

# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT MACHYNYNS WEST LLANELLI, CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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CARMARTHENSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

By

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**SUMMARY**

*Llanelli Coast Joint Venture is proposing to develop three areas of housing on the northern fringe of Machynys, Llanelli (centred on NGR SS50739831). The proposals are part of a long-term and extensive development programme aimed at regenerating the coastal areas around Llanelli. Machynys has been central to that programme and the construction of the proposed housing at the Machynys West site is an important element of that development.*

*Earlier assessment of the site highlighted the long and varied history of the Machynys area, in particular the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial expansion and associated housing, and recommended that an archaeological evaluation of the site be carried out in support of any planning application (Page 2006). Evaluation of the adjacent Machynys East site showed that extensive below ground remains survived. Therefore Llanelli Coast Joint Venture commissioned Cambria Archaeology to undertake an evaluation of the Machynys West during August 2007.*

*This evaluation revealed that there are surviving below ground remains within the Machynys West site, they are poorly preserved and less extensive than on the adjacent Machynys East site. However, it was possible to match the results from the evaluation with Ordnance Survey maps and identify part of the former South Wales Iron and Tinplate Works. There was no trace of the houses from Bay View Terrace.*

*The demolition and subsequent landscaping of the Machynys region has removed much of the buried remains of the structures that formerly occupied the area, but enough is now known to suggest that buried remains may survive across the site and that these would be lost during the development works.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Llanelli Coast Joint Venture is proposing to develop three areas of housing on the northern fringe of Machynys, Llanelli (centred on NGR SS50739831). The proposals are part of a long-term, wide-ranging development programme aimed at regenerating the coastal areas around Llanelli. Machynys has been central to that programme and the construction of the proposed housing at the Machynys West site is the first phase of the development. This development includes the re-alignment of Cockle Pickers Way and the construction of a new pumping station.

Earlier assessment of the site highlighted the long and varied history of the Machynys area and recommended that an archaeological evaluation of the site be carried out in support of any planning application (Page 2006). Llanelli Coast Joint Venture commissioned Cambria Archaeology to undertake the evaluation of the proposed development site during August 2007.

### **The scope and aims of the evaluation**

The main aim of the evaluation was to target those areas of the site that contained former structures in order to characterise the presence, extent, nature and date of any below ground archaeological remains associated with them.

The project was also aimed at providing enough information on the archaeological resource to enable assessment of the likely impact of any development proposals on that resource, and to help inform future management decisions in areas that may require further archaeological work.

### **Report outline**

This report briefly describes the physical environment of the area with a discussion and description of the known archaeological resource before detailing the results of the evaluation.

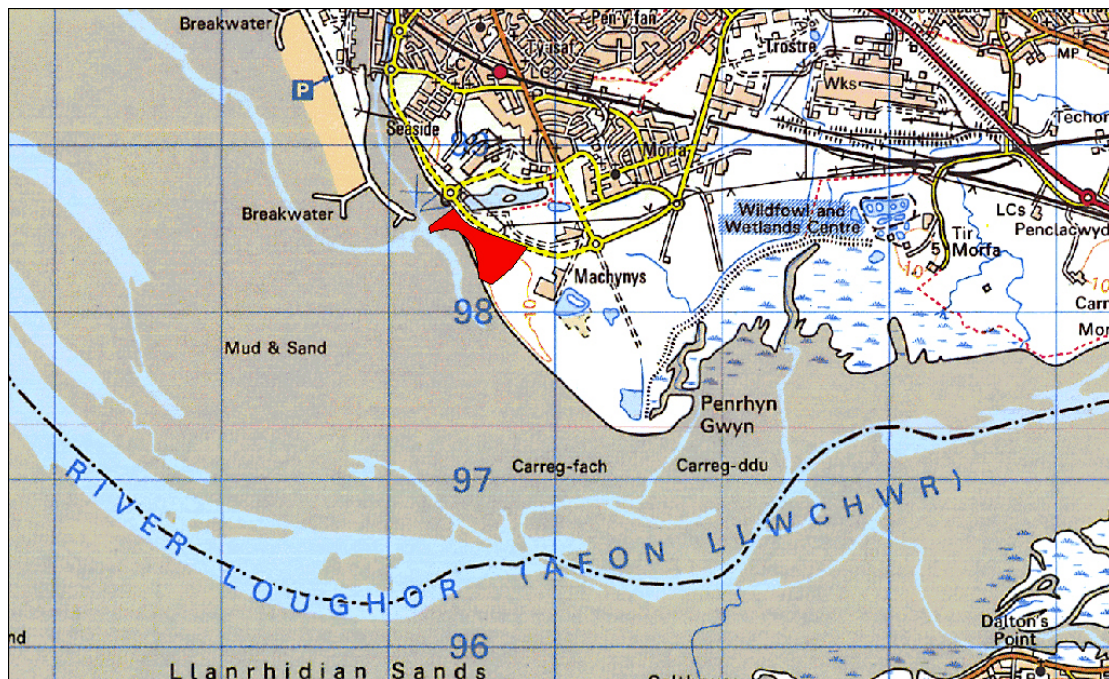
### **Abbreviations used in this report**

Any references to sites in the text that are recorded on the regional 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 end of the report.

## THE EVALUATION AREA

The massive industrial expansion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century turned Machynys from an agricultural district to an industrial landscape. The flat lands of Llanelli Marsh around Machynys and the areas around Seaside – to the west of Machynys – were seen as ideal building land for both factories and worker housing and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the northern section of Machynys had been developed.

The evaluation site occupies c.7.5ha (c.18.5 acres) of former housing and industrial land on the north slope of Machynys Mound (Fig. 1). Its north boundary is formed by the Llanelli coast road, to the east it is bounded by the Machynys West development site and to the south by the site of the former Machynys House. The west edge is formed by the coast.



*Figure 1: Location map of proposed development area (red shaded area).*

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## THE EVALUATION

### Methodology

Three trenches (Fig.2) each measuring 10m x 1.6m were excavated using a JCB excavator with a 1.6m wide toothless grading bucket. In all trenches the turf and topsoil was removed by machine down to the top of the archaeological deposits or natural subsoil. Where archaeological features or deposits were revealed they were cleaned by hand, photographed, and drawn to scale. During excavation all exposed deposits and features were described and allocated their own individual context number. After excavation all revealed features were photographed and planned at 1:20 scale.

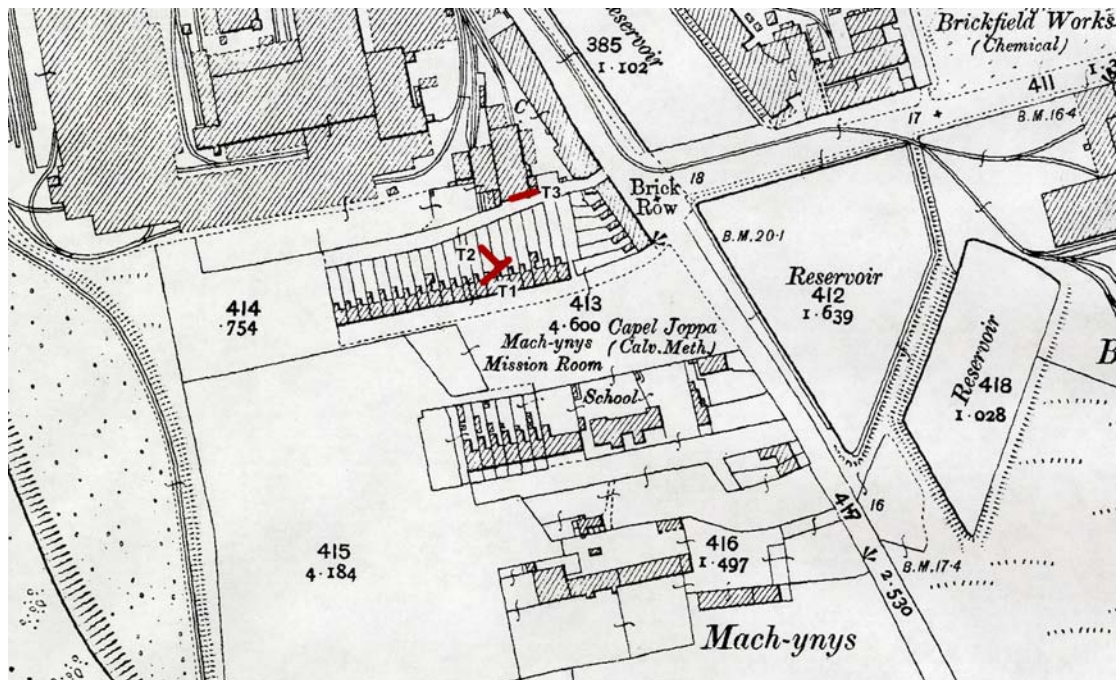


Figure 2: Plan showing the location of the trial trenches overlying second edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map

### Results

The trenches were intended to investigate specific targets identified from Ordnance Survey mapping during the original desk-based assessment (Page 2005). Modern changes to the landscape meant that positioning the trenches accurately was difficult. A hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) was used to position the trenches as close to the chosen locations as possible, however, in the event this was accurate in only one of the three cases. On-site constraints also influenced the final trench locations, but the results of the evaluation have not been too compromised in that at least two of the trenches provided good information about the extent, character, and condition of the buried archaeological resource.

#### Trench 1

Trench 1 was positioned to investigate the area formerly occupied by a terrace of houses (Bay View Terrace). It was positioned using the GPS and ended up being a few metres to the north of its intended location and slightly off its intended

alignment. However, its actual position, it appears, was within the footprint of the back of the terraced houses as marked on the 1921 6 inch Ordnance Survey map.

During the initial machine excavation of this trench three modern service trenches were encountered representing mains water, sewage and (probably) electricity. It was not known whether any or all of these services were still 'live' so after excavating a length of 3.5m, to a depth of c.0.25m, this trench was abandoned and recommenced some 1.5m to the northeast on the same alignment.

Removal of 0.25m of turf and topsoil (context 100) revealed a friable mixed deposit of dark brown sandy soil containing c.30% small and medium sized pebbles and occasional red brick fragments (context 101). The average depth of this deposit was 0.20m and it overlay a natural deposit of glacial or fluvioglacial gravels (context 102) comprising 70% small and medium sized pebbles within a matrix of orange brown sandy soil. Interleaved within this natural deposit were episodic natural deposits comprising 100% yellowish sand with occasional discrete flecks of charcoal which appeared to have been introduced by root action.

The glacial gravels were test excavated to a depth of 0.80m below the present ground surface and were shown to continue, undisturbed, to an unknown depth.

Other than the fragments of red brick, which probably represent building demolition debris associated with the former terrace of houses, no finds were encountered in the mixed layer 101.

### ***Trench 2***

Trench 2 was positioned some 1.2m to the north of, and at right angles to, Trench 1 in an attempt to pick up any trace of the terraced houses that were not located in Trench 1.

The stratigraphic sequence revealed in Trench 1 was repeated in this trench with the exception that there appeared to be a greater percentage of broken red brick fragments in the disturbed layer (context 201, equivalent to 101 in Trench 1) between the turf and topsoil and natural gravels.

### ***Trench 3***

Trench 3 was positioned to investigate the area marked on the Ordnance Survey map as being formerly occupied by industrial buildings of the former South Wales Iron and Tinplate Works and their associated services.

The removal of an average 0.22m depth of turf and topsoil (context 300) revealed a dark brown sandy soil (context 301) containing 45% small, medium and large rounded stones, 5% fragments of red brick and concrete, and 5% general industrial waste and rubbish in the form of metal, glass and plastic. This very mixed friable layer had an average depth of 1.70m below the present ground surface and was seen to overlie a level compacted surface (context 302).

At the western end of the evaluation trench, set within 302, was a linear configuration of at least nine bricks (context 303) aligned east to west and protruding into the trench for a distance of about 1.2m whilst continuing beyond the western end of the trench (Plate 3). A pad of hard concrete (context 304) was revealed adjacent to the southern side of the bricks and seen to continue beyond both the western end and southern side of the excavation trench. A fuller characterisation of these features was not possible due to their depth in relation



to the sides of the excavation. However, it seems clear that they represent components of the industrial buildings shown on the Ordnance Survey maps in this location. At the eastern end of the trench a length of chain-link metal fence was seen to protrude from the compacted surface 302, and throughout its revealed length 302 was also seen to incorporate many red brick fragments and patches of compressed mortar. It appears, then, that 302 probably represents the surface of a late phase of post industrial demolition perhaps being left open for a considerable time prior to being buried during later landscaping represented by 301.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Industrial development at Machynys**

The development of Machynys as an industrial community has been discussed during the desk-based assessment phase of this project. The following short summary is based on the assessment report.

The rapid expansion of the coal, metal processing and associated transport industries dramatically increased the number of people living and working in the Llanelli area during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The flat lands of Llanelli Marsh around Machynys and the areas around Seaside – to the west of the Machynys – were seen as ideal building land for both factories and worker housing and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century factories and housing extended as far as Machynys House.

By the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map was published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century parts of several factories, terraces of worker housing, a school, a chapel and a mission room were all present within the proposed development boundary. With the people living in the houses working in the factories at the end of the road, attending the local school and chapel, it is easy to see how Machynys quickly became an almost self-sufficient community. It has been said that people living in Machynys and other similar tight-knit industrial communities in Llanelli seldom went far as they had everything they needed virtually on their doorstep (Rees 2002, 95).

The decline of Llanelli's industry was as dramatic as its rise. During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Machynys landscape was dominated by the massive factories and the associated infrastructure of industry, but by the middle of the century the factories and the people had gone. The decline is resonant in the words of a former Machynys resident 'gone is our unique community, gone are the jobs' (McKibbin 1995, 128).

Over the last decade or so the former industrial landscape has been replaced by a more leisure-oriented space, which has little or no trace of the dynamic, full and busy landscapes of the recent past.

### **The results of the evaluation**

The evaluation has shown that, in the case of Trench 3, at a depth of some 1.7m below the present ground surface there are *in situ* industrial remains. The results from Trenches 1 and 2, however, are not so clear but it appears that little remains of any buildings to the rear of Bay View Terrace.

Although not specifically investigated, the proposed site of the new pumping station is very close to Trenches 1 and 2, therefore the results from these can be used with some confidence to assess the likely impact of its construction.

Re-alignment of the road and construction of the pumping station will impact on any surviving buried remains. However, those remains appear only discretely across this part of the site, so the impact may be small.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The evaluation revealed that below ground archaeological structures and deposits survived at a depth of 1.70m in Trench 3, at the northern edge of the site. The Ordnance Survey map evidence had shown that that part of the site was formerly occupied by the South Wales Iron and Tinplate Works and the results of the evaluation confirmed that remnants still survive.

The results from Trenches 1 and 2 were conclusive in that they revealed only a small amount of disturbed made ground and only natural deposits below about 0.40m. Anomalies in the GPS readings, however, mean that the trench locations may have been incorrect and that they failed to reveal evidence of the terraced houses, should it indeed exist.

The remains located in Trench 3 may only be a constraint on development if the proposed groundwork is deeper than 1.6m or so, and if that is the case mitigation measures may be required to protect the archaeological resource. Should it be required, the Local Planning Authority's archaeological advisor would decide on the level of any mitigation. However, this could include excavation, survey and/or a watching brief.

The irregular and discrete nature of the remains across the site make it difficult to target further works, therefore, it is suggested that a structured watching brief take place that will allow adequate recording of any remains exposed during development.

## PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1: General view of Trench 1 during excavation showing the glacial deposits.



Plate 2: General view of Trench 2 after excavation, showing glacial deposits.



Plate 3: West end of Trench 3 showing brick structure 303 and associated concrete 304, looking south.



## **SOURCES**

### **Published sources**

McKibbin E     1995    'Machynys – a vanished village'. In J Edwards (Ed.) 1995, p124-128.

Rees A            2002    'New Dock, Llanelli: the changing landscape'. In the *Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, vol. XXXVIII.

### **Unpublished sources**

Page N            2006    *Proposed residential development at Machynys East, Llanelli archaeological desk-based assessment*. Llandeilo. Cambria Archaeology report No.2006/44.

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This report has been prepared by R Ramsey

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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