

PEMBROKE COMMONS FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME PEMBROKE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION JANUARY 2006



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PEMBROKE COMMONS FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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SUMMARY

Four small but relatively deep trial trenches were machine excavated in the Upper Commons Park, below the southern town wall of Pembroke. Until recently this was an area of salt marsh and therefore likely to be of significance for environmental archaeological remains. Adjacent there was a large amount of medieval and post medieval activity. However, nothing of archaeological interest was recording during the evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Cambria Archaeology Heritage Management, as advisors to Pembrokeshire County Council, identified a potential impact on the archaeological resource during the proposed flood alleviation scheme on The Commons, Pembroke, and recommended archaeological evaluation in advance of any groundworks.

Cambria Archaeology Field Services drew up specifications for three trial trenches. However, due to negative results a fourth trench was excavated. Because of the lack of results it is not proposed to go into the historical background of this site or the adjacent area at this stage.

The Upper Common is centred on grid reference SM 98750120 (Fig. 1). This land forms a flat bottom to a valley adjacent to the south side of Pembroke. The Upper Common and The Lower Common are grassy fields with a few mature trees and are used as a town amenity area. There is one small building complex midway along the south side of the Upper Common, which is on the site of an iron foundry (Fig. 2). A stream runs along the town edge of the common, mostly within artificial banks; this area is liable to flooding. A proposed new watercourse is to be cut more centrally through the Upper Common and the trial trenches were therefore located approximately on this alignment (Fig. 1).

The objectives of the evaluation were to characterise the extent of deposits, any structures and artefacts.

Pembrokeshire County Council supplied a JCB-type digger with a toothless grading bucket, and their Assistant Engineer, Emyr Williams, was in attendance during the excavation. The works took place on 17th January 2006 when the ground conditions were wet to very wet. All excavation was undertaken by machine with each trench being about 1.5m wide and 4m long. Sections were photographed with depth of layers logged.

RESULTS

Trench 1 (Cover Photo): This was located at the southern end of the Upper Common just above the bridge separating it from the Lower Common. It was excavated down to c. 1.8m deep. The lowest layer encountered at 1.3m was grey marine silt. Above this, from 0.7 m to 1.0m deep, there was a layer of mottled reddish brown and dark silt. Above this, from 0.35m to 0.7m deep, was a layer of dark sandy silt with a lot of domestic rubbish, including china and glass, probably dating to the late nineteenth century and with an iron foundry deposit smell. Above this, from 0.1m to 0.35m deep, there was a layer of mixed clay and small angular stones, possibly quarry scalplings, and also a few fragments of china. Above this, from the surface down to 0.1m, there was dark grey topsoil and turf.

Trench 2 (Photo 1): This trench was located about 70m downstream from the footbridge crossing the middle of the Upper Common and 9m south of the stream edge. This trench was excavated down to a depth of 2.4m. The lowest layer encountered, at 2.1m deep, was a sandy layer, probable deriving from Old Red Sandstone. Above this, from 0.95m to 2.1m there was a layer of grey brown marine clay, similar to that seen in the bottom of Trial Trench 1. Within this

marine clay there was some organic material at 1.8m, possibly roots and limited in extent. Above the marine clay, from 0.8m to 0.95, was a layer of peaty clay that contained china. From 0.65m to 0.8m ran a layer of orange clay. Above this, from 0.5m to 0.65, there was a layer of orange brown clay with angular limestone fragments. From 0.35m to 0.5m was a grey soil layer, overlain from 0.1m to 0.3m by orange brown slightly sandy clay. The uppermost layer, from the surface down to 0.1m was topsoil and turf.

Trench 3 (Photo 2): This trench was located opposite a tower on the town wall, and about 24m above the footbridge crossing the Upper Common and 1m south of the stream edge. This trench was excavated to 1.2m deep. The lowest layer encountered was grey marine clay at 0.8m deep. Above from 0.45m to 0.8m there was a layer of orange brown clay, cut on its northern side by the streambed (before the stream was artificially edged). Over this, from 0.1m to c.0.45m, and also filling the stream cut, was a layer of topsoil mixed with hardcore and modern china. The topmost layer, from the surface down to 0.1m, was topsoil and turf.

Trench 4 (Photo 3): This trench was located about 40m south of Grove Bridge and 10m south of the existing watercourse. This trench was slightly shorter, c.3m, than the other trenches and was excavated down to 2.1m deep. The lowest layer encountered, at 1.3m deep, was grey marine clay. Above this, from 0.8m to 1.3m, there was a layer of dark grey organic silt. From 0.6m to 0.8m was a layer of hardcore and detritus of late nineteenth century date. Above this, from 0.25m to 0.6m, there was a layer of soil and scalpings. The topmost layer, from the surface down to 0.1m, was topsoil and turf.

DISCUSSION

All of the trenches showed similar stratification. Trench 2 contained nearly 1m of recent build-up. It is possible that this build-up started between the dates of the First (1891) and Second (1909) editions of the Ordnance Survey maps (Figs. 2 and 3) as the offshoot stream channels appeared to be filled in during this period. The upper layers, including the scalpings, probably date to the final phase of this area being turfed over as a recreation amenity, probably in the mid to later twentieth century, but no secure dating evidence was found to prove this.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified during the watching brief. However, the trial trenches represent only a small percentage of the area. Features such as trackways or medieval middens could easily have been missed, as could water channels, a number of which are shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition (Fig. 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although no archaeological material was recovered nor significant environmental archaeological deposits identified it is quite likely that they exist in the Upper Common area, especially the latter in the form of earlier stream channels. Therefore it is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be implemented during the cutting of the new channel. Constant attendance, however, may not be necessary.

In the area of the Lower Common it is considered unlikely that the cutting and altering of the southern side of the channel will encounter any meaningful deposits and an archaeologist should only be called in if unexpected material of medieval or earlier date is encountered. However, at the western end of the Lower Common, just above Bridgend Terrace, where the watercourse is to be widened into a pool, it is recommended that an archaeologist be in attendance during the excavation of the pool and alteration of the stream edge.



Photo 1: Trench 2. View East



Photo 2: Trench 3. View East



Photo 3: Trench 4. View East

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Figure 1: Site Location and trial trenches

Figure 2: Ordnance Survey first edition 1891

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Figure 3: Ordnance Survey second edition 1909

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Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
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ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed
Cyf.
on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

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