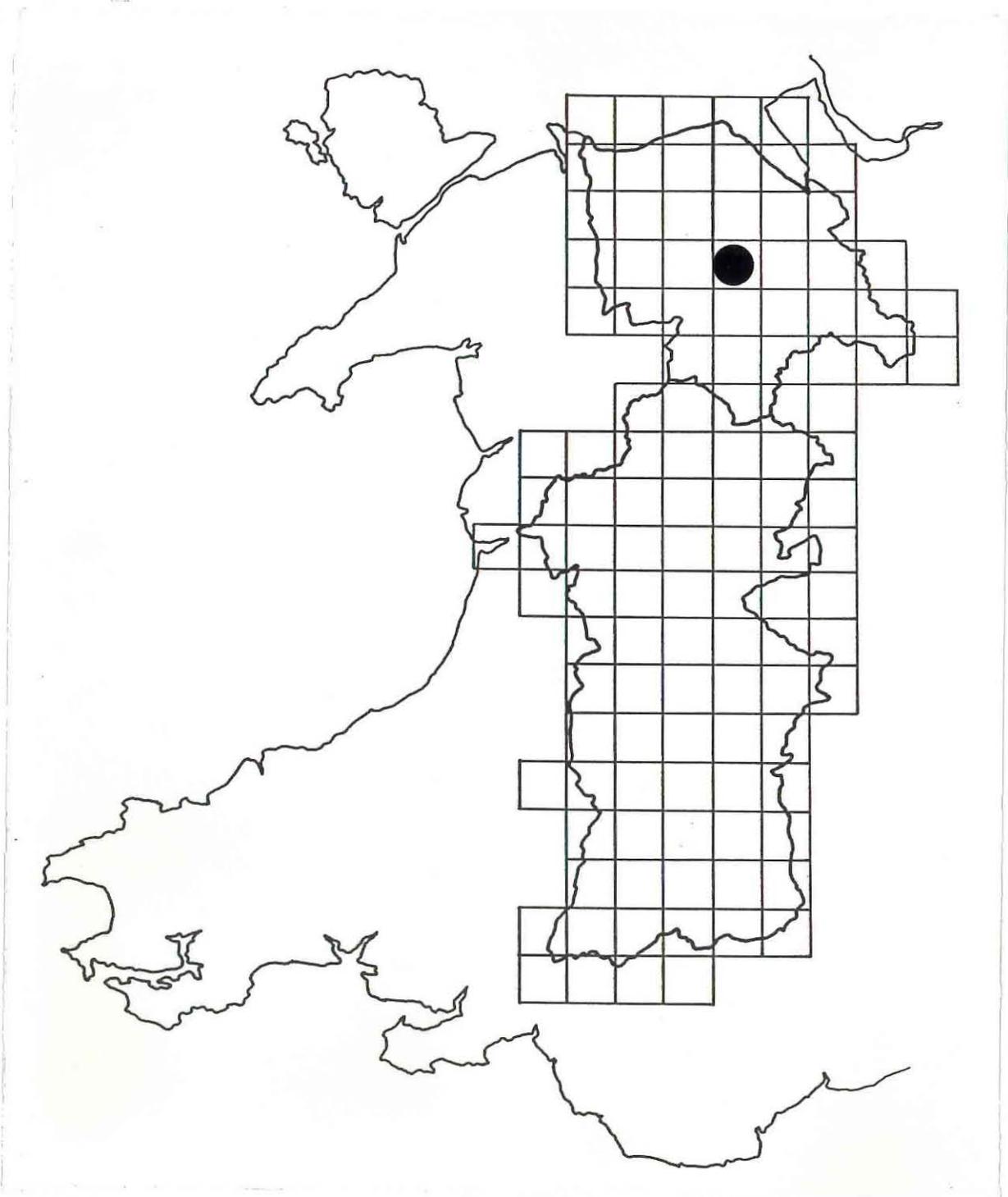


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Bryn Gwyn to Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd
Water Main Renewal
ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT



CPAT Report No 54

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Report prepared for Welsh Water plc

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1 Introduction

In December 1992, as a result of the consultative procedure between Welsh Water and the curatorial section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT), CPAT was informed of the details of a proposal to renew the water main between Bryn Gwyn and Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd in Clwyd.

Following interrogation of the Sites and Monuments Record the curatorial section of CPAT decided that there was a possibility that features of archaeological interest might be disturbed in the course of the renewal programme. This led to the preparation of outline recommendations for on-site archaeological recording by M.J.Walters of the curatorial section which were accepted by Welsh Water. In January 1993 they commissioned CPAT to carry out the work, and this was conducted during March 1993.

2 Location

The pipeline renewal starts near the dwelling of Bryn Gwyn (SJ 1319 5191) and runs in a generally northerly direction for approximately 4km within the community of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd to the outskirts of the village of the same name (SJ 1349 5536). Between these two points a wayleave averaging 10m in width was fenced off, although this width varied and in some cases the wayleave was omitted because of local ground conditions.

3 Topography and Land-Use

The route used follows the A525 for approximately 1km south of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd before crossing a low ridge in the direction of Llwyn-Ynn Hall where it meets the Afon Hesbin. The river is crossed to the north-east of Pen-y-graig farm from where the pipeline climbs a small spur, running adjacent to a partly disused trackway until it reaches Bryngwyn house.

Land-use in the area of the pipeline is almost entirely agricultural pasture except for a small area of woodland known as Coed Cochion (SJ 136 539). Field cultivation is quite intensive and this was demonstrated in the area of pasture stripped of topsoil to the north-east of Coed Cochion, by the appearance of tree roots suggesting a reduction in size of the wood to its present boundaries.

4 Pipeline Methods and Archaeological Methodology

Within the fenced off areas of the wayleave the topsoil was removed to an approximate width of 6m and depth of 0.3m by machine. The areas exposed were then left open for some time before installation of the pipes took place.

Pipeline laying was carried out by first machining a narrow trench to a depth of 1.2m. The bottom of the trench was then immediately backfilled with a layer of chippings on which the pipe was laid. A further layer of chippings was laid to cover the pipe before the trench was backfilled by machine. The consequence of this was that only a short length of trench was visible at any one period and the time available for recording possible archaeological features was therefore very limited.

Owing to the above considerations it was considered worthwhile extending the original methods to encompass walking of the area before and after topsoil stripping when access was possible. This led to the recognition of several archaeological features which were investigated prior to their potential

destruction by the laying of the pipeline.

5 Archaeology

5.1 The initial appraisal of the pipeline route by the curatorial section of CPAT highlighted one area in which there was a known archaeological site: PRN 100911 (SJ 137 542), the location of a find in 1837 of two Neolithic stone axes in or near Coed Cochion.

5.2 Field work during the pipeline works revealed further areas of archaeological significance these being:

5.2.1 PRN 105409 (SJ 1367 5502): An apparently circular, man-made pit extending beyond the area of topsoil removal. It was 2.0m in diameter with heat affected sides, the visible portion being half-sectioned to the maximum permitted depth of 1.2m at which point the bottom had not been reached. The lowest layer contained a great deal of charcoal but nothing else of significance was seen and the feature as such remains undated.

5.2.2 PRN 105410 (SJ 136 537): A redundant field situated to the south of Coed Cochion, showing ridge and furrow cultivation with an east-west alignment. The separation between furrows was 5m. This may be of medieval or post-medieval date and relate to Llwyn-Ynn Hall.

5.2.3 PRN 105411 (SJ 134 533): A second area of ridge and furrow cultivation divided into three parts by PRN 105444 and what appears to be a redundant field boundary. The western part is aligned north-south, the other parts being generally aligned north-west to south-east. The furrows are of 4m-5m separation. This area is probably contemporary with PRN 105410 and is situated to the east of Llwyn-Ynn Hall surrounding the area where PRN 105444 is crossed by the pipeline wayleave.

5.2.4 PRN 105444 (SJ 1346 5348): A trackway or road which runs approximately parallel to the southern section of the pipeline. The pipeline crosses this feature to the east of Llwyn-Ynn Hall where it was first noted after the removal of topsoil, being visible as localised areas of limestone cobbling with loose humic topsoil between them.

5.2.5 Owing to the nature of the pipeline works there was sufficient time to undertake a limited excavation of the feature prior to pipe installation. This took the form of an 8.3m by 1.0m trench at 90 degrees to the line of the trackway. The section obtained across the trackway showed a layer, 2.9m in width, of angular limestone cobbles less than 0.2m in size and weathered on their upper surface, underlain by a layer of light grey, gritty gravel. There was some evidence of an earlier limestone cobbled surface at the easternmost end of the trench. This appeared to be more irregular and without an obvious foundation, but restrictions on available space and time prevented further investigation.

5.2.6 An area of the upper surface was cleaned and this showed that there was a considerable downslope of the upper stone surface towards the south. This, together with the rather inconsistent appearance of cobbled areas in the immediate vicinity and evidence of fluvial activity from the excavation, would suggest that natural gravel banks interspersed with areas of sand have caused subsidence of parts of the original surface. It seems unlikely therefore that the upper surface seen in the excavation would have been capable of supporting wheeled traffic for any length of time and there was no evidence for it on the surface exposed.

5.2.7 This trackway has been postulated as being on the line of a Roman road from St Asaph to near Rhug (Waddelove 1986, W654), having been supported by another source (Waddelove 1991, 8) who notes it as being "visible on the ground as a depression and by its ditches showing as two dark lines on an air photograph". It is also noted as being an "ancient road" (Davies 1929, p215), where the writer suggests the possibility of a Roman origin.

5.2.8 The nature of the excavation has limited the conclusions which may be drawn from it, but it would nevertheless appear that the upper surface, at least, is more suggestive of medieval usage. This may therefore be contemporary with the bridge (PRN 102602), which is noted as having a cobbled trackway crossing it (Davies 1929, 216) and believed to be Medieval in date (Clwyd Sites and Monuments Record). The bridge is situated on the line of the trackway at a distance of approximately 800m to the south of the excavation.

6 Conclusions

No archaeology was noted during pipeline operations in the area near Coed Cochion where the stone axes came from. However the discovery of a pit, unfortunately undated, and further information on the putative Roman road from St Asaph to near Rhug has demonstrated the value of an archaeological input into pipeline schemes particularly as so little is known about the past development of this landscape at the southern limit of the Vale of Clwyd.

7 References

1. Davies E., The Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Denbighshire, Cardiff.
2. Waddelove A.C., The Development of a Roman Road Network:the Lower Dee Valley Region before A.D. 138, University of Manchester M.Phil Thesis.
3. Waddelove E., Roman Dyffryn Clwyd, Ruthin.

8 Acknowledgements

The trust is grateful for the assistance and cooperation of Welsh Water plc and Beacon Pipelines, in particular their on-site agent Dougie Roberts. Also to all the landowners on the route of the pipeline , most notably Mr E. Edwards, Cefn Coch, Ruthin on whose land the majority of the work was carried out.

9 Site Archive

The archive at CPAT consists of the following;

A Reports

1. Assessment report.

B Site Data

1. A4 plans of excavations at 1:20 scale.
2. List and descriptions of all contexts.

C Photographic Archive

1. Catalogue of 35mm transparencies.
2. Catalogue of 35mm black and white negatives.
3. Colour slides.
4. Black and white negatives and contact of prints.

D Finds

1. All recovered finds cleaned, marked and stored at CPAT.

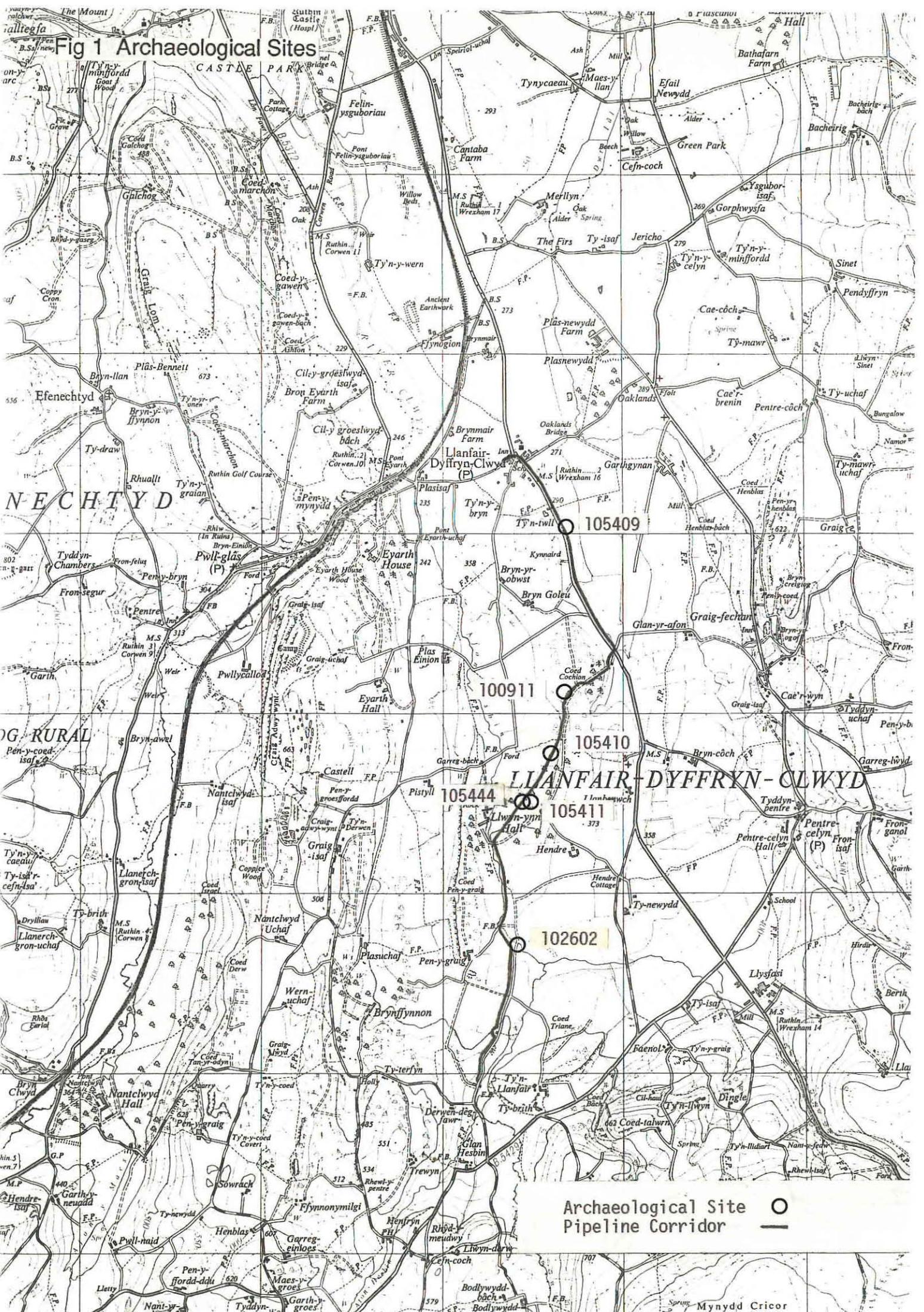


Fig 1 Archaeological Sites

Archaeological Site ○
 Pipeline Corridor —