

CPAT Report No. 1753




Caersws Water Main Repair, Powys

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Client name: Severn Trent Water
 CPAT Project No: 2484
 Project Name: Caersws STW
 Grid Reference: SO 02900 92146
 County/LPA: Powys
 Planning Application: N/A
 CPAT Report No: 1753
 HER Enquiry No: N/A
 Event PRN: 214618
 Report status: Final
 Confidential until: 15/09/2021

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15/09/2020	15/09/2020	15/09/2020

Bibliographic reference: Hankinson, R., 2020. *Caersws Water Main Repair, Powys*, Unpublished CPAT Report.



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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 20 August 2020 by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust during water main repair works on the outskirts of Caersws in Powys at NGR SO 02900 92146. The watching brief was commissioned by Severn Trent Water (STW) as part of the grant of permission by Cadw to STW for work within the designated area of the scheduled monument known as the Caersws Roman site (MG001).

The watching brief was required to mitigate the impact of the repair work on the mains leak which had occurred in a field on the edge of the village and entailed the examination of machine and hand excavations associated with the repairs. A deposit of probable Roman age was revealed, which lay within the approximate area of features to the north-west of the Roman fort. No in-situ features or structures were recognised.

Crynodeb

Bu Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys yn cynnal briff gwyllo archaeolegol ar 20 Awst 2020 yn ystod gwaith atgyweirio prif bibell ddŵr ar gyffiniau Caersws ym Mhowys yn y Cyfeirnod Grid Cenedlaethol SO 02900 92146. Comisiynwyd y briff gwyllo gan gwmni dŵr Hafren Trent fel rhan o ganiatâd Cadw i'r cwmni weithio o fewn ardal ddynodedig yr heneb gofrestrdedig o'r enw safle Rhufeinig Caersws (MG001).

Roedd gofyn gwneud y briff gwyllo i liniaru effaith gwaith atgyweirio twll yn y brif bibell a oedd wedi digwydd mewn cae ar fin y pentref ac roedd yn galw am archwilio gwaith cloddio â pheiriant ac â llaw a oedd yn gysylltiedig â'r atgyweiriadau. Datgelwyd dyddodyn o'r oes Rufeinig, mae'n debyg, yn gorwedd o fewn ardal fras nodweddion i'r gogledd-orllewin o'r gaer Rufeinig. Ni nodwyd unrhyw nodweddion neu strwythurau yn y fan a'r lle.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was appointed by Severn Trent Water (STW) to carry out an archaeological watching brief during water main repairs works necessitated by a leak located at NGR SO 02900 92146, in a field to the north-west of the village of Caersws in Powys.
- 1.2. Archaeological input was required as the site of the leak fell within the designated area of the Caersws Roman Site scheduled monument (MG001). The need for a watching brief during ground disturbance associated with the repair work had been specified by Cadw in their grant of scheduled monument consent (SMC) for the works.
- 1.3. The work was carried out on 20 August 2020. In line with Cadw's stipulations, the watching brief monitored all excavations and reinstatement work and provided an opportunity to record any archaeological features revealed.

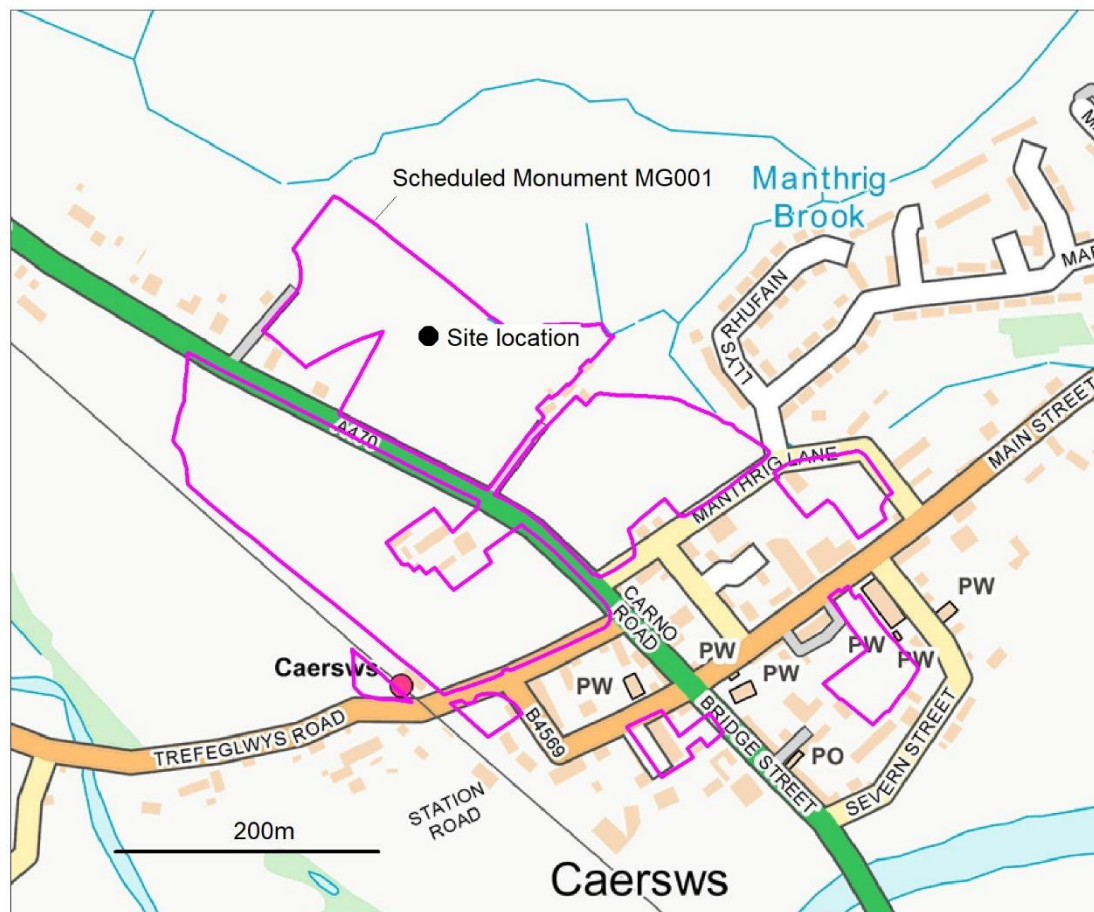


Fig. 1: Location of the water main repairs (contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018)

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. This section provides a brief summary of the relevant archaeology in the area affected, to allow the findings of the watching brief to be placed in a wider context.

- 2.2. The scheduled area of the Caersws Roman Site (MG001) covers the Caersws II Roman fort and its adjacent *vicus* or Roman civilian settlement; the earlier Caersws I fort lies about 1km to the east-north-east. Caersws II is believed to have been established in the mid-70s AD and then refurbished later in the 1st century. Further works were carried out on the fort during the early 2nd century, at which time the ramparts were fronted with stone and an annexe was added on its north-west side (Jones 1993, 15-96).
- 2.3. Excavations in the annexe have identified a tile kiln and geophysics has suggested that it may have been the site of timber structures. It was defended by a ditch, with a second that also divided it into north-east and south-west sides (Fig. 2). Additional ditches have been identified further to the north-west which may identify an extension in that direction.
- 2.4. As far as can be ascertained with current knowledge, the early 3rd century effectively marked the end of the military tenure of the site, though there is evidence of activity lasting into the 4th century (Burnham and Davies 2010, 226-9).

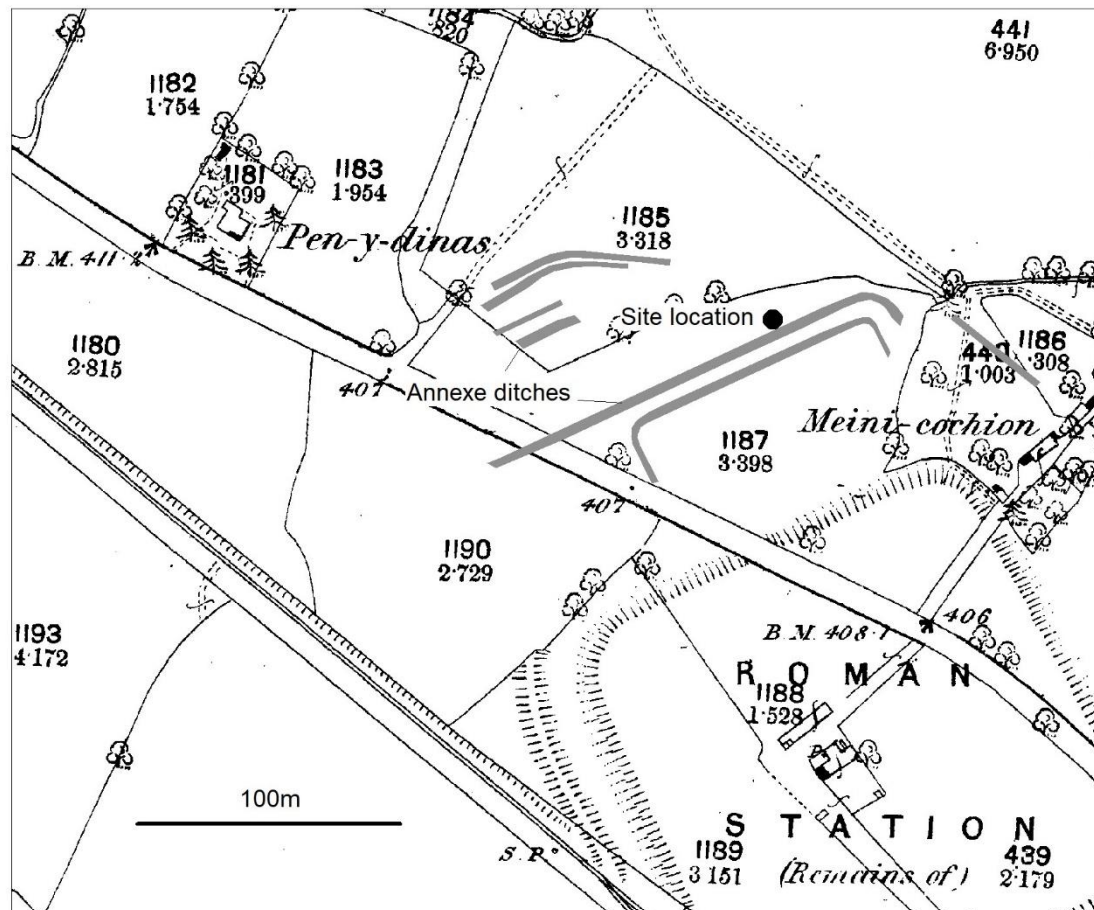


Fig. 2: Caersws II fort and the annexe ditches (extract from the 1885 Ordnance Survey map)

3 Watching Brief

- 3.1. The watching brief was conducted on 20 August 2020, in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) (2020) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*.

- 3.2. The water main in which the leak occurred runs from a larger main that follows the line of the main A470 Carno road. This branch is an asbestos cement pipe which starts at approximately NGR SO 0286 9207 and runs north-east, feeding stock water supplies in the two scheduled fields. The trench was initially excavated to 2m by 1m in size, slightly wider than the original trench in which the pipe was laid, but the poor condition of the pipe meant that a complete section had to be removed. This resulted in the final excavation covering an area of 5m north-east/south-west by up to 1m wide (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: The final excavation, showing the replacement pipe, from the north-east. Photo CPAT 4782-0008

- 3.3. The excavation created a section through the deposits which could be examined and recorded, though as far as could be determined, no archaeological features or structures were seen in the section.
- 3.4. The natural subsoil was revealed at a depth of between 0.5m and 0.6m below the surface, continuing to the base of the trench at approximately 1.0m in depth. These natural soils comprised manganese-panned gravels covered with sticky yellow clay. Above these was a layer of grey gravelly silt, between 0.3m and 0.4m in thickness, which contained some Roman material and probably denotes the contemporary ground level; it did not appear that the gravel included any surface metalling, but it was not seen in plan so this is difficult to gauge with certainty. The Roman material comprised two sherds of highly abraded coarse pottery and was not retained. The overlying surface soil was a grey-brown silty topsoil, 0.2m in thickness.



Fig. 4: The section through the deposits at the site location, from the east. Photo CPAT 4782-0005

- 3.5. Once the pipe had been repaired (see Fig 3), the excavations were reinstated by machine (Fig. 5). This returned the area of the leak to its previous surface appearance.



Fig. 5: The area of the leak following its reinstatement. Photo CPAT 4782-0010

4 Conclusions

- 4.1. The watching brief recorded the deposits at the location of the leak. A layer belonging to the Roman period lay between the topsoil and the natural subsoil, though no evidence of features or structures was observed.
- 4.2. The condition of the existing asbestos cement pipe was seen to be poor and in all likelihood this will result in further leaks in future, resulting in additional impacts to the sub-surface archaeology of this part of the scheduled area. There would be merit in dealing with the archaeological impact of this work in a single operation – either by mitigation at an early stage as part of the replacement of the existing main, or by rerouting the water main entirely. STW are advised to consult closely with CPAT and Cadw to develop an appropriate scheme of mitigation.

5 Sources

Published sources

Burnham, B.C., and Davies, J.L. (Ed), 2010. *Roman Frontiers in Wales and the Marches*, Aberystwyth: RCAHMW.

Jones, N.W., 1993. 'Caersws Roman Fort and Vicus, Montgomeryshire, Powys 1984-92, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 81, 15-96.

Cartographic sources

1885 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1st edition Montgomeryshire 35.15

6 Archive deposition Statement

- 6.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2020). The archive is entirely digital and will be deposited jointly with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW). No artefacts were retained.

Archive summary

CPAT Event PRN: 214618

10 digital photographs, CPAT film no 4782