Marches Archaeology

Pembridge Market Hall, Pembridge, Herefordshire

Report on archaeological building recording

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Pembridge Market Hall, Pembridge Herefordshire

A report on archaeological building recording

NGR: SO 3902 5810

Report by Susan Fielding

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Summary

Marches Archaeology was commissioned to carry out a building survey on the Market Hall, Pembridge, Herefordshire. The Market Hall is a three-bay, rectangular structure located in the centre of the village and comprises an open ground floor of eight paired oak posts with a hipped roof of stone tiles. Dendrochronological dating has confirmed that the structure dates to the early 16th century, a date previously suggested on stylistic grounds. A further four phases of alteration or restoration can be identified, the two major phases consisting of the replacement of the roof structure, probably in the later 18th century, and a major programme of restoration work that took place in 1927.

1 Introduction

Marches Archaeology was commissioned by Trevor Hewett Architects on behalf of the Pembridge Amenity Trust to carry out an archaeological building recording of the Market Hall, Pembridge, Herefordshire (SO 3902 5810). The Pembridge Amenity Trust has obtained a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to carry out a programme of conservation of the Market Hall, and it was considered necessary to carry out a full archaeological survey of the structure in order to produce a comprehensive record of the building and to inform the conservation programme.

The Market Hall is Grade II* Listed and appears on the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record (Ref: 360) as a site of archaeological interest. A cross base which forms the pad for the north-east post is Grade II listed (HSM ref: 7283). The structure lies within the Pembridge Conservation Area, designated in 1974, and was a Scheduled Ancient Monument until 1997, when it was descheduled. It is currently owned by the Pembridge Amenity Trust, a small charitable trust that holds a 99-year lease on the structure.

Dendrochronological dating of the Market Hall had previously been undertaken by the ARCUS Dendrochronology Laboratory in September 2002 (Tyers, 2002), and a conservation plan produced (Joyce, undated). In 2003 a small below ground investigation was undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology (Williams, 2003).

2 Aims and objectives

It was deemed desirable as part of the conservation plan to produce a comprehensive archaeological record of the Market Hall prior to any conservation work. This record was to include documentary research, a drawn and photographic survey and an analytical report forming a statement of historical and archaeological interest in the structure.

The aims of the projects were to produce:

- A 3D measured survey of the Market Hall using REDM (Reflectorless Electronic Distance Measurement) supplemented by hand survey. This would not include the stone tiles forming the roof covering or the battens supporting them.
- A photographic record of the Market Hall, with details of areas to be replaced.
- A consultation of primary and secondary documentary sources relating to the area
- An intermittent site attendance during the conservation programme to monitor discoveries of archaeological or historical interest
- A production of an illustrated report on the project

The Institute of Field Archaeology (IFA) defines Building Investigation and Recording as "a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building, or structure, or complex and its setting, including its buried components on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater".

The objective of Building Investigation and Recording is defined by the IFA as "to examine a specified building, or structure, or complex and its setting, I order to inform [either] the formulation of a strategy for the conservation, alteration, demolition, repair or management of a building, or structure, or complex and its setting [or] to seek a better understanding, compile a lasting record, analyse the findings/record, and them disseminate the results".

3 Methodology

The work was based on the guidelines laid out in *Recording Historic Buildings: A descriptive specification* (RCHM(E), 1996, 3rd Edition) and took into account the principles set out in *Informed Conservation* (English Heritage, 2001).

Documentary research

Readily available primary and secondary sources were consulted at the Herefordshire County Record Office, the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record. These sources included written documents, historic maps and photographs. An archive relating to the 1927 restoration is known to be held by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, however it was not within the scope of the project to directly consult this.

Fieldwork

The archaeological record consists of written, drawn and photographic elements. A 3D REDM survey using TheoLt to download data directly into AutoCAD was carried out of the following elements of the building:

- North external elevation
- South external elevation
- West external elevation
- East external elevation
- North-south longitudinal section
- East-west cross-section Truss 1
- East-west cross-section Truss 2
- Plan of ground floor
- Plan of roof structure
- Plan of loft

The REDM survey was further supplemented with hand-measured survey and written notes. In addition a full photographic survey of the structure was undertaken using 35mm black and white negative and colour transparency.

Office work

On completion of the fieldwork the drawn, written and photographic data was cross-referenced and catalogued, and a site archive produced. This illustrated client report was produced detailing the aims, methods and results of the project, and including a non-technical summary and details of the archive.

4 Site description

Pembridge is a small market town in north-west Herefordshire, situated on the main east-west road (the A44) between Kington (9km to the west) and Leominster (15km to the east). The town lies on the south bank of the River Arrow at a height of 100-125m OD. The Market Hall is located in the centre of the market place, located in the centre of the village at 120m OD, to the south side of the main road and to the west of the church.

The building is rectangular in form, orientated north-south, and with a mark stone at its south-west corner. The plot of land on which it sits is triangular, a shape formed by the three roads that surround the site (Figure 1), and slopes downwards towards the north-east.

The underlying geology consists of Downtonian Raglan Mudstone, overlain by drift geology of glaciofluvial or river terrace gravels and till with agrillic brown earths typical of the Rowton association soils.

5 Archaeological and historical background

Market places have provided a focal point as the economic and social centre of towns throughout the medieval and post-medieval period and, with the majority of markets being granted by Royal charter, they held a virtual monopoly on trading within an area. In Britain the market was traditionally held in a designated street or square, with trading taking place in the open air. This centralisation was brought about not only by mutual convenience for

traders and purchasers, but also by the need of the manorial lord to govern and regulate the market on matters such as the collection of tolls, the supply and price of food and the checking of weights (Schmeichen & Carls, 1999)

It has been suggested that 'mark', 'merch' or 'march' stones were used to mark out a spot where people first gathered to trade and exchange goods (Watkins, 1925) from which the word market derived. In the medieval period market crosses not only indicated the commercial function of an open square, but marked the market place as a centre of peace and the rule of law (Schmeichen & Carls, 1999). Only in the later medieval period did covered areas appear, either in the form of a roofed market cross as at Salisbury or Chichester, or more commonly in the form of a wooden structure, designed to keep people dry in the worst weather. By the 17th and early 18th centuries the timber-framed structures were often replaced by stone market houses, although the form with an open ground floor with an enclosed upper storey generally remained the same from the late medieval period through to the 1850s. During the 19th century, however, the increasing problems associated with open air markets – noise, congestion and pollution among others - led to the phasing out of the street-based market place within most British towns and by 1886 two thirds of Britain's towns had prohibited marketing on the street. In many of these cases the market place was physically removed by being built over, often replaced with an enclosed, purpose built building.

The name Pembridge (Pen Y Brug, Penebrug, Pembrigge) derives from the settlements location at a crossing point of the River Arrow. The town appears to have its foundation in the early medieval period, with the large, flat-topped mound located to the south of the church being pre-conquest in origin, and is listed in the Domesday Book as "11 hides, less 1 virgate" with "20 villagers, 7 smallholders with 1 riding man with 12 ploughs. 3 slaves; a mill at 10s".

In 1240 Henry de Penebruge, who then held the manor, gained a Royal charter for the town. In addition to a weekly market, the charter allowed for two fairs every year, one held on the 13th May known as the Cowslip Fair, and the other on St Martins Day (November 15th) known as the Woodcock Fair. The market place was established to the west of the 12th century church, the bell-tower of which dates to this period.

Due to its close vicinity to the Welsh border and its location on the Leominster-Kington road (a major trade route into Wales), Pembridge quickly became one of the many trading centres in the area dealing in the Welsh woollen trade. Although not able to compete with larger towns such as Leominster and Ledbury, its location and some influential patronage (becoming part of the lands of Roger Mortimer in 1265, and in 1425 passing to Richard, Duke of York and subsequently, in 1460, to Edward IV) ensured Pembridge became the most important trading outlet in the region to the south of the River Arrow throughout the later medieval period (Joyce, undated).

This wealth allowed for rebuilding and extension of the church on a grander scale, as well as the growth of the town which adopted a linear, east-west layout stretching along the main road. A number of high quality open hall-houses, set within large burgage plots, date from this period of economic success, giving evidence of spacious domestic accommodation that could also have been used for commercial purposes (James, 2002).

At the beginning of the 16th century the market place was furnished with the Market Hall, possibly replacing an earlier market cross, the stone base of which was reused in the building of the new hall.

After the Acts of Union with Wales in 1536 and 1542 the town's importance in the woollen trade declined, although economic decline did not set in for a further 150 years. The economic stagnation of the 18th and 19th century accounted for the high survival of the medieval and post-medieval structures, together with the medieval linear form of the town.

By 1923 the Market Hall had fallen into state of disrepair, and Sidney Barnsley and Alfred Powell visited the structure in that year on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. It was at this time in the ownership of Alton Court Brewery Ltd of Ross-on-Wye, the culmination of a tradition in which the ownership of the Market Hall was held by the owners of the New Inn, situated on the north side of the market place, and through which they could let the market place for the holding of fairs and other events. In response to the concern raised over the state of the structure, Pembridge Parish Council made an agreement with the brewery that in exchange for the brewery contributing £25 to the repair of the structure and donating the building to the Pembridge Parish Council, they would undertake the repair of it. Money was raised through a public appeal, and G H Jack, the county surveyor, surveyed the building and supervised the work without charge, while the restoration work was undertaken by Messrs Beavan and Hodges of Victoria Street, Hereford.

The archive relating to the 1927 restoration details the work carried out:

- South-west corner post replaced
- New section scarfed into south-east corner post
- South-east post and one to the north of it given concrete foundation pads
- Five posts given new stone bases with mild steel locating bars to fix the feet of the posts
- New end scarfed onto west end of southernmost truss tie-beam
- Some of brackets replaced and reinforced with iron bolts
- Two wrought iron tie-beams inserted longitudinally to support the arcade plates.
- New ridge pole and battens provided
- Tiles removed and reused/replaced
- New eaves poles installed
- New lead capping along ridge and around finials
- All oak pegs replaced

In the autumn of 1927 the Ministry of Works declared the Market Hall a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

In the 1960s the possibility of further work was explored when concerns were raised about the condition of the earth floor. The Ministry of Works advised that a raised step should be instated along the centre line of the rows of posts, within which a paved floor should be 'reinstated' (although there is no evidence for, or previous reference to, a paved floor being present) as well as oak rails between the posts being replaced. This work was never carried out, although the county council did lay the present kerbstones around the outer edge of the floor (Plate 4).

The Pembridge Amenity Trust has recently recognised the need for a further programme of conservation to be undertaken, in order to maintain the stability of the structure. Nick Joyce, Architect and Historic Building Consultant, was commissioned to prepare a Conservation Plan which included an architectural assessment of the building and an assessment of its historical significance, as well as providing recommendations for its repair and future management (Joyce, undated).

Subsequent work has included the taking of dendrochronological samples from four of the primary timbers by the ARCUS Dendrochronological Laboratory (Tyers, 2002), two of which provided a felling date of between 1502 and 1538 AD. A ground investigation was also carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology in June 2003 in order to ascertain the presence of a cobbled or other constructed floor surface (Herefordshire Archaeology Report 19, Williams, 2003). The investigation consisted of a single 1m x 1m test pit, hand excavated, and located half way along the western side of the structure. This revealed that the deposits forming the floor of the Market Hall were naturally deposited glacial till, the upper layer being of softer, weathered till into which objects had been trampled, underlying which was a harder, un-weathered till, into which the bases of the posts had been cut. Overlying the earth floor a thin mortar surface, probably dating to the late 20th century was observed.

6 The building recording

Pembridge Market Hall is a rectangular, single storey, open structure of three bays. Eight paired oak posts with curved brackets carry a hipped roof of slate tiles.

Phase I (1502-1538)

The Market Hall was constructed in the early 16th century as a rectangular, timber building, orientated north-south. The ground floor was open, with eight oak posts forming the frame of the building (Figures 2-9, Plates 5 & 6). Seven of these posts stood on square sandstone pads (Figure 2), the eighth (that forming the north-east corner) stood on a larger base of moulded stone (Plate 12). This stone is possibly the base of a market cross that may have preceded the Market Hall, but whether it is in its original location or has been moved from elsewhere within the market square or outside of it is unknown with excavation.

Each of the oak posts was chamfered, and decorated with moulded caps of cavetto and roll mouldings (Plates 9 & 10). Above the caps the posts supported curved brackets, tenoned and pegged into place. Each of the four inner posts supported four brackets, two providing lateral support for the tie-beams of the trusses (Figure 5 & 6) and two giving lateral support for the arcade plates (Figures 3 & 4). The four corner posts also had two brackets supporting the tie-beams for the end trusses, with a further single bracket on the inner face supporting the arcade plate. The four posts forming each side of the building were tied together by three arcade plates, which were tenoned and pegged into the tops of the posts.

At a lower level the posts were provided with notches into which rails could be slid on market days (Figure 3, 4 & 6). These rails probably provided supports on which the wares of market traders could be placed or hung, or to which animals could be tethered, as well as providing a boundary to the otherwise open hall. A number of the external faces of the posts also have mortice holes at the level of, or just below, the caps, in which are the pegged

remains of timbers which would have extended out from the sides of the Market Hall, possibly forming lean-to structures (Plates 9 & 10). The northern two posts each have a small notch high up on their north face, probably to house temporary supports during construction, indicating that these posts were the first to be erected (Figure 5).

Each of the four pairs of opposing posts also supported the tie-beam for the four trusses which supported the roof structure. Only the central two trusses now survive, but redundant mortice holes in the north and south tie-beams indicate that these originally supported trusses of a similar form, providing two gable ends to the building. The arrangement of mortice holes in the surviving trusses indicate an arrangement of a collar with central strut below it, a form typical of the 15th and 16th century (Figures 8 & 9). The remainder of the roof structure has been completely replaced at a later date (Phase II), but the large housings in the back of the principal rafters indicate double purlins of a substantial size, with no indication of bracing being used.

The construction of the market has been dated through dendrochronological dating to the early part of the 16th century. This has confirmed the stylistic dating of late 15th/early 16th century attributed to the moulded caps at the top of each post, and the 15th/16th century form of the trusses.

Phase II (late 18th century)

At a later date the roof of the Market Hall was largely replaced and the form of it substantially altered. The principal rafters forming the gable ends of the building were replaced with hipped rafters to form a hipped roof, the hipped ends being given additional support with the provision of longitudinal half-trusses (Figures 7 & 10, Plate 8). The rafters and purlins were replaced, and wooden battens used to fix stone roofing tiles which were graded in size from the base to the apex. At each end of the apex of the roof were wooden finials, seen in a watercolour painting of 1842 to be of an elongated urn shape (Plate 1).

In the central bay a loft structure was created, with a bridging beam inserted between the two Phase I truss tie-beams. Longitudinal timbers were placed on top of the arcade plates within this bay, onto which the outer ends of the floor joists were notched, the inner ends notched into the central bridging beam, and overlain by oak floorboards (Figure 10a). Access to the loft was created by the removal of the collars and crown posts from the two trusses, replaced by the current raking struts (Figures 5 & 6, Plate 7).

The remodelling of the roof is known to have taken place prior to 1842, when the watercolour of Pembridge shows the Market Hall with its hipped roof. The quality of the work is much poorer than that seen in the Phase I construction, and the timbers are nailed rather than pegged into position. From the form of the roof structure, and style of construction this Phase can be dated to the late 18th century.

Phase III

The third phase of work involved the strengthening of the loft floor bridging beam with the addition of iron straps and the further enclosure of the loft space. A thin upright was inserted between the two struts of the northernmost truss and boards nailed across the north face of the

truss (Figure 8). Two similar uprights were inserted into the southern truss to form an asymmetrical door with boarding attached to the south face of the truss to either side (Figure 9, Plate 8). It is impossible to date this work, other than it took place after the Phase II alterations and before the 1920s when the first SPAB inspection took place.

Phase IV (1927)

In 1927 a recorded programme of repair and restoration took place. At ground level the sandstone pad stones of five of the posts were replaced (Figure 2) with steel locating bars fixing the feet of the posts, with concrete foundations inserted below that in the south-east corner and the one to the north of it.

The south-west post was completely replaced with a new timber, on which the chamfering and moulding of the Phase I work was crudely copied, possibly delibratley to show that it was not original, while two new sections of wood were jointed into the base of the south-east post (Figure 6). A number of the brackets were replaced and they were all reinforced with iron bolts, and two wrought-iron 'tie-beams' were inserted the length of the building, immediately above the arcade plates. A number of the joists in the north-east corner of the loft, together with some of the floorboards in the eastern half of the room were also replaced (Figure 10a).

The eaves poles around the building were replaced, and a new section of timber scarfed onto the west end of the tie-beam of the southern truss where it had rotted. Six rafters are recorded as being replaced but it is impossible to distinguish all of these from the Phase II rafters, although this information may be contained in the SPAB archive. The tiles were stripped from the roof and all the Phase II ridge pole and battens removed and replaced. As many of the tiles as possible were cleaned and re-laid, supplemented by new tiles. Lead flashing was laid along the roof ridge.

Phase V

In the second half of the 20th century, probably in the later 1960s or 1970s, the current line of kerbstones was laid around the outside of the building, defining the floor as it is today (Figure 2). A chain was strung between each of the posts, hung from small iron hooks attached to the inner faces of the posts and limiting access to the area (Plate 4).

Undated

There are a number of features of the Market Hall which cannot be attributed to any particular phase of works. At the south-west corner of the site are two unworked stones known locally as mark stones. Photographic evidence places them at the site at least since the early 19th century, and also shows that they originally formed one, much larger, stone that was roughly squared. They may well be much earlier, and could pre-date or be contemporary with the Market Hall.

As mentioned in the Phase I section there are notches in the eight posts which held wooden rails used on market days for the display of goods or for tethering animals to. At least two phases of notches can be identified, but it is impossible to date the notches, or to phase them in relation to each other. The water colour of 1842 shows a low rail in the northern bay of the

east side in place, while photograph of the early 20th century shows the rail in the central bay of the same side in place.

At the south end of the building is a small area of cobbles measuring approximately 2.30 by 0.42m. The ground investigation carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology did not extend into this area, but photographic evidence indicates they were in place by c.1890-1900 (Plate 2). Beyond this however it is impossible to place a date on the cobbling, although it seems unlikely that they extended far beyond their current extent.

7 Discussion

Detailed recording and analysis of the Market Hall, Pembridge has confirmed that much of the surviving structure dates to the early 16th century. The use of a medieval base, typical of those used in the construction of market crosses, may indicate that the market hall replaced a cross that previously stood in the market square. It is probable that a centre such as Pembridge would have had a market cross, but as the base does not appear to be *in situ* it cannot be directly linked to such a structure.

Although very weathered, the quality of the construction and moulding of the Phase I elements indicates it was a building of some status, in keeping with Pembridge's role as an important and prosperous trading centre throughout the later medieval period. It has been previously suggested that the Market Hall originally had a second, enclosed storey, as can be seen at the three other surviving market halls in Herefordshire, namely those at Leominster, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. However it is apparent that the two central trusses are *in situ*, and that in the structures original form two further trusses formed gable ends above the north and south pairs of posts, making it the only surviving single storey market hall in the county.

Dendrochronological analysis has confirmed a date of 1502-1538 for the construction of the Market Hall. This makes the Pembridge Market Hall considerably earlier than those at Leominster, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye, all of which date to the 17th century. Within Britain it can be placed within a group of similar small commercial buildings performing the function of an open market hall, but due to the presence of an enclosed second storey classified as guildhalls or town halls (such as that at Thaxted), or if constructed of stone classified as a market 'cross' (Salisbury, Chichester), even within which few have been dated earlier than the late 16th/17th century (Thaxted Guildhall and Salisbury market 'cross' both dated to the 15th century).

Its significance is increased by the fact that, although the roof has been replaced, its basic form as a single storey, open, timber structure has been retained, and it has escaped the rebuilding and modernisation that occurred at so many other market halls within the 18th century. This can almost certainly be attributed, as can the survival of so many medieval and early post medieval houses within the town, to the economic decline that took place from the late 17th century onwards.

It has been suggested on many occasions that notches in the posts held timbers that could be used by the market traders to display their goods, later used a rails to which to tether animals. These appear to be an uncommon feature on market halls, but this would seem to be the most logical explanation. Another unusual aspect of the Market Hall is the presence of mortice joints with the remains of pegged tenons that are visible on the external faces of posts on the

east, west and south elevations. These indicate that timbers extended out from the posts, possibly forming small lean-to structures or booths, or providing a projecting frame from which goods could be hung.

In the late 18th century the roof structure was altered, the gable end structure replaced by the present hipped roof. This may have taken place for structural reasons, the original vertical end trusses being unsuitable for supporting a covering of heavy stone tiles, which may have formed the original roof covering. The quality of the Phase II roof is poorer than that seen in the ground floor of the building, possibly indicating that the same level of funds were no longer available. Alteration of the trusses allowed access for a new loft structure, which would only ever have been accessible by ladder, providing storage for items used only on market days such as the rails.

The decline of Pembridge as a market town led to the Market Hall falling into disrepair, being close to collapse when it came to the attention of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Monuments in the 1920s. The repair work carried out at this time has ensured the survival of the building, although some of the techniques used are now creating further problems. The Market Hall is still used on a regular basis and forms an important focus of the Pembridge town community, as well as forming an important attraction within the historic town for its many visitors. This social importance combined with its historical and architectural importance make Pembridge Market Hall a building of both regional and national importance.

8 Acknowledgements

Marches Archaeology were commissioned by Trevor Hewett Architects on behalf of the Pembridge Amenity Trust, and the aid of Sarah Butler of Trevor Hewett Architects is acknowledged. Various members of the Pembridge Amenity Trust, in particular Bob Anderson, are thanked for their encouragement and information given during the fieldwork. Duncan James is also thanked for his discussions on the structure and providing valuable information on the wider context of Pembridge architecture.

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10 Archive

The site code is MHP 04A The archive consists of:

- 5 sheets of site diary and notes
- 6 photo record sheets
- 3 films of black and white photographic negatives
- 3 films of colour photographic transparencies

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to Herefordshire County Museum.



Plate 1: Watercolour of Pembridge, 1842



Plate 2: Photograph of the Market Hall dated 1904



Plate 11: Marker stones at the south-west corner of the site



Plate 12: Base of possible medieval market cross forming padstone for north-east post



Plate 3: Photograph of Market Hall from the north-west, undated



Plate 4: Photograph of the Market Hall, 1960s



Plate 5: The Market Hall from the south-east



Plate 6: The Market Hall from the east



Plate 7: Southern truss from the north



Plate 8: Half truss supporting hipped roof



Plate 9: South-east post of market hall showing Phase I and Phase IV replacement brackets together with mortice and tenon on external face



Plate 10: Remains of mortice and tenon joints in west faces of posts in the west elevation at the level of the decorative caps

Pembridge Market Hall Pembridge Herefordshire

Addendum to A report on archaeological building recording

Addendum by Richard Stone

Summary

After the roof was removed a photographic record was made of constructional aspects which were now clearer. Also recorded photographically were areas to be worked on, including the finials and the lower parts of the posts.

1 Introduction

Subsequent to the production of a report on the building (Marches Archaeology Series 361), the roof covering was removed. This revealed further information, which was recorded photographically. This report constitutes an addendum to the earlier report.

2 The building recording

The double pegged mortices for the original (Phase 1) gable ends noted in the earlier report, were seen more clearly (Plates 13-16), confirming that the hipped roof is a modification (Phase 2) and that in its original form the structure presented gabled ends to north and south. The timbers used to create the dragon ties for the hips are reused, as are almost all roof timbers throughout the building.

The Phase 2 finials were due to be removed for work and were photographed (Plates 17-18).

Representative photographs were taken of the metal ties added in Phases 3 and 4 and of constructional details which are more clearly visible when the roof covering is removed (e.g. Plate 19).

The lower parts of the posts were to have some timber replaced. A photographic record was made for archival purposes. During removal of the north-eastern post a coin of 1806 was found. This was replaced along with a modern coin.

3 Discussion

The additional work has not significantly altered the interpretation given in the earlier report, though it is likely that the date of the coin, 1806, is the date of Phase 2, i.e. early 19th rather than late 18th century.