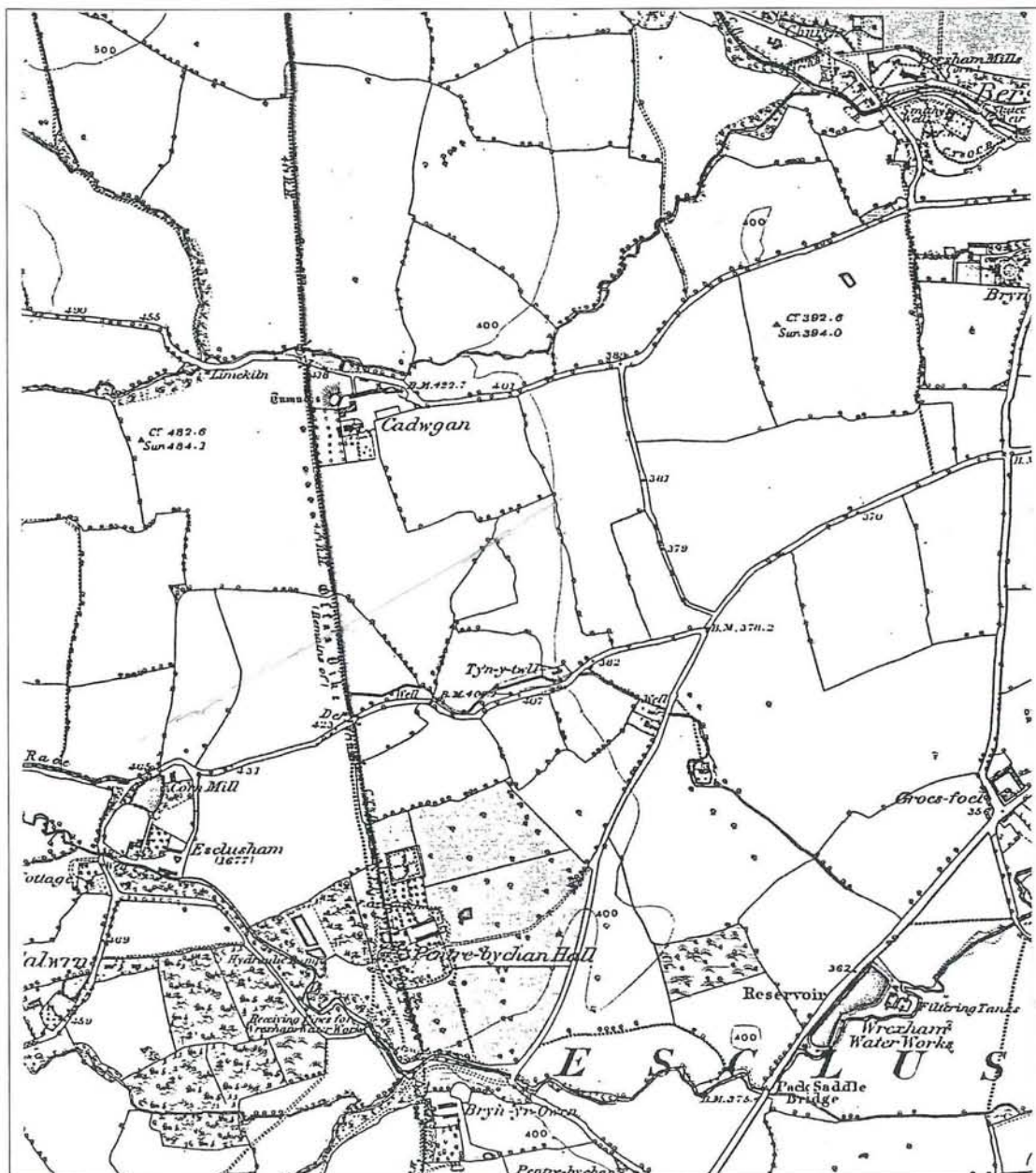


Offa's Dyke, Legacy, Wrexham

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 453

Offa's Dyke, Legacy, Wrexham

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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March 2002

Report for Dee Valley Water plc

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The replacement of an existing water main by Dee Valley Water plc affected a length of Offa's Dyke at Legacy, Wrexham. The works involved the excavation of two trenches, together with a third small-scale excavation to replace the existing water supply to a cattle trough. The site in question has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM FI132) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979.
- 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) to undertake the works as granted by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, included the following conditions: the applicant shall appoint a professional archaeologist, to be approved in writing by Cadw, to undertake a watching brief during all work within the scheduled area; the approved archaeologist shall make a photographic record of the site before, during and after the works are undertaken and write a report even if the findings are negative; the approved archaeologist shall be present during all works involving ground disturbance; the approved archaeologist shall be permitted to stop the work to record any features of archaeological significance revealed; within 6 weeks of completion a copy of the report shall be submitted to Cadw, the Regional Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record.
- 1.3 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was appointed by Dee Valley Water plc to undertake the required watching brief, which was carried out in December 2001.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

- 2.1 The site is located 1.1km south-west of Bersham and 300m south of Cadwgan Hall Farm (fig. 1; SJ 2984 4842). Topographically, it lies at the base of a gentle south-facing slope at approximately 125m OD.

3 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1 Prior to the commencement of groundworks a photographic record was made of the area concerned, which was repeated once the works had been completed and the trenches backfilled. The watching brief was undertaken between 10 and 12 December 2001 during the excavation of three trenches. These were mechanically excavated under archaeological supervision, after which the sections and base were inspected for the presence of any features of archaeological significance. A written and drawn record was maintained throughout, together with a photographic record in 35mm black and white and colour print and colour slide formats. Following completion of the works a further visit was made in March 2002 to photograph the affected areas following trench reinstatement (pls 7-9).

Trench 1

- 3.2 The northernmost of the three trenches was located immediately adjacent to the hedge which follows the line of the dyke, running roughly north-south (fig. 2). The trench was 3.5m long, 1.0m wide and a maximum of 1.5m deep at its northern end. Examination of the west-facing section of the trench (fig. 3) showed a dark brown, friable humic loam (1), up to 0.20m thick, overlying a homogenous brown, fairly compact silty clay loam (2), which lacked any stratigraphy and which extended to the base of the trench above the existing pipe. There was no clear indication of the former pipe trench and it is assumed that layer 2 could represent material redeposited as ditch fill.

Trench 2

- 3.3 The trench (pl 5), which was 3.2 long, 1.5m wide and 1.5m deep, was located 7m north of the disused railway embankment and 3.5m to the west of the dyke. It was immediately adjacent to an animal watering trough whose existing water supply was to be replaced. Examination of the south-facing section of the excavated trench (fig. 3) revealed an uppermost layer consisting of a dark grey to black clayey humus, up to 0.24m thick (3), which contained modern brick fragments and stone, probably representing the make-up of a trackway. On the eastern side of the section, above the existing iron pipe (5), at a depth of 1.0m, a reddish-brown redeposited clay (4) overlay the pipe, forming the backfill to the previous pipe trench. To the west of this, exposed in the section, was a compact greyish brown

coloured clay up to 0.80m thick (6), which overlay a stiffer dark grey clean clay (7) extending below the base of the trench.

Trench 3

- 3.4 The trench (pl 6), which was 3.0m long, 1.6m wide and 1.5m deep, was located immediately to the south of the railway embankment and 3.0m west of the dyke. Examination of part of the west-facing section on the eastern side of the pipe (fig. 3), showed an uppermost dark brown humic loam (8), up to 0.15m thick, overlying a lighter brown silty loam (9). Below this was a light grey silty-clay (10), up to 0.40m thick, which contained a high proportion of dark grey, gritty cinder, mainly in the upper half of the layer. This overlay a yellowish brown, compact silty clay, 0.70m thick (11), below which was a brownish-yellow, silty clay 0.09m thick (12), which contained a high proportion of both water-washed and angular stone. This layer extended below the base of the trench.

Trench 4

- 3.5 Due to changes in the scheme of works after the watching brief was completed, it was subsequently necessary to excavate a fourth trench, which was positioned in the area of the former railway bridge, outside the scheduled area. Although arrangements were made to conduct a watching brief, the contractors had unfortunately excavated and backfilled the trench before this could take place.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The trenches were all positioned on the west side of the dyke, which at this point survives as a low bank beneath, and to the east of, field boundaries. It would therefore be expected that the excavations might reveal evidence of the ditch, which Sir Cyril Fox recorded on the west side of Offa's Dyke at a point some 35m south of Cadwgan Hall, as being about 6.3m wide and a maximum of 1.7m deep in his survey of 1927 (Fox 1955, 69).
- 4.2 The layers revealed in Trench 1 appeared to consist of redeposited material which could constitute ditch fill. In Trench 2, while the eastern part of the trench was obviously disturbed by the excavation of the previous pipe trench, the western side revealed a clay layer which could be interpreted as ditch silt. Similarly in Trench 3, the basal layers could also represent ditch silts. No artefacts, however, were recovered from any of the layers in question to confirm the interpretation.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank the staff of Dee Valley Water plc for their assistance and co-operation during the project.

6 REFERENCES

Fox, C, 1955. *Offa's Dyke*. London.

APPENDIX 1

OFFA'S DYKE, LEGACY, WREXHAM SPECIFICATION FOR A CONDITIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Proposals by Dee Valley Water plc to replace an existing water main will affect a length of Offa's Dyke at Legacy, Wrexham. The proposed works will involve the excavation of two trenches, each 3 x 1m and 1.8m deep, together with a third small-scale excavation to replace the existing water supply to a cattle trough. The site in question has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) to undertake the proposed works has been granted by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, including the following conditions: the applicant shall appoint a professional archaeologist, to be approved in writing by Cadw, to undertake a watching brief during all work within the scheduled area; the approved archaeologist shall make a photographic record of the site before, during and after the works are undertaken and write a report even if the findings are negative; the approved archaeologist shall be present during all works involving ground disturbance; the approved archaeologist shall be permitted to stop the work to record any features of archaeological significance revealed; within 6 weeks of completion a copy of the report shall be submitted to Cadw, the Regional Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record.
- 1.3 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been appointed by Dee Valley Water plc to undertake the required watching brief and the following specification provides a method statement for undertaking this work.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are:
 - 2.1.1 to monitor all works involving ground disturbance to record the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of any archaeological deposits and/or features revealed within the area of the proposed development during the development works in so far as these aims are possible;
 - 2.1.2 to make a photographic record of the site before, during and after the works are undertaken;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief, even they are negative.

3 Methods

- 3.1 The watching brief will be carried out according to the conditions contained within the SMC and will involve the examination of all works involving ground disturbance within the scheduled area.
- 3.2 A photographic record will be maintained in 35mm black and white and colour slide with a photographic scale visible in each view.
- 3.3 Should any significant archaeological deposits be revealed sufficient opportunity must be allowed for adequate recording and excavation as appropriate. All contexts will be recorded on standard individual context forms and drawn in section and/or plan as appropriate.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared. This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background;

Catalogue of sites identified with notes on their condition and significance, Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

- 3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled and experienced archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by Mr R J Silvester, 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 or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the watching brief. Copies of the report will be provided to the following: the client; Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments; the Regional Sites and Monuments Record, CPAT, Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 4.3 The duration of the watching brief will be entirely dependant on the client's/contractor's programme of work and that the subsequent report will be prepared immediately thereafter. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client, who will be responsible for informing Cadw of the timetable for the works.
- 4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W.Jones
2nd August 2001



Fig. 1 Location, 1:25,000



Fig. 2 Position of trenches, scale 1:500

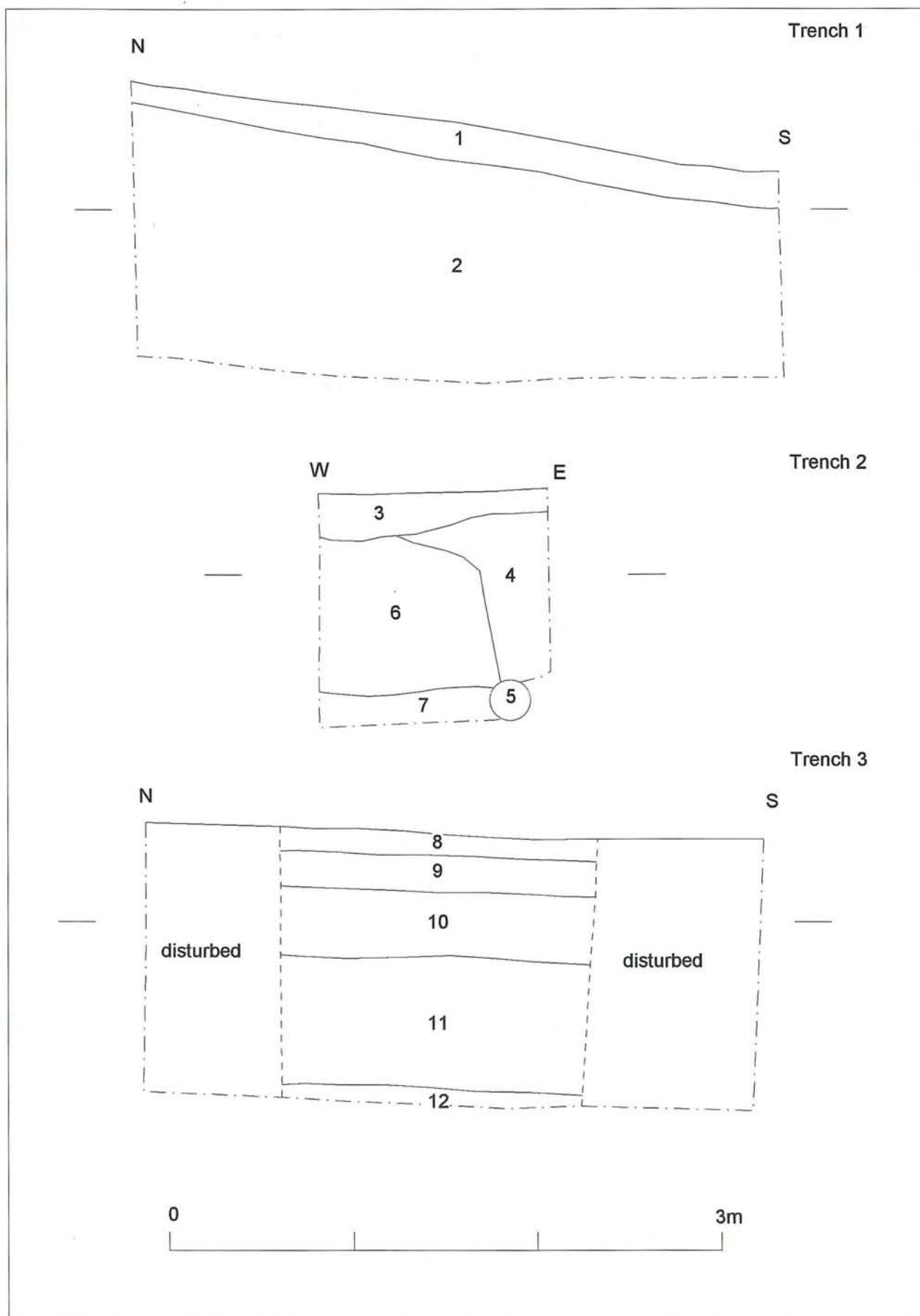


Fig. 3 Trench sections



Plate 1 Offa's Dyke, W side to N of railway embankment prior to excavations. Photo CPAT 1138.13



Plate 2 Offa's Dyke, E side to N of railway embankment prior to excavations. Photo CPAT 1131.25



Plate 3 Offa's Dyke S of railway embankment prior to excavations. Photo CPAT 1138.11



Plate 4 Pipeline route S of railway embankment. Photo CPAT 1131.20



Plate 5 Trench 2 S facing section. Photo CPAT 1138.18



Plate 6 Trench 3 W facing section. Photo CPAT 1138.21



Plate 7 Position of Trench 1 after reinstatement. Photo CPAT 1158.20



Plate 8 Position of Trench 2 after reinstatement. Photo CPAT 1158.21



Plate 9 Position of Trench 3 after reinstatement. Photo CPAT 1158.22