

PARC YR ABBOT, ST CLEARS CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



Prepared
by
Cambria Archaeology
for
Mr and Mrs M Phillips



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PARC YR ABBOT, ST CLEARS CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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**PARC YR ABBOT, ST. CLEARS
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SUMMARY

A planning application was submitted by Mr and Mrs M Phillips (Planning Application number W/16021) for the construction of a new dwelling on a plot of land at Parc yr Abbot Farm, St Clears Carmarthenshire (NGR SN31111647).

The site is located within an area that has been suggested to be the site of a medieval grange (PRN 6683) once owned by the Cistercian monks of Whitland Abbey. Given the potential for archaeological features and deposits to be present within the proposed development site planning permission was granted on condition an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during all major episodes of earth moving or ground breaking, such as topsoil stripping and foundation trench cutting.

In order to comply with the planning condition Mr and Mrs Phillips commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Services to carry out the watching brief during March 2008.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were noted.

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

Plans to construct a new dwelling (Planning Application number W/16021) on a plot of land at Parc yr Abbot Farm required an archaeological watching brief be undertaken. The proposed construction site is located within an area once thought to have been a grange formerly owned by the Cistercian monks of Whitland Abbey. As a result an archaeological watching brief condition was recommended by the Local Authority's (LPA) Archaeological Advisors¹

1.2 Scope of the Project

The project was designed to record any archaeological features or deposits exposed by topsoil stripping across the site.

1.3 Report Outline

This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background (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 (HER²) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

¹ Cambria Archaeology Heritage Management recommended the condition in a letter dated 2nd May 2007.

² Held and managed by Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo

2. THE SITE

2.1 Site Location

The proposed development site occupies a broadly L-shaped plot adjacent to the present Parc yr Abbot farmhouse. Topographically the site is located on the brow of a hill, which gently slopes to the northeast. The site is bounded on the west and south by a hedge line, which on the south side has been truncated. The northern boundary is a hedgebank and a modern garden wall forms the eastern boundary. The site appeared to have formerly been used as pasture.

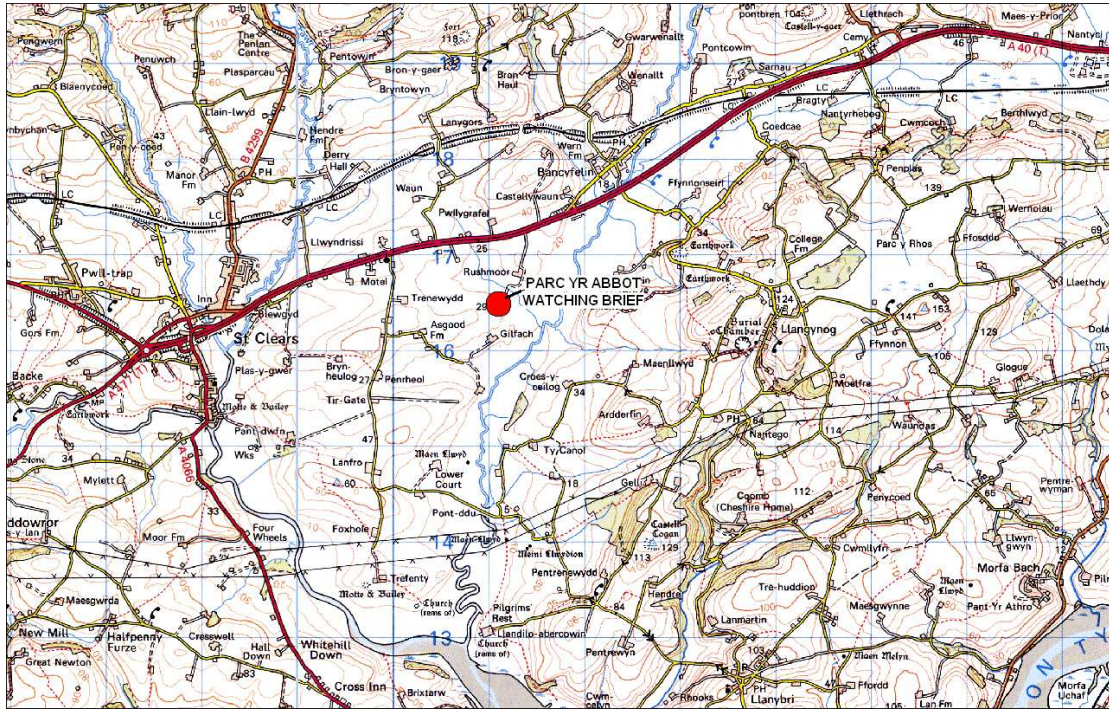


Figure 1: Location of Parc yr Abbot watching brief.

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2.2 Archaeological Potential

No archaeological sites are known to exist within the boundaries of the proposed development site. However, there is the suggestion that it is located within an area that was once the site of a medieval grange that formed part of the extensive landholdings of Whitland Abbey, which in 1291 amounted to 5,040 acres (Cowley, 272). The term grange referring to a monastic farm, which could vary in size from a sheep run to a substantial complex of buildings with refectory, chapel, granary and other agricultural structures. Not only were the granges centres of monastic agriculture but also important for the transaction of business and the provision of hospitality (Williams, 2001, 192).

The grange suspected to have been located in the area of the proposed development site is probably Ystlwyf Grange, which is known to have existed within the parish of Llanfihangel Abercywyn (Williams, 1990, 66). Place name evidence in the form of Parc yr Abbot suggests a connection with Ystlwyf Grange but whether it is the focal point of the grange is not clear. The present Parc yr Abbot Farm outwardly appears to be of 19th century date with much modern building work in the form of agricultural buildings being constructed over the

intervening years. This suggests that if the present farm was the focal point of the grange then any archaeological evidence of the grange buildings may have been destroyed, or at best obscured by later building. Alternatively the name Parc yr Abbot may in fact recall that it was once formed part of Ystlwylf Grange's lands and was not the actual site of the main grange complex, which may have been located elsewhere in the area.

3. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 Watching Brief Methodology

The watching brief methodology consisted of two half day site visits to monitor groundworks being undertaken at the proposed development site. The groundworks monitored comprised of topsoil stripping and levelling of the site prior to construction.



Plate 1: South facing shot following initial topsoil stripping.

3.2 Results

The stratigraphical sequence was consistent across the site with a dark brown clay silt topsoil of a depth of 0.33m covering the site and containing much modern debris in the form of china, pottery, coal ash, a teaspoon and a veterinary syringe. The topsoil overlays a mid yellowish brown clay of a depth of 0.50m which was of firm compaction and contained a relatively high proportion of small shattered shale fragments. The underlying bedrock was noted at the western edge of the proposed development site and was seen to be shale.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were noted during the course of the archaeological watching brief. The only feature noted being a former hedge line which Mr Phillips indicated he had removed sometime around 2005. A relatively recent aerial photograph shown by Mr Phillips clearly showed this hedge line in place.

3.3 Conclusion

Despite the site being located in a potentially archaeologically sensitive area the groundworks required for the construction of the new property had no archaeological impact.



Plate 2: West facing shot showing underlying clay subsoil.



Plate 3: South facing shot following initial stages of site levelling.



Plate 4: General working shot of site with existing farmhouse to rear.

SOURCES

Cowley F G 1977 *The Monastic Order in South Wales 1066-1349*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

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