

# 14 AND 15 CHURCH STREET NARBERTH PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
2005-2006



Paratowyd gan: Archaeoleg Cambria  
Ar gyfer: Cadw  
Prepared by: Cambria Archaeology  
For: Cadw



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Ionawr 2006  
January 2006

### **14 AND 15 CHURCH STREET, NARBERTH, PEMBROKESHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

Gan / By

**Pete Crane BA Hons MIFA**

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*Cover: 14 and 15 Church Street, frontage before development, view east*

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## ***RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2006/1***

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan:  
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ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.  
on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw  
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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/recording programme was undertaken following the excavation of footing trenches for a new house/studio at 14 and 15 Church Street, Narberth, within the area of the medieval town. Part of a linear pit or trackway was encountered, although this feature may have its origins in the medieval period, a later date is more likely. No other significant archaeological features were found.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Cambria Archaeology-Heritage Management, as advisors to Pembrokeshire County Council Planning Department, identified potential impacts on the archaeological resource during groundworks on a proposed studio/workshop and first floor residential accommodation at 14 and 15 Church Street, Narberth, Pembrokeshire. An archaeological condition was therefore requested in relation to Planning Application 04/1159/ PA, centred on grid reference SN 10900/14469. However, due to an oversight in the planning procedure no such condition was applied to this development.

With the assistance of the planning officer it was possible for for a visual inspection by Charles Hill, Cambria Archaeology's Planning Officer to visit the site in late spring. At least three periods of stonewalling were identified along with part of a rear doorjamb, utilising a re-used stone, which may have come from the castle. A dark earth deposit was also identified at the rear of the building.

Subsequently an application was made to Cadw to fund site recording and reporting. Pete Crane, senior archaeologist, of Cambria Archaeology Field Operations undertook this project.

## **LOCATION**

The site of former houses of 14 and 15 Church Street is located halfway along the road on the southwest side. The ground at the rear, southeast, of the plot(s) is now terraced but would have sloped very steeply down. The houses had been demolished many years previously and the area used as a builder's yard with sheds. However, the front walls of the houses remained, although these had been reduced to ground floor height, the windows blocked and a small modern infill made with the gable end wall of No 16 to the northeast. Concrete rafts for the rear wall of number 15 partly remained as a buttress for No. 16 (Fig. 2). Footing trenches for the new development had already been excavated at the time of the recording, with the eastern corner dug down over one metre where softer infill had been encountered. Elsewhere the footing trenches were shallower, down mostly onto natural shale subsoil. The geology here is shales and mudstone (Ordovician).

## **HISTORY**

Given the limited scope and results of this project it is not intended here to provide a detailed historical account. Should more information be required see Heather James' report: *Narberth, a Topographical and History Survey* (James 1992). Historic detail provided here is taken from James 1992.

Church Street lies within the medieval area of the small town of Narberth. A short watching brief was undertaken 80m to the north of 14 and 15 Church Street on the site of a former Bottling Yard. Only a limited amount of trenches were observed on this site, with negative results and no formal report was submitted. However, excavation on the entrance to Narberth Castle encountered a number of burials (Murphy and Crane 2002, Jameison 2003). A radiocarbon date obtained from one of these burials was AD 1047 to 1264 (at 95% probability). This cemetery may have been abandoned when Rodger Mortimer rebuilt the castle in stone and perhaps granted a new plot of land for St Andrews Church (Jamison, Ludlow and Courtney 2003), which was first recorded in 1291 (Ludlow 2003).

It is likely that there were buildings on the south side of Church Street during the medieval period. However, it is also likely that the town contracted in the later medieval period as when the mansion of Plâs Farm was built in the early 1500s, at the western end of Church Street opposite the church, it seems that there were few adjacent houses, and possibly none on the south side of the street. The extant houses on the south side of Church Street are probably later than early 1700's, but are in existence by 1835 (James 1992, maps on 22 and 29).

Due to the lack of good building stone around Narberth it is likely that all but the most medieval houses were built of either of timber or clom (rammed earth) and therefore below ground remains are likely to be slight. Thus, given the shaley subsoil and the lack of methodological archaeological excavation, it is not surprising that no medieval town buildings have been discovered.

## **METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

The owner had already excavated trenches for the rear footings of the new building. The soft soil had been removed from the site, but a large number of china and clay pipe fragments had been left beside the rear trench. The concrete rafts, for the builder's sheds were still intact (Photo 1).

Three days were spent on site by one archaeologist, starting on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2005. The artefacts by the side of the trenches mostly dated from the 1800s and none of the clay pipe bowls appeared earlier than that. None of the pottery was of medieval date. These finds were discarded.

Following archaeological cleaning, a rapid 1:50 plan was made of the whole area (Fig. 2). All of the exposed sections were drawn (Fig. 3-5). Two further brief visits were made on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2005, after the concrete raft was lifted and further footing trenches were cut towards the frontage.

The stub of the rear wall to the properties of 14 and 15 Church Street (129) were uncovered and found to be of clay bonded construction (Fig. 2). The buttress opposite (115), to the southeast, was uncovered later, and was of similar construction technique - this is the other end of the rear wall. There was no indication of where any doorways had been in this rear wall, as the remainder had been removed. The front wall had been much altered but is likely to be of the same date and construction as the rear wall (129).

Were the rear trench footing had encountered softer material, it had been excavated to a greater depth of up to 1.2m. This softer material was the fill of a linear feature or large linear pit (cut 113), which ran at an angle to the rear of the buildings and road (Fig. 2). It is probable that this feature may have continued with its northern edge being observed below the gable wall of the property to the southeast (Photo. 2). However this cut below the gable end could be the edge of the hill-slope; but this is considered unlikely.

The lower fill 114 in cut 113 (Fig. 3) was compact and contained no coal fragments, unlike those fills above. This fill predated the footings of the wall 115 of the house before it was extended, but no artefacts were recovered: this fill is probably primary and not deliberate infilling.

The fill above (112) produced: a one jug handle 17-18<sup>th</sup> century, 2 pottery sherds of probable North Devon Gravel Tempered Ware of late 17-18<sup>th</sup> century date, 1 un-diagnostic pottery sherd, one fragment of post medieval tile, and one fragment of thin window glass. This fill (112) is probably the same as the lowest fill 126 seen in the section of the rear trench (Fig. 4). The fills 125, 124 and possibly 121 were all deposited before the building of the house rear extension wall (110). This wall footing (110) was constructed with lime mortar bonding in a narrow trench - contexts 111 (Fig. 3) and 126 (Fig. 4). This construction trench was in-filled (109 and 126) before the house interior was in-filled (105-108). From one of the in-fills (106) there was 1 sherd of late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century transfer printed china plus 1 plain sherd. Above the in-fills there was a pitched cobble floor 104. The surviving layers above this, 101-103, were all of late 20<sup>th</sup> century date after the houses were demolished.

In the rear extension wall (110) were the remains of a doorway that contained a probable re-used stone (Fig. 5). This later rear of the building possibly doglegged with a right angle wall 127 of lime-mortared construction, which probably joined with the rear wall 128 (Fig. 2), the rear line of which had probably been removed by the new footing trench, although it may have been robbed earlier. Of interest was a possible gully (Fig. 2) about 1.5m in from the remaining stub of 128 and almost certainly pre-dating this wall.

Outside the rear of the building a hollow - the top of pit 113 - was filled in with two distinct layers (119 and 120) of coal ash and soil, although there were a number of lenses within these. Above this was topsoil and turf (116), which was cut or disturbed by a few modern features, including a possible gully (118) from an eaves drip.

### **INTERPRETATION**

No definite evidence of medieval activity was found on the site. A gully towards the southwest was undated and could be medieval, but a post-medieval date is more likely. The large linear feature (113) predates the post-medieval houses on the south side of Church Street, but the pottery within it is 17-18<sup>th</sup> century. The best interpretation for this feature is that of a partly sunken path, possibly a shot cut from the mansion of Plâs Farm to the north-south road beside the castle. This path would have gone out of use as soon as the houses on the south side were built, probably in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, it was still an open feature when the first phase of the house or houses at No 14 and 15 were constructed, and may have provided rear access. When the back extension was erected, sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or very earliest 20<sup>th</sup> centuries path hollow was filled in immediately within the building, prior to being floored, and outside filled in soon after with domestic deposits, mostly of coal ash. The quality of the artefacts indicate that the occupants in the 19th century were not wealthy.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

No evidence was found for structures pre-dating the last houses on the site. It is possible that any such evidence was removed along the frontage when those houses were built. It is probable that an early post-medieval pathway was discovered.

Little archaeological work, other than that in the castle has been undertaken. It is likely that any medieval remains in the town are likely to be relatively ephemeral, being either of timber or clom construction. The recognition of these is likely to be hampered by the shaley subsoil. Therefore it is recommended that if there are archaeological constraints on developments in Narberth that the ground is cleared under archaeological supervision.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks are due to Eve Armstrong, owner and developer and to Steve Underhill, builder.

### **SOURCES**

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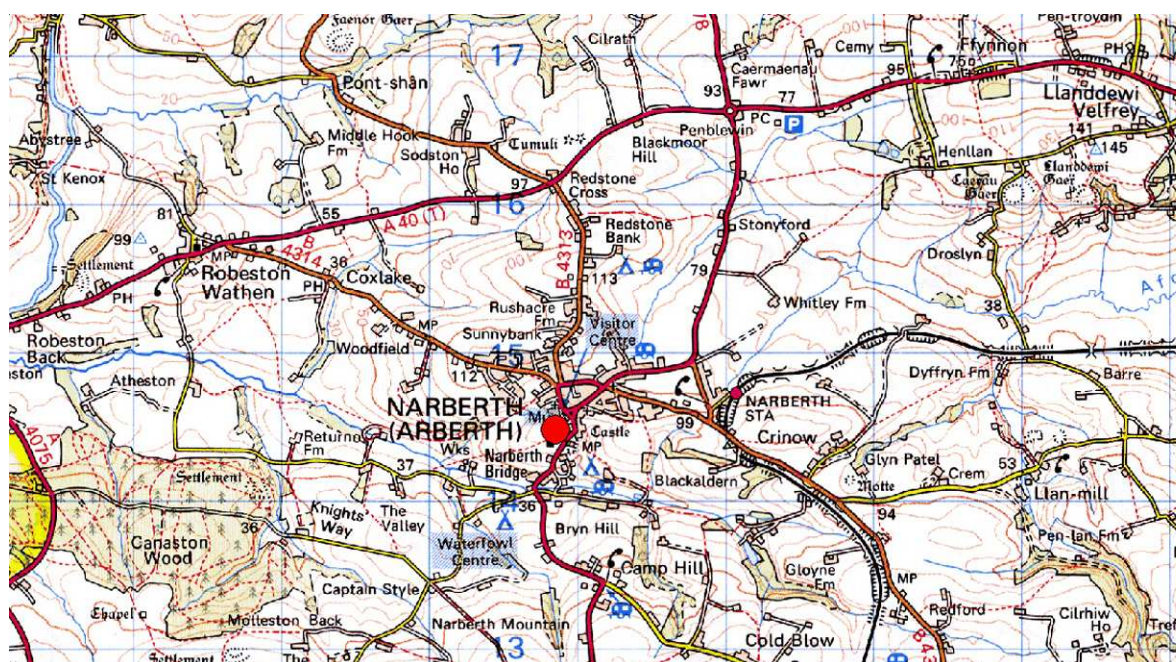
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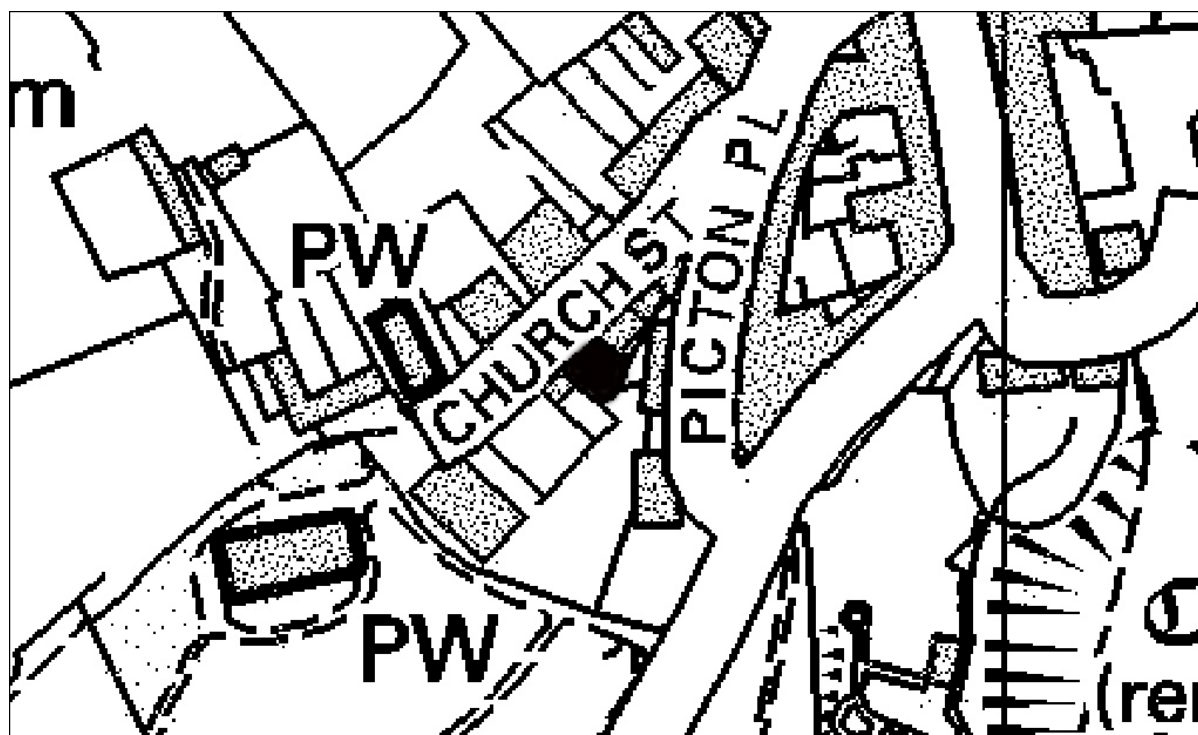
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**Figure 1: Location of 14 and 15 Church Street Narberth**

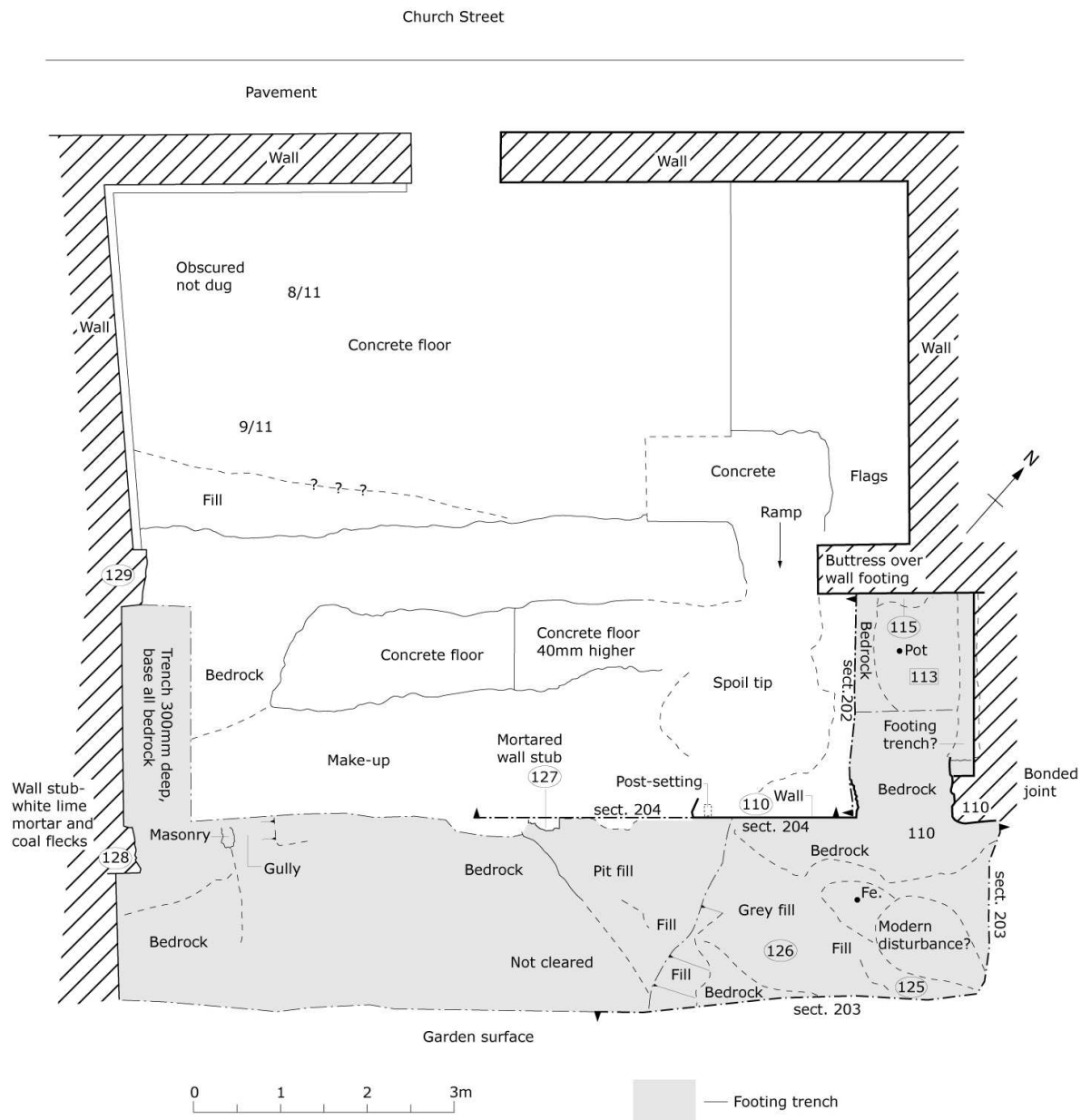


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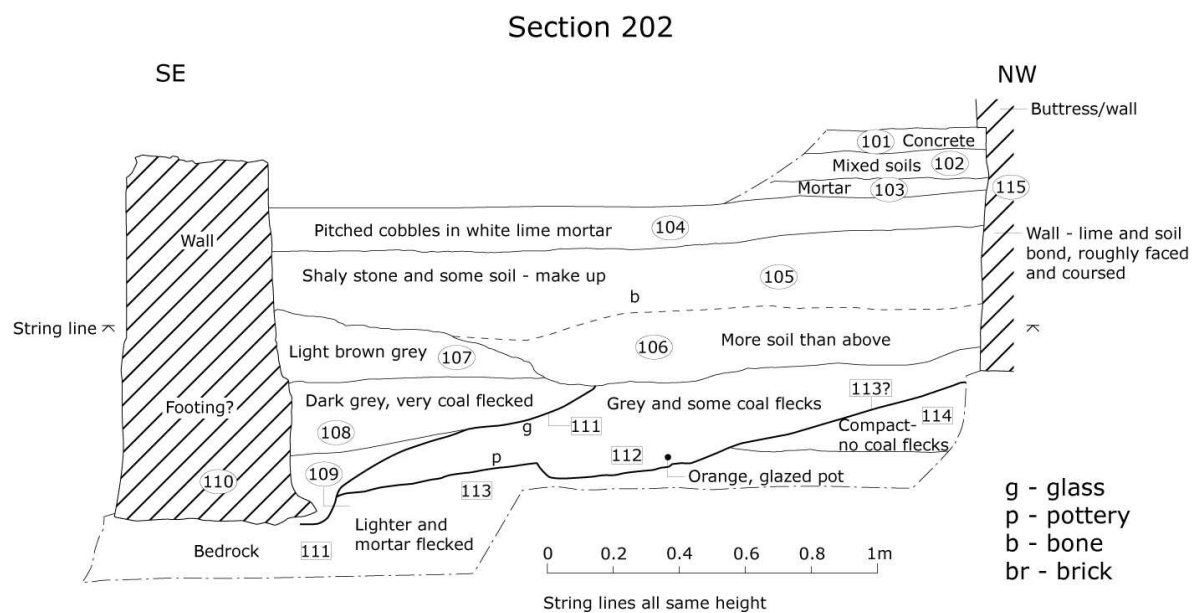


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Figure 2: Site Plan



**Figure 3: Section (202) below rear extension floor**



NW SE NE SW

String line

Wall

110

117

118

Red ash layer

119

116

Concrete path

116

119

120

Soil and red ash

120

121

122

br

Mixed

125

123

Grey

126

Disturbed br

124

Disturbed

Mixed

125

Grey

126

113

Bedrock

Fill

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1m

String lines all same height

br - brick

SW NE

Dark coal ash

Shaly

Mixed

Mixed mortar

Bedrock 113

String line

Obscured

Masonry/wall 127

Fill (fawn grey)

Mortar

Ashy

Obscured

Stony infill?

Remains of post

Concrete

Re-used stone

g

Stone wall

Fill

Bedrock

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1m

g - glass

String lines all same height





**Photo 1:** Site as seen on arrival in September. View East



**Photo 2:** Cut with dark fill below gable end footing. View South West