

**Carmarthen Greyfriars
(GF97):
1997 Excavations**

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Archive report

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Summary of 1997 excavations

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SUMMARY

In the period of late June to September 1997, staff from Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology were involved in a programme of excavations within the northern fringes of the area known as Friar's Park, in the centre of Carmarthen town and centred on SN 4150 1980. The work was carried out in advance of a major shopping centre development by Morrison Developments Limited, with an additional watching brief for the duration of site-works. The programme of archaeological work was commissioned by Morrison Developments Limited, and followed archaeological specifications prepared by the Curatorial Section, Dyfed Archaeological Trust, based in Llandeilo.

The area of Friar's Park was formerly the site of Carmarthen Greyfriars, a Franciscan establishment founded in the mid-13th century, the majority of which had been previously excavated, under the direction of Terry James, between 1983-1990. The 1997 excavations and watching brief focused on an area of approximately 20m by 15m immediately to the north of the choir (Areas 1 and 2), with an additional test-trench 22m long situated on the northern boundary of the development (Area 3). Both the excavation and the evaluation trench were located at the rear of medieval tenement blocks associated with Lammas street. In addition to this, a small area contained within the Friary's choir and rooms situated immediately to the south (Rooms 1759 and 1972) which had not been investigated during the 1983-1990 excavations was also fully excavated (Area 4).

A small number of pre-Friary features were identified. These included traces of a small timber structure or fence-line adjacent to a large timber structure situated beneath the choir and southern rooms and identified during the 1983-1990 excavations. In the area to the north of the Friary, a grouping of postholes and shallow pits which contained large quantities of early medieval coarse-ware sherds may have indicated a possible small-scale timber structure, although it proved impossible to define further. This structure appeared to be closely associated with two short butt-ended segments of boundary ditch, a gully and the remains of a corn-drier, complete with charred oat seeds. The eastern ditch segment was partially traced during the 1983-1990 excavations, in an area immediately to the east of the 1997 excavations. The ditch may have formed a boundary and entrance to a pre-friar complex. The evidence from both excavations does indicate some degree of pre-Friary agricultural activity sometime probably during the late 12th to early-mid 13th century, including food processing and storage, and possibly limited settlement, on the site of what was previously thought to be undeveloped communally-farmed open fields. The orientation of

the pre-Friary features would appear not to be related to that of the line of Lammas Street or its tenement plots. It would therefore seem likely that the complex would pre-date any medieval developments that far west along Lammas Street. Within the choir of the Friary, the excavations located the eastern end of the northern choir stall footings, in much the same position as was conjectured during the previous excavation. Two gully features associated with the northern and southern choir stall footings produced a wide range of small finds including: silver and copper coins and jettons from a variety of countries, fragments of lead window grills, amber rosary beads and an assortment of decorated copper sheet fragments from book bindings. From the central and north-western area of the choir a total of at least 61 medieval burials were identified, recorded and lifted. Within area 1, a further 35 burials, both medieval and post-Reformation, were located to the north and north-west of the choir. A concentration of possible medieval graves (with a further 33 left 'in situ') was located north of the nave and choir, adjacent to the historic thoroughway, presently linking Lammas Street with Tesco's superstore. This would suggest that a major medieval graveyard located to the north of the Nave and choir, although its extent was not fully defined. A small number of post-Reformation graves would seem to point to authorised additions to the northern medieval graveyard, in the years immediately following the dissolution of the Friary in 1538. For how long burials continued to be interred on the site is still unclear.

Areas 1, 2 and 3 produced a wealth of evidence for a wide range of post-medieval activities on the site. The most notable features included: a large pit filled with the remains of possible hearth lining, perhaps associated with post-dissolution cupellation and smelting hearths found elsewhere on the Friary site during the previous excavation, a stone-lined cess-pit and drain and a 19th century stone cellar.

It is hoped that, at a later stage, the results of the 1997 work will be published to complement those of the 1983-1990 excavation, produced by Terry James. This will be an opportunity to give a final record of the work carried out on the Greyfriars site from 1983 to the present date.

Introduction

Introduction

From late June to September 1997, staff from Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology were involved in two phases of excavations within the northern fringes of the area known as Friar's Park, the former site of Carmarthen Greyfriars, in the centre of Carmarthen town, centred on SN 4150 1980 (Fig 1). The work was carried out in advance of the planned construction of a major shopping centre and bus station, with an additional watching brief carried out during the general construction phase of the works.

The excavations and post-excavation work were commissioned and funded by Morrison Developments Limited, and followed archaeological specifications prepared by the Curatorial Section, Dyfed Archaeological Trust, based in Llandeilo.

The results of the previous 1983-90 excavations, which investigated the majority of the friary building were produced in monograph form in 1996 (James, T 1996). This interim report is intended to cover the results of the 1997 excavations, excluding the present Stage 2 watching brief, which remains unfinished at present. These excavations and Stage 1 watching brief investigated the unexcavated portions of the choir and the area immediately north of the friary structure (Fig. 2). Although reference has been made to results from the previous excavations, this report is not intended as the final completed report on the whole of the Carmarthen Greyfriars site. It also follows that all interpretations contained within this report, made from results gained from the 1997 excavation and from previous work, would not be necessarily shared by the original excavators.

It is intended that when the Stage 2 watching brief is completed, the full results of the 1997 excavations and associated watching briefs will be reported in an expanded version of this report. At a later stage, the results of the 1997 work will be published for a wider audience in a form that is compatible with that of the 1983-1990 excavation report, produced by Terry James, giving a final record of the work carried out on the Greyfriars site from 1983 to the present date.

Project brief, objectives and methodology

The archaeological specifications prepared by the Curatorial Section, Dyfed Archaeological Trust, called for the full excavation and archaeological recording of those areas within the development area which were due to be reduced by *approx.* 3m. These areas were principally located within the medieval friar's choir and adjacent buildings (Area 4), and the block of land *approx.* 20m by 15m immediately north of the choir (Areas 1 and 2).

An additional trial-trench was conducted along the northern boundary of the western part of the development site (Area 3). A continuous watching-brief was carried out over the whole development area during site works, including within the north-western corner of the site which was not subject to the archaeological excavations. In order to safely batter the western edge of the development area, an addition strip, *approx.* 2m wide, was excavated and recorded under archaeological conditions (Stage 2) a few weeks after the end of the main (Stage 1) excavations.

The initial objective of the excavations was to identify, record and sample all examples of post-medieval archaeology present within the development area. Once the medieval archaeological horizon was revealed, then all significant archaeological deposits, features or structures, were hand excavated, sampled and recorded to normal archaeological standards. In particular, within areas 1, 2 and 3, it was anticipated that information would be forthcoming on the nature and developments within the area at the rear of Lammas street. Area 4 was intended to complete the full excavation of the friary choir, expected to contain an unknown number of burials.

All areas were recorded using methods and guidelines expressed in the site recording manual used by Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology. All definable layers, deposits, surfaces and walls were given a unique number (context number) by which they can be identified and recorded in a written record. To supplement this written record, a drawn and photographic record (monochrome and colour slide film) were kept. Sections and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10, as appropriate. All features excavated, medieval or post-medieval, were subject to at least a 50% sampling. Finds recovered from the site were bagged by context for later analysis and will be included with the site archive, to be deposited with Carmarthen Museum.

This brief archive report contains information and details on all the relevant finds, contexts and full copies of the site registers. The structure is based on guidelines drawn up for excavation archives.

ARCHIVE SECTION A

Reports

Material held

- A.1 Final report to be added at a later date
- A.2 Interim report, produced February 1998
- A.3 Both final and interim reports on disc.

Relevant information

The interim report was written before the final phase of the watching brief was completed. It was subject to limited distribution; to Morrison Developments Ltd and Terry James for initial response to new information.

Format for both reports was 'Word for Windows 6'.

ARCHIVE SECTION B

Site written data

Material held

- B.1 Context records: paper
- B.3 Computer generated context list
- B.5 Survey data: paper

Relevant information

Context register is in archive folder. It also contains details of small finds, photos and drawings listed by context.

EDM

heights need to be corrected by +0.71m, i.e. given height = 60.10m OD, corrected height = 60.81m OD

Note: Drawings in report have been corrected, all levels taken by level are correct (i.e. calculations including IH, FS and BS)

ARCHIVE SECTION C

Drawings: Non-publication

Material held

- C.1 Catalogue of drawings
- C.2 Site drawings
- C.3 Survey drawings
- C.4 Phased 'level III plans

Relevant information

C.1 Full catalogue of drawings is contained within the archive folder under C. 1, Drawings are also listed by context in the general context register.

C.2 and 3 All drawings, both site and pen are contained within the drawing folder, sorted by drawing number.

C.4 Phased drawings are in folder, contexted and finished version is within the report.

ARCHIVE SECTION D

Photographs

Material held

- D.1 Catalogue of photographs
- D.2 Colour slide
- D.3 B/w
- D.4 Press photographs

Relevant information

D.1, 2 and 3 Full catalogue of photographs is contained within the photographic folder with all photographs. These are listed by film number, with separate consecutive numbers for black/white and colour slide. Photographs are also listed by context in the general context register.

C.4 Photographs from a Morrison Dev Ltd internal newsletter, colour print only.

ARCHIVE SECTION E

Finds data

Material held

- E.7 List of objects and special finds
- E.11 Conservation forms
- E.13 Pottery records
- E. 14 Specialist correspondence and notes

Relevant information

E.7 Full catalogue of small finds and identifications is contained within the archive folder under E.7. Sfs are also listed by context in the general context register.

E.11 Conservation records are contained within the report.

E.13 and 14 All pottery lists and notes by Heather James and Dee are contained in the report, with a separate copy within the archive folder which also contains correspondence.

ARCHIVE SECTION F

Environmental and technological data

Material held

- F.1 Sample forms
- F.5 C14 report

Relevant information

F.1 Copies of sample forms in archive folder.

F.5 C14 reports, copies in report and in archive folder.

ARCHIVE SECTION G

Documentary data

Material held

- G.2 Correspondence on archaeological matters

Relevant information

G.2 Copies of letters and faxes in archive report

ARCHIVE SECTION H

Human remains

Material held

- H.1 Burial forms

Relevant information

H.1 Copies of all burial forms

NB Watching brief burial sheets were only partially filled in during processing
Sheets are within the archive folder

ARCHIVE SECTION I

Draft report

Material held

- I.4 Draft report

Relevant information

I.4 Copy of draft report in archive folder.

ARCHIVE SECTION J

Publication Drawings

Material held

J.1 Publication Drawings

Relevant information

J.1 Drawings contained with report. Inked originals contained within drawing folder.

ARCHIVE SECTION K

Public relations

Material held

K.1 Publication Drawings

Relevant information

K.1 Press cuttings are contained within the archive folder.

ARCHIVE SECTION L

Pre-and post- excavation design

Material held

L.1 Publication Drawings

Relevant information

L.1 Post-ex programme details are contained within archive folder.

