

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

***A40 Llansantffraed/Talybont-on-Usk  
Embankment Stabilisation  
and Junction Improvement, Powys***

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 841

***A40 Llansantffraed/Talybont-on-Usk  
Embankment Stabilisation  
and Junction Improvement, Powys***

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

R. Hankinson  
January 2007

Report for Halcrow Group Ltd


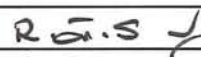
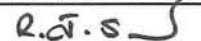
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## CPAT Report Record

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### Internal memo

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FIGURE: Archaeological sites and areas examined during the watching brief



## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In October 2006, the Halcrow Group Ltd, of Newport Road, Cardiff, (henceforward Halcrow) asked the contracting section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward CPAT Contracting) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during road improvement works at Llansantffraed in the Usk Valley of southern Powys. The works had been subject to an earlier archaeological assessment (Silvester 2003) and encompassed the junction of the A40(T) with a minor road from Talybont-on-Usk.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in November 2006 and a preliminary note of the findings passed to Halcrow. This report is a formal statement of the results and was prepared in January 2007.

## **2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The watching brief covered areas of pasture land, centred at SO 12222340, on the lower valley slopes and flood plain of the River Usk, near Llansantffraed village.
- 2.2 Two main soil types have been identified in the locality, namely river alluvium with deep, stoneless, permeable fine silty soils, of the Lugwardine Association (Rudeforth *et al* 1984, 174), and well-drained, reddish coarse loamy soils over sandstone belonging to the Eardiston 1 Association (Rudeforth *et al* 1984, 132).
- 2.3 The underlying rocks of the area comprise sandstones, mudstones and siltstones belonging to the Breconian and Dittonian portions of the Old Red Sandstone rocks, which are of Lower Devonian age (British Geological Survey map of Wales).

## **3 WATCHING BRIEF**

- 3.1 The watching brief was undertaken on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2006 and was predominantly concerned with work in the vicinity of two sites, Nos 17 and 18, in the original assessment report (Silvester 2003).
- 3.2 The line of Site 17, a redundant boundary bank, was crossed by a new section of access road leading to Llansantffraed village. Some disturbance to the earthwork was inevitable during the preliminary groundworks for the new road and these were examined when a 21m-long and 4m-wide section was cut across the bank at SO 12382335. The western end of the area examined commenced some 40m from the fence which defines the western boundary of the field. The excavation revealed that some of the appearance of the feature is due to the natural lie of the slope, but that the surface soils are a little thicker (a maximum of 0.5m instead of the 0.25m elsewhere) on its line. It may be that the feature is a lynchet or perhaps a ploughed-down boundary bank.



Plate 1 Section cut through the bank (Site 17), from SW (CPAT photo 2291-001)

- 3.3 Following the completion of the watching brief on Site 17, the opportunity was also taken to examine a larger topsoiled area on the south-west side of the A40, near the bridge across the River Usk, centred at SO 12182343. No sub-surface archaeological features were seen, with only modern pipes and drainage features visible where they cut through the subsoil. Some of the area had been travelled over by machines at the time of the watching brief, but it was unlikely that any evidence had been lost as a result of this activity. No sign of the putative Roman road (Site 6) that had been mentioned by Silvester (2003) was seen in any of the excavated areas and there was no disturbance to the surviving elements of the dismantled railway (Site 7).
- 3.4 During the first visit to the improvement works on the 6<sup>th</sup> November, a bank (Site 13), at the north-western end of the larger topsoiled area, was found to have been covered with material from the topsoil stripping. Careful instructions were left that this feature was not to be removed when the area was reinstated. When the works were revisited on the 15<sup>th</sup> November, the opportunity was taken to re-examine Site 13, as the topsoil cover had been removed. The feature had been identified by the on-site staff during the clearance of topsoil and was being preserved at the time of the visit.
- 3.5 On the 6<sup>th</sup> November, some minor surface damage to Site 18 (another lynchet or field bank), was noted, resulting from a machine being parked on the earthwork. The marks were re-turfed at the time under archaeological supervision to prevent the onset of erosion. Subsequently, it was realised that a revision to the line of the access road mentioned in para 3.2 was required, which necessitated the removal of the south-western end of Site 18, at SO 12412331.





Plate 2 Section across the lynchet (Site 18), from SW (CPAT photo 2291-006)

- 3.6 A machine-cut section, up to 1.2m deep, was excavated across the affected portion of Site 18 under archaeological supervision, on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. The makeup of the bank was examined and found to consist of brownish-red sandy silt, up to 0.6m thick, with a cover of topsoil, generally 0.3m thick. An area of stones, individually up to 0.3m across and collectively up to 0.36m thick, lay against the western slope of the bank and could represent either cleared stone, or be a result of the agricultural methods used to create the earthwork. Examination of the section suggested that the site was most probably a lynchet, created during ploughing, although its period of origin could not be confirmed by any artefactual evidence.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The construction of a new access road to the village from the A40 necessitated the removal of short sections of the field banks or lynchets, Site Nos 17 and 18. In both cases, the sections were excavated under archaeological supervision and suitable recording was completed prior to the construction of the road. The evidence revealed suggests that the features were related to arable farming of the field in question, but it proved impossible to determine the period in which this agriculture took place.
- 4.2 None of the other archaeological features, which had been identified during the original archaeological assessment, were subjected to any significant disturbance during the road improvement works.

- 4.3 The opportunity was taken to examine areas of topsoil stripping to determine whether a Roman road was present. A suggested course for the road had been identified in the original archaeological assessment of the proposed road improvement. However, no evidence of this road was found and it is presumed that it took a slightly different course to the one which was suggested.

## 5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank Mr P. Sandford and Mr G. Potter, of Halcrow, for their help and assistance during the watching brief.

## 6 SOURCES

### 6.1 References

Rudeforth, C C, Hartnup, R, Lea, J W, Thompson, T R E, and Wright, P C, 1984, *Soils and their use in Wales*, Bulletin No 11, Harpenden: Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Silvester, R J, 2003, *A40 Llansantffraed/Talybont-on-Usk Embankment Stabilisation and Junction Improvement*, Powys, CPAT Report No. 546

### 6.2 Cartographic sources

1983 Soils of England and Wales (Sheet 2 - Wales) Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend.

1994 *The Rocks of Wales* (Solid), Nottingham: British Geological Survey map.



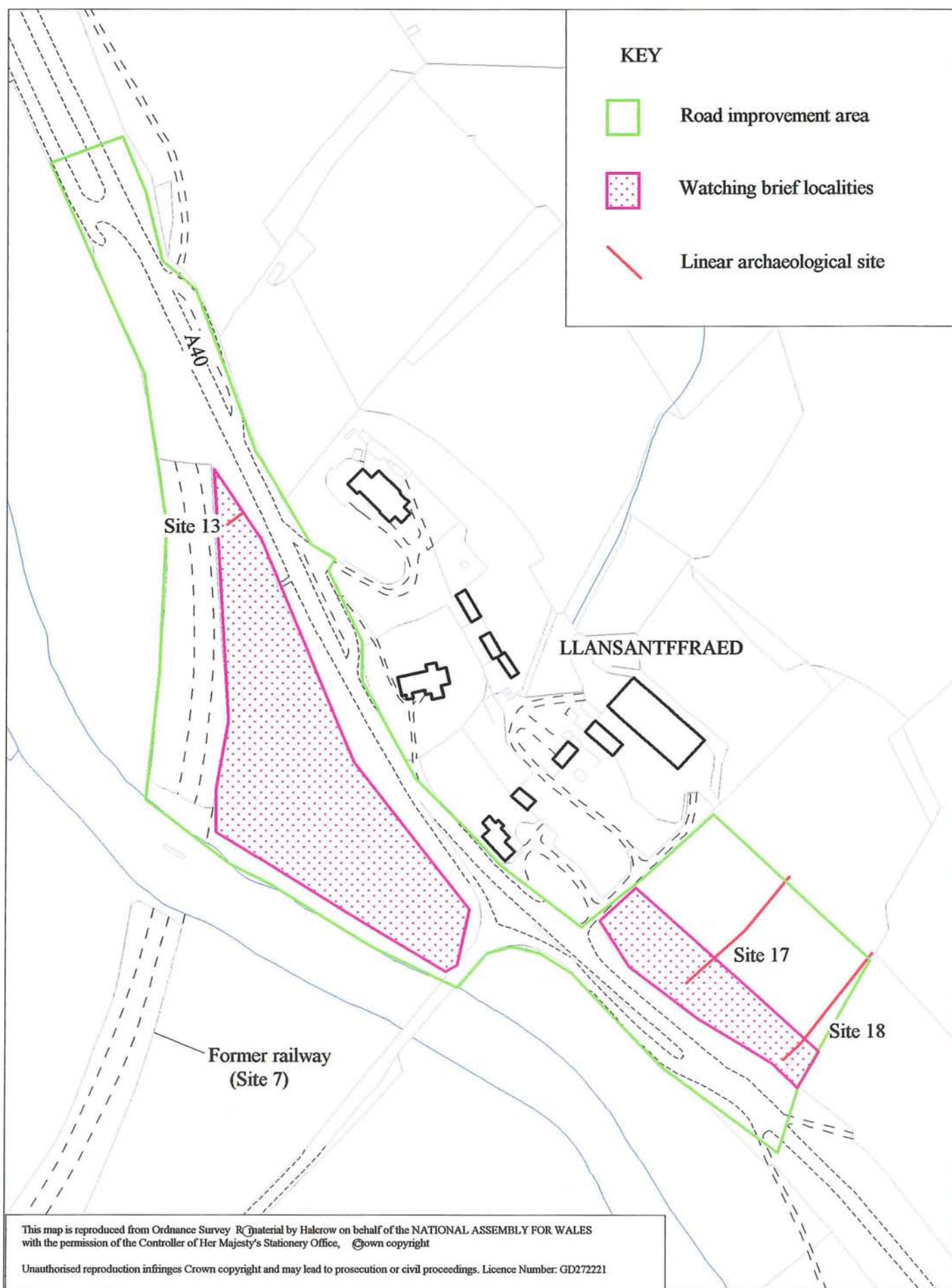


Fig 1 Archaeological sites and areas examined during the watching brief Scale 1:2,500