

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE NEW CYCLE BRIDGE CARMARTHEN

September 2005



Paratowyd gan Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer Carmarthenshire County Council
Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Carmarthenshire County Council



A R C H A E O L E G
CAMBRIA
A R C H A E O L O G Y

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 55208

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2005/104

Medi 2005
September 2005

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE NEW CYCLE BRIDGE CARMARTHEN

Gan / By

Duncan Schlee

*Archaeoleg Cambria yw enw marchnata Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyfyngedig.
Cambria Archaeology is the marketing name of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited.*

*Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan
Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd
yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys*

*The report has been prepared for the specific use of the client. The Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd can
accept no responsibility for its use by any other person or persons who may read it or rely on the
information it contains.*

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA
Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Ebost: cambria@cambria.org.uk Gwefan:
www.cambria.org.uk

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: cambria@cambria.org.uk Website:
www.cambria.org.uk

*Cwmni cyfyngedig (1198990) ynghyd ag elusen gofrestredig (504616) yw'r Ymddiriedolaeth. The Trust is both a Limited Company (No.
1198990) and a Registered Charity (No. 504616)*

CADEIRYDD CHAIRMAN: C R MUSSON MBE B Arch FSA MIFA. CYFARWYDDWR DIRECTOR: E G
HUGHES BA FSA MIFA

CONTENTS

1.0	SUMMARY	1
2.0	INTRODUCTION	2
3.0	SITE LOCATION	2
4.0	SITE DESCRIPTION	2
5.0	CONCLUSIONS	3
6.0	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
7.0	SOURCES	3

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Location plan

Photo 1: Deposits revealed during preparation of bridge footings

Photo 2: Capping of well revealed during preparation of bridge footings

Photo 3: Demolition debris directly overlying the timber well capping

Photo 4: Hollowed timber pumping column within well structure

Photo 5: Detail of the pumping column

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE NEW CYCLE BRIDGE,
CARMARTHEN**

1.0 SUMMARY

Cambria Archaeology was commissioned by Carmarthenshire County Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a cycle and pedestrian bridge across the river Towy, to the west of the existing road bridge. Following two earlier visits to the site when little of significance was observed, the remains of a timber-capped well were encountered at approximately NGR SN4109019853 during groundworks for the insertion of sheet piling. Because of the location of the feature, and the nature of the works, only a limited amount of recording was possible.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Carmarthenshire County Council are constructing a new cycle bridge over the River Towy. The bridge will cross the river from just south of the existing roundabout at the southern end of Blue Street. The north pier of the bridge was located just to the rear of the present quay wall, which is one of the few surviving elements of Carmarthen's historic waterfront and quay area and a listed building. Footings were also constructed for the ramp leading up to the bridge from the existing road.

Cambria Archaeology was commissioned by Carmarthenshire County Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief at various times during the construction project.

3.0 SITE LOCATION and HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site for the north end of the new Cycle Bridge is located immediately to the south of the existing roundabout at the southern end of Blue Street. This area was part of the quayside area of Carmarthen, but it has been substantially altered in the 20th century.

There would have been a quayside development in this area from the very beginnings of Carmarthen in the 12th century, because of its location at the tidal reach of the Towy. The original quayside is thought to have been located in the vicinity of Island Wharf, in the same area that the new cycle bridge is situated.

The location of a quayside development associated with the Roman fort and town is not known but it may well have also been in this vicinity.

In 1326 Carmarthen was made a Staple Port, trading in wool, pelts and leather, lead and tin. It became an important wool centre in the 16th century. Carmarthen was the largest Welsh town by the early 18th century and was an important port and trading centre. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the area shows a number of dwellings, Warehouses, public houses, schools, and a variety of industries and other quayside activities extending as far west as Pothouse Wharf.

Much of the historic quayside area was lost to redevelopment in the 20th century. The new road layout especially resulted in the loss of many dwellings and effectively cut the quayside area off from the rest of the town. Buildings associated with Island Wharf, including the Sloop Inn (PRN 421), were situated immediately to the west of the site of the new cycle bridge. The Hope and Anchor or Jubilee Inn (PRN 368) was formerly situated at the point where the new cycle bridge meets the existing roundabout at the bottom of Blue Street.

4.0 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

Two main site visits were made during the project to observe the ground preparation on the north side of the bridge. The first, in February 2005 observed groundworks for the construction of the northern pier of the bridge, situated immediately behind the listed structure of the quayside wall.

The area was found to have been heavily disturbed by services and contained evidence of several modern road re-surfacings. Beneath the modern deposits were a series of make-up layers of redeposited natural gravels overlying remnants of a cobbled surface associated with the quayside wall. Beneath the cobbles was backfill material, presumably related to the construction of the quayside wall. No other significant archaeological deposits or features were observed.

A second visit was made in August 2005 to observe the preparation of a trench for the insertion of sheet piling on the roadside where footings for the base of the ramp leading from the road to the cycle bridge were to be constructed (at approximately NGR SN4109019853). On commencing this operation, the site contractors had encountered the remains of a well. Field notes and a photographic record of the feature were made, but owing to the nature of the groundworks and the location of the feature, no more detailed recording was possible.

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE WELL

The top of the feature was approximately 2.50m below the current level of the roadside pavement, but also approximately 1.20m below the level of the old quayside. The ground in this location was sufficiently waterlogged to have resulted in the preservation of several timbers associated with the well. The well had been roughly capped using 3 pieces of waste wood from timber preparation, supported by two cross-timbers. Directly above the well capping was a sequence of layers of modern demolition rubble, containing crushed slate, concrete, bricks, and glass fragments.

The well was slightly sub-circular and had a diameter of approximately 1.20m. After pumping out, approximately 1.0m of the structure was visible above the water level. The well was constructed in a rough and un-coursed style from a variety of stone types including large, irregular blocks of Old Red Sandstone and large river worn stones. The masonry appeared to be bonded with soft grey clay. No construction cut for the well could be discerned, but considering the size and character of the stones, it is likely to have been at least 2 m in diameter.

Removal of water from the well revealed a square cut vertical timber with chamfered edges, approximately 0.25m wide, lodged into the well backfill against the northern edge. The top end of this timber was tapered and was inserted into a separate block of shaped timber with an iron collar. The timber is presumed to have been hollowed out for use in pumping water from the base of well. No pump or associated structure survived in-situ above the well, although some of the timbers exposed may have been part of the original capping. Considering the deposition sequence, and the depth of the feature, any surfaces and structures associated with the well-head were probably demolished when the area was redeveloped. It is assumed that the well was re-capped at this time, using scrap wood.

The removal of part of the well by machine was observed, but no dating evidence was recovered. It was not possible to recover the worked timber from the well and so the object was left in-situ.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The nature and extent of the cycle bridge ground-works have only provided a limited opportunity to assess the extent of survival of significant archaeological deposits in the quayside area during the watching brief. Remnants of the cobbled surface that is contemporary with the dockside walls have survived in places, especially along the quayside. Make-up deposits associated with the construction of the post-medieval quayside have also been identified. A little further to the north, the demolition of quayside structures and other buildings for the construction of the new road, appears to have resulted in a considerable amount of disturbance to or destruction of the post medieval quayside development.

In the absence of any dating evidence from basal fills, it is assumed that the well is a post-medieval structure and that other features associated with it have been removed

during earlier demolition. The survival of the well structure indicates the level from which any archaeologically significant deposits are likely to survive (approximately 1.10m below the current level of the car park). The watching brief was not able to ascertain the presence, location, or extent of survival of any archaeological deposits relating to any medieval or earlier quayside development.

The timbers revealed during the watching brief may only have been buried since the mid 20th century. It is not known how the various phases of development that have occurred in the area have affected groundwater levels, but if archaeologically significant deposits survive anywhere within the quayside area, it is highly probable that they will contain well preserved waterlogged material of considerable importance. This likelihood will have significant implications on the nature and extent of any archaeological investigations that may occur in advance of any future development in this area of the town.

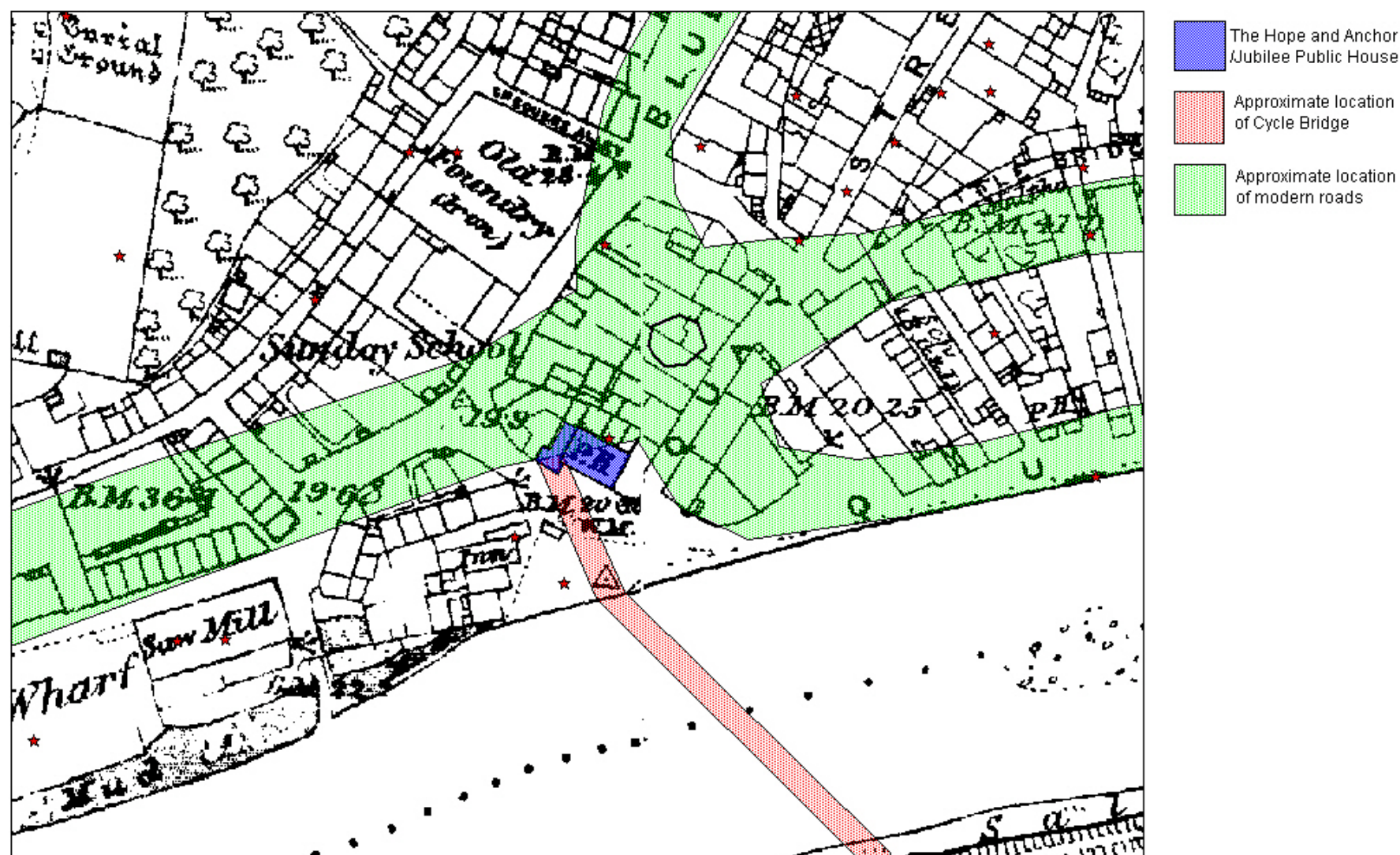


Figure 1: Approximate location of cycle bridge in relation to modern roads and buildings represented on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map



Photo 1: Make-up and backfill deposits revealed during preparation of bridge footings



Photo 2: Scrap wood capping the well revealed during preparation of bridge footings



Photo 3: Demolition debris directly overlying the timber well capping



Photo 4: Hollowed timber pumping column within well structure



Photo 5: Detail of the pumping column

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
THE NEW CYCLE BRIDGE, CARMARTHEN**

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2005/104

**Medi2005
September 2005**

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan:
This report has been prepared by:

Duncan Schlee

Swydd / Position: Archaeologist

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by

Nigel Page

Swydd / Position: Project Manager (Field Services)

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date

ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Yn unol â'n nŵd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw
sylwadausydd 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