be present in different buildings at Maenclochog). The 'inner wall' is not present in all cases. Where it is, it can again take the form either of a circular arrangement of post or stake holes (as is the case at Maenclochog), or of posts or stakes in a continuous gully.

Roundhouses dating from the Neolithic period (4400-2300BC) have been excavated, but they are most frequently found in the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. There is a small amount of evidence to suggest that roundhouses may have continued in use into the early medieval period (Johnston 2007).

There is some archaeological evidence from excavations at Drim Camp in Pembrokeshire (Williams and Mytum 1998), where a small group of features which have been dated to AD 613-871 (2 sigma calibration) have been interpreted as a possible double-walled wattle roundhouse. Other examples have been excavated elsewhere in Wales (Redknap 2004).

This apparent continuation of building style may suggest a native style used over several centuries. Double walling is also characteristic of early medieval roundhouses in Ireland (Edwards 1990, 22-5). No evidence has yet been found to suggest that the roundhouse building tradition continued into the Anglo-Norman medieval period.

Although the roundhouse at Maenclochog was thought most likely to be of Iron Age construction, the pottery found in the top of some of the features suggested a 12th century date. It was also curious that there was no build-up of soil between what appeared to be an Iron Age building, and the medieval pottery. Analysis of the charred plant remains also suggested a medieval date might be more likely. The final answer to this enigma was provided by the C¹⁴ dates of charcoal fragments from the fill of the hearth (021) inside the building.

The date obtained from the hearth was AD 980 to 1160 (2 sigma calibration). This date range suggests that the building and other features at Maenclochog are possibly of Early Medieval (pre-Anglo-Norman origin), but may also have been built in (or occupied into) the period of Anglo-Norman conquest of the region. The

dating evidence from the pottery recovered from the tops of the features in Trench 1, suggests a date towards the end of the C¹⁴ date range.

The significance of these dates is that it strongly suggests that roundhouse buildings were present at the site before, and possibly even during the Anglo-Norman Medieval period.

Trench 2

In Trench 2 we found the remains of a 2.2m thick wall that is probably part of the medieval castle. We assume that the wall continues all around the car park, beneath the pound wall. Outside this wall were the remains of a bank and a ditch which we also assume forms a large circle around the castle wall.

During the excavation, although we could tell that the defensive bank and ditch were built before the castle wall, we were not sure whether the bank and ditch were the remains of an Iron Age defended enclosure (as suggested by Fenton in 1811) or not. It was equally possible that the bank and ditch were the remains of an earlier version of the medieval castle.

Following the Anglo-Norman conquest of Wales, many castles were built to announce the establishment of Norman political authority in an area. These were first built of earth and timber, and were only later re-built in stone. They may have used the existing seats of native Welsh lordships or 'llys'. Without good dating evidence, therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between wooden defences from either period.

There are a large number of defensive medieval period earthwork sites in west Wales, with a variety of different forms including motte and bailey castles. Another form of defensive medieval earthwork, the 'ringwork' is also common in south and west Wales. Ringworks are essentially baileys without a motte.

There are also a variety of Iron Age earthworks ranging in scale from large hillforts, to small defended farmsteads. There is growing evidence to suggest that Iron Age defences of whatever scale, were used well into the early medieval period, as shelter in a time of emergency, or as the seat of residence of powerful men. This re-use of politically and strategically significant sites from previous times may have continued during the Anglo-Norman conquest of the area. Both mottes and ringworks may be built within earlier earthworks. So few of these sites have been excavated that we do not know for certain what the significance of the differences between them is, or even how old they actually are.

The castle at Maenclochog is interesting because it has some attributes to suggest it is an Iron Age defended enclosure, while other characteristics suggest it is a 'ringwork' or a 'motte and bailey' castle. Figure 4 shows a plan of what the Maenclochog site may have looked like as an Iron Age defended settlement. It has a ditch and a bank, and presumably included the natural rock outcrop as an extra defensive feature. The shape and size of the site is based on the results of the excavation, evidence from maps, and guesswork! Next to it are the plans of two similar Iron Age enclosures that have been excavated near Llawhaden. All three sites are similar in size and capacity.

The pottery from the foundation trench for the castle wall suggests it was built some time between AD 1200 and 1600. The earlier of these dates ties in well with documentary references in the Welsh chronicles which suggest there was a castle at Maenclochog by at least 1215.

Figure 5 shows a plan of Maenclochog as a medieval castle. The plan of Maenclochog castle is compared to the motte and bailey castle at Wiston. The most obvious difference between the two sites is their size. If the defensive bank survived to any great height, it would need to have been removed when the stone perimeter wall was built. This may suggest that the bank and ditch were no longer defensive features by this time. The natural stone outcrop may have been incorporated into the defences as a motte. The bank and ditch may therefore be the remains of an early earthwork phase of the castle, built to establish a defended foothold, before the castle could be built more substantially in stone.

The C¹⁴ date from posthole 027, suggests that the castle had been demolished by a date sometime between 1440 to 1640 AD (2 sigma calibration). This ties in well with the documentary evidence for the existence of the castle in 1376 (HMSO), as well as its apparent absence by the late 16th century (when the castle is not mentioned by the Elizabethan antiquarian George Owen).

Another possibility is that the ditch and bank may be a 'ringwork'. This type of defensive earthwork is common in south and west Wales, but few if any sites have been excavated or dated. The majority of these sites are believed to be of medieval date, although they may have earlier origins. 'Ringwork' and 'Motte and Bailey' castles were built by both Anglo-Normans and the Welsh, but what dictated the preference for either style is uncertain (Higham and Barker 2006, page 65).

The date obtained from beneath the bank material (038) was AD 880 to 1020 (2 sigma calibrated). This date is very interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it suggests that the bank and ditch defences were not built during the Iron Age or Roman periods. This also supports the dating evidence from Trench 1, which suggested that the roundhouse may not be of Iron-Age origin.

The AD 880 to 1020 date range suggests that the defensive bank and ditch may have been constructed towards the end of the early Medieval period, prior to the Anglo-Norman conquest of Wales. The date does not, however, exclude the possibility that the defences were constructed later, possibly at the time of the Anglo-Norman conquest.

Assuming the three postholes are associated with each other, from the dating evidence recovered from posthole fill 026 we can say that the castle wall was demolished by, and the pound wall was built after AD 1440 to 1640.

So what has the community excavation told us about the history of Maenclochog? It is now clear that before the Anglo-Norman 'planted' settlement was established, there was already a defended enclosure at the site, that may date to 880 AD. Following the traditional Welsh tenurial system the enclosure at Maenclochog may have been the fortified stronghold of a Welsh Lord at the heart of a [commote](#) within the [Cantref](#) of [Cemais](#).

During or following the Anglo-Norman conquest of Pembrokeshire the commote of Maenclochog may have been adopted as the seat of a new lordship under Anglo-Norman tenurial control. Although the presence of other pre-Norman medieval or even earlier settlement at Maenclochog was not found in the excavated locations, their presence elsewhere in the surrounding area cannot be dismissed.

The presence of a pre-existing defensive establishment (a ringwork?), and possibly the presence of an associated settlement may have been sufficient reason not to construct a large motte and bailey from scratch. Alternatively, there may have been no political need, or sufficient resources to make the statement of authority embodied in the construction of a large motte and bailey castle.

The presence of a roundhouse, possibly contained within an early medieval defended enclosure, in association with 12th century pottery, C¹⁴ dated to AD 880-1020, and associated with charred plant remains more usually found in medieval contexts, would appear to be remarkable evidence for a native roundhouse building tradition that continued through the Romano-British period, into the early medieval period, and possibly even into the Anglo-Norman period.

The dating evidence is supported by an apparent lack of soil layers that might be expected to have accumulated over time if the building had had prehistoric origins. Caution must, however, be exercised since the limited area of excavation may not have revealed the complete picture of how the site changed through time. There may for example, be evidence of Anglo-Norman style medieval buildings associated with the later use of the castle in other parts of the site, or the association of the hearth with the roundhouse may somehow be erroneous. The interpretations offered here attempt to account for the evidence obtained, and include several assumptions about the interrelatedness of spatially separate features. Only further excavation could confirm or refute the results obtained.

CONCLUSIONS

The excavation at Maenclochog was undoubtedly successful in a variety of ways. For the community it has confirmed the existence location and survival of the castle beneath the car park. It has also provided evidence taking the history of Maenclochog back to the early medieval period.

Although the scale of the excavation and the number of participants that could be accommodated was relatively small, the number of visitors, good media coverage, the 'dig diary' and site tours, all helped to make the excavation accessible to a wider audience.

The dig generated a lot of positive community interest and was enjoyed by all that took part. Participants were able to take part in most aspects of the excavation, meeting new people, learning new skills, and engaging with the interpretation and explanation of the site to visitors.

The excavation has stimulated desire to discover more of the history of Maenclochog, and will hopefully inspire a variety of community interests and activities in the future, especially in conjunction with the community history group that is being encouraged by PLANED. The discoveries of the excavation will be included on an 'information panel' to be placed in the car park explaining the history of the site, together with another panel to be located in the village centre. This may form part of wider improvements to the appearance of the site to increase appreciation of its history.

Archaeologically, the excavation has shown that well-preserved remains dating from the early medieval period survive at Maenclochog. The site makes an important contribution to our understanding of how settlements in Pembrokeshire have developed over time, perhaps suggesting that other settlements in the region may have earlier origins than has previously been suspected. It highlights the potential value that excavation opportunities such as this can have for further progressing our understanding of settlement development that is otherwise based on non-intrusive methods.

The clear evidence for a continuity of roundhouse building up to the Anglo-Norman conquest of west Wales is a significant discovery that will undoubtedly be of interest to research into early medieval Wales.

For Cambria Archaeology, the excavation has provided both excellent archaeology and a valuable opportunity to develop its ability to undertake such 'outreach' projects. It has shown that effective archaeology can be undertaken, and important discoveries can be made by joint working with other organisations and in collaboration with the general public.

Copies of this report will be distributed to participants in the project and the wider community. The report will also be made available as a downloadable 'PDF' on the Cambria Archaeology web-site.

GLOSSARY

AMS: Accelerator Mass Spectrometry radiocarbon dating is a method for obtaining Carbon 14 dates from very small charcoal samples.

Bailey: The defended courtyard of a castle, often containing domestic or other buildings.

Burgage plot: A plot of land longer than it is wide, typically within a medieval settlement often includes a street front house or other structure.

Cantref: A medieval Welsh land division, itself divided into several 'commotes'. Each cantref had its own court, which was presided over by the king or his representative.

C¹⁴ dating: Organic material can be dated by measuring the amount of carbon 14 it contains because the C¹⁴ decays at a regular rate from the time it is created.

2 sigma calibration: This is a measure of the 'standard deviation' or accuracy of the C¹⁴ date. 2 sigma calibrated dates are 85% accurate.

Cemais: One of the seven Cantrefs or 'sub-kingdoms' within the ancient Welsh kingdom of Dyfed.

Commote: A division of land in Wales, within a cantref. Larger than a township and smaller than a lordship.

Defended enclosure: An enclosure, often prehistoric, provided with one or more defensive banks, ramparts and ditches.

Dyfed Gravel Tempered Ware: A type of pottery consisting mostly of unglazed cooking pots and storage jars. The date of this pottery ranges between the late 12th to early 16th centuries.

Hillfort: A hilltop defended enclosure bounded by one or more substantial banks, ramparts and ditches.

Inquisition: In this instance an enquiry or audit.

Llys: The regional court or administrative centre of a Welsh Prince.

Manor: An area of land consisting of the lord's demesne and of lands from whose holders he may exact certain fees, etc.

Manorial pound: A pen, often circular and stone-walled, for rounding up livestock, within the area of a manor.

Motte: An early form of castle consisting of an artificial flat-top, steep-sided earthen mound on, which is set the principal tower of a castle.

Open field: An area of arable land without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences), with common rights after harvest or while fallow. The open fields were subdivided into long narrow strips.

Planted settlements: Settlements established to encourage colonisation of newly conquered areas under the protection of a castle.

Proto-Ham Green Ware: A Bristol Pottery type also known as proto-Ham Green ware, dated to the 12th to early 13th centuries. It was probably produced at Pill near to Ham Green on the Severn estuary.

Ringwork: A defensive bank and ditch, circular or oval in plan, surrounding one or more buildings.

Roundhouse: A circular structure, normally indicated by one or more rings of postholes and/or a circular gully. Usually interpreted as being of domestic function.

Wattle and daub: A woven latticework of wooden stakes (wattles) is covered with a mixture of mud and straw (daub) to create a structure.

DATE RANGES

The following dates are attributed to the archaeological periods listed below:

Neolithic: 4400-2300BC

Bronze Age: 2300-700BC

Iron Age: 700BC-AD43

Roman: AD43-AD410

Early Medieval (pre-Norman conquest): AD410-AD1066

(The **Anglo-Norman** invasion in 1066 marks the end of the early medieval period)

Medieval (post-Norman conquest): AD1066-AD1485

Post Medieval: AD1486-1900

Modern: AD1900+

