

LAND AT ST CLEARS CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING



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**LAND AT ST CLEARS
CARMARTHENSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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Cover plate: topsoil stripping

**LAND AT ST CLEARS, CARMARTHENSHIRE
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SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken in advance of the construction of a number of new dwellings by Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd on land to the west of St Clears, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN2760716671). No archaeological features or deposits were present, except for a stone re-used as a field gate post, this stone post. This was possibly originally for a more ornate location nearby.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project commission

About forty new dwelling are being constructed by Taylor Woodrow Developments LTD on land to the west of St Clears, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN2760716671). The development site lies c.600m to the south of a major Roman Road and close to the find of a Bronze Age stone axe. Therefore the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) archaeological advisors recommended that a condition for an archaeological watching brief be attached to the planning consent (Planning Application No. W/13656). This recommendation was accepted by the LPA and Taylor Woodrow commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Services to carry out the watching brief in December 2007.

1.2 Scope of the project

The project was designed to record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during the site clearance works and foundation trench cutting operations.

1.3 Report outline

This report describes the physical environment of the site (Section 2) before summarising the watching brief results and the conclusions based on those results (Section 3).

1.4 Abbreviations

Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Discussions about archaeological problems were with Charles Hill of Cambria Archaeology, the LPA's archaeological advisor.

1.5 Archive Deposition

Dyfed Archaeological Trust HER will initially hold the archive.

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location

The site is located just north a fork in the former trunk road from St Clears to Haverfordwest, now just a through route for Pwll-Trap and the other minor road going north through Llangynm, NGR SN2760716671 (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Location plan. Site (red circle).

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The site was an open pasture field, the south western half of which was fairly level with a distinct break of slope where the ground falls to the north east. In the north corner of the site there was a small hollow. The eastern side of the field has residential development (Fig. 2), with modern fencing; elsewhere hedgebanks enclosed the site.

Although a Roman road passes some 600m to the north there is no evidence that it had any effect on the area of this development. There are two other known sites nearby:

PRN 3876 Park Villa. SN27761653. A greenstone axe with an hour-glass perforation found c.1900 in the grounds of Park Villa, St. Clears. The axe was presented to Carmarthenshire Museum in 1922. The axe may have come from a Bronze Age burial, and the raised position and the break of slope of the development site would be a suitable location for burials of this period.

PRN 25413 Ostrey. SN27301660 Historic Post-medieval house 180m to west of site. Historic home described by Francis Jones in 1987. This house, belonged to the lords of St Clears and remained until 1674 when it was taken down and a new house was built (Jones 1987, 140).

The tithe map (Fig. 3) shows that this site was an open field in 1840, but is unlikely to go back in this form into the medieval period.

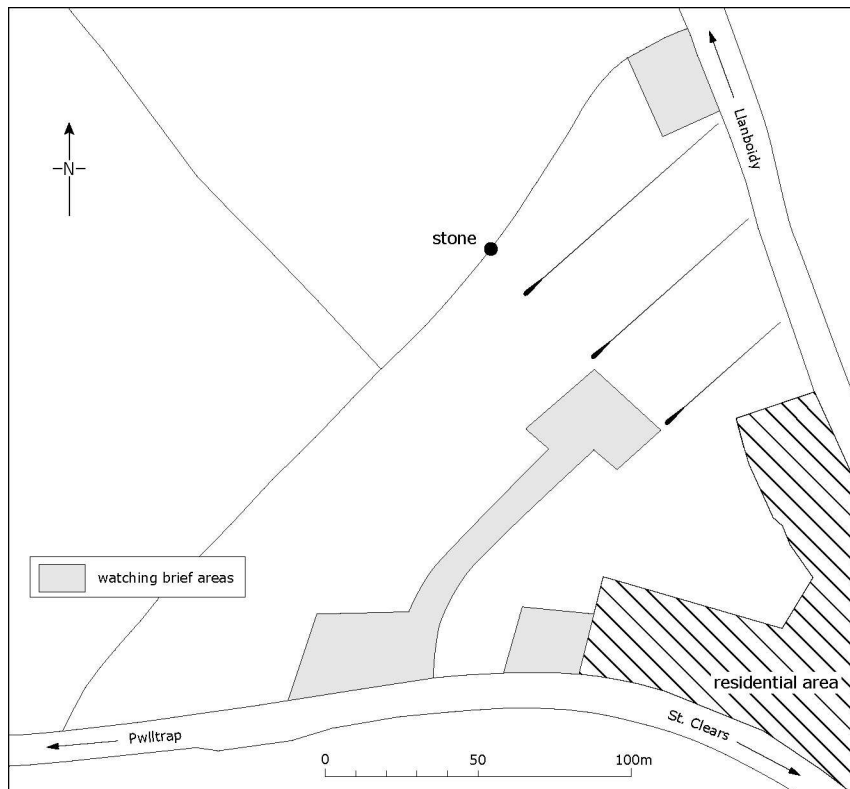


Figure 2: Watching brief areas within the field being developed

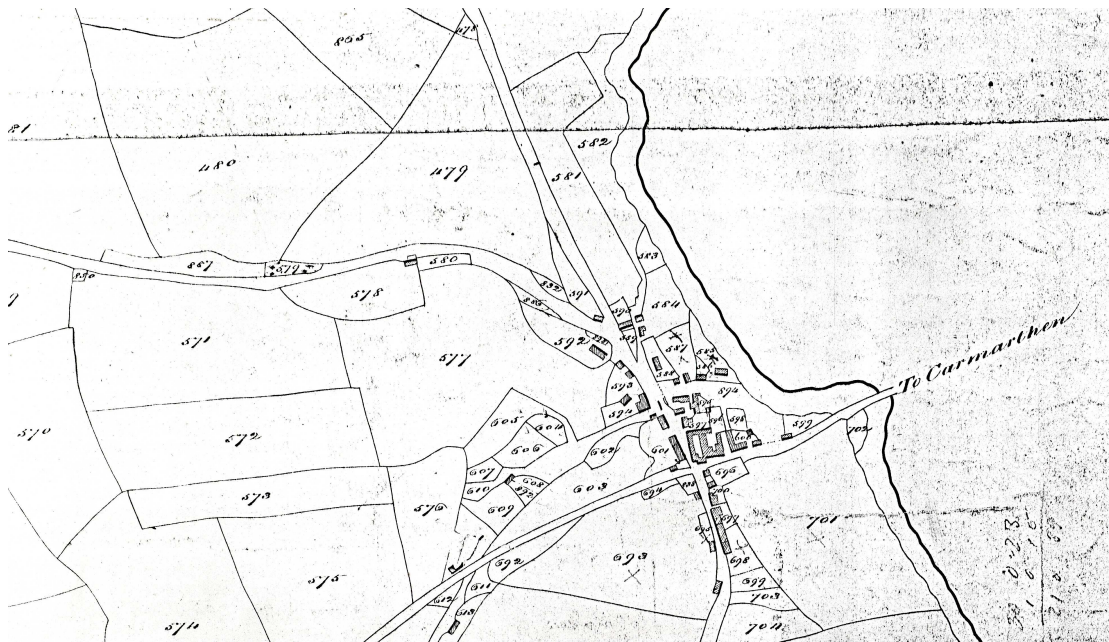


Figure 3: Part of St Clears Tithe Map c 1831. The site is within the triangular field in the upper centre (No 479)

3. SUMMARY OF WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 Methodology

The watching brief commenced on 12 November 2007. The entire initial strip was seen except for a small area for the sales office, which had been cleared earlier.

The areas were roughly topsoil stripped by 360° excavators using a combination of toothed and un-toothed buckets. The areas observed were along the new road for the site, house plots either side on the Pwll Trap road and an area in the corner of the field for the contractors' storage compound. The footing trenches were also observed on one of the house plots by the road. No archaeological features or material of any age were found, therefore Cambria Field Services contacted the LPA for permission to curtail the watching brief. This permission was given and the watching brief ceased on 3 December 2007. The areas covered by the watching brief are shown on Figure 2.

3.2 Results

In the upper part of the site the topsoil stripped varied from 200mm to 300mm deep. It contained a fair amount of 19th/20th Century china, pottery and clay pipe fragments. There were also fragments of lime in the soil indicating that it had been ploughed in the past although none of the locals spoken to could remember it as anything other than pasture.

The exposed subsoil was of light yellow brown or very light brown silty clay. A few possible features were investigated that cut this subsoil. These had a light brown fill with charcoal flecks. On excavation these appeared to be the remains of root holes or animal burrows. The only other features seen cutting the subsoil were modern service trenches.

In the north corner of the development an area was cut for the contractors' compound. Here there was up to 1m depth of topsoil, probably caused by hill wash and/or ploughing on the slope. Modern material was only found in the upper part of this topsoil, although there were a few coal flecks lower down.

While working on the site the opportunity was taken to look along the hedge banks. The hedges adjacent to the roads did not appear to be of any antiquity and were mostly of hazel. However the bank to the north west was more substantial, with a lot of stone in its construction, probably cleared fieldstone. The hedge on this bank also appeared older with more mixed vegetation and a few mature trees.

While walking the boundaries a stone gate post was noted, PRN 63949 (location Fig 2, Plates 1 and 2) on the north side of a gateway (NGR SN2760516724) in the north west boundary. This stone was obviously re-used. It stood 1.4m above the ground, was 0.49m wide at the base tapering to 0.390m just below a semi circular top. This stone appears to be of uniform thickness of about 0.13m. There were some chisel marks on the front face and sides, although what could be seen of the back appeared to be a rough finish. There were two 45mm wide, square holes, probably for earlier gate pintles. There was one round hole, c. 25mm diameter, and one new round hole for the present gate bolt. This latter hole does not go through the stone. After discussion with the developer and the LPA it was advised that the gate post should remain where it was and if necessary the gateway filled in with similar hedge banking.



Plate 1: Gate post. PRN 63949 . View E. Scale 1m



Plate 2: Gate post PRN 63949 . View NE. Scale 1m

4. DISCUSSION

The total area of topsoil stripping observed was about 23% of the total area of the development area. Nothing was seen to indicate any archaeological features on the site other than recent china, pottery and other detritus, possibly spread on the fields with manure from the farmyard. There was a deep build up of topsoil at the lower, north end of the site. This deep deposit had a few coal flecks and is likely to date to the post-medieval period, coal not being widely used until after the Elizabethan period (after 1600).

The stone gate post PRN 63949 is quite intriguing as to whether this is a reused grave marker or a reused fine gate post. There was no sign that the stone had been inscribed, and if it had it must have been quite shallow as some of the front face surface still remains. It would seem more likely that this could have been a gate post associated with the medieval house or post medieval house PRN 25413 "Ostrey", 180m to west of site. However, there may be some doubt over the location of this house as it is also described as part of the Castle (Jones 1987, 140).

5. CONCLUSION

Even though there was some potential for archaeological features or deposits on this site, nothing of archaeological interest was present.

6. SOURCES

St Clears Tithe map c. 1841 and schedule 1838

Ordnance Survey first and second editions

Jones F 1978 *Historic Carmarthenshire Homes and their Families*. Carmarthen Antiquarian Society: Carmarthen

**LAND AT ST CLEARS
CARMARTHENSHIRE
Archaeological watching brief**

REPORT NUMBER 2008/14

February 2008

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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