

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

# **Abermule to Newtown Rising Main, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**CPAT Report No 667**

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## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

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October 2004

Report for Severn Trent Water

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

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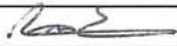

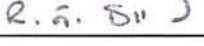
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## CPAT Report Record

### Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Abermule to Newtown Rising Main		
CPAT Project Name	Abermule to Newtown Pipeline		
CPAT Project No	1194	CPAT Report No	667
Confidential (yes/no)	No	draft/final	Final

### Internal control

	name	signature	date
prepared by	R. Hankinson		08/10/04
checked by	R.J. Silvester		08/10/04
approved by	R.J. Silvester		08/10/04

### Revisions

no	date	made by	checked by	approved by

### Internal memo


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## **CONTENTS**

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY
- 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
- 4 WATCHING BRIEF
- 5 CONCLUSIONS
- 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **FIGURES**

Fig. 1 Pipeline route and archaeological sites mentioned in the text

### **PLATES**

Plate 1 Pipeline route near Roman road (PRN 34754) at Cil-Gwrgan

Plate 2 Pipeline route near the Glan Hafren ringwork (PRN 1036)

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In March 2004, the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was asked by Severn Trent Water to provide a specification and quotation for a watching brief to be undertaken during the construction of a new rising main pipeline, running from the village of Abermule to the Newtown Waterworks in Powys.
- 1.2 The watching brief was requested by Mr M. Walters, of the Curatorial Section of CPAT, acting in his capacity as the archaeological advisor to Severn Trent Water. The work was not subject to a design brief, but the scope of the watching brief was specified in a letter of 26 February 2004, from Mr Walters to Mr I Hodgkiss of the Engineering Section of Severn Trent Water.
- 1.3 The CPAT quotation was accepted by Severn Trent Water in May 2004, and the watching brief was carried out in June of the same year. The report was delayed until work had been completed on site, to ensure that no further visits were required, and was completed in October 2004.

## **2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

- 2.1 The route of the pipeline commenced in the centre of the village of Abermule at National Grid Reference (NGR) SO 14209464, running south-west alongside the B4386 and A483 roads towards Newtown. The route left the road alignment at a point equidistant from the farms of Glan-Hafren and Broniarth, where it ran north-west for a short distance prior to crossing the River Severn and entering the Newtown Waterworks at NGR SO 13429247 (Fig. 1).
- 2.2 The route lay in the Severn Valley, downstream of Newtown and passes through land used for both agricultural pasture and arable cultivation. Approximately half of the route was sited on the flood plain of the river, with the remainder occupying the river terrace immediately above it. The elevation of the route varied from 90m OD on the flood plain up to 110m OD on the river terrace.
- 2.3 The underlying geology of the area consists of Ludlow and Wenlock Series mudstones, siltstones and greywackes belonging to the Silurian period (1994 British Geological Society map), although these are generally covered by a large amount of drift material of both fluvial and fluvio-glacial origin. The soils of the route are generally alluvial silty soils belonging to the Terme soil association, but there are also minor occurrences of fine silty and clayey soils, belonging to the Cegin soil association, which are derived from the underlying rocks (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend).

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The scope of the watching brief was determined by the archaeological sites recorded in the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) along the pipeline route. A brief description of those sites considered to be in close proximity to the pipeline route is given in the following paragraphs.
- 3.2 Traces of a Roman road (PRN 34754) have been identified in the vicinity of Cil-Gwrgan Farm (at NGR SO 14929359), during work on the opposite side of the road to the pipeline route. It is believed that they represent part of a road linking the known Roman forts at Caersws and Forden.
- 3.3 The remaining archaeological sites near the pipeline route consisted of the Cil-Gwrgan Crossing enclosure (PRN 7032), the Penarth mound (PRN 38709) and the Glan Hafren ringwork (PRN 1036).
- 3.4 None of the sites in para 3.3 has been confirmed as belonging to a particular period, but their present attribution in the SMR suggests that the Cil-Gwrgan Crossing enclosure consists of



the cropmark remains of a defended enclosure of the Iron Age, and that the Penarth mound represents a round barrow of the Bronze Age. The nature of the Glan Hafren ringwork remains unknown, but possible interpretations as a medieval defensive structure or a post-medieval tree-ring mound have been suggested.

#### **4 WATCHING BRIEF (Fig 2)**

- 4.1 The evidence for a Roman road at Cil-Gwrgan and the possibility that further sections of this road might be exposed between there and Abermule led to the examination of the entire section between those two points.
- 4.2 The remainder of the pipeline route was less intensively examined, in accordance with Mr Walters' letter, mentioned above. This specified that the watching brief be limited to areas where the pipeline route came into close proximity with known archaeological sites, although the opportunity to check adjoining sections was taken if these were open at the time of the relevant visit.
- 4.3 In order to optimise the time spent on site, regular contact was maintained with the site manager for the pipeline contractors, McPhillips. Visits were timed to coincide with the stripping of topsoil from the route, before the route had been disturbed by the transit of vehicles, as past experience suggests that this normally provides the best opportunity for the recognition of archaeological features. The spoil produced by topsoil stripping and heaped beside the wayleave was also examined for significant finds.
- 4.4 The initial part of the watching brief comprised the examination of the section north-east of Cil-Gwrgan farm. The only features which were recognised in this area comprised a series of land drains undoubtedly intended to improve the drainage of this low-lying ground and which were evidently of relatively modern origin. Further drainage features of this type were recognised to the south-west of Cil-Gwrgan.
- 4.5 At Cil-Gwrgan, the pipeline passed on the opposite side of the main road to the farm. One area of compact gravel was seen here at SO 14869352, but this had an irregular surface and was considered to be natural in origin. Even had it been artificial, its east-north-east/west-south-west trend suggested strongly that any potential alignment was not that of the Roman road.
- 4.6 No evidence relating to the Cil-Gwrgan Crossing enclosure (PRN 7032) was seen in the topsoiled area. Examination of the aerial photographic source (CPAT 86-MB-988) from which the site was recorded, demonstrated that the nearest portion of the site was probably more than 15m from the hedge line which borders the main road and that the site was therefore not likely to have been disturbed by the topsoiling of the wayleave. No material which may have been associated with the cropmark feature was recognised in the spoil.
- 4.7 No evidence of an archaeological feature was evident at the recorded location of the Penarth mound (PRN 38709), or was revealed after the wayleave had been topsoiled. The lack of evidence here suggests that the feature had been incorrectly located when it was originally recorded in the SMR, the record probably relating to the Glan Hafren ringwork.
- 4.8 The route of the pipeline in the field containing the Glan Hafren ringwork (PRN 1036) was examined after topsoil stripping had been carried out. No evidence relating to the earthwork was found in either the stripped wayleave or the resulting spoil. The nature of the site remains unconfirmed.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 No significant archaeological features appear to have been disturbed by the excavation works associated with the construction of the pipeline. The only features which were revealed by topsoil stripping of the pipeline wayleave were the lines of drainage gullies of relatively modern origin.
- 5.2 Examination of the spoil produced during construction revealed no finds earlier than the post-medieval period.

## **6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank the following for their assistance and co-operation: Bob Silvester of CPAT, for assisting with the watching brief; and Mr M Charles and the staff of McPhillips, the pipeline contractors, for their co-operation throughout.

## **7 SOURCES**

### **7.1 *Aerial photographic sources***

CPAT 86-MB-988, taken 27/07/1986

### **7.2 *Cartographic sources***

1994 British Geological Survey map of the Rocks of Wales (Solid edition)

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend (Sheet 2 - Wales)



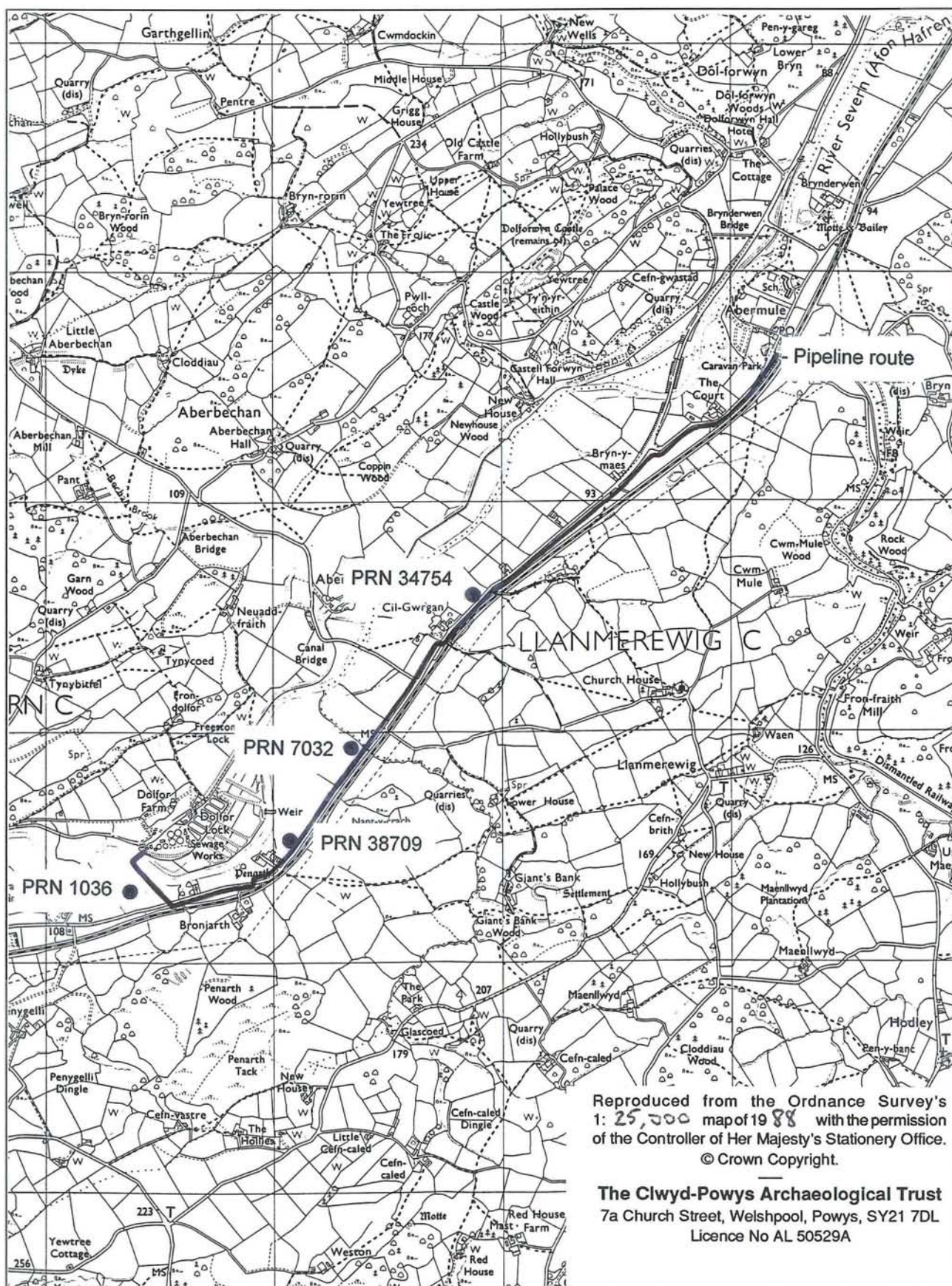


Fig. 1 Location of pipeline route and archaeological sites mentioned in the text. Scale 1:25,000