

PARKS, GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES OF MEDIEVAL NORTH WALES AND NORTH WEST SHROPSHIRE

June 29, 2012 Spencer Gavin Smith Archaeological Prospection, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Education, Excavation, Historical Archaeology, Medieval, Periods, Survey metal detecting survey, Wales

My name is Spencer Gavin Smith and I am writing my PhD thesis on ‘Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes of Medieval North Wales and North West Shropshire’. I’m using a combination of archaeology, history, literature and the visual arts to tell the story of the development of these landscapes during the medieval period. I’m particularly interested in the social relationships which existed between the English and Welsh royal and noble families and how their relationships can manifest themselves in the archaeological record.

Today I’m working on the PhD chapter which looks at designed landscapes. These can be temporary landscapes, for example a field full of tents for a diplomatic meeting or a tournament, which are removed once business has been concluded; or they can be permanent landscapes, for example, where a castle is constructed which has built into it a particular set of meanings which will be understood by people visiting the site subsequently.

The featured image shows the survey carried out of a motte and bailey castle in North-East Wales called Sycharth. It is most famous for being the home of Owain Glyn Dŵr, who led a revolt in the

15th century against the English Crown. But, the castle has a much longer history than just that one event.

The image shows the results of a metal detecting survey carried out, and the finds are mapped out in two colours to distinguish between ferrous (iron) and non-ferrous finds (brass, tin or copper for example). Some of these finds are likely to date from a meeting which was held here in the early 13th century. By looking at the chemical composition of the ferrous finds it might be possible to identify different metalworking techniques and sources of the iron, and these could be compared to other ferrous finds which have been made in other parts of Wales and the rest of Britain.

