

A WATCHING BRIEF ON THE INSTALLATION OF NEW PATH FURNITURE ON  
**OFFA'S DYKE PATH AT MARDU  
(NEWCASTLE ON CLUN AND MAINSTONE),  
SHROPSHIRE, 2017**

by  
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A report for  
Countryside Maintenance, Outdoor Partnerships,  
Shropshire Council

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** In January and February 2017 improvements were made to footpath furniture on two sections of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail near Mardu, at Bridge Farm, Newcastle on Clun, and at Cwm Farm, Mainstone, in south 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:

<b>NGR</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>NHLE no.</b>	<b>Mon. name</b>
SO 2589 8388	Bridge Farm, Newcastle on Clun	1020899	Offa's Dyke: section 175m east of Cefn Bronydd
SO 2610 8575	Cwm Farm, Mainstone	1020897	Offa's Dyke: section 400m east of Cwm Farm

**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 Countryside Maintenance 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 both 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 Bridge Farm, Newcastle on Clun, SO 2589 8388, NHLE 1020899**

**2.1.1** The site at Bridge Farm, Mardu, lies on the northwestern side of Graig Hill, on the north side of the River Clun, to the northeast of the village of Newcastle and 4.5km west-northwest of Clun, in southwest Shropshire. The Dark Age earthwork monument Offa's Dyke runs across the western slopes of Graig Hill before dropping down to cross a stream valley at the east end of Skeltons Bank. This section of the Dyke has been scheduled as an ancient monument as defined by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (Offa's Dyke: section 175m east of Cefn Bronydd, National List Entry No. 1020899). In 2011 a number of stiles were replaced with gates on the line of the dyke on the west side of Graig Hill, to the south of the 2017 work (Hannaford, 2011). The 2017 footpath work here involved the

removal of the old stile and its replacement with a new kissing gate on the top of the Dyke bank overlooking Bridge Farm.

**2.1.2** The location of the new gate lay on a hedgeline and the bank here was reduced in height to a terrace on the hillside though with a steep drop down to the west. Six postholes for the new gate were excavated by hand; two postholes, one 1m deep and one 0.8m deep and both 0.4m x 0.3m in plan were excavated for corner and strainer posts on the hedgeline and four postholes between 0.7m and 0.55m deep by up to 0.3m in diameter were dug for the remaining gate posts.

**2.1.3** A thin topsoil (1) up to 0.05m deep (Fig. 2; 1) was seen to overlie a deposit of loose brown silty sand (2) up to 0.6m thick. This may have been natural subsoil, or re-deposited subsoil forming the remains bank itself. This in turn lay over natural subsoil comprising a brown silty sand with gravel (3).

**2.1.4** No other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

## **2.2 Cwm Farm, Mainstone SO 2610 8575, NHLE 1020897**

**2.2.1** The site at Cwm Farm, Mardu, lies some 6km northwest of Clun, on a section of the Dyke 325m to the east of Cwm Farm itself. In 2009 and 2013 fingerposts and stiles were replaced on the line of the dyke at Hergan some 250m to the south of the 2017 work (Hannaford, 2009 & 2013). The work area lay within the line of the ditch section of the Dyke, at the corner of four fields where a gateway has breached the bank component of the Dyke.

**2.2.2** Six postholes for the new gate were excavated by hand; two postholes, one 0.9m deep and one 0.8m deep and both 0.4m x 0.3m in plan were excavated for corner and strainer posts 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 sandy loam (Fig. 2; 4). This lay over a deposit up to 0.8m thick of dark brown sandy loam (5) with some rock fragments, that may have comprised fill of the ditch. In the western post holes this deposit overlay a layer of dark reddish brown sandy silt (6) with a high proportion of gravel and stone fragments that may have represented the natural subsoil.

**2.2.4** No other significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

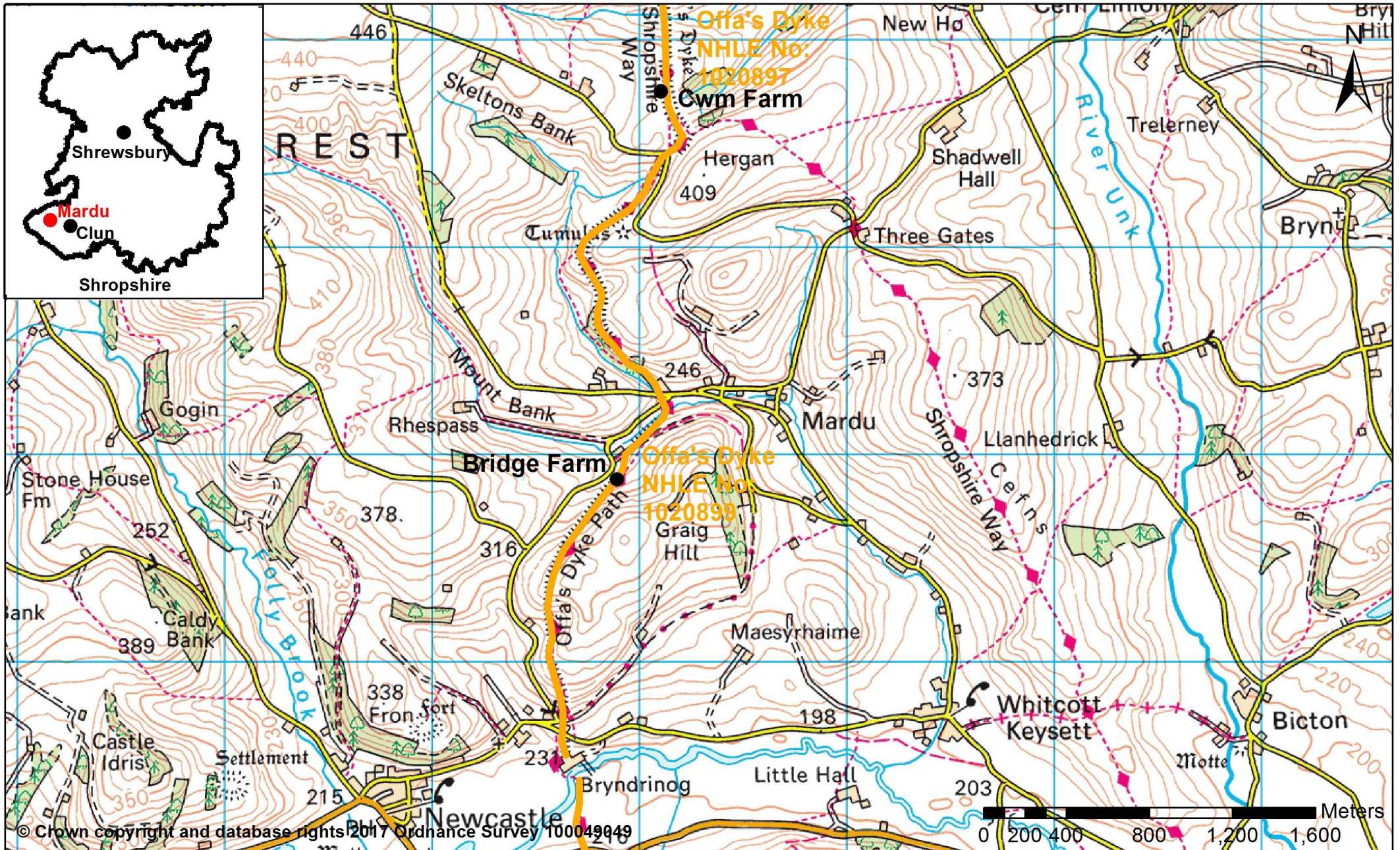
### **3 REFERENCES**

- 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**, 2011: *Graig Hill, Newcastle-on-Clun, Shropshire, 2011 A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture on Offa's Dyke Path*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service Report No 296
- Hannaford, H R**, 2013: *Offa's Dyke Path 2013, A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture at Hergan, Clun, Shropshire*, Shropshire Council Archaeology Service Report No. 334

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

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





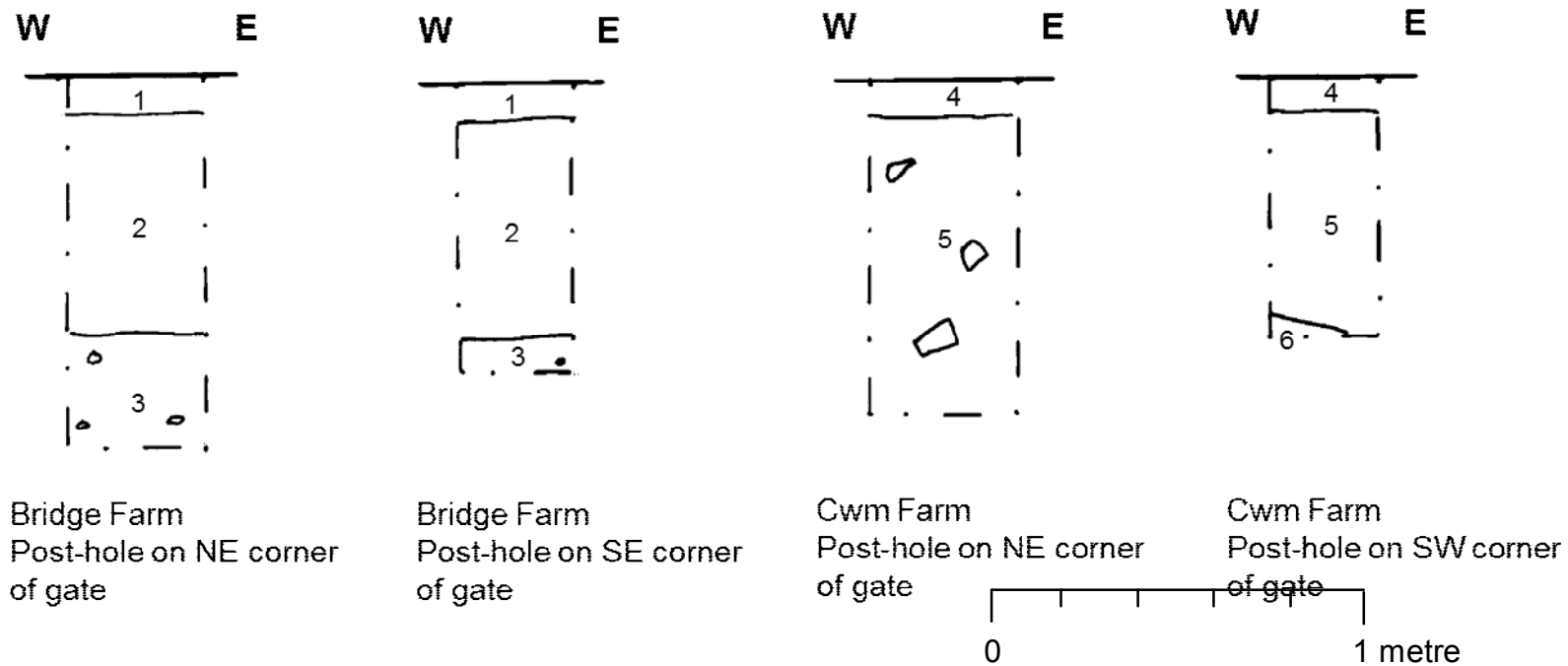
## OFFA'S DYKE PATH 2017

Figure 1: The location of the sites at Bridge Farm and Cwm Farm, near Mardu

Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council,  
Historic Environment Team, Business Growth & Prosperity,  
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Scale: 1:24,000





## OFFA'S DYKE, BRIDGE FARM AND CWM FARM, MARDU 2017

Figure 2: Sections through post-holes on the sites at Bridge Farm and Cwm Farm, near Mardu, Newcastle-on-Clun

*A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture on Offa's Dyke Path at Mardu (Newcastle On Clun and Mainstone), Shropshire, 2017*



Photo 1: The old stile at Bridge Farm being removed, looking S



Photo 2: Bridge Farm; the gate post hole on the NE corner of the gate, looking NE; scale bar 1m



Photo 3: Bridge Farm; the new gate installed, looking NW

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Photo 4: The old stile at Cwm Farm, looking NE



Photo 5: Cwm Farm; the gate post hole on the SE corner of the gate, looking N; scale bar 1m



Photo 6: Cwm Farm; the new gate, looking S

**OFFA'S DYKE, MARDU 2017**