

Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief:
Erection of New Garage at Cefn y Gaer
Trefecca, Brecon, Powys LD3 0PR
NGR SO 1446 3132
Planning Application 16/14050/FUL

CPAT HER Event PRN 142682



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Summary

A watching brief was carried out at Cefn y Gaer, Trefecca during the cutting of foundation trenches for a new garage. The development is some 25m to the south of the scheduled ancient monument Cefn Barn Ringwork, a small Medieval castle ringwork.

All four foundation trenches were cut into solid Old Red Sandstone bedrock and no archaeological features or deposits were recorded.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has granted planning permission (16/14050/FUL) for a new garage at Cefn y Gaer, Trefecca, Powys
- 1.2 The development lies only some 25m to the south of the scheduled ancient monument, known as Cefn Barn Ringwork (BR088, NPRN306053, CPAT HER PRN 540) (figure 1). This is probably a small Norman castle ringwork enclosure, and a condition of the consent was that there should be an archaeological watching brief during any ground works associated with the development.
- 1.3 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was submitted to the planning authority in January 2017 setting out how the work would be carried out, the standards of excavation, recording and reporting, staff specifications and qualifications. It was written following the *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* 2014. The WSI was approved by Alice Thorne, BBNPA Heritage Officer (Archaeology) in early February.
- 1.4 The purpose of the watching brief was that set out in the above CIfA guidance.
 - a. To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works
 - b. To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard
- 1.5 The watching brief was carried out on the 14th of June 2017. The weather was clear, sunny and warm.

2. Location and Geology

- 2.1 The development site is 2.5km south-south-west of Talgarth in Powys and just to the south-east of Cefn y Gaer, Trefecca, Brecon, Powys LD3 0PR. NGR OS 1446 3132 (figures 1 and 2). Located on the 220m contour on one of the lower foothills of the north-western corner of the Black Mountains it looks south-west over the Llynfi Valley to the Brecon Beacons beyond.
- 2.2 The solid geology of the area is Devonian Old Red Sandstone of the St Maughans Formation. This supports loamy clay soils whose exact character depends on drift deposits and agricultural history. It was understood prior to the watching brief that bedrock on the site is very close to the surface, outcropping in places.

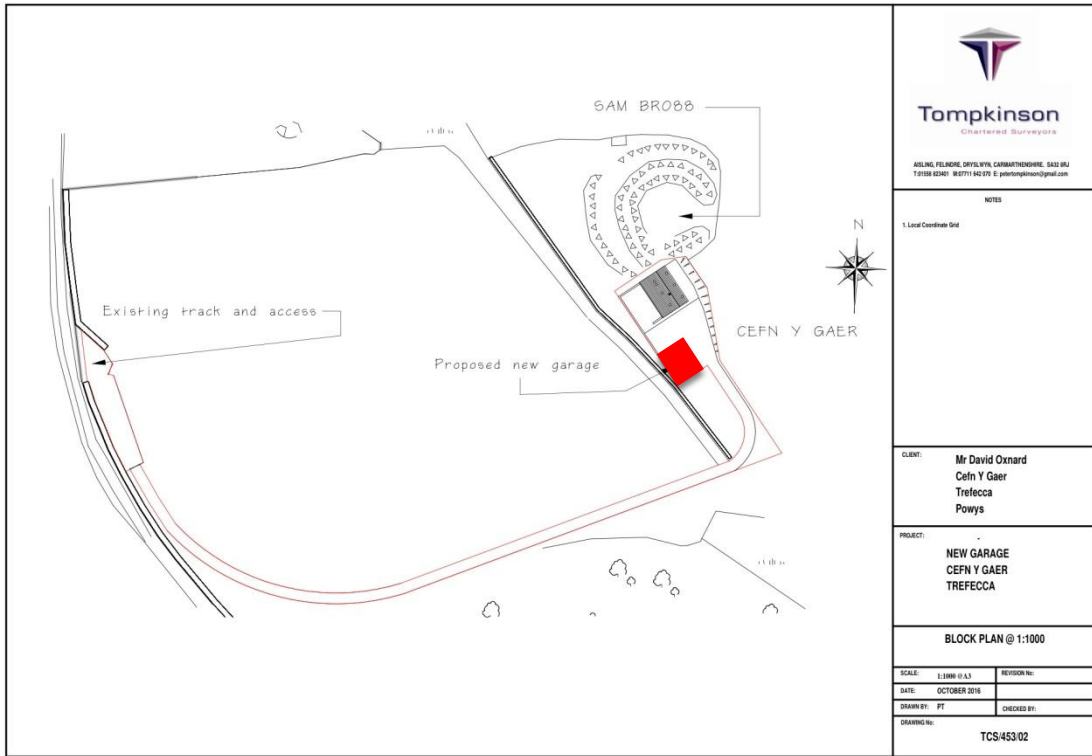


Figure 1: Location of the development in relation to Cefn Barn ringwork

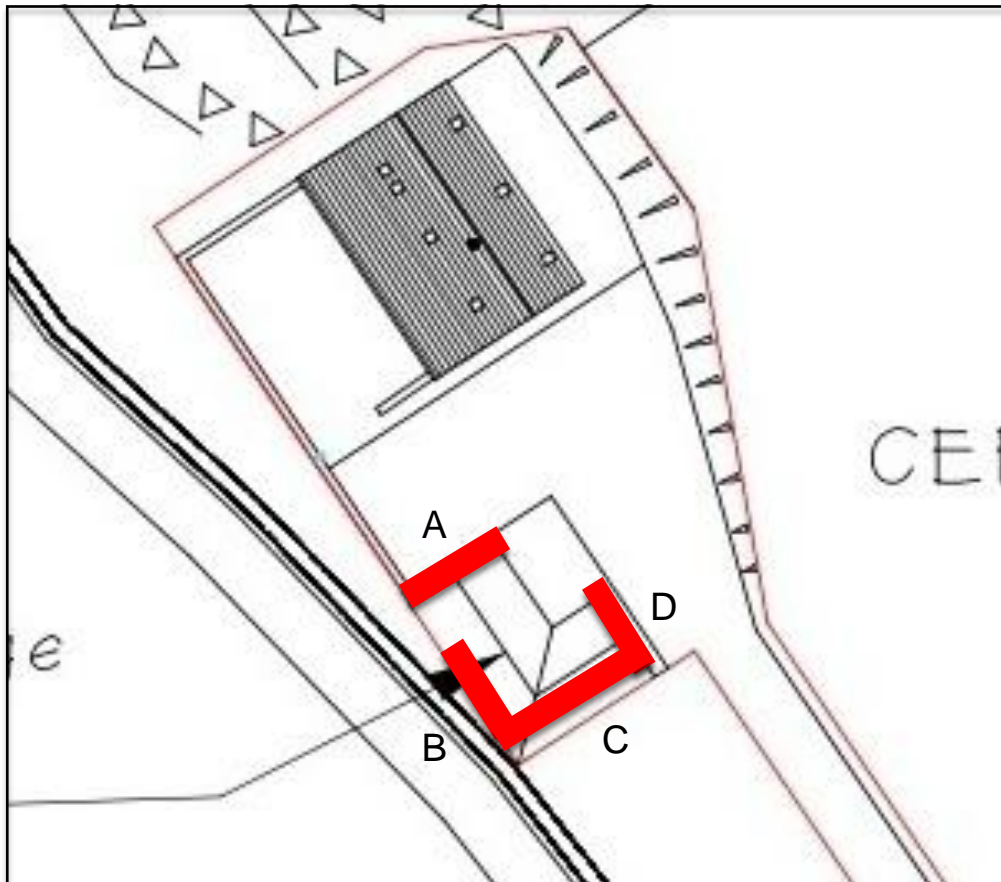


Figure 2: Location of foundation trenches A – D

3. Description of Cefn Barn Ringwork (BR088)

- 3.1 The monument comprises the remains of a well preserved castle-ringwork, which dates to the early part of the medieval period (c. AD 1066 - 1485). The ringwork is roughly circular in plan, measuring 27m north/south and 23m east/west with a discontinuous bank and ditch defining the outer edge of the enclosure. The interior is flat. The bank is steep sided, a maximum of 1m high on the inside and 2.2m high on the outside, and surrounded by a shallow ditch, 0.3m to 0.5m deep. The ditch is intermittent and does not survive on the south or east sides. There is a gap in the bank on the east side which may be the original entrance. At the west end of the site is a stone outcrop at the foot of the bank which is around 3m high. A hollow to the south of the outcrop may be the result of quarrying.
- 3.2 The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of medieval settlement, organisation and defence. The site forms an important element within the wider medieval landscape. It is well preserved and retains considerable archaeological potential. There is a strong probability of the presence of evidence relating to chronology, layout, building techniques and functional detail. The scheduled area comprises the remains described and areas around them within which related evidence may be expected to survive.

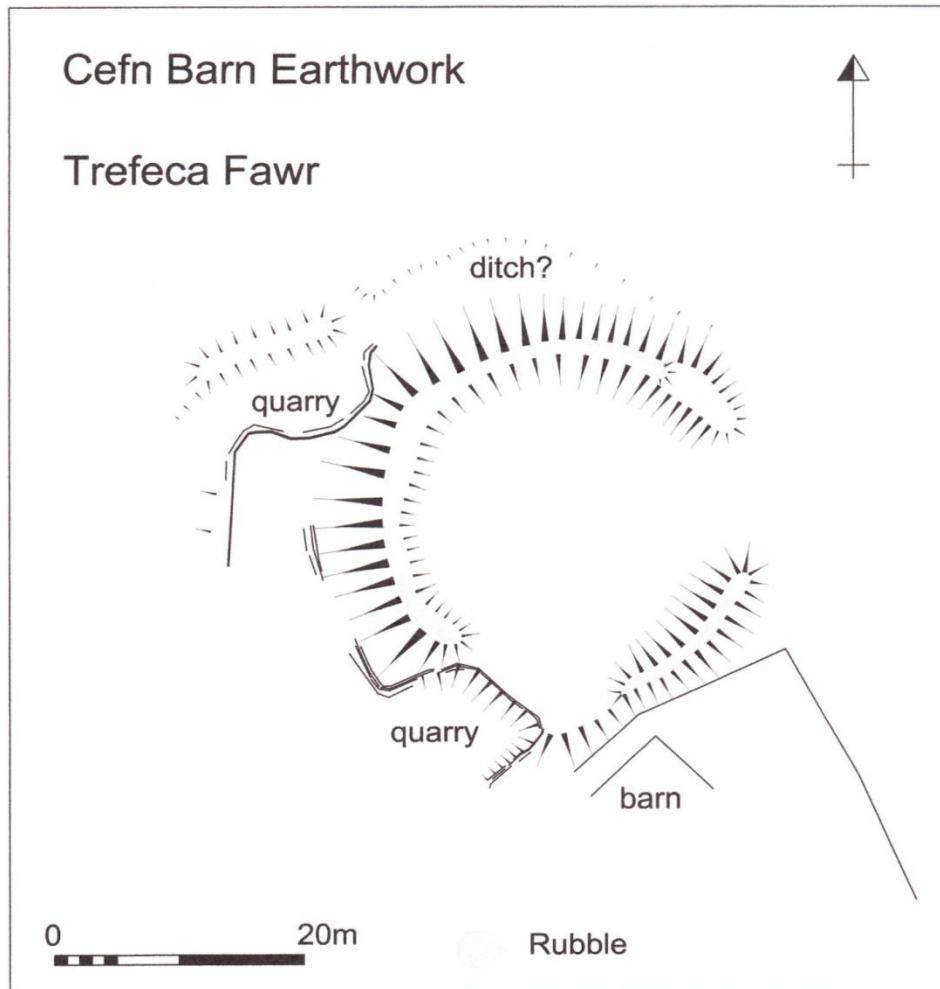


Figure 3: Recent survey drawing of the ringwork. © Will Davies, Cadw

4. Previous Archaeological work

- 4.1 There is no record of any excavation of the medieval ringwork, but the site was recently the subject of a detailed survey by Will Davies the Cadw Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments (figure 3).
- 4.2 A photographic record of the barn was made prior to its conversion to domestic use.

5. Watching brief results

- 5.1 Information obtained from the owner/developer prior to the current construction work indicated that the area had been subject to significant erosion during its use as an agricultural building and the passage of cattle across the area had exposed the Old Red Sandstone bedrock across the entire area to be occupied by the garage. As a consequence of this erosion and in order to facilitate easy vehicular access the area had been levelled by putting down a layer of scalplings. These were removed prior to the cutting of the foundation trenches and this removal was also observed as part of the watching brief (figure 4). The depth of the scalplings was between 0.20m and 0.30m.
- 5.2 The watching brief was maintained during all excavation of the foundation trenches for the construction of the new garage. This entailed four trenches in total (figure 2) all were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.90m wide toothed bucket. The dimensions of the trenches were as follows.
- A: north-west – 6.35mL x 0.90mW x 0.45mD
 - B: south-west – 6.00L x 0.90mW x 0.55mD
 - C: south-east – 10.35L x 0.90mW x 0.55mD
 - D: north-east – 5.60mL x 0.90mW x 0.50mD
- 5.3 At least one third of trench B had been excavated during the main barn conversion work for the foundation of the property boundary wall.
- 5.4 There were no superficial deposits surviving within the development area, all the trenches were excavated entirely through solid Sandstone bedrock and the interleaved crumbly red clay (figures 6 and 7). The bedrock split along the bedding planes laminating into pieces between 0.02m and 0.30m thick.
- 5.5 During the work it was noted that a number of service trenches had already been cut across the area during the work on the barn conversion. These included a sewage pipe trench running north-west to south-east across the entire area and a water pipe trench entering from the north-east and running south-west across the area.
- 5.6 In conclusion it is reported that there were no archaeological features or deposits observed during the watching brief.



Figure 4: Stripping of scalplings layer



Figure 5: Completion of excavation of the foundation trenches



Figure 6: Trench C during excavation showing the nature of the bedrock



Figure 7: Trench A on completion of excavation

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mike Oxnard for his hospitality and for assistance with facilitating the watching brief and to Elwyn Jones and his team for their assistance in carrying out the watching brief.

Archive

The archive for the project consists of –

A written scheme of investigation dated January 2017
One page of notes and one sketch drawing
23 digital images, held as jpgs, tiffs and Olympus RAW files
This report