

# **ST DAVID'S CHURCH PRENDERGAST, HAVERFORDWEST PEMBROKESHIRE**

## **ARCHEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**2003**



Report No. 2003/104

Report Prepared for:  
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PEMBROKESHIRE

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ST DAVID'S CHURCH, PRENDERGAST, HAVERFORDWEST  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

By

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**ST DAVID'S CHURCH, PRENDERGAST, HAVERFORDWEST**

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**REPORT NUMBER 2003/104**

**SEPTEMBER 2003**

This report has been prepared by Pete Crane

Position Senior Archaeologist

Signature ..... Date .....

This report has been checked and approved by Ken Murphy on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,  
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may  
have on the content or presentation of this report

## Summary

A short watching brief was undertaken at St David's Church, Prendergast, Haverfordwest, during drainage work and path replacement. Nothing of great significance was noted; the results are noted here.

## Introduction

Cambria Archaeology were commissioned by the Architect for this project Frans Nicholas, 15 Albany Terrace, St Thomas' Green, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003 to undertake a short watching brief on the ground works being carried out. The main reason for these groundworks was the subsidence of the porch (Photos.1 and 2) on the south side of the church which appeared to have been caused by a broken drain. Other than the tower and parts of the nave, most of this medieval church was rebuilt in the Victorian period. Due to the limited nature of this project it is not intended here to give a description and history of the church, but a copy of Cambria's report by Neil Ludlow for Cadw is included (Appendix 1).

## Method and Results

The site was visited in late afternoon of 7th July. The main path along the south side of the church had been stripped of concrete but no further excavation had taken place. Finds bags were left with the contractor for any stray bones that might subsequently be found. It was agreed that it would only be necessary to inspect the drain trenches when excavated as they were replacing an earlier pipe.

There was no archaeological presence the next day, but Rob Hall of Cadw called in on the site when a 1.5m deep test pit has been machine dug at the front of the porch, apparently all through made up ground. The decision was made to do nothing further with the porch footings and the test pit was backfilled (pers. comm. Frans Nicholas). The porch appears to have splayed footings continuing in line with the splay visible above ground level (Photo 2).

The site was visited on the morning of 9th July; the drain trenches had not been fully excavated and a further visit was made later in the day. The upper part of one femur was retrieved from the skip provided for the broken up path and surplus trench fill. This bone was returned to the churchyard for reburial when the drain trenches were backfilled.

The path on the west side of the tower door (Figure 1) running southwards to the main path across the churchyard had been lifted and a 0.4m wide pipe trench dug down 0.3m to 0.6m deep below the ground surface. Part of three probable grave ledgers had been revealed just to the south of the northern buttress; these had been directly below the concrete of the former path. Only one of these ledgers had an inscription, part of the surface and inscription of this slab had come up with the base of the concrete path. However, it appeared that this inscription had been in poor condition before the concrete path was laid and it was not possible to read it. It is uncertain whether these ledgers were *in situ*. The southernmost buttress on this side of the church appeared to

have little or no footing below ground level. One stray fragment of leg bone was recorded.

On the west side of the porch and running to the SE corner, a shallow pipe trench, c. 0.3m deep, was excavated. A 75mm offset footing was observed on the south of the corner buttress and nave walls, this footing is probably Victorian rather than medieval given the type of mortar. The drain trench on the east side of the porch was deeper, c. 0.65m below ground surface and was tunnelled under one grave slab. Two fragments of skull and one fragment of lower arm/leg were recorded approximately 0.15m down. This drain trench was extended eastwards along the south side of the nave from 0.2m to 0.4m below the concrete surround, to the second buttress along, near which was found one skull fragment and a fragment of lower arm/leg. None of the bones found appeared to be *in situ*.

The drain trench below the main churchyard path ran from just east of the porch to just west of the path on the west end of the church and was dug mainly through the a former storm drain. This trench was about 0.4m wide and from c. 0.65 to 0.75m below the ground surface. A few small fragments of bone were noted on the spoil tip.

It was requested that the bone fragments found should be replaced near to their original location. After consultation it was recommended that the legers on the west side remain in place but be covered with plastic so nothing more adheres to them.

## **Discussion**

It appears that no graves or any other features of archaeological significance were disturbed by this project. However, it would have been advantageous to observe the test pit against the porch enabling a more detailed description of the soils excavated and revealed splayed footings.





**Photo 1: Subsidence crack on east side of porch. View W. Scale 1m**





**Photo 2: Subsidence crack on West side of porch. View E. Scale 1m**

**Proposed Groundworks. Plan supplied by Frans Nicholas**

**Figure 1**



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **ST DAVID, PRENDERGAST, PEMBROKESHIRE (PRESELI)**

**Cambria Archaeology Report by Neil Ludlow for Cadw ©**

**Dyfed PRN 3316**

**RB No. 3098**

**NGR SM 9566 1634**

**Listed Building No. 12039**

**Grade B listed (1998)**

#### **SUMMARY**

Medieval church; 15% pre-19th century core fabric.

A 6-cell church, large. Consists of north-west tower, 4 storeys, medieval. Chancel, 2 bays; nave, 4 bays; north chapel, 2 bays; north aisle, 3 bays; south porch; 1867-8. Boilerhouse (north of tower), 1911. Construction is in sandstone rubble, some limestone in the medieval work. 100% of internal walls are rendered/plastered. Slated gable roofs; the tower roof was not seen. Medieval north-west tower with medieval arch, spiral stair, window, lights and corbelled plain parapet. Chancel arch, arcades, all other windows, south door, south porch door, tower west door, buttresses; all 1867-8.

Roofs and floors: 1867-8. Finishes: 1867-8, 20th century repointing.

Condition - good.

Archaeological potential - good-very good. Church largely (re)built 1867-8; shallow-deep external cutting around 75% of church; all internal levels raised 1867-8; suspended floors in 50% of church; below-ground boilerhouse against 5% of church; no internal crypt/vault evident; no evidence for former components beyond the present church; memorials lie significantly close to 20% of church.

Structural value (pre-19th century) - poor-fair. Largely (re)built 1867-8, 15% pre-19th century core fabric; medieval north-west tower with vault, arch, stair, door, window, lights and parapet; respond for former arcade.

Group value - high. Landmark medieval church with tower, in hilltop location; churchyard with Grade II listed wall and gates; urban amenity value.

#### **Phasing:**

(Phase 1 - Former chancel, nave, north chapel, north aisle, south 'transept' and south porch, 13th-15th century)

Phase 2 - West tower, c.1500.

Phase 3 - Rebuilt 1867-8, apart from north-west tower.

Phase 4 - Boilerhouse, 1911.

## DESCRIPTION

### The present church

St David, Prendergast, is a 6-celled church, of large size. It retains approximately 15% pre-19th century core fabric, confined to the west tower.

The present church consists of a 2-bayed chancel, a wider 4-bayed nave, a 2 bayed north chapel of the same length and width as the chancel, a 3-bayed north aisle of the same width as the chapel, a 4 storey tower west of the aisle and north of the nave east bay, and a south porch. All except the tower was (re)built in 1867-8. There is also a below-ground boilerhouse against the tower north wall, from 1911.

The medieval construction is in medium-sized limestone and sandstone rubble, unsquared and uncoursed, with crude quoins; fair pointing from the 20th century; internal plaster/render, 1867-8. The 1867-8 facework is roughly squared and coursed sandstone rubble, some limestone, with good 1862-76 pointing and limited 20th century repointing; internal render/plaster, 1867-8. Roofs are slated gables, the nave and north aisle roofed at a higher level; the west tower roof was not seen but is believed to be pyramidal and leaded.

The church was almost entirely rebuilt in 1867-8, not on the existing foundations but to a larger, if similar plan; all floor levels were also raised. The 4-storeyed tower was the only component retained from the medieval church. It occupies a position between the nave west bay north wall and the east end of the north aisle, reflecting its position in the pre-1867 church; it was thus a later component of the pre-1867 church. There was originally no west door. Stylistically, the tower belongs to c.1500; it is slightly tapered but lacks the projecting spiral stair turret, basal batter and string-course characteristic of the region. The spiral stair instead occupies a curved internal projection into the north-west corner and is entered from the ground floor through a doorway with a depressed 2-centred surround from 1867-8 and is lit by simple slit-lights. The ground floor has a depressed 2-centred barrel-vault of c.1500, pierced (secondarily?) for a single bellrope, and opens to the north aisle through an arch reflecting the vault profile. The floor has been raised, but is lower than in the aisle, and is limestone-flagged, pre-1867? re-used?. There is a window in the west wall of 3 cusped lights with Perpendicular tracery in a 2-centred oolite surround and drip-mould, all c.1500; a 2-centred doorway was inserted beneath the window in 1867-8 interrupting its sill. The second and third stages are divided by an external plain granite string-course, c.1500, and are lit by single square loops in the north and west walls. The belfry stage is entered from the stair through a 'fine early curved arched entrance' (Nicholas, 1997, 4), not seen 17/1/1998. The east and south walls have 2-light openings with square heads in segmental outer arches, partly rebuilt but with mullions from c.1500; the north and west walls have similar openings but single-light. The parapet lies on a continuous plain corbel table, c.1500, and is not crenellated; much of it was rebuilt in 1876 (Pembs. R. O., HPR/71/8). The tower is in good condition, and has been repointed during the 20th century.

The south-east corner of the tower displays part of the western respond for the medieval arcade between the pre-1867 nave and north aisle, in the form of a chamfered stop of probable 15th century date.

The chancel is all from 1867-8. The east wall is divided from the north chapel east wall by an external stepped buttress. The east window is of 3 cusped lights, with a hexafoil-pierced spandrel beneath a 2-centred surround, in oolite. The 2 south windows is similar, but 2-light and trefoil-pierced; they are separated by a buttress similar to that on the east wall but with a basal batter and string-course. The north wall is a 2-bayed arcade into the north chapel, of moulded 2-centred arches on a cylindrical polychrome pier with a square base and plain capital. The 2-centred chancel arch is moulded. There is a softwood 'wagon-roof' ceiling and external weather tabling. The floor is tiled. The altar rail is from 1867-8. The elaborate reredos with a marble frieze is dated 1894. The panelling either side, the altar table, and the free-standing oak-panelled stalls and desks, are later 20th century.

The nave is divided from the north aisle by a 3-bay arcade similar to that between the chancel and chapel, but with octagonal piers; the westernmost stop is medieval (see above). The south wall is pierced by three 2-light windows with trefoil-pierced spandrels, with squared oolite surrounds in 2-centred openings; the eastern 2 are separated by an external buttress like that on the chancel south wall, and there are similar buttresses at all external corners of the nave. The west window is of 3 lancets each with a cusped head and a trefoil above; a quatrefoil opening lights the roof space. The south door has a moulded, 2-centred surround. The oak nave roof has collar-rafter trusses, with king- and princess-posts, arch braced from moulded wall-corbels; the exterior has weather tabling. The passages are tiled, with suspended board floors. The nave is seated with softwood pews; the oolite pulpit may be later than 1867-8.

The north chapel has an external basal batter and string-course. The east wall is pierced by a single cusped lancet, while the north wall exhibits 2 windows and a buttress as in the chancel side wall. The chapel opens to the north aisle through a moulded 2-centred arch similar to the chancel arch. It is roofed in softwood, all common rafters having scissors-braces arch-braced from simple wall-corbels; the exterior has weather tabling. Floored as the chancel?, but beneath superficial floor-boarding. A low softwood screen divides the east bay from the chancel, while the west bay is largely occupied by an organ dated 1874. The altar table, altar rail and credence table are 20th century.

The north aisle has a batter and string-course like the chapel, and is buttressed at the east and west ends like the nave. It is lit by 3 windows in the north wall, the eastern 2 as the chancel south wall windows, the western a single light as in the north chapel. A square, moulded chimney emerges from the western buttress, with a pyramidal cap and smoke-vents. The softwood roof is supported by tie-beams on plain wall-corbels, with crown-posts and a crown-plate, from which the common rafters are braced. Floored and seated as the nave, the west bay with an inserted, enclosed and ceiled vestry from 1978, all in softwood.

The south porch also has a batter and string-course. The doorway has a 2-centred head. The softwood roof is of collared common rafters. The floor-tiles may be re-used from the earlier church, earlier 19th century?.

A shallow-deep external earth-cut cutting runs around the eastern three-quarters of the church, excavated 1867-8 when the church was rebuilt. All floor levels were raised when the church was rebuilt. There are suspended floors in the nave and north aisle. The boilerhouse against the tower north wall is below-ground. No internal crypt/vault is evident. There is no evidence for former components beyond the present church walls. Memorials lie significantly close to the south-west quarter and west walls.

## **Structural development**

The form of the pre-rebuild church can be reconstructed from the sources. In 1833 it was described by Samuel Lewis as 'an ancient and venerable structure, in the early style of English architecture' (see below), 'and in good repair', fulsome praise indeed for one of the more dismissive of contemporary commentators (Lewis, 1833). All these factors did not, unfortunately, prevent its demolition and rebuild in 1867. The Faculty submission for the rebuild (NLW, SD/F/564) does, on the other hand, contain a detailed plan of the existing church. It occupied approximately four-fifths of the area of the present church and was very similar in plan, comprising a 2-bayed chancel, a wider 3-bayed nave, a 5-bayed north aisle of the same length as the nave and chancel, a south porch and the present west tower. The tower occupied the same position as at present within the arrangements, ie. it lay at the west end of the north aisle which, however, does not appear to have been a former nave and chancel; the tower partially intruded into the aisle, but projected westwards from it to a far greater degree than at present. The church was only entered from the south. There was a short south transept lit by a 3-light window in the south wall, possibly representing a rood-loft stair bay rather than a transept proper. There was a chancel arch, and a second transverse arch in the centre of the north aisle suggesting the former presence of a north transept, or an extended north chapel. The arcade was of broad, chamfered piers. The church was well fenestrated with 2- and 3-light windows, apparently with stone surrounds and possibly all medieval. It was seated throughout with box-pews, and there was a triple-decker pulpit in the south transept. None of the components extended beyond the present walls, with the exception of the south-east corner of the south porch.

The proposed demolition did arouse contemporary concern, and a member of the Cambrian Archaeological Association called it to public attention; the architectural features were described as 15th century in the account (Anon., 1869, 202-3). However, the demolition and rebuild went ahead, to the plans of Foster & Wood, Architects, of Bristol (NLW, SD/F/564), and for an estimated cost of £1900, a massive sum for the day.

The below-ground boilerhouse against the tower north wall has brick walls, rendered where they rise slightly above yard level. It is entered from the west down a flight of 8 concrete steps to a concrete-lintelled door. The lean-to roof is almost flat, and now with a polymer-resin finish. The heating apparatus may still be present, functional?. The boilerhouse was built in 1911 (NLW, SD/F/565) but the chimney in the adjacent aisle buttress suggests that some form of heating arrangement was present from 1867-8; 'new stove pipes' were fitted in 1882 (Pembs. R. O., HPR/71/7), while coke was a frequent purchase (Pembs. R. O., HPR/71/8), and probably a free-standing stove is referred to.

The oolite font, with a square scalloped bowl, cylindrical stem and square base, is apparently medieval but has been 'redressed and spoilt' (RCAHM, 1925, 298).

The church was Grade B listed in 1998.

## **SITE HISTORY**

There some evidence for the pre-conquest religious use of the site - Celtic dedication.

St David, Prendergast, was a parish church during the post-conquest period, of the medieval Deanery of Rhos (Rees, 1932). It was granted to the Knights Hospitaller of Slebech Commandery by Wizo, Lord of Wiston, his son Walter and grandson, also Walter, c.1130 (Green, 1913, 246), a grant confirmed in c.1165 in which it was termed 'the church of St David of the vill of Prendelgaste' (Rees, 1897, 214-5). There was no separate valuation of the church in the 'Taxatio' of 1291 but in 1536 the rectory of Prendergast had an annual value of £9 14s 9d, for tenths of 19s 5d (Green, op. cit.).

At the dissolution Slebech Commandery, and all its appurtenances including the Prendergast rectory, fell to King Henry VIII, and was to remain in royal hands. In 1786 the discharged rectory, of the Archdeaconry of St Davids, had an annual value of £28 (£50) rated in king's books at £9 14s 9d (ibid.). By 1833 the living was endowed with £200 royal bounty (Lewis, 1833).

In 1998 St David, Prendergast, was a parish church. The living was a rectory, held with Rudbaxton (Benefice 601), in the Archdeaconry of St Davids, Rural Deanery of Daugleddau (St Davids, 1997-8).

**N. D. Ludlow, *Archaeoleg CAMBRIA Archaeology*,  
March 1998**

## **SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **Map Evidence**

NLW, Ordnance Survey 1:2500, Second Edition, Sheet XXVII.8, 1907.

NLW, Parish of Prendergast, Tithe Map, 1842.

Rees, W., 1932, South Wales and the Border in the XIVth century.



## **Church in Wales Records**

Nicholas, F., 1997, Quinquennial Report, Prendergast.

St Davids, 1997-8, Diocesan Year Book.

NLW, SD/F/564 - Faculty, pulling down and rebuilding, 1867.

NLW, SD/F/565 - Faculty, heating apparatus, 1911.

NLW, SD/F/566 - Faculty, appropriating grave, 1913.

NLW, SD/F/567 - Faculty, appropriating grave, 1917.

NLW, SD/F/568 - Faculty, installing electric light, 1926.

NLW, SD/F/569 - Faculty, 2 stained glass windows, 1929.

## **Parish Records, Pembrokeshire Record Office, Haverfordwest**

HPR/71 - Prendergast:-

HPR/71/6 - Vestry Minute Book, 1835-47.

HPR/71/7 - Vestry Minute Book and Churchwarden's Accounts, 1854-97.

HPR/71/8 - Vestry Minute Book and Churchwarden's Accounts, 1898-1918.

## **Printed Accounts**

A. Gordon Partnership, 1993, Redundant Religious Buildings in West Wales.

Anon., 1866, 'The Hollands of Conway', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. XII, Third Series.

Anon., 1869, 'Miscellaneous Notices', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. XV, Third Series.

Crossley, F. H., and Ridgway, M. H., 1957, 'Screens, Lofts and Stalls situated in Wales and Monmouthshire: Part 8', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. CVI.

Green, F., 1913, 'Pembrokeshire Parsons', West Wales Historical Records Vol. III.

Lewis, S., 1833, A Topographical Dictionary of Wales.

Phillips, J., 1898, 'Haverfordwest', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. XV, Fifth Series.

RCAHM, 1925, Inventory: Pembrokeshire.

Rees, J. R., 1897, 'Slebech Commandery and the Knights of St John: Part I', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. XIV, Fifth Series.

Rees, J. R., 1899, 'Slebech Commandery and the Knights of St John: Part II', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. XVI, Fifth Series.

Salter, M., 1994, The Old Parish Churches of South West Wales.

Welsh Office, 1974, Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Haverfordwest).

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Photo record**

201 East side of porch after removal of concrete path, but before removal of any further excavation. View NW. Scale 1m

202 E-W trench as excavated in front of the porch. View WNW. Scale 1m

203 E-W trench as excavated in front of the porch. View E. Scale 1m

204 N-S trench as excavated at west end. View N. Scale 1m

205 Grave slabs at west end. View E. Scale 0.5m

206 Detail of lifted surface of S. slab inscription. View E. Scale 1m

207 Detail of lifted surface of S grave slab on bottom of concrete path. Scale 0.5m

208 General view of St David's church. View NNE

209 General view of St David's church. View NW

210 General view of St David's church. View NW

211 E side of porch showing subsidence cracks. View W. Scale 1m

212 W side of porch showing subsidence cracks. View E. Scale 1m

## APPENDIX 3

### : CATALOGUE OF WATCHING BRIEF ARCHIVE

The project archive has been indexed and catalogued according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories and contains the following:

- A. Copy of final report.
- B. Site records, including context record sheets and site notebook.
- C. Drawing catalogue and site drawings.
- D. Site photographs - catalogue, digital.
- E. Finds catalogue, individual finds record and finds report.
- G. List of references, including primary and secondary sources.
- I. Archive report and draft copies of final report.
- J. Publication drawings.
- M. Miscellaneous correspondence.

There is no material in categories C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M and N.

The archive is currently held by Archaeoleg **Cambria** Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, as project number 49170.