CPAT Report No 979

Llanymynech Golf Club Driving Range

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF





THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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I Grant March 2009

Report for Llanymynech Golf Club

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CPAT Report Record

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2009 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) were commissioned by Llanymynech Golf Club, to undertake a watching brief during groundworks within the scheduled area of Llanymynech Hillfort (Mg030) in connection with the construction of a driving range. The watching brief had been requested by Cadw as a condition of scheduled monument consent, dated June 2nd 2008. The details of this condition are outlined below.
 - That Cadw shall be given the name of the contracted archaeological contractor for approval before work commences;
 - That Cadw shall be given at least two weeks notice, in writing, of the date of the commencement of the work or of any subsequent adjustment to this date, to allow Cadw's representatives to monitor on site activity;
 - That access to the site shall be afforded to representatives of Cadw;
 - That any works involving ground disturbances, including that of initial turf stripping, shall only be undertaken in the presence of the approved archaeological contractor. The contractor shall write a report on the works on site, even if negative, and the applicant shall send a copy of the report to Cadw within three months of the completion of the works.
- 1.2 The site of the new driving range lies around 47m to the west of the Club House, and immediately west of the car park (SJ 26502199). The footprint of the development measures 11.5m north-east to south-west by 11m north-west to south-east, comprising the area of a new concrete slab base with a covered area supported on metal stanchions at the north-east end.



Fig. 1 Location of new Driving Range

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 Geologically, Llanymynech Hill marks the southernmost point of a band of Lower Carboniferous Limestone that extends south from the North Wales coast at Prestatyn. Outcrops of this formation are visible throughout the hillfort. In places the limestone is altered to dolomite with mudstone bands, and both lead and copper ores, with cerrusite and malachite as secondary oxidation products, occur in a lode that strikes north-north-east from underground workings known as the Ogof Mine at SJ2660 2222. Soils in lower-lying areas and on terraces between outcrops characteristically overlie drift derived from Palaeozoic sandstone and mudstone (Rudeforth *et al.* 1984).

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Llanymynech hillfort lies on a prominent outcrop of carboniferous limestone on the western edge of the Shropshire Plain overlooking the confluence of the Vyrnwy, Tanat and Cain Rivers to the south-west and the Severn Valley to the south-east. The three-kilometre circuit of the ramparts encloses an area of approximately 57 ha, making it one of the largest hillforts in England and Wales. Although much of the hillfort lies within Wales, the English border follows the line of the defences on the eastern side, with the north-east defences lying across the border in Shropshire.
- 3.2 Llanymynech Hill has a long history of copper and lead mining dating back to at least the Roman period (Walters 1994). Quarrying of exposed limestone outcrops has also occurred no doubt over long periods, though precise definition is impossible.
- 3.3 Archaeological investigation of the hillfort has to date been rather limited. In 1981 a section through the ramparts was recorded during the laying of a pipe trench adjacent to the approach road to the golf-course. It revealed the stone rampart and ditch of the inner defences, and metalworking debris behind the rampart. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal associated with two separate pits showed that the metalworking was probably undertaken during the period from the 4th century BC to the 1st century AD (Musson 1981; Musson and Northover 1989, 20).
- 3.4 Apart from the study of peat deposits in a pond (at SJ 269221; Martin 1992), the interior of the fort has been the subject of a number of small-scale evaluations in recent years, conducted in connection with applications for scheduled monument consent. An evaluation close to the clubhouse in 1995 revealed no structural evidence of prehistoric occupation, but did recover sherds of Iron Age pottery, metalworking debris and calcined bone from a possible old ground surface (Thomas 1995). Further investigation within the same area in 1997 (Owen 1997) exposed several features of likely Iron Age date, including the inhumation of a small child that was radiocarbon dated to between 770 BC and 370 BC (Owen 1997).
- 3.5 A small-scale excavation undertaken within the area of the 13th Green during October 1999 revealed important evidence for occupation within the hillfort. This included part of a drainage gully for a round hut, together with associated pits or postholes. There was also evidence of prehistoric metalworking, with fragments of furnace lining and part of a crucible, together with metallurgical residues, demonstrating that copper smelting took place somewhere in the immediate area (Owen 1999).

4 WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 The watching brief was undertaken on 26th February 2009, and comprised archaeological monitoring during the excavation of eight test pits, in two rows of four, together with the removal of turf and topsoil in a test strip between the rows of pits (see Plate 1, Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Plan of test pits and area of watching brief



Plate 1. General area of excavation, viewed from the east. Photo CPAT 2800-003

- 4.2 The test pits were mechanically excavated to depths of between 0.6m and 0.85m, and measured 1.2m in length and between 0.6m and 1.0m in width. In each pit the upper layer was composed of topsoil, which varied from 60mm in Pit 4, to 0.36m in Pit 8, reflecting in part the natural slope, with the ground falling gradually from west to east.
- 4.3 It was apparent that material had been imported to level part of the area (see Fig. 2), with up to 0.25m of mixed silty clay, containing late 18th and 19th century pottery, revealed beneath the topsoil in Pits 1, 2, 7 and 8. (see Plate 2)



Plate 2. Pit 7, illustrating depth of imported material, viewed from north-east Photo CPAT 2800-019

4.4 A significant depth of hillwash was identified in Pits 2-7, comprising a deposit of sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks, the thickness at its greatest being in Pit 4 where it measured 0.4m. The undisturbed natural subsoil, consisting of a pale yellowy brown silty clay and shattered limestone bedrock, was revealed in all eight test pits, at a depth which varied from 0.25m in Pit 4 to 0.7m in Pit 6. Of particular note was a thin deposit of dark reddish brown silty clay (20mm thick) overlying the limestone, observed only in Pit 6 (see Plate 3). The organic-rich deposit possibly pre-dates the Iron Age.



Plate 3. Pit 6, viewed from the east. Photo CPAT 2800-017

4.5 In addition to the eight test pits an additional trench, measuring 0.6m x 7m and aligned parallel with and between the two rows of pits, was excavated to a total depth of 0.25m. This is the proposed maximum depth of the concrete slab across the development area. At no point along the extent of the trench was the undisturbed underlying hillwash deposit observed, thus confirming the existence of the fairly uniform depth (0.25m -0.3m) of imported overburden across the site. This can be best observed in the south-facing section of Pit 1 (see Plate 4).



Plate 4. Pit 1, illustrating depth of modern overburden. Photo CPAT 2800-006

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The watching brief revealed no trace of any features or deposits associated with the scheduled Iron Age hillfort. There is evidence of the existence of an undisturbed charcoal flecked hillwash deposit across the general area but this lies at a depth greater than 0.25m (the intended thickness of the concrete slab base). Consequently the deposit, which remains undated, will not be affected by the construction works.

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