

ROCK STREET, CAIO, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (NGR SN 67532 39943)



Prepared by DAT Archaeological Services
For: Camilla von Massenbach



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ROCK STREET, CAIO, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

By

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys

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**ROCK STREET, CAIO, CARMARTHENSHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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ROCK STREET, CAIO, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground works associated with the installation of cable trenching at Bryn Ranell and Bryn Cerdd, Rock Street, Caio, Carmarthenshire (centred on SN 67532 39943). The site lies adjacent to the medieval church of St Cynwyl's Church (PRNs 1881 & 49251), which has likely early medieval origins.

The groundworks revealed 20th century levelling deposits to the rear of the house built up against the churchyard wall, a 20th century sewer line alongside the house, and bedrock deposits in front of the house. No finds, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered.

CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL

Comisiynwyd Gwasanaethau Archaeolegol YAD i gynnal brîff gwylio archaeolegol yn ystod gwaith daear yn gysylltiedig â gosod ffosydd ceblau ym Mryn Ranell a Bryn Cerdd, Stryd y Cware, Caio, Sir Gaerfyrddin (yn canolbwyntio ar SN 67532 39943). Gorwedd y safle gerllaw eglwys ganoloesol Eglwys Sant Cynwyl (PRNs 1881 a 49251), sydd â tharddiad canoloesol cynnar yn ôl pob tebyg.

Datgelodd y gwaith tir ddyddodion lefelu o'r 20fed ganrif tu ôl i'r tŷ a godwyd yn erbyn wal y fynwent eglwys, llinell garthffos o'r 20fed ganrif ochr y tŷ, a dyddodion creigwely o flaen y tŷ. Ni ddarganfuwyd unrhyw ddarganfyddiadau, nodweddion na dyddodion o arwyddocâd archeolegol..

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Proposals and Commission

- 1.1.1 DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Camilla von Massenbach to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Bryn Ranell and Bryn Cerdd, Rock Street, Caio, Carmarthenshire (centred on SN 67532 39943, Figures 1 and 2). The work was commissioned in response to the redevelopment of the existing building (planning application number PL/00973), which included the redirecting and undergrounding of electricity cables. The requirement for an archaeological watching brief had been placed upon the work on the electricity cables by Carmarthenshire County Council (Local Planning Authority) following advice from their archaeological advisors, Dyfed Archaeological Trust–Development Management (DAT-DM).
- 1.1.2 The work on the electricity cables required the excavation of a new trench adjacent to the property and along the street side in front of the property. The requirement to undertake an archaeological watching brief during these works was recommended by DAT-DM because the building is recorded on the Historic Environment Record as the former Kings Head pub (PRN 29653), and the area of groundworks was located between the building and the adjacent churchyard of St Cynwyl's Church (PRNs 1881 & 49251), a medieval church with likely early medieval origins. There was the potential therefore for archaeological remains associated with these sites to extend into the development area, and for subsequent groundworks to expose, damage or destroy any such remains. The recommendations by DAT-DM are laid out in a letter to the Local Planning Authority, dated 22nd December 2020.
- 1.1.3 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological investigation and recording of Standing Buildings and Structures* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), 2014).

1.2 Scope of the Project

- 1.2.1 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) for a watching brief was prepared by DAT Archaeological Services prior to the commencement of the works, which was approved by the DAT-DM in their capacity as archaeological advisor to the planning authority prior to the commencement of the works. The project objectives were:
- Provision of a written scheme of investigation to outline the methodology by which DAT Archaeological Services will undertake the watching brief.
 - To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits.
 - To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed groundworks.
 - To appropriately investigate and record any archaeological deposits to be affected by the groundworks.
 - To produce an archive and report of any results.

1.3 Report Outline

- 1.3.1 This report describes the location of the development works along with its archaeological background, and provides a summary and discussion of the archaeological watching brief and its results.

1.4 Abbreviations

- 1.4.1 Sites recorded on the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Sites recorded on the National Monument Record (NMR) held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) are identified by their National Primary Record Number (NPRN). Scheduled Monument (SM). Altitude is expressed to Ordnance Datum (OD). References to cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets throughout the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the rear of the report.

1.5 Illustrations

- 1.5.1 Photographic images are to be found within the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

1.6 Timeline

- 1.6.1 The following timeline is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text.

Table 1: Archaeological and historical timeline for Wales

| Period | Approximate date | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Palaeolithic – | c.450,000 – 10,000 BC | Prehistoric |
| Mesolithic – | c. 10,000 – 4400 BC | |
| Neolithic – | c.4400 – 2300 BC | |
| Bronze Age – | c.2300 – 700 BC | |
| Iron Age – | c.700 BC – AD 43 | |
| Roman (Romano-British) Period – | AD 43 – c. AD 410 | Historic |
| Post-Roman / Early Medieval Period – | c. AD 410 – AD 1086 | |
| Medieval Period – | 1086 – 1536 | |
| Post-medieval Period ¹ – | 1536 – 1750 | |
| Industrial Period – | 1750 – 1899 | |
| Modern – | 20 th century onwards | |

¹ The post-medieval and industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust



Figure 1: Location map (site in red dot)

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Explorer Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Corner House, 6 Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No. 100020930



Figure 2: Detailed site location plan (supplied by client). Annotated by DAT-AS with route of electricity cable (green line).

2. The Site

2.1 Location and Topography

- 2.1.1 The site is situated in the village of Caio, in northern Carmarthenshire, 2km east of Pumpsaint, 33km northeast of Carmarthen (Figure 1).
- 2.1.2 The site lies in the grounds of the former Kings Head public house, a late post-medieval two-storey masonry building used as both a dwelling and public house, with a range of various outbuildings to the northeast. The building stands on Rock Street, which climbs rising ground to the northeast. The rear of the property looks out to the northwest across the valley of Afon Annell, a small steep-sided valley that rises to higher levels on the opposite side of the river.
- 2.1.3 St Cynwyl's church is a medium-sized church with a broad west tower. The church is largely 15th century in appearance, but the nave and chancel are earlier, with various 19th century restorations. This occupies slightly lower ground to the southwest, surrounded by a D-shaped churchyard, the northeast wall of which provides the boundary to the site. This wall is stone built in random rubble. A slate-topped notch lies along this stretch of wall, backed by steps within the churchyard, which was apparently where coffins would be passed into the churchyard for burial, emphasising the link between the site and the churchyard.
- 2.1.4 Caio is a small village arranged largely in a linear fashion along Rock Street and Church Street. The village lies at junctions of two watercourses, the Afon Annell and the Nant Frena. The Annell forms a steep-sided valley along its western edge, the village lies on the undulating eastern side of the valley at approximately 160mOD. To the northeast the road continues into Caio Forest, an area of conifer woodland with open uplands beyond. A small road runs southeast from Caio, providing access to local farms eventually ending up in Porthrhyd.
- 2.1.5 The surrounding area comprises a mix of dispersed dwellings and small settlements in a largely pastoral agricultural landscape, interspersed with areas of upland and woodland. Former estates, such as the Dolaucothi Estate, lie in the area. The topography comprises relatively steep-sided valleys running northeast-southwest into a more undulating landscape to the south.
- 2.1.6 The underlying bedrock comprises interbedded mudstones and laminated hemipelagic mudstone of the Cwmere Formation. Nearby lie the Dolaucothi Gold Mines, extending into the ridge of Allt Formation mudstones on the opposite side of the Annell Valley (based on information from the British Geological Survey).

(<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.2.1 Caio lies within 500m of a Roman road that linked the Roman forts at Llandovery and Llanio, and provided access to the Dolaucothi Gold Mines and fort at Pumpsaint to the west. The precise nature of any Roman-era activity in the immediate vicinity of the site is not known however, but this link to the areas of Roman activity and the infrastructure that they provided are likely to have contributed to the establishment of an early medieval religious site.
- 2.2.2 The D-shaped churchyard (PRN 49251) around St Cynwyl's Church is thought likely to have early medieval origins, possibly in the 6th century as

an inscribed stone of that date has been built into the fabric of the church (PRN 1882). This site may have formed the focus of an early medieval Welsh 'bond' settlement.

- 2.2.3 The church itself (PRN 1881) was granted to Talley Abbey in *circa* 1200 and contains 13th-14th century fabric in the nave and chancel, with 15th century additions including the broad western tower, along with later 19th century restoration work. The church likely remained the focus of a small settlement throughout the medieval period.
- 2.2.4 The village continued throughout the post-medieval period, although it never appears to have been particularly extensive. The Roman Road continued to be used as a drover's route, and the Kings Arms public house (PRN 29653) may have served as a stop-off on this route. The village is visible in much of its present form on the original Ordnance Survey drawings of 1805, which depicts a building on this spot. The site is shown in more detail on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3), labelled as the King's Head. The space between the building and the churchyard wall appears to be demarcated as a separate trackway, which runs around the churchyard wall, and descends the valley slope to a footbridge over the river. This subsequently gave access to a spring on the opposite valley slope, and a track leading further up the base of the valley.
- 2.2.5 At some point the building was acquired by local builders and plasterers (Camilla von Massenbach, pers.com.) and elements of the building may have been rebuilt, including a high two-storey arched opening, now an internal feature, and decorative plasterwork. The rear garden and outbuildings would have provided much of the space from which to run their business. Close ties with the adjacent churchyard are evident in the coffin-rest in the churchyard wall adjacent to the property, a lowered section of the wall where the coffin could be passed into the churchyard. Spare keys to church also used to be held by at the house until recently.



Photo 1: St Cynwyl's Church, viewed from the south.



Photo 2: Bryn Ranell and Bryn Cerdd, the building under redevelopment, view facing northwest. The cable route runs to the left of the building



Photo 3: Bryn Ranell and Bryn Cerdd, as viewed from the rear.



Photo 4: The coffin rest (to the left of centre) in the churchyard boundary wall.

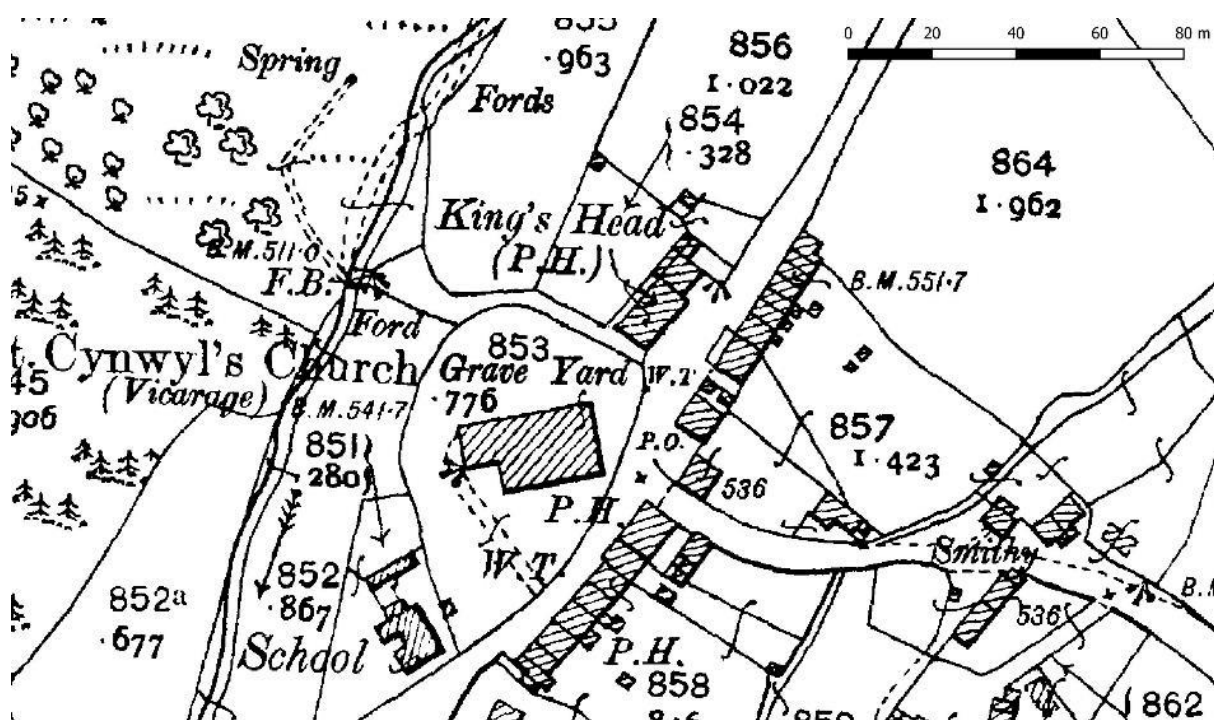


Figure 3: Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1888, showing the King's Head pub to the north of the churchyard.

3. WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at the site which had the potential to expose, damage or destroy underlying archaeological remains.
- 3.1.2 The groundworks comprised the excavation of a linear service trench running from the rear garden boundary, along a route parallel to the churchyard wall. This trench ran between the churchyard and the house, before turning to run alongside Rock Street and up the hill to connect with existing services. The trench was excavated by a mechanical mini-digger using a combined of toothless and toothed buckets due to the nature of the material being excavated. The excavated trench measured 0.3m to 0.4m wide, 0.5m to 0.6m deep, and ran for 35m northwest-southeast, before turning to run another 30m along Rock Street.
- 3.1.3 All archaeological deposits revealed during the groundworks were examined and recorded to an appropriate level.
- 3.1.4 Recording of all archaeological features or deposits conformed to best current professional practice and was carried out in accordance with the Recording Manual² used by DAT Archaeological Services.
- 3.1.5 The work followed the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief as laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014) and adhered to their code of conduct (CIfA 2014).

3.2 Timetabling of Fieldwork

- 3.2.1 The watching brief took place on the 24th of January 2022.

3.3 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving

- 3.3.1 All data recovered during the fieldwork was collated into a site archive structured in accordance with specifications in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2011), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 3.3.2 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts. The report includes a desk-based research element to ensure that the site is placed within its wider archaeological context.
- 3.3.3 A report fully representative of the results of the fieldwork has been prepared.

² DAT Archaeological Services have adopted the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available on-site for inspection if required.

4. RESULTS

- 4.1 The earliest deposit uncovered by the works was exposed bedrock, comprising solid orange-brown mudstone, revealed along the entirety of the trench excavated in front of the house along the edge of Rock Street (Photos 5 & 6). The bedrock was directly overlaid by modern road deposits. Bedrock was also exposed in the bank on which the churchyard wall was built at its northeast corner, above the current road level.
- 4.2 The relationship between the bedrock and overlying (non-modern) deposits was not exposed within the excavated trench, as the trench followed the line of a modern sewer pipe [004] immediately adjacent to the house, which truncated the bedrock and all earlier overlying deposits (Photos 7 – 9). This modern sewer pipe ran past the house to a point approximately 6m from the rear wall of the house, where the line of the sewer trench then turned to run parallel to the rear wall of the house. This change of direction was marked by an iron manhole cover, itself buried at a depth of 0.5m below current ground levels, which rose behind the house (Photo 12). As the current trench approached this change in direction it began to deviate from the line of the sewer trench, which revealed a lower subsoil deposit (005) of friable mid-grey sandy clay, with common fragmented stone inclusions (Photo 11). This deposit was revealed initially at a depth of 0.6m from the current ground surface, exposed along part of the trench for approximately 6m, the frequency of stone inclusions increasing to the southeast (as it got closer to Rock Street and the exposed bedrock deposits).
- 4.3 To the northwest of the sewer pipe manhole ground levels levelled out, and the lowest deposit revealed within the trench was a soft dark brown sandy silt (003) with common small stone inclusions, along with common fragments of coal (Photos 13 & 14). This deposit also contained fragments of broken roof tile, brick of 20th century appearance, and some later 19th and 20th century pottery and glass fragments. A few fragments of small, disarticulated bone was revealed amongst the deposit, not readily identifiable as human or animal and therefore left *in situ*. This deposit was exposed for a length of approximately 12m and was also cut by the sewer pipe [003], which also truncated the relationship of this deposit and subsoil (005).
- 4.4 Overlying the sewer pipe, and also deposits (005) and (003), was a loose light grey-yellow sandy clay (002) with abundant small stone inclusions. This deposit was up to 0.2m thick but undulated along the line of the excavated trench. This in turn was overlaid by a topsoil deposit (001), 0.2m thick, of very loose dark brown sandy silt with common stone and coal fragment inclusions. A variety of 20th century artefacts were visible amongst this deposit, including brick, pottery, broken stone slabs, tree roots, uPVC fragments and plastic wrapping.



Photo 5: View southwest along the roadside trench, showing exposed bedrock deposits.



Photo 6: Exposed bedrock deposits, directly overlaid by modern road surfaces. 0.5m scale.



Photo 7: View southeast of marked line of the trench between the house and the churchyard wall, prior to excavation.



Photo 8: View of trench between the building (on the right) and the churchyard wall (on the left), showing backfill of a modern sewer pipe [004].



Photo 9: View southeast along the excavated trench between the house and the churchyard wall, with the coffin rest on the churchyard wall visible on the right.



Photo 10: View along the line of the trench prior to excavation. The trench line ran to the left of the churchyard wall. Deposits within the churchyard are at a higher level than ground levels to the left.



Photo 11: Potential subsoil deposit (005) on the left, cut by the sewer pipe trench [004] on the right, represented by the orange infill material. 0.5m scale.



Photo 12: Buried manhole cover for the sewer pipe revealed at the base of the trench. 0.5m scale.



Photo 13: General view southeast along the line of the excavated trench. 1m & 0.5m scale.



Photo 14: Northeast facing shot of a representative section along the excavated trench, showing (barely indistinguishable) deposits (001) and (001).

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- 5.1 A watching brief was carried out during the machine excavation of a cable trench at Bryn Ranell and Bryn Cerdd, Rock Street, Caio, Carmarthenshire (centred on SN 67532 39943). The line of the trench runs between a late post-medieval public house/dwelling (PRN 29653), and the churchyard boundary wall of St Cynwyl's Church (PRNs 1881 & 49251), a medieval church with likely early medieval origins. The presence of these sites highlighted the potential for associated archaeological remains to extend into the development area.
- 5.2 To the front of the house the trench revealed bedrock deposits immediately below the current road surface, with exposed bedrock along roadside banking indicating the road has likely long been cut through bedrock deposits, hence the name 'Rock Street'.
- 5.3 To the rear of the house ground levels were higher. As the ground began to fall towards the house a possible natural subsoil deposit was revealed at the base of the trench, represented by deposit (005). This however was heavily truncated by the line of a 20th century sewer pipe that ran alongside the house, which also truncated any visible relationship to the bedrock levels at the front of the house.
- 5.4 Within the rear garden of the house, beyond the sewer pipe disturbance, the lowest exposed deposit (003) contained 20th century material. The layer above (002) had the appearance of a natural subsoil but was clearly redeposited, lying as it did above the 20th century deposit (003) and also appearing above the infilled sewer line. The topsoil (001) above this also contained a variety of modern material. These rear garden deposits therefore have the appearance of 20th century infill and levelling work, built up against the face of the churchyard wall
- 5.5 No finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were identified within the excavated area.

6. SOURCES

6.1 Map

Ordnance Survey Original Surveyors Drawings – Crediton, published 1805

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map published in 1888

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500 map published in 1907

6.2 Database

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, The Shire Hall,
Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6AF

British Geological Survey information accessed via
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

APPENDIX I:
Context Register

| Context | Description | Interpretation |
|---------|---|--------------------------------|
| 001 | Loose, dark brown sandy-silt. Common medium-large sub-angular stone, and common small coal fragment inclusions. Finds included late 19 th to late 20 th century pottery and glass fragments, broken stone paving slabs, 20 th century brick, modern uPVC fragments, plastic food wrappers (not retained) | Topsoil |
| 002 | Loose, light grey-yellow sandy-clay Abundant small sub-angular stone inclusions No finds | Redeposited subsoil |
| 003 | Loose, dark brown sandy-silt Common small-medium sub-angular stone and common small coal fragment inclusions 19 th and 20 th century pottery and glass fragments, broke roofing slates, 20 th century brick, bone fragments (not retained) | Levelling deposit |
| 004 | Linear cut, steep straight sides. Contained a mix of crushed stone and light orange-brown stony clayey-sand. | 20 th century sewer |
| 005 | Friable, mid grey sandy-clay Common to abundant small-medium sub-angular stone inclusions. No finds | Possible natural subsoil |

