

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
FIELD OPERATIONS

**A40(T) ROBESTON WATHEN
BYPASS
PREFERRED ROUTE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STAGE 3 INVESTIGATION

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT ROBESTON-WATHEN BYPASS

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SUMMARY

As part of the assessment process of the preferred route of the A40(T) Robeston Wathen Bypass a Stage 3 Archaeological Assessment was undertaken to determine the likely impact of the scheme on the archaeological resource. The Assessment revealed traces of the open-field system of agriculture associated with the Norman settlement of the area.

Features were identified by the geophysical survey that may be pre-Norman boundaries, if so, they are of great importance. However, they may simply be post-medieval or modern field drains, although the pattern is unusual if that were the case, and therefore it has been recommended that this area of the route be investigated prior to road construction. The full report on the geophysical survey was not available at the time of preparation, and whilst it is not envisaged that it will substantively alter the findings of this assessment a revised report will be prepared.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by M Trethowan Msc, Project Officer, and N A Page, BA AIFA, Contracts Manager, Cambria Archaeology Field Operations. The fieldwork was carried out by M Trethowan and S Scott. The authors are grateful to all the landowners who gave their permission for access, and to the staff of Stratascan for undertaking the geophysical survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project proposals and commission

As part of the preparation of documentation for the Statutory Orders and support for the preferred route for the A40(T) Robeston Wathen Bypass, Ove Arup commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Operations to carry out a Stage III archaeological study of that route. The study comprised an extension to a Stage II appraisal carried out in 1993, and included further documentary research, a rapid walkover and photographic recording of the route and a geophysical survey of the eastern end of the route.

1.2 Report outline

This report describes the physical environment of the study area (Section 2) before summarising the archaeological resource (Section 3) and the likely impact of the proposed scheme on that resource (Section 4). Recommendations based on the results of Sections 3 and 4 are given in Section 5.

1.3 Abbreviations used in this report

All sites recorded on the county Sites and Monuments Record will be identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Any new sites will be assigned a PRN and located by their NGR. References to primary cartographic and documentary evidence and published sources will be given in brackets, full details will be found in the bibliography.

2. THE STUDY AREA

2.1 Location and topography

The preferred bypass route passes to the south of Robeston Wathen village, joining the present A40 at Canaston Bridge to the west, and c.0.5km to the east of the village. From its easternmost point (c.54m aOD) the route runs southwest sticking to the flank of the higher ground to the north before dropping down past Green Grove and Lands End to Canaston Bridge (8m aOD). It is confined to pasture land for its entire length.

The underlying solid geology of Ordovician shales and mudstones causes some slight east-west ridging across the slopes to the south of Land's End and Sunnyside. The soils of the Denbigh1 series vary between loamy and silty soils with slowly permeable subsoils. There are some deposits of boulder clay at the eastern end of the route.

3. SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

3.1 Introduction

This summary relies heavily on the Stage II appraisal carried out in 1993, but has been updated by more recent work and the results of the present assessment. There is no doubt that the preferred route, to the south of the village, has eliminated the most significant archaeological implications of the scheme. However, the southern route does still impact on the landscape, which in places retains traces of Anglo-Norman boundaries and landscape features.

3.2 The prehistoric period

The date range, type and density of prehistoric sites within the vicinity of Robeston Wathen is evidence for a long period of settlement and landuse in the area. The identified sites would not have existed in isolation, but are simply the surviving, above-ground, traces of prehistoric occupation and land use. It is possible therefore that the absence of prehistoric sites south of the village may be more apparent than real, since this was an area of intense medieval arable cultivation (see below) which would have eroded or destroyed any surviving above-ground traces, whether of earthworks or standing stones.

3.3 Medieval settlement

Very little is known, either historically or archaeologically, of the nature and extent of native Welsh settlement and landuse in this area, prior to the Anglo-Norman conquest and settlement of the 12th century. Surviving Welsh elements in place-names like *Wathen* in Robeston Wathen and *Teglyn* for the area south east of the village hint at possible early medieval Welsh settlement, and any archaeological evidence confirming this would be of national importance.

The bypass route contains, in relict form, evidence for the characteristic Anglo-Norman 'landscape package' of the 12th and 13th centuries: nucleated settlement with a system of open-field communal arable cultivation, low lying valley bottom areas (still recorded as commons in the early 19th century) and areas of ancient woodland. The latter suggests that the individual farms at the western end of the route corridor may have been created by assarting, or clearance, within the medieval Forest of Narberth. It was

Robeston Wathen, first recorded in 1282 as *Villa Roberti* (Charles 1992, 545), was a holding of the medieval Lordship of Narberth, part of the 'Englishry', or the part of the lordship held under Anglo-Norman systems of tenure. Although the only surviving medieval building is the church, the plan of the village suggests a medieval origin, and most of the buildings within its core are likely to be on medieval sites. The settlement was founded as a nucleated settlement and the basis of its economy rested on subsistence production of grain, produced in the open fields which surrounded the village. Evidence for this survives in a remarkably complete and integrated form in the present day landscape around the village, and is of considerable historic landscape value.

Open field cultivation comprised large open plains which were divided into strips; each strip was owned, or rented, for cereal cultivation. Often a landowner's, or tenant's strips were scattered throughout the region rather than together. It is possible that open field cultivation was a response to changing social behaviour, developing as villages replaced the more scattered hamlets and farmsteads. This in turn may have led to a more communal approach to farming, with farmers supplying oxen and labour to a communal plough team.

3.4 Post-Medieval and Industrial

There are several sites and areas of industrial archaeological importance to the north of the village. Lime Kiln Wood was so-called in 1609, and other limekilns and quarries survive, as do more modern gravel quarries and clay pits. Those later features are not of major industrial archaeological importance in themselves but they do form part of an important post-medieval industrial landscape. The area to the south of the village appears to have always been agricultural in nature.

3.5 Modern development

Robeston Wathen has developed from its medieval origins into a vibrant modern settlement, with modern needs and priorities. However, initiatives by the South Pembrokeshire Action for Rural Communities (SPARC) in production of local history leaflets, display boards and re-opening footpaths, has shown the depth of local interest in its past, and the quality of the conservation resource.

3.6 The historic landscape

The landscape around Robeston Wathen is itself an historical document as it contains features and evidence of changes from two millennia of landscape use. It records the development of the present landscape, clearly showing traces of the medieval open-field system and the subsequent piecemeal enclosure which introduced many of the hedges and boundaries. In recent times some of those boundaries have been removed, to allow easier use of modern farm machinery, but the geophysical survey has shown that they survive as sub-surface features. The geophysical survey also revealed a series of buried linear features immediately to the west of Woodford Lane (field no. 2238) which may be former (possibly pre-Norman) boundaries, or they could be field drains (see Figure 2). Their layout, however, does not appear typical of a field drain system, but further work is necessary to establish the nature of the features.

4. IMPACT OF PROPOSED SCHEME ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

4.1 Features affected

The major archaeological features to be affected are Woodford Lane, the standing field boundaries and the buried features identified by the geophysical survey.

4.2 Woodford Lane

It seems that Woodford Lane is the oldest, visible, man-made element in the landscape which would be affected by the bypass. It is a deep rock-cut hollow way descending the steep slope from Robeston Wathen down to Woodford at the crossing point of the Narberth Brook, and it forms part of an early north-south route, which may predate the Anglo-Norman open field system. Woodford Lane is therefore a coherent, intact historic landscape component which would be degraded by being cut across by the bypass route.

4.3 Open field system

Relict traces of the open field system survive on either side of Woodford Lane. The bypass route will remove parts of many boundaries, some of which have already been removed, but which still remain as sub-surface features.

4.4 Buried features

The buried features identified by the geophysical survey will be affected, and depending upon their nature could be removed all together.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The need for further archaeological works

This study has shown that there are surviving traces of the Anglo-Norman settlement of Robeston Wathen, and it has highlighted the potential for earlier, buried features. It has also shown that the known, and the potential, archaeological resource will be affected by the current proposals. Therefore, it has been necessary to devise a programme of archaeological works in mitigation of the likely impact of the road construction works.

5.2 The programme of archaeological works

The programme of works outlined below is designed to provide the best protection for the archaeological resource. The works fall into two categories, investigative and reactive.

5.2.1 Investigative works

These works would be implemented prior to the commencement of road construction and consist of two phases:

Phase I - The excavation of two archaeological trial trenches to evaluate the nature and extent of the buried features identified by the geophysical survey. This would provide evidence of any sites or features requiring further, full-scale excavation prior to the start of construction.

Phase II - Excavation of any sites or features of significant archaeological importance identified during Phase I as liable to damage or destruction during the Phase I trial trenching.

5.2.2 Reactive works

These works would take place during the construction programme, and so the site contractors should be aware of the level and purpose of the works at the outset.

Recording the hedgebanks - The profiles and make up of all boundaries should be recorded by photography and scale drawing following the removal of the effected lengths.

Archaeological watching brief - As with any large-scale earth moving scheme the potential for encountering unexpected archaeological deposits is high, especially in an area that has been settled for 2,000 years. Therefore it is recommended that a watching brief be carried out on all topsoil stripping and deep cutting within the route corridor.

APPENDIX ONE: CARTOGRAPHIC AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Primary Record Maps, Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT) Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), Llandeilo.

Robeston Wathen Parish Tithe Map and Apportionment, 1841.

First Edition OS one inch map, 1832.

Second Edition OS 1:25000 map, 1907.

Soil survey of England and Wales : 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales.

Geological Survey Map 228 Haverfordwest : Soil and Drift.

Memoirs of the Geological Survey ; The Country around Haverfordwest.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Sources held in SMR.

SORTIE	SCALE	DATE	FRAMES
Meridian		1955	27255-27257

Sources held in Central Register of Air Photography for Wales, Cardiff.

SORTIE	SCALE	DATE	FRAMES
RAF 106GUK 1425	1:9,800	15/04/46	3038-3039
RAF 106GUK 1625	various	07/07/46	5229-5230
58 RAF 9679	1:60,000	10/06/69	120-121
OS 64 210	1:7,500	23/09/64	472-474
OS 71 336	1:21,800	07/07/71	115-116
J A Storey	1:10,000	06/06/83	24-25; 5783

APPENDIX TWO: CATALOGUE OF RESEARCH ARCHIVE

The project archive has been indexed and catalogued according to National Monument Record (NMR) categories and contains the following:

- A.** Copy of the report.
- B.** Notes from site visits.
- D.** Site photographs - catalogue, colour slides, B/W contact sheets.
- G.** Documentary data, including primary and published sources.
- I.** Draft copies of report.
- J.** Publication drawings.
- M.** Miscellaneous correspondence

There is no material for classes **C**, **E**, **F**, **H**, **K**, **L** and **N**.

The project archive is currently held by Cambria Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Dyfed as project number 35307.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Charles B G 1992 *The place-names of Pembrokeshire: volume II.* The National Library of Wales. Aberystwyth.



Figure 1: Location plan

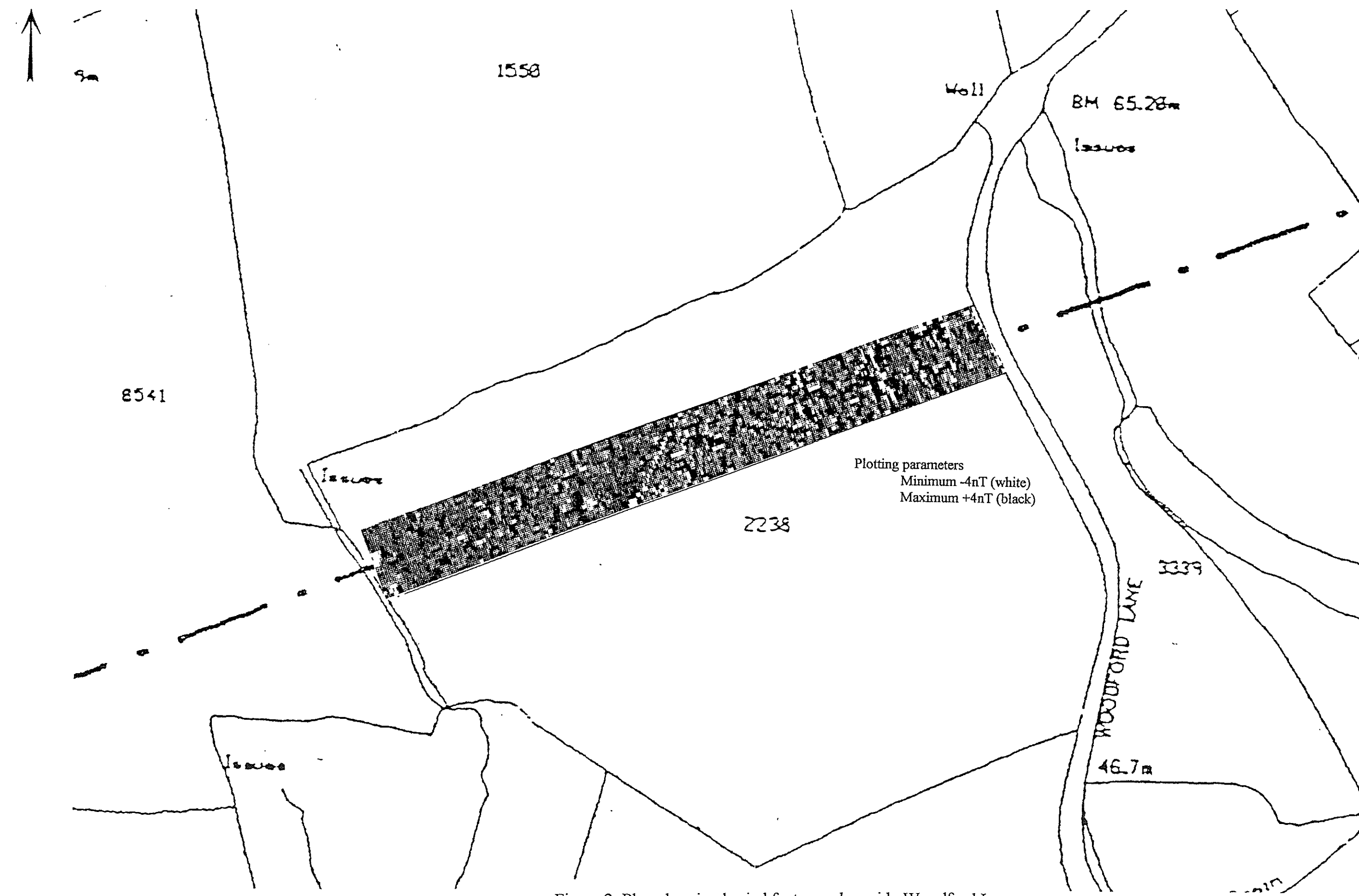


Figure 2: Plan showing buried features alongside Woodford Lane