

**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

## **Land off Park Lane, Welshpool, Powys**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



**CPAT Report No 799**

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# **Land off Park Lane, Welshpool, Powys**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**N W Jones**  
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Report for J R Pickstock


**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**  
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL  
tel (01938) 553670, fax (01938) 552179  
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## CPAT Report Record

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### The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL

tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) were invited by J R Pickstock to undertake an archaeological watching brief during topsoil stripping associated with a residential development on land off Park Lane in Welshpool, Powys.
- 1.2 The site lies within the historic core of the medieval town, and it was therefore anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits might survive within in the area. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, had therefore determined that the archaeological watching brief should be undertaken. Following discussions with the Curator it was agreed that in the absence of a brief, an approved specification of works produced by CPAT Field Services would form the method statement for the required works.

## **2 LOCATION (Fig. 1)**

- 2.1 The site in question lies on the east side of Park Lane, adjacent to the north-west gateway into Powis Castle Park (SJ 22320750). This was formerly known as Hasels Lane and formed the main approach to Powis Castle from the town. The southern boundary of the plot is formed by the park boundary wall, while the western side is formed by a brick and dressed-stone wall along the eastern side of Park Lane. An unmetalled track leads through the plot from Park Lane.

## **3 WATCHING BRIEF**

- 3.1 The watching brief was undertaken on 9 May 2006 during the mechanical stripping of topsoil. A full drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context records in the site archive.
- 3.2 The southern part of the plot was stripped of between 0.25 and 0.45m of topsoil (01) containing 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century artefacts, revealing a further modern deposit (02). It was evident at this stage that the reduction of levels for the new development would not result in the removal of the full depth of modern garden soils and thus the presence or absence of any earlier archaeological deposits would not be ascertained. Information provided by the developers indicated that following the removal of up to 0.45m of topsoil across the site, material would then be imported to raise the level again, and that the construction process would not involve the excavation of foundation trenches. Consequently, the lower levels of the site would remain undisturbed.
- 3.3 Following discussions with the Curator it was agreed with the developer that two test pits would be mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision in order to investigate the lower levels of the site (see Fig. 2).

### **Test Pit 1**

- 3.4 Test pit 1 was excavated close to the southern boundary of the site and measured 2.5 by 0.9m. It was taken down to a depth of 1.8m.
- 3.5 The upper 0.45m of garden soil had already been removed prior to the excavation of the test pit, revealing a loose, grey-brown, silty clay (02) up to 0.25m thick, which contained 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century pottery and glass. This overlay a mixed, yellow-brown clay (04), 70mm thick, which also contained 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. Beneath this layer was a 0.38m-thick deposit of loose, silty sand and clay (05) which contained fragments of brick, slate and 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery. This

overlay a deposit of brownish-grey silty clay (06), up to 0.38m thick, which contained early post-medieval pottery, including Midlands Purple ware, and it sealed a further deposit, 0.27m thick, consisting of a firm, brownish-grey silty clay (07). This lower deposit contained several small sherds of medieval pottery.

- 3.6 The test pit was extended beneath the base of layer 07 to reveal a 0.4m-thick layer of dark reddish-brown silty clay (08) with a high organic content, including twigs, but containing no artefacts. Beneath this, at the base of the test pit, was a deposit of fine, white silty clay (09) which was rich in fragments of small snail shells and twigs.

#### **Test Pit 2**

- 3.7 Test pit 2 was located towards the eastern boundary of the site and measured 2.5 by 0.95m. This was excavated to a depth of 2.1m.
- 3.8 As in Test pit 1 the upper 0.3m of garden soil had already been removed prior to the excavation of the test pit, revealing a loose, grey-brown, silty clay (02) up to 0.25m thick, which contained 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century pottery and glass. However, the deposits revealed beneath this layer did not include the same sequence of garden or cultivation soils as the other pit. Whereas in Test pit 1 there was a succession of deposits indicating activity from the medieval period onwards, this part of the plot appeared to have been extensively disturbed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and contained none of the earlier deposits.
- 3.9 The removal of layer 02 revealed a 0.4m-thick deposit of demolition rubble (10) containing brick, stone and 20<sup>th</sup>-century pottery which overlay a deposit of compact, mottled clay (11), 0.45m thick, that appeared to represent a deliberate infilling and levelling. Beneath this was a 0.48m-thick deposit of loose, dark grey, sandy silt (12) containing 19<sup>th</sup>-century pottery which, in turn, overlay a similar deposit (13) containing a higher proportion of angular stone.
- 3.10 At the base of the test pit two undated layers were identified comprising a dark grey clay (14), 0.12m thick, and a reddish-brown silty clay (15) which contained compressed organic material.

## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The excavation of two test pits during the watching brief revealed that a considerable depth of deposits had accumulated across the southern part of the plot. Including the topsoil, up to 1.8m of material had accumulated since the medieval period, apparently as garden or cultivation soils, with no evidence for actual occupation within the plot. Two deposits identified at the lowest levels of the investigation contained no artefactual evidence but included a high organic content and the presence of numerous snail shells. The nature of these lower deposits suggests that the lower levels of the site might have significant palaeoenvironmental potential, although these will not be disturbed by the present development.
- 4.2 Towards the eastern side of the plot the test pit revealed considerable 19<sup>th</sup>-century disturbance and consequently an absence of the cultivation deposits identified to the south-west.
- 4.3 Information provided by local residents revealed that this plot is generally known as 'the Earl's Secret Garden'. This refers to a tradition, presumably from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that the residents of Powis Castle would leave their carriages here and walk into town, returning for tea and refreshments in the garden before returning to the castle.



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SPECIFICATION**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) have been invited to prepare a specification for undertaking a programme of archaeological work in connection with a planning application for the construction of two dwellings on land off Park Lane, Welshpool, Powys. No formal curatorial brief has been prepared for the work, although following discussions with the curator, Mr M Walters, it is understood that the required works consist of an archaeological watching brief during the initial phase of construction. It has been agreed that in the absence of a brief, this specification of works shall be submitted to the curator for approval, subject to which the specification will form the method statement for the required works.
- 1.2 The site in question lies on the edge of the historic core of Welshpool, adjacent to the main entrance to Powis Castle Park (SJ22320750).

#### **2 Objectives**

- 2.1 The objectives are:
  - 2.1.1 to record any archaeological features identified during the archaeological monitoring of groundworks to ensure their preservation by record;
  - 2.1.2 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief.

#### **3 Methods**

- 3.1 The watching brief will be undertaken to include: the archaeological supervision of all relevant groundworks, including topsoiling, foundation and service trenches and construction of a new access; and appropriate archaeological excavation and recording of any significant features or deposits which may be revealed.
- 3.2 All archaeological deposits and/or features noted during the watching brief will be recorded and, where appropriate, excavated by hand and recorded by drawn section/plan and/or photography. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white negative and colour slide. All features identified will be tied in locationally to points which are identifiable on modern Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 3.3 Previous test pitting in the area has suggested the possibility that buried palaeoenvironmental deposits may be located within the development area. Accordingly, a limited programme of augering will be undertaken to determine the presence or absence of such deposits and a contingency sum has been allowed for the analysis of any deposits encountered.
- 3.4 The on-site contractors are required to allow sufficient opportunity for appropriate archaeological excavation and recording to be undertaken. Every effort will be made to minimise any disruption to the overall scheme of works.
- 3.5 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared. This will be in A4 format and contain, as necessary, conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Watching Brief; Conclusions and References, together with any 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).

#### **4 Resources and Programming**

- 4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by an experienced field archaeologist and overall supervision will be by Mr RJ Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The duration of the watching brief will be entirely determined by the contractor's programme of work.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the fieldwork.
- 4.3 Copies of the report will be deposited with the client within one month of the completion of on-site works at Royal House. If appropriate, a short report will be published in *Archaeology in Wales*.
- 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.

#### **5 Contingencies**

- 5.1 The following contingency sums have been allocated:

1 radiocarbon date	£270
Finds analysis and reporting	in house, included within the daily rate
Environmental analysis and reporting	£700

N.W. Jones

9 November 2004



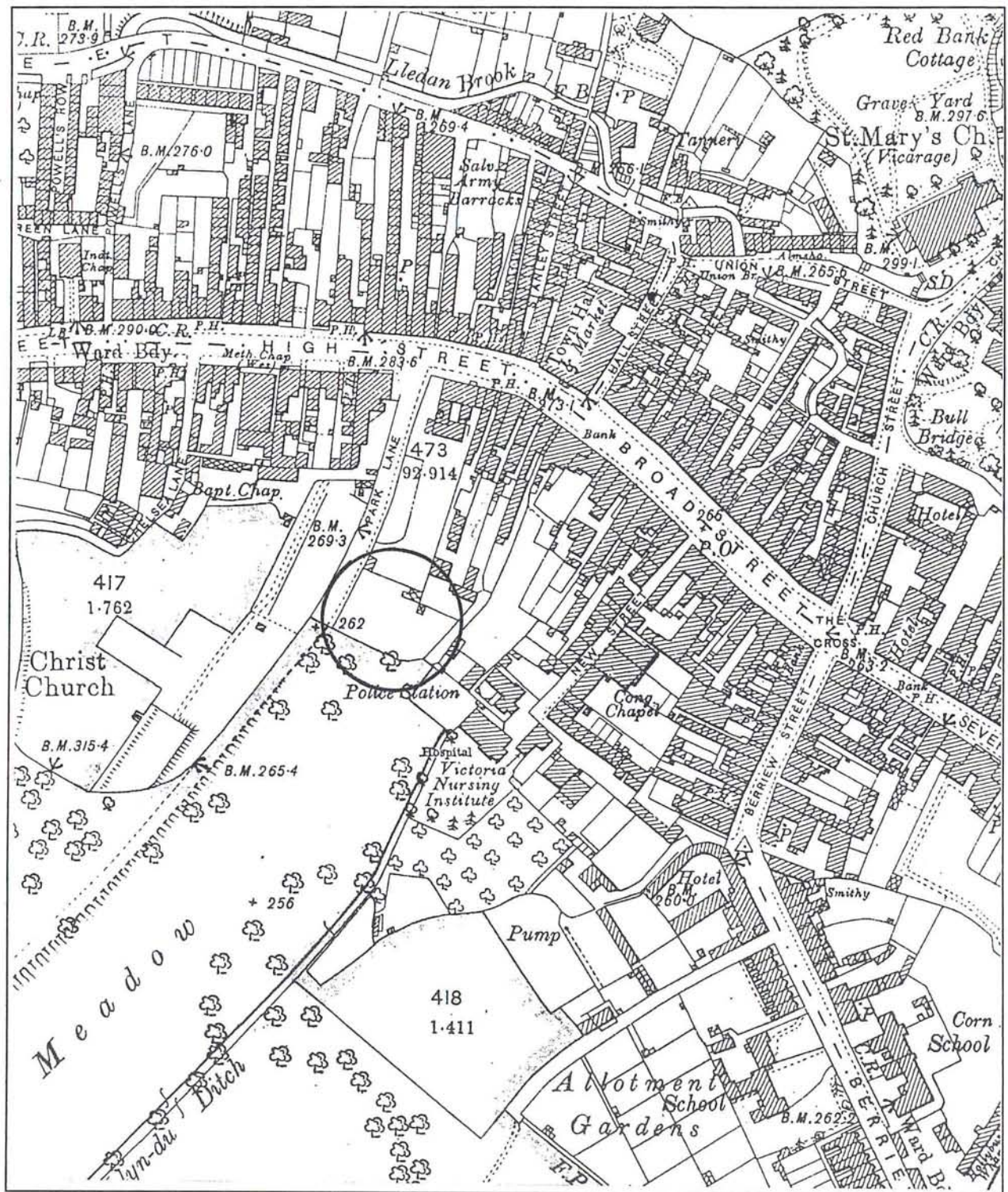


Fig. 1 Site location

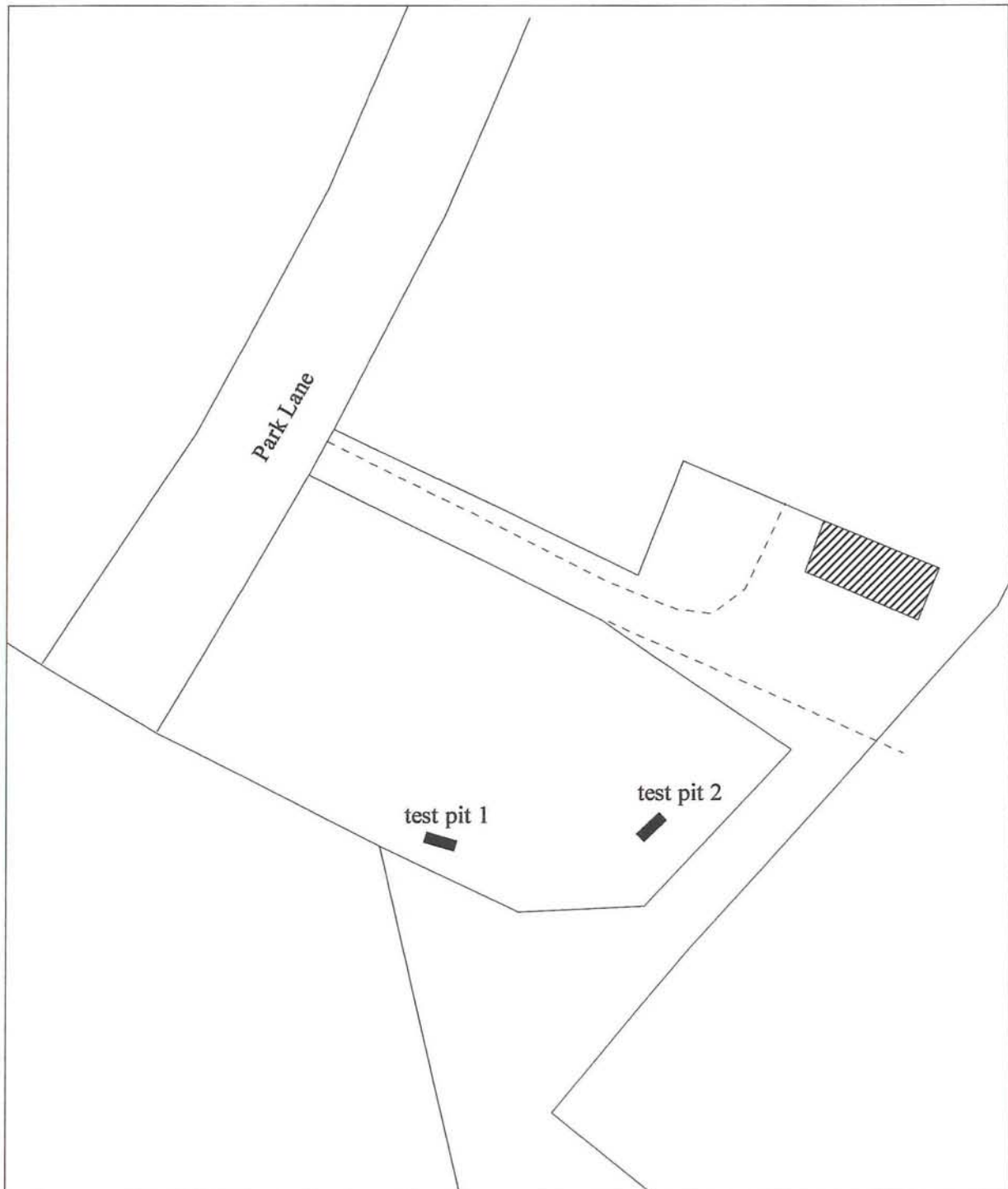


Fig. 2 Location of test pits, scale 1:500





Plate 1 Topsoil stripping across the southern part of the plot. Photo CPAT 2241.012



Plate 2 Section of Test Pit 1 showing cultivation deposits with darker organic deposit 08 and shell-rich deposit 09 at the base





Plate 3 Section of Test Pit 2 showing rubble deposits