

ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OPERATIONS

NORTH CARMARTHENSHIRE AND CEREDIGION LINK ROADS PHASE 1/1 GLANGWILI TO PENIEL IMPROVEMENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1998

PRN 35838

Report prepared by

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for

Kennedy & Donkin Limited

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
CEREDIGION LINK ROAD**

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SUMMARY

Carmarthenshire County Council are widening the A485 Carmarthen to Lampeter road as part of the North Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion Link Roads scheme. Prior to the works an archaeological appraisal revealed several areas of archaeological interest along, or close to the line of the proposed works. These areas were marked onto a base map and it was recommended that a watching brief be carried out on the most sensitive areas. That recommendation was accepted and it was agreed that the area around the historic bridge and bridging point over the Gwili and an area just north of Rhyd-y-rhaw where the suspected line of a Roman road crossed the A485 would be monitored.

In the event, the works around the historic crossing point were completed before an archaeological site visit was made. The area of the Roman road was monitored, but no definite evidence for the road was recovered. However, a pit or gully, which cut through the clay fill of what appeared to be another feature, was noted in the side of a new construction trench close to the line of the Roman road.

One other site that was affected by the works was a small mine adit. The adit had been filled with modern rubbish and no evidence of a date for its use was recovered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by N A Page, Project Officer, Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology Field Operations. The fieldwork was carried out by B Allen and A Manning.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT COMMISSION

Carmarthenshire County Council are widening the A485 Carmarthen to Lampeter road as part of the North Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion Link Roads scheme. Kennedy and Donkin Limited (formerly Rust Consulting Ltd.) commissioned Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology to carry out an archaeological appraisal of Phase 1/1 of the route for inclusion in the Statement of Case prepared for the Public Inquiry. The appraisal revealed a number of archaeological interests along the route. It was recommended that a watching brief be carried out on the two most sensitive areas. That recommendation was accepted and it was agreed that the area around the historic bridge and bridging point over the Gwili and an area just north of Rhyd-y-rhaw where the suspected line of a Roman road crossed the A485 would be monitored. Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology were commissioned by Kennedy and Donkin Limited to carry out the watching brief.

1.2 SCOPE OF PROJECT

The watching brief was concentrated on two areas identified as being of archaeological interest. The fieldwork was intended to allow the 'preservation by record' of archaeological deposits exposed during ground disturbance works. This report has been prepared based on the results of the fieldwork.

1.3 REPORT OUTLINE

This report describes the physical environment of the site (Section 2) before summarising the watching brief results (Section 3) and the conclusions (Section 4) based on the results of Sections 2 and 3. Supporting data, including detailed records of the watching brief (Appendix One), are given in a series of appendices.

1.4 ABBREVIATIONS

Sites recorded on the regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) will be identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Any new sites discovered during the course of the project will be allocated a new PRN and located by their NGR.

Archaeological features and contexts will be referred to using the continuous three-figure numbering system (e.g. 1001) employed by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology Field Section.

2. THE SITE

2.1 LOCATION

Phase 1/1 of the North Carmarthenshire - Ceredigion Link Roads scheme was the stretch of the A485 between Glangwili and Peniel. The areas identified for the watching brief were at NGR 43122190 and NGR c.SN 43302360.

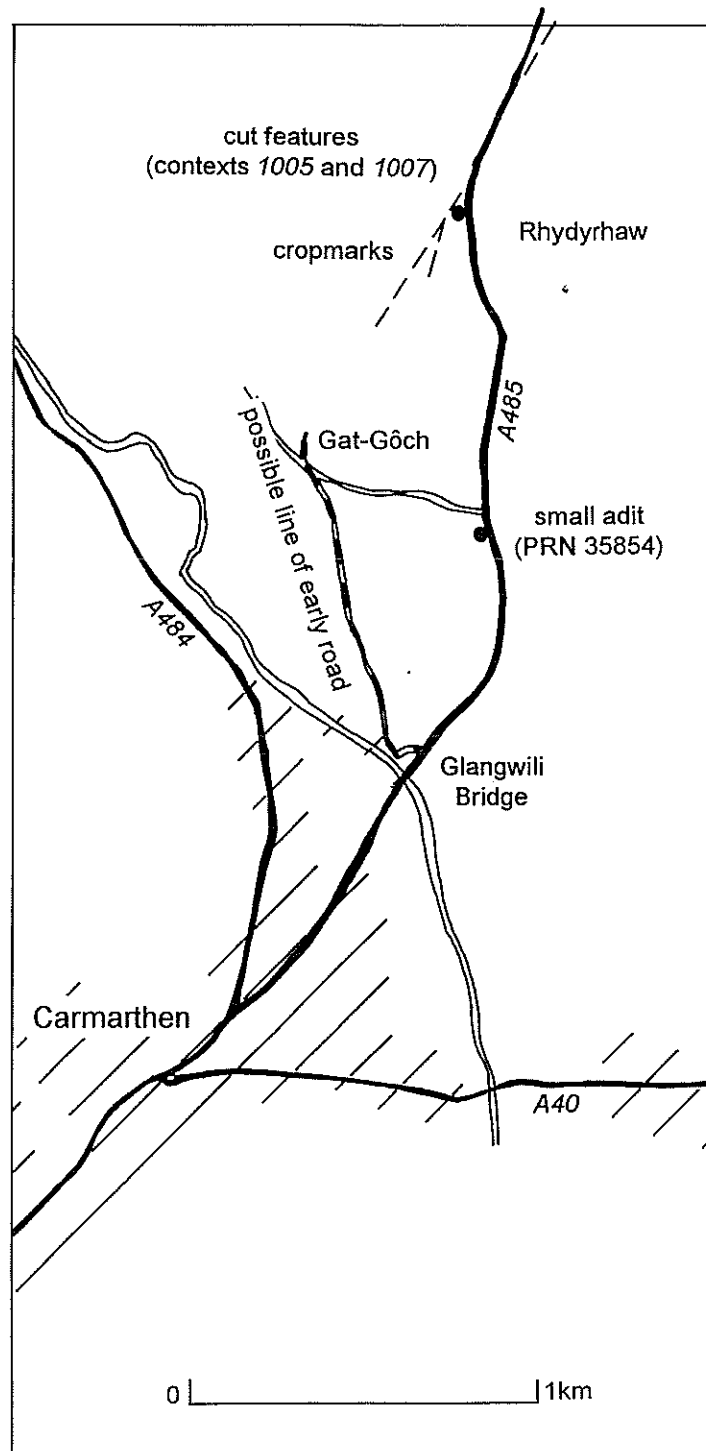


Figure1: Location plan shown sites mentioned in the text

3. SUMMARY OF WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.1 METHODOLOGY

A total of four site visits were made to monitor the ground disturbance works in two areas. All exposed features and deposits (contexts) were recorded using written notes, photographs and scaled drawings.

3.2 THE RESULTS

3.2.1 The Glan-gwili historic bridging point

This area had the potential for significant archaeological discoveries. There were two main factors that contributed to that potential. First, until the advent of modern construction methods, fording and bridging points of rivers tended to stay roughly in the same place, so any early bridges would have been on, or close to the same line as the present bridge. Second, the waterlogged conditions in and close to the river would preserve timber structures, which means that remains of even the earliest, pre-stone structures would survive.

This was the case at Pont Rhyd Gôch 6km north of Glan-gwili, where dredging of the Afon Gwili recovered a number of large timbers just downstream of the present bridge. A brushwood surface buried in the bank was also noted at this point. This suggests that the timbers were an early (possibly Roman) bridge which was approached along a brushwood track (James 1991, 70).

There is no doubt that the Glan-gwili crossing point had the same potential for survival of archaeological remains as Pont Rhyd Gôch. Unfortunately this part of the works took place without archaeological monitoring.

3.2.2 The mine adit (Fig 2)

The adit (PRN 35854) is cut into the bank on the west side of the A485 at NGR SN 43362255. It is cut into a small rock outcrop and measures 2.5m long x 2m wide x 1.75m high. There was no evidence to indicate what the miners were after or a date of use, however, its small size does not suggest a modern date. The entrance to the adit had been blocked by modern dumping; this material was removed by mechanical excavator.

3.2.3 The Roman road

Aerial survey in 1989 revealed linear cropmarks (PRN 14308) that may be the line of a section of the Roman road from Carmarthen (Roman - *Moridunum*) to Llanio (Roman - *Bremia*). For most of its length the Roman road is broadly followed by the line of the A485, with only a few notable deviations. One of those deviations is the section of road from Glan-gwili to Pant-y-fedwen. Here the modern road crosses the Afon Gwili slightly to the east (downstream) of the possible Roman road before curving around a spur of high ground. It seems that the Roman route went straight up and over the high ground, although there is no trace of it after it passes Glan-gwili. Existing tracks and

two converging cropmarks leading to a farm at Gat-Gôch may be a continuation of this more direct route. From Gat-Gôch the cropmarks run north-northeast and cross the A485 at NGR SN 43302360 before reappearing as a single cropmark at Pant-y-fedwen (James 1991, 68-69).

Investigations on the site following topsoil stripping revealed no evidence of a Roman road, but it may be that it ran along a slight ridge slightly to the northeast of the present works.

3.2.4 Other features (Fig. 3)

A narrow trench dug by the contractors following topsoil stripping in the area of the possible Roman road cut through a shallow linear feature (*1005*). The feature was 2.7m long x 0.34m deep and contained two fills. The primary fill was a thin layer (0.04m) of charcoal and burnt stone (*1004*) that spread down the south side and along the bottom. This was covered when the feature was apparently deliberately backfilled with a fairly stoney reddish-brown clay (*1003*). The backfill material was similar to the surrounding sub-soil and probably came from nearby.

The northern edge of *1005* was indistinct, but it appears that it was cut through a layer of clean red clay (*1006*) filling an earlier feature (*1007*). Feature *1007* was c.3.2m wide and c.0.5-0.6m deep and cut into the bedrock and may be a natural clay-filled fissure.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 THE VALUE OF THE WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

There can be no doubt that the value of the fieldwork results were lessened by the lack of observation of the Afon Gwili historic crossing point. However, the monitoring of the other areas, the possible Roman road and the adit, produced some interesting results. Both this watching brief and the original appraisal have proved valuable in identifying and recording sites affected by the first phase of the road scheme.

4.2 SITE SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

4.2.1 The adit

The plan and profile of the adit were recorded, but unfortunately no evidence to provide a date for its use was recovered, nor were there any indications of what the excavators were after. The small scale of the adit suggests that it is earlier in date rather than later. Other possible explanations for its small size are that it was a private enterprise carried out by a local individual, who perhaps had no further need or resources for expansion, or that the material the miners were after ran out.

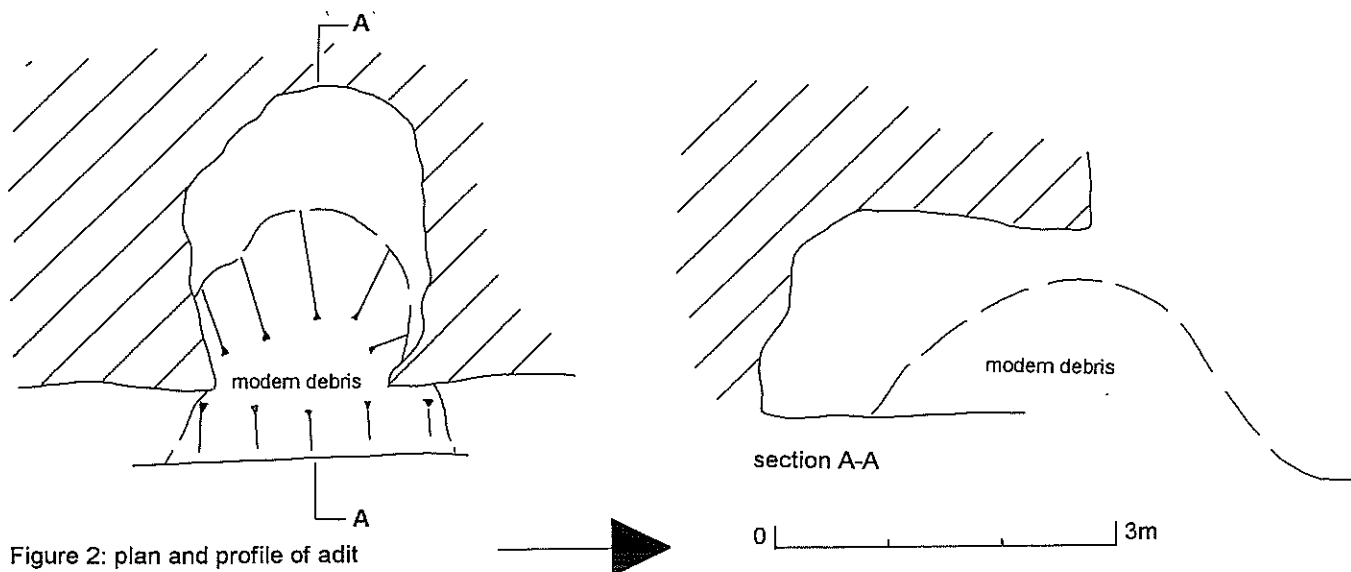
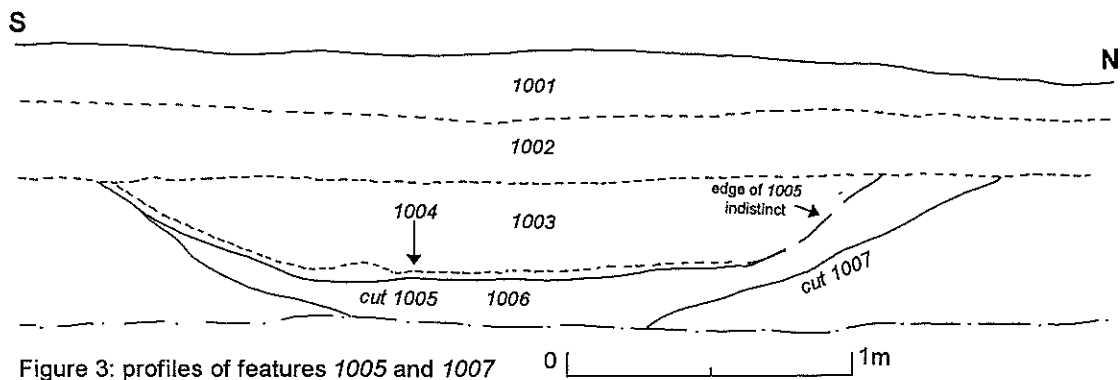


Figure 2: plan and profile of adit

4.2.2 The other sites and features

The only other feature recorded was the shallow feature (1005) exposed in a new construction trench near the supposed line of the Roman road. No evidence was recovered to suggest a date, or function for this feature, although its proximity to the supposed line of the Roman road may be significant. It is also interesting that it was cut into the fill (1006) of an earlier feature (1007).

The exact nature of both features is unclear. Feature 1007 could be a natural fissure in the bedrock - in which case 1005 may have been dug to extract the clean clay fill - or it may be a small quarry pit, possibly associated with the Roman road. Quarry pits dug to extract construction materials are well known features alongside Roman roads.



APPENDIX ONE: DETAILED RECORDS OF WATCHING BRIEF

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context descriptions were only given to the two cut features (1005 and 1007) and their associated fills.

1001 - Mid reddish brown plastic clay loam with 10% small mudstone pebbles and fragments.

1002 - Mid reddish brown plastic clay loam with 20-25% small mudstone pebbles and fragments.

1003 - Light reddish brown plastic clay loam with 25-30% small mudstone fragments.

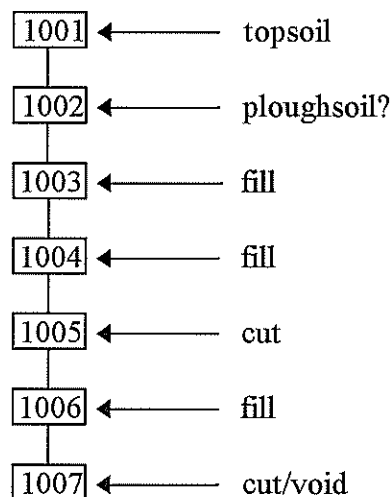
1004 - Mixed brown loamy, friable topsoil with 50% charcoal fragments.

1005 - Cut, a pit or gully containing 1003 and 1004. Only visible in the east facing section of a new construction trench. Overall dimensions - 2.7m long x 0.34m deep

1006 - Red plastic clay.

1007 - Cut or fissure, a feature containing 1006. Only visible in the east facing section of a new construction trench. Overall dimensions - 3.2m wide and c.0.5-0.6m deep. Possibly a natural feature.

SUMMARY OF THE STRATIGRAPHIC SEQUENCE



APPENDIX TWO: CATALOGUE OF WATCHING BRIEF ARCHIVE

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

- A.** Copy of final report.
- B.** Site records, including context record sheets and site notebook.
- C.** Drawing catalogue and site drawings.
- D.** Site photographs - catalogue, colour slide and B/W contact sheets.
- E.** Finds catalogue, individual finds record and finds report.
- G.** List of references, including primary and secondary sources.
- I.** Archive report and draft copies of final report.
- J.** Publication drawings.
- M.** Miscellaneous correspondence.

There is no material in categories **F**, **H**, **K**, **L** and **N**.

The archive is currently held by Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology Field Operations, Llandeilo, Dyfed as project number 35838.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- James H J 1991 The Roman Roads of Carmarthen. In H James (Ed) *Sir Gâr: Studies in Carmarthenshire History*. Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society Monograph Series Volume 4. Carmarthen.