

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Proposed Development at Canol-y-cae, Eryrys, Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT



CPAT Report No 888

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

R J Silvester and N Jones
September 2007

Report for Rupert Havard Planning

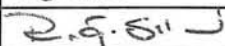
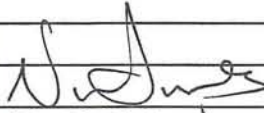
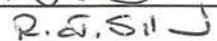
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In August 2007, the Field Services section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was commissioned by Rupert Havard Planning to undertake an archaeological assessment in connection with proposals to develop a plot of land at Canol-y-cae, Eryrys, Denbighshire. The Denbighshire Archaeology Service, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, had determined that an archaeological assessment should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource.
- 1.2 The site lies within an area where there has been a great deal of mining activity during the 18th and 19th centuries, and it was anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits might survive within the area.

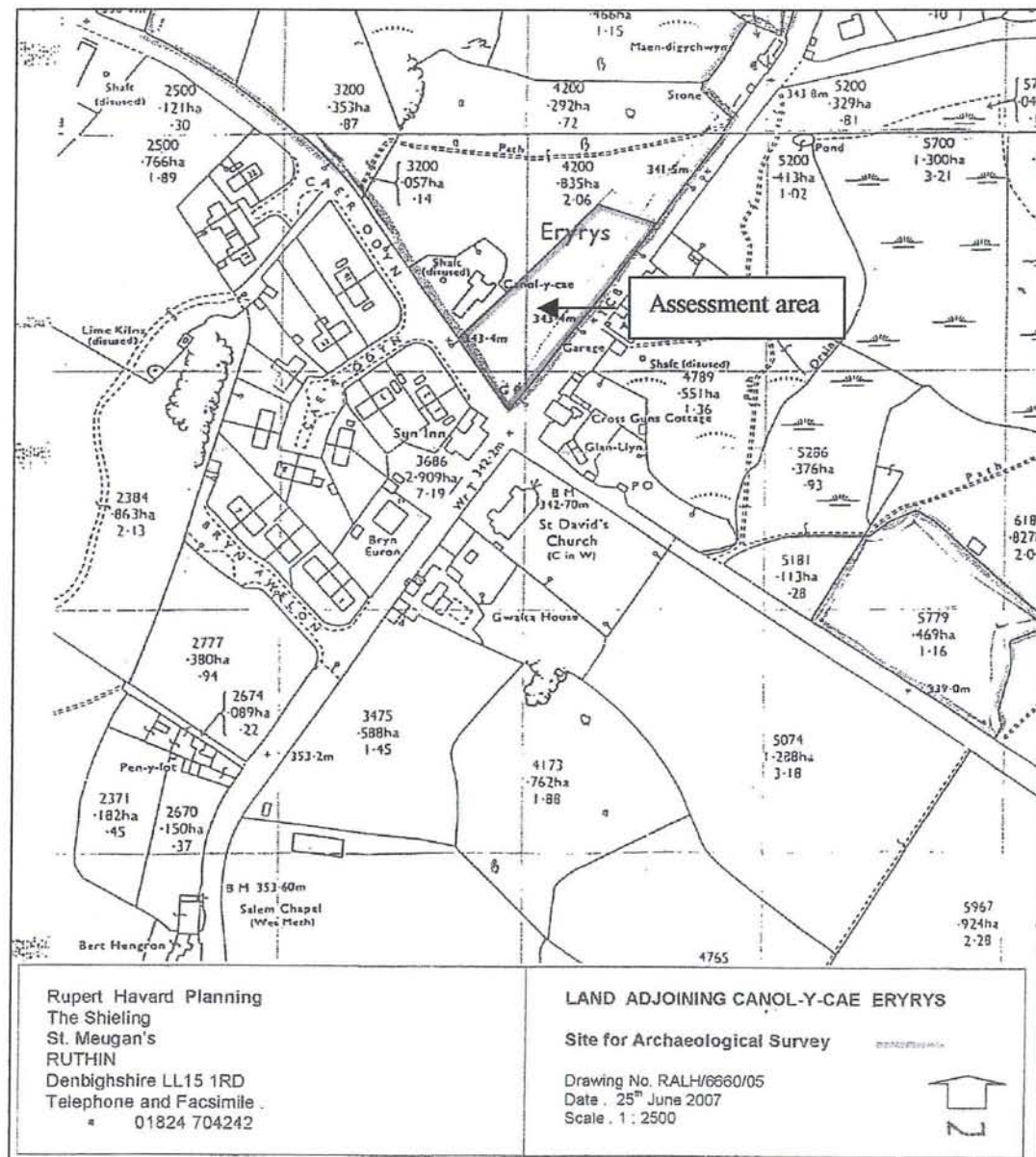


Fig. 1 Site location

2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The village of Eryrys lies around 6km south-west of Mold on the eastern side of Nercwys Mountain. The assessment area is situated near the centre of the village, on the northern side of a crossroads, immediately east of Canol-y-cae (SJ 20405790; Fig. 1). At present the proposed development area is part of a pasture field.
- 2.2 The solid geology of the area consists of Palaeozoic limestone (1994 British Geological Survey map), while the soils in the area of the village consist of well-drained fine loams belonging to the East Keswick Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The first stage of the assessment comprised a desk-based study of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources held at the following repositories: the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in Welshpool; the Flintshire Record Office (FRO) in Hawarden; the Denbighshire Record Office (DRO) in Ruthin; the National Library of Wales (NLW) in Aberystwyth; and the National Monuments Record (NMR) in Aberystwyth.
- 3.2 The earliest feature in the vicinity of the development area may be the Maen Digychwyn Boulder (NGR SJ 20475801), less than 60m to the north-east. This is an irregularly shaped boulder integrated now into the fence line of field. When measured by the Royal Commission in 1914 it was 3.3m high and 3.6m wide, and its authenticity as a prehistoric standing stone is given a boost by the fact that its name is not modern; it was known as *Maen Digychwyn* when the enclosure award was drawn up in 1830 and before the cottage of the same name was built (see below), but at a rather earlier date, around 1698, Edward Lhuyd referred to 'Maen ty gychwyn ar y Mynydd are y Fordh o Lan Armon ir Wydhgryg'. No other prehistoric sites have been recognised in the vicinity, but this almost certainly reflects a lack of archaeological research rather than a genuine absence of prehistoric activity.
- 3.3 As an area and township Eryrys has a long history. *Ereres* was first referred to in 1315, though lead miners from the area and from Minera were used by Edward I to open up lead mines in the south-west of England at the end of the 13th century. There are records of lead mines in the township at the time of the Black Death in the mid-14th century, and detailed records of lead mining from 1390/1. Robert Thomas, gent, of Eryrys was mentioned in 1691 (*NLW/Peniarth/DF362*), and later in 1763 Lord Grosvenor leased land to William Lloyd in the township of Eryrys to dig mines, pits etc in the search for lead (*NLW/Smallwood 40*), which Lloyd then sublet to Evan Davies and his family of Eryrys (*Smallwood 41*). In the early 19th century, Samuel Lewis confirmed that it was the township of Eryrys which was renowned for its lead mines, though by the time that he wrote these, he believed, were nearly exhausted.
- 3.4 The settlement that has now become known as Eryrys was not significant enough to be noticed by John Evans when he compiled his map of north Wales in 1795 nor was it named by the Ordnance surveyors in the early part of the 19th century. The reason for this becomes immediately evident from the Enclosure Award which was made in 1830 and more significantly in this context, the accompanying map which is probably of the same date. The roads were already in existence and the area around the crossroads was divided into blocks of land at the time of enclosure and passed to new owners. The development area lay within a block of land, 16 acres in extent, to the north of what was termed the Pont yr Alyn public road, and became the property of John Bonner Esq. There appear to have been virtually no houses here at the time of enclosure in 1830.

- 3.5 Gradually the settlement developed during the 19th century. The Tithe survey in c. 1842 reveals that this was a very fluid landscape. Cottages with small plots of lands, some termed allotments, spread out along the lane frontages. For instance the place where Maen-digychwyn emerged was one of several in the neighbourhood that was designated as an allotment for materials at the time of the Enclosure Award. This suggests that stone was excavated from here to make roads and walls and that the spot was then utilised for a new cottage. St David's church was constructed in 1863.
- 3.6 John Bonner's allotment remained undeveloped into the late 19th century. The Ordnance Survey map of 1874 shows an elongated and irregular pair of enclosures with what may have been a small hut in them. It is tempting to see this as associated with the opening up of the adjacent shaft (see below), but there can be no certainty on this point. By 1900 a proper house had been built on the site of the enclosures – this is what is now known as Canol-y-cae.
- 3.7 The physical manifestations of the lead mining industry become evident on the early, large-scale Ordnance Survey maps. On the east side of the road to Mold, opposite the development area one old shaft in 1874 was marked behind what was the Cross Guns Public House and more at a greater distance. Others, however, are only depicted on the second edition that appeared twenty-six years later, and this includes the shaft on the west side of Canol-y-cae, and another 50m to the west. It would be logical to assume that both had been opened in the last quarter of the 19th century, even though in 1900 both were termed 'old'. We should not, however, overlook the possibility that the surveyors simply failed to record them during the work for the earlier map.
- 3.8 Other industries too were functioning at this time. The 1874 map (Fig. 2) shows a small limestone quarry together with a limekiln to the west of the Sun Inn. By 1900 the quarry had been extended and an additional limekiln had been constructed (Fig. 3). At least two further quarries lay within 150m of the Sun, to the north and the south-east.
- 3.9 What is clear is that the desk-top sources, specifically the maps, show no evidence of any activity in the area defined for development between Canol-y-cae and the road.

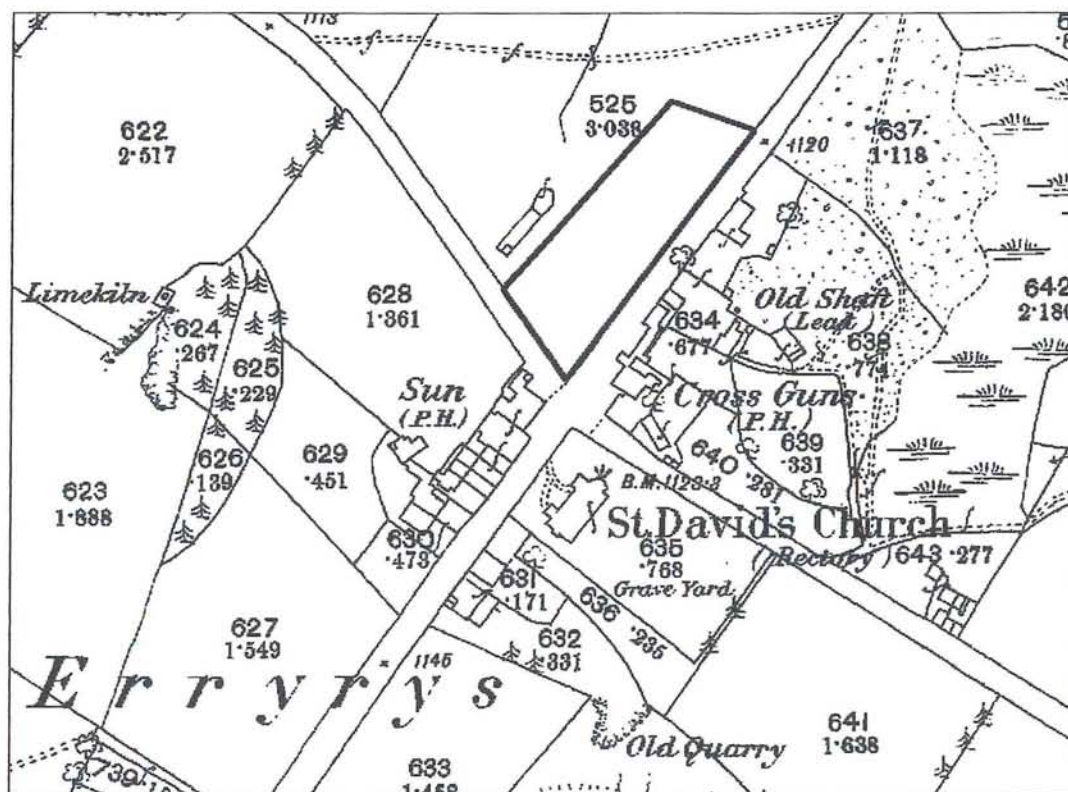


Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map of 1874.

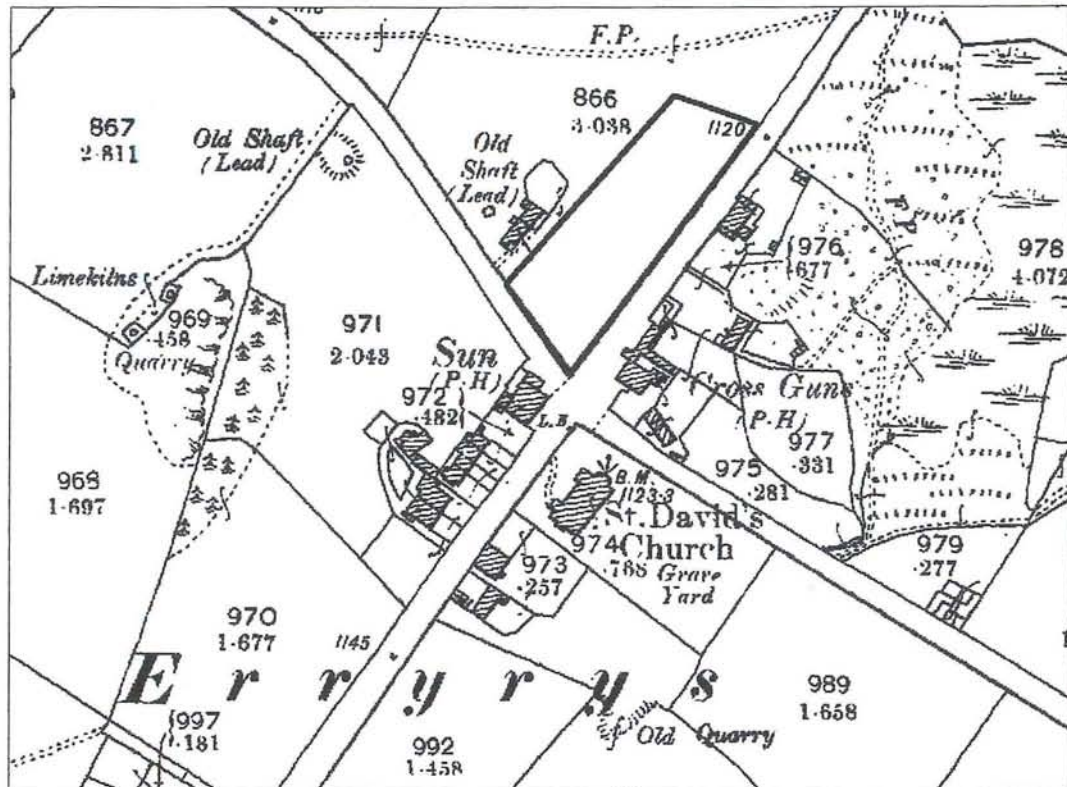


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500 map of 1900.

4 WALKOVER SURVEY

- 4.1 The walkover demonstrates that there is a little more to this area than the desk-top assessment revealed. The field is enclosed, at least on the south-west and south-east by a rubblestone wall of limestone blocks.
- 4.2 To the north-east of Canol-y-cae is a low, grass-covered outcrop of limestone (see Plate 1), less pronounced than those to the north around Maen-digychwyn. It is of irregular shape, and a portion of it protrudes into the development area, but it is not clearly observable on modern aerial photographs (though parts of it are visible on the post-war RAF photos), nor is it shown on Ordnance Survey maps. Consequently to define it accurately on a modern map would require measured survey. There is a cutting through the top of this mound with a trench opening out into a broader depression (GPS reading at SJ 204145795). Together these are perhaps 20m long with a maximum width of 10m, shallow and is perhaps best interpreted as a shallow surface quarry or trial, though the possibility that this could be a disguised shaft should not be overlooked. From these surface cuttings some spoil has been spread to the north-east and perhaps the east.
- 4.3 To the south-east of the outcrop there is another even lower mound showing as little more than an undulation in the field, but lying fully within the development area (GPS NGR SJ 2042157964). It is of irregular form, about 8m across and little more than 0.3m high, and of uncertain origin. It could be completely natural, or could constitute dumped spoil from nearby activity. Again it would be unwise to ignore entirely the possibility that this disguises industrial activity of some form.



Plate 1 Assessment area viewed from the south-west showing the limestone outcrop top left

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The examination of historic cartography failed to reveal any direct evidence for features of potential archaeological significance within the area of the proposed development. There is, however, evidence for lead mining in the form of several shafts, within several hundred metres of the site, and there are records of lead mining in Eryrys township as early as the 14th century.
- 5.2 The walkover survey identified a grass-covered limestone outcrop to the north-east of Canol-y-cae through which there is a broad cutting which could be the earthwork remains of an old quarry or lead mining trail excavation. A smaller mound to the south was also identified which could also be a grass-covered limestone outcrop, or possibly a mound of soil from the excavations noted above. While it is not possible entirely to rule out the presence of lead mining shafts in or adjacent to the development area, it seems unlikely on the evidence available to us.
- 5.3 There is always the possibility that buried archaeological deposits of other periods could be present within the area, for which there are no surviving earthwork remains, although the results from the assessment have given no indication that the potential is any greater in this area than might generally be anticipated across the limestone landscape of north-east Wales.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writers would like to thank the following for their assistance during the programme: the staff of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record

at the RCAHMW in Aberystwyth; the staff of the Denbighshire Record Office in Ruthin; and the staff of the Flintshire Record Office in Hawarden.

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Maps

1795 Map of North Wales by John Evans

1830(?) Enclosure Award for Llanarmon-yn-Ial. Denbs Record Office/QSD/DE/10

1836 Ordnance Survey surveyors' drawing no. 341

1844 Tithe survey (with map of ?1842) for Llanarmon yn Ial, townships of Gelligynnain, Chwelieriog etc

1874 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1st edition: Denbs 20.06

1900 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 2nd edition: Denbs 20.06

1912 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 3rd.edition: Denbs 20.06

Aerial Photographs

1947 RAF CPE/UK/1935/1255; 17 January 1947

1948 RAF 541/208/3160; 25 November 1948

APPENDIX 1 SPECIFICATION

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been invited to prepare a specification of works for undertaking an archaeological assessment in connection with proposals to develop a plot of land at Canol y Cae, Eryrys, Denbighshire. The Denbighshire Archaeology Service, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, have determined that an archaeological assessment should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource.
- 1.2 The site lies within an area where there has been a great deal of mining activity during the 18th and 19th centuries, and it is therefore anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits may survive within in the area and the following specification has been designed to assess the archaeological potential of the area.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the assessment are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of a desktop study and field survey, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;
 - 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the assessment, incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the future management of the archaeology.

3 Methods

- 3.1 Stage one of the evaluation will involve the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources at the County Records Office, Hawarden; the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 3.2 All cartographic sources consulted will be included within the desktop section of the report, together with transcriptions of relevant documents and copies of plans, maps and photographs containing relevant information.
- 3.3 Stage two consisted of detailed walk-over survey of the area. Any visible remains will be described, photographed and, where appropriate, sketched. The position of all features will be recorded using a hand-held GPS.
- 3.4 The results from stages one and two will be entered into a database in a format compatible with the regional HER.
- 3.5 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared in A4 format, containing conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Archaeological Background; Evaluation; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.
- 3.6 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991), to be deposited with the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The assessment will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the overall supervision of Mr RJ Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). CPAT is an IFA Registered Organisation.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the evaluation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the desk-based study will be completed within 2 days and the walk-over survey within one day. The report will be completed within two weeks of the completion of on-site works. A draft copy of the report will be forwarded to the Curator for approval prior to the production of the final report. Copies of the final report will be provided to the client and the Regional HER. The Curator will be informed of the timetable in order to arrange for monitoring if required. At present, CPAT would be in a position to undertake the work during July or August 2007, subject to sufficient advance notice.
- 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
28 June 2007