

A WATCHING BRIEF ON THE INSTALLATION OF NEW PATH FURNITURE ON  
**OFFA'S DYKE PATH AT LOWER MOUNT, MARDU,  
AND SELATTYN LODGE, SELATTYN, SHROPSHIRE, 2018**

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

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** In February 2018 improvements were made to footpath furniture on two sections of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail near Mardu, at Lower Mount, Mardu, in south Shropshire, and at Selattyn Lodge, Selattyn. 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 ref</b>	<b>Mon. name</b>
SO 2610 8423	Lower Mount A (ODP18 LM-A)	1020898	Offa's Dyke: section 575m north west of Myndtown
SO 2610 8422	Lower Mount B (ODP18 LM-B)	1020898 & 1020899	Offa's Dyke: section 575m north west of Myndtown Offa's Dyke: section 175m east of Cefn Bronydd
SO 2610 8419	Lower Mount C (ODP18 LM-C)	1020899	Offa's Dyke: section 175m east of Cefn Bronydd
SJ 2520 3315	Selattyn Lodge A (ODP18 SL-A)	1006266	Offa's Dyke: section 1300yds (1190m) long, N from Careg-y-Big)

**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 Lower Mount Mardu, SO 261 842**

**2.1.1** The sites at Lower Mount, Mardu, lie at the foot of the northern tip of Graig Hill, just to the southwest of the hamlet of Mardu and 5km 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 northern tip of the hill (Fig. 1). 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 575m north west of Myndtown National List Entry No.

1020898, & Offa's Dyke: section 175m east of Cefn Bronydd, National List Entry No. 1020899).

**2.1.2** The Archaeology Service has previously carried out a watching brief during the installation of new footpath furniture on the Dyke south of Bridge Farm on Graig Hill, Newcastle, in 2011 and 2016 (Hannaford, 2011 & 2017).

## **2.2 Lower Mount A, Mardu, SO 2610 8423, NHLE 1020898**

**2.2.1** The 2018 footpath work at Lower Mount A involved the removal of the old stile on the line of the Dyke at the road edge and its replacement with a new gate.

**2.2.2** The location of the new gate lay on a hedgeline on the south side of the lane to Mardu. Although the bank of the dyke survived as an earthwork on the north side of the road, on the south side, between the road and the stream, there are no earthwork remains of either the bank or the ditch. Two postholes for the new gate were excavated by hand, one 0.95m deep by 0.4m x 0.3m in plan and one 0.95m deep and 0.3m in diameter.

**2.2.3** A topsoil up to 0.12m deep (Fig. 3; 4) was seen to overlie a deposit of loose dark grey-brown loam (5) up to 0.7m thick, which in turn lay over natural subsoil comprising a brown silty loam with gravel (6).

**2.2.4** No archaeological features or deposits were encountered

## **2.3 Lower Mount B Mardu, SO 2610 8422, NHLE 1020898 & 1020899**

**2.3.1** The 2018 footpath work here involved the replacement of a footbridge over a stream.

**2.3.2** The footbridge was located to the east of the line of the bank section of the dyke, but nevertheless still lay within the boundary of the Scheduled Monument. The southern abutment of the new bridge lay on the site of the old abutment. The disturbed ground following the removal of the old abutment was cleared out and the new abutment (a timber sleeper 1.2m long by 0.25m wide) was laid in a slot 0.10m deep. The northern abutment was slightly offset from the old one, and was laid in a similar sized slot 0.33m deep, cut through topsoil (7) 0.15m thick over a brown silty loam (8) subsoil.

**2.3.3** No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the shallow excavations for either abutment.

## **2.4 Lower Mount C, Mardu, SO 2610 8419, NHLE 1020899**

**2.4.1** On the south side of the footbridge, the 2018 footpath work involved the removal of an old stile and its replacement with a new kissing gate on the Dyke bank.

**2.4.2** The old stile lay on the top of the dyke bank, with a steep slope down to the west to a stream. The new gate was placed some 3 metres to the east, just to the east of the tail of the bank. Six postholes for the new gate were excavated by hand; despite its location on the hill-slope, the post-holes rapidly filled with water below 0.5m depth. Two postholes, one 0.85m deep and one 0.55m deep and both 0.4m x 0.3m in plan were excavated for corner and strainer posts on the hedgeline and four postholes between 0.9m and 0.6m deep by up to 0.3m in diameter were dug for the remaining gate posts. A step was partially terraced into the topsoil on the north side of the gate.

**2.4.3** A topsoil (1) between to 0.10m and 0.35m deep (Fig. 3; 1) was seen to overlie a deposit of grey-brown silty loam (2) up to 0.45m thick. This in turn lay over natural subsoil comprising a grey-brown silt with many small stone fragments (3).

**2.4.4** No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

## **2.5 Selattyn Lodge A, Selattyn, SJ 2520 3315, NHLE 1006266**

**2.5.1** The site at Selattyn Lodge, Selattyn, lies 1.5km southwest of Selattyn village and 5km northwest of Oswestry town centre in northwest Shropshire. The Dark Age earthwork monument Offa's Dyke here runs across undulating high ground with spectacular views to the east across the Shropshire plain to the west Midlands (Fig. 2). 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 1300yds (1190m) long, N from Careg-y-Big National List Entry No. 1006266). The Archaeology Service has previously carried out a watching brief during the installation of new footpath furniture on the Dyke north of Selattyn Lodge in 2009 (Hannaford, 2009).

**2.5.2** The work at Selattyn Lodge A involved the replacement of the existing stile with a new wicket gate. The old stile lay on the top of the dyke bank. The new gate posts were set more or less in the old stile post-holes. A topsoil 0.20m deep (Fig. 3; 9) was seen to overlie a deposit of dark grey-brown silty loam (10) up to 0.40m thick. This in turn lay over a buff clay, mottled with orange clay, brown loam, and peat (11) which probably represented deposits within the dyke bank.

**2.5.3** 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
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- Hill, D, and Worthington, M**, 2003. *Offa's Dyke: History and Guide*. Stroud. Tempus. Fig. 28 & pp193
- Wigley, A**, 2017: *Brief for a programme of archaeological work on Offa's Dyke at Lower Mount, Newcastle on Clun*, Shropshire Council
- Wigley, A**, 2017: *Brief for a programme of archaeological work on Offa's Dyke at Selattyn Lodge, Selattyn (Site A)*, Shropshire Council

### **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



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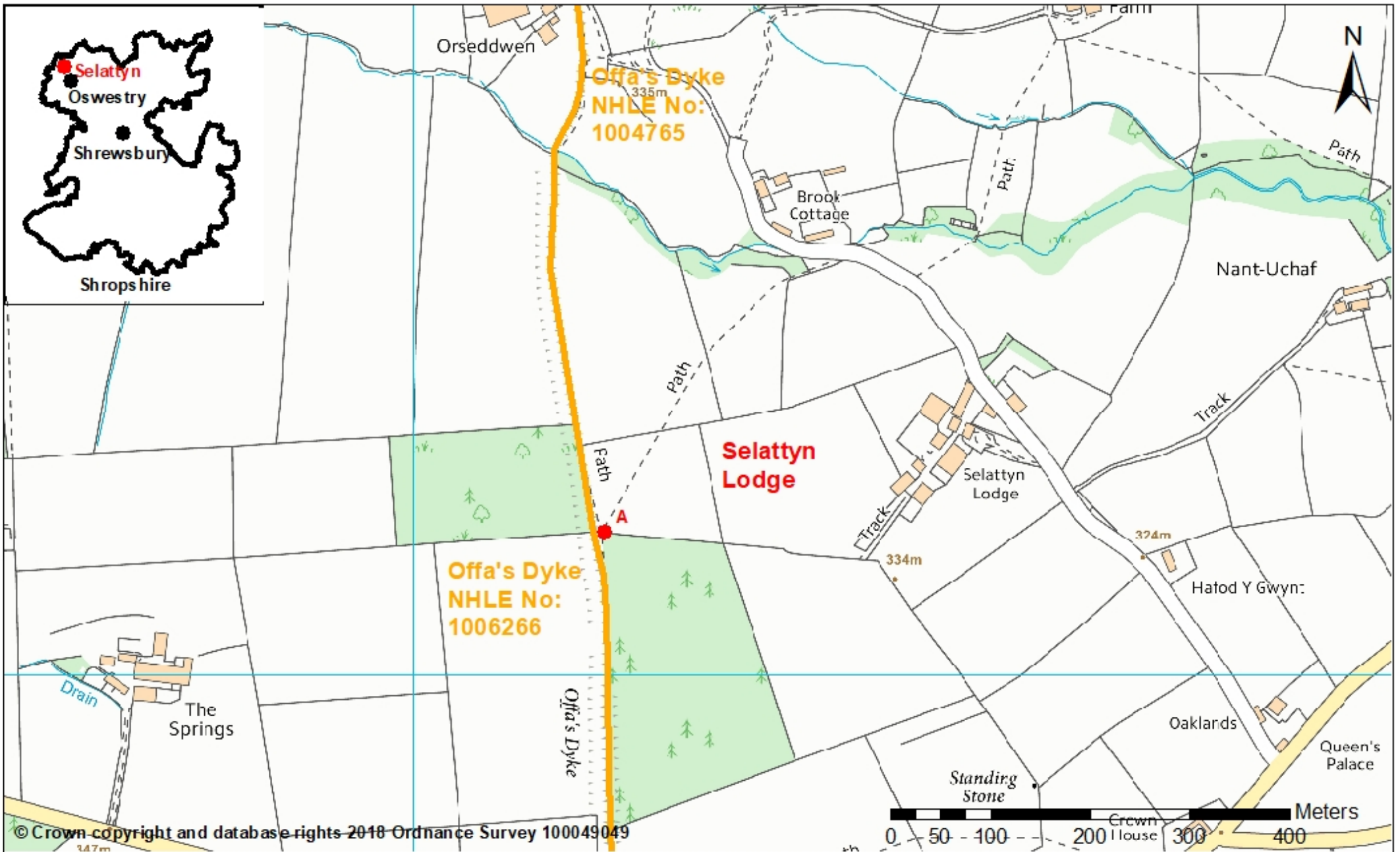


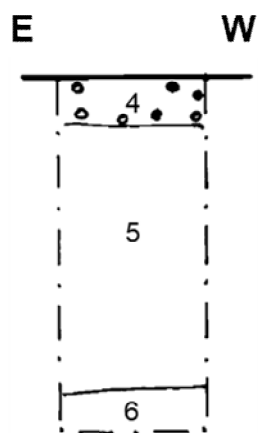
**OFFA'S DYKE PATH 2018**

Figure 1: The location of the sites at Lower Mount, Mardu

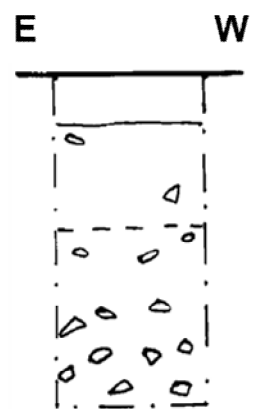
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Historic Environment Team, Shirehall,  
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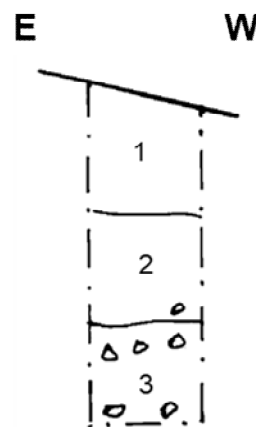




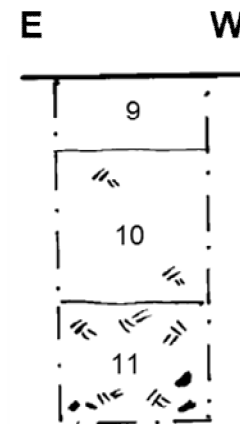
Lower Mount A  
Post-hole on W side  
of gate



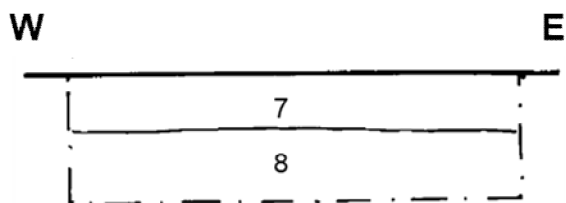
Lower Mount C  
Post-hole on NW  
corner of gate



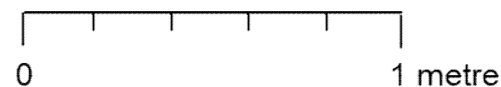
Lower Mount C  
Post-hole on NE corner  
of gate



Selattyn Lodge A  
Post-hole on W side  
of gate



Lower Mount B  
North abutment pit for footbridge



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Figure 3: Sections through post-holes on the sites at Lower Mount and Selattyn Lodge



*A Watching Brief on the Installation of New Path Furniture on Offa's Dyke Path at Lower Mount, Mardu, and Selattyn Lodge, Selattyn, Shropshire, 2018*



Photo 1: The old stile at Lower Mount C, looking S



Photo 2: The NW post-hole for the new gate at Lower Mount C, looking S; scale bar 1m



Photo 3: The completed gate at Lower Mount C, looking SW

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Photo 4: The old stile at Lower Mount A, looking S



Photo 5: The west post-hole for the new gate at Lower Mount A, looking N; scale bar 1m



Photo 6: The new gate at Lower Mount A, looking N

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Photo 7: The old footbridge at Lower Mount B, looking N



Photo 8: The pit for the north abutment at Lower Mount B, looking W; scale bar 1m



Photo 9: The base for the new footbridge at Lower Mount B, looking S

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Photo 10: The old stile at Selattyn Lodge A, looking S



Photo 11: The west post-hole for the new gate at Selattyn Lodge A, looking S; scale bar 1m



Photo 12: The new gate at Selattyn Lodge A, looking S

**OFFA'S DYKE, SELATTYN LODGE 2018**