

THE ROMAN ROAD AT LLWYNFORTUNE FARM CARMARTHENSHIRE

A Watching Brief
September 2004



Paratowyd gan Archaeoleg Cambria
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THE ROMAN ROAD AT LLWYNFORTUNE FARM CARMARTHENSHIRE A Watching Brief

Gan / By

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**LLWYNFORTUNE FARM,
CARMARTHENSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF,
SEPTEMBER 2004**

Project Record No. 51955

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1.0 SUMMARY

On notification as part of the planning process that an agricultural building was to be built at Llwynfortune Farm, Carmarthenshire, directly on the line of the Roman road between Llandeilo and Carmarthen, a limited amount of archaeological recording was undertaken by Cambria Archaeology during the preparation of foundations for the new building. Remains of the road were identified in one of the foundation trenches, and comprised of three layers of compacted gravel and clay road surface over a foundation layer of larger stones and cobbles, lain directly over naturally deposited clays.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the archaeological recording at Llwynfortune Farm undertaken by Cambria Archaeology on 6th September 2004. A watching brief was undertaken in response to notification through the planning process, of the construction of a new agricultural building at the farm. From aerial photographic survey and field observations, the line of the Roman road is known to have run directly through the farmyard of Llwynfortune farm.

Trenches, cut to contain the footings for the steel frame building, were consequently highly likely to impact upon the remains of the road and would also provide a rare opportunity to offer an opportunity to assess the construction details, character, and degree of survival of the Roman road in this area.

2.1 Site description and background history

Llwynfortune Farm is located on the north side of the Towy valley, to the east of Pont-ar-Gothi at grid reference SN5248221776. The farm is situated on the slopes leading down to the flood plain, at an elevation of 38m, also the chosen elevation for the Roman road, which runs through the farmyard on an east-west alignment. In her discussion of the Roman road between Llandovery and Carmarthen (James 1991, p68) Heather James notes that William Rees reported that the remains of the road 'are to be seen in a sunken track across the farm' (Rees 1837, p130). A low bank still visible in the field immediately to the west of the farm probably marks where the Roman road is terraced into the hill slope. This feature may have given rise to the 'llwyn' of Llwynfortune, with a Welsh language meaning of 'grove' or, in some instances 'groove' (R. Jones pers. com.). The 'fortune' part of the farm name is derived from a Roman altar stone (PRN 10560), dedicated to 'Fortune' and decorated with a cornucopia on one side and an augural staff on the other, found somewhere in the locality. A Roman coin hoard (PRN 723) was found in the vicinity in the 1760's (Colt Hoar, R. 1806 p. cli). The hoard, now lost, is reported to have included coins dating from the first to the third centuries AD (Boon G. C. 1967).

2.2 Methodology

On notification that the footings for the building had been dug (by machine) the site was visited by Cambria Archaeology in order to assess and record any surviving evidence for the Roman road. Representative sections were drawn of several of the footings trenches and digital photographs were taken to record the nature of the deposits and stratigraphy observed.

3.0 RESULTS

The new agricultural building was located directly on the projected line of the Roman road, between two known stretches of road identified from aerial photographic survey. The excavated footings were aligned on approximately east-west and north-south axes. The three trenches along the north edge of the building were approximately 0.80m deep and 1.0m square. All three were found to contain post-medieval and modern deposits to at least 0.60m below the present ground level, which consisted of a concrete yard surface.

It was considered that the road had either been truncated in this area, or was located further to the south. Investigation of the north-south aligned trenches indicated that in the majority of cases, there were naturally deposited clays directly beneath the concrete yard surface and its make-up layer. In Trench 4, however, compacted laminated gravels and cobbles identified in all four sides of the trench are thought to be the remains of the Roman road.

3.1 Description of Trenches 1, 2 and 3

The stratigraphic sequence of deposits in each of these trenches differed slightly, but it was apparent from inclusions of wood fragments, concrete, tarmac and modern brick and field drain fragments in deposits to a depth of 0.75m below ground surface, that there was either considerable post-medieval disturbance to the north side of the Roman road or, perhaps, a build up of dumped deposits to fill in a roadside ditch or other topographical feature before establishment of the farmyard. The trench profiles are shown in Figure 2. Modern brick and field drain fragments and a post-medieval horseshoe from the lowest deposit in Trench 3 were the only sources of dating evidence.

3.2 Description of the Roman road in Trench 4

In Trench 4, the Roman road was identified in all four sides of the trench, immediately beneath a 0.15m thick layer of apparently modern gravel, laid as make-up for the 0.13m thick concrete yard surface. The road itself consisted of two distinct layers of compacted river-rounded gravel and pebbles in a yellow-brown clay matrix. Below these was a layer consisting of slightly larger pebbles in a grey clay matrix. Combined, these layers formed a deposit roughly 0.20m thick.

Below the compacted gravel layers was a deposit of larger stones and cobbles (up to 0.15m in size) in a mid grey clay-silt matrix, approximately 0.15m thick. This layer appears to have been constructed to form a reasonably evenly surfaced foundation layer upon which the gravel surfaces were laid. The total thickness of the road was therefore approximately 0.35m. The foundation layer was laid directly over naturally deposited mixed yellow and grey silty clay with occasional cobbles.

No camber to the road was visible within the trench, nor was there any evidence for the overall width of the road, or any roadside drainage ditches. Trench 4 is situated 3.5m between trenches 1 and 5, offering an 8.0m strip within which the road and any associated drainage ditches could be located, assuming there was no truncation along the northern edge of the road.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although it has been possible to confirm the presence, construction characteristics and survival of the Roman road at this location, it was not possible to obtain a complete section through the road in order to ascertain its total width or the presence and character of any drainage arrangements associated with the road. It was also not possible to demonstrate whether any horizontal truncation of the road surface had occurred before the construction of the existing yard, and if so, to what degree or depth.

Figure 1, showing the projected line of the Roman road, suggests that it might have been expected to find evidence of the road in the sides of the trench to the south of Trench 4. On the ground, this did not appear to be the case. The absence of such evidence may suggest that the road has been truncated or eroded away at this point. Alternatively, it may be a consequence of compounded inaccuracies in the various stages of mapping, survey, plotting and scaling of the features.

Assuming that the character of the road as revealed in this location is representative of the road generally in this area, then it is clear that any ploughing that has occurred in the past is already likely to have had a considerable impact upon the integrity of the road. Any additional ploughing in the future could have a further significant impact upon the survival of the road unless mitigation measures are taken to minimize any potential future damage.

5.0 REFERENCES

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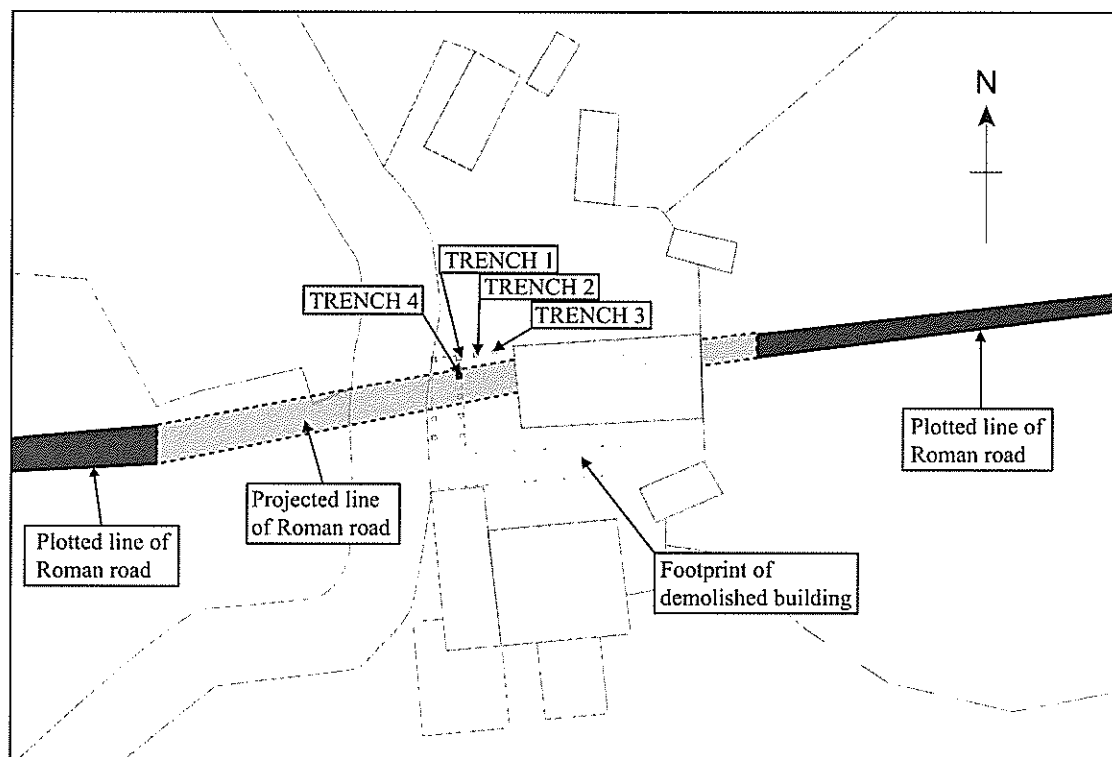


Figure 1: Location plan showing position of trenches and projected line of Roman road (not to scale)

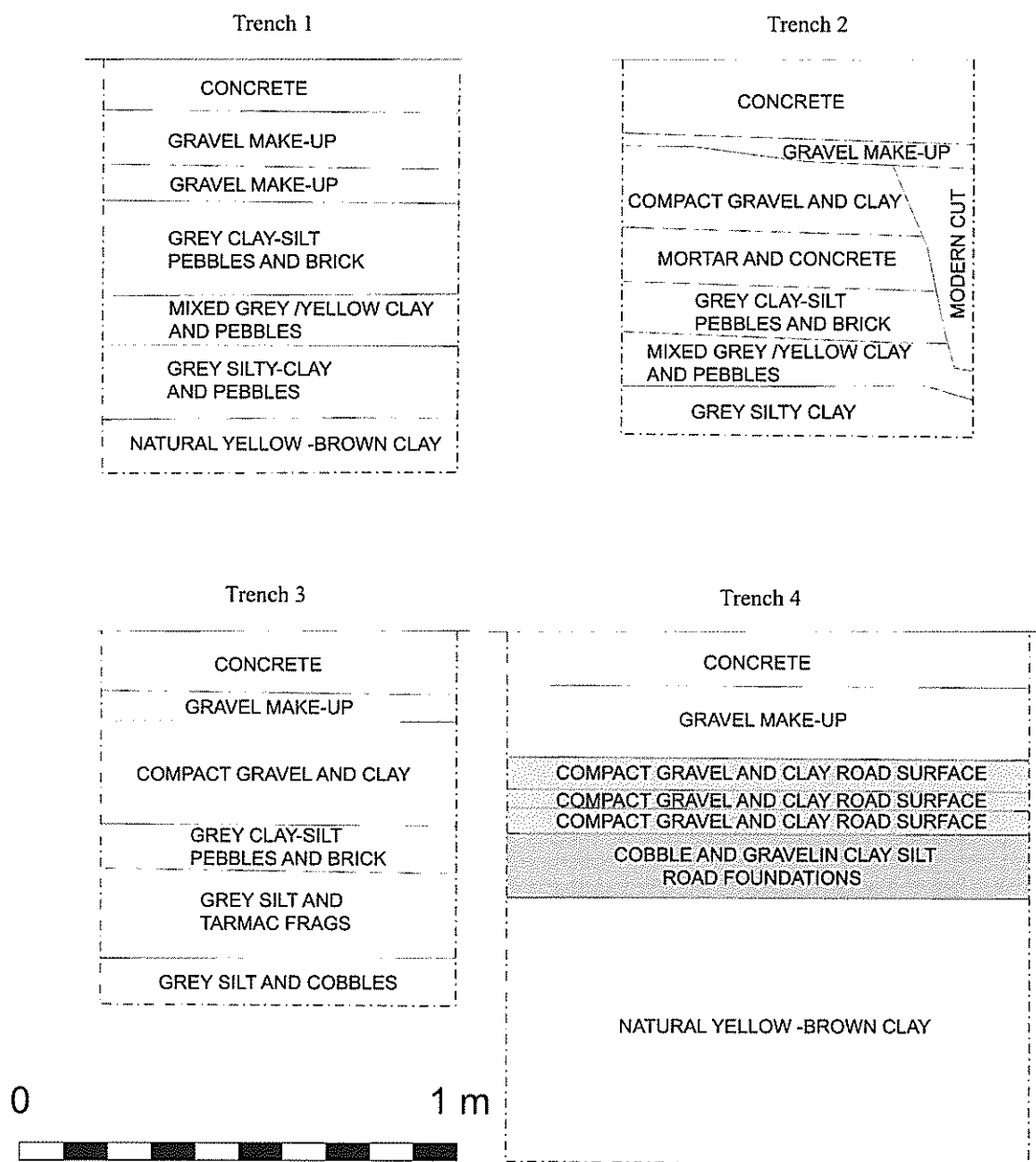


Figure 2: Schematic south facing sections of Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4



Photo 1: South facing section of Trench 1



Photo 2: South facing section of trench 2



Photo 3: South facing section of Trench 3



Photo 4: South facing section of Trench 4



Photo 5: Detail showing Roman road deposits in Trench 4

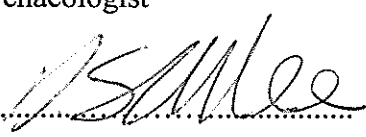
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