



DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD



07/07/95

**WATERMAIN DIVERSION AT
PWLL-Y-HWY AID
WHITLAND**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
Project Record No. 30299
JULY 1995**

Commissioned by: Dwr Cymru

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Figure 1: Location plan

Figure 2: Section through southern half of Roman road

SUMMARY

As part of the ancillary works for the construction of the new A40 Whitland Bypass Dwr Cymru were required to divert a watermain at Pwll-y-hwyaid, to the north of the town. The diversion crossed the line of a recently discovered Roman road (PRN 14277), therefore, Dwr Cymru commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Operations to carry out a watching brief on the diversion works. A small pipe-trench was excavated across the Roman road, which at this point is one of the best preserved in Wales, and time was made available to record the exposed sections.

The fieldwork revealed that the road was a substantial structure, indicating a major route between important Roman centres, Carmarthen to the east and an as yet unidentified location to the west. The scale of the road is both surprising and exciting, for it had long been the belief that the Romans did not reach further west than Carmarthen. Therefore, the results from this watching brief will be important in the future assessment of the Roman occupation of southwest Wales.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The report was prepared by N A Page, Project Officer, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services. The fieldwork was carried out by N A Page and R Linnard. The author is grateful to the on-site staff of Dwr Cymru for their help during the watching brief.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project commission

The watermain diversion was part of the ancillary works of the construction of the new A40 Whitland Bypass. The new line of the main crossed an identified Roman road, so Dwr Cymru commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Operations to undertake a watching brief on the works.

1.2 Scope of project

The watching brief was to monitor the works across the Roman road, record the exposed archaeological deposits and examine the rest of the length of the trench.

1.3 Outline of report

The report will outline the physical environment of the site (Section 2) and the results of the fieldwork (Section 3), before presenting a discussion of the conclusions (Section 4) based on the results of Sections 2 and 3.

1.4 Abbreviations

Sites mentioned in the text will be identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) allocated by the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Archaeological contexts are identified by a continuous three-figure numbering system (e.g. 001).

1.5 The project archive

The project archive for this watching brief is small, comprising 13 context record sheets, 1 drawn section and a number of photographs, and will be retained by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services (Site No. 30299).

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location (Fig 1)

The watermain was located just east of Pwll-y-hywaid (NGR SN158 182), to the north of Whitland. The line crosses gently undulating pasture land, with a small peat bog at the lowest point of the route. For the most part the line was dug through silty loam soils on the higher ground and peat and silty clay alluvium deposits in the lower area.

2.2 The site

The site comprised a fifteen metre section of the new line where it cut across a recently discovered Roman road. At this point the route was nearly at its lowest point and the pipe trench was cut completely through the road into the underlying peat.

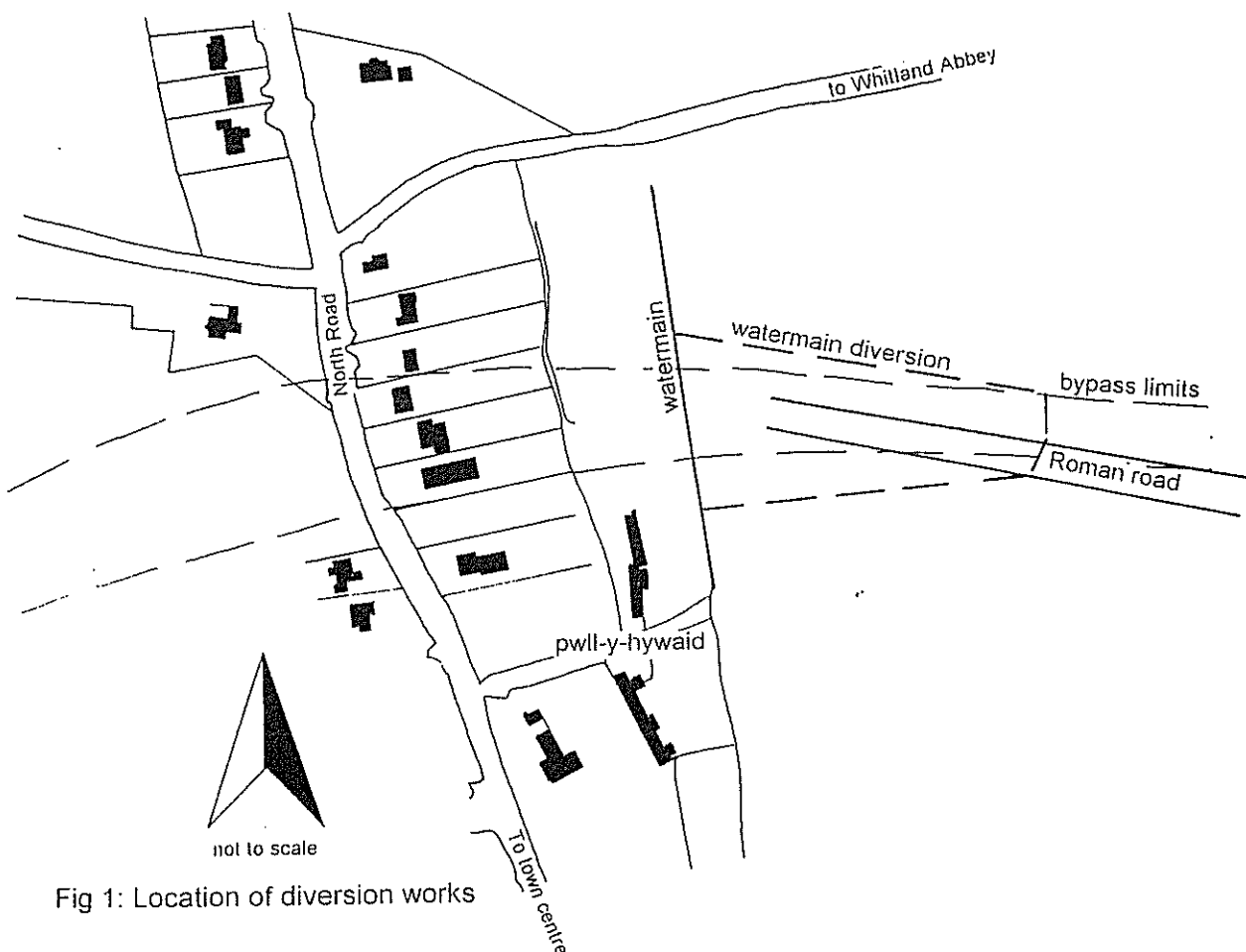


Fig 1: Location of diversion works

3. RESULTS OF FIELWORK

3.1 Methodology

A 0.5m wide pipe trench was excavated by Dwr Cymru across the road, the east facing section was then drawn and recorded. The remainder of the pipe trench was examined but no archaeological features were noted.

3.2 Stratigraphic sequence (Fig 2)

The sequence of the road structure is similar to that in other parts of the road encountered further to the west. A causway made up of large angular stone blocks (004) had been laid onto and preserved the Roman land surface, a woody peat (006). Above the blocks a clay and shale *agger* (003) supported the cobbled road surface (002). Between 004 and 006 was a thin layer of grey clay and shale (005), which appears to have percolated down through 004 from the *agger* (003).

Cutting the southern end of 003 was a narrow slot (009) filled with a dark grey silty, organic clay and shale (010). Machine damage made it impossible to determine the exact relationships of the slot with the surrounding deposits. Beneath the southern end of layer 004 were two clayey deposits, a lens of light brown very organic clay (012), and a thin layer of clean grey clay (011). The origins of those deposits is uncertain.

The peat rose slightly at either end of the section revealing beneath it a light grey/brown very organic clay (007 not shown and 008).

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 History of the road

The line of the Roman road was discovered in 1990 by Terry James (James 1990), then of DAT, but now working for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW) whilst studying aerial photographs of the region. Subsequently CADW funded a project by DAT and Trinity College, Carmarthen (TCC), to trace the line of the road on the ground, which identified parts of the road from crop marks, old hedgelines, trackways and roads. The project established the line of the road from Carmarthen to the banks of the Eastern Cleddau river northeast of Llawhaden (Fenton-Thomas 1994). What the project did not truly establish was the potential importance of the road. This watching brief, and other concurrent work, has established that the road was a major element in the military occupation of south west Wales.

4.2 The Romans in southwest Wales

Carmarthen was established and occupied as a fort between AD 75 and AD 110, it later became the civilian capital (*Civitas*) of the region (James 1992). Until the initial identification of the road in 1990 it was the accepted belief that the Romans did not advance beyond Carmarthen (*Moridunum*) in any organised campaign. Even though there have been some Roman finds from western Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire it was thought that Roman influence was largely through trade. The lack of evidence for Roman occupation from west of Carmarthen has been seen as a sign of the compliancy of the local indigenous population, the Demetae, which meant that the Romans did not need the system of roads and forts common in other areas to control the region.

The road is the first solid evidence of significant Roman activity beyond Carmarthen and is therefore of great importance in understanding Roman settlement of south-west Wales.

4.3 The road

The scale of the road construction is a sure indication of its importance. As with other Roman roads in Wales the military were responsible for its construction, so it must have been laid when the fort at Carmarthen was occupied, between AD75 and AD110. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that there are some forts to be discovered west of Carmarthen.

Until the final destination of the road is established its presence will pose many more questions than it answers. What was its destination in the west? What form of military installations was it linking? How many installations are there to discovered? Was it part of a plan to reach Ireland?

Whilst the results from the watching brief are confined to a very small area, they will add to a growing body of evidence of the importance of the road and contribute to the reassessment of the Roman occupation of South Wales.

5. CATALOGUE OF WATCHING BRIEF ARCHIVE

The project archive indexed according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories is currently held by DAT Field Services, Llandeilo. It is intended that the archive will be incorporated into a larger archive of all projects carried out on the Roman road. The archive will remain available for consultation by relevant bodies after incorporation.

The archive is held as Site No. 30299.

Contents of archive

- A.** Copies of report.
 - B.** Notes made during fieldwork.
 - C.** Site photographs (Monochrome and colour slide, 35mm).
 - D.** Site records, including site plans.
 - I.** Annotated copies of the report.
 - L.** Project brief.
 - M.** Correspondence, excluding matters of a confidential or financial nature.
- There is no material for categories **E**, **F**, **G**, **H**, **K** and **N**.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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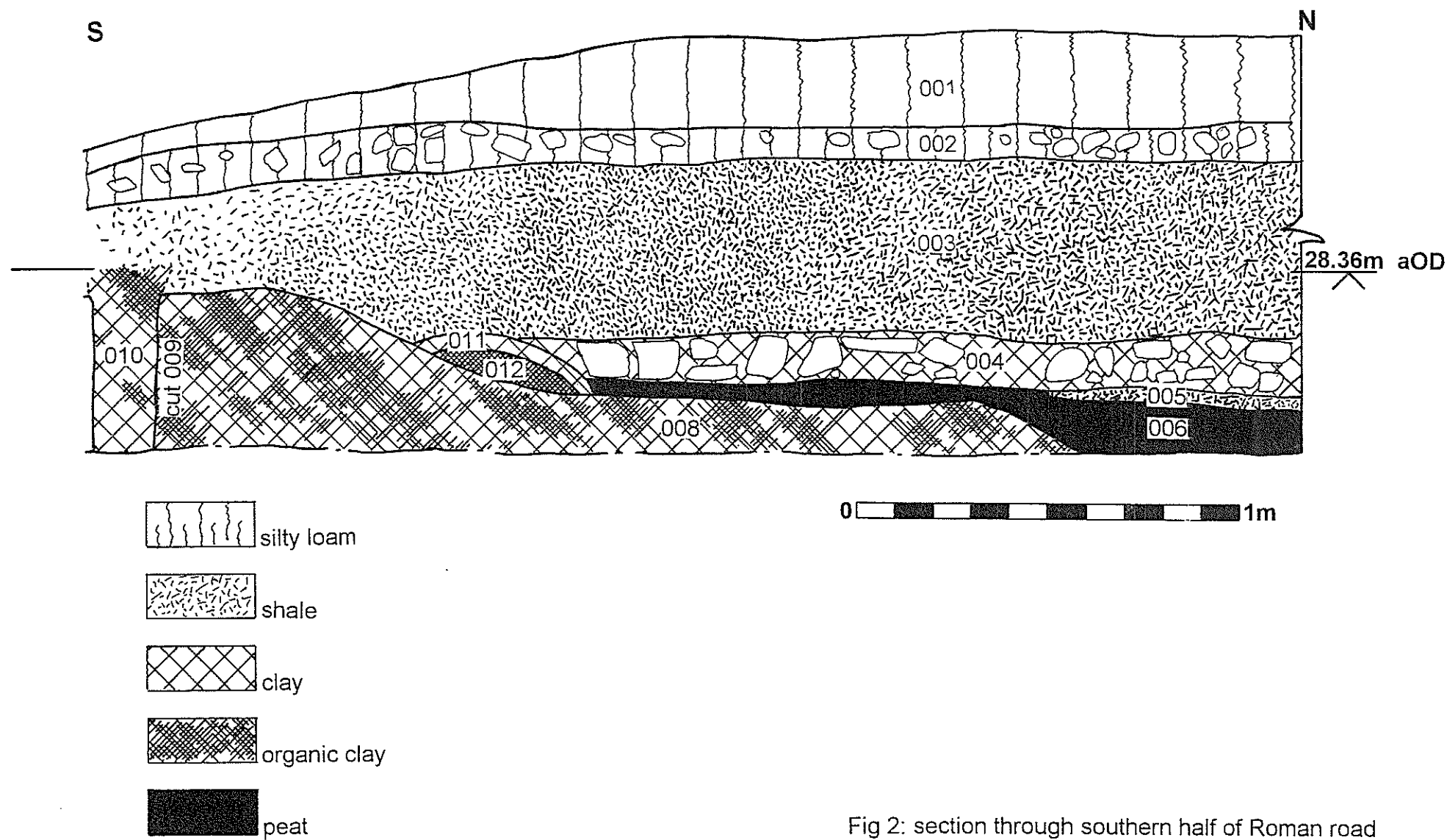


Fig 2: section through southern half of Roman road