

CPAT Report No.1379

6-8 Beacons Hill, Denbigh



Archaeological Watching Brief



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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 with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

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Summary

The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust conducted an archaeological watching brief during the initial groundworks associated with the construction of two new dwellings with access on land between 6-8 Beacons Hill, Denbigh, Denbighshire (SJ 0527 6632). Full planning permission (01/2011/0665) had been granted for the development with the inclusion of a condition for the watching brief.

Historic Ordnance Survey mapping indicated that the development site had been a walled garden during the nineteenth century. It is very likely that the existing western and northern retaining walls are those walls depicted on the historic mapping. However, the southern wall had long been demolished whilst the north-east/south-west return wall had been replaced by a modern wall on concrete slab footings. This wall retained modern, imported deposits in the upper, north-eastern area of the site.

Ground reductions in the north-western corner of the site revealed the remains of a late post-medieval dry-stone wall which was not depicted on the historic mapping. It was not possible to determine the function of the wall.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust were invited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of two new dwellings with access on land between 6-8 Beacons Hill, Denbigh, Denbighshire (SJ 0527 6632). Full planning permission (01/2011/0665) had been granted for the development with the inclusion of the following condition:

“No development works of any kind shall begin until the presence of a contracted archaeologist has been secured on-site according to the prescriptions set out in a curatorial design brief and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Access, at any reasonable time, shall be given to this archaeologist to enable the observations and recording of any archaeological remains uncovered during the early stages of development. A report of any archaeological records made must be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, 41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR (01938-553670) within one month of the completion of this work with a summary of records sent to the Local Planning Authority at the same time”.

- 1.2. The development consisted of the construction of two detached dwellings along the street frontage, with terraced gardens and tarmacked car parking spaces at the rear of the plot.
- 1.3. The development site lies within the historic core of the town and it was therefore considered possible that buried archaeological remains may have been present within the area.

2 Topography and Geology

- 2.1. The development site is located on the eastern street frontage of Beacons Hill in the north-eastern corner of Denbigh town (Fig. 1). The site itself is located on a north-east/south-west slope. Prior to development, the site was terraced with rough ground enclosed by a limestone wall in the north-western corner. Further up slope to the rear of the plot there were concrete and tarmacked surfaces and a modern garage (Photo 1).
- 2.2. The underlying solid geology comprises Carboniferous Limestone (Dyserth Group) dipping southeast-northwest which in turn are overlain by sandy boulder clays.



Contains Ordnance Survey data © 2015

Fig. 1. Location map showing the development plot as highlighted in red.



Photo 1. The development plot prior to ground reductions showing the area of rough ground retained by the limestone wall and the modern garage up slope towards the rear of the plot. CPAT Photo 4078-0004

3 Historical Background

- 3.1. The earliest cartographical evidence consulted is the 1840 tithe map of Denbigh town. Although lacking specific detail, it is possible to identify the development area along the eastern side of Beacons Hill, although this is annotated on the map as “Pembrokes Hill”. The nineteenth-century chapel is also cited and it is possible to locate the development plot immediately north of this as an area of garden fronted by dwellings (Fig. 2).

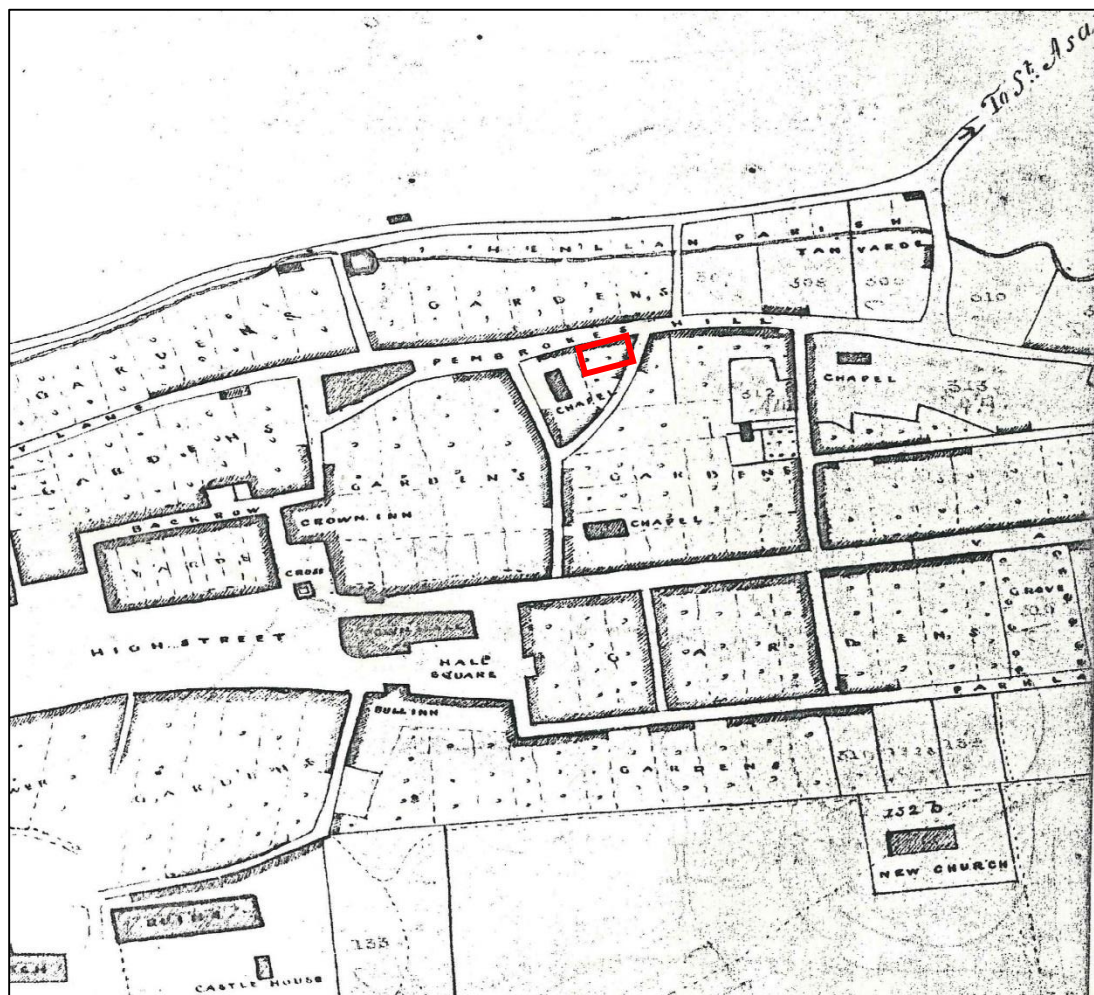


Fig.2 The tithe map of 1840. The red rectangle indicates the location of the development plot.

- 3.2. Sometime after the tithe mapping the street name of “Pembrokes Hill” is replaced with the current street name of “Beacons Hill”. The 1st edition, 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1875 shows the development area as devoid of dwellings and occupied by a large walled garden parallel to the street front, along with open areas delimited by garden paths to the rear of the plot (Fig. 3). The 2nd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1899 although less detailed, also shows this area as plot devoid of buildings but divided into garden plots (Fig. 4).

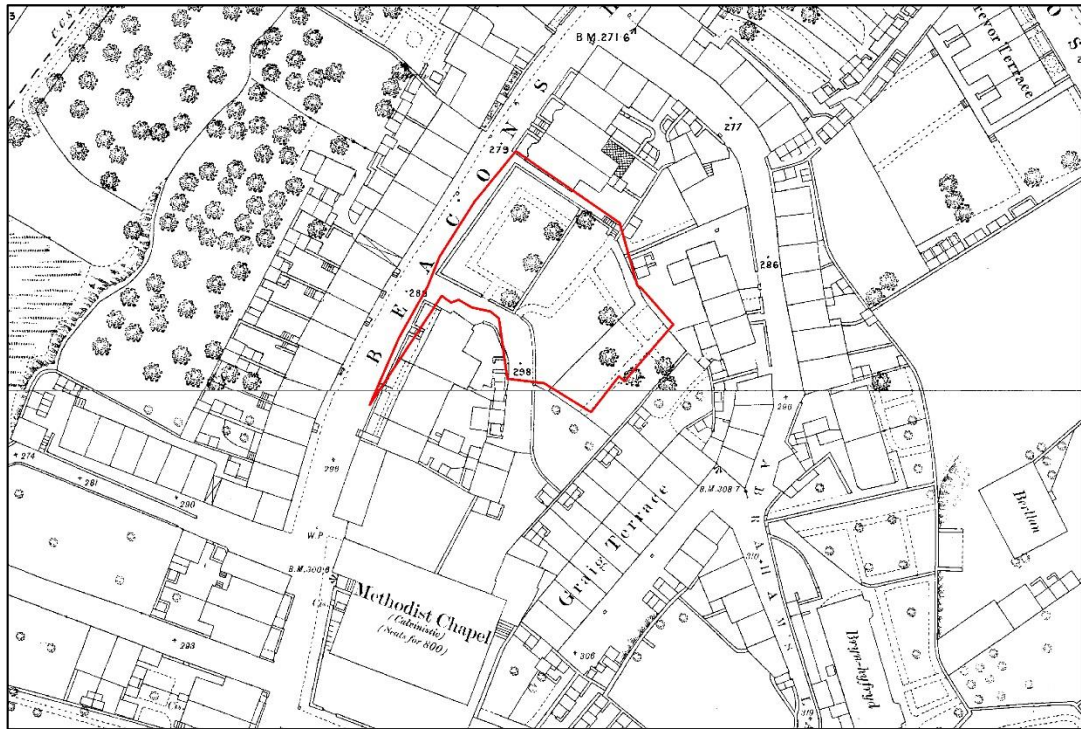


Fig. 3. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 showing the development plot (as outlined in red) as a walled garden.



Fig. 4. The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899 showing the development plot (as outlined in red) as an area devoid of dwellings.

4 Watching Brief

- 4.1. This watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 4.2. The watching brief was conducted intermittently between and the 23rd of September and 26th of October 2015 with the timing determined by the contractor's programme of work. In all, three visits were made to the site. The initial site works consisted of the excavation of four test pits within the footprint of the new buildings, in an area of rough ground in the lower north-western area of the site. This phase of work was followed by ground reductions of around two thirds of the plot.
- 4.3. Consultation of the historic mapping indicated that the existing limestone wall enclosing the lower, north western area of the site, corresponded with the position of the walled garden represented on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (Fig. 3). Where accessible, this wall was inspected during the watching brief.
- 4.4. It is very likely that the western elevation of this wall is part of the original walled garden or at least has, 19th century or possibly earlier origins. It is lime mortared and heavily weathered (Photo 2). It was not possible to access the northern wall but given its position as both a boundary and retaining wall it is almost certainly the wall represented on the historic mapping. The southern return wall had been demolished prior to the development. The eastern elevation was extant but on closer inspection it was found to be a modern wall on concrete slab footings.



Photo 2. The western limestone wall, most likely to be part of the walled garden as depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. CPAT Photo 4078-0011

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- 4.5. The test pits characterised the nature and depth of the deposits in each corner of the walled area of the rough ground, revealing a sequence of deposits comprising modern and post-medieval gardens soils overlying (with one exception) sandy boulder clays containing limestone rubble. Each test pit encountered the dipping limestone bedrock underlying the boulder clay. The test pits demonstrated that the depths of deposits were greatest at the northern end of the site with bedrock shallowest at the south-eastern area.
- 4.6. Test pit 2 demonstrated a variation in this sequence and was located in the north-western corner of the walled rough ground. Here, the depth of the cultivation soil was greater and a thin layer of lime mortar was encountered approximately 1.6m below the ground level. This appeared to be overlying a layer of limestone rubble which in turn was overlying the limestone bedrock which was reached at around 2.1m below ground level.

Ground reductions

- 4.7. The modern overburden was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, down to the surface of the undisturbed natural subsoil or the first recognisable archaeological horizon. A written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout this watching brief, a summary of which is presented in Appendix 1. All contexts encountered during this watching brief were recorded and assigned a unique context number. These numbers are enclosed in brackets in the following text. Elevation levels were taken relative to an on-site datum, in this instance the top of a step to the rear of the neighbouring property No.6 on Beacons Hill.
- 4.8. Ground reductions began within the bounds of the existing limestone wall. With the exception of the small area sampled by Test pit 2, up to 0.6m of a rich, dark grey/black silt garden soil was removed (01). This was underlain by an earlier light grey charcoal rich silt (02), between 0.3m and 0.4m thick and which contained frequent pieces of animal bone and 18th/19th-century pottery. The natural subsoil was revealed to be a mottled, bright orange sandy boulder clay with limestone rubble and large boulders (17) (Photo 3). This was reached at a depth of around 0.8m below ground level in the northern area end and 0.55m at the southern end of the site.



Photo 3. Ground reductions in the south-western area of the site revealed large limestone boulders in the sandy boulder clay subsoil. CPAT Photo 4078-0044

- 4.9. The area sampled by Test pit 2 was subject to further investigation. An area measuring approximately 11. 2m² was excavated in the north-western corner (Fig. 5). Here, the cultivation soils were removed to reveal a dark silt filled linear, orientated north-south and measuring over 2.2m long and 0.2m wide, (15) cut into the orange subsoil (17) and butted by the light grey, charcoal rich garden soil (02) along its western side. It is likely that this linear represents a robbed wall trench or some kind of partition. A rubble filled pit (20) with Victorian pottery was cut into the garden soil (02).

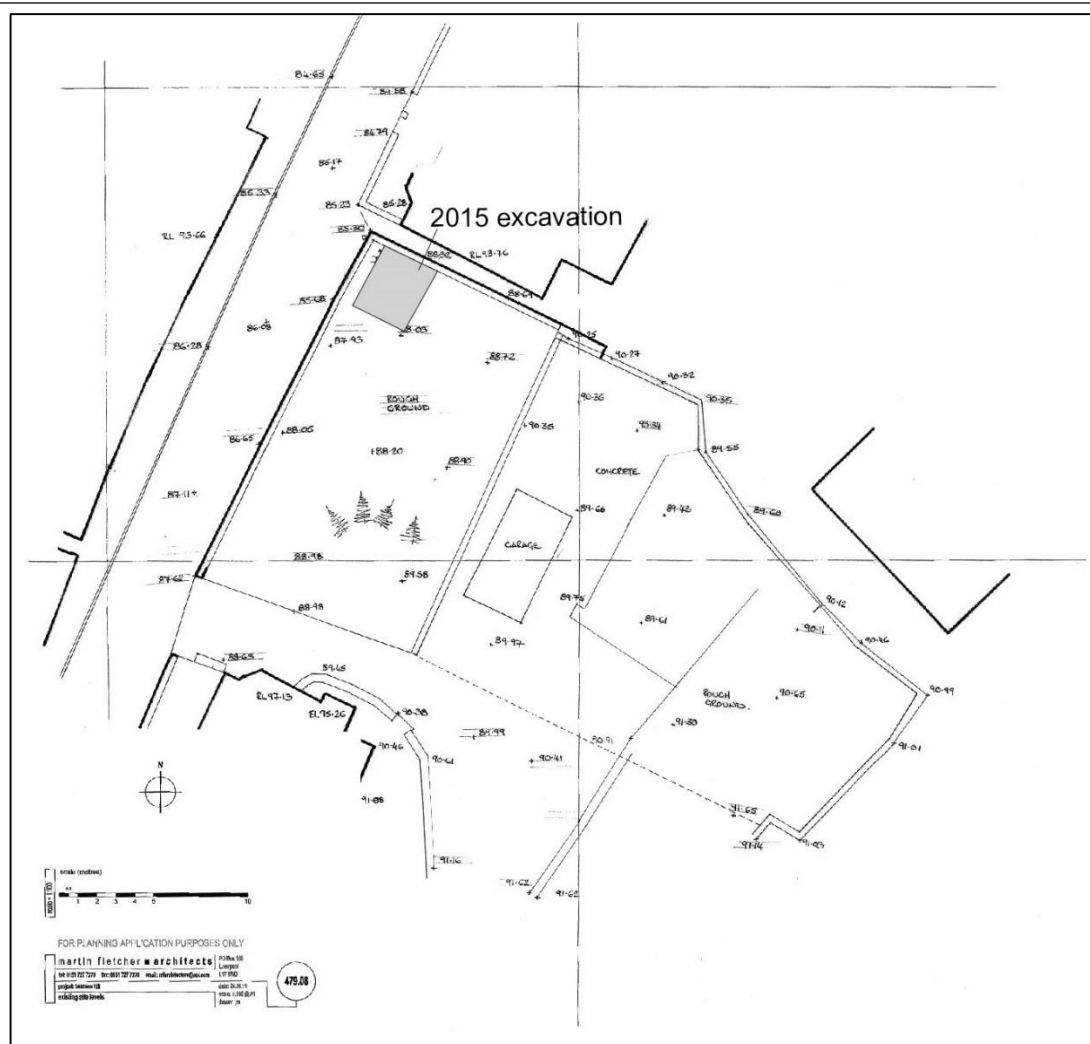


Fig. 5. Site location prior to development showing the location of the area of archaeological investigations in the north-west corner of the plot (based on a plan by Credit Martin Fletcher Architects)

- 4.10. The light grey cultivation layer (02) was mechanically removed down to a depth of 1.5m where the surface of a dry stone limestone wall was encountered (Photo 4). Thereafter the excavation was conducted by hand. The wall (07) was orientated north-east/south-west, measured 1.4m long and 0.45m wide, and continued into the northern section of the trench (Photo 5). The wall was situated within a rubble-filled (08) foundation trench (06) which was had been cut into the natural subsoil (17) and appeared to turn east-west towards the western section. The rubble fill (08) consisted of angular limestone rubble with frequent pieces of animal bone, eighteenth/nineteenth-century pottery including porcelain, bottle glass and clay pipe. A small exploratory slot against the face of the wall revealed that the wall was built on top of the limestone bedrock (18) and the late, post-medieval artefacts were consistent down to this level (Photo 6).



Photo 4. The dry-stone wall (07) beneath the garden soils. Note also the cut of linear (15) to the right of the wall. CPAT Photo 4078-0028



Photo 5. Plan view of the dry limestone wall (07), the wall trench cut (06) into the orange subsoil and the rubble fill (08). CPAT Photo 4078-0032



Photo 6. The exploratory slot through the rubble fill (08) against the face of the limestone wall (07). CPAT Photo 4078-0050

- 4.11. It appears that Test pit 2 had truncated a rubble filled void between wall (07) and the remains of a possible wall (09), truncating the wall trench cut (06) and revealing the east-west dipping limestone bedrock (18) in the process (Photo 7 and Fig. 6). The possible wall (09) comprised of two large limestone blocks, orientated north-east/south-west and was set into the natural subsoil (17). These blocks were butted by loose rubble fill (10), very similar to (08). Immediately south-west of this possible wall (09) and rubble (10) were two cut features (11) and (13) with late post-medieval fills (12) and (14) containing pieces of clay pipe and pottery. These were cut into the natural subsoil (17).



Photo 7. Overview of the limestone wall (07) and associated features showing the location of Test pit 2 truncating the rubble fill, revealing bedrock. CPAT Photo 4078-0041

- 4.12. Overlying these features were sealed beneath a layer of lime mortar (05) which had been truncated by Test pit 2. The layer (05) was up to 80mm thick and followed the topography of the hill, dipping east-west and dissipated around 2.7m away from the northern section of the trench where it overlaid the natural subsoil (17).
- 4.13. The lime layer (05) was overlain by a dark grey silt (04,) up to 0.2m thick, which contained late post-medieval pottery and overlay the natural subsoil (17) at the south-western end of the trench. Overlying this layer was a 0.3m-thick layer of limestone gravel (03) which contained frequent sherds of 18th/19th-century pottery and animal bone. This too butted the face of the wall (07) and further ground reductions towards the south-western corner of the trench revealed that this layer extend into this area, up to 3.3m in width and seemingly in line with the limestone wall (07). This deposit was itself overlain by the light grey cultivation layer (02) seen elsewhere across the site.
- 4.14. Ground reductions elsewhere on the site were limited to within the foot print of the demolished garage, and crucially beyond the modern north-east/south-west retaining wall. Here ground reductions revealed modern deposits overlying the boulder clays (17) (Photo 8).



Photo 8. Ground reductions in the eastern area of the site, beyond the (demolished) modern wall. Note the depths of modern deposits on the left side of the picture, at the north-eastern area of the site. CPAT Photo 4078-0045

5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The depth of late post-medieval garden soils encountered within the lower, walled area of the site attest to what is depicted on the historic mapping. The existing mortared limestone wall to the front of the plot and the northern boundary wall are almost certainly the retaining garden walls depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.
- 5.2. The dry-stone wall (07) and associated features in the north-west corner were not depicted by the Ordnance Survey and clearly predate the later 19th-century mapping. However, the artefacts associated with these features indicate that they are at the very earliest 18th-century in origin. Although truncated by the test pit, the features do not suggest any structural significance. The localised character of these features and deposits along with the silt filled linear (15), indicate some previous activity of partitioning or terracing within the garden and the dry-stone wall (07) may have functioned as a retaining wall. Material was later deposited in attempt to level this area prior to the importation of cultivation soils some time during the late 18th or early 19th century.
- 5.3. The north-east/south-west retaining wall depicted on the historic mapping and been replaced by a modern wall with concrete slab footings cut into the natural subsoil (17). Sometime thereafter a large amount of material had been imported to level the site, with the greatest depth of material at the north-eastern area of the site.

6 Sources

1973. British Geological Survey, Geological Survey of England and Wales 1:63,360/1:50,000 geological map series, New Series; Denbigh, Drift. Sheet number 107.

Cartographic sources

1840 Tithe survey (apportionment and map) for Denbigh

1875 Ordnance Survey 1:500 1st edition: Denbigh

1899 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 2nd edition: Denbigh

7 Archive deposition Statement

- 7.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the ClfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record, maintained by CPAT in Welshpool. A summary of the archive is provided in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Site Archive

Watching Brief forms x4

Trench Recording form x1

Photographic Register x 1 (two sheets)

Level record form x1

A3 plan x1 @ 1:20

52 Digital Photographs: CPAT Film Number 4078

Context Register

Context	Type	Description
01	Layer	Modern topsoil
02	Layer	Fairly compact, medium grey silt, charcoal and coal rich with frequent animal bone and late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery
03	Layer	Loose, small limestone gravel and late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery
04	Layer	Fairly compact, dark grey silt with late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery
05	Layer/surface	Friable, concreted lime mortar with coarse aggregates
06	Cut	Wall trench cut of wall (07)
07	Structure	Dry limestone wall
08	Fill	Loose limestone rubble in a dark silt matrix with frequent late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery and animal bone
09	Structure	Possible dry limestone wall
10	Fill	Loose limestone rubble in a dark silt matrix with frequent late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery and animal bone: same as (08)?
11	Cut	Irregular, rectangular cut filled by (12)
12	Fill	Compact, light brown, charcoal rich silt, containing clay pipe and late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery. Fill of (11)

13	Cut	Possible linear cut, filled by (14)
14	Fill	Compact, light brown, charcoal rich silt containing late post-medieval (18th/19th century) pottery. Fill of (13)
15	Cut	Cut of silt filled linear. Filled by (16)
16	Fill	Loose, dark grey/black silt. Fill if (16)
17	Layer	Bright orange, mottled sandy boulder clay subsoil
18	Layer	Limestone bedrock
19	Cut	Test pit 2 cut
20	Cut	Cut of Victorian pit in (02). Filled by (21)
21	Fill	Loose limestone rubble and 19th century pottery fill of pit (20)

Appendix 2: CPAT WSI 1501

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been invited to submit a proposal for undertaking a watching brief during the construction of two new dwellings with access on land between 6-8 Beacons Hill, Denbigh, Denbighshire. Full planning permission (01/2011/0665) has been granted for the development with the inclusion of the following condition:

“No development works of any kind shall begin until the presence of a contracted archaeologist has been secured on-site according to the prescriptions set out in a curatorial design brief and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Access, at any reasonable time, shall be given to this archaeologist to enable the observations and recording of any archaeological remains uncovered during the early stages of development. A report of any archaeological records made must be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, 41 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7RR (01938-553670) within one month of the completion of this work with a summary of records sent to the Local Planning Authority at the same time.”

1.2 A contracted archaeological watching brief is designed to allow a professional archaeologist, who has been contracted by the applicant, to observe and make records of any archaeological deposits revealed during the initial stages of development. Normally, the archaeologist will only need to be present during initial topsoil and subsoil removal within the development plot, or any immediately adjacent area, and during the cutting any new foundation trenches and access routes. Service trenches are often too narrow for viewing and recording features although insertion of septic tanks would require monitoring. The archaeologist should be given access and sufficient time to view, record and excavate any soil profiles, finds and features revealed in trenches or topsoiled areas.

1.3 The development plot lies within the historic core of the town and it is therefore considered possible that buried archaeological remains may be present within the area.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The watching brief will monitor any groundworks associated with the construction of the new garage.

2.2 The watching brief will be conducted according to the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (2008). Should any archaeological deposits be encountered work will cease to allow adequate archaeological excavation and recording. The excavation of any archaeological features or deposits will be undertaken by hand using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation:

- The presence or absence of archaeological features encountered during the ground works will be noted.
- Where features of archaeological interest are identified during the ground works they will be systematically investigated by hand with sufficient work being undertaken to determine their date, character and function, using the conventional techniques for archaeological excavation and in accordance with IfA Standard and Guidance.

-
- All features will be located as accurately as possible on an overall plan of the development at an appropriate scale, showing boundaries depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping.
 - Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms, using a continuous numbering system, and be drawn and photographed as appropriate.
 - Plans will be drawn on permatrace to a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50, as appropriate.
 - All photography will be taken using a digital SLR camera with a minimum resolution of 8 mega pixels, including a metric scale in each view, with views logged in a photographic register.
 - In the event of human burials being discovered the Ministry of Justice will be informed. The remains will initially be left in situ, and if removal is required, an MoJ licences will be applied for under the Burial Act 1857.
 - In the event of finding any artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasures Act 1996, the appropriate procedures under this legislation will be followed.

2.3 All artefacts and environmental samples will be treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and a sampling strategy will be developed as appropriate:

- All stratified finds will be collected by context, or where appropriate, individually recorded in three dimensions. Unstratified finds will only be collected where they contribute significantly to the project objectives or are of particular intrinsic interest.
- All finds and samples will be collected, processed, sorted, quantified, recorded, labelled, packed, stored, marked, assessed, analysed and conserved in a manner appropriate to their composition and in line with appropriate guidance.
- arrangements to assess and study any artefacts, assemblages and environment samples.
- Any artefacts recovered during the evaluation will be deposited with an appropriate museum, subject to the permission of the owner.

2.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared containing sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Archaeological Background; Evaluation; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

2.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications in English Heritage's Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) system and the IfA Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives (2008), to be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record (HER).

3 RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMING

3.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist under the overall supervision of Dr R J Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). CPAT is also an IfA Registered Organisation (RAO No 6) and as such agrees to abide by their Code of Conduct (2010) and the Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology (2008).

3.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the site work. Copies of the report will be provided to Cadw, the client and the regional Historic Environment Record.

3.3 The client should be aware that in the event that significant archaeological remains are revealed there may be a requirement for more detailed excavation and specialist services, such as radiocarbon dating and finds conservation. Any detailed excavation, post-excavation and publication would be the subject of a separate WSI and costing.

3.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.

3.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

N W Jones

12 November 2014