



Early Ships & Boats of the Severn Estuary

The south Wales coast line of the Severn Estuary has left a wealth of remains of sailing vessels from ancient to medieval times. The following is a brief look at a few of the discoveries.

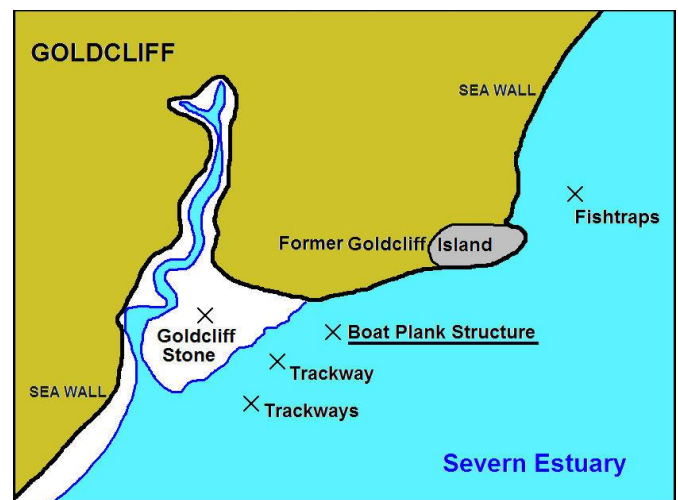


1. The Caldicott Fragment (1800 BC)

Discovered in 1990 while excavations on a waterlogged Bronze Age site to the north-east of Caldicott Castle were being carried out. It consisted of a large plank fragment from a sewn boat together with some yew withies twisted into a rope. This would have enabled the oak planks to be lashed to one another. The fragments were conserved whilst the site is now an artificial lake.

2. The Goldcliffe Boat (1000 BC)

A Late-Bronze Age flat-bottomed boat was excavated by Martin Bell at Goldcliff. It was made up of two oak sewn planking fragments. The planks had been re-used in a secondary role on the foreshore to make a small platform forming a short trackway which crossed a narrow intertidal channel. A piece of wood from the same structure was radiocarbon dated to 2720 BP. The planking had closely spaced fastening holes along the sides with plant fibre cord used as continuous rope sewing, a method differing from the lashing used on the earlier Caldicott boat. The planks have now been conserved.



3. The Barlands Farm Boat (300 AD)

In 1993 a Roman-Celtic period boat was excavated from a site close to a tidal stream flowing into the Severn Estuary. It consisted of the stem post, the plank-keel with mast-step, and about half of the bottom and side planking along with much of the framing. Nails were used on the planks to pin them to the framing which

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had been constructed first. Similar boats have been found in south-west Brittany, described by Julius Caesar in 56 BC whilst engaging the Veneti tribe. The remains have been conserved.

4. The Magor Pill Boat (1240 AD)

In August 1995 the remains of a medieval boat were excavated from the foreshore of the Severn estuary at Magor Pill. Parts of her keel, stem post, a quantity of planking, and a number of framing timbers were recovered.

It is thought that the boat sank with some of her last cargo of high grade Glamorgan iron ore in the 13th century. It is possible that the boat foundered during bad weather while seeking shelter. Contributing factors for its loss could have been the shifting of its dense cargo of iron ore during bad weather, or the failure of previous repairs.

The Magor Pill Boat is very similar to the 9th-11th century ships of the Viking age tradition, built of overlapping oak planks in "clinker-fashion" and fastened with iron nails and square washers, similar to the Newport Medieval Ship.



During the 13th Century boats like the Magor Pill Boat would have been used both for trade and as military transport during times of war. During the wars against the English Crown in the 13th century, these boats were used to ferry supplies and troops between Ireland and Wales.

5. The Newport Ship (15th century)



Archer's Bracer

Construction work on the Riverfront Arts Centre in Newport along the River Usk in June 2002 uncovered a mid-fifteenth-century sailing vessel. Originally 116 feet (35 metres) and of 161 tons burden, the boat is considered to be of "great ship" size by contemporary standards. It was built to cover long-distance trade between Britain, the Bay of Biscay and southern Iberia.

Dendrochronology has dated the timber to 1449, coming from the San Sebastian, Basque region of northern Spain. A small coin, a French "petit blanc", found within the keel of the ship, also helped to date the original construction date. At this time Shipbuiding was an important trade in this area. Other timber seem to have

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originated from Britain probably as repair planking carried out in Newport at the time the Ship was lost. The repair cradle on the starboard side seems to have collapsed whilst the repairs were carried out in Newport.

The ship had been stripped of much of its materials but many artefacts still remained. Coins, pottery and plant remains of previous cargos and package were found. Pictured on the previous page is an Archer's Bracer used to protect the shooter from the slap of the bowstring against their arm while shooting. The artefacts suggest lively trading with Portugal in the 1450s-60s.

The remains of the actual ship were conserved in Newport in huge tanks in a warehouse and freeze-dried in both Newport and York. The ship was meticulously recorded and it is hoped to reconstruct the ship for future display.

CAS visited the Newport Ship on Saturday 27th July 2013.

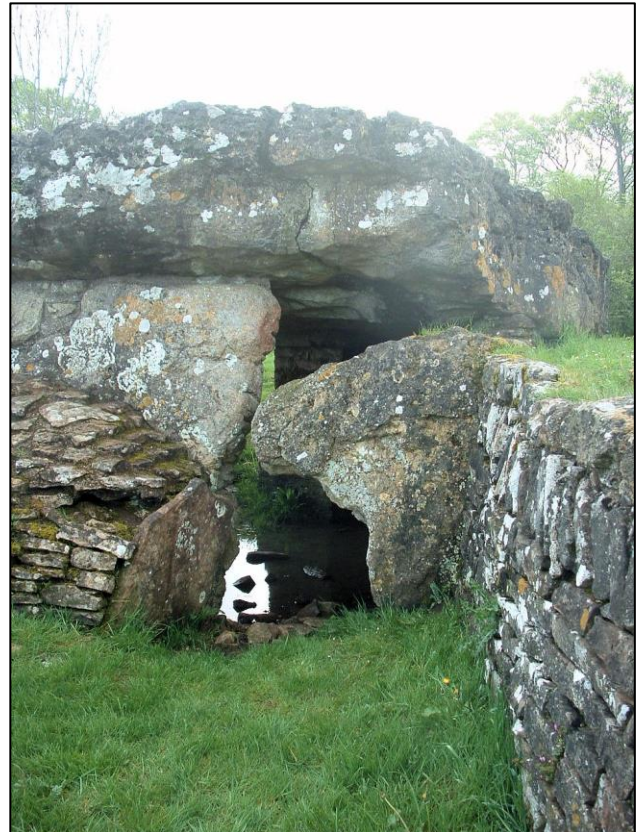
Tinkinswood Burial Chamber

Tinkinswood is a megalithic burial chamber, built around 6,000 years ago, during the Neolithic period, in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Lukis excavated the disturbed site in 1875, to find human teeth, unburnt bone and "rude pottery". John Ward also excavated and restored the site in 1914, revealing a number of phases that included construction, utilization, abandonment and later secondary use.

A stone cist or drystone walled pit, approx. 3 metres square has been sited in the northern end of the mound and may be Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. The cist contained horse, cow, sheep and pig bones, which could represent a

ritual feasting event. The mound is supported by a drystone revetment wall of locally quarried limestone and possesses a distinctive horn shape. Excavation of the mound found the remains of at least 50 people (including 21 women, 16 men and 8 children) aged between a few months and 70 years. A large quantity of Late Neolithic pottery was also recovered.



The structure is a dolmen of the Severn-Cotswold tomb type and consists of a large capstone on top, with smaller upright stones supporting it. The limestone capstone weighs approximately 40 tons and measures 24 feet (7.3 m) by 14 feet (4.3 m); it is thought to be the largest in Britain, and also in Europe. It would have taken over 200 people to lift the stone into the correct position and was originally all covered by a mound of soil, which has been removed over time. The remaining mound behind the structure measures approximately 130 feet (40 m) by 59 feet (18 m) in size.

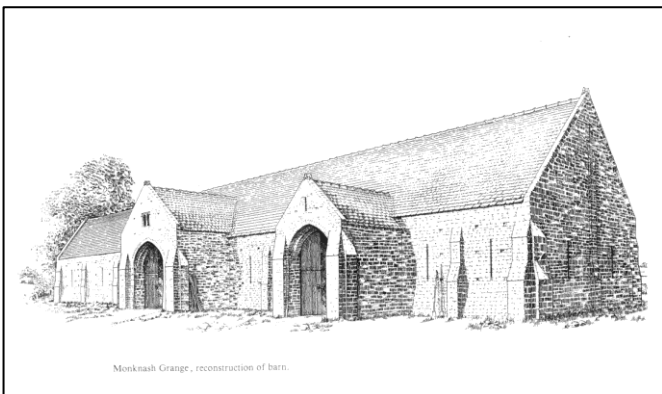
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The monument appears to have had a secondary use as a shelter in the Early Iron Age to Medieval period, and a selection of pottery and a bone gaming die was among the finds.



CAS visited Tinkinswood on Thursday 10th May 2012.

Monknash Grange



RCAHMW

Monknash Grange was a Cistercian monastic grange, attached to Neath Abbey, established around 1130 by Richard de Granville and continued until 1533. The visible remains today include a polygonal enclosure, approximately 350 metres by 360 metres, defined by scarps and banks, with remains of sub-divisions and traces of buildings. The ruins of a later barn and a grade II listed dovecote also lie on the site.

According to a charter of 1140 the early history of the grange may have involved the exchange of the originally granted land (or 140 acres of it) with the lord of Ogmore for a larger area, a gift which also included the site of a mill on the Ewenny River.

The grange occupies an area of about 8ha in several pasture fields on the west side of Monknash, located between Wick and Marcross in the Vale of Glamorgan. Within this area banks, ditches, levelled areas and ruined stone buildings bear witness to the farming activities of the lay brothers of Neath Abbey. The main entrance is thought to have been in the middle of the north-east side where the Old Smithy is now. From here a hollow way runs into the site. In the middle, on the south side of the Nash Brook which crosses the grange, are various ruined buildings, some reduced to turf-covered humps, some with walls standing. Their exact original purposes are obscure, but they were all farm buildings. The best preserved is the dovecote. It is circular, built of mortared rubble, and stands almost to its full height; only the corbelled roof is missing. The doorway is on the north-west side, and inside there are a few remaining nesting boxes. All over the enclosure there are low banks, scarps, ditches and levelled areas, which probably delineate small fields, tracks and, near the brook, fishponds.

The most impressive building of the grange is the great barn, which stands on the south-east side parallel to the lane. It is 64 metres long, rivalling some of the largest English monastic barns. Its south-east wall stands almost to its full height, and the north-east gable end is more or less complete. The other gable end is much ruined, and the long north-west wall is almost completely gone, partly reduced to a turf-covered mound. On the south-east side are two large entrances with porches, the more northerly one ruined, and the southerly one built into a house.



The Dovecot in the Distance.

CAS visited Monknash Grange on Thursday 7th June 2012.

Highlights from the Magazines

Current World Archaeology Oct-Nov 2021

Entering the hare paenga - The canoe-shaped houses and monumental archaeology of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

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Wooden snake figurine

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Current Archaeology October 2021

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Sussex Past and Present - Tracing the Origins of a 175-year-old Archaeology Society

The Long Man of Wilmington - Memorialising a Sussex Martyr?

Listed and Lost - Cultural World Heritage sites in the UK

Angle Castle



Angle Castle was built in the 14th century to provide secure accommodation for a powerful local family. It overlooks the sheltered anchorage of Angle Bay near the mouth of the Milford Haven estuary and may have been intended as a defence against sea-borne raiders.

The castle is an example of a tower-house, a type of single-tower fortified residence that is common in Ireland, Scotland and the English/Scottish borderlands but is almost non-existent in Wales. There was a walled and moated enclosure to the north of the tower and the south and west sides were protected by marshy ground. The beach was a short walk away to the east.

The base of the tower contained a storage room that could only be accessed from above until an exterior doorway was added for convenience in the 19th century. The basement had a fireproof stone ceiling so that the occupants of the tower couldn't be burnt out from below if the wall had been breached.

The tower was entered over a drawbridge at first-floor level, which could be raised to fit into a recess in front of the door. The apertures for the drawbridge mechanism can still be seen above the doorway. The entrance was further protected by an overhanging parapet at the top of the tower that allowed defensive fire to be directed at unwanted visitors from above.

The battlements around the roof were supported on corbelling that ran around all sides of the tower, except where the spiral staircase protruded, to provide downward-facing slots that covered the base of the tower.

There were a further two floors above the entrance room that were accessed using the spiral staircase built into one corner of the tower. The standard of accommodation in the castle was good for its day as each floor of the tower had its own fireplace and a garderobe, or indoor privy, was also provided.



In a field close to the Castle stands a magnificent dovecote.

CAS visited Angle on Sat 15th June 2013.

Quiz

1. King of the East Angles linked to the ship burial at Sutton Hoo.
2. R.... Ruined Cistercian abbey in North Yorkshire.
3. Irish county, location of the Newgrange passage tomb.
4. South American civilisation whose capital was Cuzco.
5. Artificial island constructed in a lake or wetland.
6. African city, location of Christiansborg Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
7. beaker, Anglo-Saxon glass drinking vessel.
8. Roman general and son-in-law of Theodosius.

9. Egyptian god, son of Isis and Osiris.

10. Rood, partition in a church separating the nave from the chancel.

Blackmore Farm, Cannington, Somerset



Building work, on the Manor house and contiguous chapel wing by Sir Thomas Tremayll, started in 1480. Blackmore is an example of a Tudor manor house and retains many of its period features. Set in rolling farmland with views of the Quantock Hills, the house contains many pieces of seventeenth-century furniture and a collection of arms and armour.

Also of interest are many unusual artefacts which have been collected by the owners, dating back to the twelfth century. The Manor Estate is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086.

On arrival you step into the great hall through the original fifteenth-century oak door, where there is a 20-foot oak refectory table and walls lined with arms and armour.

On the ground floor one can view the old kitchen with its fireplace, iron spits and cooking utensils, and then visit the private chapel that is still in use. The main staircase takes you up to the west bedroom with its extremely fine oak

SUPPLEMENT

cruck roof, and the gallery bedroom with oak panelling and stairs leading to the original servants' quarters.



CAS visited Blackmore Farm on Saturday 15th June 2013.

Bronllys Castle

Bronllys castle was probably founded c.1144 when Centref Selyf was granted to Walter Clifford, the mesne tenant of the Tosnys at Clifford Castle. The grant was made for the service of five knights at Earl Miles of Hereford's castle of Brecon. Earl Miles was killed here while he was being entertained by Walter in 1165. There was a fire in the night and a stone fell on him.

Bronllys Castle was the administrative centre of the Clifford mesne Lordship of Cantref Selyf. The castle was seized by the crown in 1233 during the Clifford rebellion and it was attacked by Prince Dafydd in 1241 and 1244 but no mention is made of the castle afterwards but it seems to have held out. It was seized by Edward II in 1322 after the Marcher rebellion of 1321 and it became a royal property when Henry II became king.

The first castle was a motte up to 8 metres high with inner and outer northern baileys. The

castle had wooden defences and buildings and was probably built in the late 11th or early 12th centuries, soon after the Norman conquest of this part of Brecknock.

The stone tower on the motte is typical of this part of the Marches, being entered at first floor level with a wooden staircase, similar to that provided today. The first floor was probably the entrance hall and it is likely that there was a trapdoor to the basement. The second floor room had a fireplace and two windows and was probably the main living area. The stairs from this floor originally led to the roof but another storey was added possibly as part of the 14th century refurbishment.



The Castle was repaired in 1400 and 1409 in response to the Glyndwr rising for which there was considerable local support. By 1521 it was said to be beyond repair and only fit for a prison!

CAS visited Bronllys Castle on Saturday 17th May 2003.

Past Events

Twmbarlwm

At the top of a hill near Risca are the remains of an Iron Age hillfort, believed to have been built by the Silures. Possibly thereafter also a Roman signal point and a motte and bailey castle which is incorporated into the eastern end of the fort, probably of early Norman construction. It may have formed part of a short lived chain of castles protecting the caput of Glamorgan Lordship at Cardiff prior to a regional Welsh resurgence in the 12th century.

The hilltop remains were thought to have been likely to have been extensively damaged by the fires during the drought of 2018. So the Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society in association with CPAT planned to carry an archaeological dig there in 2019 to assess the situation. Covid unfortunately delayed the start to this year, Monday 2nd till Friday 20th August 2021.



CAS members were invited along to view the excavations and see the dig in progress. On Tuesday 17th August, our intrepid adventurers climbed to the top, viewed the excavations and posed for the above shot. From Left to Right Chris Jones-Jenkins, Clare Smith, Bryan Smith, Janet Oti, Elaine Davey, Neil Statham, Val Caple (and Maisy), Amelia Pannett (guide

/archaeologist), Ann Dunton. What did they find? You'll have to visit the Blog on:

<http://www.twmbarlwm.co.uk/category/information/history/>.

Future Events

Zoom Lectures

Our 2021/22 season of Zoom lectures will start with

7 October - The Sutton Hoo Mound 1 Ship- its character, contexts and a new reality by Martin Carver, Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Archaeology, University of York;

21 October- The World Before Us: When humans met Neanderthals (and Denisovans) by Prof Tom Higham, Department of Evolutionary Anthropology, University of Vienna.

Links to Websites

Recorded Previous Lectures:

[Roman Britain's Missing Legion](#)

[Two talks on Merseyside Industrial Archaeology](#)

[The archaeology of Leicester's lost medieval churches](#)

[Current Archaeology Live 2021](#)

[Bristol Museums: Roman Sea Mills](#)

[Bristol Museums: Bristol Castle](#)

[Free Illustrated Dossier on Welsh Slate Mines:](#)

<http://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Documents---Council/Have-your-say/Slates/Slate-Landscapes-ENG-190809.pdf>

Answers to Quiz

1. Raedwald 2. Rievaulx 3. Meath 4. Inca 5. Crannog 6. Accra 7. Cone 8. Stilicho 9. Hor-Pa-Khred 10. Screen