

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*Perry Farm, Whittington, Shropshire*  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF  
DRAFT REPORT

CPAT Report No 233

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF  
DRAFT REPORT**

**N.W.Jones and R.Hankinson**  
July 1997

Report for Mr J. Ward

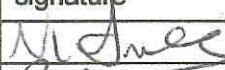



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## CPAT Report Record

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was invited to submit a quotation and specification for an archaeological excavation and subsequent watching brief at Perry Farm, Whittington Shropshire, based on a brief prepared by Archaeology Service, Shropshire County Council. The quotation was accepted and CPAT were invited to undertake the assessment.
- 1.2 The excavation was undertaken as a condition of planning consent, following an earlier archaeological assessment, also undertaken by CPAT (Jones 1996). The assessment was undertaken prior to the consideration of a planning application to develop a block of land to the rear of Perry Farm, involving the construction of four poultry houses (Planning Application No. 96/9458).

## 2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

- 2.1 Perry Farm is located c.5km east of Oswestry (SJ 350 303, fig. 1) on low lying land at approximately 85m OD. The proposed development site occupies c.1.1ha to the rear of Perry Farm, which is currently under arable cultivation. The site lies on the north-east side of the valley of the River Perry, a tributary of the Severn. The site has been recorded (Swan & Welfare 1995, 166) as occupying a slight rise, which may have been surrounded by marshland.
- 2.2 The site is located on the western edge of the North Shropshire plain within the Permo-Triassic synclinal basin. The sands and gravels are derived from the meltwaters of the Devensian glaciation c.18,000 years ago. The soils comprise of brown loamy silts and sandstones, generally well-drained and suitable for use as permanent grass or cereal crops (Soil Survey 1982; 1983).

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The development site lies within the Roman marching camp PRN 935 (fig. 2), in an area generally rich in cropmark features which have been interpreted as a series of enclosures and field systems. The marching camp is one of 130 such temporary camps now identified in England (Swan & Welfare 1995), with a further 26 examples known in Wales (Ordnance Survey 1991). The camp covers 15.3ha, with the development site occupying 1.3ha within the interior (8.5% of the area).
- 3.2 The evaluation conducted in 1996 (fig. 3; Jones 1996) showed the area to have been heavily disturbed by cultivation to a depth of c.0.45m. No evidence was revealed for any features associated with the marching camp. Although the existence of one linear ditch (context 9, M4/C2), which may best be interpreted as a field boundary, was confirmed, other features thought to represent field systems and identified both as cropmarks and by a geophysical survey, were found to be of natural origin. The dating of the ditch was uncertain as the evaluation only produced a single undiagnostic sherd from a probable recut of the ditch.

## 4 EXCAVATION

- 4.1 The excavation consisted of 2 trenches (H and I) excavated across the line of the ditch identified during the evaluation (M4/C2), together with a further two trenches (J and K) located to investigate linear cropmark and geophysical anomalies (C1 and C3) running parallel to the ditch (fig. 4).

### Trench H (fig. 5; 10 x 1.5 m)

- 4.2 The removal by machine of up to 0.35m of ploughsoil (1) revealed the natural subsoil which was generally composed of loose orange sand containing small, rounded stones. The natural subsoil was seen to be cut by a ditch (3) of V-shaped profile with a level base. The length of ditch revealed in the trench was completely excavated and was seen to be filled with a soil (4) of similar character to the natural subsoil, but with a more clayey texture; no finds or datable material were recovered. The ditch would appear to represent a continuation of ditch C3 identified as a cropmark during the evaluation.



**Trench I (fig. 6; 5 x 5m)**

- 4.3 Removal of up to 0.38m of ploughsoil (5) revealed the surface of the natural subsoil which varied from gravelly silts at the west end to sandy silts and gravel at the east end. Cleaning of the trench revealed a ditch (7) up to 1.4m wide crossing the trench in an approximate north-south direction, which represented a southern continuation of the ditch M4/C2 seen in the original excavation, confirming the aerial photographic evidence. Excavation of the ditch demonstrated that it had been cut into the subsoil to a depth of at least 0.5m and had an asymmetric V-shaped profile, steeper on the east side; three distinct sand and gravel fills are thought to represent successive phases of silting. No finds or datable material were recovered.

**Trench J (fig. 7; 5 x 5m)**

- 4.4 Removal of up to 0.35m of ploughsoil (11) revealed the surface of the natural subsoil which varied from gritty sand at the west end to silts and gravels at the east end. Cleaning of the trench revealed a ditch (13) up to 1.3m wide crossing the trench in an approximate north-south direction, which represented a northern continuation of the ditch (M4/C2) seen in the original excavation, confirming the aerial photographic evidence. Excavation of the ditch demonstrated that it had been cut into the subsoil to a depth of at least 0.6m and had an asymmetric V-shaped profile, steeper on the east side; two distinct sand and gravel fills with an intermittent initial sandy fill are thought to represent successive phases of silting. Three fragments of pottery were recovered from the upper fill (14) of the ditch; one small body sherd of Black Burnished Ware, and two body sherds, probably from a jug of likely Medieval date.

**Trench K (fig. 8; 10 x 1.5m)**

- 4.5 Up to 0.35m of ploughsoil (17) was removed by machine revealing the surface of the natural subsoil which was predominantly sand with lesser amounts of gravel and silt. No features were apparent, suggesting that the cropmark (C1) may be of natural origin.

## **5 WATCHING BRIEF**

- 5.1 Following the archaeological excavation of trenches H, I, J, and K, a watching brief was carried out during the initial groundworks on the site. The procedure adopted by the site contractors involved the removal of topsoil by bulldozer, followed by a subsequent levelling of the subsoil; the north-eastern end of the site was lowered by c.1.5m with the excess subsoil being spread on the south-western end to obtain an even surface. The watching brief was maintained throughout the topsoil removal and site levelling phases.

- 5.2 Two areas of further archaeological interest (Areas L and M) were recognised during the watching brief. Written, drawn, and photographic records were made of these areas prior to their disturbance by machining.

**Area L (fig. 9; 1.8 x 1.4m)**

- 5.3 Cleaning of the surface of the natural subsoil at this location revealed a ditch, aligned approximately north/south measuring 1.25m wide. Subsequent excavation of the ditch demonstrated that it had a shallow V-shaped profile, slightly steeper on the east side. The single homogenous fill of slightly clayey sand was removed, but no finds or datable material was recovered. The alignment and similarity of the fills would seem to suggest that this section of ditch is a northern continuation of the ditch seen in Trench H.

**Area M (fig. 10; 4.6 x 3.1m)**

- 5.4 A small area of charcoal was recognised during topsoil removal; further machining was deferred until the area and its immediate surroundings had been examined. The disturbed soil was removed and the area cleaned onto the top of the archaeological deposits or natural subsoil. Cleaning revealed two features, 1.25m apart; excavation of the western feature revealed that it was composed of a layer of brown sandy soil (24), approximately 0.1m thick, containing charcoal and this rested on a red-brown soil layer (25), 0.02m in thickness, which appeared to represent contact burning of the natural subsoil. Excavation of the eastern feature demonstrated that it was a pear-shaped shallow pit or scoop measuring 0.70m x 0.55m. The lowest 0.14m of the feature had survived the machining process and was filled with brown sandy soil (21) containing charcoal, and this rested on a layer of red-brown sandy soil (22), 0.02m thick, which appeared to represent contact burning of the natural subsoil. The similarity between contexts 21 and 24 and their relationship to the burnt soils 22 and 25, suggest that



the two features were probably related and have been truncated by subsequent ploughing or machining activities.

## 6 THE FINDS

- 6.1 The excavations produced a very small assemblage of artefacts, most of which came from either ploughsoil or disturbed subsoil. The only stratified pottery finds came from the upper fill (14) of ditch 13 (Trench J) and consisted of a small sherd of Black Burnished Ware and two sherds probably belonging to Medieval jugs. An unstratified iron nail fragment was recovered during localised cleaning to identify the course of the ditch to the north of Trench J and may have originated in the upper fill of the ditch.
- 6.2 The watching brief produced three unstratified sherds of probable Medieval pottery: one body sherd from a green glazed jug; one body sherd from a green/brown glazed jug; one base sherd, possibly from a jug or jar.
- 6.3 The soils (21 and 24) which relate to the areas of burning in Area M produced a quantity of wood charcoal; a fragment of burnt clay with organic inclusions and seed impressions was also found within soil 24. The charcoal was identified by Dr G.Morgan, University of Leicester as follows:

<u>Context</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>No. of Rings</u>	<u>Age</u>
21	Alder/Hazel	70mm	15	30yrs
24	Alder/Hazel	50mm	13	20yrs

The material from this area is currently awaiting radiocarbon dating.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The results from all three stages of archaeological investigation have shed further light on the nature and survival of the archaeological resource within the development area.
- 7.2 It would appear that the intensive ploughing of the site has disturbed deposits to a depth of c.0.45m below present ground level, the likely result of which is that much of the evidence for any internal features within the marching camp may already have been lost. No features were revealed which could definitely be associated with the marching camp, although the areas of burning identified in Area M may yet prove to be Roman in date. Only a few unstratified sherds of Roman coarse pottery were recovered.
- 7.3 Although the cropmark and geophysical survey evidence appeared to indicate a complex series of ditches assumed to represent a prehistoric field system, the evidence from excavations indicated that the majority of these features were likely to be of natural origin. Only two linear features were confirmed as probable boundary ditches, running roughly parallel and approximately 53m apart. The only dating evidence consisted of 3 sherds (from Trench J) of Roman and probably Medieval pottery from the upper fill (14) of the eastern ditch; no finds were recovered from either of the excavated sections of the western ditch. The negative evidence for the more complex field systems previously suggested may have significant implications regarding the nature of similar cropmarks identified further to the north.
- 7.4 The watching brief led to the discovery of a soil layer and a shallow pit or scoop associated with insitu burning. At present the nature and dating remains uncertain although samples of charcoal have been processed and will be submitted for identification and radiocarbon dating after which a final report will be produced.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1 CPAT would like to thank Dr G.Morgan for identifying the charcoal and the site contractors for facilitating the investigations which became necessary during the progress of the watching brief.

## **9 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Jones, N.W., 1996. *Perry Farm, Whittington, Shropshire: Archaeological Assessment*. CPAT Report No. 206

Swan, V., and Welfare, 1995. *Roman Camps in England, the Field Archaeology*, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments (England), London: HMSO.

Soil Survey (1982). *Soils of the Midland and West of England* . 1:250,000 Soil Map

Soil Survey (1983). *Legend for the 1:250,000 Map*.



## APPENDIX 1

### SITE ARCHIVE

#### Site Data

25 Context Record Forms

2 A1 site plans

5 A4 site plans/sections

EDM survey including trench locations, plans and levels

2 negative films, prints and contacts

2 slide films

Photographic catalogue

Correspondence

#### Finds

Trench H

No finds recovered.

Trench I

No finds recovered.

Trench J

1 small sherd of Black Burnished ware from context 14.

2 sherds probably belonging to Medieval jugs from context 14.

Trench K

No finds recovered.

Area L

No finds recovered.

Area M

1 small piece of burnt clay with organic inclusions and seed impressions from context 24.

1 sample of soil and charcoal from context 21.

1 sample of soil and charcoal from context 24.

Unstratified

1 sherd of green glazed Medieval jug.

1 sherd of green/brown glazed Medieval jug.

1 base sherd of possible Medieval jug.

## APPENDIX 2

### PERRY FARM, WHITTINGTON, SHROPSHIRE SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development of a block of land at Perry Farm, Whittington, Shropshire, involves the construction of four poultry houses on land which is currently in use as arable (Planning Application No. 96/9458).
- 1.2 The development area lies within a known Roman marching camp (SA935) with crop mark evidence for an undated field system on the same site.
- 1.3 An archaeological evaluation of the proposed development site was conducted by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in December 1996 (Jones 1996), which identified a linear ditched feature of unknown date. Planning consent was subsequently granted with a condition stipulating a programme of archaeological work. Accordingly, a brief has been prepared by Shropshire Archaeology Service which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

#### 2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the excavation are:
  - 2.1.1 to ensure preservation by record of known archaeological remains and any remains whose presence and/or nature could not be established in advance of development;
  - 2.1.1 to establish the date, function and form for ditch M4 and to investigate linear features C1 and C3 to investigate their possible association with the supposed field system;
  - 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the excavation and a site archive for deposition at an approved repository.

#### 3 Methods

- 3.1 The excavation will consist of 2 trenches excavated along the line of ditch M4, each measuring 5m in length, together with a 2m wide section across both linear features C1 and C3, at locations identified in the Brief. The excavation will be undertaken using standard excavation procedures:
  - 3.1.1 removal of modern overburden by machine;
  - 3.1.2 excavation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling. All features encountered will be excavated as fully as possible within the constraints imposed by safety considerations.
  - 3.1.3 all archaeological contexts recorded using the standard numbered context system employed by CPAT, on pro-forma recording sheets. All significant contexts to be planned and/or drawn in section at appropriate scales and photographed in monochrome and colour 35mm format. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps with levels reduced to Ordnance Datum.
  - 3.1.4 all archaeological artefacts and environmental samples recorded and processed in a manner appropriate to the material involved, in accordance with the Curatorial Brief Section 4.1.4. Those requiring conservation or other specialist treatment will be stored in a stable environment until such times as they can be examined by a specialist. All finds, except those deemed to be Treasure Trove,



are the property of the landowner. It is anticipated that they will be donated to the appropriate local or regional museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.

- 3.2 An archaeological watching brief will be maintained during all groundworks exceeding 0.50m below existing ground level. Below this depth the watching brief will not be maintained once groundworks exceed the depth of the lowest identified archaeological horizon. Provision will be made for an appropriate level of recording for any archaeological features revealed, in accordance with the Curatorial Brief section 4.2.2..
- 3.3 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief (section 5). This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Excavation; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.
- 3.4 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991), in accordance with the Curatorial Brief Section 5.

#### **4 Resources and Programming**

- 4.1 The excavation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist, who will also be responsible for producing the final report. Overall supervision will be by Dr A Gibson, 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 the same field archaeologist who conducted the excavation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the excavation may take up to 5 days. The subsequent report would be prepared immediately following completion of the watching brief, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. A date for commencement of 28th April 1997 has been agreed with the client and Curatorial monitoring is provisionally arranged for 30th April 1997.
- 4.4 The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be adhered to throughout the project.
- 4.5 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.6 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity Insurance.

#### **5 References**

Jones, N.W., 1996. *Perry Farm, Whittington, Shropshire: Archaeological Assessment*, CPAT Report No. 206

N.W.Jones  
23rd April 1997