

CPAT Report No. 1697




Reaseheath Cabling Works, Nantwich, Cheshire

Archaeological Mitigation



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Summary

A programme of archaeological mitigation was conducted by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in connection with the replacement of two overhead powerlines with underground cables at Reaseheath, north-west of Nantwich in Cheshire.

The scheme lay partly within the registered area of the Civil War Battle of Nantwich, while chance finds associated with the battle have also been recovered from the wider area.

The mitigation within the area of the battlefield included a metal detector survey prior to the commencement of works, followed by a watching brief during groundworks. This revealed few artefacts likely to be contemporary with the battle and no features of archaeological significance.

While it had been intended to extend the metal detector survey outside the registered battlefield, together with a watching brief on any areas where concentrations of artefacts are recovered, a new housing development had already commenced within this area, precluding the possibility of any further archaeological works.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) were invited to undertake a programme of archaeological mitigation on behalf of SP Manweb PLC / SP Energy Networks in connection with the replacement of sections of 33kV and 132kV overhead powerlines at Reaseheath, near Nantwich, with an underground cable (Fig. 1; SJ 6408 5358). The work was associated with a new housing development at Reaseheath, known as Kingsley Field, located between Reaseheath College Equestrian Unit on the A51 and Henhull Farm, Welshmen's Lane centred at (SJ 6459 5330).
- 1.2. A desk-based assessment was conducted by CPAT in 2018 (Jones 2018), which recommended the following mitigation:
 - Metal detector survey along the wayleaves for the two rerouted cables, both inside and outside the area of the registered battlefield, to be undertaken in advance of groundworks. Any areas to be soil stripped for compounds should also be included.
 - Watching brief during soil stripping within the area of the registered battlefield and during excavations for terminal tower BH 29. The watching brief should also include any areas where concentrations of artefacts are recorded by the metal detector survey outside the registered area.
- 1.3. The mitigation was incorporated into a Written Scheme of Investigation (Appendix 1) which was produced following discussions with Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service and Historic England prior to the commencement of works.

2 Historical Background

- 2.1. The significance of the development area focuses around the Civil War in the mid-17th century, a time of profound political, constitutional, religious and social conflict which was expressed in a struggle for control between King and Parliament.
- 2.2. By January 1644 the Royalists had captured almost all of Cheshire and were intent on securing the North-west of England. The Parliamentarian garrison at Nantwich held out under siege and, anxious to save the town, Sir Thomas Fairfax led a relieving force of 5,000 men intending to join the garrison and break the siege.
- 2.3. Lord John Byron, heading the 3,500 strong Royalist army, intercepted the Parliamentarians near Acton, to the north-west of the town. In a hectic two-hour battle the Parliamentarians, with the help of the garrison from Nantwich, overcame the Royalists, captured their artillery and ammunition, and took many of their senior figures prisoner. The Royalist defeat ended the prospect of securing the North-west for the King. At the same time, it enhanced the military reputation of Sir Thomas Fairfax and made him an obvious choice as commander-in-chief of the New Model Army a year later.
- 2.4. The following description of the battle is drawn largely from the Battlefields of Britain website (http://www.battlefieldsofbritain.co.uk/battle_nantwich_1644.html). Fairfax took a cautious route to Cheshire, skirting around the Royalist strongholds in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire, whilst concurrently mustering more forces. On 24 January he was at Tilstone, some seven miles north of Nantwich.

-
- 2.5. Byron was aware of Fairfax's approach and on the night of the 24 January he lifted the siege and deployed his infantry north-west to intercept. Byron's original intent is not fully known but it is presumed he intended to fight Fairfax at Barbridge, three miles north of Nantwich. Certainly on the morning of the 25 January a short skirmish was fought there with some of Byron's men. However, if this was his intent, his plan was foiled by the weather; a sudden thaw led to the River Weaver overflowing and destroying the Beam Bridge over which Byron needed to move his cavalry. His forces were now cut in two with the infantry at Acton, some 3 miles from the main Parliamentary force, while his cavalry were on the south bank of the River Weaver and had to take a five mile diversion cross country via Shrewbridge to link up with the foot soldiers.
 - 2.6. After the initial skirmish at Barbridge, Fairfax continued his march south-east towards Nantwich on a direct line towards the Royalist infantry at Acton, now just two miles ahead of him. He held at Hurlston to hold a Council of War where he resolved to relieve Nantwich prior to fighting the battle as he hoped to bolster his forces from the garrison there. The delay brought Byron sufficient time to get his cavalry to Acton.
 - 2.7. Up until this point Fairfax had been advancing along the main road to Nantwich, now the A51 (Fig. 2-1). He then swung his forces off the road and attempted to skirt around the Royalists to the north. He aimed to head for Welsh Row, a small settlement to the north-west of Nantwich and in full view of the town, hoping to draw out the garrison to join him (Fig. 2-2).
 - 2.8. Aware of Fairfax's movements, Byron deployed his forces to intercept. The advance was difficult as the terrain consisted of fields enclosed by thick hedgerows. The cavalry advance was completely frustrated and it was infantry on the flanks who made initial contact around 3.30pm, engaging the Parliamentary vanguard and rearguard (Fig. 2-3).
 - 2.9. The initial attacks of the Royalists were successful. On the left of the Royalist line, Robert Byron pushed back the Parliamentary rearguard under Colonels John Booth and Holland. Their advance was only checked by the cavalry of Sir William Fairfax. On the Royalist right Major-General Gibson pushed back the Parliamentary vanguard, under William Brereton (Fig. 2-4).
 - 2.10. Despite the Royalist success on the flanks, in the centre they were less fortunate. The enclosed fields had delayed the advance of the main body of Royalists under Colonels Earle and Warren. By the time they arrived at the Parliamentary line, Fairfax was well prepared. Fierce fighting followed and the Royalists were pushed back with Warren's Regiment breaking (Fig. 2-5).
 - 2.11. Gibson's forces, now under an intense attack, retreated back towards Acton where they made their stand at St Mary's Church (Fig. 2-6). Over 1,500 men would surrender to the Parliamentarians including every Colonel in Byron's army save his brother. Both Sir John Byron and Robert Byron managed to disengage their respective forces and retreated towards Chester (Fig. 2-7).

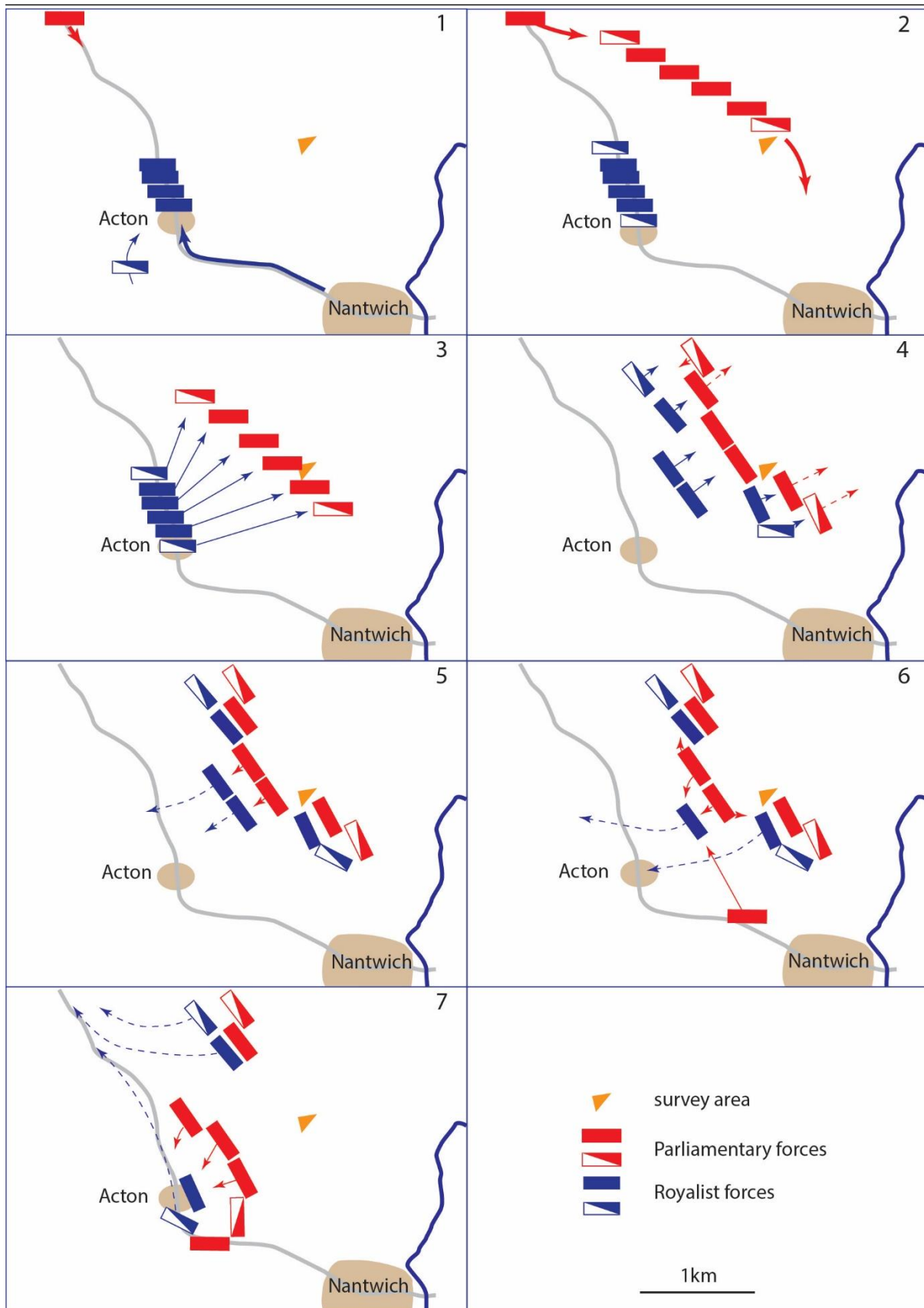


Fig. 2 Schematic representation of the Battle of Nantwich based on the Battlefields of Britain website, showing the relative position of the metal detector survey

3 Metal Detector Survey

- 3.1. The metal detector survey was undertaken in early July 2019. The survey was conducted by Archaeological Surveys West, on behalf of CPAT, and members from a local metal detector club. The survey was conducted in advance of construction and covered a wider area than that of the proposed works in order to allow for possible subsequent changes to the site layout.
- 3.2. The position of each artefact was recorded using survey grade GPS to locate each artefact with respect to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The survey recovered 36 objects, each of which was assigned a unique record number. The distribution of artefacts is showing in Fig. 3, while a catalogue is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Artefacts recovered during the metal detector survey.

Find No.	Easting	Northing	Material	Description	Date
1	364096	353532	Iron	Ring, 45mm diam. Likely agricultural associated with machinery	Unknown
2	364084	353564	Iron	Possible plough blade	19th/ 20th century
3	364080	353567	Iron	Possible handle	Unknown
4	364081	353568	Iron	Bracket fitting	20th century
5	364077	353607	Slag	Lead slag or by-product of lead casting	Unknown
6	364075	353609	Cu alloy	Torch head	20th century
7	364104	353536	Cu alloy	Fragment of cast copper alloy object with one rounded edge and a circular notch in the centre. Possible fitting	Unknown
8	364123	353571	Slag	Small fragment of slag / industrial waste	Unknown
9	364123	353571	Iron	Handle, large rivet or fitting	Unknown
10	364123	353573	Pottery	Vessel rim with stamped decoration	20th century
11	364123	353573	Iron	Key, hammered with flattened loop end.	19th century
12	364101	353590	Cu alloy	1988 Elizabeth II 1 penny	20th century
13	364088	353590	Iron	Nail or hook	Unknown
14	364096	353605	Cu alloy	Worn coin 29-30mm diam. ? 18th-century halfpenny	18th - 19th century
15	364113	353630	Iron	Corroded pin hammer head	19th/ 20th century

16	364111	353625	Iron	Large bracket fitting with nails / bolts	19th/ 20th century
17	364126	353581	Iron	Fragment of cast iron, possible pipe collar	19th/ 20th century
18	364140	353576	Iron	Fragment of heavily corroded iron.	Unknown
19	364130	353589	Iron	Corroded iron bolt 75mm long	20th century
20	364130	353589	Lead	Lead fragment, by-product of lead working	Unknown
21	364130	353598	Lead	Impacted lead ball (pistol shot)	16th - 19th century
22	364130	353599	Clay pipe	Clay pipe bowl with no makers stamp	17th century
23	364130	353599	Slag	Large lump of industrial non-ferrous slag	Unknown
24	364125	353597	Cu alloy	Part of a double-loop buckle 20mm wide, estimated 38mm long with swan neck ends	c 17th - 18th century
25	364122	353606	Cu alloy	Heavily corroded coin copper. Uneven edge suggests either clipped or hammered coin	early post med?
26	364133	353614	Lead	Small fragment of sheet lead	Unknown
27	364115	353631	Iron	Hammered Iron bolt / nail 115mm long by 14mm thick	Unknown
28	364123	353631	Iron	Iron hook, 135mm long	Unknown
29	364130	353637	Cu alloy	British Army 17mm general service tunic button (likely WW1)	early 20th century
30	364142	353599	Slag	Lead slag or by-product of lead casting	Unknown
31	364143	353609	Slag	Large lump of none ferrous slag	Unknown
32	364144	353626	Cu alloy	4 hole button, 19mm diameter	19th/ 20th century
33	364137	353617	Iron	Corroded 75mm nail	
34	364141	353629	Lead	Lead fragment, by-product of lead working	Unknown
35	364188	353642	Cu alloy	Spent percussion cap, part of 12mm cartridge	20th century
36	364178	353633	Cu alloy	Small fragment of copper alloy fitting	Unknown

- 3.3. Only two objects are likely to be associated with the Civil War battle, an impacted lead pistol shot (no. 21) and a double-loop buckle (no. 24), although the clay pipe bowl (no. 22) and the worn coin (no. 25) are also possibly contemporary. These, together with find no. 29, are the only finds which have been retained.



Fig. 3

Objects which may be contemporary with the Civil War Battle of Nantwich

- 3.4. It was noted that there was a paucity of artefacts compared with what might be expected from a Civil War battlefield which perhaps confirms anecdotal evidence that the area has been fairly systematically targeted by metal detector users in the past, although whether this was prior to the establishment of the Battlefields Register is not known.

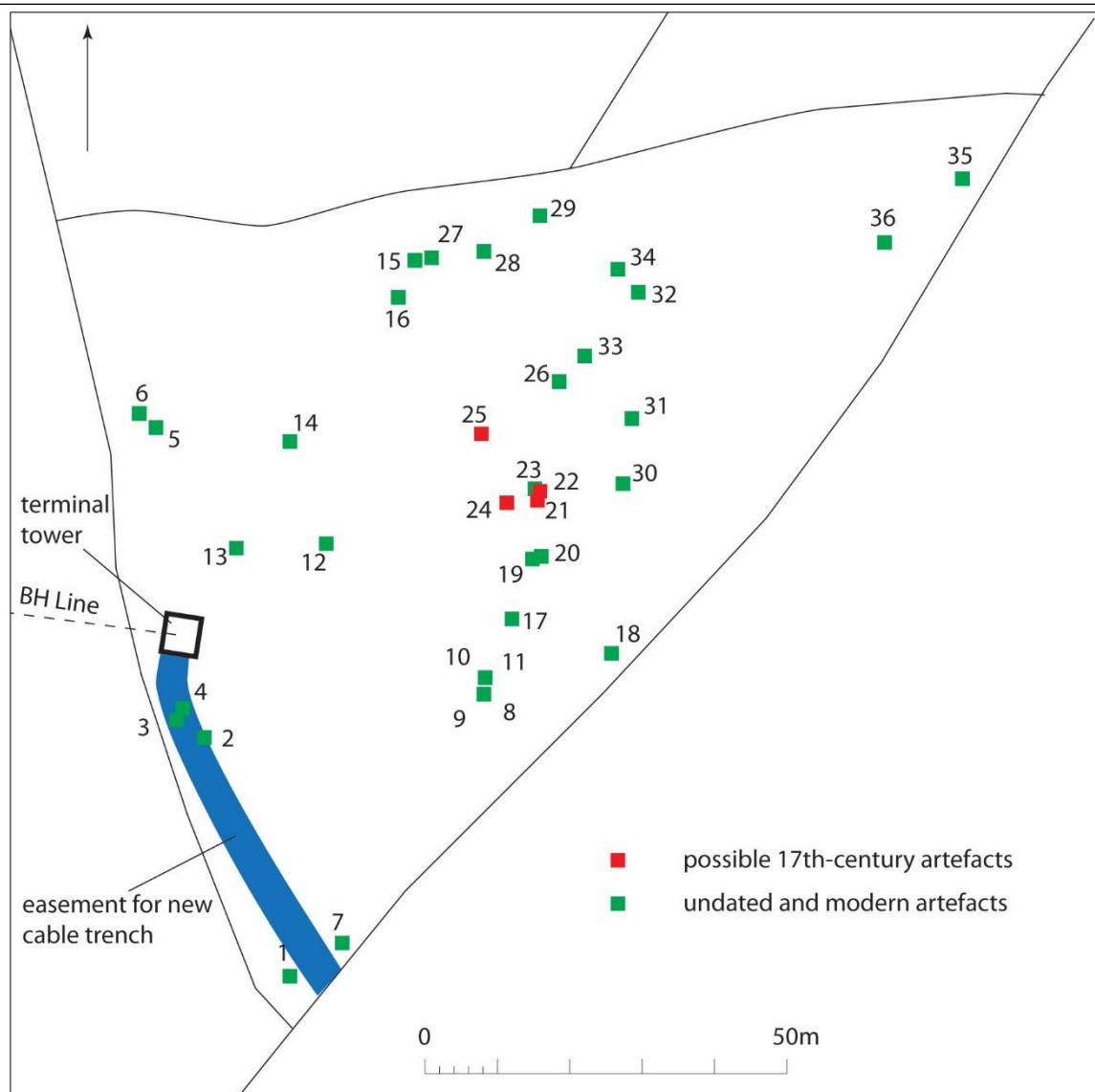


Fig. 4 Distribution of artefacts recovered during the metal detector survey

4 Watching Brief

- 4.1. The watching brief was conducted in late July and August 2019 in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) (2014) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. It monitored the excavation of cable trenches within the area of the Registered Battlefield, together with the foundations for the new terminal tower. No soil stripping was undertaken for laydown areas or site compounds, which used protective matting to avoid ground disturbance.
- 4.2. The topsoil was removed by machine within a wayleave around 1.50m in width, prior to the excavation of the cable trench, which was 0.45m wide and up to 1.00m deep. The foundation trenches for the new tower measured around 3m by 3m and were excavated to depths of between 0.80m and 1.10m.

- 4.3. The results revealed between 0.25 and 0.30m of topsoil, overlying 0.20-0.55m of ploughsoil directly overlying the natural subsoil, a reddish brown clay silt. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were revealed and no artefacts were recovered.



Fig. 5 Excavation of the cable trench. Photo CPAT 4700-0005



Fig. 6 One of four foundation trenches for the new terminal tower. Photo CPAT 4700-0016



Fig. 7 The location of the new terminal tower, adjacent to tower BH29. Photo CPAT 4700-0021

5 Conclusions

- 5.1. A programme of archaeological mitigation was conducted in advance of and during the installation of a new terminal tower and associated cable trenching at Reaseheath, north-west of Nantwich in Cheshire. The scheme lay partly within the registered area of the Civil War Battle of Nantwich, while chance finds associated with the battle have also been recovered from the wider area.
- 5.2. A metal detector survey prior to the commencement of works, identified 36 artefacts, only four of which might be contemporary with the battle. A watching brief during groundworks revealed no features or artefacts of archaeological significance.
- 5.3. While it had been intended to extend the metal detector survey outside the registered battlefield, together with a watching brief on any areas where concentrations of artefacts are recovered, a new housing development had already commenced within this area, precluding the possibility of any further archaeological works.

6 Sources

Jones, N. W., 2018. *Reaseheath 132kV Cabling Works, Nantwich, Cheshire: Desk-based Assessment*. Unpublished report. CPAT Report No. 1619.

7 Archive deposition Statement

- 7.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive is entirely digital and will be deposited jointly with the regional Historic Environment Record. The artefacts will be deposited with Grosvenor Museum, Chester in due course.

Archive summary

21 digital photographs, CPAT film no 4700

Retained finds

Find No.	Easting	Northing	Material	Description	Date
21	364130	353598	Lead	Impacted lead ball (pistol shot)	16th - 19th century
22	364130	353599	Clay pipe	Clay pipe bowl with no makers stamp	17th century
24	364125	353597	Cu alloy	Part of a double-loop buckle 20mm wide, estimated 38mm long with swan neck ends	c 17th - 18th century
25	364122	353606	Cu alloy	Heavily corroded coin copper. Uneven edge suggests either clipped or hammered coin	early post med?
29	364130	353637	Cu alloy	British Army 17mm general service tunic button (likely WW1)	early 20th century

Appendix 1: CPAT WSI 2008

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) have been invited to undertake a programme of mitigation works on behalf of SP Manweb PLC / SP Energy Networks in connection with the replacement of existing overhead powerlines at Reaseheath, near Nantwich, with underground cables.
- 1.2. The BH line runs between Crewe Grid 132kV substation and Whitchurch Grid passing the outskirts of Nantwich. A consortium of developers have secured planning permission for a development site (centred at SJ 6459 5330) at Reaseheath known as Kingsley Field, located between Reaseheath College Equestrian Unit on the A51 and Henhull Farm, Welshmen's Lane. The southern part of the development is already underway.
- 1.3. SP Energy Networks have been requested to underground the existing 132kV circuit and an adjoining 33kV circuit that cross the site. An easement of approximately 5 metres wide following the development topography has been proposed, which will carry both circuits.
- 1.4. The existing 132kV line is carried on metal portal frame structures. New steel lattice terminal towers will be erected at the BH24 and BH29 positions for the 132kV circuit, located respectively at SJ 6496 5325 and SJ 6408 5358. There will be an interface requirement for terminating the 132kV cables on the towers.
- 1.5. The scheme affects a section of the existing 132kV overhead powerline between towers BH 24 and BH29, respectively at SJ 6496 5325 and SJ 6408 5358.
- 1.6. The scheme involves the following works:
 - Site compounds
 - Vehicular access
 - Decommissioning of twin-poles BH 24 to BH 29 and the erection of new terminal towers
 - Excavations for an underground cable within a 5m-wide easement
 - Diversion and connection of existing 33kV overhead line to new underground supply alongside the 132kV cable

2 Methodology

- 2.1. A desk-based assessment was undertaken in December 2018 (Jones 2018). The route of the new underground cables crosses the registered area of the Battle of Nantwich Nantwich (list no. 100002) and has the potential for direct impacts on associated artefacts, and possibly buried archaeological remains. The battlefield is considered to be of high value.
- 2.2. The Crewe and Nantwich local plan *Policy BE.17 Historic Battlefields* states that 'Development proposals within the historic Nantwich battlefield will only be permitted where there would be no adverse effects on the historical value of the site, its archaeological value, the appearance of the landscape, and they would not prevent the historical interpretation of the site.' It should be noted, however, that the current proposals do not require planning permission and are

facilitating works associated with a new housing development for which planning permission has already been granted.

- 2.3. The potential for direct impacts is addressed through recommended mitigation, which is outlined below.

Metal Detector Survey

- 2.4. The wayleaves for the two rerouted cables, both inside and outside the area of the registered battlefield, will be subject to a systematic Metal detector survey to be undertaken in advance of groundworks. Any areas to be soil stripped for compounds will also be included.
- 2.5. The survey will be conducted by Archaeological Surveys West and members from a local metal detector club. The position of each artefact will be recorded using survey grade GPS to locate each artefact with respect to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Each artefact will be ascribed a unique record number, and be bagged separately and the depth of the find noted. The finds storage during fieldwork and any site archive preparation will follow professional guidelines (UKIC). The finds will be assessed and reported on by CPAT staff.

Watching brief

- 2.6. A watching brief will be undertaken during soil stripping within the area of the registered battlefield, during excavations for terminal tower BH 29, and will also include any areas where concentrations of artefacts are recorded by the metal detector survey outside the registered area. A metal detector will also be used to maximise the retrieval of metallic artefacts.
- 2.7. The watching brief will be conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 2.8. 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 CIfA 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 12 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, a 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.

- 2.9. 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 during the watching brief 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.
 - All artefacts will be identified and catalogued, using an appropriate specialist if required.
 - Any artefacts recovered during the mitigation works will be deposited with an appropriate museum, subject to the permission of the owner.
- 2.10. Following the on-site work an illustrated report will be prepared containing conventional sections to include:
- Non-technical summary
 - Introduction
 - Site location
 - Archaeological Background
 - Metal detector survey
 - Watching brief
 - Conclusions
 - References
 - Appropriate appendices on archives and finds

Site archive

- 2.11. The overall archive will conform to guidelines described in Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE), Historic England 2006, the CIfA (2014) *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives*. The digital archive will be deposited with the regional Historic Environment Record.

3 Resources and programming

- 3.1. The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist under the overall supervision of Nigel Jones, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). CPAT is also a CIfA Registered Organisation (RAO No 6) and as such agrees to abide by their *Code of Conduct* (2014) and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (2014).
- 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 deposited with the client and the regional Historic Environment Record within one month of the completion of on-site works.
- 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. Any

further work over and above the original watching brief and report would be the subject of a separate WSI and costing. The following figures provide an indication of the types of additional services and indicative costs which might be required, for which the client is advised to make some provision.

Curatorial monitoring	£150 per visit
Finds conservation etc	£285 per day
Radiocarbon dating	£330 each
Finds specialist	£285 per day

- 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.

4 References

Jones, N. W., 2018. *Reaseheath 132kV Cabling Works, Nantwich, Cheshire: Desk-based Assessment*. Unpublished report. CPAT Report No. 1619.

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29 April 2019