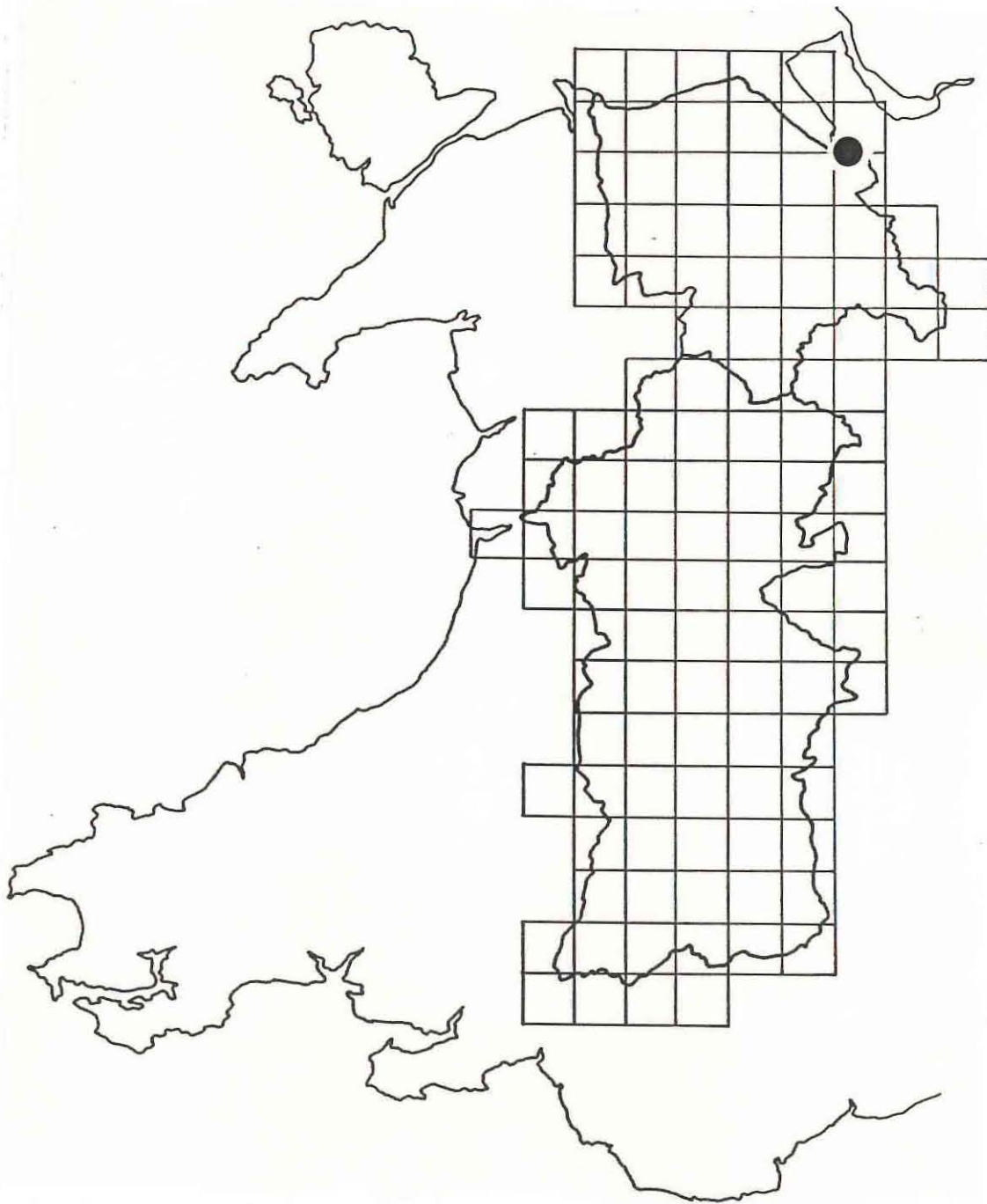


*An Archaeological Assessment of the  
A494 Improvement Scheme,  
Drome Corner to Ewloe, Clwyd*



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**by Mark Walters**

May 1992

## **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE A494 IMPROVEMENT SCHEME DROME CORNER TO EWLOE**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This assessment has been instigated at the request of the development and engineering consultants Rendel Palmer & Tritton who have put forward two alternative schemes for public consultation on behalf of the Welsh Office.

1.2 This assessment is designed in two stages. The first stage reported upon here is a desk-top study. After the public consultation exercise mounted by the consultants, a second stage will involve the detailed field examination of the alternative routes.

1.3 The assessment has attempted to establish the archaeological resource within the alternative road scheme corridors shown on the enclosed plan. The first involves the widening of the present route of the A494 south-east of the Pentre roundabout via Clay Hill and Aston. An optional improvement scheme consists of a loop road from the Pentre roundabout which bypasses Aston on the east to reconnect with the A494 at the Ewloe roundabout.

1.4 The topography includes former river terraces and flood deposits associated with the old course of the River Dee to the north-east of the Pentre roundabout which can be traced as far as the present canalised course of the Dee. These deposits cover Middle Carboniferous coal formations. From Pentre the ground rises gently to the south-west from 7m OD to the linear ridge at 80m OD between Hawarden and Connah's Quay. Land-use is a mixture of arable and pasture broken by large village developments around Aston, Mancot, Ewloe and Pentre which are gradually becoming part of eastern suburban extensions to the Connah's Quay and Shotton conurbations.

### **2 METHOD**

Stage 1 - Desk-top study.

#### **2.1 County SMR**

Consultation of the County Sites & Monuments Record (SMR) housed at the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. This includes the checking of the 1:10,560 map coverage in the relevant area for known sites of archaeological interest. Also use of the computerised SMR database and photographic collection.

#### **2.2 Aerial photographs**

Consultation of the aerial photographic archive at Clwyd County Council, Mold. This includes vertical aerial coverage of Clwyd by Geonex in 1984.



## 2.3 Cartographic sources

Checking of maps held at Clwyd County Council Record Office and the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth including: Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6" maps, Tithe maps for the Hawarden Tithe Survey of 1839 (Aston township), Hawarden Estate Map of Shotton c.1651, Enclosure Map of Aston 1730-40, 1815 Survey of the parish of Hawarden.

## 2.4 Documentary sources

Checking of records held in the Clwyd County Council Library - Local History Section.

## 2.5 Assessment

Collation of data derived from stage 1 to provide a summary of the character, dating and significance of the archaeological features located during the survey. Based on this information recommendations are made for those parts of the archaeological resource which would be affected by the development scheme.

# 3 RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT

3.1 The County Sites & Monuments Record showed that no known sites exist within the corridor to be developed.

3.2 The aerial photographic collections revealed no new sites.

3.3 The earliest map available for this area, the Hawarden Estate Map of Shotton c.1651, shows two house sites within the loop road corridor (Fig 1, Sites B & D.). Site B (SJ 312 672) was destroyed in the early 1960s. The building dated from the seventeenth-century. Site D (SJ 315 679) still exists and is known as Unwins Cottage. This building is also recorded as of seventeenth century date in origin and as such it is one of the oldest surviving structures in this part of Hawarden parish.

3.4 The Hawarden Tithe Survey of 1839 (Aston Township) adds little of interest except for a small area of survival of the open-field strip system of agriculture centred on SJ 3140 6775. This area has since been drastically reduced by hedge clearance. Such strip fields date from the medieval period through to the eighteenth century when enclosure acts were passed. After these changes many of the strip fields vanished or were incorporated into the larger square or rectangular enclosed fields familiar in today's landscape. Strip fields are recognisable in a modern enclosed landscape by their narrow shape, sometimes appearing as a reversed S in plan. A well preserved cluster of these fields survives at Mancot Royal to the east of Aston (SJ 3260 6700). The survival of these fields may be an indicator of



medieval agricultural practices in the Aston area. The community which worked the land was most likely derived from dispersed farmsteads rather than village centres, which are not in evidence on the earliest maps of the Aston area.

3.5 The 1881/2 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map for this area reveals a light railway /tramway embankment associated with coal workings centred on SJ 3035 6685. This ferried coal from the opencast to a quayside loading area at Queensferry (SJ 3230 6850).

3.6 Documentary sources are scarce for the Aston area. Those that do exist prior to the industrialisation of this region confirm the evidence derived from the cartographic sources that the landscape was largely given over to agriculture carried out by dispersed farming communities. The earliest reference is dated 1086 in the Domesday book. This contains inventories for the small communities at Estone (Aston) and Claitone (Clay Hill) in Atiscros Hundred. The landscape at this time would seem to have undergone recent clearance as both communities are listed as owning woodland covering approximately 1.5 miles square while the actual land being worked on is considerably less at approximately 240 acres.

3.7 There is a brief statement in Lloyd (1967) which mentions that the Saltney Marshes were granted to monks of Basingwerk with rights of pasturage by Robert, Lord of Mold.

3.8 In Willett (1822) reference is made to the four ancient families of the lordship of Hawarden. The Whitleys' were resident at Aston in the fifteenth century and could trace their line back to 1268. Willett would seem to be suggesting that the lords' residence was on the site of the present Aston Hall but there is no evidence to support this. The present structure of the Hall is no earlier than 1615.

3.9 The character of the landscape was not significantly changed in the Aston area until the arrival of industry in the form of coal mining. The earliest reference to this industry is 1677 in Yarringtons 'Englands Improvement by Sea and Land' but it would seem logical that mining had been carried out during the medieval period also. The boom period for mining was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the Aston and Mancot collieries being the most productive in the area at this time. After the Dee was canalised in 1737 trade in coal was opened up considerably, aided by new loading quaysides at Queensferry. From here the coal could be shipped for sale in Chester or exported elsewhere. The effect of the new prosperity in the Aston and Mancot townships can be readily gauged by the expansion of the population in these small villages during the late nineteenth century as evidenced by the cartographic evidence. The only coal workings which would affect the road scheme are located at SJ 3036 6680 and were part of the Aston Colliery.

#### 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Based on the desk-top study above the following recommendations are proposed.

4.2 The seventeenth century cottage at SJ 315 679, known as Unwins Cottage, (Fig 1, Site D) is one of the oldest surviving in the district. Prior to any decision being made on the proposed road course this building should be subjected to a thorough examination backed up by a photographic, measured, and written survey to determine its true architectural and historical potential.

4.3 The tramway/light railway embankment at SJ 3035 6685 is one of the few industrial period monuments surviving in this area. It is currently being used as part of a footpath between Aston Hall and Clay Hill. The road scheme drawings would appear to show that this earthwork will be narrowly avoided by the Aston loop road and thus preserved. Preservation would be the ideal recommendation in this case. However, a rapid record of its present condition should still be made in the form of a photographic, measured and written survey prior to any development in the vicinity.

4.4 An archaeological watching brief should be maintained on the site of the seventeenth century house destroyed in the 1960s (Fig.1 Site B) at SJ 312 672 in order to determine whether an earlier dwelling existed on the same site. Provision should be made for an archaeologist/s to be present during topsoil removal and adequate time should be allowed for rapid recording of features revealed.

4.5 All the surveys recommended above should be carried out by a recognised professional body.

#### REFERENCES

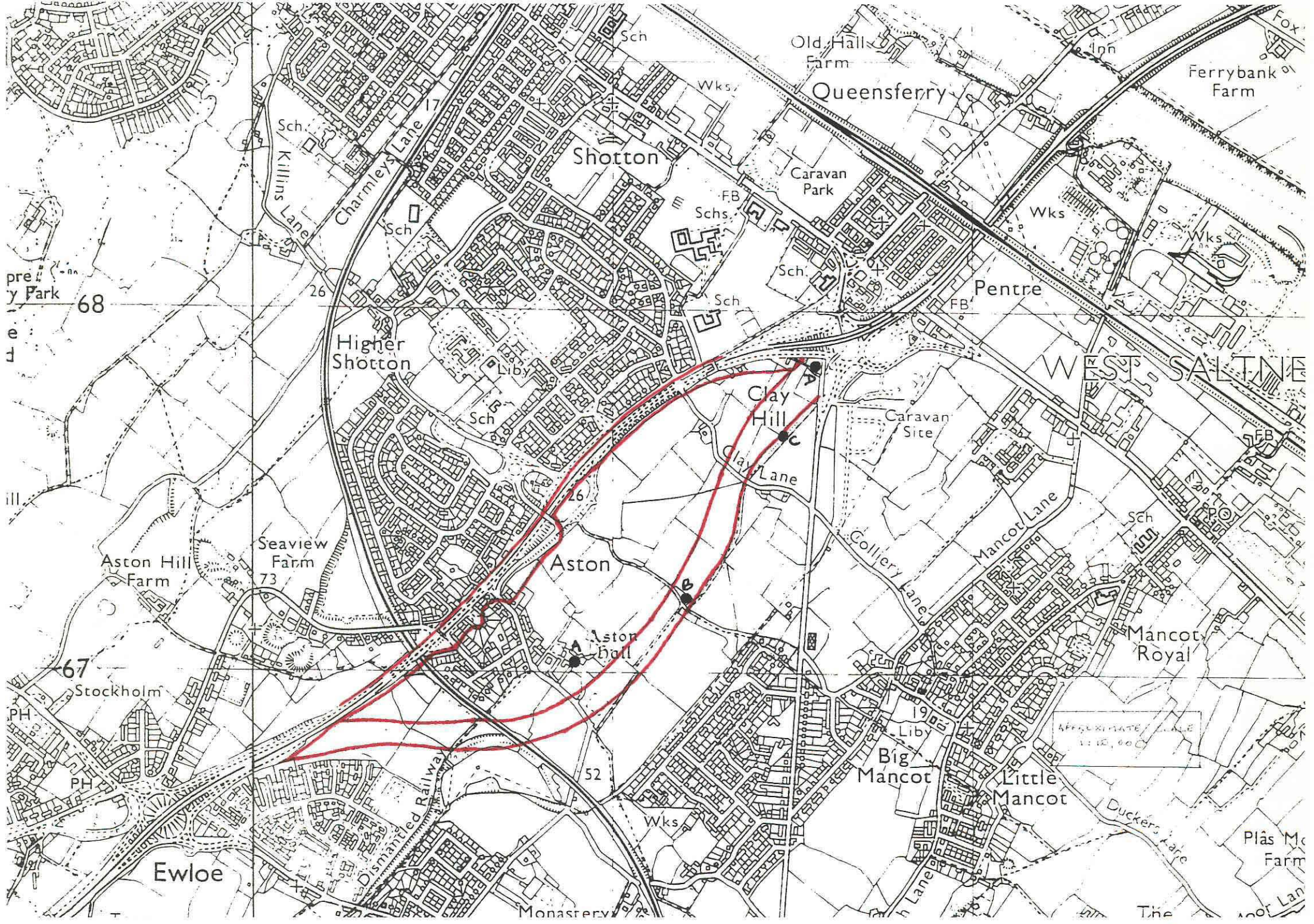
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pre  
y Park  
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68

26

Higher  
Shotton

Shotton

Old Hall  
Farm

Queensferry

Ferrybank  
Farm

Pentre

WEST SALTNEY

Clay  
Hill

Clay Lane

26

Aston

Aston  
Hall

Seaview  
Farm

73

Aston Hill  
Farm

67

Stockholm

PH

PH

Ewloe

Dismantled  
Railway

52

Wks

Big  
Mancot

Little  
Mancot

Mancot  
Royal

Duckers Lane

Plás M  
Farm

APPROXIMATE SCALE  
1:10,000