

CPAT Report No 984

Walton Roman Marching Camps

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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I Grant
April 2009

Report for Mr G Price

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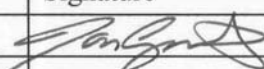
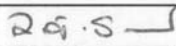

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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Walton Roman Marching Camps: Archaeological Watching Brief		
CPAT Project Name	Walton Watching Brief		
CPAT Project No	1596	CPAT Report No	984
Confidential (yes/no)	Yes	draft/final	Final

Internal control

	name	Signature	date
prepared by	I. Grant		14/04/2009
checked by	R.J. Silvester		14/04/2009
approved by	R.J. Silvester		14/04/2009

Revisions

no	date	made by	checked by	approved by

Internal memo

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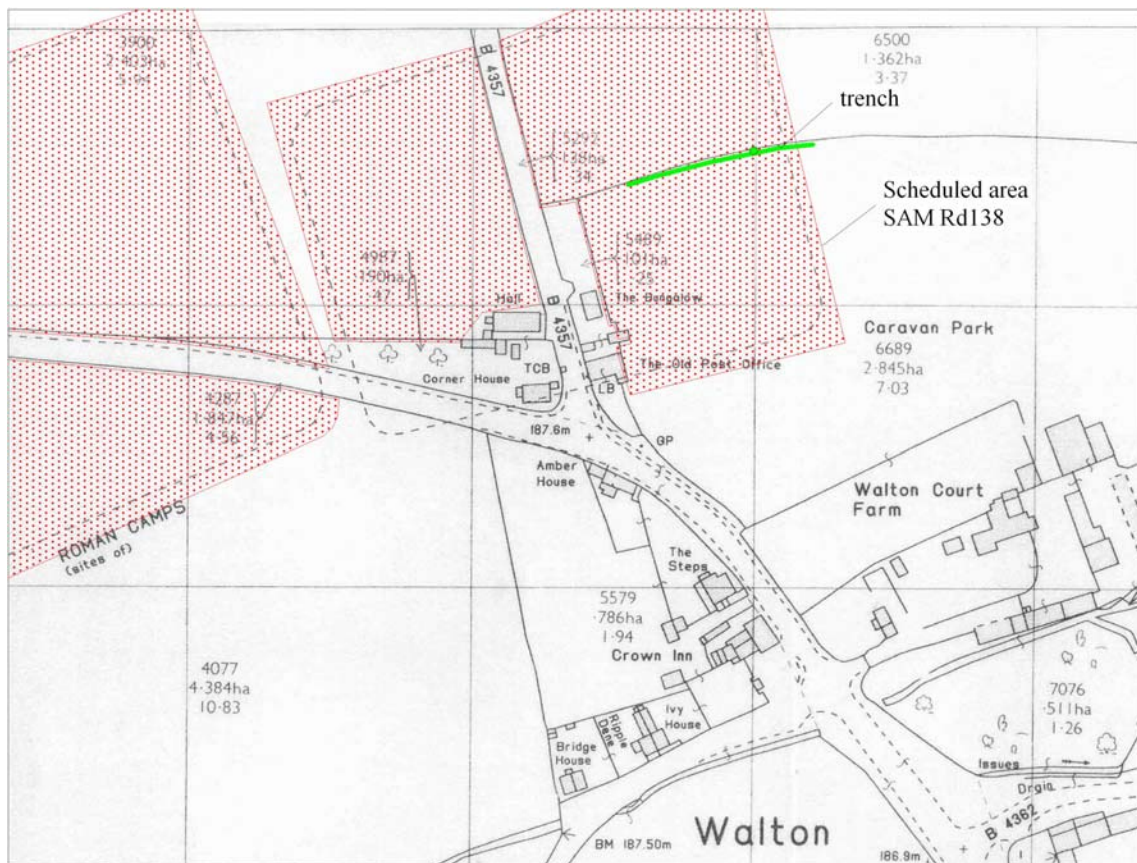
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2009 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mr VG Price to undertake a watching brief during underground cabling on the site of the Roman marching camps at Walton, near Presteigne (SAM Rd 138(Pow)). The watching brief was requested by Cadw as a condition of scheduled monument consent.
- 1.2 The underground cable trench extended for 67m from SO 2555559945 to SO 2562059959 (see Fig. 1), running west to east approximately through the centre of the easternmost marching camp.

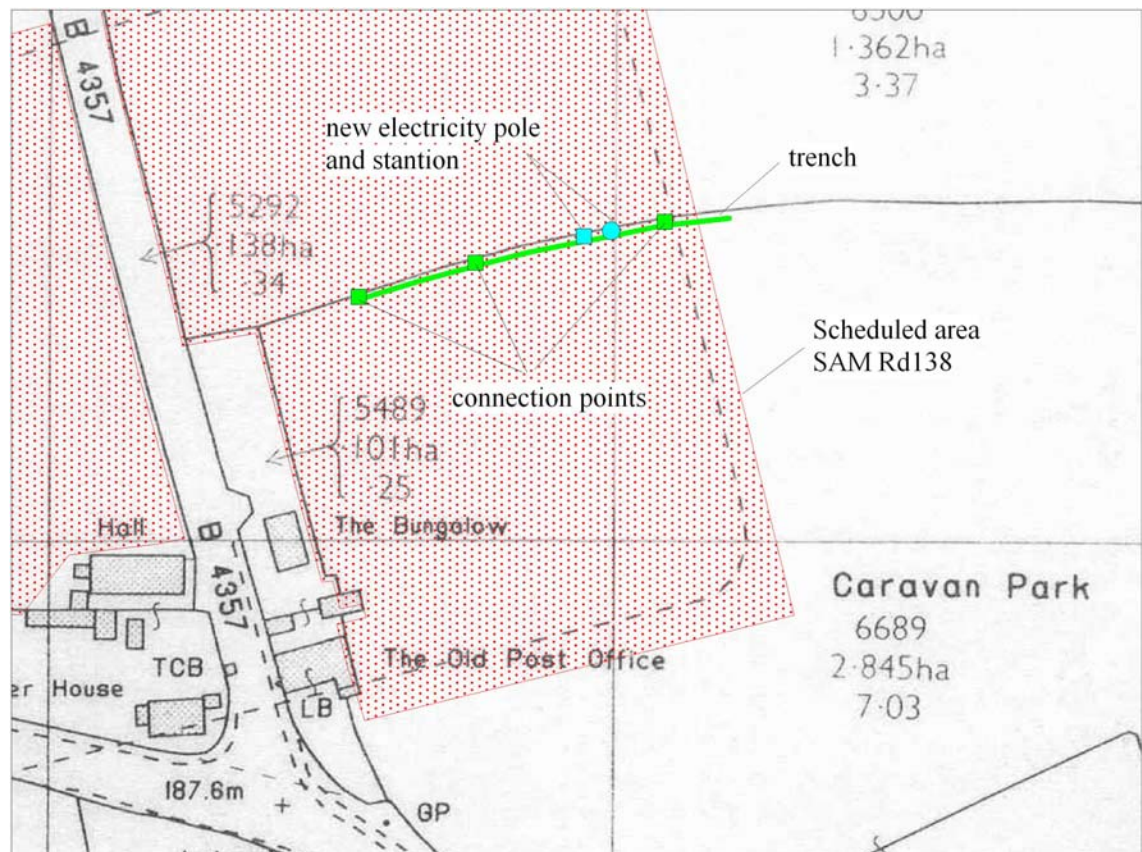


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Fig. 1 Trench location

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There is considerable evidence for Roman activity in the area around Walton, principally comprising the auxiliary fort at Hindwell (SO 258 606) and a series of marching camps. The fort, which lies 600m to the north-north-east of the site in question, was discovered as a result of aerial reconnaissance by J. K. S. St. Joseph in 1973, which provided a context for the Roman pottery and other diagnostic material that had been identified during works at Hindwell Farm in the 1950s and 1960s. The fort occupies a level terrace 200m to the north of the Summergil Brook, the main watercourse draining through the low-lying Walton Basin, and well back from where the hills close in to the west. Its precise dimensions cannot be gauged, because of uncertainties over the line of the defences on the west and south sides, but are *c.* 155m north-north-east to south-south-west by *c.* 148m, enclosing an area of *c.* 2.29ha. The defences are complex with an outer, irregularly shaped ditch, two narrower ditches (or palisade slots) backed by a rampart, and inside it an intra-mural road, together indicating two phases of construction. The road leaving the east gate of the fort is flanked by a small civilian settlement, or *vicus*, with indications of buildings and ancillary activity spreading out for *c.* 30m on either side of the road and for at least 150m beyond the fort.
- 2.2 The site of the watching brief lies within the easternmost of three marching camps, known as Walton III, which measures around 168m by 121m, enclosing an area of around 2ha. The camp is aligned west-south-west to east-north-east and cropmarks have indicated entrances on all but the south side, where it is obscured by buildings (Davies & Jones 2006, 139-141). This is also within the area of a much earlier, Neolithic monument, the Walton palisaded enclosure, which is defined by a series of large post holes forming an enclosure at least 300m across.



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Fig. 2 Cable trench and associated works

3 WATCHING BRIEF (Fig. 2)

- 3.1 The watching brief was conducted on 19 March 2009 and comprised the close archaeological monitoring of all groundworks associated with the installation of the underground cable. Although not originally part of the scheduled works, the watching brief also included monitoring during the replacement of an existing wooden electricity pole. This was deemed to be unsafe by Western Power, who conducted the cable installation, and the work was carried out as an emergency repair, presumably under Class Consent. The new pole was erected within a pit measuring 1m by 2m and 2m in depth, with an additional pit, 1m by 1m and 1.5m deep, to accommodate a stanchion on its western side (see Figs 3-4).



Fig. 3 Pit excavated for replacement electricity pole. Photo CPAT 2817.002

- 3.2 The underground cable required the mechanical excavation of a trench 67m in length, 0.3m to 0.4m wide, and between 0.7m and 0.8m deep. The trench commenced at a point 18m east of the north-western corner of the field and ran parallel to, and around 1m south of, the northern boundary of the field. Three electricity connection points were installed along the route, each requiring the excavation of a pit measuring 0.5m by 0.5m and up to 0.5m deep.
- 3.3 The topsoil was generally observed to be up to 0.3m thick, overlying either a layer of orange-brown silty clay 0.2-0.25m thick, or an orange-brown silty gravel 0.2m thick, beneath which were undisturbed natural gravels. The watching brief failed to reveal any archaeological features or deposits, and recovered no artefacts of any period.



Fig. 4 View westwards along the cable trench, showing the position of the stanchion pit.
Photo CPAT 2817.005

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The watching brief had been requested by Cadw as a condition of scheduled monument consent as it was thought that groundworks associated with the installation of the underground cable might impact on buried archaeological deposits relating to a Roman marching camp, which is protected as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM Rd138(Pow)). In addition, the location of the trenching also lies within the area of presumed the Neolithic palisaded enclosure.
- 4.2 Close archaeological monitoring of all groundworks failed to reveal any evidence, either structural or artefactual, for deposits or features which might be associated with the marching camp, or indeed activity relating to other periods. Although the route of the cable trench extended across the eastern side of the marching camp, there was no evidence for any features in this area. The examination of available cropmark evidence, based on plots held within the regional Historic Environment Record, suggests that on the eastern side there is a central entrance in the single ditch surrounding the marching camp, which could explain the apparent lack of any ditch within the cable trench.

5 REFERENCES

Davies, J L, & Jones, R H, 2006. *Roman Camps in Wales and the Marches*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.