

CPAT Report No 1087

Former Cattle Market Welshpool, Highway Improvement

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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March 2011

Report for McBurney Civils Ltd and Tesco plc



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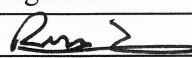
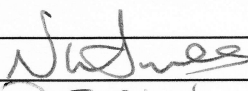
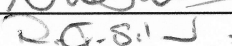
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited in October 2010 by McBurney Civils Ltd, on behalf of Tesco plc, to undertake an archaeological watching brief in connection with works on the road in the vicinity of the new supermarket development on Mill Lane, Welshpool.
- 1.2 The road in question acts as a link between a roundabout on the main A483 trunk road and Church Street in the centre of the town (Fig. 1). The road runs through the site formerly occupied by the Smithfield livestock market, part of which is the site of the new Tesco supermarket.
- 1.3 The Smithfield site was the subject of a number of archaeological works prior to the construction commencing, comprising an initial pre-planning evaluation in 2006 (Grant and Jones 2006) which revealed evidence for potentially significant archaeological deposits in two areas. The results informed the planning process and meant that further work was carried out by CPAT at one of these locations, an area where Roman discoveries were made in 1959/60, and an interim report for this has already been prepared (Jones 2011).

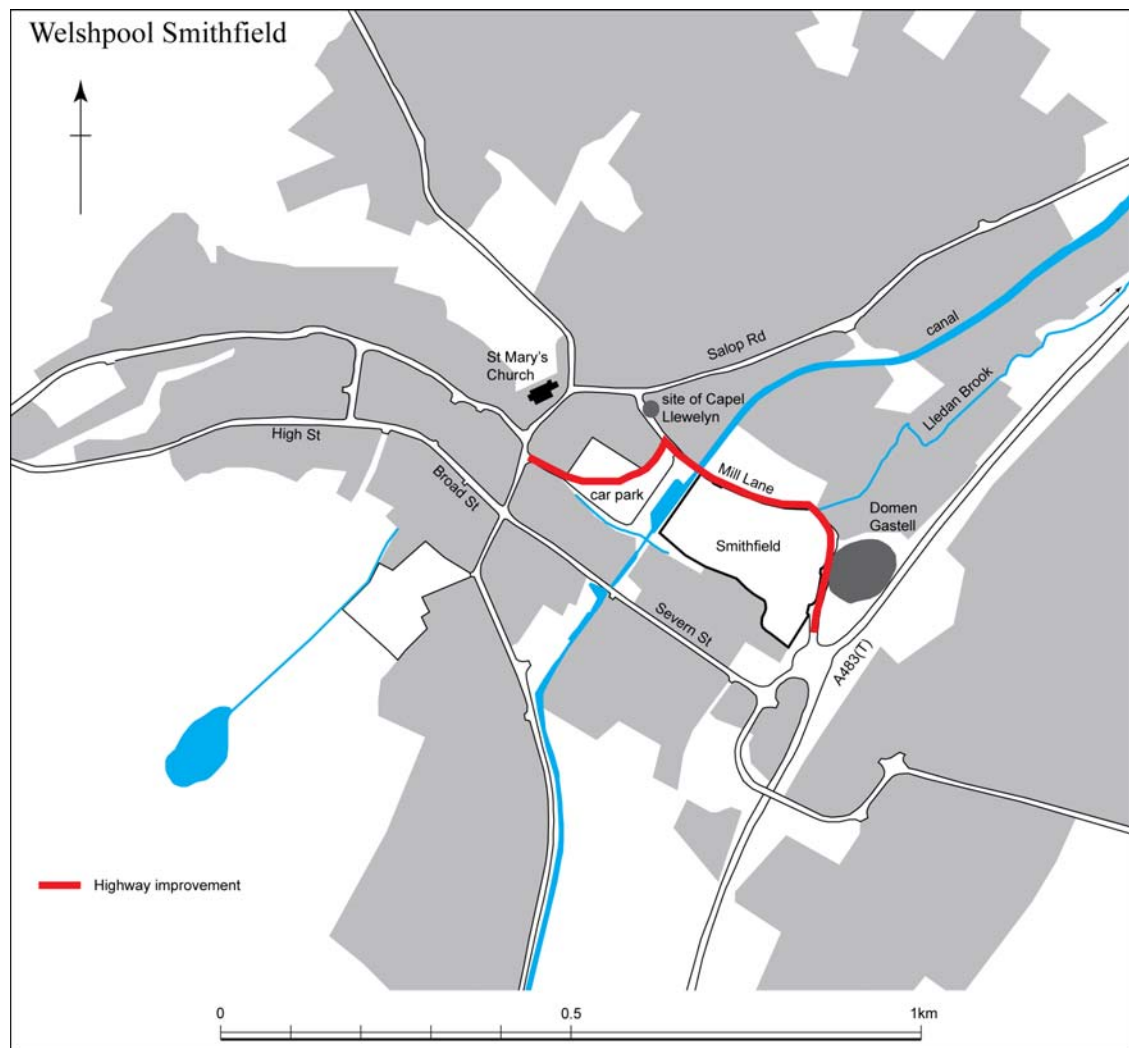


Fig. 1 Plan of Welshpool showing the location of the Smithfield, together with the modified road alignment

- 1.4 The archaeological watching brief described herein was one of the conditions for the grant of planning permission for the development and was carried out intermittently between the end of October 2010 and February 2011. This report was compiled once it was confirmed that significant ground disturbance had been completed and there was therefore no further need for a watching brief.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The area of the supermarket development lies to the south-east of the present town centre of Welshpool, occupying the main part of the former Smithfield livestock market, bounded to the north by Mill Lane and with Smithfield Road to the south-east and the Montgomery Canal to the north-west (Fig. 1; SJ 2296 0746). The link road followed the general line of Smithfield Road and Mill Lane, with minor adjustments, up to the point where it crossed the canal, from where a new road was built across the main car park to join Church Street.
- 2.2 The solid geology of the area consists mainly of undivided Ludlow and Wenlock Series siltstones and mudstones belonging to the Silurian period, though there is some local faulting which has exposed Caradoc Series siltstones and mudstones of the Ordovician period (British Geological Survey map, 1994). The soils of the area generally comprise fine silty and loamy soils belonging to the Denbigh 1 Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales map, 1983).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The archaeological interest in Welshpool Smithfield stems from the discovery of an important and unusual collection of Roman metalwork and other objects in 1959. The road is also in close proximity to the medieval motte and bailey castle known as Domen Gastell, and comes close to the site of Capel Llewelyn (towards the head of Mill Lane), in an area where early medieval activity has been postulated.

Mesolithic activity

- 3.2 The earliest activity in Welshpool was found during the excavation carried out prior to the construction of the supermarket filling station (Jones 2011), and is evidenced by a scatter of tools and debitage which indicate an area of stone tool manufacture attributable to the Mesolithic period. The scatter of chert and flint was found in an area measuring around 7m by 5m at the eastern end of the site, lying within a natural alluvial deposit. A small number of lithics were also recovered from adjacent features which had been cut through this deposit. This small scatter probably reflects a single phase of activity and may relate to a temporary, short-stay camp, where tool preparation and maintenance, as well as other domestic processing tasks, were undertaken.

Romano-British period

- 3.3 The Roman finds from the site were published in detail by George Boon (1961) and readers are directed to this source for a full description of the items. They were discovered in August 1959 during the installation of a drain on the north side of the Smithfield, adjacent to a former stables and office alongside Mill Lane. The objects were recovered by workmen, although their significance only came to light following the intervention of Mr George Shepherd who, on being shown one of the articles, persuaded the workmen to hand over the artefacts. These were later shown to the Director of Hull Museums (Mr Shepherd was a tutor in Hull at the time), who then informed the Department of Archaeology of the National Museum of Wales (NMW). The collection included a glass jar and bottle, two redware pottery vessels, three bronze *paterae*

(shallow dishes with a handles), a bronze ewer (jug) with a decorated handle depicting the young Bacchus, all of which had been placed in a bronze cauldron after being wrapped in a linen cloth and then packed around with leaves and grasses. Other finds included a wooden bucket, an iron fire-dog and two ornate iron 'standards'. Ewers and *paterae* are consistently found with rich Roman burials of the first and second centuries AD, while fire-dogs are sometimes part of native burial deposits. Boon therefore concluded that they were likely to be associated with the grave of a native Cornovian chieftain.

- 3.4 A small-scale excavation was conducted by Boon in July 1960 in the anticipation that more could be found out about regarding the context of the finds. It comprised two parallel trenches, each around 3.5m by 0.9m and 1.9m apart, together with a connecting trench between the two. The excavations recovered a further part of one of the iron standards from the 1959 drainage trench, together with a patch of wood ash, a small iron nail and a few sherds of pottery. There was, however, little information on the context of the finds. The excavation failed to identify any pit or cist which might have contained the finds or been associated with a potential burial. Boon concluded was that the finds might have been deposited on the Roman ground level and buried beneath a small barrow.
- 3.5 The further work carried out by CPAT in the area around Boon's excavation (Jones 2011) revealed a number of additional details regarding Roman activity in the immediate locality. The main evidence took the form of boundary features, which were cut by a later ditch, all of which are thought to be of Roman date. This suggests that the area was occupied by some form of Roman settlement, although no evidence of structures was revealed. Small amounts of material not observed by Boon were also recovered.

Early medieval period

- 3.6 Welshpool is said to have been the site of churches founded by St Cynfelyn and his brother Llywelyn in the 6th century AD; the foundation by the latter has since been associated, at least traditionally, with the 'Old Church' which is known formerly to have stood on the east side of Mill Lane, immediately to the south of Salop Road. The most recent church on the site was erected in 1587 but was destroyed by fire in 1659, though some of its masonry remains were still visible until the 19th century (Soulsby 1983, 265). Part of its associated graveyard was identified during rescue excavations by CPAT in 1986-7, when seventeen burials were located. Radiocarbon dates suggested that they belonged to the 13-14th century (Blockley 1987, 24-6). Further work in 1997 revealed the possible position of Capel Llewelyn (PRN 4438; Fig. 1) in a garden to the rear of 37 Salop Road. It may be then that the line of Mill Lane broadly followed the western boundary of the graveyard (PRN 16386).

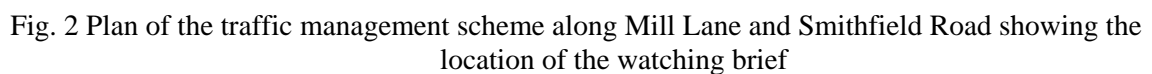
Medieval period

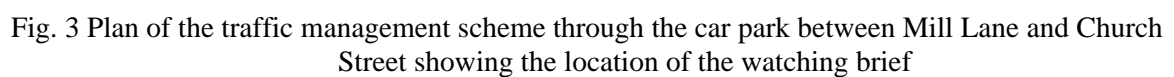
- 3.7 Domen Gastell, a motte and bailey castle (PRN 120; Fig. 1) lies immediately to the east of Smithfield Road. It may have been constructed as early as 1111, although the earliest possible documentary reference to it dates from 1196 (Silvester 1992, 167). There had been some suggestion that a settlement developed around the castle, but no firm evidence had been found to substantiate this hypothesis prior to the 2010 CPAT excavation (Jones 2011).
- 3.8 The CPAT excavations revealed several gullies of presumed medieval date on an alignment broadly parallel to the present course of Mill Lane. The plots demarcated measured approximately 6m to 8m in width, dimensions which are comparable with the size range of burgage plots in the planned medieval town (see para 3.9). The medieval boundaries were cut by a number of undated pits or possible post-holes, after which there appeared to have been a period of disuse before a stone surface was laid down, presumably creating a metalled yard or standing. The stone surface was sealed beneath a presumed medieval ploughsoil.

- 3.9 The present town of Welshpool resulted from a deliberate policy by Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, Prince of Powys, to establish a new borough. As such, this was a planned town which owed little to any existing settlement (Soulsby 1983, 266). The burgesses received a foundation charter in the 1240s and a market was recorded there in 1252 (Silvester 1992, 167). The new town adopted a basically linear plan, centred on High Street and Broad Street, with some development also along Church Street, Berriew Street and Severn Street.
- 3.10 Interestingly, the parish church of St Mary's, which was refounded around 1250, lies further to the east, away from the centre of the town and in an area recorded by Humphrey Bleaze on his map of 1629 as 'Welshe town' (Silvester 2008, Fig. 3). While this, the earliest map of Welshpool, does not show the area of the Smithfield development, it is clear that the location is within the general area of 'Welshe town', and it is conceivable that Mill Lane was part of an early Welsh settlement which grew up between the motte and bailey castle and Capel Llewelyn. The map does depict Church Street and it is clear that the Lledan Brook was open at the time as there is a bridge over it, just to the south-west of the point where the new road meets the existing road network.

Post-medieval and modern period

- 3.11 A mapped survey of the Manor of Leighton, including parts of Welshpool, in 1663, shows Mill Lane and depicts the area later occupied by the Smithfield on the south side of the road as fields. Named as 'maes', this had become an area of open fields which would have originated in the medieval era. Interestingly, the 1663 map does not indicate any buildings along Mill Lane, and this is supported by the significant accumulation of ploughsoils found by the 2010 CPAT excavation, which were ultimately sealed by the construction of the Smithfield. Almost a century later a survey of the Estate of Mrs Victoria Lloyd, surveyed by John Rocque in 1747, shows Mill Lane and Salop Road; again there are no indications of any buildings on the street frontage, though this could be because the area then was under different ownership and was thus not mapped in any detail.
- 3.12 The north-western boundary of the former Smithfield is formed by the waterway now known as the Montgomery Canal, which was built in stages between 1794 and 1821, and ran from the Shropshire Union Canal at Frankton Locks to Newtown. The canal was an agricultural rather than an industrial waterway and was primarily constructed to carry and distribute lime for agricultural purposes from the Llanymynech Quarries (Hughes 1988, 9), although it was also used for transporting cloth from the mills in Welshpool and Newtown.
- 3.13 The 1840 Tithe Survey for Pool parish, Lower Division, Trefnant Fechan, Town etc depicts the area later occupied by the Smithfield, showing it as a series of fields. The Lledan Brook is shown crossing the area, and alongside it there is a small building. To the east is Domen Mill, with its feeder leat (or artificial channel) running from the canal-side weir. This was also shown on Bleaze's map in the early 17th century.
- 3.14 It is not known precisely when the Smithfield was constructed, although it was in existence by 1875 (Boon 1961, 14), and it is depicted on the large-scale Ordnance Survey (1:500) town map of Welshpool in 1885. The Smithfield has undergone some changes, particularly in more recent years, yet the overall layout of the main area remained largely unchanged from that depicted in 1885 until the site was cleared as part of the present development.





4 WATCHING BRIEF

- 4.1 The sections of road that were examined during the watching brief are considered below. For convenience the works have been divided into four sections, comprising that along Mill Lane/Smithfield Road (Fig. 2), the area formerly occupied by the house called 'The Moorings' off Mill Lane, the car park, and the road linking the car park to Church Street (Fig. 3).

Mill Lane/Smithfield Road

- 4.2 The road followed the approximate line of the existing public roads, although a sharp bend opposite the entrance to Pentrefelin Terrace was altered to reduce its severity and other minor changes were made to incorporate the entrances to the supermarket. The main activity involved the excavation of roadside drains, the resurfacing of the road and the alteration of existing services.
- 4.3 On the inside of the bend mentioned above, the base of the wall that bounded the livestock market was still in evidence, although this was evidently of relatively late date, perhaps not before the mid-19th century at the earliest. The top of the culvert carrying the Lledan Brook was also exposed but this feature was preserved in-situ so recording was limited to photography of the point where it passed beneath the public road.
- 4.4 No evidence of features associated with the motte and bailey castle, on the opposite side of Smithfield Road from the supermarket, was seen in the trenches observed. However, there were two instances where the excavation of launch holes for direct-drilled underground services was carried out without the contractors informing CPAT, meaning that the work was conducted without archaeological supervision.



Plate 1: The top of the culvert carrying the Lledan Brook beneath Mill Lane
(Photo CPAT 3199.0008)



Plate 2: Excavation of the roadside drain opposite Domen Gastell motte and bailey castle
(Photo CPAT 3199.0017)

The Moorings

- 4.5 Work at this location involved the removal of the house and the excavation of the entrance to the new road through the existing car park. Various services were also altered/installed while this was being done.
- 4.6 The house itself was built of brick and was of relatively late date, the plot having previously formed part of the grounds attached to the vicarage. However, an archaeological evaluation carried out in the gardens between the house and Mill Lane in 2002 (Grant and Jones 2002) revealed evidence of occupation belonging to the 13th or 14th centuries at a depth of between 0.5m and 0.7m below ground level, and this seemed to be an area which merited close examination. Unfortunately, work on widening the access into the car park section was carried out without CPAT being informed and it was therefore not supervised and any archaeology present was destroyed without a record. Examination of the ground after the work had been done revealed no evidence of medieval occupation, but very little of the ground remained undisturbed, most having been reduced in level by more than 1m, which is below the level of the top of the natural subsoil as identified in the 2002 evaluation.



Plate 3: The former garden plot attached to the Moorings showing the reduction in ground level
(Photo CPAT 3199-0015)

Car Park

- 4.7 The main work in this section involved the creation of a new road with its associated services, although a small number of launch holes were also excavated to facilitate the direct drilling of underground drains between the road and the south corner of the car park, where it borders the Montgomeryshire Canal.
- 4.8 No evidence of any archaeological features was seen in the main part of the road alignment, where the soil profile implied that the ground had been reduced in level when the car park was created. It is thought that this area originally formed part of the grounds of the vicarage. This, together with the nature of the excavations for the launch holes made the potential for observing any early activity in this locality low, at best, and no evidence was seen of anything predating the 19th century.



Plate 4: Machining of the new section of road across the car park (Photo CPAT 3199-0002)

Access road to Church Street

- 4.9 The remainder of the route involved alterations to the existing car park access road from Church Street, specifically the widening of the splayed section opening onto the road. This section appears to have been used as an access route in the 19th century but it seems unlikely that it is earlier than that as it partly lies on the (subterranean) route of the Lledan Brook and the watercourse remained uncovered at that time when the Tithe map was created in 1840.



Plate 5: Machining at the Church Street junction (Photo CPAT 3199-0010)

- 4.10 A small number of archaeological features were revealed in the course of machining, including a single undated post-hole, 0.4m in diameter and 0.2m deep at NGR SJ 22541 07580 and a 2m-square pit at NGR SJ 22542 07579. The latter was not examined in detail as material in its fill was no earlier than the 18th century. Both features had most probably been truncated by later activity as there was about 0.65m of 19th-century and later overburden.



Plate 6: The 2m-square pit, with the post-hole just visible at top right (Photo CPAT 3199-0013)

- 4.11 Later activity, probably belonging to the late 19th century, was revealed where the new road splayed out to meet Church Street. This included the remains of a former revetment wall associated with the car park access road and a stone-lined culvert running alongside Church Street at a depth of about 1m.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The watching brief has revealed a small amount of further information regarding activity in the town in the post-medieval period, mainly in close proximity to Church Street. No evidence of any earlier activity was recorded, even though it is known that the area around Mill Lane was occupied in the medieval and Roman periods. This has been reported on recently (Jones 2011) as part of the archaeological works relating to the construction of the supermarket on the former Smithfield livestock market site.
- 5.2 A number of reasons for the lack of evidence can be adduced, including the number of existing services that were encountered in the various trenches that were excavated and the likelihood that the creation of the car park resulted in the removal of any significant archaeological deposits in that area. It does have to be mentioned, however, that there were some occasions where construction work was carried out without notification to CPAT, particularly on the site of the former house called 'The Moorings', where traces of medieval occupation had been recorded in 2002. The ground there was reduced in level to below the horizons where medieval layers had been identified without archaeological supervision, and it cannot now be known whether any significant deposits or features were present.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank his colleagues at CPAT - Ian Grant and Nigel Jones - for their help with the watching brief. Thanks are also due to Dave Ramsey of McBurneys for his help and assistance during the project.

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- 1663 'The Mannor of Leighton with other lands and tenements in Welch Poole, Hope and Forden in the County of Montgomery', surveyed by William Fowler.
- 1747 Survey of The Estate of Mrs Victoria Lloyd in the parishes of Pool, Guilsfield and Buttington, surveyed and drawn by John Rocque, NLW M256.
- Post-1780 Powis Castle estate map, NLW Powis Castle M17-18.
- 1800 Powis Castle estate map, NLW Powis Castle M20.
- 1840 Tithe Survey and Apportionment for Welshpool parish.
- 1885 Ordnance Survey 1:500 first edition map of Welshpool.
- 1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale).
- 1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale).

APPENDIX 1

Table of Site Visits

Date	Archaeologist	Time on site	Works monitored	Finds	Archaeology
25/10/10	R Hankinson	8:30-9:30	Induction. No works being undertaken		
27/10/10	R Hankinson	14:00-14:30	Excavation for services at Moorings	None	Area already largely stripped without WB
01/11/10	R Hankinson	12:00-16:00	Excavation at junction of Church St and carpark	Post Med pottery	Undated posthole and 18 th -century pit
02/11/10	I Grant	10:00-11:30	Induction. Excavation at junction of Church St and carpark	None	19 th -century wall and drain
04/11/10	N Jones	9:40-10:20	Induction. Excavation for footpath at junction of Church St and carpark	None	None
07/12/10	R Hankinson	10:30-11:35	Water pipe trench along Mill Lane/Smithfield Road.	None	None
14/01/11	R Hankinson	9:45-10:20	Trenches on the site of the old sheep pens and opposite the motte alongside Mill Lane	None	No features observed, soil profile as expected from evaluation
18/01/11	I. Grant	9:45-11:00	Drainage gully alongside Mill Lane opposite Motte	None	No archaeological deposits encountered
25/01/11	R. Hankinson	15:30-15:55	Excavation of reception hole in main car park. Removal of two courses of revetment wall opposite entrance to Boys and Boden	None	Reception hole is in disturbed ground next to a manhole. No significant deposits at either location
02/02/11	R. Hankinson	9:50-10:20	Works at end of road through car park. Further works around motte	None	Excavations not deep enough to affect archaeological deposits
09/02/11	R. Hankinson	9:30-9:50	Trenches across old part of road next to Boys and Boden entrance	None	No significant archaeology in deep deposits of clay and silt
10/02/11	R. Hankinson	14:30-15:30	Trenches across old part of road next to Boys and Boden entrance	None	No significant archaeology. Deep deposits of silt and gravel – not possible to determine if there is any archaeological component