

Archaeology Wales

Letterston School, Pembrokeshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Report No. 1014

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Letterston School, Pembrokeshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Archaeology Wales on the site of the new VC school in Letterston, Pembrokeshire in March 2011. The aim of the work was to determine whether archaeological sites survived on the site, which lies in an area of recorded archaeological significance. No features pre-dating the nineteenth century were identified on the site, which contained abundant evidence for post-medieval and modern drainage.

1. Introduction

In March 2011, Archaeology Wales were commissioned by W.B. Griffiths and Son to carry out an Archaeological Watching Brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a new school in Letterston, Pembrokeshire (NGR: SM 9390 2939). The development comprises the construction of a new VC school within the playing fields of the existing school. The local planning authority is Pembrokeshire County Council and the planning application number is No. 10/1072/PA.

The development site lies on the southern edge of the village, which is known to have origins in the medieval period. The wider landscape around Letterston is known to contain sites of archaeological significance of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval date. As a result, Charles Hill of Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Heritage Management, in his capacity as advisor to Pembrokeshire County Council, recommended that a watching brief be carried out during all phases of ground reduction on the site.

The work was carried out between the 18th and 29th March 2011 by Hywel Keen. The overall management of the project was carried out by Dr Amelia Pannett. All work conformed to Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief (IfA 2008), and was undertaken by suitably qualified staff to the highest professional standards.

2. Site Description and Historical Background

The development lies on the southern edge of the village of, Letterston, Pembrokeshire, adjacent to the existing primary school. The village is located 8km south of the northern Pembrokeshire coast and the site is located on gently sloping southeast-facing ground at approximately 110m AOD.

The development site lies within an area of Pembrokeshire known for its archaeology, containing sites dating from the prehistoric period, the medieval period and the post-medieval period. A search of the local HER revealed that five sites of archaeological significance are located within a 400m radius of the development site. These comprise:

- a possible Bronze Age round barrow (burial mound) or medieval circular motte (PRN 2394) known as Parc Moat, which lies around 170m to the northwest of the site (no longer standing).
- The medieval Holy Well of Ffynnon Shan Shilin (PRN 2396), which lies 230m to the north of the site on the main road through Letterston.
- The Church of St Giles (PRN 4552) which is located 180m to the north of the site.
- The site of the rectory (PRN 17976), which is located 360m to the northwest of the site.

- The site of the earlier School (PRN 17620) on the site itself.

The presence of the possible Bronze Age barrow, or Motte, together with the Holy Well in the vicinity suggests that remains of prehistoric or medieval date could lie within the development site. These sites would not have existed in isolation in the landscape, and would have provided the focus for associated activity across a wide area.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the work were to locate and describe all archaeological features present within the development area. The work aimed to elucidate the presence or absence of archaeological material, its character, distribution, extent, condition and relative significance.

4. Results

The area of groundworks was irregular in shape, and measured 128m north/south by 78m east/west at the southern end of the site and 29m east/west at the northern end of the site (fig. 2). The topsoil (001) was removed using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching blade. It was found to be up to 0.2m deep across the site and overlay a thin mid orange brown silty clay subsoil (002) which was up exposed for 0.1m across the site. Two bands of heavily weathered bedrock were exposed running east/west below the subsoil, one towards the centre of the stripped area and the second at the southern end.

The site was criss-crossed by nineteenth/twentieth century drainage features, including 5 manholes. The main drain, [003], was identified running roughly north/south along full length of the site. It branched off to the east in two places., [009], [037]. The majority of the manholes were located on this main drain, with the remaining two, [039] and [040] located to the west of drain [003].

At the northern end of the site a trench containing a metal pipe was identified [007]. This was 29m in length, running southward from the edge of the stripped area and then turning east. It was cut by drain [003].

On the western side of the site a trench containing a modern plastic drainage pipe was revealed [005]. The ran southwards from the edge of the stripped area for 86m before turning west. It cuts drainage trench [003] and is evidently very modern.

At the northern end of the site, three lines of square cuts measuring 0.5m by 0.5m were identified, [011]-[014], [019]-[023], [033] and [034]. These were spaced 1m apart and were aligned directly east/west. These cuts all contained a fill comprising mixed topsoil and natural shale. Their function is unknown but they are modern and possibly related to the drainage trench [003]. A further line of square cuts was identified at the southern end of the site, [043], which contained square concrete fence posts that were removed as part of the works.

Two further features were identified at the northern end of the site. A shallow oval cut [029] measuring 0.63m by 0.3m and 0.02m deep was found to contain a single silty clay fill with frequent asphalt inclusions. A second, square, cut [030] was located 1.5m west of cut [029]. It measured 0.45m by 0.4m and was less than 0.01m deep containing a

comparable fill to cut [029]. The function of these features is not known but they are modern.

No features of archaeological significance were identified.

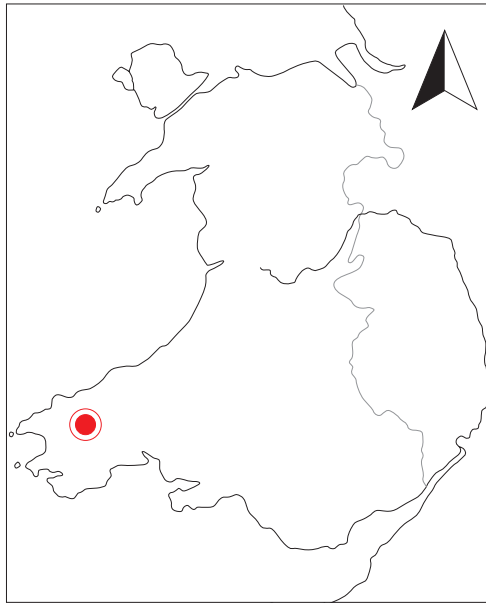
5. Discussion and Conclusions

The archaeological watching brief carried out on the site of the new school in Letterston, Pembrokeshire identified a large number of modern features but no features of archaeological significance. The modern features relate to different phases of drainage on the site in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are likely to be associated with its use as a playing field for the modern school and as the site of a previous school building.

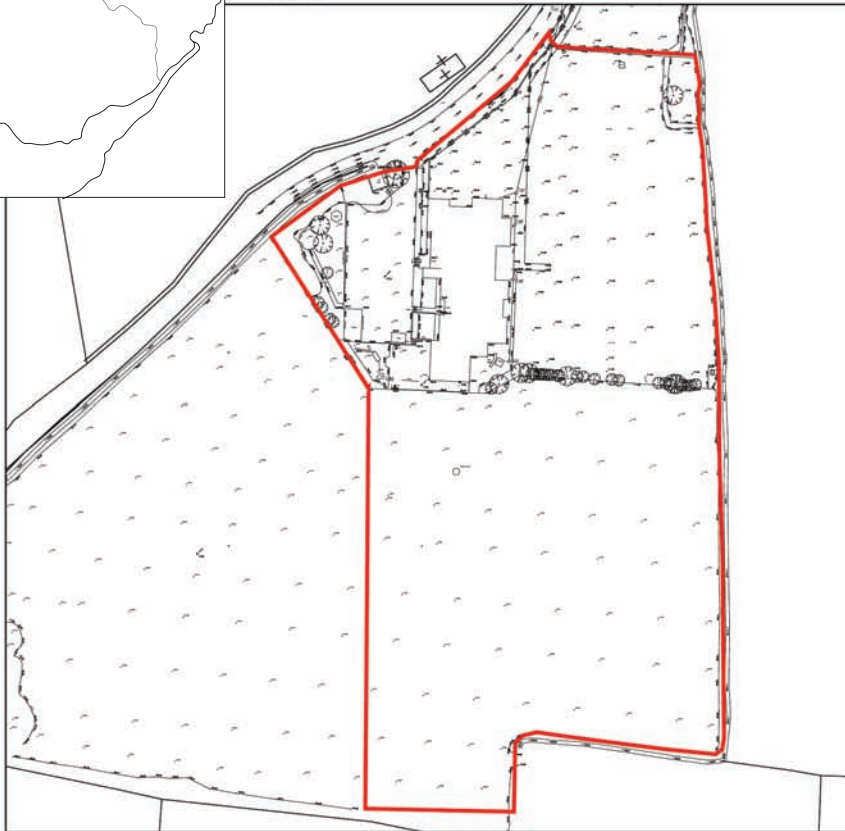
These modern features had disturbed much of the northern and western sides of the site, although large areas of undisturbed ground still existed on the site. Despite the proximity of the site to known archaeology, no features pre-dating the nineteenth century were identified during the works.

6. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Hywel Keen for undertaking the watching brief and to Hywel and Peter at W.B. Griffiths and Son for their assistance throughout.



1:1000



Rev	Amendments	Date	Chk
1			✓



LOCATION PLAN 1:2500

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Fig. 1
Location of site

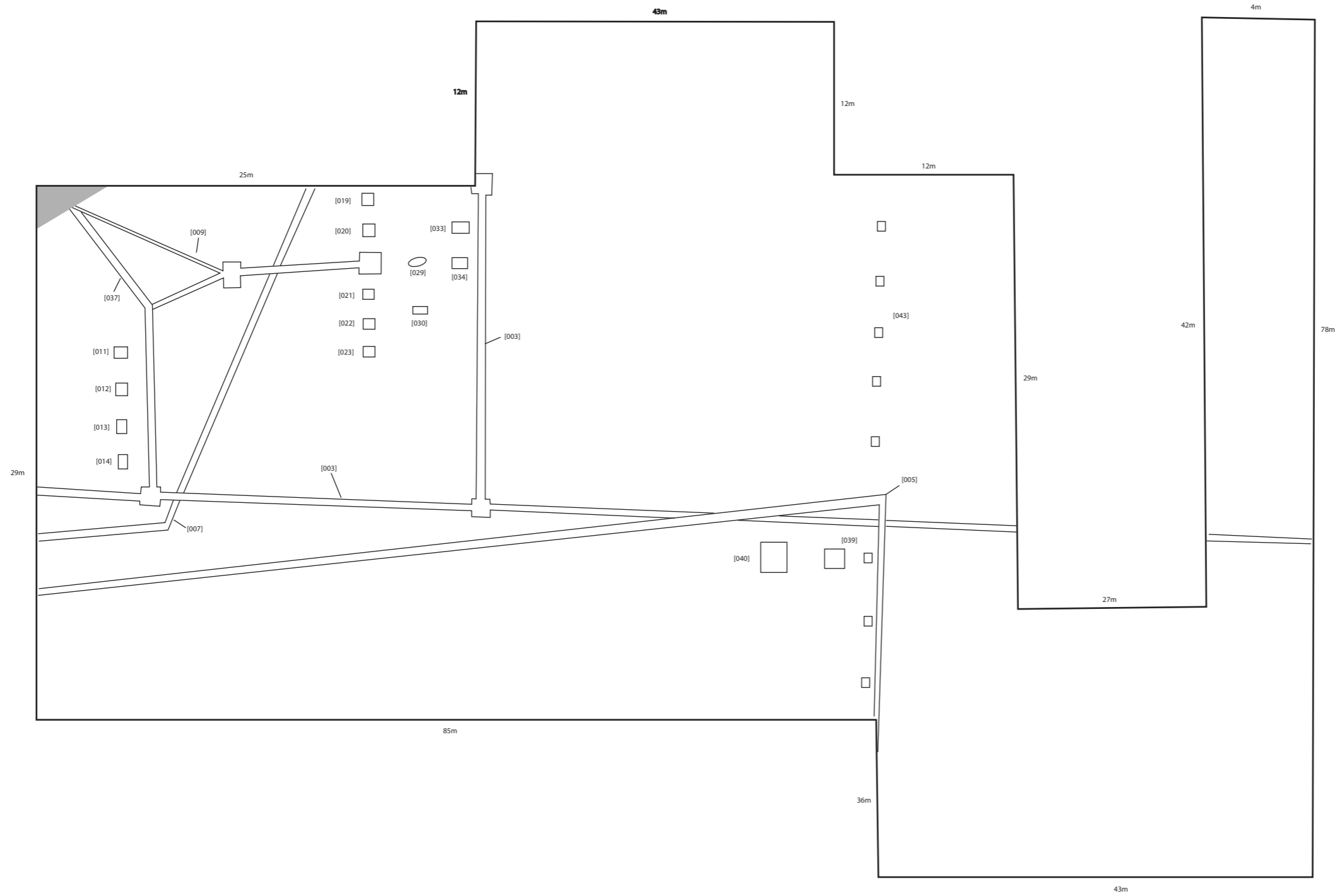


Fig. 2
Layout of the site showing
the location of the modern
features identified



Fig. 3
The site prior to and
during the topsoil
strip

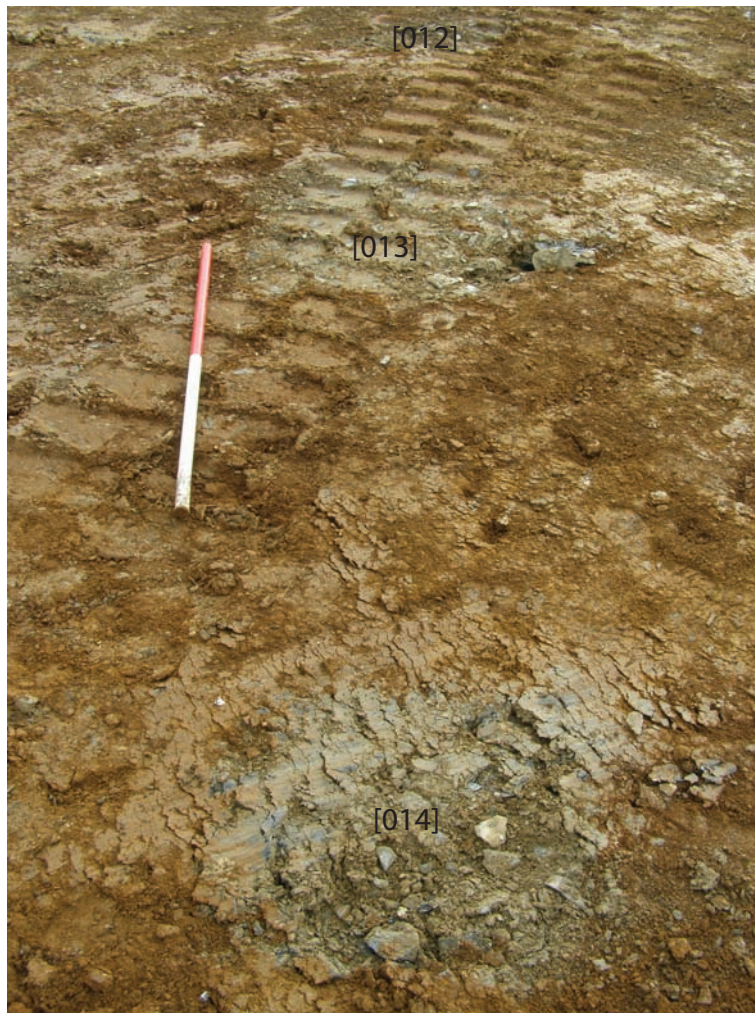


Fig. 4
Line of square cuts
filled with modern
materials at the northern
end of the site

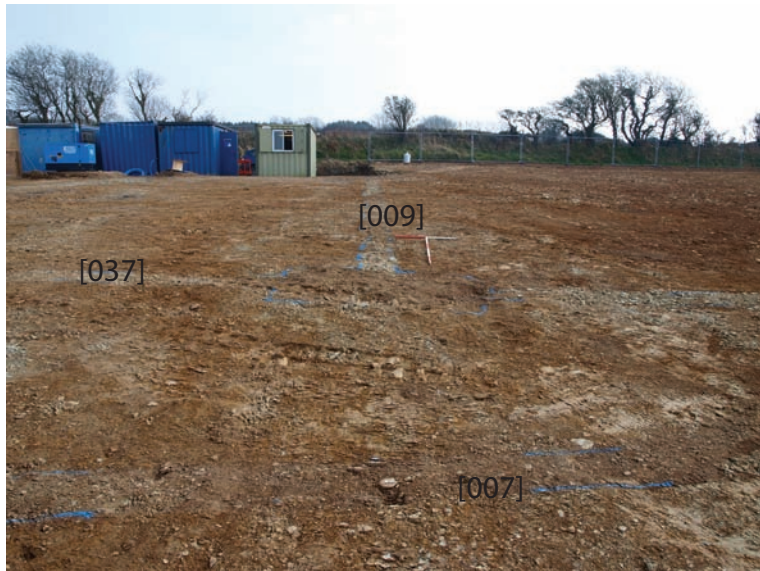


Fig. 5
Modern drains and
manholes on the site

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