

A WATCHING BRIEF ON THE INSTALLATION OF NEW PATH FURNITURE ON
**OFFA'S DYKE PATH AT CRAIGNANT AND LITTLE BROMPTON,
SHROPSHIRE, 2016**

by
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A report for
Outdoor Recreation, Countryside Access
Shropshire Council

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In February and April 2016 improvements were made to footpath furniture on two sections of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail at Craignant, near Oswestry, and at Little Brompton, Near Chirbury, in Shropshire. The location of these works (see Figs. 1 & 2) lay within sections of the linear monument, Offa's Dyke which have been scheduled as an Ancient Monument as defined by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979:

NGR	Location	NHLE no.	Mon. name
SJ 2524 3532	Upper Craignant	1004765	Offa's Dyke: section two miles 780yds (3930m) long, from the stream W of Brook Cottage, Selattyn, to footpath crossing dyke W of Bron-y-Garth Also in Clwyd: Wales
SO 2474 9415	The Ditches farm, Little Brompton	1006257	Offa's Dyke: section two miles 780yds (3930m) long, from the stream W of Brook Cottage, Selattyn, to footpath crossing dyke W of Bron-y-Garth Also in Clwyd: Wales

1.2 In accordance with the Scheduled Monument consents for these works, an archaeological watching brief was maintained by the Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, on the excavation of post-holes for the new gates at each location. The excavations were all carried out by the Shropshire Council Outdoor Recreation Countryside Access team. The excavations were carried out with minimal disturbance to the ground.

1.3 The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to allow for the preservation by record of any archaeological remains that were encountered during the excavations for the new path furniture.

1.4 A schedule of work was prepared for the work on each of the sites and submitted to Historic England with the application for scheduled monument consent.

1.5 The Archaeology Service has previously carried out watching briefs on the installation of new path furniture at a number of locations along the Dyke.

2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1 Craignant SJ 2524 3532 NHLE1004765

2.1.1 Craignant lies 6km NW of Oswestry, Shropshire. The site at Craignant lay on a steep bank above the north side of the lane past Fairview cottage. In 2009 a fingerpost was replaced on the line of the dyke on the north side of the lane at Upper Craignant at SJ 2523 3531 (Hannaford, 2009). The 2016 footpath work here involved the removal of the old stile and its replacement with a new kissing gate at the top of the road verge on the tail of the Dyke bank.

2.1.2 Seven postholes for the new gate were excavated by hand; two postholes 0.9m deep and 0.4m x 0.3m in plan were excavated for corner and strainer posts on the hedgeline and five postholes between 0.7m and 0.9m deep by up to 0.4m x 0.3m in diameter were dug for the remaining gate posts and fence post.

2.1.3 A deposit of previously disturbed topsoil (1) up to 0.9m deep was seen in the full depths of the postholes on the hedgeline in the location of the old stile. Away from the old stile, a layer of topsoil (Fig. 3; 2) up to 0.55m thick sat over a dark brown sandy loam (3) with some stone fragments, which in turn lay over a brown sandy silt with fewer stone fragments (4), possibly the natural subsoil.

2.1.4 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

2.2 Little Brompton SO 2474 9415 NHLE 1006257

2.2.1 Little Brompton lies 5km SSW of Chirbury, Shropshire just off the A489 Churchstoke to Newtown road. The site at Little Brompton lay 200m to the north of The Ditches farm. The footpath work here involved the removal of an old stile and its replacement with a new kissing gate. The gate here was situated on the top of the bank portion of the Dyke, on an existing hedge and fence line.

2.2.2 Six postholes for the new gate were excavated by hand; two postholes 0.9m deep and 0.4m x 0.3m in plan were excavated for corner and strainer posts on the fenceline and four postholes c. 0.7m deep by 0.3m in diameter for the remaining posts.

2.2.3 The topsoil in all the post holes comprised a dark greyish brown humic loam (Fig. 3; 5). This lay over a deposit of greyish brown sandy silty loam (6) with some gravel that formed part of the surviving fabric of the bank element of the Dyke. In the southern three gatepost holes this deposit overlay a layer of light greyish brown silt (7) with a high proportion of pebbles and gravel; in the western most of these post holes (Photo 6; C) this appeared in turn to overlie a grey silty deposit (Fig. 3; 8) with some charcoal and flecks of burnt clay. This deposit lay at the very base of the posthole, and although a sample was taken its integrity could not be guaranteed, and so it was not processed for analysis. In the northern three gatepost holes the lower deposit comprised a greyish brown sandy silty loam (9) with some gravel and pebbles.

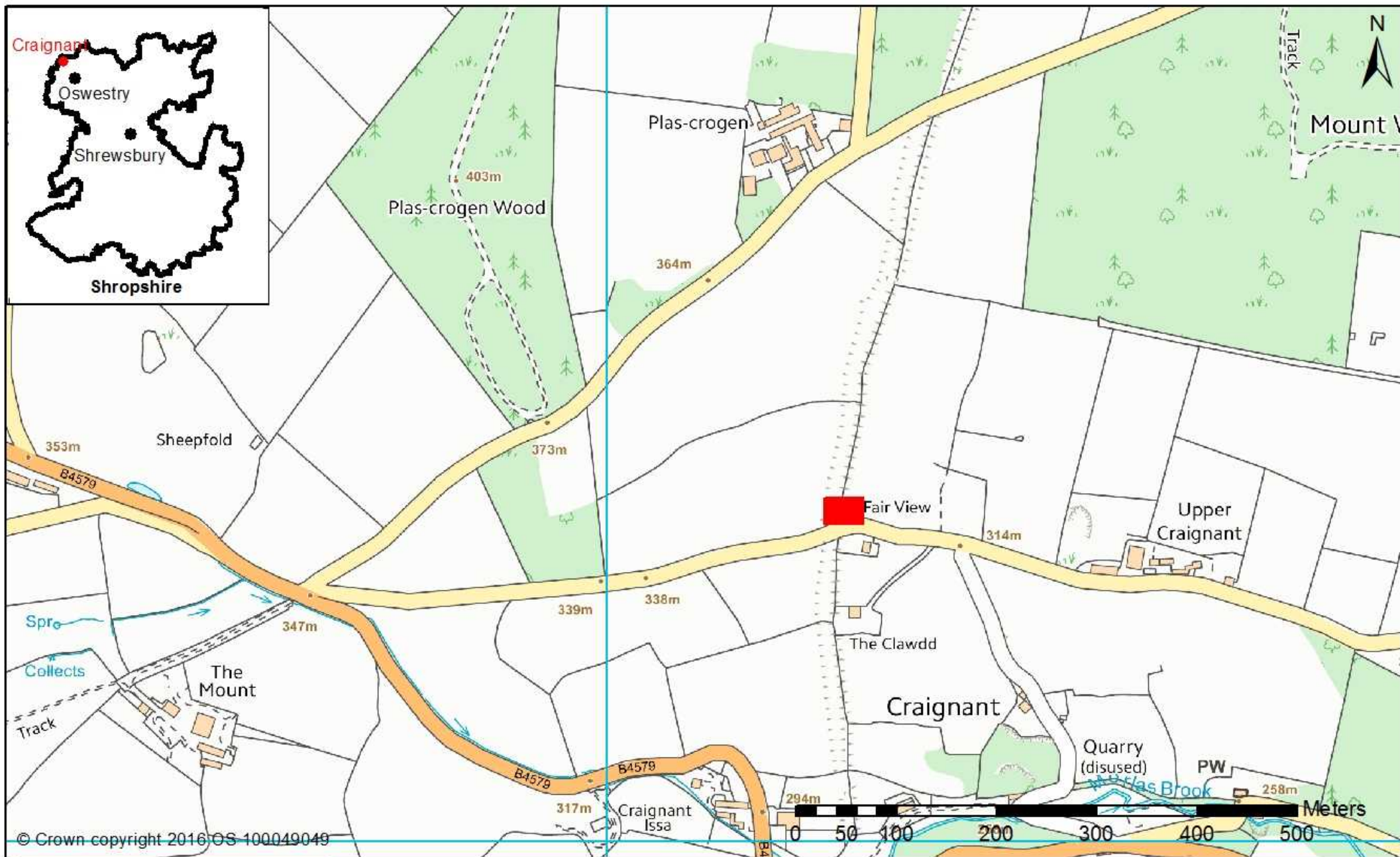
2.2.4 No other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

3 REFERENCES

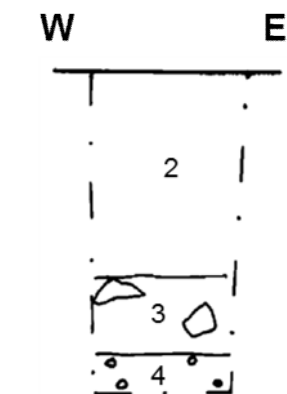
- Hannaford, H R**, 2009: *A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture along Offa's Dyke Path, Shropshire, 2009*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service Report No. 269
- Hannaford, H R**, 2012: *Offa's Dyke Path 2012: A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture at Lymore, Montgomery, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service Report No. 332*
- Hannaford, H R**, 2015: *A Watching Brief on the Installation of new Path Furniture at Offa's Dyke, Bryndrinog, Newcastle-on-Clun, Shropshire, 2015*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service Report No. 370

ABBREVIATIONS

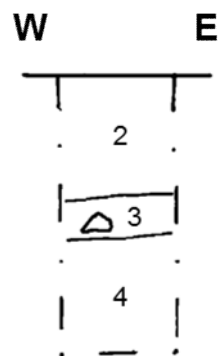
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society



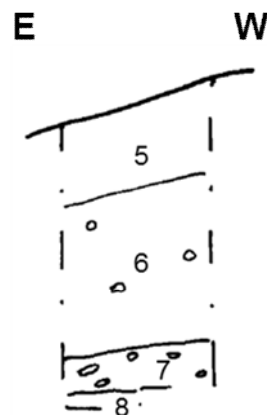




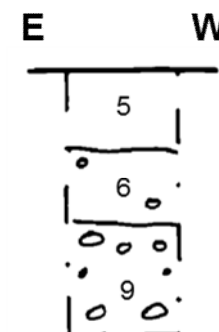
Craignant
Post-hole on SE corner
of gate (Photo 3 C)



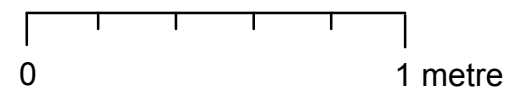
Craignant
Post-hole on NW corner
of gate (Photo 3 F)



The Ditches
Post-hole on SW corner
of gate (Photo 6 C)



The Ditches
Post-hole on NE corner
of gate (Photo 6 F)



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Figure 3: Sections through post-holes on the sites at Craignant, Oswestry, and The Ditches farm, Little Brompton, Chirbury;

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Photo 1: The old stile at Craignant being removed, looking NW



Photo 2: One of the gate post holes (Photo 3; C), looking NW; scale bar 1m



Photo 3: The new gate installed, looking N

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Photo 4: The old stile at The Ditches farm, looking N



Photo 5: One of the gate post holes (Photo 6; D), looking S; scale bar 1m



Photo 6: The new gate, looking SW

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