

QUAKER FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE MILFORD HAVEN PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF 2005/6



Paratowyd gan: Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer: Acanthus Holden Architects
Prepared by: Cambria Archaeology
For: Acanthus Holden Architects



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Front cover: Site near the end of topsoil stripping

SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken on the south side of the Friends Meeting House at Milford Haven in advance of an extension to the building. Four post-medieval graves were located but the burials themselves were not revealed or disturbed.

INTRODUCTION

Cambria Archaeology Heritage Management, as advisors to Pembrokeshire County Council, identified a potential impact on the archaeological resource during a proposed development (planning applications 03/0475/PA and 03/0014/LB) at the Quaker Meeting House, Priory Road Milford Haven, Pembroke (SM9035606090), and recommended an archaeological watching brief during groundworks.

Cambria Archaeology Field Services drew up specifications for the watching brief. This entailed observing the turf and topsoil stripping to identify any graves or features of archaeological significance. It was anticipated that potential damage to identified graves could be 'designed out' prior to foundation excavation. A watching brief was also specified during foundation excavation.

The Quaker establishment at Milford Haven was built as the result of a small group of Nantucket Quaker whalers being invited by Charles Grenville, a substantial local landowner, together with support from the Government, to re-establish their business here (Edwards 2001, 140-3). Their first meeting in Milford was in 1794 (Brinkley 1987, 249) with the meeting house being opened in 1811 (Brinkley 1993 p378). The southern side of the meeting house (where the new build is taking place) may have been used for parking horse carriages in the 19th century (pers comm. David Redpath). Because of the lack of archaeological results it is not proposed to go further here into the historical background of this site or the adjacent area.

METHOD

The first visit to the site was on 25 November 2005, but nothing was undertaken on that day except for making the site entrance. The following visit was on 28 November 2005, when the topsoil and turf were stripped along with the removal and replanting of a tree. The tops of two probable graves were identified. A scaled sketch plan was made in increasingly snowy conditions. Following the discovery of the probable graves it was agreed, after discussion with Cambria Archaeology Heritage Management, that the watching brief should continue when the footing trenches were excavated.

At 09:30 am on the morning of 15 February 2006 the site contractor informed Cambria Archaeology that he was ready to start work and was awaiting our arrival. Digging of the footing trenches therefore did not commence until 12:00. Neither the contractor nor any Cambria Archaeology personnel were available during the next two days. Therefore work was restarted and footing trenches completed on 27 February 2006.

The digging was undertaken using a mini tracked 360° digger, using a toothless bucket for the soil stripping. A toothed smaller bucket had to be used for digging the footing trenches in a controlled manner. Where features were encountered these were cleaned by shovel and trowel.

RESULTS

Topsoil stripping and removal of tree and replanting

The topsoil and turf, about 0.2m deep, were removed during the initial groundworks. The tops of two probable grave cuts (later confirmed) were revealed. At the start of this work a small tree was removed and replanted in a machine-dug hole, about 0.350m deep, to the front of the building. Nothing of archaeological interest was seen in this hole.

Footing trenches (Figure 2)

The footing trenches were between 0.75m and 1m wide and also between 0.75m and 1m deep (Photo. 2). Except where there were grave cuts the entire bottom of the footing trenches cut into the shaley Old Red Sandstone bedrock.

In the eastern wall footing, on the western side only and 1m to 1.5m south of the Meeting House wall there was a feature (Photo. 2) cut into the bedrock. This could be the end of a grave but, given the cement in the lower fill, it is more likely to be a construction feature, possibly for timber scaffolding. This feature and the grave cuts (see below) appeared to all have been cut through a lower old "topsoil" layer approximately 0.2m to 0.3m above the shaley bedrock.

The kerb for one grave (102; Photo. 3) was located adjacent to the southwest corner of the new building footing trenches. This kerb was possibly of green granite. The machine removed a small part of this, possibly along an old break or construction joint.

A grave cut (104) was located 1.75m to 2.35m north of the grave kerb (102), and the southwest corner of the footing trench. This grave cut extended beyond the western footing trench with the eastern end extending 0.35m into the footing trench for a pillar. The fill, excavated only down to the base of the footing trench, was fairly root-disturbed.

Another grave cut (106; Photo. 4) was located 3.3m to 3.9m north of the grave ckerb (102). This cut extended east and west of the footing trench. At the bottom of the footing trench in the grave fill there were two coffin fittings that appeared to be disturbed, possibly by the extensive tree roots in the fill of this grave. It is probable that the coffin/body remains are just below this level. No investigations were carried out. Five fragments of bone recovered from just above the base level of the trench were animal, one of which appeared to be cow and had butchering marks.

A further probable grave (108; Photo. 5) was located 5.15m to 5.75m north of the grave kerb (102). The cut for this grave extended westwards of the footing trench and also just through the southern side of the north footing trench. Its eastern extent could not be firmly established but appeared to be similar to that of grave cut (104). However, this feature could be just disturbance of the subsoil by the former hedge above this location.

DISCUSSION

Graves were only encountered to the southwest of the meeting hall in the known cemetery area. None of these graves had remaining features above the surface. All of the four gravesites were aligned east - west although Quaker graves are not necessarily aligned east - west (pers comm. David Redpath).

One of Acanthus Holden's architects examined the grave cuts and confirmed that the foundations would be able to go over the grave cuts without disturbance to the burials themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that the Society of Friends make a plan of the graveyard with a written and photographic record of the graves, stones and epitaphs, noting where grave markers are considered to be still *in situ*. A copy of this should be deposited with the Historic Environment Record Office at Llandeilo and also with the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth, so there is a permanent record of the location of graves.

SOURCES

Brinkley R 1987 *Religion and Education 1660-1815 in Pembrokeshire County History* Vol III, Early Modern Pembrokeshire. Ed Howles B: Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire Historical Society

Brinkley R 1993 *Religion 1815-1974* in Pembrokeshire County History Vol IV, Modern Pembrokeshire. Ed Howell D W: Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire Historical Society

Edwards S 2001 *The Story of the Milford Haven Waterway*: Guilford, Logaston Press



Photo 1: Footing trenches almost complete. View W



Photo 2: Eastern wall footing trench. Feature behind 0.5m scale. View W



Photo 3: Grave kerb (102) far left. Grave cut 104 behind 0.5m scale. View W



Photo 4: Grave cut (106). Two coffin fittings located just in front and to either side of 0.5m scale. View W



Photo 5: Grave cut? (108) to either side of 0.5m scale. View WSW



Figure 1. Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey.

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Figure 2: Site plan with location of graves and approximate footing trenches.