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Non Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd (CAP) on behalf of RSKENSR Environment Ltd working for Transco. As part of Transco's ongoing pipeline repair and improvement programme, a section of plastic piping was to be inserted adjacent to an existing cast-iron pipeline in woodland to the south west of Castell Coch. This report represents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during ground disturbance works due to its close proximity to the Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Bronze Age hoard. During the course of the work, a single 6m x 2m trench was cut as a primary insertion point. No archaeological features were encountered and no stratigraphy was noted in the trench.

Introduction

Location and scope of work

In October 2004 Cambrian Archaeological Projects (CAP) carried out a detailed archaeological watching brief in woodland to the south of Castell Coch, Tongwynlais (Fig 1) on behalf of RSKENSR Environment Ltd.

The work involved digging one large trench to the south of the site and inserting a new, plastic, gas pipeline adjacent to an existing cast-iron pipe.

The main trench was situated at NGR ST 131 826 on a site overlooking the A470 main trunk road.

Geology and topography

The underlying geology is that of Pennant Limestone, there is a former, 19th century, limestone quarry adjacent to the site. The area contains a number of fault lines as it is sandwiched between the Old Red Sandstone of the Vale of Glamorgan and the South Wales Coalfield to the north and, as such, is considered significant by British geologists. The site is on a valley side, on the east of the River Taff and immediately below the ridge on which Castell Coch stands.

Archaeological and historical background

The site lies close to Castell Coch a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is also close to the site of a Bronze Age hoard (Needham, Lawson & Green, 1985).

While a certain amount of archaeological work has been carried out at the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Castell Coch located to the north east, the boundaries of which are adjacent to the proposed groundworks, no archaeological investigation has taken place within the area.

The history of the site is essentially mid nineteenth century industrial, with the earliest recorded activity in the immediate vicinity being quarrying associated with the Bute Estates, the owners of Castell Coch. The track, which slopes up the valley side giving access to the existing

pipeline, is an extension of a lane, constructed by the Bute Estate, to give access to quarry workers cottages. These cottages, known as Castell Coch cottages, were demolished in the mid-twentieth century although some remains can still be seen (See Figure 2; Plate 1)

Aims and Objectives

Watching Brief

To establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may be associated with the Scheduled Ancient Monument to the north east or with the industrial workings to the north west, and record such archaeological remains that are found.

Watching Brief Methodology

Scope of Fieldwork

The watching brief consisted of an archaeological fieldworker to be present during the machine-excavation of all trenches where the work is likely to expose archaeologically sensitive deposits. The machining will be carried out under the direct supervision of the archaeologist, who was present during all ground disturbance works.

Site director Mike Anthony undertook the watching brief. All trenches were photographed using colour print, and digital photography.

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation* (1999) and current Health and Safety legislation.

Watching Brief Results

Soils and ground conditions

While weather conditions during the actual watching brief were good, heavy rain on previous days meant that the soil was heavy and wet. The topsoil comprised of dark brownish loam while the underlying soil was a consistent heavy, red brown clay.

Distribution of deposits

The top and subsoil's were consistently present throughout the excavated areas. No trench was deep enough to note the underlying geology.

Descriptions

The excavation trench was 6m x 2m in plan and some 1m deep. Below the turf layer, the soil was a consistent red brown clay. The southern part of the trench had clearly been the subject of ground disturbance associated with previous Gas Pipeline construction activity, but the northern portion of the trench was undisturbed ground. There was no discernable stratigraphy, no archaeological features and no finds were recovered.

Palaeo-environmental evidence

No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were located during the evaluation.

Finds

No artefacts were recovered from the site.

Discussion and Interpretation

Reliability of field investigation

Following a conversation with local historian Steve Gray, the absence of archaeological evidence is consistent with the known history of this part of the site.

Overall interpretation

The watching brief revealed no archaeological features, despite its close proximity to a known medieval site. The best interpretation would appear to be that the ground has been naturally built up by slope-wash from the ridge above and subsequently artificially levelled, for at least some of its length, to make an access track.

Significance

The watching brief revealed no significant archaeology at the extreme south of the site, nearest the village of Tongwynlais but did highlight a need to record the extant remains of the nineteenth century quarry workers cottages. While outside the remit of this particular watching brief the cottages are an important part of the area's industrial heritage and are being eroded at an alarming rate.

Acknowledgements

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Needham S. P., Lawson, A. J, & Green, H. S. 1985. *Early Bronze Age Hoards*, London.



Figure 1: Location plan of Castell Coch with watching brief trench location shown

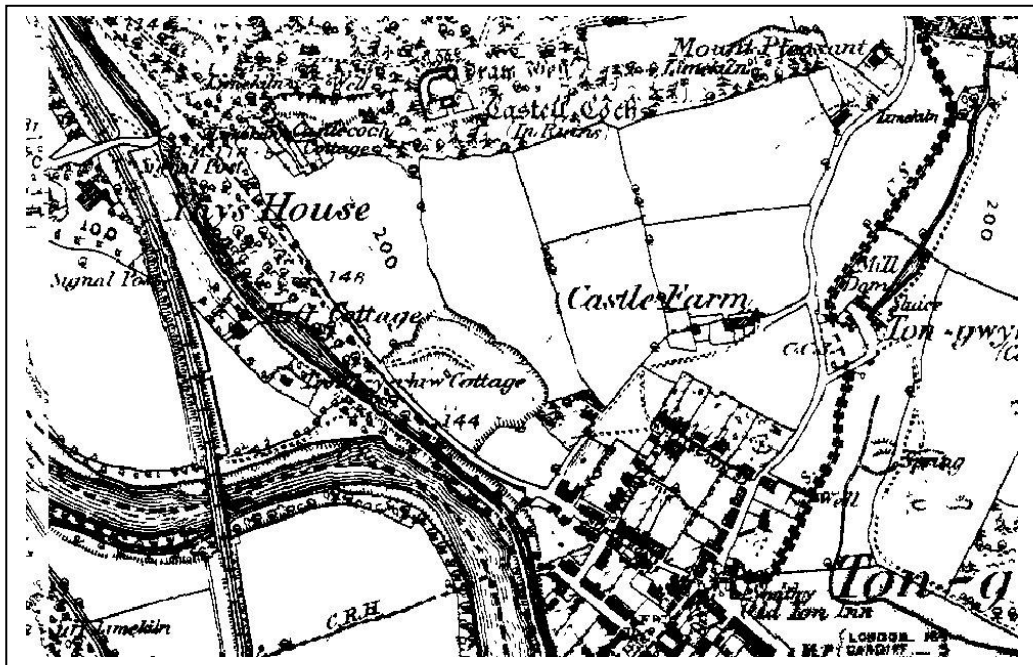


Figure 2: Detail of 1885-86 Ordnance Survey map showing Castell Coch and the cottages below it



Plate 1: Showing the remains of Castell Coch Cottages



Plate 2: Section view, West wall of main trench. Note the uniformity of the topsoil and underlying clay. The ground is entirely natural and undisturbed.