

***A Watching Brief at
Rhyn Park,
St Martins, Shropshire, 2010***

by
H R Hannaford



Archaeology Service
Community Services Directorate, Shropshire Council



Shropshire
Council

**A WATCHING BRIEF AT
RHYN PARK, ST MARTINS,
SHROPSHIRE, 2010**

by
H R HANNAFORD MIFA

A Report for the
Outdoor Recreation Service,
Community Services,
Shropshire Council

Archaeology Service Report Number 288
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January 2011

Archaeology Service
Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, SY1 2AQ
Tel: 01743 255353 Fax: 01743 255355
Email: archaeology@shropshire.gov.uk
Website: www.shropshire.gov.uk/archaeology.nsf

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SUMMARY

In October 2010 three stiles were replaced on footpaths which crossed the Roman military site at Rhyn Park, St Martins, Shropshire (HER 00645). Scheduled Ancient Monument consent granted by English Heritage for the work required that the work was carried out under archaeological supervision. No archaeological features or deposits were seen during this watching brief.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rhyn Park is situated in northwest Shropshire, about 7km north of the centre of Oswestry. In the mid 1970s the remains of a multi-phase Roman military site were discovered through aerial photography (Shropshire Historic Environment Record [HER] No. 00645, Roman military site at Rhyn Park). The remains are thought to include those of a 1st century AD legionary fort believed to have been part of Agricola's campaign in Wales. The site is a scheduled Ancient Monument (Shropshire County No. 349, Roman military site at Rhyn Park).

1.2 The Roman military site comprises two temporary camps set in undulating land above the River Ceiriog. The larger cropmark, is a double ditched rectangular fort of c. 19ha area, with entrances and tutuli on the long sides, and additional ditches on the south. This fortress is thought to be a campaign base of legionary size for the Welsh Campaign of Agricola. The second fort of 5.8ha lies across the east side of the larger fort. (HER 00645). Excavations by G D B Jones in 1977 along the east side of the larger fort in the area of the entrance found evidence for at least three phases on the defences and a massive timber gateway with two carriageways. In the interior was further evidence for timber buildings, perhaps barrack blocks. Pottery finds indicated a mid 1st century date for the site. The smaller, later fort was also seen to have a complex history with at least two phases of defences and interior timber buildings. (Jones, 1977)

1.3 In March 1991 a watching brief was carried out on the laying of a sewage pipeline in the vicinity of the Roman Fort. The pipeline skirted round the south side of the fort and no archaeological features were observed. Throughout the length of the pipe trench there was a consistent ground make up of c 30cm of topsoil directly overlying natural orange-yellow clay.

1.4 In October 2010 three stiles were replaced by the Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Service on public rights of way within the scheduled area. In view of the potential archaeological significance of the work area, it was a requirement of the Scheduled Monument Consent for the proposed works that they were to be carried out under archaeological supervision. The Archaeology Service was commissioned to carry out this watching brief.

1.5 The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the works.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 The work scheduled at each of the three stiles was as follows:

- Site (A) – Replace stile with new stile in same location and replace Finger Post.
- Site (B) - Remove old stile, fill holes with sand and ram firm, install new stile kit c. 25m to east.
- Site (C) - Replace stile with new stile in same location.
- Tidy sites.

2.2 Site A SJ 3024 3686

The existing stile was removed. Two post holes for the new stile were excavated to a depth of 80cms x 30cms diameter. The natural subsoil consisting of a light yellowish brown silty sand with gravel (3) lay at a depth of 50cms beneath a dark brown sandy loam (2) 0.20cms thick and a topsoil of dark brown humic loam (1) 30cms thick. The topsoil produced a single pottery sherd from the handle of a brown-glazed 18th-century jug. Four smaller postholes 60cms deep x 25cms diameter were excavated for the stile step supports.

2.3 Site B SJ 3034 3697

The existing stile was removed, and the old post-holes filled with sand. The new stile was installed 25m to the east along the fenceline. Two post holes for the new stile were excavated to a depth of 80cms x 30cms diameter. The natural subsoil consisting of a light yellowish brown silty sand with gravel (6) lay at a depth of 50cms beneath a dark brown sandy loam (5) 0.20cms thick and a topsoil of dark brown humic loam (4) 30cms thick. Four smaller postholes 60cms deep x 25cms diameter were excavated for the stile step supports.

2.4 Site C SJ 3053 3720

The existing stile was removed. Two post holes for the new stile were excavated to a depth of 80cms x 30cms diameter. The natural subsoil consisting of a light yellowish brown silty sand with gravel (8) lay at a depth of 30cms beneath a dark brown sandy loam topsoil (7). Four smaller postholes 60cms deep x 25cms diameter were excavated for the stile step supports.

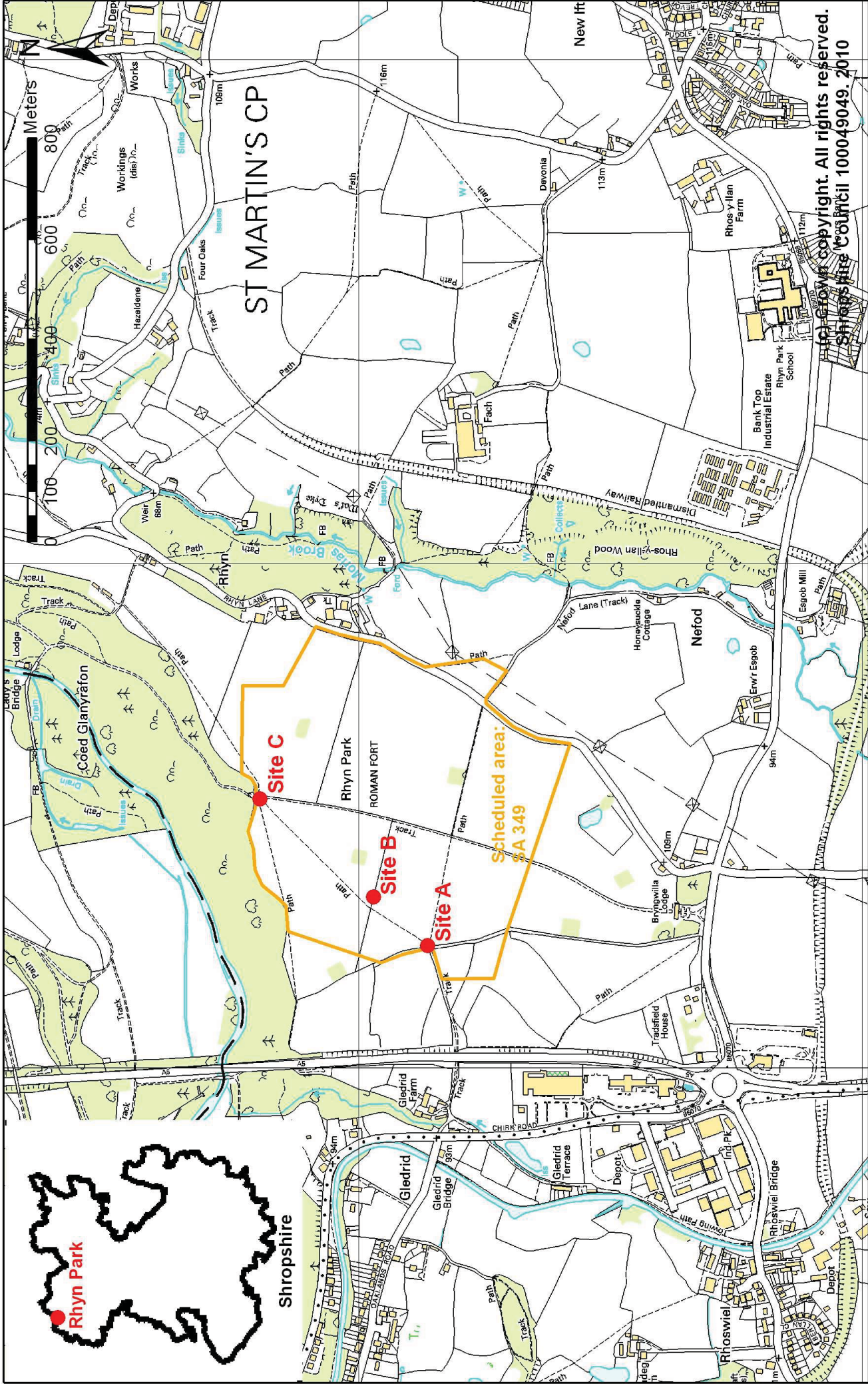
2.5 No other features or deposits of archaeological significance were recorded during the watching brief.

3 REFERENCES

- Jones G D B**, 1977: *Rhyn Park Roman Fortress: Excavations 1977*, Border Counties Archaeology Group
- Jones G D B**, 1977: *The Roman Campaign Base, Rhyn Park, Near Chirk*, West Midlands Archaeological News Sheet No 20, 1977, CBA Group 8, pp45-52
- Watson M D**, 1991: Rhyn Park - watching brief on sewage pipeline, Shropshire County Council internal report.

ABBREVIATIONS

CBA	Council for British Archaeology
HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society



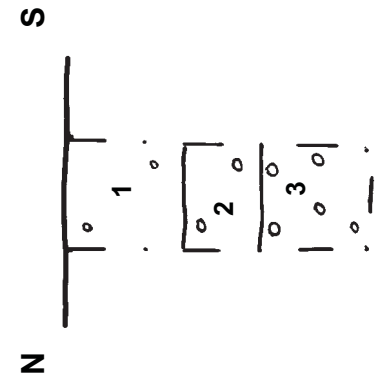
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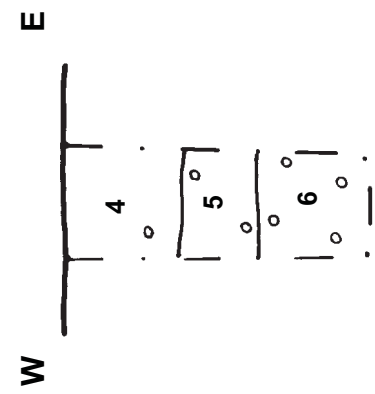
Figure 1: Location of the stiles (Sites A - C)

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 Scale: 1:10,000

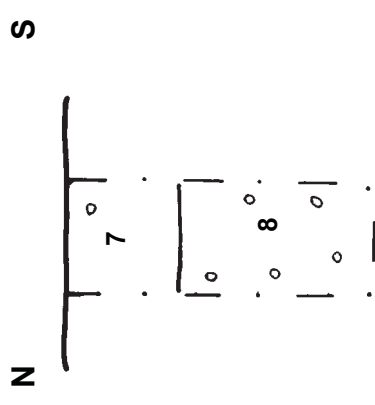




a



b



c



RHYN PARK, ST MARTINS, SHROPSHIRE 2010

Figure 2: Sections through postholes: a - stile A; b - stile B; c- stile C; scale 1:20

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Photo 1: Stile A – post holes under excavation



Photo 2: Stile B – new stile frame in place



Photo 3: Stile C – location of new stile