

MONKSFORD STREET, KIDWELLY CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL



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REPORT NO. 2008/6
PROJECT RECORD NO. 63887

January 2008

MONKSFORD STREET, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

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SUMMARY

Proposals to develop a large plot of land at Monksford Street, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire (centred on NGR SN41200665), required an archaeological appraisal. The appraisal was considered necessary because of the proximity of the site to the medieval town and, therefore, the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) archaeological advisors recommended that an archaeological appraisal be carried out before the planning application for the site (Planning Application S/17768) was decided. Mr Phillip George commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Services to carry out the appraisal in January 2008.

The proposed development area lies within a Historic Landscape Characterisation character area, that retains traces of former medieval strip fields.

The appraisal revealed that there are no known archaeological sites within the proposed development area, but its location is potentially significant. The topography of the site, with a small stream – now largely culverted – running through its centre, is fairly typical of the type of landscape that could contain burnt mounds. Burnt mounds are generally found close to small watercourses such as the one crossing this site.

There is also a possibility that medieval burgage plots could have been developed along the street frontage.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project Proposals and Commission

Proposals to develop a large plot of land at Monksford Street, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire (centred on NGR SN41200665), required an archaeological appraisal. The proposed development site lies just to the south of, but close to the medieval town and, therefore, the LPA's archaeological advisors recommended that an archaeological appraisal be carried out before the planning application for the site (Planning Application S/17768) was decided. Mr Phillip George commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Services to carry out the appraisal in January 2008.

Scope of the project

The appraisal consisted of the examination of available sources of information such as maps, published works and aerial photographs held in the Historic Environment Record¹ (HER) and a site visit. The results are intended to identify the extent and character of the archaeological resource, to assess the likely and potential impacts of the scheme on that resource and, if required, to outline a possible programme of further works to mitigate those impacts. The appraisal should be seen only as the first stage of the archaeological process and does not preclude the possibility that further archaeological input may be required prior to, or during, the proposed development.

Abbreviations used in this report

All sites recorded on the county HER are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). References to cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets throughout the text, with full details listed in the sources section at the rear of the report.

¹ Held and managed by Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

2. SUMMARY OF THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

The Site Location

The proposed development site occupies c.4ha (c.10 acres) of undeveloped land located to the south east of the town of Kidwelly and fronting onto Monksford Street. The site is low-lying and very wet, the land slopes gently from the east and west to form a very shallow stream valley. The site is bounded by hedgebanks, those to the northeast and north west being topped by mature trees. A lane known as Stockwell Lane runs along the southeast boundary of the site. A stream enters the site from the northeast, which has been enclosed in a culvert for its entire length through the site, although, the culvert is now damaged in some places.

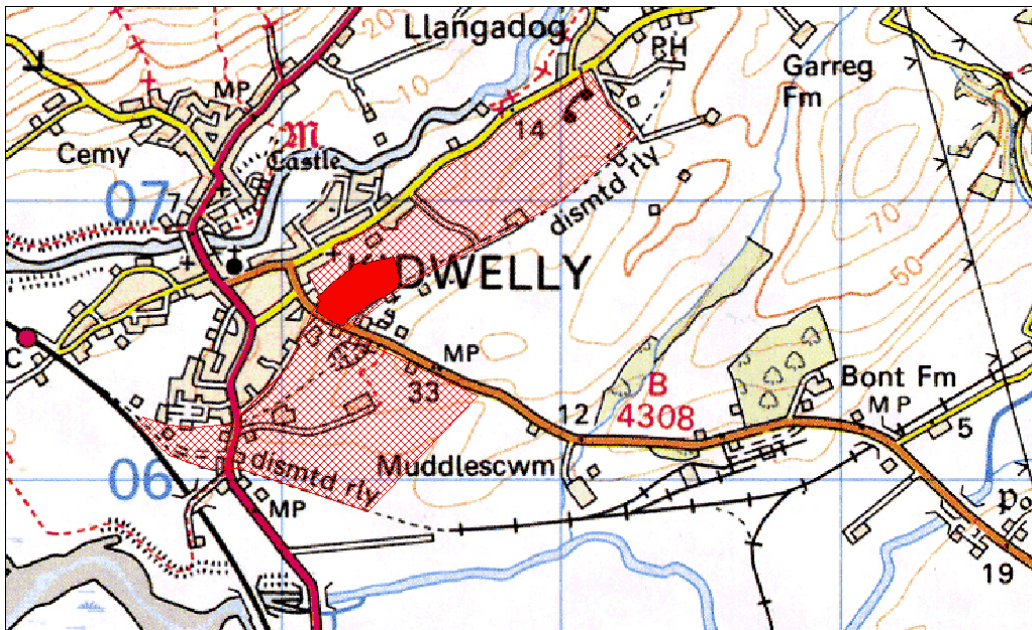


Figure 1: Location plan showing proposed development site (solid red block) and the extent of the HLC character area (red hatched area).

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Landscape Development

The site lies within an area thought to have been former medieval strip fields (Murphy and Ludlow 2000 – HLC Character area 170). This area was identified during Historic Landscape Characterisation assessments carried out on landscapes recorded in the *Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales* (Cadw *et al* 1998). The proposed development site lies just outside the edge of the Taf and Tywi Estuary Registered Landscape, but it is included in one of the HLC Character areas (The Holloway Former Strip Fields) that extends beyond the Registered Landscape boundary. The area is described as:

'A small area of fairly small fields lying between 5 metres and 20 metres, representing a system of former strip fields associated with the Medieval borough of Kidwelly. The former strips are most pronounced to the west, around Holloway Farm which has Medieval origins; they are less apparent to the east where there has been some reorganisation of boundaries'. (Murphy and Ludlow 2000)

The present layout of the proposed development area has changed significantly since the mid 19th century, when the first reliable mapping of the area was undertaken. Map regression has revealed the area was once subdivided into a series of small fields, all of which were in place as early as 1840 (Kidwelly parish tithe map, 1840). This pattern of small fields remained unchanged into the 20th century and it was shown on both the first and second edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1889 and 1907). However in the succeeding period the field boundaries were removed to form the single open field present today. The surrounding landscape has been subject to modern development as the town of Kidwelly continued to expand during the mid to late 20th century. Recently this has seen the construction of housing along Stockwell Lane and a supermarket on land on the other side of Monksford Street, directly opposite the proposed development site.



Plate 1: View of proposed development site from Monksford Street.



Plate 2: General view southwest across the proposed development site.

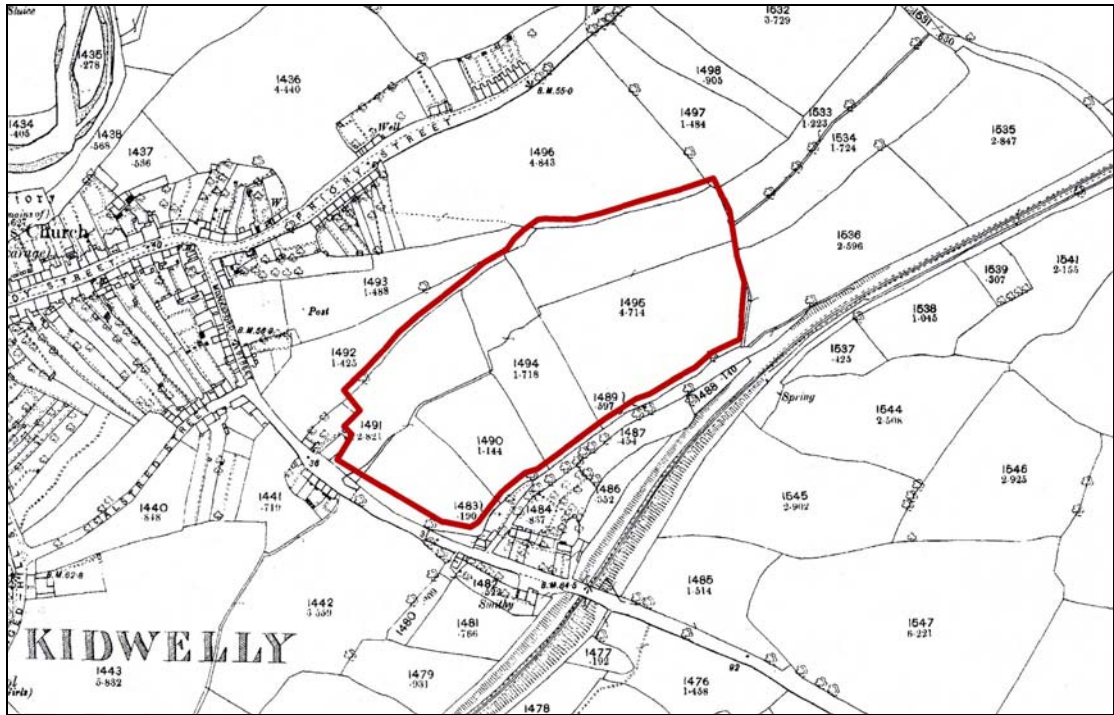


Figure 2: Detail of 1st edition Ordnance Survey map showing proposed development area (1889).

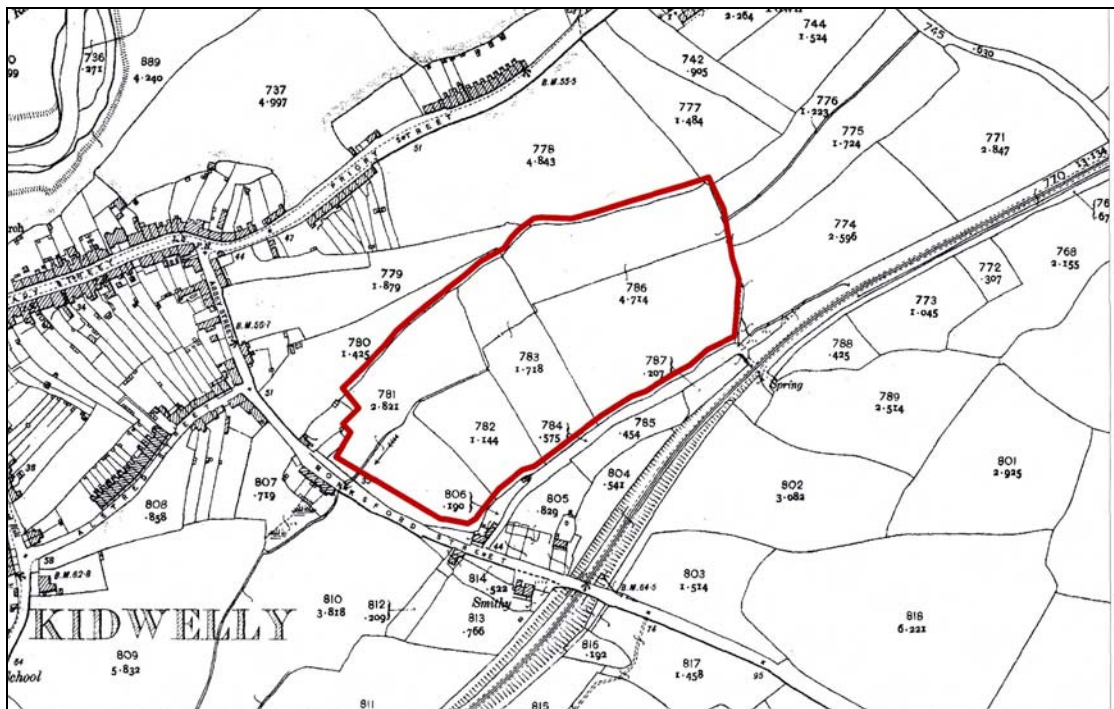


Figure 3: Detail of 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map showing proposed development area (1907).

3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

Known Archaeological Sites

There are no known archaeological sites within the proposed development area. The closest known sites are a post-medieval blacksmith's workshop known as Stockwell Forge (PRN 16378; NGR SN41260651) to the southeast and the former Gwendreath Valleys Railway line, now used as a footpath that passes to the south of the site. The only feature within the proposed development area noted during a site visit in January 2008 was the damaged culvert, which consists of a concrete pipe in a concrete and stone channel.



Plate 3: Damaged section of the culvert.

Archaeological Potential

The buried archaeological resource is unknown and frequently unpredictable. With a proposed development of this scale, and given its location, there is the potential for buried remains to be present across the site. The small stream running through the site is a typical of the location of burnt mounds. A burnt mound usually consists of a low irregular mound of fire-cracked stone and charcoal. The broken stones that form these mounds result from being heated in a fire and then being dropped into water, or other liquid, to heat it. The mounds can vary in diameter between c.2m and c.15m and can possess associated troughs or pits. This form of archaeological feature usually dates to approximately 2000 BC, although examples are known which have earlier or later dates. Burnt mounds have widely been interpreted as being places for cooking (Williams, 1990, 130-138). No evidence of any burnt mounds was noted during a site visit for this appraisal.

The name Monksford Street indicates the presence of a former ford, possibly across the stream now culverted across the site, and may also suggest that the land in the area was once the property of the Benedictine Priory which existed at Kidwelly from circa 1115 until its closure in 1539 (Williams, 1991, 190-200), the

church of St Mary being the former Priory church. It is known that the priory was endowed with over 100 acres of land (Cowley, 1977, 238), along with a further twenty eight tenements of urban property in the vicinity of the priory (Williams, 1991, 200). Additional place name evidence in the form of, Priory Street, Abbey Street and Lady Street in the vicinity of the proposed development area may suggest that some of this land was located in the area.

Further place name evidence in the form of Stockwell on the tithe map (1840) and the presence of Stockwell Lane on later editions of the Ordnance Survey maps may suggest the presence of a well in the area. It is known that once a holy well by the name of Fynnon Stockwell was located in the Parish of Kidwelly, which was said to have been visited as recently as Palm Sunday 1911 for the purposes of throwing in bent pins to invoke good wishes and to drink the waters sweetened with sugar (Jones, 1992, 169).

Perhaps more significantly is the suggestion a series of burgages were located at Monksford and are mentioned in the 14th and 15th century Muddlescombe Deeds (Morris, nd). The burgages mentioned by Morris were said to be isolated from the main town pattern. Of the eighteen burgages listed in the vicinity of Monksford only one mentions it by name as '*Monkysford*,' which was held along with a large garden by William Sair on payment of 12d per year (*ibid*). A Rent Roll for the Borough of Kidwelly dated 1753 indicates the continued presence of burgages in Monksford Street (Evans, nd).

MONKSFORD STREET	s	d
Phillip Jones of Llandarrog holds a Burgage and a half whereon the House of Robert James now stands	1	6
Mrs. Margaret Howard holds a Burgage and a half in her own hands	1	6
Richard Bonnel, Aldr., for Mr. Edward Brown's House	1	0
Mr. Pemberton, adjoining to the last mentioned holds a Tenement now in the hands of Hugh David, Malster		4
Griffith John, weaver, adjoining thereunto, holds one Tenement in the hands of Anne Richard, widow - yearly		6
Griffith John, Weaver, for another Tenement in the hands of Wm. Thos		6
Mrs. Elinor Jones for a Tenement or Griffith Popkins House	1	0
Mr. Pemberton holds one Burgage by Monkford Bridge p. Mabel Hugh	1	0
Mrs. Elinor Jones for three Burgages in Monkford meadow	3	0
The said Mrs. Jones adjoining to the last holds a Burgage now in the hands of John Richard, Blacksmith	1	0
Kiffin Williams, Esqr., adjoining to the last hold one Burgage now in the hands of Griffith John, weaver	1	0
Thos. William, weaver, holds ½ a Burgage opposite to the last one, in his own hands		6
John Nicholas adjoining to Thomas William holds two Burgages paid by Thomas William, weaver	2	0

Table 1: List of Monksford Street properties included in 1753 Rent Roll (Evans nd)

The Muddlescombe Deeds locate the burgages 'at Monksford' suggesting they were close to the point where the stream crossed the road. It is possible that the existing buildings at the northwest corner of the site occupy some of the original burgage plots, so it is possible that the development site also contained former burgages. However, the road appears to have been widened at this point during the 20th century, and this may have affected any burgages that were present.

4. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The absence of specific design plans makes it not possible to be definitive about the impact the proposed development would have on the archaeological resource. However, construction processes are familiar enough to enable general statements to be made which can be used to inform the final design plans.

A development such as the one proposed at Monksford Street Kidwelly involves a range of processes that would have an immediate and obvious archaeological impact. The main construction processes in this case would be:

1. Site Clearance
2. Excavation of new foundations and service trenches.
3. Construction of new roads.
4. Heavy plant and machinery moving across the site.
5. Landscaping.

As with any form of construction work these processes have an impact on the landscape whether through initial topsoil stripping and levelling through to the excavation of foundations and service trenches prior to construction. All of these processes have the potential to damage, remove or destroy previously unknown archaeological features and deposits.

An assessment of the likely severity of impact of the proposed development on identified archaeological features can be made according to the following criteria:

- 1- Total** - complete destruction of the site
- 2- Very severe** - loss of most of the major components of a site
- 3- Severe** - loss of some of the major components of a site
- 4- Medium** - loss of some components of a site
- 5- Slight** - some loss of some minor components of a site
- 6- None** – No impact on the site or feature or its setting
- 7- Beneficial** – an improvement to a site or feature or its setting
- 8– Unknown** – areas where the potential impacts are currently unknown

Potential Impacts on the Historic Landscape Character area

A proposed development such as this will alter the rural character of the site. It will also truncate and bisect the Holloway Former Strip Fields HLC character area.

Impact: Severe/Medium

Potential Impacts on the Buried Archaeological Resource

The nature and extent of any buried archaeological deposits or features is as yet unknown, although it could include burnt mounds, and evidence of the former medieval strip fields and/or burgage plots. These could be removed during construction.

Impact: Unknown

5. SUGGESTED FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

The further archaeological works outlined below are suggestions only, the final decision regarding the scope and extent of any further works will be taken by the LPA's archaeological advisor.

Historic Landscape

Further assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on the HLC character area may be required. If so, this could take the form of an Assessment of the Significance of the Impact of Development on Historic Landscape areas on the Register (ASIDOHL). An ASIDOHL is required when a development is considered to have more than a local impact on a HLC Character area. A decision regarding the necessity for an ASIDOHL will be taken by the LPA's archaeological advisor in consultation with Cadw and the Countryside Council for Wales.

Potential buried archaeological features

The extent of the buried archaeological resource is as yet unknown, but it may include burnt mounds and evidence of medieval settlement and agriculture. It is possible that geophysical survey of the site will identify and locate any buried archaeological features. Burnt mounds and any former medieval strip field boundaries are particularly susceptible to geophysical survey and, therefore, a survey of the site could be a rapid and non-intrusive method of providing the information required to determine the planning application.

SOURCES

Maps

Ordnance Survey 1889 Carmarthenshire Sheet LIII NE 1st edition 1:2500
Ordnance Survey 1907 Carmarthenshire Sheet LIII NE 2nd edition 1:2500
Parish of Kidwelly Including St Mary, Tithe Map 1840

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This report has been prepared by Simon Ratty

Position: Archaeologist

Signature Date

This report has been checked and approved by Nigel Page on behalf of Cambria Archaeology,
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Position: Head of Field Services

Signature Date

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have on the content or presentation of this report