

CARMARTHEN RESURFACING WORK TRIAL TRENCH 2004

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2004/76
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 51530



Paratowyd gan Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer Jones Brothers Henllan Ltd
Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Jones Brothers Henllan Ltd



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Gan / By

Pete Crane BA Hons MIFA

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by Pete Crane

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Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau sydd gennych ar
gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn
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 small-scale archaeological investigation located probable Roman road make up and possible workshop activity at Carmarthen, during road resurfacing work, within the site of the Roman town of *Moridunum*. These Roman period deposits are not far below the modern surface.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Pete Crane, Project Manager, Cambria Archaeology Field Operations. The fieldwork was carried out by Tom Jamieson and Pete Crane. Fraser Gardiner, site engineer for W S Atkins, kindly provided photographs of the tree hole excavated by the Toyota garage and made this project possible. Heather James visited the project and supplied much background information.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project commission

Following a brief site meeting, Cambria Archaeology were commissioned on 27th July 2004 by Fraser Gardiner on behalf of Jones Brothers, Henllan Ltd, who were undertaking road re-surfacing work in eastern Carmarthen.

1.2 Scope of project

The submitted outline of the resurfacing project indicated that groundworks would only be going down c. 300mm below the ground surface; therefore there were no archaeological constraints on this project and no watching brief took place during groundworks. However, the opportunity arose within the work programme to excavate a test trench on the north side of St Peter's churchyard wall. Due to the limited nature of the archaeological investigations and results a full history and topographic description of the area is not given. For further detailed information consult the recent publication by Heather James (2003).

1.3 Report outline

This report describes the physical environment of the site (Section 2) before summarising the results (Section 3) and the conclusions (Section 4), based on the results of Sections 2 and 3. Supporting data, including detailed records of the project, are given in the appendices.

1.4 Abbreviations

Sites recorded on the regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

Archaeological features and contexts are referred to using the continuous three-figure numbering system (e.g. 001) employed by Cambria Archaeology Field Section.

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location

The location of the test trench was on the north side of St Peter's Churchyard north wall (NGR SN4169820401) and in the southern half of St Peter's Street (Figure 1), approximately 6.5m east of the line of the east wall of No 3 St Peter's Street. This location is to become a covered paved area opposite the entrance to St Peter's Car Park.

In addition, visits were made to examine holes excavated for tree planting.

2.2 Historical Summary

There is no evidence for pre-Roman settlement in Carmarthen. The Roman Fort of *Moridunum* (the name meaning 'sea-fort') appears to have been established between the line of King Street and the flood plain to the south, and to the west of St Peter's Church. This fort would have been established AD 74-77 and the military roads would have first been constructed at about the same time. The main connecting roads

ran from Llandeilo Fort, to the east and westwards towards Whitland; this road has now been traced as far as mid Pembrokeshire. In Carmarthen this Roman Road ran approximately along the line of Priory Street and, indeed, its remains have been observed below the current St Peter's Street. It probably continued on the same alignment to the west before turning along the route of Lammas Street.

The Roman town was established to the east of the Fort, and is likely to have been on the site of the *vicus* (the native civilian settlement which grew up adjacent to such forts), although evidence for this early occupation is scarce. The military road appears to have formed the central east-west route through the town. The dating for the creation of the formal town is uncertain, probably between AD120-150, with the suggestion that at least two of the minor roads in the town are being developed c. AD130, with the buildings around them starting nearer AD150.

The town was established as a *civitas* or tribal administrative centre for the *Demetae*, the local British population and appears to have been provincial in appearance, with none of the finely constructed buildings seen at Wroxeter and Verulamium. Most of the buildings at *Moridunum* were built of 'clom' (rammed earth construction and rendered) and many of these appear to have had thatched roofs. The town did have a surrounding defence of earth and timber, constructed in the late 2nd century. These defences comprised a substantial clay bank, revetted with turfs and fronted by a triple ditch system. These defences were subsequently remodelled and enlarged during the 3rd century with the construction of a stonewall, fronted by a new wide ditch. Moreover, the construction of the amphitheatre, which may have been able to seat 4000 to 5000 people (Little 1971), points to a town of some status or pretensions.

As with the rest of Roman towns in Britain, in the 300s they were already in decline, retaining their administrative functions but losing a large amount of urban activity. The evidence immediately after the Roman period (AD 410) for this town is very small; there are suggestions that it may have retained a Christian community, but was no longer functioning as a town. The town was re-established after the Norman Conquest and was located around the Norman castle. The former area of the Roman Town (Old Carmarthen), belonged then to the Priory to the east, and had little occupation, the remains of the Roman roads and ruins being robbed for building material. It is not until the later post-medieval period that any amount of occupation of the Old Carmarthen area takes place. Much of this area remains undeveloped to this day and is a valuable archaeological resource. Reflecting this importance, a large part of the northern Roman town was scheduled in 1988 (Cm. 234), including the remaining garden areas (Cm 235). The defences on the southeast side of the Roman town were scheduled in 1990 (Cm 243).

3. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

3.1 Test Trench, St Peter's Street (SN4169520400)

On 23rd July the curved area for the new pavement had already been machined, removing the modern road and make-up along with the pavement surface. This area was then brushed clean (Photo, front cover). This cleaning revealed stripped deposits running along the line of the road. After consultation with Lucy Bourne, then Development Control Officer with Heritage Management, Cambria Archaeology, it was agreed that a trial trench should be dug at a right angle across the deposits. A trench 1m wide by 3m long and starting 0.9m out from the churchyard wall, was dug by hand because of the number of live services present.

The earliest layer (106)(Figure 2) was pale brownish yellow compact silty clay and probably was redeposited natural. Above this there was a layer (105)(Figure 2 and Photo 1) or similar layers or lenses of dirty sandy gravel, including a patch of soil that was possibly re-deposited turf. Above this was a very clean and compact orange brown slightly sandy silt clay (104) with charcoal flecks in the upper part, which may be the result of root or worm action. Very similar to this layer (104) and possibly the same, was another layer (115) separated by later features. Although all of these layers seem to be very natural in appearance, given the heights of known artificial deposits in the vicinity, observed within St Peter's Church (excavated by the author) and a gas pipe trench (Heather James pers. comm.), they are probably mainly composed of redeposited natural sub-soils. The most likely interpretation is that these are make-up layers for a Roman road, the Roman road surface having either been robbed or truncated by later activity.

The layer (103) above these "Roman road make-up layers" was mid brown clay silt with sub angular stones - possibly make-up for more modern or even the present road surface. Above this (103) there was a mid grey layer (102) with 80% sharp angular stones, which is a sub-base for the current road.

Nearly all of the southern part of the trench encountered modern cuts for services (Figure 2 and Photo 2)(107; 109 and 113) and their fills (108; 110; 111; 112 and 114). Pipes were observed in 108 and 114, and an electricity cable, possibly for street lighting, just in the southern edge of our trench.

3.2 Tree Hole, Toyota Garage, Priory Street

A call was received on 29th July that a hole excavated for tree planting had encountered the possible remains of a Roman road. Unfortunately the hole had already been lined with concrete before our arrival. The photograph kindly supplied by Fraser Gardener shows a red layer (Photo 3) some 180mm thick and about 600mm below the pavement surface. This layer maybe the remains of a Roman road, but appears to be more like a heat-affected layer, possibly the remains of a workshop. However, without inspection conclusions are speculative.

3.3 Additional Tree Hole, Priory Street (SN4149520235)

We were made aware of the excavation of another tree hole being dug on 3rd August. This only encountered modern services and no visit was made.

3.4 Sump Hole, on corner between King and Church Streets (SN4147520215)

A hole was excavated for a sump and reportedly encountered a wall, or wall footings, of red sandstone, found about 0.6m below the surface. This structure is likely to be of medieval date and not Roman (Photo 4). This was not visited during the archaeological work

4. CONCLUSIONS

The trial trench in St Peter's Street indicates probable Roman road make-up. The upper part of this was less than 400mm below the modern road surface. The tree hole by the Toyota garage indicates a layer that is probably of Roman date, some 600mm below the pavement surface. The results of these small investigations and those elsewhere show that within the area of the Roman town archeologically important layers have been encountered from just over 300mm down. Service trenches certainly cut into these layers and have disturbed a proportion of the underlying archaeology within the modern road and pavement areas.

APPENDIX ONE: DETAILED RECORDS OF TEST TRENCH

Record Number

Context records

- 101 Finds from cleaning area, unstratified
- 102 Layer. Modern
- 103 Layer. Modern
- 104 Layer. Roman?
- 105 Layer. Roman?
- 106 Layer. Roman?
- 107 Pipe Trench. Modern
- 108 Fill. Modern
- 109 Cut. Modern
- 110 Fill. Modern
- 111 Fill. Modern
- 112 Fill. Modern
- 113 Pipe Trench. Modern
- 114 Fill. Modern
- 115 Layer Roman

Drawings

- 401 Plan pre-excavation of trench
- 402 Section N-S of trench

Photographs. Black and White and Digital

- 1296 Tree Hole, by Toyota Garage, Priory Street. © Fraser Gardener
- 1297 Tree Hole detail, by Toyota Garage, Priory Street. © Fraser Gardener
- 1759 As machined, view W
- 1760 Central area brushed, view W, scale 1m & 1m
- 1761 N-S section, northern part, view E, scale 1m & 1m
- 1762 N-S section, view E, scale 1m and 1m
- 1763 W-E section at north end of trench, view N, scale 1m & 1m

APPENDIX TWO: CATALOGUE OF TEST TRENCH 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 and B/W prints.
- G. List of references, including primary and secondary sources.
- M. Miscellaneous correspondence.

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

The archive is currently held by Archaeoleg **Cambria** Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, as project number 51530.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

James H 2003 *Roman Carmarthen, Excavations 1978-1993*. London: British Monograph Series No. 20

Little J H 1971 "The Carmarthen Amphitheatre", *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 7, 58-63

Figure 1: Location

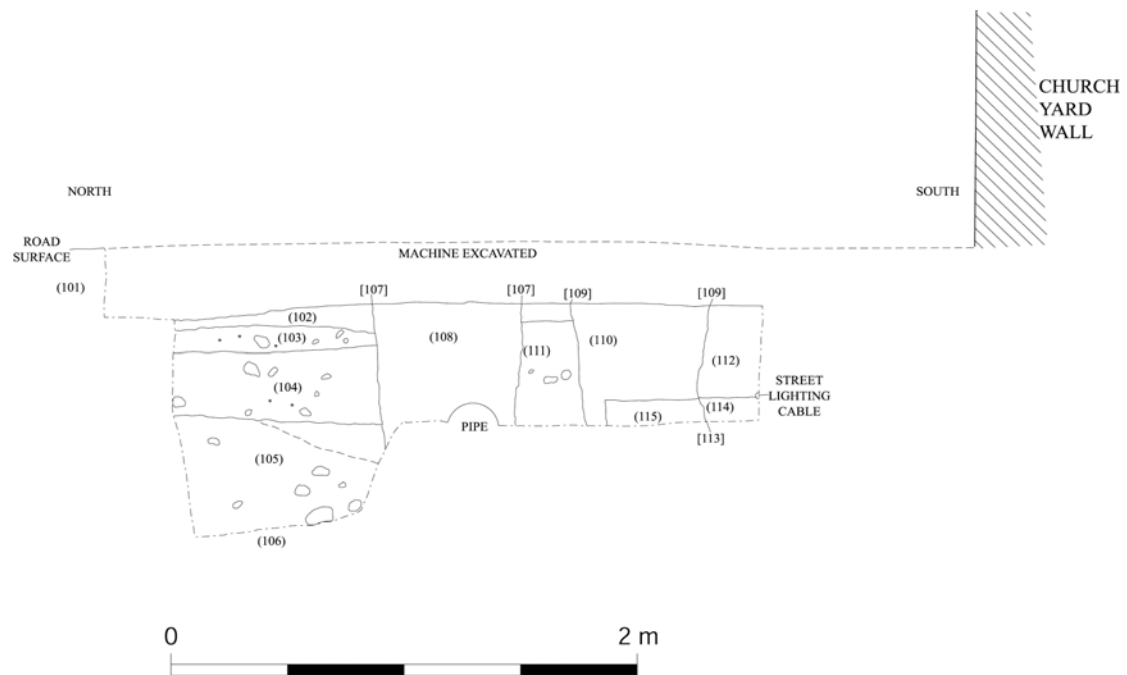


Figure 2: Trial Trench Section



**Photo 1: North end of trial trench with probable Roman road make-up. View E.
Scales 1m**



Photo 2: Trial trench with service trench cuts on right side. View E. Scales 1m



Photo 3: Tree hole, possible road indicated by red layer. © Fraser Gardiner



Photo 3: Sump hole, possible medieval wall footing. © Fraser Gardiner

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