

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

**Offa's Dyke, Vron Farm, Llewellyn
Road, Wrexham
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

CPAT Report No 587

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Road, Wrexham**
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

F Grant
October 2003

Report for Miss S Rawstron

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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The watching brief, which forms the subject of this report, was undertaken during the installation of a new water main along the drive at Vron Farm, Llewellyn Road, Tan-y-Fron, Wrexham (SJ 292519). The site in question included a section of Offa's Dyke which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (De 113) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979 (Fig. 1).
- 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) to undertake the works was granted by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, and included the following conditions: the applicant should appoint a professional archaeologist, to be approved in writing by Cadw, to undertake a watching brief during all work within the scheduled area; the approved archaeologist should make a photographic record of the site before the works are undertaken; the approved archaeologist should be present during all works involving ground disturbance; within one month of completion a copy of the report should be submitted to Cadw, the Regional Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record.
- 1.3 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was approached by Miss S. Rawstron, of Vron Farm on 10 October 2003 to undertake the required watching brief, and this was carried out on 20 October 2003.

2 LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is located on the eastern side of Llewellyn Road, to the south-west of Tan-y-fron and to the north of Coedpoeth. Tan-y-fron is one of the outlying villages to the north-west of Wrexham.
- 2.2 Llewellyn Road runs north to south and at this point occupies the line of the ditch on the western side of Offa's Dyke, an 8th-century bank and ditch earthwork running discontinuously along the Welsh border region from Prestatyn in the north to Chepstow in the south (Fox 1955). The dyke itself runs north-south through the garden of Vron Farm before being cut by the drive to the farm buildings. It then continues southwards on the same alignment.
- 2.3 Although much of the surrounding area is currently under pasture, the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map, surveyed in 1872, shows brick and coal works and two small collieries immediately to the north of Vron Farm.

3 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1 The watching brief was undertaken on 20 October 2003.
- 3.2 A curving trench was excavated by machine along the drive, following the line of the northern flanking hedge. The trench was 0.25m wide, approximately 1m deep, and 12m long between the gardens of Vron Farm to a point in Llewellyn Road where it would link with the main water main. The drive at this point sloped downwards from east to west.
- 3.3 The eastern end of the trench revealed a maximum depth of 0.8m of disturbed topsoil deposits lying directly upon a yellowish grey clay subsoil. The black sandy silt topsoil contained fragmented brick and sandstone and other modern rubbish such as wire, iron scrap and baling twine. Severe ground water seepage occurred all along the trench at this point, suggesting the presence of springs.
- 3.4 The central area of the trench revealed the remains of the bank of Offa's Dyke lying beneath a thin, (minimum 0.10m) layer of topsoil, gravel and cinder material. The base of the bank was revealed in section, surviving to at least 0.7m in height and consisting of a lower deposit of grey brown clay, up to 0.55m thick, beneath a yellow brown clay up to 0.55m thick. At its broadest the bank material was approximately 7m wide, but it should be born in mind that this was revealed in a curving section and is not therefore a true reflection of the actual bank width.
- 3.5 The bank had been cut into on its eastern side by the insertion of a ceramic drain which discharged waste water when cut by the machine. A plastic pipe had later been fitted into the ceramic pipe to act as a land drain.

- 3.6 A large ceramic pipe (0.35m in diameter) had been inserted on the western side of the bank, at the point where the drive joined Llewelyn Road. To the west of this pipe, ditch fill deposits were observed consisting of a light olive brown silt clay with iron mottling lying beneath a 0.20m thick deposit of dark grey silt clay with frequent charcoal flecks. These were topped with cinder, gravel and tarmac up to 0.25m thick. The large drain therefore occupied and obscured the boundary between the bank and its accompanying ditch.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The results of the watching brief show that although the bank of Offa's dyke had previously been truncated at this point by the construction of the drive to Vron Farm, together with the insertion of earlier drains, the lower levels of the bank still survive beneath modern surface deposits. The associated ditch lies to the west beneath Llewelyn Road, with the eastern edge of the ditch having been observed during the watching brief.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Bob Silvester and Nigel Jones, CPAT; Miss S. Rawstron, Vron Farm; Mr R. Brandon, Mr R.W. Kevern, Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments.

6 REFERENCES

Published sources

Fox, C, 1955. *Offa's Dyke, a field survey of the western frontier-works of Mercia in the seventh and eighth centuries AD*. London: British Academy/Oxford University Press.

Cartographic sources

1871-1872 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" Denbighshire 28.12

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive

1 black and white negative film

1 colour print film

1 colour slide film

12 context sheets

1 A2 drawing

Specification, brief and correspondence

APPENDIX 2

OFFA'S DYKE, VRON FARM, WREXHAM SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Proposals to undertake groundworks at Vron Farm, Wrexham, may affect archaeological remains associated with Offa's Dyke. The site in question has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) to undertake the proposed works granted by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, included the following conditions: the applicant shall appoint a professional archaeologist, to be approved in writing by Cadw, to undertake a watching brief during all work within the scheduled area; the approved archaeologist shall make a photographic record of the site before the works are undertaken; the approved archaeologist shall be present during all works involving ground disturbance; within one month of completion a copy of the report shall be submitted to Cadw, the Regional Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record.
- 1.3 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been approached by Miss S Rawstron of Vron Farm to undertake the required watching brief and the following specification provides a method statement for undertaking this work.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are:
 - 2.1.1 to maintain an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of the trench;
 - 2.1.2 to record any archaeological deposits revealed;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a short report outlining the results of the archaeological works even if negative.

3 Methods

- 3.1 The watching brief shall be maintained during all related groundworks within the scheduled area.
- 3.2 All archaeological deposits and/or features noted during the work will be excavated by hand and recorded by drawn section/plan and/or photography as appropriate. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white negative and colour slide. All features identified will be tied in locationally to points which are identifiable on modern Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 3.3 Artefacts recovered will be related to their contexts and treated in a manner appropriate to their composition.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work a report will be produced outlining the results of the archaeological works, detailing the archaeological potential of the area.
- 3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled and experienced archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by Mr R J Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the watching brief.
- 4.3 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones
14th October 2003



Fig. 1 Site location, 1:25,000

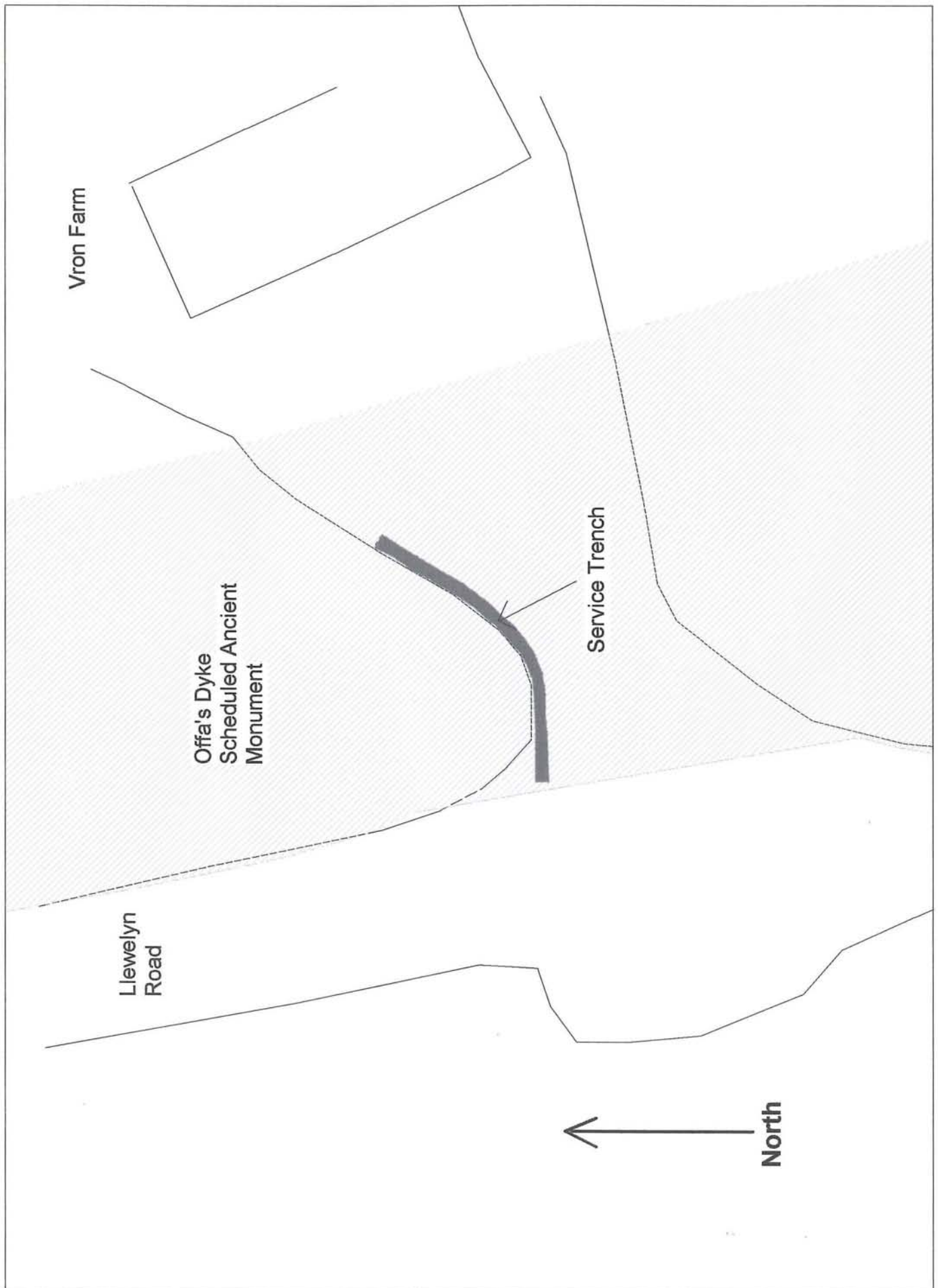


Fig. 2 Location of service trench in relation to scheduled area. Scale 1:250



Plate 1. Offa's Dyke from the south, showing location of driveway and continuation of dyke to the north (topped by trees). Photo CPAT 1544.13



Plate 2. Excavated trench showing orange-brown bank material in foreground, with ditch fills and drain to the west. Photo CPAT 1844.25



Plate 3. Location of service trench and driveway, with Offa's Dyke to north. Viewed from the west. Photo CPAT 1544.34



Plate 4. View of service trench and driveway with Offa's Dyke to the south. Viewed from the east. Photo CPAT 1544.37