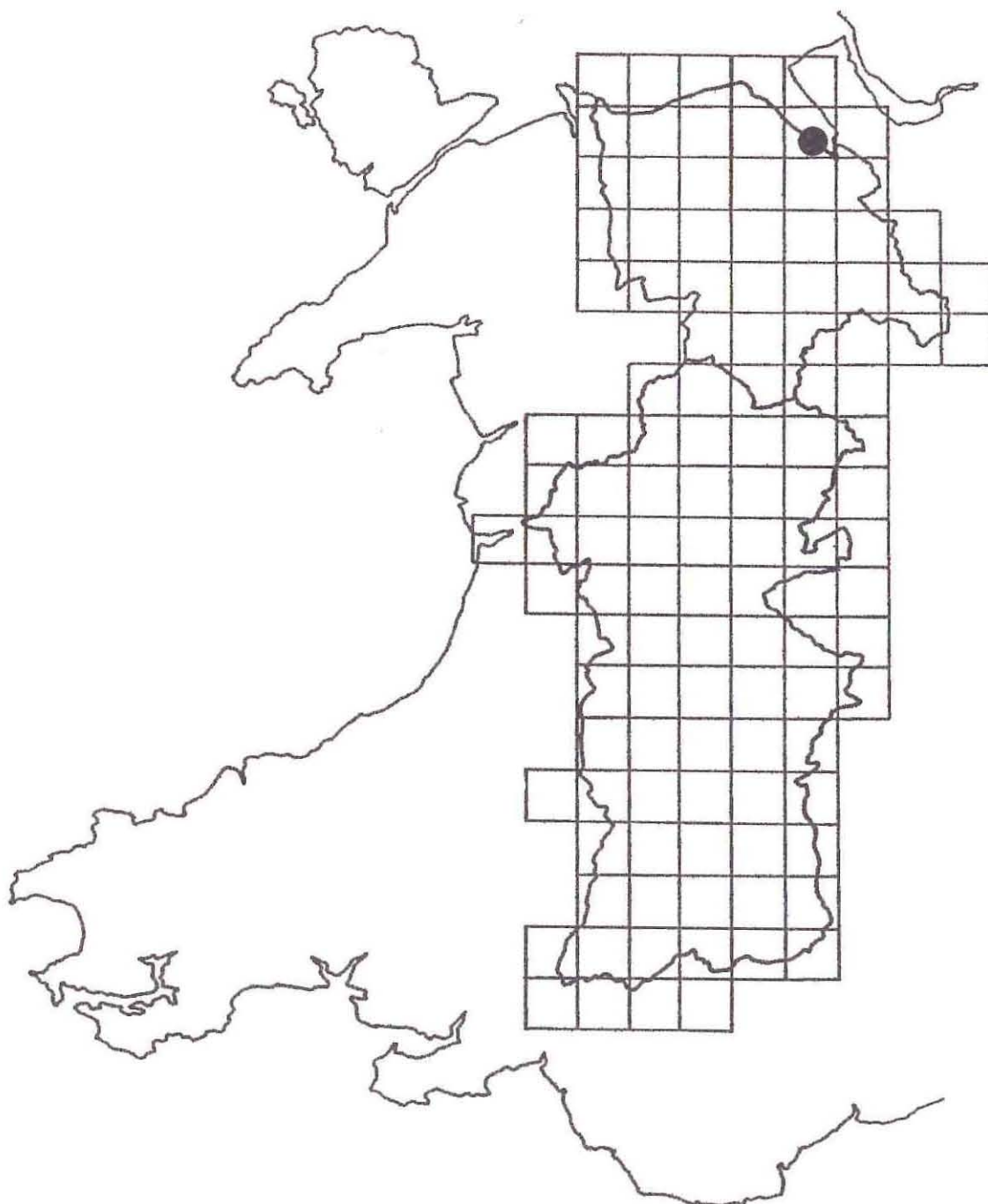


Croes Atti Lane, Oakenholt, Flint, Clwyd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 108

Croes Atti Lane, Oakenholt, Flint, Clwyd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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September 1994

Report prepared for Manweb plc

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1 Introduction

1.1 In the first half of 1993 Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments were approached by Manweb plc of Sealand Road, Chester, regarding proposals to remove the existing 33KV overhead line which oversails the amenity area to the south of Croes Atti Lane, Oakenholt, Clwyd (Fig 1; SJ 255 721) and to replace this with underground cable.

1.2 Because the proposed route of the underground cable was located entirely within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument referred to as Pentre Bridge Roman Site (F 131), Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments requested Manweb plc to engage an archaeological contractor to excavate seven trial pits to provide data on the depth of archaeological deposits that would assist them when considering Manweb's application for Scheduled Monument Consent for the proposed works.

1.3 Consent for an evaluation based on a specification presented to Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was subsequently granted and CPAT were commissioned by Manweb plc in August 1994 to undertake the work and report on the results.

2 Archaeological Background

2.1 Evidence of Roman settlement in the Pentre-Oakenholt area of Flint has been known since the late 18th century (Pennant 1778), when an association with a local lead industry was first suggested. Stone walls, burials, Roman finds and a smelting furnace were identified in Ship Field (SJ 2557 7216), to the east of the Chester road in the mid-19th century (Ffoulkes 1856), and subsequent excavations in Oakenholt from the 1920s onward have confirmed the presence of considerable Roman activity in the area (Atkinson, Petch and Taylor 1924-5; Hayes 1961; O'Leary and Davey 1975-76; O'Leary, Blockley and Musson 1978).

2.2 Excavations previously carried out within the area of the present evaluation produced evidence for Roman occupation and an associated lead processing industry dating primarily to the 1st-2nd centuries AD, though with possible re-occupation of the site in the late 3rd century AD (Weetman 1986).

2.3 Following Hayes' discoveries in 1961, the area to the south of Croes Atti Lane (Fig 1) was scheduled as an Ancient Monument in September 1961. It remains the only part of this extensive Roman site that has statutory protection.

3 The Evaluation

3.1 A total of seven evaluation pits were located at specific points along the line proposed for the undergrounding of the electricity cable (Fig 2). Their locations had previously been determined at a site meeting in November 1993 attended by

representatives of Manweb, Cadw and CPAT.

3.2 Six of the evaluation pits were to have maximum dimensions of 1.0m by 1.0m (Pits A-F) whilst the seventh pit (Pit G), located where an H-pole with two stays was to be erected, was a maximum of 1.5m square. Each pit was excavated by hand - within the constraints imposed by the size of the pits and by safety requirements - to establish the presence and depth of archaeological deposits on the line of the proposed underground cables.

3.3 Each pit was excavated to a depth where either undisturbed archaeological deposits or undisturbed natural subsoil could be recognised. A written and photographic record of each pit was maintained and, where appropriate, a representative sectional drawing was also prepared. All significant finds were related to their contexts and kept for cleaning and further examination.

3.4 The height of the surface of each pit and individual levels within them relative to Ordnance Datum was recorded by standard levelling procedures.

3.4 Evaluation Pit A

3.4.1 Approximately 0.55m of modern overburden was removed from this pit which was located immediately to the south of the H pole at the eastern end of the proposed cable trench. At this depth, an iron water-pipe inspection plate or valve cover set on a concrete block was uncovered. It was not clear whether or not there was an underlying water-pipe which was still active. No further excavation was possible in this evaluation pit.

3.5 Evaluation Pit B

3.5.1 This pit, located immediately to the south of the bowling green, and 3.0m north of the stream was abandoned at a depth of 0.70m where the base of the pit thus far excavated was seen to contain concrete slabs of the same type as those used to revet the lower, south-east side of the adjacent bowling green. The slabs, presumably dumped during construction works, extended laterally beyond the limits of excavation and could not be broken manually. It was ascertained that they were at least 0.25m thick within the pit.

3.6 Evaluation Pit C

3.6.1 This trial pit was located close to the south-western corner of the bowling-green. The uppermost layer, which was approximately 0.63m in depth, consisted of modern overburden closely similar to that encountered in Pits A and B. Immediately below this was a brown silty soil 0.38m deep containing abundant flecks and particles of charcoal, natural limestone nodules, brick fragments and small quantities of post-medieval glazed pottery fragments. Below this, a layer interpreted as a floor

that consisted of unevenly cut thin sandstone slabs or tiles, 0.32m in maximum width and 3mm thick, extended horizontally across the pit. These were mortared and rested on a layer of orange-coloured sand approximately 0.2mm thick which overlay a layer of charcoal approximately 2mm thick. A single, small particle of late post-medieval or modern glazed pottery and a fragment of glass were recovered from the charcoal layer.

3.7 Evaluation Pit D

3.7.1 The modern overburden in this pit extended to a depth of approximately 0.56m and overlay a moderately stony brown to greyish-brown silty soil, 0.40m deep, which contained occasional brick and iron slag fragments at its interface with the overburden. Smears and particles of charcoal were found throughout the silty soil reaching a maximum density at the interface of this layer with the underlying undisturbed subsoil.

3.8 Evaluation Pit E

3.8.1 Pit E was located close to the eastern end of the embankment overlooking the western half of the area. Modern overburden extended to the maximum specified depth of 1.20m. This was probably due to the fact that the pit was inadvertently located on the line of an overspill pipe from the adjacent stream. The pipe itself was not uncovered but was believed to lie a short depth below the base of the excavation.

3.9 Evaluation Pit F

3.9.1 Pit F was located on the embankment near the south-western end of the amenity area and excavated to the maximum specified depth of 1.20m. A modern overburden layer approximately 0.25m deep overlay a clayey-silt soil which extended to the undisturbed subsoil at 1.20m. Modern pottery sherds were recovered from the overburden and upper level of the underlying soil.

3.10 Evaluation Pit G

3.10.1 Modern overburden consisting of modern, tipped material extended to a depth of 0.53m below which, and extending to the maximum specified depth of 1.20m was a stiff, grey clay which was relatively stone-free except for the basal 0.10m. This basal layer was also rich in charcoal and contained 19th century/early 20th-century finds. The sequence of soil layers suggested the location of a naturally infilled hollow on the surface of which modern rubbish had been tipped.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Because of the presence of substantial below-ground features, two of the pits (Pits A and B), were not excavated completely. The presence of significant archaeological deposits relating to the Roman activity in the area cannot be precluded at lower levels within these two pits, but is thought to be unlikely.

4.2 None of the evaluation pits excavated yielded evidence of Roman activity. In this respect, we may note that one of the conclusions drawn by Weetman following trial excavations in this area in 1986 was that there was a decline in the density of occupation about 30m beyond the modern Chester Road. Nevertheless, there were some indications of industrial activity extending further to the west and on this basis we cannot preclude the possibility that Roman archaeological levels do exist along the line of the proposed cable trench.

4.3 Features found within Evaluation Pit C were interpreted as a mortared floor level (Par 3.6.1) and were associated with modern finds. However, these were small and it is possible that they were re-deposited at this level from above by the activities of earthworms or small mammals. Other, more secure artefactual dating evidence was not found, but its presence cannot be precluded bearing in mind the limits of scale of the excavation. It remains a possibility, therefore, that this floor level represented the remains of a feature of Roman origin.

5 Summary

Pit Code	Min depth of excavation	Height OD of surface
A	0.55m	10.96m
B	0.70m	11.52m
C	1.02m	11.46m
D	0.96m	11.93m
E	1.20m	14.42m
F	1.20m	15.13m
G	1.20m	13.80m

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Fig 1

Location

Scale 1:2,500

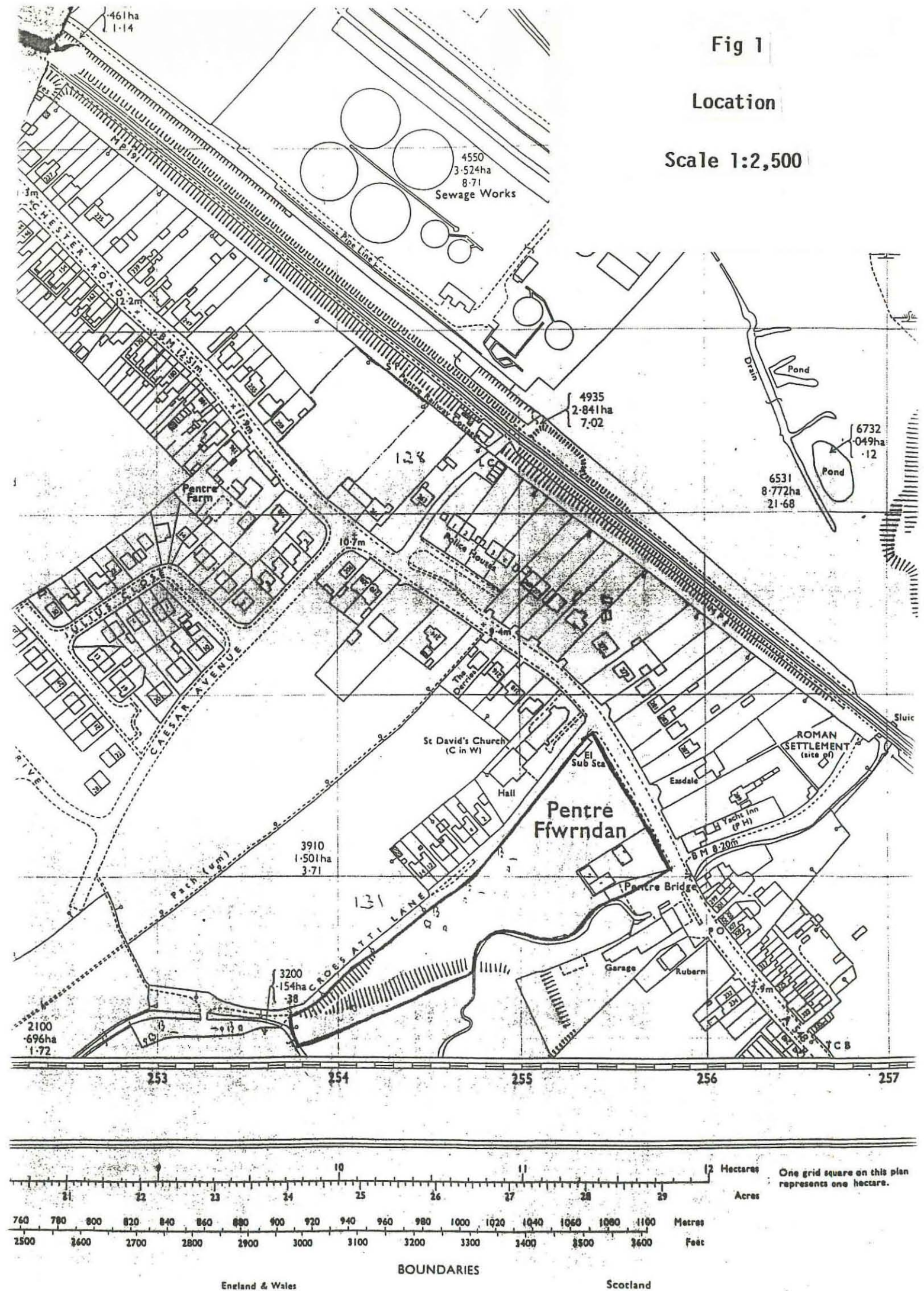


Fig 2

Location of Evaluation Pits

Scale 1:500

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