

NORTH DOCK, LLANELLI

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT



Prepared by
Cambria Archaeology
For
Llanelli Coast Joint Venture



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NORTH DOCK, LLANELLI ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY

The Llanelli Coast Joint Venture is proposing the comprehensive mixed use re-development of the North Dock area of Llanelli centred on NGR SS50739831). The proposals form part of a long-term, wide-ranging development project that has remodelled the coastal areas around Llanelli, including North Dock. North Dock was an important element of the industrial and maritime heritage of Llanelli and it was felt that an archaeological assessment was required to assess the potential impacts of any developments on the surviving structures of the dock.

Llanelli Coast Joint Venture commissioned Cambria Archaeology to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of the North Dock during June and July 2007.

This assessment has revealed that the North Dock has been substantially redeveloped since its closure and that most of the original structures and features such as dock gates, railways and buildings have been removed. The only structures to survive are the dock itself and an engine house, which is a Listed Building. This building is to be renovated and reused as part of the redevelopment plans for the dock. No other structures or features will be affected.

The site does lie adjacent to the Carmarthenshire Dock, one of the earliest established in Llanelli and redevelopment plans on the east side of North Dock will have to avoid the Carmarthenshire Dock.



Plate 1: general view north across North Dock. The new development has been built over the former GWR railway sidings (PRN 37018).

INTRODUCTION

The Llanelli Coast Joint Venture is proposing the comprehensive mixed use re-development of the North Dock area of Llanelli centred on NGR SS50739831). The North Dock was one of the central features of Llanelli's maritime and industrial heritage

Llanelli Coast Joint Venture commissioned Cambria Archaeology to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of the North Dock during June and July 2007.

The scope and aims of the assessment

This assessment is designed to review existing information on the North dock area in order to determine the likely impacts of the developments on the rich and varied archaeological resource and to develop a mitigation strategy to minimise those impacts.

Report outline

This report describes the physical environment of the study area before summarising the archaeological resource of North Dock and that resource may be affected by the proposed schemes. Recommendations for further archaeological works based on the results of the assessment are also given.

Abbreviations used in this report

All sites recorded on the county Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). References to cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets throughout the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the rear of the report.

THE ASSESSMENT AREA

The historic landscape is the result of natural processes and human actions interacting and influencing each other since the end of the last ice age, c.10,000 – 12,000 years ago. Those interactions and influences are particularly evident in the coastal areas around Llanelli where they have resulted in the construction of sea defences, reclamation of marshes, shifting settlement patterns, shipwrecks, construction of harbours and drowned landscapes (Page 1997, 2).

This is particularly true of Llanelli, where the massive and very rapid expansion of the town utilised and modified the coastal wetlands to the south of the town. Within approximately 50 years virtually all of the former coastal marshes around Llanelli had been enclosed and developed for industry and its associated infrastructure of transport networks and worker housing.

Wetland archaeology

As well as known archaeological sites wetland areas have enormous archaeological potential to provide forms of evidence not present on dryland sites. The preservation conditions that exist in wetland sites mean that objects made from organic materials survive, often in exceptional condition, whereas on dry sites they decay and leave no trace in the archaeological record. Wetland areas can also contain unique palaeoenvironmental evidence such as pollen, plant remains, insect remains, molluscs, diatoms and foraminifera, which provide contemporary evidence of past environmental conditions and landscapes.

Previous work to the east of North Dock has shown that there is a good surviving environmental record buried across the Llanelli Marsh. However, the past industrialisation and construction of the North Dock area will almost certainly have compromised the environmental record in this area.

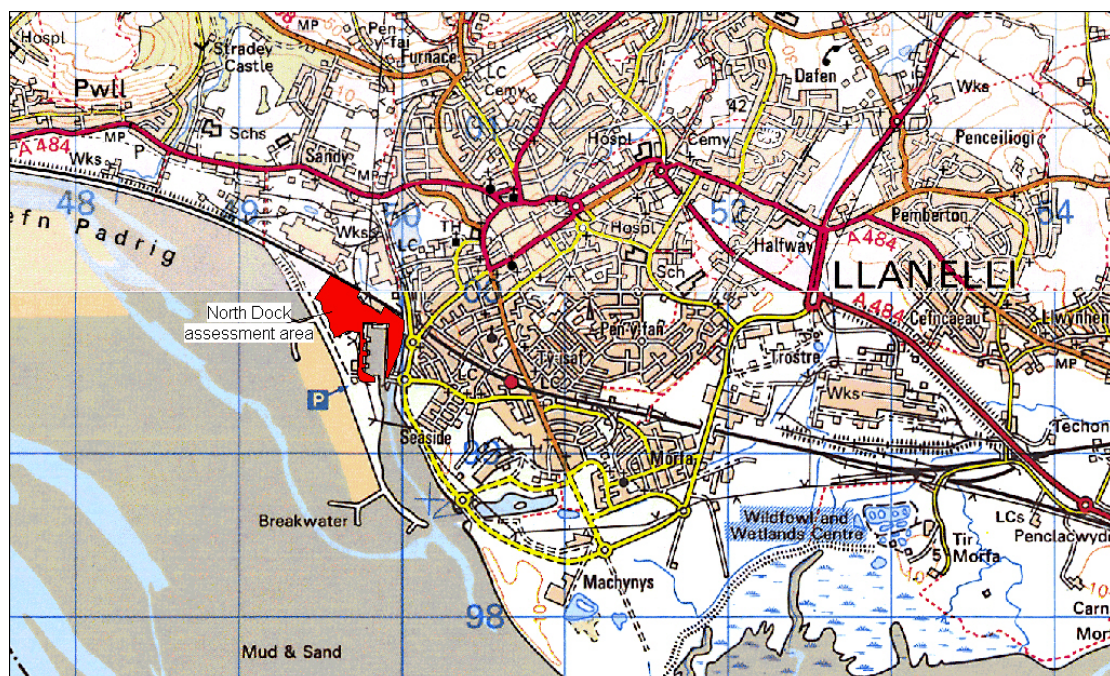


Figure 1: Location plan of North Dock assessment area.

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The North Dock

The history of the development of the Llanelli industrial and maritime interests has been well documented, not least in a comprehensive volume recently published by Carmarthenshire County Council on the industrial and maritime history of Burry port and Llanelli (Craig *et al* 2002). Therefore, it is not intended to reproduce that information here, except to provide enough information to place the dock in its context.

The North Dock was considered necessary by the Burry Harbour Commissioners in order to provide a facility that would ensure that Llanelli did not lose out to neighbouring facilities at Burry Port or Swansea. The location for the new dock was on the site of the former scouring reservoir that had kept the channel open to the Loughor for the many other smaller harbours and docks in Llanelli. The decision to build a new dock was not universally popular, but enough momentum was gained that the bill to sanction the construction of North Dock was received Royal Assent in 1896. However, work never started until 1898 due to problems securing the necessary funding from the Bank of England, who insisted in appointing outside representatives to provide advice (Craig *et al*, 2002, 503).

The contract for excavating the basin and constructing the dock walls was awarded to Mr L P Nott for a sum of £57,987 13s 2d (Hughes 1984, 250). Work was originally expected to take two years, but protracted disputes during construction delayed the opening until December 1903 (Symons 1979, 369; Hughes 1985, 198-190; Craig *et al*, 2002, 503). The disputes centred on the fact that the entrance to the dock would cut across the line of the Mynydd Mawr Railway, which for many years had serviced the existing dock facilities. The intensity of the disputes is shown in the language of the local news reporting of the time (1902-1903), which described the delays as being a consequence of '*the war between the [Burry Harbour] Commissioners and the Mynydd Mawr Company*' (Hughes 1984, 250-251).

Even once it was open the North Dock did not run smoothly, a slump in the British shipping industry meant that the dock was operating at a loss that took until 1911 to begin to turn around. However, shortly after that the dock was hit by the Great War and plunged into great debt (Craig *et al* 2002, 503). On paper the dock appeared to be a great success as of the 11,000,000 tons of shipping from Llanelli between 1904 and 1947 9,000,000 were shipped from North Dock (Hughes 1985, 190; Roberts 1999, 16). The bulk of this appears to have been between the wars, as for the four years ending in 1939 1,297,037 tons was shipped from the dock, with only 102,000 shipped in the four years up to 1947. The record shipment was 584,696 tons in 1935 (Hughes 1984, 412).

The dock closed to virtually all shipping in 1951.

This is a detailed historical map of the North Dock area in Glasgow, Scotland. The map shows the dock's layout, including the 'NORTH DOCK' itself, which is a large rectangular area. The dock is bordered by a red line. The map includes various landmarks such as 'Old Castle Colliery (Domest.)', 'Glasgow Channing', and 'Hydroelectric Power Station'. The map is oriented with North at the top.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

Archaeological sites within the proposed development areas

There are a total of 8 known archaeological sites recorded within, or just outside the North Dock assessment boundary. Most of the sites are associated with the industrial and maritime expansion of Llanelli during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For descriptions of the sites within the North Dock assessment boundary see Appendix 1.

Table 1 (below) lists the known archaeological sites within the North Dock assessment boundary.

PRN	SITE NAME	SITE TYPE	NGR
4652	Llanelli North Dock	Dock	SS49809960
4653	Llanelli Power Station	Power Station	SS49959983
8760	North Dock Engine House	Engine House	SS49999974
8763	North Dock Swing Bridge	Swing Bridge	SS49879943
34039	The Flats	Scouring Reservoir	SS49869944
37014	North Dock Goods Sheds	Goods Sheds	SS49969956
37018	North Dock railway Siding	Railway Siding	Centred on SS49739978
37019	Thomas Bowen's Shipping Place	Quay	SS49859970

Table 1: archaeological sites within the North Dock assessment boundary.

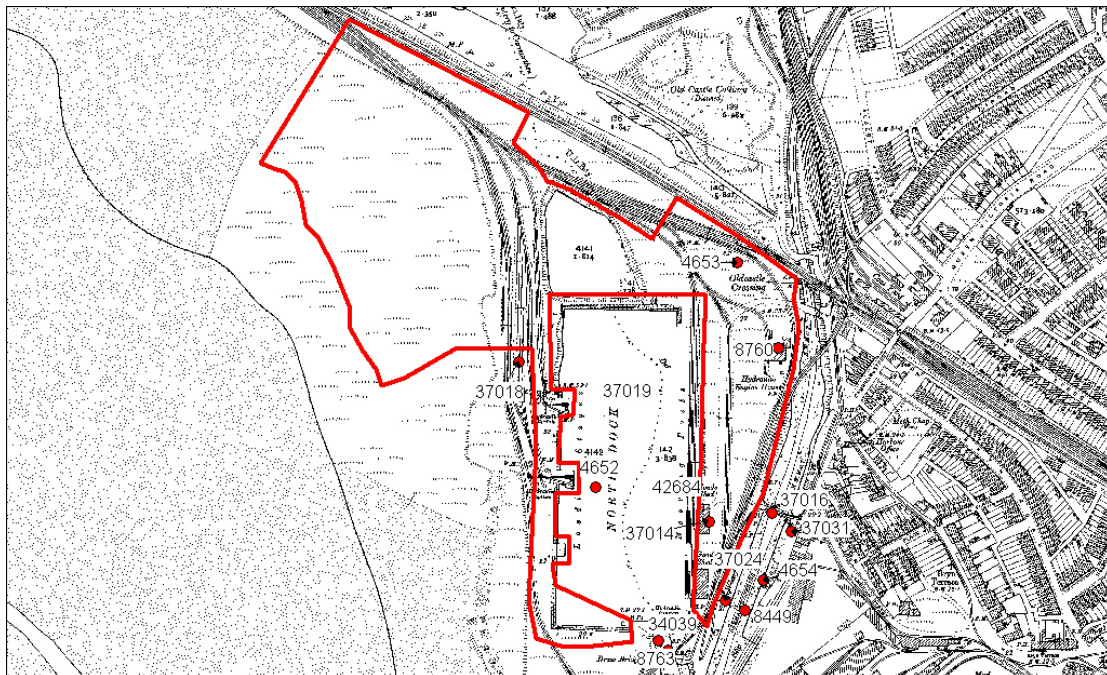


Figure 4: Known archaeological sites within and close to the North Dock assessment boundary shown on OS 2nd edition base map.

Condition

The sites will be assessed using a classification system that assigns each site to one of five categories for their condition and value. The categories are:

- A** – Intact.
- B** – Substantially intact, but with some damage or loss.
- C** – Largely destroyed, but with some surviving elements.
- D** – Destroyed, no above ground remains.
- E** – Unknown potential, buried sites in particular.

Value

- A** - National importance: Scheduled Monuments; Listed Buildings or sites worthy of consideration for Scheduling of Listing.
- B** - Regional importance: sites not considered worthy of scheduling or listing, but which should be retained where possible.
- C** - Local importance: sites that are considered important to an understanding of the development of a local area, or are characteristic of that particular area.
- D** – Sites that are heavily damaged, or where too little remains for inclusion in a higher category.
- E** – Sites of unknown potential, including buried sites, which should be subject to further assessment and evaluation to determine whether or not they should be assigned to a higher category.

Using these categories it is possible to define the level of archaeological response for each individual site and for the proposed development site as a whole.

Condition of archaeological sites within the North Dock assessment boundary

PRN	SITE NAME	NGR	CONDITION
4652	Llanelli North Dock	SS49809960	B
4653	Llanelli Power Station	SS49959983	D
8760	North Dock Engine House	SS49999974	B
8763	North Dock Swing Bridge	SS49879943	D
34039	The Flats Scouring Reservoir	SS49869944	D
37014	North Dock Goods Sheds	SS49969956	D
37018	North Dock railway Siding	Centred on SS49739978	D
37019	Thomas Bowen's Shipping Place	SS49859970	D

Table 2: Condition of the archaeological sites within the proposed development site. Sites in italics are unnamed, but the type has been included here for ease of reference.

Assessing the value of the archaeological sites within the North Dock assessment boundary

Assessing the value of archaeological sites is not intended to identify sites of little or no archaeological value as all sites are, or have been, integral to the development of the historic landscape. Therefore, they are all considered important, but not all of them will require the same level of archaeological protection or mitigation. There are a number of factors that will affect and influence the levels of protection and mitigation for individual sites such as their condition, rarity and vulnerability.

PRN	SITE NAME	NGR	ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE
4652	Llanelli North Dock	SS49809960	B
4653	Llanelli Power Station	SS49959983	D
8760	North Dock Engine House	SS49999974	A
8763	North Dock Swing Bridge	SS49879943	D
34039	The Flats Scouring Reservoir	SS49869944	D
37014	North Dock Goods Sheds	SS49969956	D
37018	North Dock railway Siding	Centred on SS49739978	D
37019	Thomas Bowen's Shipping Place	SS49859970	D

Table 3: Archaeological value of the known sites within the North Dock assessment boundary.

THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

The North Dock (PRN 4652)

It is proposed to construct new lightweight quayside units at North Dock. The existing quay walls and landing stages should be retained within the redevelopment.

The North Dock Engine House (PRN 8760)

The chief interest of the North Dock assessment area is perhaps the former Engine House. As a Listed Building the Engine House has statutory protection and will, therefore, be protected during any redevelopment proposals. Plans to reuse the building should be sympathetic to the surviving structures.

The other sites

The other sites identified within the assessment boundary have been partially or completely removed and the impacts of redevelopment are considered to be small.

SUGGESTED FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

The North Dock (PRN 4652)

A watching brief should be maintained during construction of the new quayside structures to record any previous structures and buildings that may be exposed.

The North Dock Engine House (PRN 8760)

The Engine House should be subject to a standing building survey prior to any redevelopment works.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 2: The North Dock Engine House (PRN 8760).



Plate 3: General view northeast across the site of the former goods sheds (PRN 37014).



Plate 4: Entrance to North Dock, the site of the former swing bridge (PRN 8763).



Plate 5: View northwest across the site of the former North Dock Power Station (PRN 4653).

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES WITHIN THE NORTH DOCK ASSESSMENT BOUNDARY

PRN: 4652

NAME: Llanelli North Dock

TYPE: Dock

NGR: SS49809960

DESCRIPTION: See description above, p4.

PRN: 4653

NAME: Llanelli power Station

TYPE: Power Station

NGR: SS49959983

DESCRIPTION: Llanelli power station was constructed in just four months and it went into full production in January 1911 (Hughes 1985, 190). It was built on Commissioner's land at the head of the dock, and water from the dock was used to cool the plant (Hughes 1984, 502). During its early years the plant was switched off from Saturday until Monday because it only produced when the local works were operating. Electricity for lighting on Saturday and Sunday came from storage batteries (Hughes 1985, 191).

The plant expanded throughout its life from generating 1.5 megawatts to 25 megawatts and from employing 19 people to 127 people during its peak (Hughes 1985, 191). It closed in 1969 and was demolished shortly after.

PRN: 8760

NAME: North Dock Engine House

TYPE: Engine House

NGR: SS49999974

DESCRIPTION: The North Dock Engine House is a Grade II Listed Building located at the northeast corner of the dock. It was built around 1900 and consists of three parallel ranges consisting of a boiler house, engine house with accumulator tower and a maintenance shed. Modern additions include corrugated iron sheds and a brick-built range added to the southwest end (information from RCAHMW schedule, copies held in the HER).

PRN: 8763

NAME: North Dock Swing Bridge

TYPE: Swing Bridge

NGR: SS49879943

DESCRIPTION: The swing bridge across the mouth of the dock was constructed c.1900 as a link in the railway system that serviced the North Dock. The bridge had a single deck with a span of c.75ft. The bridge has been removed and replaced by the present road bridge.

PRN: 34039

NAME: The Flats

TYPE: Scouring Reservoir

NGR: SS49869944

DESCRIPTION: A scouring basin with a swinging sluice that was used to maintain the shipping channel into the Llanelli docks. The North dock was built over the basin.

PRN: 37014

NAME: North Dock Goods Sheds

TYPE: Goods Sheds

NGR: SS49969956

DESCRIPTION: Two goods sheds are shown on the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition maps of c.1907 on the east quay of North Dock. These have been demolished and removed.

PRN: 37018

NAME: North Dock railway Siding

TYPE: Railway Siding

NGR: Centred on SS49739978

DESCRIPTION: The former GWR railway sidings that serviced North Dock and other landing stages to the south. The railway linked to the mainline GWR rail network.

PRN: 37019

NAME: Thomas Bowen's Shipping Place

TYPE: Quay

NGR: SS49859970

DESCRIPTION: Thomas Bowen established and operated a small shipping place on the Afon Lliedi between 1756 and 1758 (Crag *et al* 2002, 552). The site of it is believed to have been close to and possibly under the east quay of North Dock.

SOURCES

Unpublished sources

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