

# HARBOUR WALL RECONSTRUCTION, ABERAERON, CEREDIGION: TIMBER DISCOVERY

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By

R Ramsey

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Position: Project Manager

Signature ..... Date

This report has been checked and approved by

on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position:

Signature ..... Date

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

## **HARBOUR WALL RECONSTRUCTION, ABERAERON, CEREDIGION: TIMBER DISCOVERY**

### **SUMMARY**

*During recent reconstruction work on the harbour wall in Aberaeron several timber posts were uncovered. Anticipating that the posts may be archaeologically significant, officers from Ceredigion County Council commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to visit the site and make an assessment.*

*Eight timber posts were recovered during the groundworks with an additional one left in situ some distance from the others. The posts were examined and were adjudged to all be relatively modern, probably 20<sup>th</sup> century, in that they were machine sawn and appeared to be acting in a ground retaining capacity to the northeast of the harbour wall close to modern services. They were all in relatively good condition, with one post at least exhibiting a greenish colour that may suggest the use of modern wood preservation techniques.*

*It appears, therefore, that the timber posts were almost definitely not part of the original construction of the town harbour in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Project background**

The reconstruction work to Aberaeron harbour wall currently being carried out has its origins in flood damage caused by heavy rain in November 2005. The great volume of rain caused subsidence of the harbour wall that resulted in serious damage being caused to a harbour-side building at grid reference SN45816283. The building was in use at the time as an Information Technology learning centre and was being leased from the owners by Ceredigion County Council. Technical and legal issues delayed commencement of repair and reconstruction but eventually, it seems, these were resolved and the Welsh Assembly Government allocated Ceredigion County Council a grant to help with the cost of the project.

During groundworks on the northern side of the river eight timber posts were revealed, excavated and set to one side for inspection. John Edwards of Ceredigion County Council, anticipating that the timbers might be of archaeological importance, commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust to view and make an assessment of the timbers.

### **Scope of the report**

This report outlines the historical background to the town of Aberaeron before summarising the assessment of the timber posts inspected during a site visit by an archaeologist from Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Aberaeron lies at the mouth of the Afon Aeron on the Ceredigion coast at National Grid Reference SN45856280. It currently has a population of around 1500 and last year (2007) celebrated its bicentenary as a formally laid out town built to a set plan. In 1807 Susannah and Thomas Jones of Ty-Glyn sought parliamentary permission to construct piers and a harbour at the mouth of the Aeron. Prior to this the place was a relatively unimportant fishing settlement, with Aberarth, one mile to the north, being the nearest coastal settlement of any note.

After 1807 the small town grew quite rapidly with the terraces, squares and houses of the Regency period that are so evident today being well established by the 1850s. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Aberaeron became a busy shipbuilding centre with a good reputation, especially for the schooners built there by the master boat builder David Jones. The growth of the town was short-lived, however, and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the port itself went into decline when the arrival of the railways all but destroyed the coastal trade of west Wales. Today Aberaeron is an important administrative centre, tourist destination and residential town.



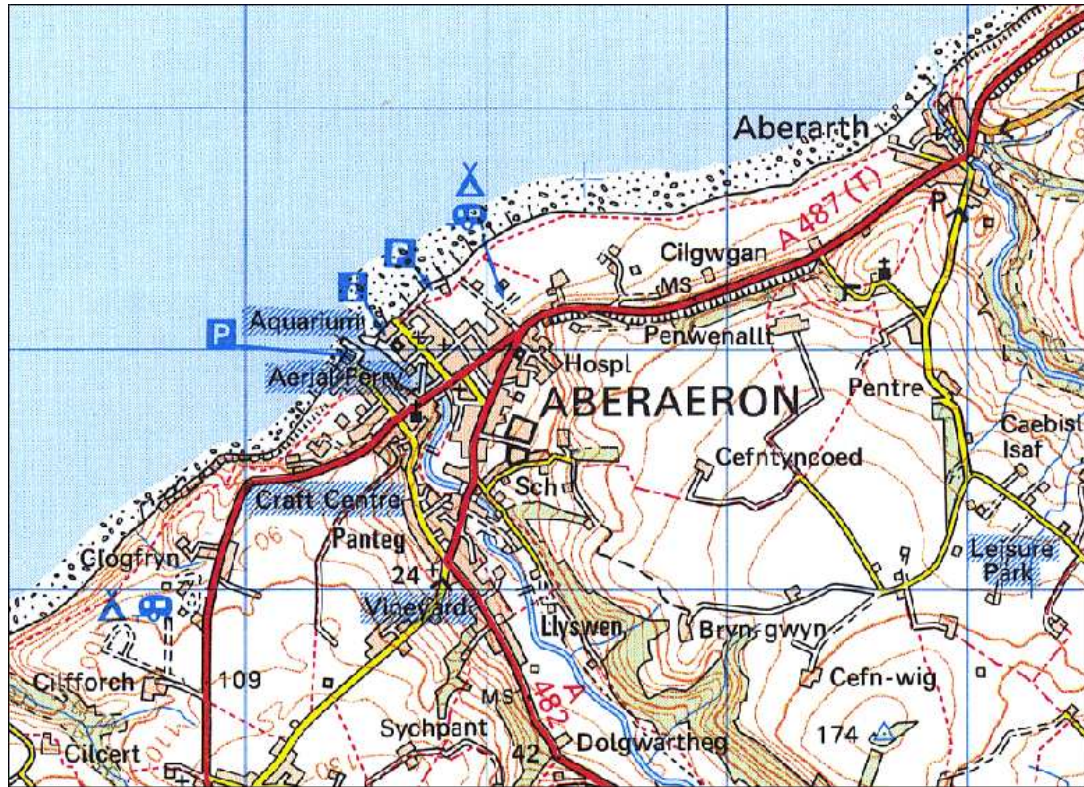


Figure 1 Location plan of development area Reproduced from the 1:50000 Landranger Map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence No. AL51842A

## THE TIMBER POSTS

Nine timber posts were revealed during groundwork excavations for the harbour wall reconstruction in Aberaeron. Eight of the posts were set side-by-side forming an upright linear configuration within the rounded stone riverbank material at NGR SN45816283, the ninth post was left *in situ* and located some three or four metres to the east of the others. The group of eight posts were removed during the excavations and retained for inspection.

All the posts were of softwood and some appeared to have been pressure treated or "tanalised". The posts varied in size from 0.8m in length to a maximum 1.5m, with five of them being full round and three half round (see Photo 2 below). All were in a good state of preservation with slight rot at their non-sharpened top ends.

## CONCLUSION

It seems likely that the timbers were set in place in order to retain some of the bank material close to a modern water services inspection chamber. None of the evidence suggests that they were part of the original early nineteenth century harbour wall makeup.



## Photographs



**Photo. 1** Part of the destroyed harbour wall soon after the storm subsidence in November 2005, looking NNW



**Photo. 2** The timber posts after being set aside for assessment





**Photo. 3** The site during reconstruction groundworks, looking northeast

## **REFERENCES**

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