

JUNE 2001 (1)



ST ISMAEL'S CHURCH, CAMROSE, PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF,
JUNE 2001



Report No. 2001/45

Report Prepared for:
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CAMBRIA

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CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

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By

Neil Ludlow

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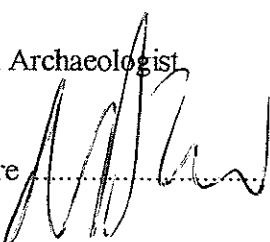
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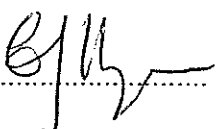
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**ST ISMAEL'S CHURCH,
CAMROSE,
PEMBROKESHIRE**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations during the excavation of an electricity cable trench at St Ismael's Church, Camrose, Pembrokeshire, during June 2001.

The trench was excavated alongside a pre-existing, north-south running pathway leading from the churchyard entrance to the north door of the church. Opposite the doorway, the trench turned to follow the line of a pre-existing cutting around the north walls of the nave and west tower. This meant that only one edge of the trench cut through previously undisturbed deposits. The section of this edge was cleaned and recorded on 27 June 2001.

The section revealed a fairly simple succession of deposits. The lowest was represented by the natural clay subsoil. This appeared to be directly cut by seven (or eight) burials of broadly 18th-early 19th century date. Above these lay extensive deposits, most of which appeared to represent deliberate build-up. The uppermost, however, appeared to have been derived from an earlier churchyard northern boundary bank that was partly levelled during the later post-medieval period. This deposit did not physically relate to the ninth burial, opposite the church tower, which was cut from a higher level than the others.

The earlier burials appear to have been aligned on the churchyard path, which thus appears to have been a long-standing feature. The level of this path also appears to have been established at an early period, lying more-or-less at the level of the top of the subsoil. This means that the burials were only partially disturbed by the cable trench. Churchyard build-up, probably derived from the levelling of the former northern bank, was deposited either side of the path, so that it now appears - superficially - to occupy a cutting.

None of the excavated burials was marked. The five burials towards the southern end of the trench appeared, by their bone preservation, to have been the earliest, the three towards the north end of the path (and further away from the church) being in better condition. The best bone preservation was in the grave near the tower, which was cut from a higher level and may be later 19th century.

1.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND BRIEF

Wyn Jones, Architect, acting on behalf of the Church, invited Cambria Archaeology Field Operations, on 19 June 2001, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of an electricity cable trench at St Ismael's Church, Camrose, Pembrokeshire. The excavation was undertaken by Griffiths Ltd (Contractors) on 25-27 June 2001, the archaeological recording being carried out on 27 June.

An archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during an operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons - normally a development or other construction project - within a specified area where archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IFA 1999). The programme results in the preparation of a report and ordered archive. The watching brief is intended to allow, subject to resources, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits in advance of their disturbance or destruction. It should also provide an opportunity, if necessary, for the watching archaeologist to alert all interested parties to the presence of an archaeological find for which the resources allocated to the watching brief are insufficient to support satisfactory treatment. The watching brief is not intended as a substitute for contingent archaeological excavation.

2.0 THE SITE

2.1 SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

St Ismael's Church (PRN 2423) is situated at NGR SM 9271 2006, on the west side of the village of Camrose which lies 6 km northwest of Haverfordwest. The churchyard lies between 30 metres and 35 metres OD occupying a gentle, southwards downhill slope towards Camrose Brook, which is a tributary of the Western Cleddau. The underlying solid geology of Ordovician shales is partially overlain by glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel.

2.2 CAMROSE - A BRIEF HISTORY

Camrose was an extensive and important manor of the lordship of Haverfordwest during the medieval period, a status exemplified by the fine motte-and-bailey castle that can still be seen towards the south end of the village. This was probably founded during the early 12th century. However, the settlement history of Camrose is obscure.

2.2.1 The settlement

The Normans under Roger de Montgomery invaded what is now Pembrokeshire in 1093. The extent of his conquests is unknown, but eventually a lordship was established based on the castle at Pembroke. The lordship was acquired by the crown in the person of Henry I in 1102, and its administration re-organised upon Anglo-Norman civil lines. In 1138 the lordship was declared an earldom and granted to Gilbert 'Strongbow' de Clare by King Stephen.

Camrose lay in the medieval lordship of Rhos, the successor to a Welsh *cantref* of the same name. Rhos was annexed to the earldom of Pembroke from 1138 onwards but its relationship with the earldom was fluid.

Rhos is referred to in a fiscal account of 1130 (Hunter 1929, 136-7) as under the control of 'Godebert the Fleming'. However, the administrative centre of the lordship of Rhos was, in the later 12th century at least, at Haverfordwest where a castle had been established by 'Tancard the Fleming' c1110, and indeed the lordship was later termed 'Haverford'. This may imply that during the earlier part of the century Rhos was administered from another centre, either singly or jointly with Haverfordwest. The 'rose' suffix in the place-name Camrose suggests that it was of some importance within the lordship, and the motte and bailey castle may represent this second centre. However, the same element occurs at Rosemarket where another earthwork castle may be a contender.

Camrose is mentioned by name (as 'Kamros') in 1188 by Giraldus Cambrensis who, travelling through it on his way from Haverfordwest to Newgale (Thorpe 1975, 156), relates the tale of the murder there of Gerald son of William and the subsequent retaliative ravaging of Rhos. His itinerary suggests that a routeway existed through Camrose but none is shown as a medieval road on Rees' map (1932).

Unfortunately Giraldus does not describe any settlement. It is impossible to determine the nature of the settlement at this time with any certitude, but the presence of a manorial village is not in dispute. The parish church (now St Ismael's) was in existence by at least 1291 (Charles 1992, 575), and the village corn mill (PRN 17737) was established by at least 1376 (Owen 1911, 107). Both probably originated earlier in the medieval period. These components of castle, parish church and mill all indicate a manorial settlement of at least some pretension.

The manorial lands of Camrose were extensive, taking in Wolfsdale and Cuffern Mountain. An account of the 'Manor of Cameros' at the Public Record Office covers the period 1376-1545 (Owen

1911, 107). A number of tenements and their occupants are mentioned, the corn mill, and in 1387, a fulling mill that was 'in decay'. In 1376 the manor was in the hands of the King's daughter.

The relationship of the manor of Camrose to the lordship of Haverford (formerly Rhos) became obscured in the later medieval period and by the 14th century Camrose was not included, for fiscal purposes, within the lordship but was assessed separately (Owen 1911, 14; RCAHMW 1922, 45). It came to be linked with the town of Haverfordwest itself, and in 1331 Richard Symond was appointed by the crown as keeper of the former lord Roger Mortimer's town of Haverford and the 'foreign land called Cameros' (Owen 1911, 14). In 1585 Haverfordwest Borough still maintained rentals of properties in Camrose (Charles 1966, 197). In direct contrast, Camrose is cited as lying within the lordship in 1544, and with the reversion of the lordship to the crown in the 16th century, Camrose was included with West Haverford lordship in a grant of profits to Anne Boleyn, Marchioness of Pembroke (Owen 1911, 32-4).

The castle - whatever its status, whether a Norman administrative centre or not - appears not to have been rebuilt in stone and, like many early motte castles that remained solely of timber, was probably abandoned by the 14th century.

The castle lies within the grounds of a mansion, Camrose House (PRN 6500), which may represent the site of a domestic habitation that succeeded the castle as the seat of the lords of the manor. The Bowen family, owners by the 18th century at least, had apparently settled in the parish in the early 14th century (Jones 1996, 21). A deed of 1722 describes the property as 'a capital messuage called Castle, containing six ploughlands' (*ibid.*). The present house site displays possible field evidence for an earlier dwelling.

2.2.2 St Ismael's Church

St Ismael, Camrose, was a parish church in the post-conquest period (Rees 1932), of the medieval Deanery of Rhos. It is first mentioned by name in 1291, when it was an appropriation of the Augustinians of Haverfordwest Priory (Green 1911, 258). The 'Celtic' dedication may be evidence for the pre-conquest religious use of the site, but it has been suggested that the church was formerly dedicated to St Ambrose (Charles 1992, 575). Camrose was a parish in the medieval period (Rees, 1932) and in 1291 the benefice was a vicarage assessed at £12, a considerable sum, the tenths payable to the king being 24s (Green 1911, 258). In 1536 the vicarage had an annual value of £6 10s 3½d (*ibid.*).

At the dissolution the advowson fell to the crown. In 1543 Arnold Butler of Johnston obtained a 21-year lease of the 'rectory' of Camrose from the king (*ibid.*), and 2 years later a member of the royal household obtained a lease of the tithes of the rectory. The living was a vicarage again by 1620 (Green 1911, 259n.). The discharged vicarage of Camrose was, in 1833, in the patronage of a private individual, with an annual value of £40, rated in the king's books at £6 10s 5d and endowed with £400 royal bounty (Lewis 1833), in the Archdeaconry of St Davids.

The living is now a vicarage held with St Lawrence, Ford and Hayscastle (Benefice 636) in the Archdeaconry of St Davids, Rural Deanery of Roose (St Davids 1997-8).

2.3 ST ISMAELS CHURCH - DESCRIPTION

(from N D Ludlow, 1998, *Cadw Welsh Historic Churches Project*)

St Ismael, Camrose (Dyfed PRN 2423), is Grade I listed. It is a 3-celled church, of medium-large size, retaining approximately 90% pre-19th century core fabric. The present structure consists of a 3-bayed chancel, a wider 4-bayed nave and a 2-storey west tower. Construction is in medium-sized limestone rubble throughout, unsquared and uncoursed, with medieval limestone quoining in the west tower only. The good-quality pointing is from 1883-4, with areas of surviving earlier (18th century?) render and some 20th century ribbon pointing. The internal walls are rendered/plastered; pre-1883 plaster survives in the chancel. Roofs are slated gables, the nave always having been roofed at a higher level than the chancel; the tower roof was not seen.

The church largely follows its medieval arrangements, but most of the openings, except in the tower, have been rebuilt. It was entered through north and south doors in the nave, still open, but there is no west door. A south chapel and ?transept were formerly present, but have been removed. The church is remarkable for its length.

A deep-very deep, wide cutting surrounds the church, mainly primary but secondarily deepened in 1883-4, and concrete-lined, exposing the nave footings. The level of the medieval door sill suggests that internal levels are unchanged in the body of the church, but the tower floor has been lowered. There is no underfloor void. No internal crypt/vault is present. A south chapel and ?transept formerly existed.

The nave and chancel are little altered and the Early English former east window, replaced between 1877 and 1883 (see below), was an unusually early architectural feature in the region, suggesting a 13th century date for both - a relatively early date made possible, also unusually, for such a large structure.

Medieval features now present in the chancel include a blocked window in the south wall of the central bay, with a full-height, segmental-headed internal recess and a surviving 2-centred surround of 2 lancets, probably 15th century; it was blocked prior to 1877 (Allen 1877, 218). A corresponding area of blocking in the north wall may or may not represent a former window. There is a piscina in the south wall, with an ogee-moulded surround but without a bowl, of the ?15th century. Medieval benching survives in the chancel central bay, and crude corbel, for a former roof truss?, on the north wall. The upper half of the north wall of the west bay exhibits an internal recess, with a half-arch and cut-out to the west wall for a former rood-loft stair; the stair recess was formerly lit by a single lancet window of broadly medieval date, blocked before 1877 (*ibid.*). The chancel arch is probably contemporary with the core fabric, and therefore 13th century; it is plain and 2-centred. To its north lies a square-headed doorway, blocked before 1877 (*ibid.*) leading from the stair recess, and rood-loft corbel survive to the south, and on the nave east bay side walls. On the upstand lay a medieval sanctus bellcote; it had gone by 1877 (*ibid.*), but was rebuilt, and the 'old bell' was re-used, in 1883-4 (NLW, SD/F/70); date of bell?

A blocked arcade in the south wall of the chancel west bay led to a former south chapel; the arch is 2-centred and full-height. The chapel had gone by 1877 (Allen 1877, 218) but was probably removed long before (see below) - the tithe map is of little assistance being highly conventionalised (NLW, Camrose, 1839). The blocking is pierced by a window from 1877-83 (see below), that has succeeded a sash-window (Allen 1877, 218).

The nave retains some medieval features. A similar arch lies in the south wall of the east bay, that communicated with a former component; the ragged finishing of the nave south-east corner indicates that a wall butted here, suggesting that the component was separate from the former south chapel, and therefore a transept; this need not, however, necessarily have been the case. The arch voussoirs lie beneath external render of possible 18th century date, by which time the component (and doubtless the south chapel, if separate) had gone; the blocking itself was rebuilt or

repointed in 1883-4, and pierced by a window. Both north and south doorways are still open; the south door retains its 2-centred limestone surround of 13th-14th century date, but the north door was rebuilt in 1883-4; all windows and other detail are also from 1883-4.

The west tower is of 2 storeys (RCAHM 1925, 46) and has retained most of its medieval fabric, of 15th century date; it is not tapered and lacks the basal batter and string course characteristic of the district. A polygonal spiral stair turret projects from the east end of the north wall; it is of smaller limestone rubble and may be a 16th century addition. The turret is entered from the nave by a square headed door with a sill probably always above floor level, and lit by simple slits. A plain 2-centred arch divides the tower ground floor from the nave, and the barrel-vault is contemporary with the core fabric. The floor is tiled as the nave, and at the same level; exposed internal footings demonstrate that it has been lowered, before 1883?. Openings are confined to the stair turret and the belfry, which is pierced by plain square single openings in all four walls; a blocked light formerly opened into the nave roof space (RCAHM 1925, 47). There is a crenellated parapet on a plain corbel table, also 15th century, but the parapet was partly rebuilt in 1883-4. A rainwater chute is in the form of a gargoye, also 15th century. The tower is in good condition.

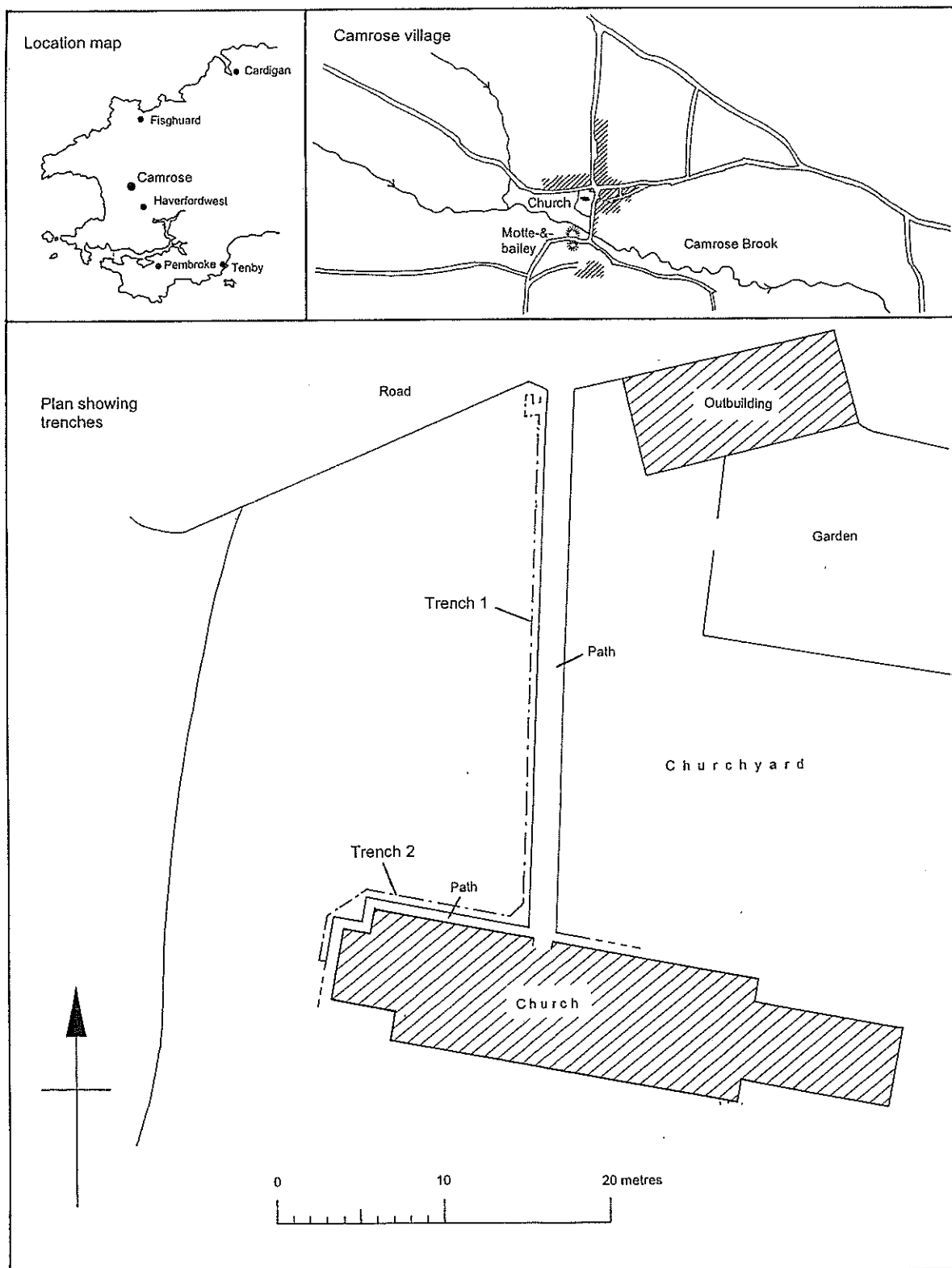
The pre-restoration church was subject to a lengthy description in 1877 (Allen 1877, 214-223). The medieval arrangements had largely survived (although the south chapel and ?transept had gone), but much of the detail in the body of the church had been altered. The windows had largely been replaced by the ubiquitous sashes, 'of the early 19th century', and the chancel south window had by now been blocked. The chancel east window, however, was a rare survival of a ?13th century 3-lancet window (illus. p220), with mullions displaying internal beading, all now gone. The interior was plastered, some of which survives especially in the chancel. The nave was roofed in oak, with collar-rafter trusses with moulded arch-braces, of medieval date? The present chancel roof was of 'recent' construction in 1877 and features oak scissors-braced trusses with moulded struts. The present chancel floor, of limestone flags, may be 18th-earlier 19th century.

There was evidently some work between 1877 and the 1883-4 restoration, when the medieval east window was replaced by a 2-centred opening with 3 lights, and Y-tracery, in oolite. A similar window, with a brick head, was inserted in the infill in the chancel west bay south wall.

The church was restored in 1883-4 (NLW, SD/F/70), following specifications by the architect John P. Seddon, of London. The restoration as planned created some dissent, due to which the proposed north porch, a structure 'out of place' for region, was not built, and the design for the sanctus bellcote was modified (Anon., 1882, 324). The restoration as undertaken was low-medium impact and largely concerned the nave. The nave east and west wall tops were rebuilt, and the tops of the side walls for the simple oolite roof corbels. The single sanctus bellcote was built new, as a replica of the old?; it is simple and square, with a 2-centred opening, and the old sanctus bell was rehung. The nave was refenestrated with neo-gothic 2-light windows, with 2-centred limestone surrounds. The north door was rebuilt with a replica 2-centred surround. The nave was replastered, and only damaged plaster was to be removed. It was reroofed, with a softwood tie-beam roof with king-posts, and arch-braced collars. Tabling is on the nave east wall only. New flooring included tiling the passages and inserting herringbone woodblock, not suspended, beneath the new softwood seating. The chancel west bays were probably given their polychrome tiled surface at the same time. The pews and stalls are of softwood and free-standing; a new altar rail, pulpit and softwood tower screen were fitted. The proposed chase for the vertical flue, from a free-standing stove in the nave, to be cut in the tower south wall, was not undertaken. There has been little further work on the church, apart from some external repointing.

The limestone font is medieval, with a square scalloped bowl, cylindrical stem, and square base, all massive and of 12th century date.

Fig. 1 - Site location and plan showing trenches



3.0 METHODOLOGIES AND RESULTS

3.1. DESCRIPTION OF GROUNDWORKS (FIG. 1)

An electricity cable trench, 0.45 metres wide and averaging 1 metre in depth, was excavated through the churchyard, partly by machine and partly by hand, along the west side of a pre-existing pathway running within a linear depression from the northern entrance into the yard to the north door of the church (Trench 1). Opposite the doorway, the trench turned through 90° to follow the north side of a pre-existing path which occupies a cutting around the north walls of the nave and west tower (Trench 2). This meant that only one edge of each trench cut through previously undisturbed deposits. The sections of these edges were cleaned and recorded on 27 June 2001.

3.2. OBSERVATIONS (FIG. 2)

3.2.1 Trench 1

Beneath a thin turf line lay two discrete areas of topsoil, the relationship between which was difficult to determine. However, it appeared in section that topsoil 1, in the northern half of the trench, which was a dark grey-brown friable clay loam containing approx. 20% small stones, lay beneath topsoil 18 in the southern half. The latter deposit was very similar to 1 but contained building debris including mortar.

Topsoil 1 overlay two discrete areas of crushed slate in the northern half of the trench, layers 2 and 7, both of which may also represent building debris. In addition, a cut feature 5, of unknown nature, also lay beneath 1, and contained a fill of very dark brown loamy clay.

Beneath 7 lay a further area of topsoil-like material 6. This was a deposit of orange-brown clay loam, containing approx. 40% small stones, with the appearance of redeposited subsoil. It overlay a further topsoil-like layer 8, which occupied much of the central area of the trench. Layers 1, 18 and 8 all overlay a further deposit of orange-brown clay loam 11, which contained approximately 40% angular stones and also had the appearance of redeposited subsoil.

All these deposits appeared to post-date the six (or seven) grave cuts (10, 12-17, burials A-E, G-H) which were cut directly through the orange-brown clay loam subsoil 4 and were therefore not marked on the surface. All contained human bone in a matrix of dark grey-brown clay loam, and are described below. A further four burials (F, I-K) were noticed during trench excavation when human bone was recovered, but were not visible in section.

A further cut feature, 9, contained a similar fill but no bone was apparent.

The existing electricity cable obscured the far south end of the trench section.

3.2.2 Trench 2

Only the eastern three-quarters of Trench 2 were recorded. The contractors were still undertaking excavation of the west end during the watching brief.

A distinct turf line was only recognisable at the west end of the recorded section. In the east half, layer 18 lay directly upon the natural subsoil 4. It was cut by an area of ?mortared masonry 19, 0.40 metres wide within a poorly-defined construction trench, of unknown nature. In the west half, 18 overlay a very similar layer 20, which was cut by a grave 21 (burial L) with well-preserved human bone (see below).

A large feature 22, measuring 1.40 metres east-west, was cut through the subsoil, beneath 11, in the eastern half. It had a fill of dark grey brown silty clay loam with much slate and mortar, which again appeared to represent building debris.

3.2.3 The burials

At least 12 discrete burials were noted from the trench sections (burials A - L), seven (or eight) of which occupied distinct grave cuts (graves 10, 12-17 and 21). All were disarticulated and had been disturbed by trench excavation prior to the arrival of the watching archaeologist. However their positions had been carefully noted and the human remains individually retrieved and stored. The remains were subject to only a rapid record, being retained under the auspices of the Vicar of Camrose for reburial within the churchyard.

Burial A (Grave 10) - 4 x skeletal fragments including pelvis, femur and tibia/fibula. Preservation fair-good.

Burial B (Grave 12) - 6 x skeletal fragments including femoral head, tibia/fibula and/or radius/ulna. Preservation fair.

Burial C (Grave 13) - 21 x skeletal fragments including cranium, humeral head, tibia/fibula and radius/ulna. Preservation fair-good.

Burial D (Grave 14) - 9 x skeletal fragments including pelvis, femur, and tibia/fibula. Preservation fair-good.

Burial E (Grave 15) - 10 x skeletal fragments including 2 x femur and tibia/fibula. Preservation good.

Burial F (no recognisable grave cut) - 13 x skeletal fragments including cranium, femoral head, tibia/fibula and/or radius/ulna. Preservation fair.

Burial G (Grave 16) - 3 x skeletal fragments including humerus/femur. Preservation fair.

Burial H (possible grave 17) - 17 x skeletal fragments including cranium, femur, 4 x humerus, ribs, tibia/fibula and/or radius/ulna. Preservation fair.

Burial I (no recognisable grave cut) - 20 x skeletal fragments including cranium, femur and other long bones, carpals and/or tarsals. Preservation poor-fair.

Burial J (no recognisable grave cut) - 16 x skeletal fragments, all long bones. Preservation fair.

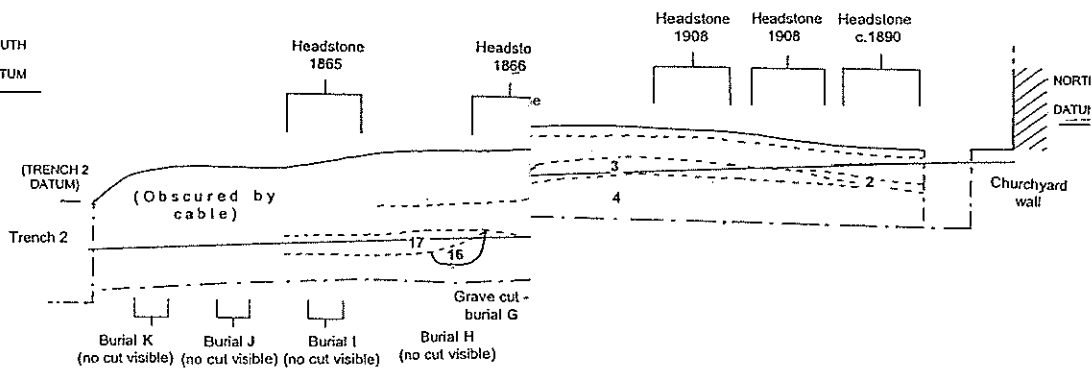
Burial K (no recognisable grave cut) - 25 x skeletal fragments including cranium (almost complete), and long bones. Preservation fair.

Burial L (Grave 21) - Mainly left *in situ*. Well-preserved cranium including intact orbits, maxilla and dentition, and c.30 x other bones including cervical vertebrae and ribs. Preservation good.

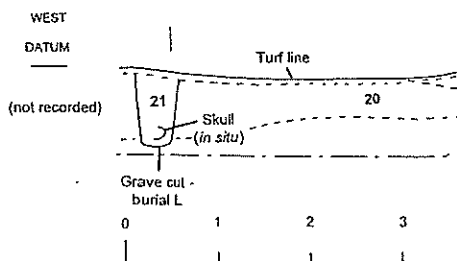
Also contained pelvis and ?femorae of an earlier, ?infant burial.

Fig. 2 - Continuous sections of

Trench 1 -
east facing section



Trench 2 -
south facing section



4.0 DISCUSSION

It appears that the surface of the natural subsoil 4 is an important horizon which represents a distinct chronological break between two phases of churchyard development. As the bases of three grave cuts, 10, 15 and 16, lay only 0.4 metres beneath this horizon, it may be assumed that the surface of 4 was originally higher and that it has been truncated to its present level. It may be significant that the present surface roughly coincides with the level of the present path through the site, and its truncation in this area may be associated with the establishment of the path (but not with its concrete finish).

The path occupies a linear depression, which appears to be secondary, having been caused by the deposition of layers 1-8, 11 and 18 around it. These layers, with the possible exception of 11, may be derived from the levelling of the original northern churchyard boundary bank which can still be seen as a low earthwork, approximately 9 metres wide, lying 8 metres south of the present northern boundary. The date at which this was levelled is not known. The churchyard occupied its present extent by the time of the tithe survey of 1839 (NLW, Camrose parish - Fig. 3), while the present churchyard surface immediately west of the path is cut by a series of graves running from 1865 through to 1953 (a weathered headstone, which has lost its inscription, may be earlier). A further unmarked grave 21, in Trench 2, with the greater depth of 0.9 metres, was also cut through this present horizon.

Fig. 3 - Extract from National Library of Wales, Parish of Camrose, Tithe Map, 1839.



The remainder of the recognisable grave cuts all appear to pre-date the churchyard extension, lying beneath layers 1-8, 11 and 18 (the possible spread boundary bank) and being cut directly through the natural soil. They cannot be closely dated, the grave fills containing no dating evidence in the form of any coffin fixtures and fittings. The burials at the southern end of Trench 1 were less well-preserved than those towards the north and burial L in Trench 2. Burial H (grave 17) appeared to cut burial G (grave 16), while burial L (grave 21) appeared to have disturbed an earlier, ?infant burial. However, bone preservation suggests a date later, rather than earlier, in the post-medieval period for all burials.

Grave orientation does not appear to have been always orthodox. In burial L (grave 21), for example, the skull lay at the east end of the grave cut. Skull fragments also occurred in burial C (grave 13), in burial F, in burial H (possible grave 17) and in burials I and K. However, the latter five burials may have already been truncated by the pathway so that their west ends, rather than their east ends, were visible in the section of Trench 1. Furthermore burials F, H, I and K included fragments of both skull and femorae and at least 4 separate humeri were present in H. All this suggested that these graves had already been disturbed prior to the deposition of the layers above.

The building debris which characterised a number of deposits (2, 7, 18 and 22) may have been derived from any of a number of restorations of the church and cannot be usefully employed in dating the sequence. They all appear to pre-date the major restoration of 1883-4 (see Section 2.3 above), forming part of a body of deposits which are cut by marked graves dating from 1865 onwards.

Plate 1- Trench 1 from the north



Plate 2 – Trench 1 from the south



5.0 THE FINDS

No artefactual material was encountered during the watching brief.

6.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The archive, which will be indexed according to the National Monuments Record (NMR) material categories, is held by Cambria Archaeology, Llandeilo, and contains the following:-

A. Copy of the final report and disk

B. Field notes

G. List of references

J. Final drawings

L. General administrative notes

M. Project correspondence

There is no material for classes **C, D, E, F, H, I, K** and **N**.

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