

**HAVERFORDWEST THE CRYPT,
PEMBROKESHIRE
(SM 95226 15560)
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

December 2009



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For: Red Dragon Ltd



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RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2010/5
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. PRN 98681

Rhagfyr 2009
December 2009

HAVERFORDWEST, THE CRYPT ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Gan / By

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HAVERFORDWEST THE CRYPT: ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SUMMARY

The 'Crypt' (PRN 6503) is a medieval 13th century vaulted undercroft in Haverfordwest (NGR SM 95226 15560). The undercroft is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. Pe 079) and is a Grade II Listed Building (6/193).

As part of a redevelopment of the site a new floor surface was to be laid in the undercroft. This entailed the removal of the existing floor surface and any underlying deposits to a depth of 15cm. Because of its SAM status, an archaeological watching brief on these groundworks was required by Cadw and the Local Planning Authority, to ascertain whether there were any surviving original Medieval or other floor surfaces present.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned to undertake the watching brief in December 2009 by Red Dragon Ltd.

A Drainage channel of a probable Post Medieval date and a modern service pipe were the only features to be revealed during the watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

The 'Crypt' (PRN 6503) is a medieval 13th century vaulted undercroft in Haverfordwest (NGR SM 95226 15560). The undercroft is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. Pe 079) and is a Grade II Listed Building (6/193).

As a consequence of the SAM status of the undercroft, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was placed by Cadw and the Local Planning Authority upon the groundworks associated with the laying of a new 'limecrete' floor in the undercroft.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by Red Dragon Ltd to undertake the watching brief in December 2009, to fulfil works.

1.2 Scope of the Project

The watching brief was required to record any features or deposits of archaeological significance that might be exposed during the groundworks within the Undercroft.

1.3 Watching brief methodology

The watching brief comprised of a single site visit to monitor the removal by hand of the existing gravel floor surface and underlying deposits to a depth of 15cm. A photographic drawn and written record was to be made of any evidence of earlier floor surfaces or other archaeological features that might be revealed during the groundworks.

2 THE SITE

2.1 Location

The building known as 'The Crypt' (PRN 6503) lies beneath pavement level at the junction of High Street and Market Street, Haverfordwest, 8.5 metres southeast of the southeast corner of St Mary's parish church. Through viewing the 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps, it can be seen that there is a town house built over the undercroft (see figures 1 and 2).

2.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

The 'Crypt' is in fact a medieval vaulted undercroft originally the cellar of a town house which appears to have been largely rebuilt during the post-medieval period and which has now been demolished. The following description of the undercroft based on a record made prior to the redevelopment of the site (Ludlow 2005).

The undercroft is reached from the pavement via a flight of stone steps. The undercroft is roughly rectangular in plan, measuring 6.20 metres north-south by 4.60 metres east-west. Its side-walls average 1.60 metres in height, rising to 2.10 metres at the apices of the vault. It is divided into six cells, by two simple cylindrical piers, with simple chamfered, circular capitals and bases. Each cell is covered by a quadripartite rib-vault. The facework of the side-walls, and the infill of the vault soffits, is in limestone rubble, while the vault ribs are in simply-chamfered sandstone. The north wall is pierced by two secondary 19th-20th century windows and the west wall by a secondary entry of similar date. The windows are covered by gratings, while the doorway carries an iron gate permitting views to the interior. The south wall may contain evidence of the now blocked original entrance to the undercroft from the ground floor. The west wall, up to vault springer, is formed by a vertical cut into the shale bedrock. Parts of the other three walls are also cut into the bedrock which follows the natural downhill slope from west to east. The keystones of the rib intersections in the two northern cells exhibit floral mouldings representing 5-petalled roses.

There is little published material relating to The Crypt. The Ancient Monuments Record Form, produced for Cadw cites an account from 1868 describing the undercroft as 'Transitional-Norman' in form.

The Cadw Listed Buildings database contains the short entry - "Early 12th century vaulted stone crypt opposite St Mary's Church. Probably a charnel vault and possibly a building which had some connection with a nearby nunnery".

Ludlow (2005) argues that there is no evidence for a nunnery nearby, and that the quality of the building argues against its use as a charnel vault. He also suggests that the dating of the vault to the 12th century or early 13th century may be called into question. He suggests that the style of the 5-petalled rose mouldings may suggest a 15th-16th century date for the building.

An information plaque formerly on the outside of the building, reads thus:

"This vaulted crypt formed the ground floor of a late 12th century or early 13th century house. Its position on the corner of two important streets, and the quality of the fine ribbed vault and circular piers suggest that it was the house of one of the great merchants of Haverfordwest. The vaulted ground floors of these houses were generally used for storage, while the drier and more secure upper storeys were used as the living areas. This vault probably had no windows and was originally entered from the back – the present doorway is a later insertion".

4 RESULTS

Following the removal of the existing gravel surface (0.04m thick), a number of large flagstones were revealed around the edges of the room. These were at first thought to be the remains of a floor surface. Closer examination, however, demonstrated that the stones were capping for a drain running along the base of all four internal walls of the undercroft. The drain consists of a rock cut channel measuring 0.20m in deep and 0.43m wide in the southwest corner and 0.23m deep and 0.54m wide in the northwest corner.

The drain cut was lined with mortared vertical stone slab sides, and was capped with stone slabs and occasionally roofing slates.

On the eastern wall and part of the southern wall the drain was cut by modern services. The modern services may have destroyed evidence for the drain exiting through the north wall to link with a drain elsewhere.

The drain contained a dark brown silty clay with occasional animal bone and fragments of post medieval glass and ceramics. Modern food wrappers were also noted, but these may have been introduced to the drain by rodent activity.

In the centre of the room a layer of blackish brown silty clay underlay the gravel layer. Below this was a thin and patchy spread of mortar fragments lying directly on shale bedrock.

The date of the drain is uncertain; although it could possibly be medieval in origin, it is perhaps more likely to be post-medieval since post medieval ceramics were recovered from mortar used to construct the drain.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Although impossible to date with certainty, the drain running along the base of the undercroft walls appears to be a post medieval modification, presumably intended to dry out the cellar. Ludlow (2005) mentions that there is a possible door situated in the south west corner of the undercroft which may have been the original entrance to the undercroft. The blocking up of this entrance, and other changes around the undercroft may have caused drainage problems, which the drain was intended to alleviate.

No evidence for the survival or presence of earlier or original floor surfaces within the undercroft was revealed during the groundworks. No other archaeological features or deposits were revealed.

6 SOURCES

Map

Ordnance Survey, 1891, Pembrokeshire Sheet XXVII NE 1st edition 1:10,560

Ordnance Survey, 1908, Pembrokeshire Sheet XXVII NE 2nd edition 1:10,560

Ludlow, N. 2005. The Crypt, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire. Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).

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Miles, D.1999. '*A HISTORY OF HAVERFORDWEST*'. Gomer Press, Llandysul.

Rees, S,1992. *A Guide to Ancient and Historic Wales. Dyfed*. London: HMSO

Ludlow, N. 2005. The Crypt, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire. Cambria (Dyfed Archaeological Trust).



Figure 1: Pembrokeshire 1st edition map showing Crypt location as red spot.



Figure 2: Pembrokeshire 2nd edition map showing Crypt location as red spot.

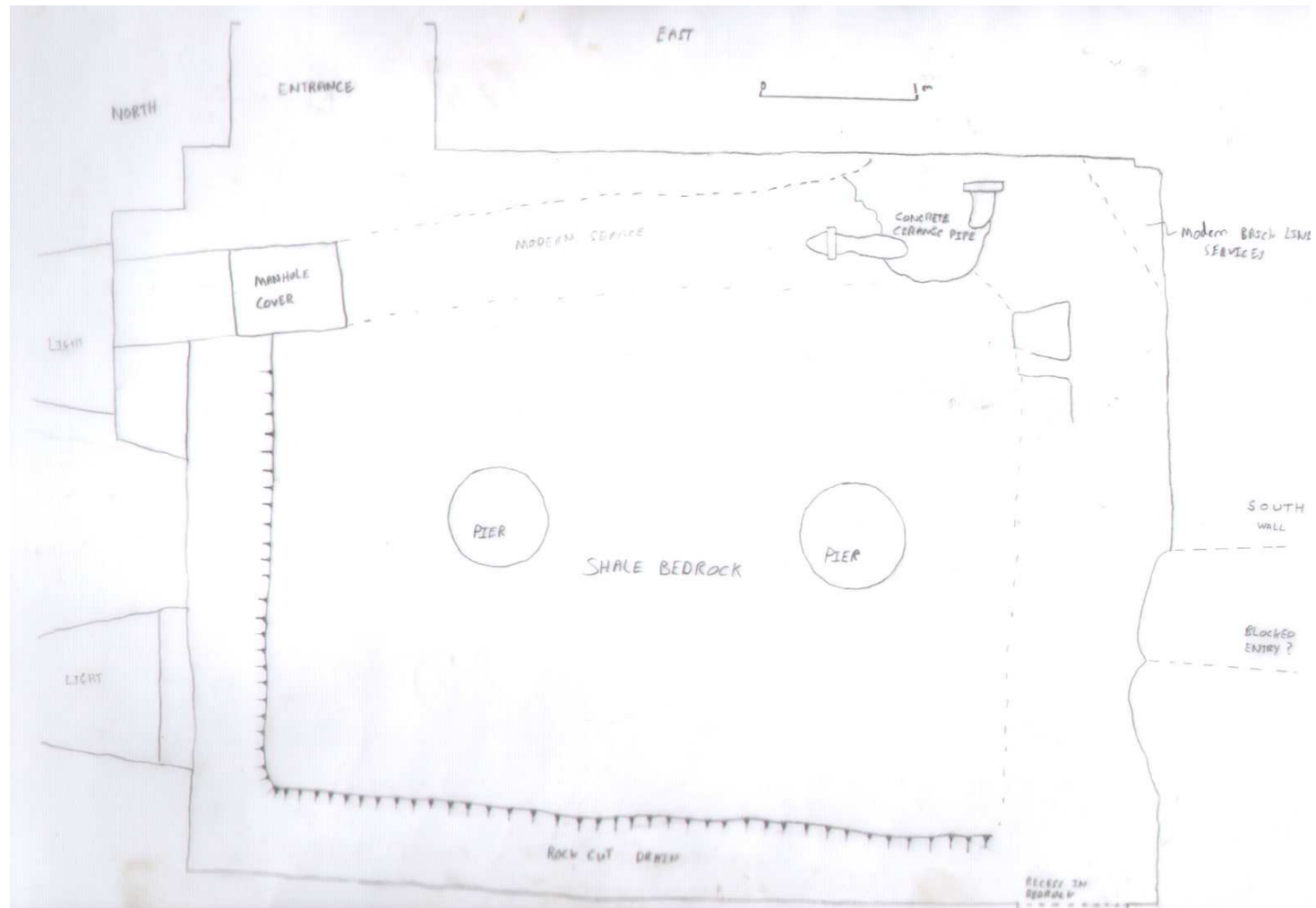


Figure 3: Plan showing drain on west and north side of undercroft after excavation.



Photo. 1: Pre-ex photo showing drain situated at west wall of crypt.



Photo. 2: North facing photo-showing rock cut gully and bed rock either side.



Photo. 3: Looking along eastern wall of undercroft showing modern services.



Photo. 4: Looking south along western wall of undercroft showing partly excavated drainage channel.



Photo. 5: Looking north along western wall of undercroft showing rock cut drainage channel.



Photo. 6: Looking south at possible medieval doorway.



Photo. 7: Photo looking towards southern wall of undercroft

HAVERFORDWEST THE CRYPT (SM 9533 1573) ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Rhagfyr 2009
December 2009

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