

Charity delving into history of castles in Wales

THEY are iconic ancient monuments Wales is famed for around the world.

But according to experts, the history of the hundreds of castles dotted across our landscape remains largely untapped.

Now, a charity is being set up to get to the heart of that history and help experts discover more about how the nation's wealth of ancient fortifications contribute to the story of Wales – and Britain.

The Castle Studies Trust has been established with the aim of creating a bank of new knowledge about the history of Wales' great castles, as well as the many relatively unknown ones.

With many badly damaged and some even lost altogether, simple questions such as what they looked like or when and why they were built remain unanswered.

The Castle Studies Trust has been set up to fund research projects to help explain some of those unanswered questions and to increase the public's un-

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GROUP WILL CREATE BANK OF KNOWLEDGE FOR STRUCTURES

derstanding and knowledge of castles across Wales, the UK and abroad.

The trust will be distributing grants of up to £5,000 to research projects from February 2014. The grants will initially focus on funding new pieces of research such as architectural and geophysical surveys, which will detect any structures below the ground, and scientific tests such as radio-carbon dating.

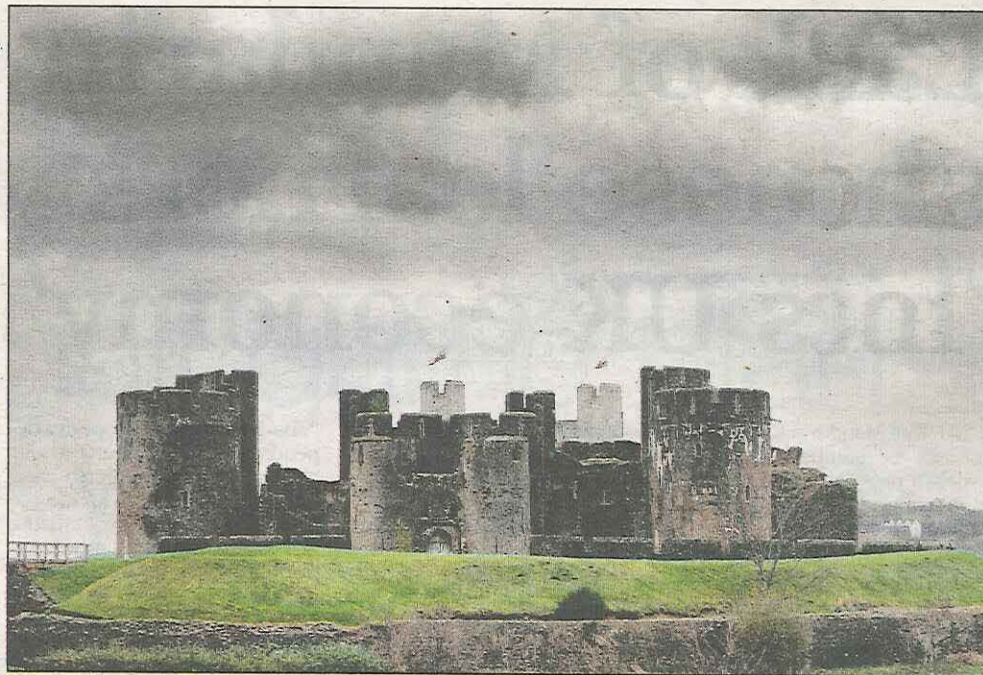
The grants will also be used in conjunction with other funding sources to co-finance projects of a larger scale.

Jeremy Cunnington, chair of the trustees at the Castle Studies Trust, said: "For most castles there are no surviving building records and so doing this work will help answer some of the questions about what, how,

when and possibly even why the castles were built where they were.

"When castles were built they were far more than just military structures, and were key parts of the communities in which they were in the medieval period and beyond, being the political, administrative, judicial and in some cases the economic hubs of the surrounding area. As such, how, why, where and when they were built or modified is key to understanding how our ancestors thought and helped shape all our lives today."

Wales' countryside is strewn with the remains of some of the world's best surviving medieval castles. But the trust aims to primarily fund research into lesser-known castles across the



■ A charity is aiming to help experts discover more about the nation's wealth of ancient fortifications, like Caerphilly Castle, above

PICTURE: Matthew Horwood ©

country such as the historically significant Rhyd y Gors castle in Pembrokeshire.

This site is of particular interest to the trust as the castle has been cited in Norman literature and the exact location of the site is not known. If allocated a grant, the trust would fund a geophysical survey into two or three possible sites around Pembrokeshire to identify its location.

The organisation also says the castles in the heart of Newport and Swansea are of interest

– as are the forts in Pembroke and Caerphilly.

Castle Studies Trust joint patron and architectural editor of Country Life, John Goodall said: "Castles great and small litter the land and townscapes of the British Isles. Despite the public interest they arouse, the vast majority remain little studied.

"By the careful application of funds the Castle Studies Trust promises to help enable further research into these buildings."

The trust, which is run by

volunteers, will work closely with the leading experts in castle studies to target the grants and ensure maximum returns are achieved.

The grants will focus on sites and projects that are not funded by organisations such as English Heritage, Cadw and Historic Scotland.

The trust will be accepting applications for grants from September and is also appealing for donations. For further information visit www.castlestudies.org