

# LYRIC THEATRE, KING STREET, CARMARTHEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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## LYRIC THEATRE, KING STREET, CARMARTHEN

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Gan / By

*Simon Ratty*

*Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys*

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**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL**

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf  
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir  
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF  
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121  
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131  
Ffacs: 01558 823133  
Epost: [info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)  
Gwefan: [www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk](http://www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk)

*Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited*  
*The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,*  
*Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF*  
*Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121*  
*Heritage Management Section 01558 823131*  
*Fax: 01558 823133*  
*Email: [info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)*  
*Website: [www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)*

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**LYRIC THEATRE, KING STREET, CARMARTHEN:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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## **LYRIC THEATRE, KING STREET, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

### **SUMMARY**

*This report has been prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in response to a request from Mr Hycinth Hettiarachchi of Mott MacDonald Ltd acting on behalf of Carmarthenshire County Council. to provide an archaeological scheme of works to address the potential impacts of a proposed extension to the Lyric Theatre, King Street, Carmarthen (Planning application number W/20391; NGR SN 41359 20061).*

*The development, consists of a new two storey extension to the Lyric Theatre. The extension will provide new changing rooms and associated amenities, a rehearsal room, storage room, plant room, technical store and various lobbies. The development area is situated in a highly sensitive archaeological area given that it is located on the site of the two phases of Moridunum Roman fort and within the medieval walled town of Carmarthen.*

*An archaeological watching brief undertaken during ground-works ahead of the development demonstrated that no archaeological remains associated with the Roman fort or medieval activity were exposed, damaged or destroyed by the works. An unstratified single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from a heavily disturbed context. It was possible to identify the probable 19<sup>th</sup> century surface of Bank Lane but this was deemed to be of low archaeological significance.*

*Piling operations archaeologically monitored on the site did encounter areas of high resistance at the northwest end and in the centre of the site, which may indicate underlying archaeological deposits such as walls, compacted surfaces or other stone built features (or possible geological features).*

*The construction methodology had been designed to try and prevent disturbance to underlying archaeological remains associated with the Roman forts and the medieval town. Previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the Lyric Theatre have demonstrated that significant archaeological remains lay at a minimum depth of 0.6m below the existing ground surface, and thus ground reduction within the site was designed to be above this level.*

*The archaeological watching brief undertaken during the groundworks associated with the proposed extension to the Lyric Theatre demonstrated that the development has had a minimal impact on archaeological remains. It is considered likely that archaeological remains associated with Roman and medieval activity will lie relatively undisturbed beneath the new extension to the Lyric Theatre, having only been directly affected by the works through piling.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Project Commission**

A planning application was submitted by Mott MacDonald for the construction of a two-storey extension to the Lyric Theatre, King Street, Carmarthen (Figure 1). The proposed development site lies within the location of the known Roman forts at Carmarthen and within the later medieval walled town. The site area has a very high potential to contain archaeological remains of high importance, associated with development and usage of the Roman Forts, as well as later Medieval and Post Medieval remains.

Due to the proposed development area lying within this archaeologically sensitive location, discussions were held between Mr Hycinth Hettiarachchi of Mott MacDonald Ltd and Charles Hill of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management in order to ascertain how the proposed development might impact upon any underlying archaeological remains. The high potential for underlying archaeological remains of high importance, was a factor in the development of the construction methodology which comprised small pile foundations and large concrete slab floor. Preparation works for the floor slab were to be shallow (around 0.6m from present ground surface). The construction methodology was designed to cause minimal disturbance to any underlying archaeological remains.

As a result of these discussions, it was recommended by the Local Planning Authority (through discussions with Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management, that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during all episodes of ground breaking and earth moving on the site which had the potential to expose, damage or destroy any underlying archaeological remains.

### **Scope of the Project**

The watching brief was designed to monitor all groundworks which had the potential to expose, damage or destroy archaeological remains, and to make a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed.

### **Report Outline**

This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background before summarising the watching brief results and the conclusions based on those results.

### **Abbreviations**

Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER<sup>1</sup>) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

### **Illustrations**

Record photographs are included at back of the report. Printed map extracts are for illustrative purposes only and are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

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<sup>1</sup> Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

## THE SITE

### Location

The area of the proposed extension is located on a plot of land situated within the historic core of the town of Carmarthen (Figure 1). It occupies a site behind the Lyric Cinema on King Street and is bounded to the northwest by the former Assembly Rooms building, now occupied by a sports shop. To the northeast the boundary is formed by Bank Lane, whilst to the southeast are Carmarthenshire County Council Planning Offices and Spilman Street (The general location of the Lyric Theatre and its surroundings are shown on Photos 15 – 20).

The underlying solid geology of the area is represented by Ordovician sedimentary rocks of the Arenig series (British Geological Survey, 1994).

### Archaeological Background

The development site is located in close proximity to six known archaeological sites.

PRN	NGR	Site Name	Form	Period
<b>39</b>	SN 414 200	Moridunum	Forts	Roman
<b>136</b>	SN 4134 2008	The Assembly Rooms	Meeting Room	Post Medieval
<b>181</b>	SN 4138 2008	Spilman St No 41; Bank House	Bank (Financial)	Post Medieval
<b>61676</b>	SN 4134 2006	Lyric Buildings	Shops and Offices	Post Medieval
<b>61710</b>	SN 4134 2007	Lyric Theatre and front range to King St	Cinema	Post Medieval
<b>61925</b>	SN 4138 2004	Bank House	House	Post Medieval

**Table 1:** Known archaeological sites in close proximity to development site.

With the exception of the Roman forts, none of these known archaeological sites would be directly affected by the development. The known alignment of the northern defences of the first Roman fort lies to the south of or along King Street, following the same alignment as the road. This suggests that there is a high potential for remains of the ditch and associated embankment (parts of the defences of the fort) to be present within the northern part of the proposed extension. The southern half of the site would lie inside the defences of this fort, and thus there is a high potential for structures and other associated activity to be present. The later, smaller Roman fort also lies within the area and it is possible that the line of the northern defences of this fort would be present in the southern part of the site area, which would most likely have truncated any remains associated with activity within the earlier fort.

The development site is also situated within the medieval 'new' town of Carmarthen and is considered to be in an area where a number of burgage plots were located.

King Street is considered to have originated as a trackway between 'New Carmarthen', centred on the castle, and 'Old Carmarthen' centred in the area of the former Roman town. 'New Carmarthen' came under the jurisdiction of the castle whilst the old town was under the control of the Augustinian Priory. This resulted in the fact Carmarthen was effectively two separate towns in the medieval period, each with its own rights and privileges, a situation that would continue until 1546 when they were amalgamated to form a single Corporate Borough (Lodwick and Lodwick, 1994, 55).

The first documentary evidence for King Street occurs in 1355 where it is included in the Cartulary of the Priory when it is called 'Sutternistret'. King Street was not enclosed within the first town walls of 1233, but following the Owain Glyndwr Revolt the walled area of the town was increased by three fold in 1415 and enclosed the street. A gateway, known as the 'White Gate', was constructed during this period at the north-western end of the street (*ibid*, 379). Within the newly enclosed area are located Conduit and Bank Lanes that provide access between King Street and Spilman Street. There is a suggestion that these lanes pre-date the enclosure of the area and may be evidence of mid thirteenth century formal planning. It is possible that further lanes may once have existed connecting the two streets as indicated by a number of continuous property boundaries between King and Spilman Street which may represent fossilised burgage plots (James, 1980, 31-32).

In addition to the above named sites, map evidence has revealed that three structures were present within the development area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Ordnance Survey, 1890 & 1906, Figures 2 and 3). It would appear from the available map evidence that the southeast part of the site has remained undeveloped since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and is considered to have formed the garden of Bank House. The proposed extension overlies footprint of the northeast – southwest aligned structure shown to occupy the north-western part of the site. The sites of two further earlier structures are currently occupied by the Lyric Cinema building that was constructed in 1936.

During the Second World War a medical research facility is said to have been present within the site area, although no further evidence exists to support this. The main building that was demolished to make way for the extension is likely to have dated from this period, being of typical wartime construction, comprising brick built walls, metal framed windows and little or no ornamentation or finery (Photo 5). The building would have originally had a flat reinforced concrete roof (timber was in short supply and used very sparingly), although this had been heightened and a pitched roof added at a later date. The building would most likely have been left with the brick exposed on its exterior, but was subsequently rendered. No internal features survived within the building.

Figure 4 overlies the known sites of the Roman forts, Roman town and roadlines on the 1906 Ordnance Survey map, which provides the clearest overview of how the later street patterns respected the lines of the earlier Roman features. The plan is also clearly demonstrates the layout of earlier property boundaries which are likely to have originated in the medieval period as burgage plots (clearest on the south side of Spilman Street).

The archaeological background demonstrates that the development area has a high potential to contain archaeological remains. Previous archaeological investigations in the area have demonstrated that significant archaeological levels are located from around 0.6m below present ground surface. This information partly informed the design of the extension, and as a result all proposed groundworks were to be kept above 0.6m below present ground surface.

## **WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

### **Methodology**

The watching brief methodology consisted of a series of ten site visits to archaeologically monitor four phases of ground-works being undertaken as part of the redevelopment of the Lyric Cinema. The four phases of work all had the potential to expose, damage or destroy archaeological remains.

The four phases of work comprised the following:

- Phase 1: Test Pits – excavated to ascertain the depths of existing footings for surrounding buildings and walls;
- Phase 2: Site Clearance and Level Reduction – demolition of existing buildings within the footprint of the extension, and removal of uppermost material to a maximum depth of 0.6m on top of which material would be placed to create a piling mat and base for the concrete floor slab;
- Phase 3: Drainage Trench Excavations – excavation of service trenches for drainage purposes; and
- Phase 4: Piling – the installation of foundation piles through the piling mat.

## **RESULTS**

### **Phase 1: Test Pits**

Site visits were made to monitor the excavation of four test pits within the footprint of the proposed extension to the Lyric Theatre. Three of the test pits were located along the southwest of the existing boundary wall between the development site and Bank Lane. The final test pit was excavated adjacent to the northwestern emergency exit opening on to Bank Lane.

#### ***Test Pit 1*** (Photo 1, Table 2)

Test Pit 1 was located on the north side of the Bank Lane entrance. The pit measured 0.45m by 0.65m wide and was dug up against the boundary wall to a maximum depth of 1.35m. The test pit revealed the footing of the boundary wall at a depth of 0.75m.

Other than the boundary wall footing no further archaeological features or deposits were revealed.

#### ***Test Pit 2*** (Photo 2, Table 3)

Test Pit 2 was located adjacent to the southwest face of the existing boundary wall and measured 0.9m x 0.7m originally with a depth of 0.6m. A 0.25 wide sondage was excavated to a depth of 0.4m against the face of the boundary wall that revealed the footing of the wall at a depth of 0.74m. Modern ceramic and brick material was recorded within the test pit, but not retained.

No further archaeological features or deposits were present in Test Pit 2.

**Test Pit 3** (Photo 3, Table 4)

Excavated to a depth of 0.84m and measuring 0.94 x 0.6m, Test Pit 3 was located adjacent to the southwest face of the existing boundary wall. As with Test Pit 2 the footing of the boundary wall was revealed. An unstratified single piece of green glazed pottery of possible medieval date was recovered and retained. Modern ceramic material was also recorded from within the test pit, but not retained.

No further archaeological features or deposits were revealed in Test Pit 3.

**Test Pit 4** (Photo 4, Table 5)

Located at the southeast corner of the existing fire exit opening onto Bank Lane, Test Pit 4 measured 0.8 x 0.64m and was excavated to a depth of 0.8m. Modern disturbance in the form of a 0.8m deep engineering brick pier and concrete were noted but not deemed to be of archaeological significance. However, in the southwest section of the test pit at a depth of 0.3m a compact layer of large flat angular stone was revealed. This may represent the former surface of Bank Lane.

With the exception of the possible lane surface and modern disturbance no further archaeological features or deposits were revealed in Test Pit 4.

**Phase 2: Site Clearance and Level reduction** (Photos 5-9, Table 6)

Following demolition of two modern buildings within the development area the site was cleared of demolition rubble prior to the reduction of the level of the existing ground.

A fragment of brown saltglazed stoneware drain pipe noted on the surface of the cleared site bore the makers mark 'Gwent Stoneware Pontnewydd Mon' which indicates a pre 1964 date of manufacture. A large number of LBC Phorpres red bricks were also noted on the pile of demolition rubble that occupied part of the site prior to its removal. These were produced by the London Brick Company up until 1974, the name 'Phorpres', was a pun referring to the four press method of manufacture used in their production.

Following site clearance excavations commenced to reduce the ground level of the development site by an average depth of 0.5m. Initial excavations revealed much modern disturbance by services and modern drains. A single hand made early 19<sup>th</sup> century brick, along with a number of broken early 20<sup>th</sup> century Trimsaran engineering bricks were recovered but not retained. In addition to the brick finds the base of a free blown wine bottle was recovered. The considered date for the bottle is mid to late 18<sup>th</sup> century and would probably been of squat cylinder form. Finds of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic material were made but these were not retained.

The depth of the ground reduction works was designed to avoid impacting into the likely depth of archaeological deposits at the site. No significant archaeological features or deposits were identified during site clearance and level reduction works, and therefore this part of the watching brief confirmed that the ground reduction works did not truncate into any significant underlying archaeological deposits.

**Phase 3: Drainage Trench Excavations** (Photos 10-12, Table 7)

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the excavation of a 6m x 0.84m x 0.61m deep drainage trench running from the rear of the Carmarthenshire County Council offices at 41 Spilman Street and terminating at an existing

manhole. The excavations revealed modern debris in the form of red brick fragments, coal ash and a single complete Swansea red brick, none of which were retained.

No significant archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the drainage trench excavations. Again the watching brief demonstrated that the groundworks did not truncate any significant underlying archaeological remains.

#### **Phase 4: Piling** (Photos 13 and 14)

Following excavation of the development site to the required level the final phase of the ground-works consisted of the installation of fifty steel piles. An archaeological presence was maintained during this phase in order to monitor the works. The piling layout had been designed to allow small changes in the locations of the piles in the event that they encountered underlying obstructions which prevented the pile from penetrating further into the ground. The locations of such obstructions could indicate the presence of archaeological remains, such as walls, compacted surfaces or other stone built features. In the event that piles needed to be moved, the watching brief would record during the removal and relocation of the piles (it had been agreed at an early stage of the design that it would not be acceptable to excavate and remove any underlying obstructions, as this could cause substantial disturbance to any underlying archaeological remains).

The piling at the Lyric theatre encountered substantial resistance at the northwest end of the development site, whilst towards the centre of the site one pile bent after encountering an obstruction at a depth of c.2m. Neither the piles at the northwest end of the site, or the damaged one in the centre were required to be moved and were successfully driven into their required locations. Although obstructions were encountered, it is not possible to substantiate whether they encountered buried archaeological features or natural geological deposits.

No archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the installation of the piles.



## **CONCLUSIONS**

There was considered to be a high potential for archaeological remains to lie within the proposed extension of the Lyric Theatre associated with the two phases of Roman fort, medieval activity associated with Carmarthen 'New' Town and also with post-medieval activity within Carmarthen. The depth of the proposed groundworks had been designed to lie above the anticipated depth of buried archaeological remains at around 0.6m below present ground surface (as had been demonstrated from other archaeological investigations in the area). The watching brief demonstrated that the groundworks associated with the proposed extension to the Lyric Theatre did not disturb any significant underlying archaeological remains.

The Phase 1 Test Pitting along the boundary walls were excavated through modern debris and the foundation cut for the wall itself, and hence no significant underlying archaeological remains were exposed, damaged or destroyed. A possible 19<sup>th</sup> century road surface to Bank Lane was identified.

The Phase 2 Site Clearance and Level Reduction across the footprint of the proposed extension demonstrated that only modern levels comprising foundations of former 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings and associated service trenches were present. These layers were visible throughout the entire depth of the ground reduction, and thus no underlying archaeological deposits were exposed, damaged or destroyed.

The Phase 3 Drainage Trench Excavations were excavated through the same material as for Phase 2, and thus no underlying archaeological deposits were exposed, damaged or destroyed by these works.

The Phase 4 Piling was undertaken from a piling mat placed on top of the reduced ground level. The methodology was such that the piles were driven into the ground to significant depths to support the proposed extension. In some areas obstructions or resistance was encountered during the insertion of the piles, which could indicate the presence of underlying remains, such as walls, compacted surfaces or other stone built features. It was not possible to establish what the obstructions were, but it is assumed that the piles would have caused localised areas of disturbance to underlying archaeological deposits, both within the line of the pile and also through displacement around the pile as they were driven into the ground. The piling was successfully completed without the need for further below ground disturbance. The disturbance to underlying archaeological deposits from the piling layout had been deemed acceptable by the archaeological advisor to the planning authority.

Although there was a high potential for archaeological remains associated with Roman and medieval to be present within the site area, the only significant find of these dates recovered from the site comprised a single sherd of green glazed medieval pottery. The sherd was recovered from a heavily disturbed modern layer and was not found associated with any other medieval remains. The absence of other finds of Roman or medieval date may indicate that underlying archaeological levels have remained relatively intact below modern development, or potentially that modern development has removed any earlier remains (although this is considered highly unlikely).

It is considered that the ground-works undertaken at the Lyric Theatre had a minimal impact on the buried archaeological resource, which was one of the aims of the design of the construction methodology. It is not known what impact the piling had on any underlying archaeological deposits, although it had been deemed that as the disturbance to archaeological remains from the proposed piling would be small, this was an acceptable loss.

## **SOURCES**

### **Cartographic**

British Geological Survey 1994 *The Rocks of Wales*. 1:250,000.

Ordnance Survey 1890 1:10560 Carmarthenshire Sheet XXXIX NE

Ordnance Survey 1906 1:10560 Carmarthenshire Sheet XXXIX NE

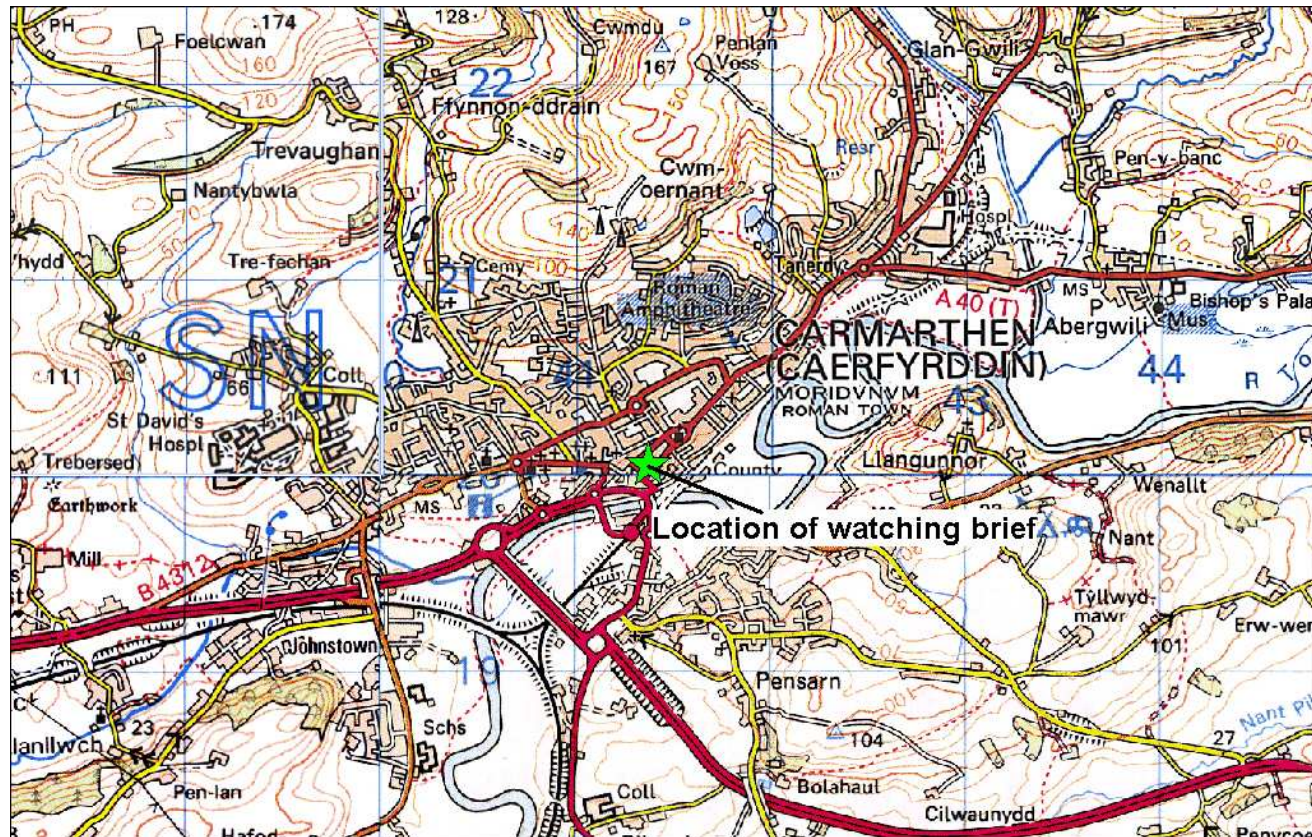
### **Bibliographic**

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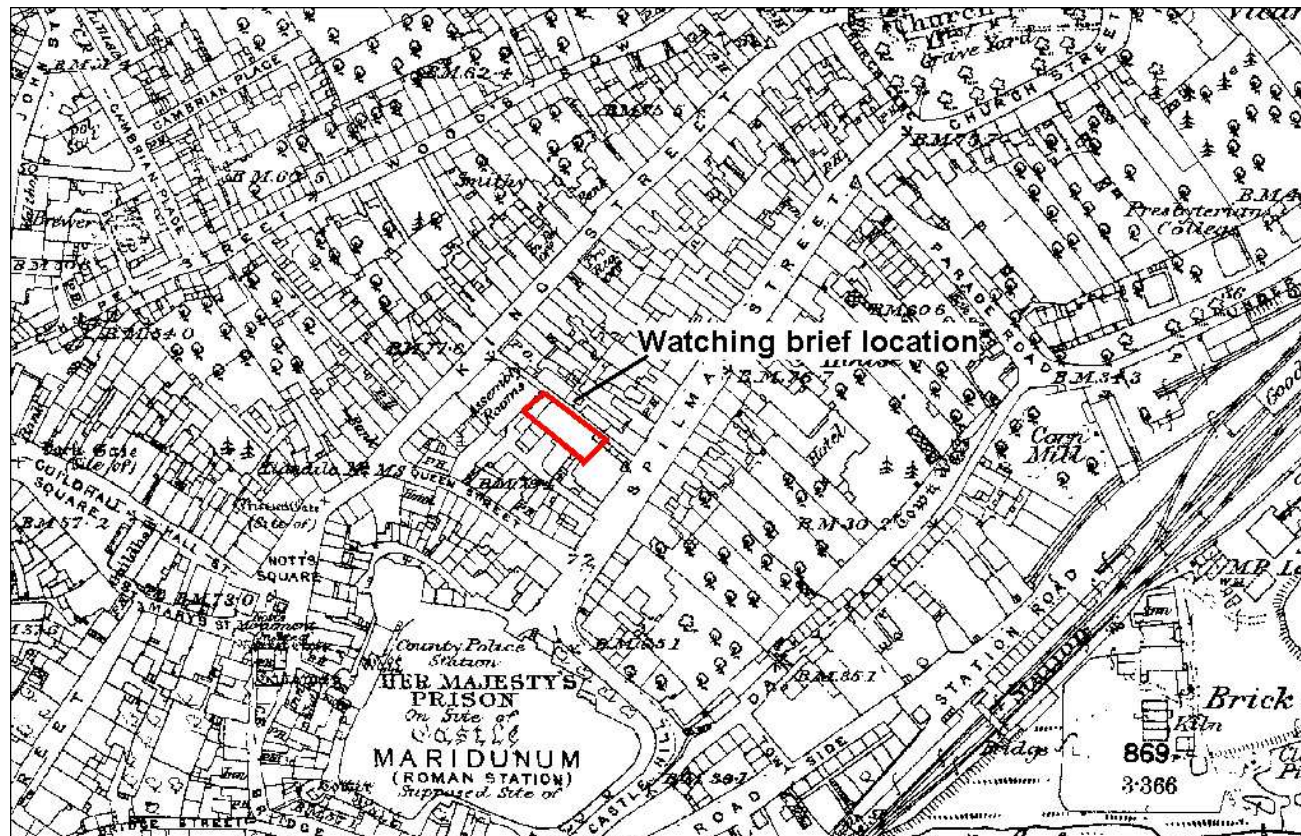
Spurrell W 1879 *Carmarthen and its Neighbourhood*. Carmarthen. William Spurrell.



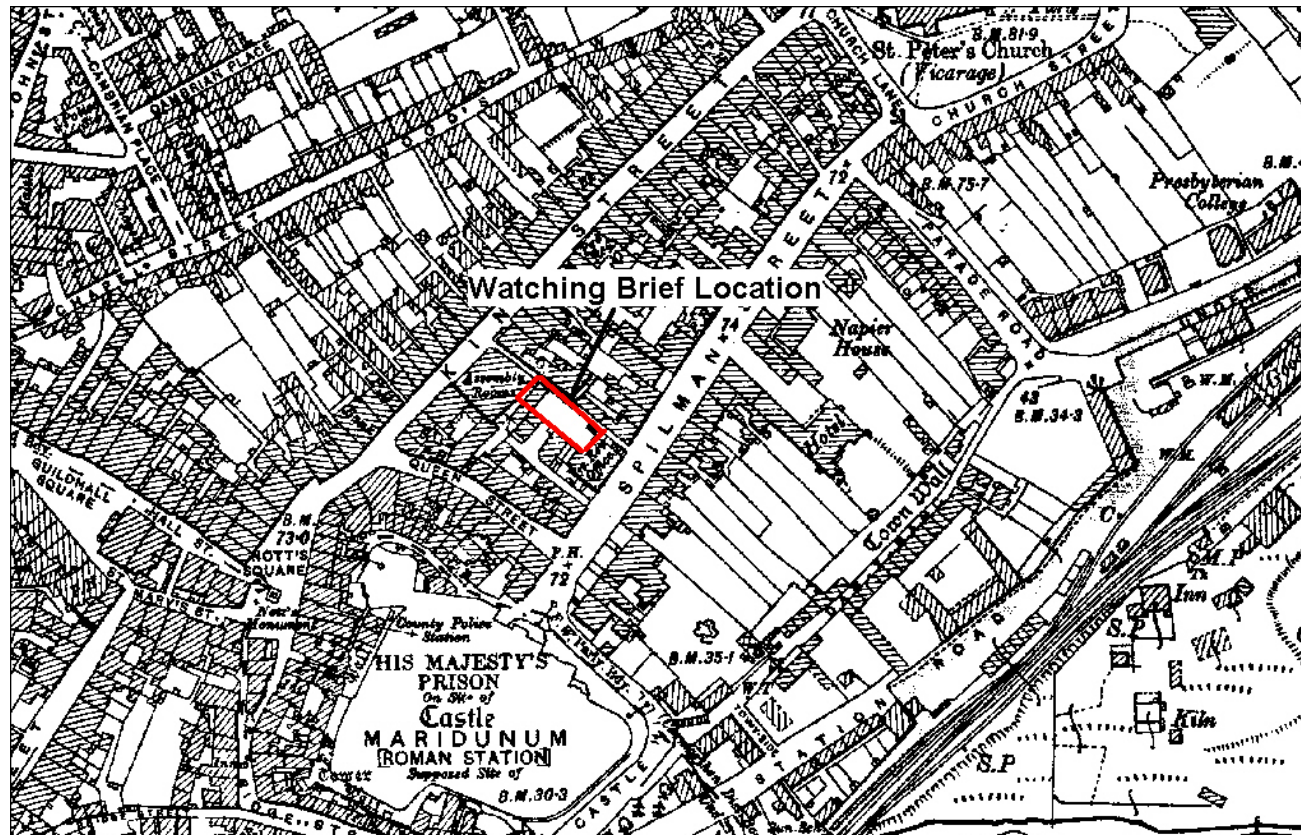
**Figure 1:** Location map based on the Ordnance Survey.

Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd., The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A



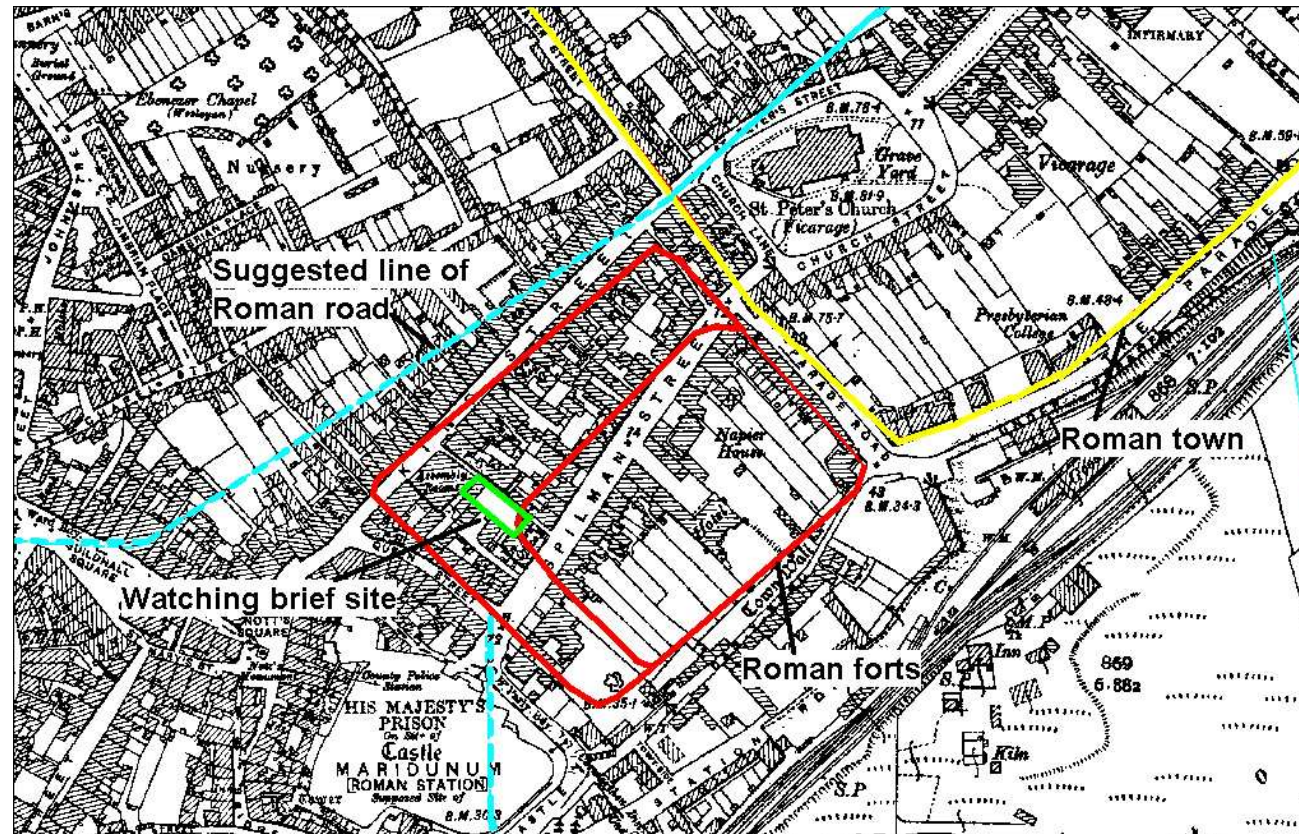


**Figure 2:** Extract of 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map 1890.



**Figure 3:** Extract of 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map (1906).





**Figure 4:** Plan of Roman fort and town superimposed on 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map (1906).

## TEST PITTING

### Test Pit 1

Number	Description	Depth
Layer (100)	Topsoil Friable dark grey brown clay silt containing occasional small to medium angular stone, red brick and mortar fragments. Modern ceramic recovered but not retained.	0.74m
Layer (101)	Natural Firm mid orange brown clay.	0.31m
Layer (102)	Boundary Wall Footing Un-coursed rubble wall bonded with lime mortar.	0.3m

**Table 2:** Context and soil descriptions for Test Pit 1.



**Photo 1:** Test Pit 1 showing boundary wall footing (102).



## Test Pit 2

Number	Description	Depth
Layer (200)	Topsoil Friable dark grey brown clay silt containing occasional small to medium angular stone, red brick and mortar fragments. Modern ceramic recovered but not retained. One sherd of green glaze medieval pottery recovered and retained.	0.74m
Layer (201)	Boundary Wall Footing Un-coursed rubble wall bonded with lime mortar.	0.11m

**Table 3:** Context and soil descriptions for Test Pit 2.



**Photo 2:** Test Pit 2 southwest facing section.

### Test Pit 3

Number	Description	Depth
Layer (300)	Topsoil Friable dark grey brown clay silt containing occasional small to medium angular stone, red brick and mortar fragments. Modern ceramic recovered but not retained.	0.70m
Layer (301)	Boundary Wall Footing Un-coursed rubble wall bonded with lime mortar.	0.14m

**Table 4:** Context and soil descriptions for Test Pit 3.



**Photo 3:** Test Pit 3 facing northwest. Boundary wall footing (301) visible in base.



#### **Test Pit 4**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
Layer (400)	Concrete surface	0.08m
Layer (401)	Engineering brick pier	0.8m
Layer (402)	Concrete base of (401)	
Layer (403)	Former lane surface Compact large angular stone	0.18m

**Table 5:** Context descriptions for Test Pit 4.



**Photo 4:** Test Pit 4 facing southeast.

## **SITE CLEARANCE AND LEVEL REDUCTION**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
Layer (500)	Topsoil Friable dark grey brown clay silt containing occasional small to medium angular stone, red brick and mortar fragments. Modern ceramic recovered but not retained.	0.5m

**Table 6:** Soil descriptions for site clearance and level reduction.



**Photo 5:** Modern buildings within development area prior to demolition.





**Photo 6:** Initial site clearance following demolition.



**Photo 7:** Development site facing northwest.





**Photo 8:** Development site following ground level reduction.



**Photo 9:** Overall view of development site from southeast.



## **DRAINAGE TRENCH EXCAVATIONS**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth</b>
Layer (600)	Concrete capping	0.1m
Layer (601)	Mid brown clay silt of friable compaction containing brick and mortar fragments. Small quantities of coal ash and sand present	0.51m

**Table 7:** Context and soil descriptions for drainage pipe excavations.



**Photo 10:** Southeast view of drainage trench.





**Photo 11:** North facing section of drainage trench.



**Photo 12:** Brick foundation of modern stage building.



## **PILING**



**Photo 13:** General working shot of piling in progress.



**Photo 14:** Overall view of development site during piling operations.



## **ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS**



**Photo 15:** Bank Lane facing southeast.



**Photo 16:** No 41 Spilman Street (PRNs 181 and 61925).



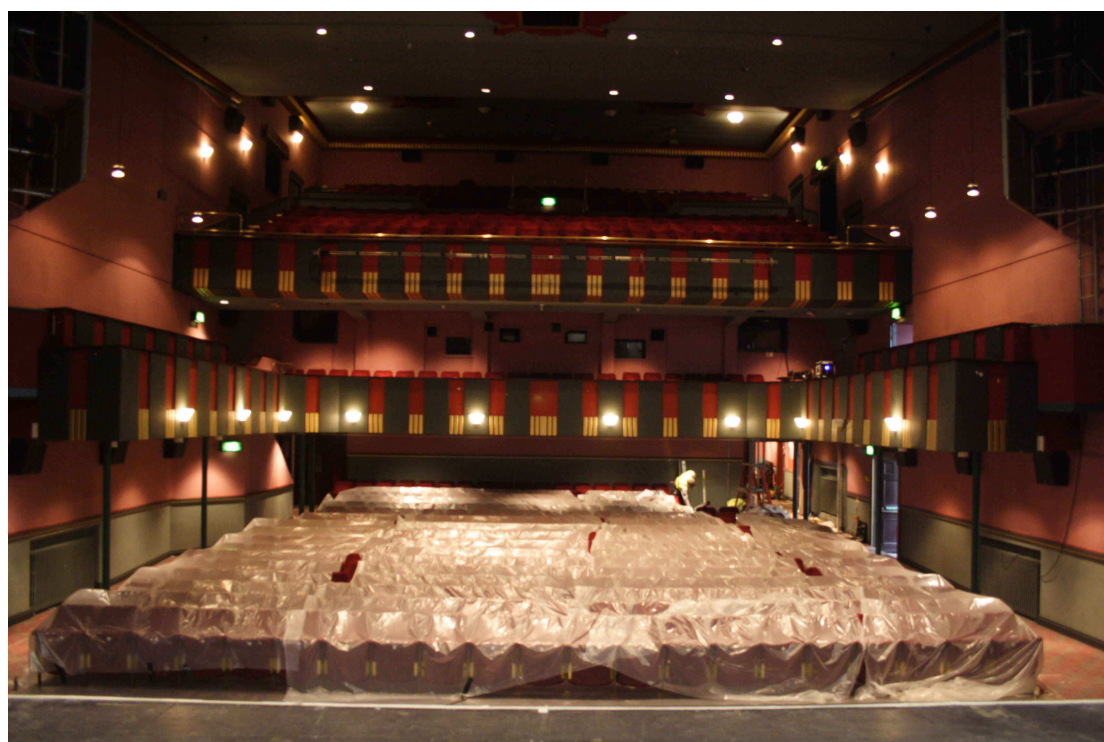


**Photos 17 & 18:** Front and rear views of surviving portion of former Assembly Rooms (PRN 136)





**Photo 19:** Lyric buildings (PRN 61790) façade from northeast.



**Photo 20:** Interior of Lyric Theatre during refurbishment works.

# LYRIC THEATRE, KING STREET, CARMARTHEN

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

**RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2008/85**

**July 2009**

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan /  
This report has been prepared by:

**Simon Ratty**

Swydd / Position: **Archaeologist**

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith /  
This report has been checked and approved by:

**James Meek**

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.  
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: **Head of Field Services**

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date

*Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau sydd  
gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn /*

*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*