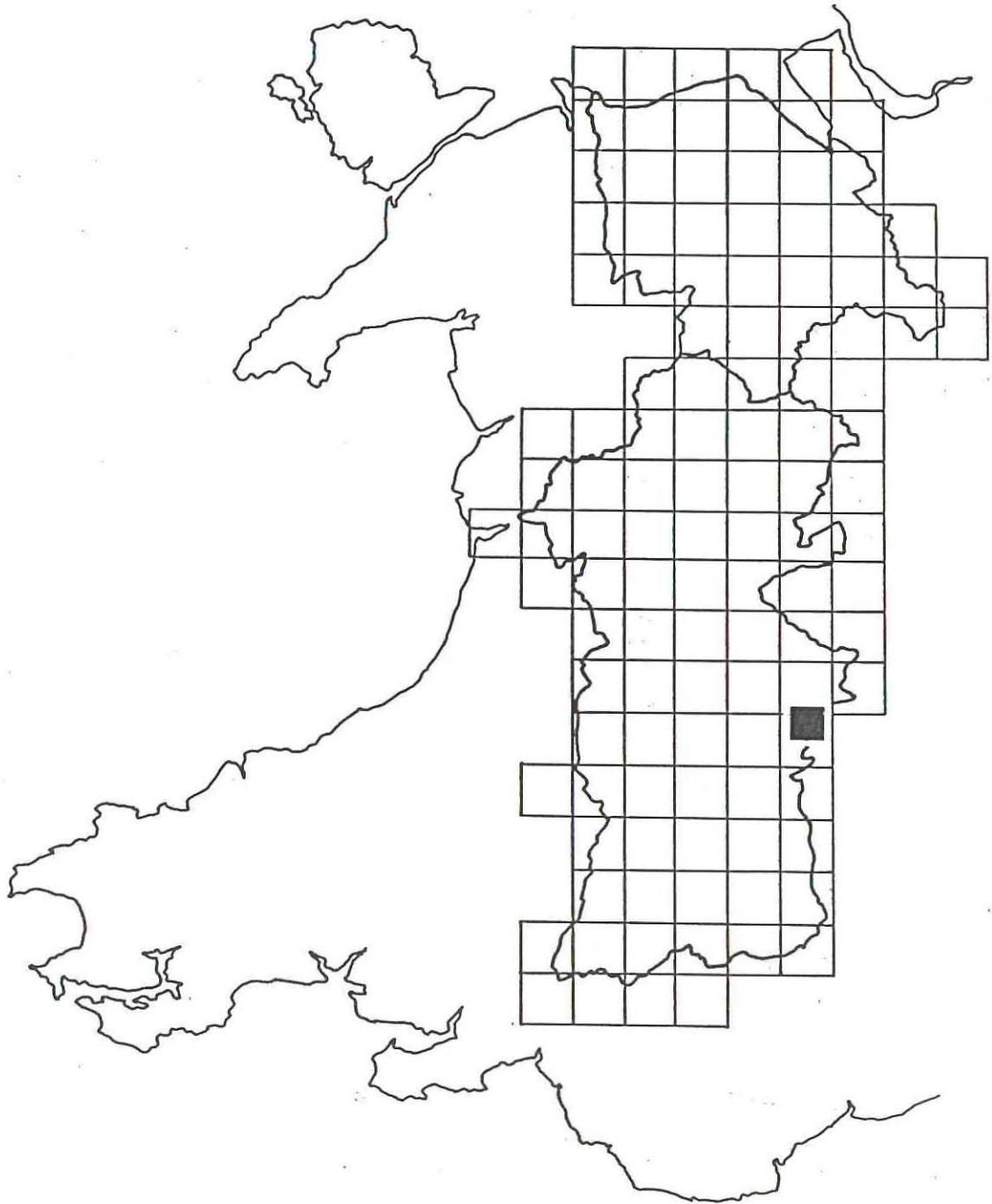


Gore Quarry, Walton, Powys

FIELD EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 69

Gore Quarry, Walton, Powys

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Report prepared for Tilcon Ltd

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Fig 1 Plan of Old Radnor Hill and Archaeological Sites

-  - Approximate Present Limit of Quarry
-  - Site with Primary Record Number (PRN)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was commissioned in June 1993 by Tilcon Ltd to carry out a field evaluation of the proposed extension to Gore Quarry at Walton near Presteigne, Powys. This was recommended by Radnorshire District Council's archaeological adviser, the Curatorial Section of CPAT, as part of the planning application relating to the current Interim Development Order (IDO) for the above quarry (Radnorshire District Council Planning Application R 4516/A).
- 1.2 The desk-top research and field survey stipulated by the brief and outlined in the specification (see Annex 1) was carried out in late June 1993 and the report prepared immediately afterwards.

2 Location

- 2.1 Old Radnor Hill is situated to the south and east of the village of the same name and approximately 1km west of the border between England and Wales. The IDO for Gore Quarry within which the extension is proposed encompasses the majority of the area of the hill within its boundary fences and up to the minor road passing along its south-eastern flank.

3 Topography and Land-Use

- 3.1 Old Radnor Hill is a fairly steep-sided rounded hill of oval plan on a north-east/south-west alignment. The hill forms a part of the southern boundary of the Walton basin and lies within a landscape of presumably glacial origin. It is composed mainly of gritstone with a patchy cover of fine brown soil of the Denbigh 1 association (Rudeforth *et al.* 1984, 125).
- 3.2 The areas of the hill not at present part of the Gore quarry seem to be used mainly for local leisure pursuits, although the hill is registered as common grazing land (Countryside Commission, 1988), with an area of 36.3 hectares. The hill does not appear to be grazed at present and this is borne out by the levels of vegetation encountered during the field survey with bracken, at this time of year, reaching heights of up to 2m.

4 Archaeological Methodology

- 4.1 The desk-top research comprised a search of all easily accessible map sources. In practice these proved to be exclusively of 19th-century date. The tithe map of 1841 shows Old Radnor Hill as an open area, edged on the north-western sides by a plantation, with no tithable value. This accords with its status as common land, and is confirmed by the first edition of the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (surveyed in 1887 and published in 1887/88), and an undated, but probably 19th-century, manuscript map in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth (Harpton Collection 5). Both show Old Radnor Hill as unenclosed.
- 4.2 The field survey was carried out by systematic walking of the area and the recording of any features of archaeological interest observed. Due to the vegetation levels previously noted some parts proved extremely difficult to cover, and in these cases use was made of vantage points to

oversee the area in question and the large-scale aerial photograph provided by Tilcon Ltd was utilised.

- 4.3 In addition, Mr R. Pye a local fieldworker living in Old Radnor kindly provided information on sites recognised and examined by him which are now lost to quarrying.

5 Archaeological Features

Extant Sites

- 5.1 Old Radnor Hill is bounded on its north-western and south-western sides by a discontinuous bank with a ditch on its upslope side which probably relates to the boundary of the common grazing land on the hill. The bank is typically 2m wide by 0.4m high and is best preserved at SO 2520 5907 where it is 1.5m wide by 0.7m high with stone revetting on its upslope (south-east) side.
- 5.2.1 There are other boundaries present within the area of the hill which may suggest enclosure of parts of the hill, possibly during the medieval or early post medieval periods.
These are:-
- 5.2.2 PRN 6661 (SO 2525 5895), an enclosure system comprised of four parallel or near parallel banks with adjacent ditches running from north-west to south-east. The south-east end of the most south-westerly bank extends in a north-easterly direction for a further 16m before being cut by the quarry workings and its original extent is therefore unknown, but it may possibly have marked the upper boundary of the field system.
- 5.2.3 PRN 7900 (SO 2497 5871), a bank 1.5m wide by 0.3m high with a shallow ditch on its upslope side which contours the hill in a general northerly direction for 120m before turning through a right angle and heading in a westerly direction for a further 20m. At both ends the bank appears to fade out but this may be due to the masking of the feature by vegetation.
- 5.3.1 Other sites noted during field work are:-
- 5.3.2 PRN 7898 (SO 2568 5941), a disused quarry site now hidden from view by trees and overgrown, situated on a rock outcrop at the northern tip of the hill. The workings run in a west-south-west/east-north-east direction for approximately 70m. The quarry face was examined and there appeared to be no trace of boreholes used for blasting, a method which appeared in Wales in the Seventeenth Century. This, and the fact that the site is not noted on the 1st Edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1887 and was presumably therefore derelict, may suggest a medieval or post medieval date.
- 5.3.3 PRN 7899 (SO 2521 5903), a bank 18m in length and of 5m width running across the moderately steep north-west facing slope of the hill. This feature may possibly be a platform of some sort but its function is unclear and it remains undated.
- 5.3.4 PRN 7901 (SO 2498 5858), a platform 7.5m north-north-west/east-south-east by 3.5m east-north-east/west-south-west set into the moderately steep south-west facing slope of the hill which may represent the position of a medieval house.

- 5.3.5 PRN 7902 (SO 2514 5857), a sub-circular pond made by construction of a 5.2m length of curving bank. Two springs to the west supply more water to the pond which was probably used either as a water supply for a nearby dwelling or stock grazing on the common.

Destroyed Sites

- 5.4.1 There are a number of other sites recorded as being on the hill which have now been lost following quarrying activities, these being:-
- 5.4.2 PRN 2165, a pillow mound or artificial rabbit breeding warren of medieval or post medieval date. Another pillow mound is reputed by Mr Pye to have been destroyed in earlier quarrying, perhaps as far back as the 1930's.
- 5.4.3 A further pillow mound identified by Mr Pye, who reports that the top of the mound was machined off and the site excavated and recorded by him in circa 1990. There were no stones visible in the mound which was 20m long by 4m wide and approximately 0.4m in height.
- 5.4.4 PRN 6659 and PRN 6660, two mounds excavated by Mr Pye on the ridge between the two original summits of the hill. One was about 4m by 2m in size and produced what he considered to be Neolithic pottery and a fragment of a Group VI (Great Langdale) stone axe.
- 5.4.5 Prehistoric activity on the hill is further suggested by the finding of a number of flints during the search of topsoil cleared prior to quarrying. Mr Pye reported up to 15 flints and K. Brassil of CPAT recovered a fragment of a polished flint axe in 1991 (PRN 6662).

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 In light of the available evidence and the proximity of Old Radnor Hill to the Walton Basin, an area of fairly intensive prehistoric occupation, the hill has clearly experienced some prehistoric activity. On the basis of the field evaluation and information provided by Mr Pye it appears that the surface evidence has now been destroyed, though the recovery of artefacts during the observation of topsoil clearance highlights the opportunity to recover some data.
- 6.2 The hill is common land used for grazing and other purposes by local people with common rights. Although no systematic search has been made of early documentary records, we can be reasonably confident that the current situation reflects practices which go back many hundreds of years. On this basis it can be assumed that the sorts of archaeological features encountered on Old Radnor Hill would be typical of land use and activity on the commons and waste throughout upland Wales, namely quarrying, grazing and illegal encroachment. Much though not necessarily all this activity can be attributed to the medieval and post-medieval eras.
- 6.3 Some earthwork features pertaining to this putative exploitation of the common survive but nothing of exceptional significance has been recognised during the course of the evaluation.

7 References

Rudeforth C.C., Hartnup R., Lea J.W., Thompson T.R.E., and Wright P.S., 1984, Soils and their Use in Wales (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden).

Countryside Commission, 1988, The Common Lands of Wales, (Rural Surveys Research Unit, Aberystwyth).

8 Acknowledgements

- 8.1 CPAT would like to express its thanks to Tilcon Ltd for facilitating the evaluation and in particular Mr D.J. Hawley for providing the large-scale aerial photograph utilised during fieldwork, and also to Mr R. Pye for information on his work in the area.

ANNEX 1: PROPOSED EXTENSION OF GORE QUARRY, WALTON, POWYS: SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT TO BE CONDUCTED BY CPAT

1.0 Background

1.1 The proposed extension of Gore Quarry by Tilcon Ltd under an Interim Development Order (IDO) may have a detrimental effect on known and unrecorded archaeological features on the summit and sides of Old Radnor Hill. The area presently untouched by quarrying is reportedly just over 30 hectares.

1.2 On the recommendation of the Powys County Sites and Monuments Record who are the archaeological advisers to Powys County Council, an archaeological evaluation has been requested to assess the implications of the extension and to assist in the determination of conditions on the IDO permission. The requirements have been outlined in a brief (ASB49).

2.0 Objectives

2.1. The objectives of the assessment are: to determine the nature and significance of all sites of archaeological interest on Old Radnor Hill in order that the archaeological adviser can promote an appropriate management strategy for the archaeological resource within the framework of the current planning application; and to prepare a report summarising and defining the archaeological resource and its spatial relationship to the development proposals, together with the identification of 'more' and 'less' archaeologically sensitive areas.

3.0 Methods

3.1 The assessment will take the form of:

(i) a desk-top study of available sources including the County Sites and Monuments Record and early cartography.

(ii) systematic field survey of the area involved.

(iii) consultation with a local fieldworker

3.2 Archaeological features noted during the assessment will be recorded, mapped and, where appropriate, photographed.

3.3 The post-survey phase of the assessment will involve the study of the information derived from the desk-top study and field survey to elucidate where possible their nature and date, and provide a measure of their wider significance. On the basis of this the archaeological potential of the area will be assessed.

4.0 Resources and Programming

4.1 It is proposed that the work will be undertaken by one experienced field archaeologist with additional assistance where necessary, and that the fieldwork may take several days to complete.

4.2 The preparation of the report will be presented to the client within two weeks of work being completed on site.

4.3 The project brief in all its elements will be adhered to throughout the course of the evaluation, and the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be observed by CPAT's staff.

R. J. Silvester
12 May 1993