

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

newsletter



Autumn 2012

Fersiwm
Gymraeg ar
gael ar ein
gwefan

Further work at the Hen Caerwys medieval settlement, Flintshire



A second season of this community excavation project jointly run by Cadw and CPAT was carried out with the vital help of local volunteers for a fortnight in the latter part of July. The two excavation trenches partially excavated last year in different parts of this abandoned medieval settlement were reopened so that they could be completed, one being across an apparently empty enclosure and the other across a house platform. A new trench was opened across the lower end of a long rectangular house. Dating can often be difficult on this kind of site but associated pottery suggests that the building might have begun in the Tudor period and continued in use into the 17th and perhaps even the 18th centuries. Further information about the project is given in the 'Hen Caerwys dig diary' on the CPAT website.

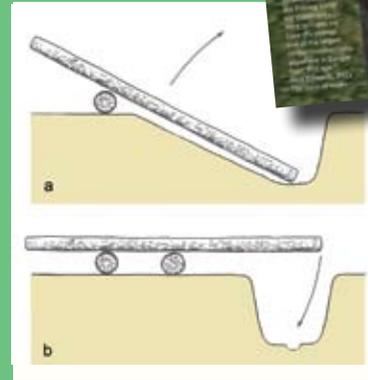


CPAT @ RWS . . . the earliest farmers in mid Wales

For the first time this August the Trust set up stall at the Royal Welsh Show, Llanelwedd, with an exhibition entitled 'How the West Was Won . . . earliest farmers in mid Wales' focusing on recent work we have been carrying out to elucidate the remarkable series of Neolithic enclosures in the Walton basin in eastern Radnorshire. We are hoping that the exhibition will be shown at various other venues including the Radnorshire Museum, Llandrindod Wells. Visit our website for a copy of the booklet that accompanies the exhibition.

How the West was Won
earliest farmers in mid Wales

Yn Ennill eu Plwyf
y ffarmwyr cycharaf yng nghanolbarth
Cymru



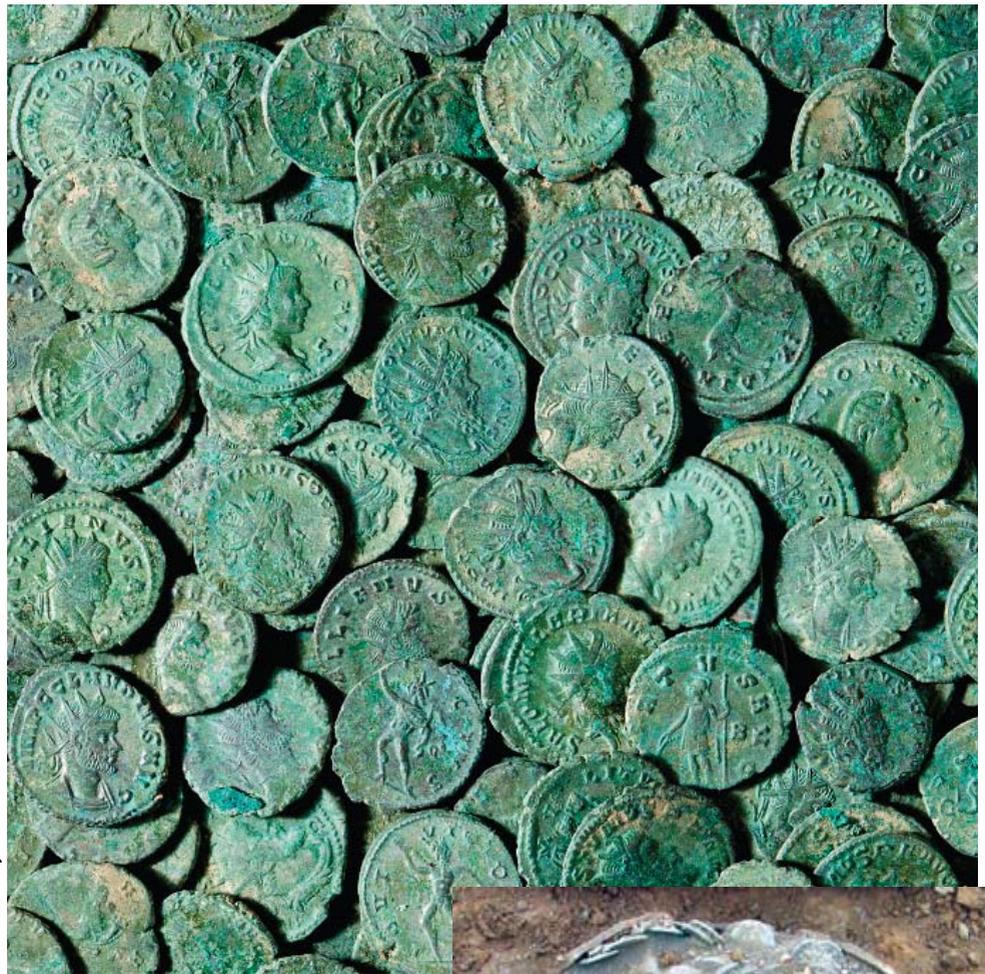
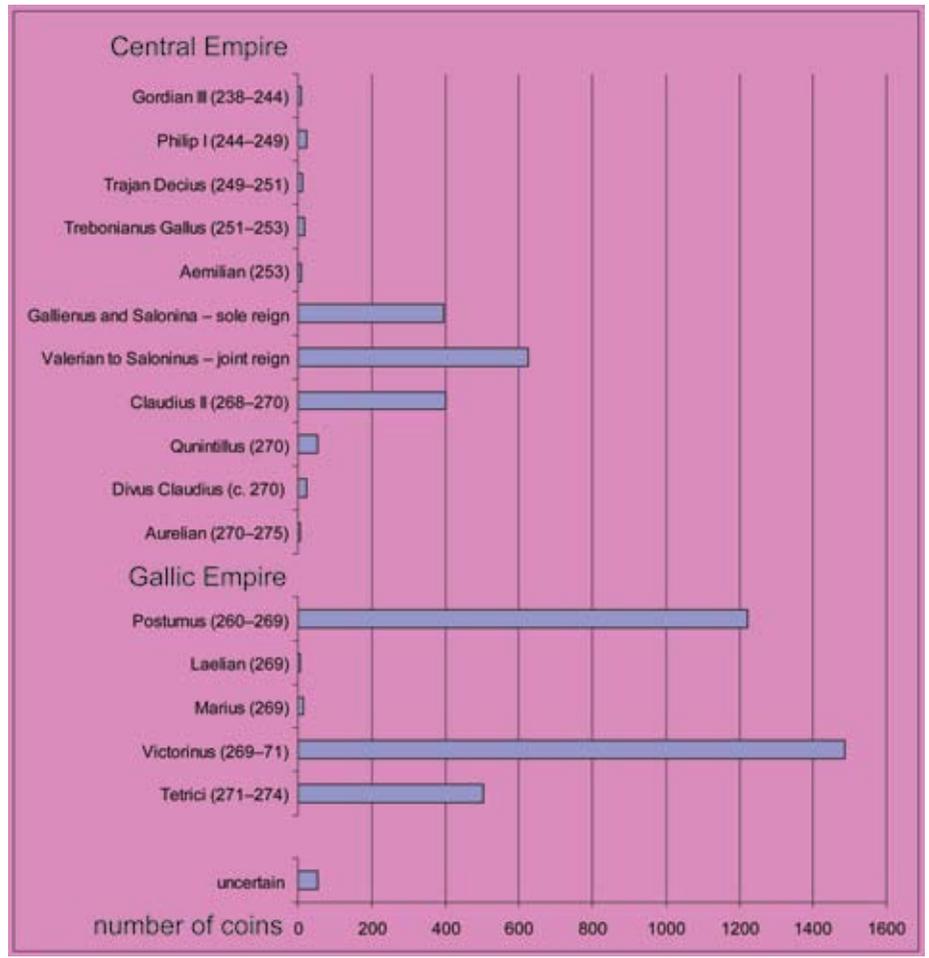
Pictures from an exhibition illustrating (top right) styles of early, middle and late Neolithic pottery found in the Walton Basin and (above) diagram showing how the posts of the different palisades were raised. Right Nigel Jones of CPAT (right) together with Mr and Mrs Goodwin of Hindwell Farm visiting the Trust's exhibition at the RWS.



Discovering more about the Montgomery Roman coin hoard

In our Autumn 2011 *Newsletter* we reported on the discovery by Adrian Simmons of a Roman coin hoard near Montgomery and on the work the Trust had carried out to recover the pot containing the rest of the hoard still buried in the ground. Since then the hoard has been studied by Edward Besly at the National Museum Wales, Cardiff. At the latest count the hoard contains a total of

4,854 coins belonging to the troubled years of the 3rd century (see photo opposite). The earliest ones were issued by the Roman emperor Gordian III who ruled between AD 238–244. The latest ones were issued by the emperor Aurelius who ruled between AD 270–275 and during whose reign the hoard is most likely to have been buried. The table below summarizes the contents and



© Ambueddfa Cymru / National Museum Wales



Above Some of the coins in the Montgomery hoard. Note that like many third-century coins the emperors are often depicted wearing 'radiate crowns'. *Right* The red-ware pot in which the coin hoard was found. The rim of the pot had been caught by the plough some time in past, which had scattered some of the coins in the ploughsoil.

provides a snapshot of the coins that would have been in the purse of a Roman Briton at this date. Significantly, almost two-thirds of the coins in the hoard belonged to rulers of the breakaway Romano-Gallic empire established by the usurper Posthumus in AD 260, which finally returned to the central Roman empire in AD 273.

The hoard was declared to be 'Treasure' at an inquest held by the Powys Coroner in Welshpool in early June 2012. The Powysland Museum in Welshpool hopes to be able to acquire the hoard for display once the finder and landowner have been fully compensated for its market value. For further information about what counts as 'Treasure' and what you should do if you find any see our Spring 2010 *Newsletter* (available on our website).

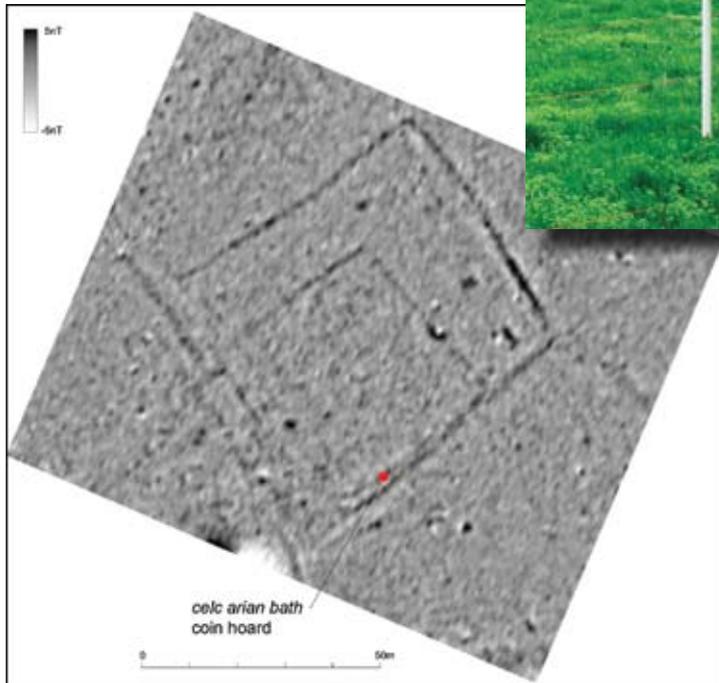
After lifting the pot containing the coin hoard from the ground there were still unanswered questions about the precise

context in which it had been buried, though there were hints that it was associated with one of the cluster of enclosed farmsteads discovered by aerial photography in the vicinity of the Roman fort at Forden Gaer. With the kind permission of the landowner and the help of funding from Cadw the Trust undertook further fieldwork to try and get a better idea of where it had come from.

Geophysical survey of the surrounding field, shown in the images below, suggested that the hoard had been buried between two, probably Roman, intercutting rectangular enclosures, between about 45 and 65 metres across, the smaller one possibly later than

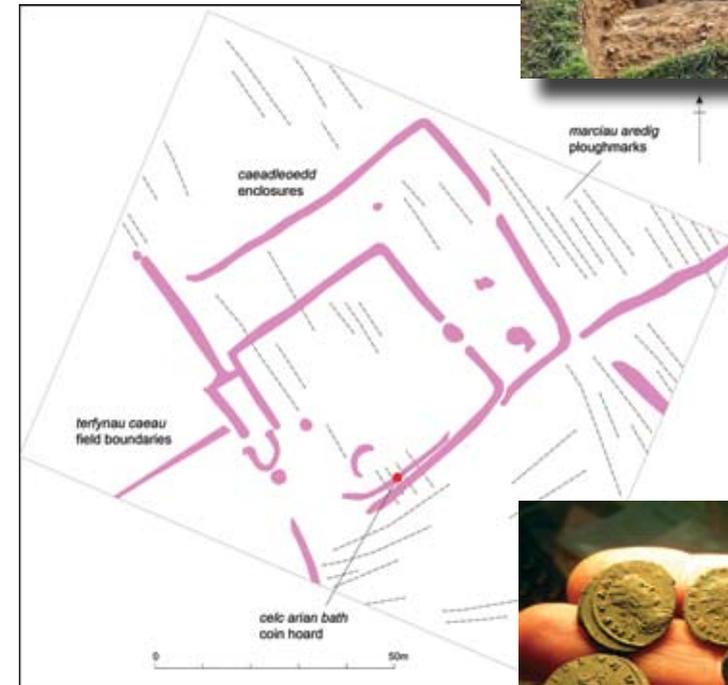


Above Richard Hankinson of CPAT carrying out geophysical survey work with a magnetometer in the field surrounding the findspot of the hoard. *Left* Buried features revealed by the geophysical survey.



the larger one. Small-scale excavation showed that the two rock-cut ditches were just over a metre across and up to half a metre deep, both of which contained sherds of Roman pottery. It is now clear that the pot containing the coin hoard was buried in a shallow pit either cut into the outer lip of ditch of the larger enclosure or possibly into the tail of a bank associated with the smaller enclosure.

The ditches of the rectangular enclosures may have enclosed a Roman farmstead but are rather slight and may alternatively simply have formed part of a more extensive Roman field system. This lies on a different alignment to the modern field pattern but interestingly shares the same orientation



Top right Small-scale excavation across the enclosure ditches with arrow showing the 'pit' the hoard came from. *Above* Interpretative plan of the geophysical data shown on opposite page.

as probable ploughmarks of perhaps later Roman or early medieval date also picked up by the geophysical survey.



© Adrian Simmons



Out and about with CPAT in 2012

Work Experience 2012



For a week in July the Trust worked with a group of six young people from schools in Llanfair Caereinion, Welshpool, Knighton, Baschurch and Wem to investigate a possible archaeological site at Middletown. The landowners, Chris and Alexa Bartram, had contacted CPAT when they became puzzled about a large stone found buried on their land.

We decided that this was too good an opportunity to miss and made it the focus for this year's work experience placements. Skills learnt by the students included survey and recording, geophysical survey, digging, and sieving as well as bailing out after torrential rain! To see how the students got on visit the webpages they put together on the Trust's website under 'Work Experience 2012'.



Left The Team taking a break, including Olly, Steph, Beth, Jacob, Michael and Lauren, together with Mr Chris Bartram (left) and the Trust's Jeff Spencer (right).

Festival of British Archaeology 2012

As part of this year's *Festival of British Archaeology* the Trust organized a guided walk around the ruins of Montgomery Castle in July which was well attended by family groups of all ages. After the walk some of the group took the opportunity of visiting the Old Bell Museum in Montgomery which houses finds from excavations at the castle.



In August we held a 'Family Archaeology Day' jointly with the Elan Valley Trust at the visitor centre near Rhayader. This included various hands-on crafts and activities which quite a number of people of all ages joined in.

In June, with the permission of the landowners, the Trust joined forces with *Twristiaeth Caersws Tourism* in organising a visit to the Iron Age Cefn Carnedd hillfort. The hillfort, which is of several different phases, crowns a prominent hill just to the north of Llandinam and has magnificent views over the Severn Valley in the area around Caersws.



Third season at Pen y Gaer, Breconshire



The third season of excavation outside Pen y Gaer Roman fort took place in mid June with the help of volunteers from the Llangynidr Local History Society, Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association, Brecon U3A, and with funding from Cadw.

As in previous years work was targetted on trying to discover the extent and layout of the Roman civilian settlement that developed along the road running southwards from the south gate of the Roman fort. In 2012 the team revisited the site of the earlier excavations, as

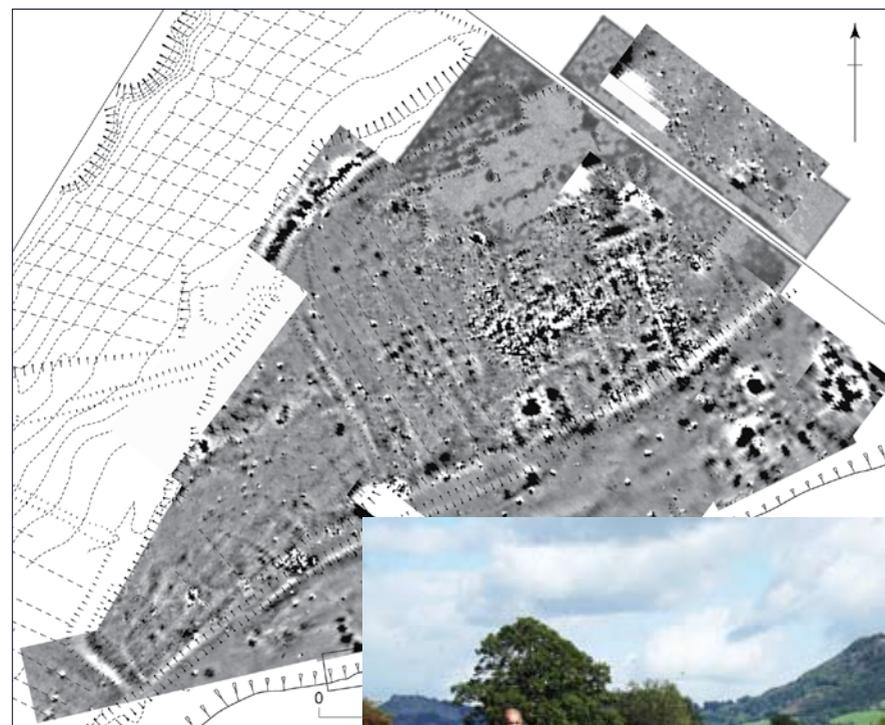


well as tackling two new areas adjacent to the Roman road. Further stone foundations of probably two previously unknown buildings were uncovered one of which contained a small oven probably for baking bread. The buildings, which generally had low stone footings (visible in the photos shown here) were probably largely built in timber and roofed with ceramic tiles. Finds included a significant quantity of Roman pottery and metalwork, including a brooch, coin and nails, and several fragments of glass vessels.

Monks and magnetometers at Strata Marcella abbey

In the Spring 2012 edition of our *Newsletter* we carried an article on the field survey work carried out on the site of the 'lost' medieval abbey of Strata Marcella at Pool Quay, north of Welshpool, founded in AD 1170. Since then, with the help of funding from Cadw and the permission of the landowner we have been able to carry out extensive geophysical survey with a

magnetic gradiometer. Combining this with the results of geophysical survey of the abbey church by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford, commissioned by the Powysland Club in 1990 (see image below), has produced a considerable amount of new information about the layout of the abbey, summarized on the next page.



Above Combined results of geophysical surveys in 1990 and 2012. *Right* Richard Hankinson of CPAT carrying out geophysical survey at Strata Marcella in October 2012 with the Breidden Hills in the background.



Recording a half-timbered hall at Glas-hirfryn, Llansilin

This summer and autumn the Trust has been carrying out recording work on an interesting half-timbered building at Glas-hirfryn in the parish of Llansilin, nestling in the hills on the southern edge of the Berwyns. In previous years we have carried out similar work on a couple of neighbouring late medieval timber buildings — at Tyddyn Llwydion and more recently at Ty-draw (reported on in our Spring 2010 *Newsletter*) — both of which were cruck-built hall-houses with a central hall open to the roof and an open hearth.

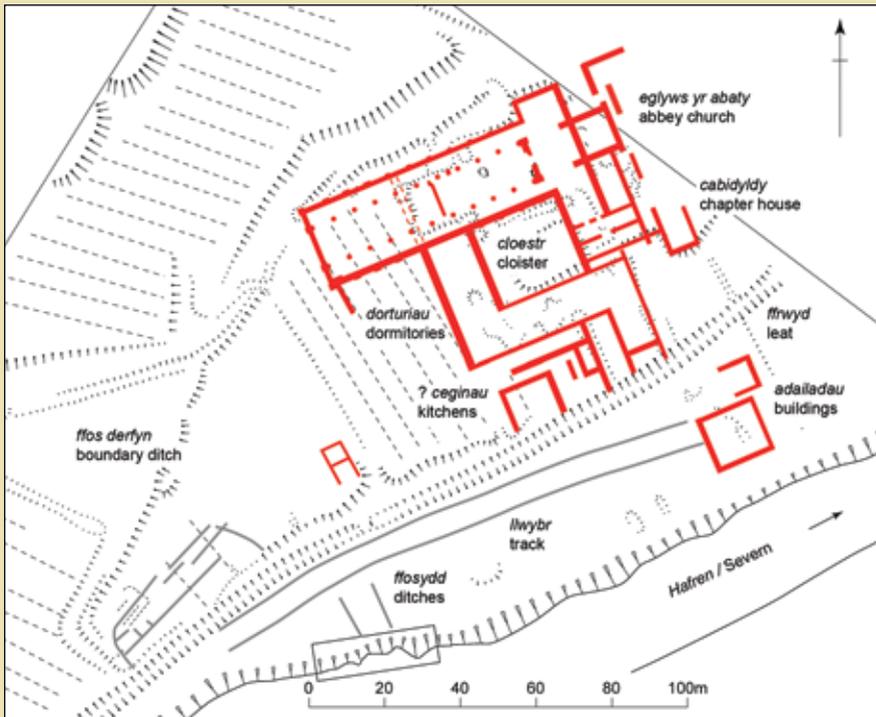


Top Architect's drawing showing how the restored building might appear. **Middle** The collapsed building during the course of clearance in July 2012. **Bottom** One of the ornate wall-posts.

One of the points of interest about Glas-hirfryn is that it appears to be an early successor of these early hall-houses — perhaps dating to as early as the mid 16th century — having been built from the outset with rooms above the central hall and with a chimney.

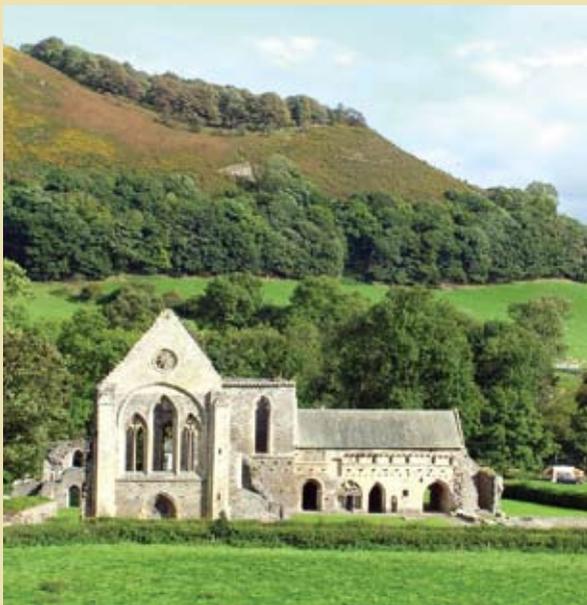
Sadly, the house has fallen into disrepair over the years and parts of the building collapsed in recent gales. However, there are now moves afoot to restore the building to something approaching its former glory.

The Trust has been carrying out recording work on the fallen timbers and excavating the footprint of the building to find



Little trace of the former abbey is visible on the ground today, but by combining the results of field survey and geophysical survey we are beginning to get a much better idea of the overall layout of the monastic complex. This must once have resembled the better-known Welsh Cistercian abbeys such as Valle Crucis and Strata Florida.

There are still many uncertainties about the interpretation and dating of some of the structures identified, but we can begin to appreciate more clearly not only the position of the abbey church and cloisters but also its chapter house, dormitories and kitchens, and their relationship to the precinct boundary on the banks of the river Severn.



Cistercian abbey at Valle Crucis near Llangollen, founded in 1201, about 30 years after Strata Marcella.



out more about its plan before the restoration begins. Work has been carried out with the permission of the landowners with funding from Cadw and is being undertaken in conjunction with conservation officers from Powys County Council and Cadw, the architect Graham Moss, and the builders, Manor Joinery. Staff of the Royal Commission are also actively involved with the project and will be commissioning tree-ring dating which will hopefully establish more precisely when the house was built.



The timberwork of the house was elaborately carved and decorated both inside and out. Significant resources had evidently been expended on the construction of this remote farm on the upland margins, probably by a well-to-do yeoman farmer. Preliminary historical research has revealed the name of the owner of the house in the later 16th century — Maurice ap Dafydd — who had married into the prominent local family of the Wynns of Moelyrch.



House Detectives

The house was finally abandoned as a dwelling in the 1960s, when the present farmhouse was built but clearly many changes would have been made during the three centuries it was occupied.

Work is continuing but interesting details are already beginning to emerge about various periods of its history. There are now suggestions that the house may originally have been larger, with an additional bay on the downhill side. Although

Top One of the finely carved ground-floor wall-posts with raised pilaster decorated with carved vine leaves. **Middle** Work in progress on the later slate and tile floors inside the house. **Bottom** Trial excavations below the lower beam (sole plate) at the east end of the building, revealing the original sill wall.

previously unclear, it is now evident that the timber building rested on stone sill walls up to half a metre high which would have made it even more impressive from the outside. Despite the rich carving it is interesting to note that the earliest floors were simply of beaten earth and probably once strewn with rushes, though the roof was evidently kept watertight with stone tiles. The use of stone tiles was beginning to replace thatch as a preferred roofing material for local houses during the 16th century.



Graduated stone roof tiles probably from the original building, reused in later walling.



Elaborately carved oak boss that once graced the middle of the ceiling of the ground-floor hall at Glas-hirfryn, decorated with stylized leaves, with a Tudor rose at the centre.

Edwardian 'time capsule'

An intriguing link with some of the later occupants of the house was discovered when it was being dismantled. Behind the later wainscoting on the east wall of the house was a neatly tied bundle of newspapers including the *Oswestry and Border Counties Advertiser* of 9 October 1907 and a copy of *Y Gwlydedydd* (the Welsh Wesleyan Methodist newspaper) of 3 October 1907. The bundle had been signed by Mary Ann Jones, daughter of a prominent local Nonconformist family, and by William Williams, 'Carpenter', and Margaret Jane Williams.



The Trust thanks David Rowlands

After thirty-three years of sterling service as both a Member of the Trust and as Trustee, David Rowlands regretfully retired at our AGM in October 2012. The Trust would like to thank David for all he has done over the years, willingly giving of his time despite a busy life and commitments to many other organisations.



Top David is seen here at the Trust's hillfort on Beacon Ring near Welshpool, which became one of the projects that has benefitted enormously from his expertise.
Left With the help of grant aid from Cadw the Trust has recently been able to acquire an additional strip of land to the east, shown here looking eastwards towards Corndon Hill and the Stiperstones.

The Trust is grateful to all the landowners who granted permission to carry out the projects on their land described in the Newsletter and for grant aid from Cadw on behalf of the Welsh Government.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



The Newsletter can be downloaded from www.cpat.org.uk/news/newslets/newslets.htm

Front cover: Alex, a volunteer on the joint Cadw and CPAT project at Hen Caerwys, Flintshire, in July 2012, with cattle jaw.

© CPAT

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
41 Broad Street, Welshpool,
Powys, SY21 7RR

tel 01938 553670, fax 01938 552179
email trust@cpat.org.uk
website www.cpat.org.uk
Registered Charity 508301
Limited Company 1212455