

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Machynlleth CSO Phase 2

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 744

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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October 2005

Report for GallifordTry Construction Ltd (North)


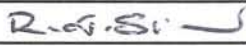

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward termed CPAT) was contacted by Mr Derrick Barlow, GallifordTry Construction Ltd (North), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during excavations in connection with a new CSO scheme along Heol Penrallt and Garsiwn, Machynlleth, Powys (SH 74550085; Fig. 1).
- 1.2 Information held within the regional Historic Environment Record indicated that the scheme was located within the medieval core of the town and along a street frontage known to have been occupied by medieval and late dwellings. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, acting in their capacity as advisors to the local planning authority, requested that the watching brief be undertaken and produced a Design Brief outlining the programme of works required (EVB 594, 23/09/05).
- 1.3 The scheme involved changes to the existing storm water network, including new manholes, pipe connections and the upgrading and construction of new chambers.

2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.1 A watching brief was maintained intermittently between 13 October and 17 October 2005 to monitor works during the mechanical excavation of a new chamber within the pavement on the corner of Heol Penrallt and Garsiwn.
- 2.2 The excavated area measured 4.7m by 3.4m overall and was ultimately extended to a depth in excess of 2.5m. Following the removal of the paving slabs and underlying layers of tarmac it became clear that much of the area had been disturbed by previous service trenches. An active gas main ran along the eastern side of the area, a BT conduit along the western side and a concrete surface water drain ran down the centre of the area, all following the alignment of Heol Penrallt.
- 2.3 Observation of the southern section (Fig. 2) revealed what appeared to be a fairly homogeneous layer of compacted small stone below the tarmac which sealed a layer of cobbles at a depth of around 0.4m, evidently a former road surface. This suggests that the present road and pavement level had been raised significantly, possibly in a single event. The cobbles lay above one or more layers of small stone, possibly also previous road surfaces, lying on top of the natural river gravel, the surface of which was about 0.65m below the present pavement. At the north-west corner of the trench the surface of the natural gravels was at a depth of 0.95m below the pavement, with the northern section displaying a similar stratigraphic sequence, although with a greater thickness of levelling material beneath the modern road and pavement surfaces.
- 2.4 The only feature of archaeological interest was a stone culvert in the western side of the trench, running from south to north, and cut into the natural river gravel. The culvert had flattened river stones in the base with dry-stone walling on either side and was capped by flagstones, forming an enclosed channel 0.3m wide and 0.25m deep. The top of the capstone was 0.55m below the pavement, although it was not possible to determine the level from which the feature had been excavated.
- 2.5 Although the area had been disturbed by previous service trenches there appeared to be no evidence to suggest that it had ever been anything other than part of the road, with no indication of any buildings or other archaeological features.
- 2.6 It appeared that the remaining trenches to be excavated were largely in areas which were likely to have been heavily disturbed by previous services. Following discussions with the curator it was therefore decided that the watching brief should not be extended to include the remaining works.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The watching brief revealed evidence to suggest that Heol Penrallt formerly extended further to the west than at present, occupying what is now a wide pavement in front of Royal House. Evidence for earlier road surfaces was also revealed in the form of one or more layers of river cobbles, although no associated artefacts were recovered to provide dating. It was clear that the present road level had been raised significantly, by around 0.4m at the southern end of the trench and as much as 0.65m at the northern end.
- 3.2 The only feature of archaeological significance which was identified during the watching brief was a stone culvert which ran from south to north, possibly along what was then the western side of Heol Penrallt.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 4.1 The writer would like to thank Mr Jim Hannah, GallifordTry and Mr Derek Starr, Daniels Construction, for their assistance during the project.

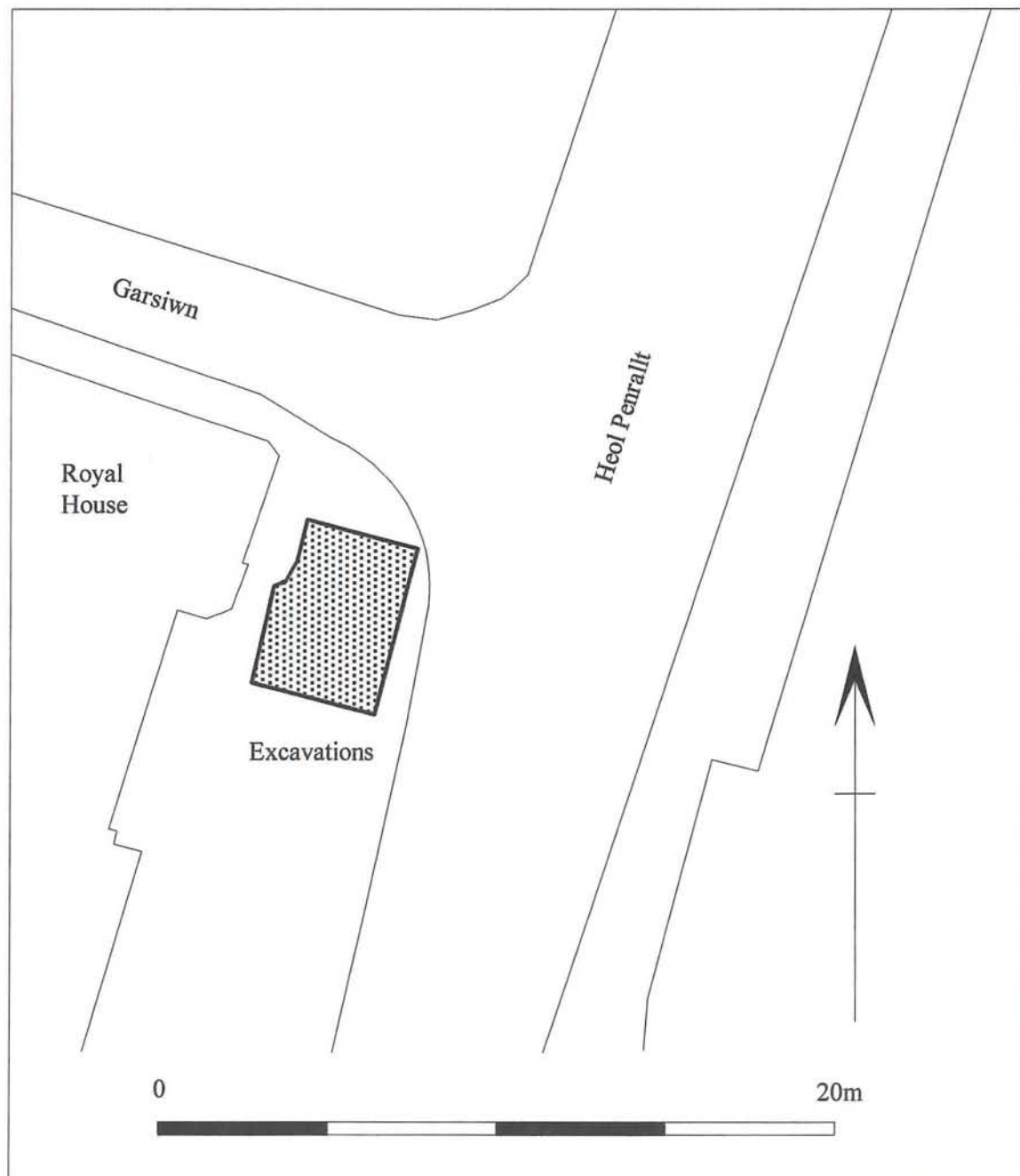


Fig. 1 Location of watching brief

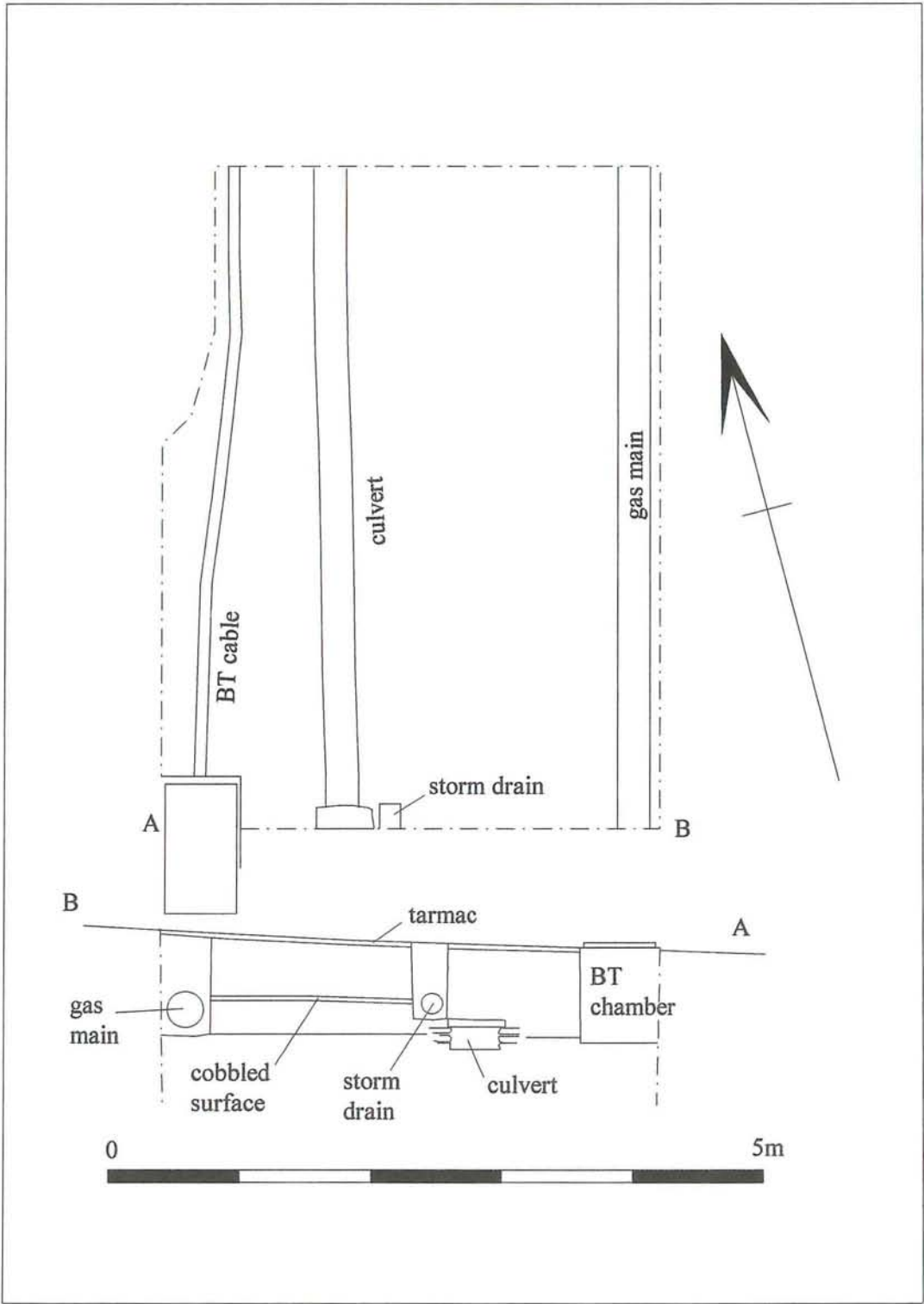


Fig. 2 Trench plan and section



Plate 1 Stone-built culvert visible on the southern section of the trench.



Plate 2 Southern section showing former cobbled road surface (at base of scale) with levelling material above.