

CPAT Report No 1023

Severnlea, Dolafon Road, Newtown, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Severnlea, Dolafon Road, Newtown, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

N W Jones
December 2009

Report for Mr P Jones

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax (01938) 552179

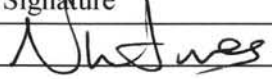
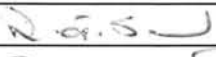

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tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179

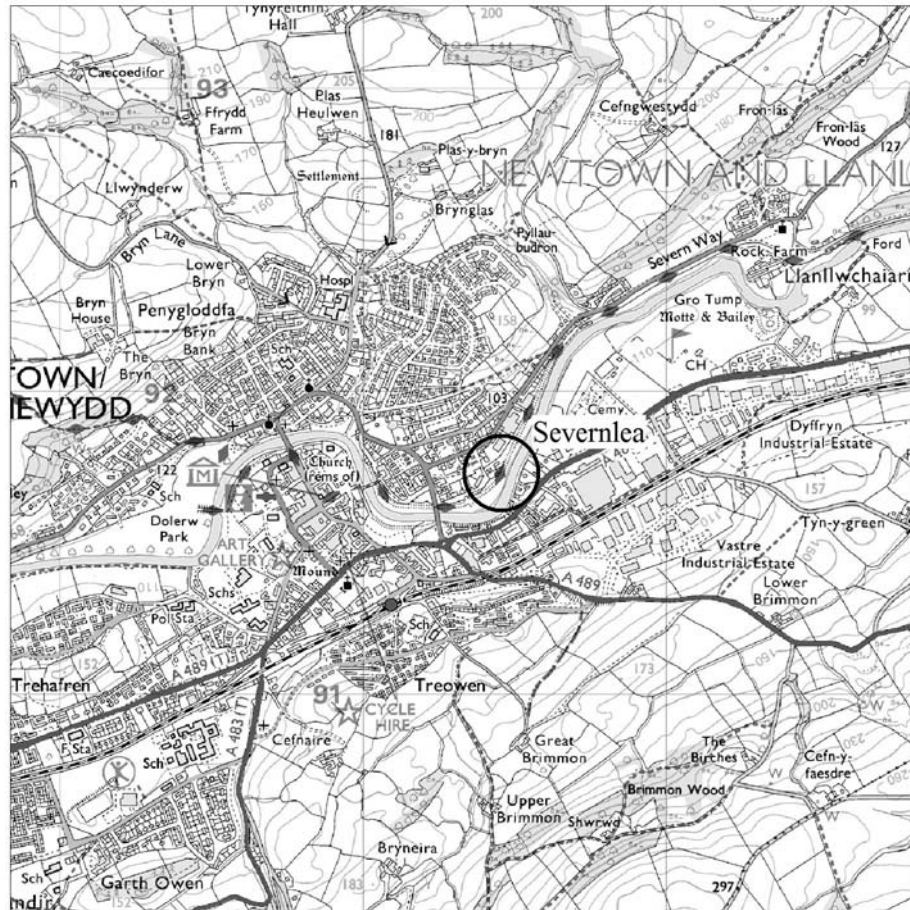
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 2009 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was invited to prepare a quotation and written scheme of investigation (WSI) for undertaking a watching brief during the replacement of an existing dwelling at Severnlea, Dolafon Road, Newtown, Powys.
- 1.2 Full planning permission (P/2009/0204) had been granted for the construction, including a condition requiring that 'a suitably qualified archaeologist is present during the undertaking of any groundworks in the development area, so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted'. The WSI was approved by the regional archaeological curator, in the absence of a curatorial brief for the work.
- 1.3 Information retained within the regional Historic Environment Record indicated that at least part of the plot was occupied by a series of limekilns (PRN 85917) during the late 19th century and it was therefore anticipated that subsurface remains might survive.



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Fig. 1 Location of Severnlea, Newtown

2 LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The development site lies on the north side of the River Severn, to the east of Dolafon Road (SO 11389172; Fig. 1). At the time of the watching brief the plot was occupied by a pre-fabricated dwelling.
- 2.2 During the 19th century this part of Newtown was a busy industrial area, with most of the activity focused around the basin forming the terminus of the Montgomeryshire Canal. This section of the canal was opened in 1821 and a variety of industries soon developed, including textile production, lime burning and a timber yard. However, the principal canal trade was related to agriculture rather than industry, and the transportation of lime from the quarries at Llanymynech was one of the major factors in the promotion of the canal. The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1886 (Fig. 2) shows the canal basin with a bank of four limekilns to the east, occupying part of the development plot. The importance of the canal waned following the opening of the railway in 1859 (Baughan 1980, 150) and by 1886 the limekilns were already disused.

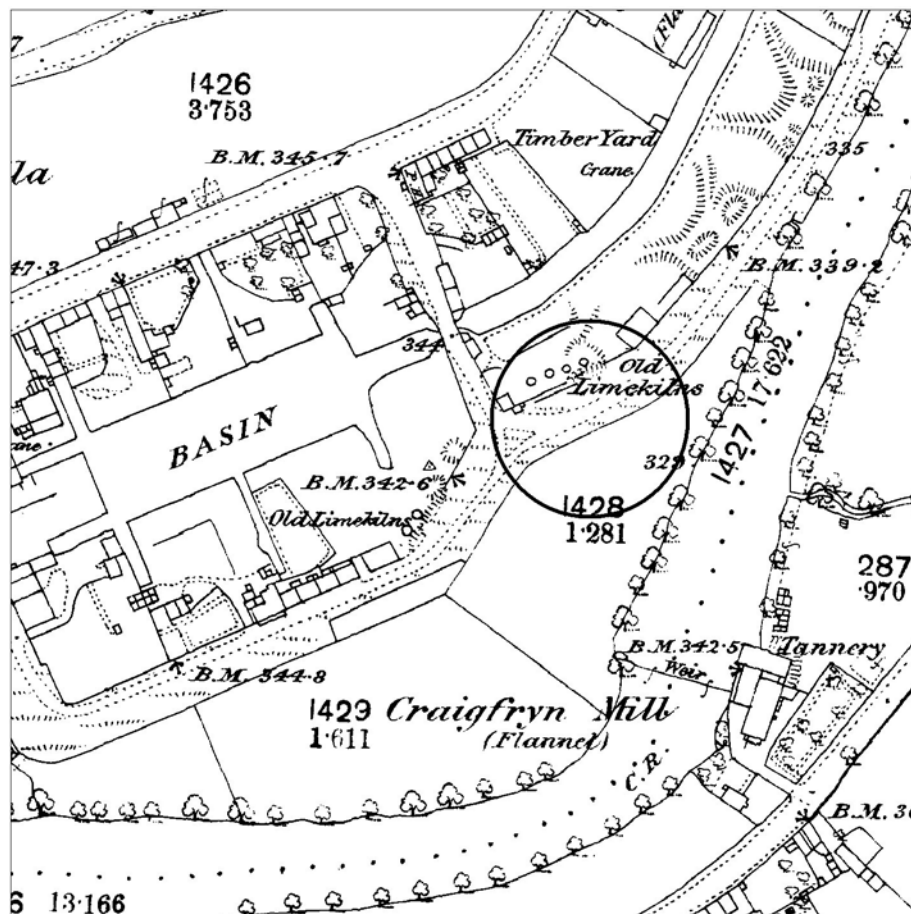


Fig. 2 Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1886 (Mont. 36.15)

3 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.1 Originally, it had been intended that the watching brief would be conducted during the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new dwelling. However, at the suggestion of the client, it was agreed with the regional archaeological curator that part of the site would be stripped in advance under close archaeological supervision to determine whether any potentially important buried archaeological deposits might be affected, and to afford an appropriate amount of time to ensure that adequate recording could be undertaken.
- 3.2 The stripping was undertaken on 9 December 2009 with modern overburden being removed by machine down to the surface of the first significant archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation was undertaken by hand. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained during the watching brief, and the site archive will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record in due course.
- 3.3 The northern boundary of the development plot is formed by the upstanding remains of the 19th-century limekilns, comprising a stone revetment wall rising up to 2.7m high above the present ground level, within which there are two brick-lined arches which formed the drawholes for the limekilns. The drawholes are around 3.7m wide and at least 2m high and both have been blocked internally by the insertion of later stone walls set back from the revetment wall at the front. The front of the eastern drawhole has been truncated by modern disturbance. The fact that there are only two drawholes indicates that each was built to serve two of the kilns, the pots for which are no longer visible, now lying partly beneath a modern bungalow on an adjacent plot.



Plate 1 The western drawhole

- 3.4 An area around 3.6m in width was mechanically stripped at the base of the revetment wall, removing up to 0.6m of demolition rubble to reveal a number of features associated with the limekilns. Towards the western end of the revetment wall were the foundations for a small building, measuring 2.5m by 2.3m externally, alongside which was part of a contemporary brick-paved yard. To the east of the building were the foundations of a small lean-to structure measuring 1.3m by 1.2m. The original ground surface was revealed in front of the western drawhole, consisting of compacted, burnt lime.

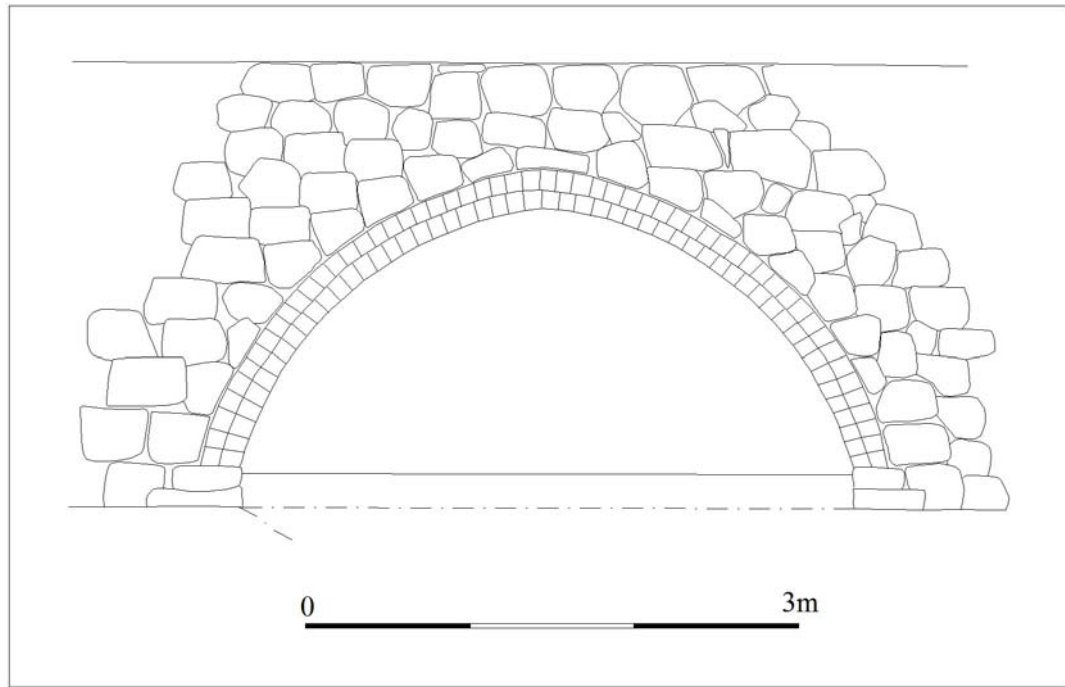


Fig. 3 Elevation of western drawhole

- 3.5 At a distance of around 1.4m to the south of the revetment wall the remains of a parallel wall were uncovered, built in stone, with an average thickness of 1.0m. A trial trench 6.2m in length was excavated in front of the eastern drawhole, cutting through the wall, and revealing it to survive to a height of around 0.8m. It seems likely that this formed a second revetment, creating a levelled working area in front of the drawholes.



Plate 2 Foundations of the small building and brick paving

- 3.6 The trial trench also revealed a possible trackway at the base of the lower revetment wall, composed of compacted, burnt lime. There was no indication of any other archaeology in the area of the new dwelling, which is to be constructed in a part of the site which contains a considerable deposit of demolition rubble.
- 3.7 A range of 19th-century artefacts were noted within the demolition rubble, but not retained.
- 3.8 The results from the investigation were presented to the curator, following on from which it was determined that the excavation of foundations for the new dwelling was unlikely to disturb any significant archaeological remains and the proposed watching brief would not be required.



Plate 3 The trial trench showing the possible trackway

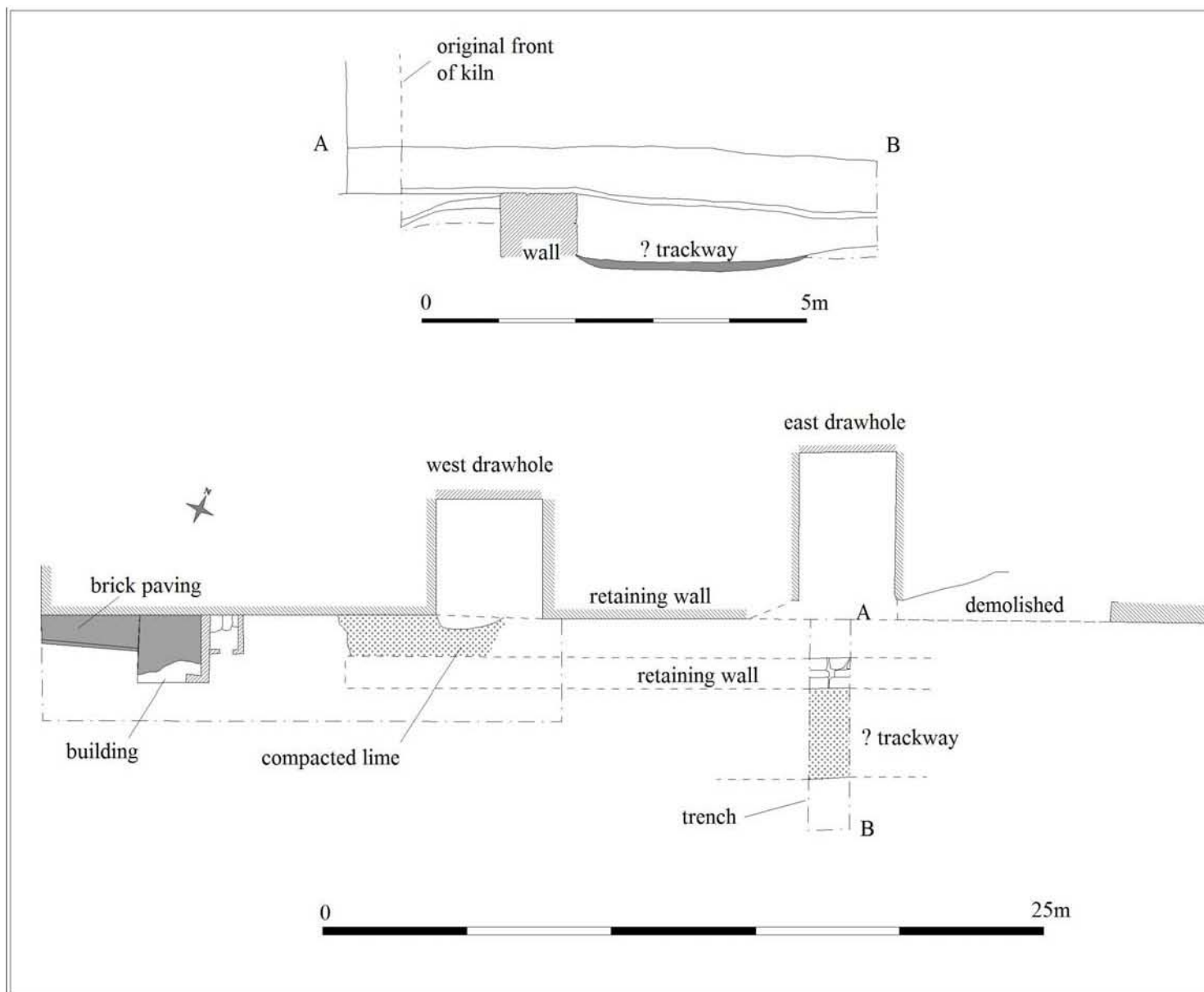


Fig. 4 Plan of structures related to the limekilns and section of evaluation trench

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 A programme of rapid investigation was undertaken in advance of construction works for a new dwelling. The results confirmed that substantial remains survive relating to 19th-century limekilns, although it was determined that there was little potential for significant deposits in the area of the new dwelling.
- 4.2 The limekilns are likely to have been constructed shortly after 1821 with the completion of this section of the Montgomeryshire Canal, which terminated at a basin to the west of the development site. The kilns were evidently disused by 1886 when they were depicted by the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" mapping. This shows a row of four limekilns with a small building to one side. The limekilns still stand to around 2.7m with two large drawholes visible, built into a substantial stone revetment wall. Each drawhole would have served two kilns. The foundations for the small building were revealed following the removal of demolition rubble, along with part of a brick paved yard.
- 4.3 The limekilns are an important feature of Newtown's industrial past and are one of only two visible structures directly related to the canal basin. The other is the Commercial Mill, a 19th-century flannel and tweed mill around 100m north of the limekilns.

5 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- 5.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Ian Grant, CPAT; and Mr P Jones, the owner of Severnlea.

6 REFERENCES

- 6.1 *Documentary Sources*
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- 6.2 *Cartographic Sources*
1886 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map, Montgomeryshire 36.15