DINAS DINORWIG, LLANDDEINIOLEN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
GAT Project no. G1968

GAT Report No. 708

Prepared for J. and S. Morgan

December 2007

By
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Cover: The evaluation area before excavation

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SUMMARY

The work involved small-scale evaluation excavation in an area between the inner and outer ramparts of the Iron Age hillfort of Dinas Dinorwig, near Caernarfon. The excavation revealed part of the upper silts and the inner edge of the hillfort inner ditch. The ditch silts continued below the maximum observed depth of -1.5m and most of this depth was interpreted as deliberate backfill to level up the area of the hillfort ditch in advance of construction of the farmhouse. No artefacts and no features other than the edge of the hillfort ditch were found. It was shown that the proposed construction would not affect any archaeological valuable features or deposits.

1 INTRODUCTION

Dinas Dinorwig is one of the largest and best-preserved hillforts in north-west Wales although it has not been the subject of excavation so little is known about it. On one side of it, in an area between the inner and outer ramparts is a farmhouse, Pen-Dinas and outbuildings. The interior of the hillfort forms a field of the farm, probably once cultivated. The ramparts and ditches of the fort, however, are mostly very well preserved.

2 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by J N Morgan to provide a cost and project design for carrying out an archaeological evaluation in advance of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for a proposed house extension because the house, Pen-Dinas, is located within the Iron Age hillfort of Dinas Dinorwig and this is a protected Scheduled Ancient Monument (CN017), centred on NGR SH55006540 (Fig. 1a).

The proposal is for an extension to the existing main building, to be attached to the south-east facing elevation.

An archaeological evaluation at the location of the extension has been requested by Cadw to ascertain the extent and value of any archaeological remains that might be affected by the proposed construction. The evaluation design, approved by Cadw was for two trenches across the area of the proposed construction, to a maximum depth of 1.5m, if archaeological deposits were encountered.

3 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The work was carried out on 27th and 28th November 2007. Two one metre wide and 4.5 metre long trenches were excavated approximately north-south across the development area using a 3 ton tracked excavator (Fig. 2). After excavation and recording the trenches were backfilled and re-turfed (Fig. 8).

One long and one short section of each trench were drawn (Figs 3 and 4) and levelled in to a TBM on the centre of the step onto the front garden adjoining. A profile was also levelled across the line of the trenches and the adjoining hillfort inner rampart to show the relation ship between them (Fig. 1b).

The archive of paper and photographic records is held at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Garth Road, Bangor.

4 TOPOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

The hillfort of Dinas Dinorwig is located about 8km south-south-west of Bangor and the same distance east north-east of Caernarfon. It crowns the summit at 169m OD of one of the hills on a long ridge running north-east to south-west, falling away precipitously to a small tributary of the River Seiont to the north-west, and much less steeply to the south-east to the marshy valley in which the River Cegin rises.

The geology of the site consists of Cambrian and pre-Cambrian metamorphic rocks overlain by sheets of glacial drift.

5 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Dinas Dinorwig is the largest and best defended hillforts in this area and lies on a very prominent position overlooking a very wide area. Its strength and commanding position suggest it was held a pre-eminent position as centre of power in the area during the later prehistoric period. It has been suggested that it would therefore have been a focus of resistance during the Roman invasion in 77AD. Many hillforts show evidence of occupation during the Roman period but so far Dinas Dinorwig is not one of them and this may be because it was too important a symbol to be allowed to continue. The name Dinorwig has been suggested to mean ‘the Capital of the Ordovices’ derived from the name of the tribe inhabiting this part of north-west Wales. However, this is uncertain and Orwig could derive from a personal name of an actual or supposed inhabitant of the site.

The hillfort was originally defended only by a single strongly built wall but this was later added to or more likely superseded by two massive concentric ramparts and ditches (Fig. 1a). With the addition of these ramparts an original entrance through the wall at the north-east was blocked and anew entrance was made at the west by a more

difficult and easier to defend approach up the steep side of the hill though inturns of the ramparts creating a defensive ‘corridor’.

One roundhouse survives within part of the interior of the fort that has escaped modern ploughing. The farm at the north-east occupies a level area in an annexe between the inner and outer ramparts. This annexe seems to be a structural part of the hillfort although presumably a later modification.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

The excavation produced 16 context records, 5 drawings on two sheets and twelve photographs in digital and film format.

No artefacts were found so interpretation of the phases of activity on the observed types and position of deposits.

Trench 1 was shown to lie entirely within the line of the inner ditch of the hillfort and was entirely of ditch fill, which was not bottomed. Most of Trench 2 revealed subsoil quite close to the modern surface with one edge cut away by the ditch of the hillfort (Fig. 2), which crossed the trench at and angle, parallel to the nearby rampart.

Trench 1:
The majority of the fill was redeposited material (Fig. 3, layer 11). The material used for backfilling was sterile stony silt and almost certainly derived from demolition of parts of the nearby outer rampart. It showed that the ditch had been backfilled to level off the area prior to building the existing farmhouse and outbuildings. The backfill overlay a spread of charcoal (Fig. 3, layer 13) probably derived from clearance of vegetation prior to backfilling and this lay on deep humic silt (Fig. 3, layer 14) at a depth of –0.85 to –1.15m, representing a stand-still phase of soil accumulation in the top of the silted-in ditch. Below this former topsoil the true ditch silts began (Fig. 3, layer 15), becoming stonier with depth and continuing beyond the limit of excavation at –1.55m. Considering the size of the associated rampart the ditch can be expected to be a minimum of 3m deep so the silts are likely to continue for at least another 1.5m in depth. The almost horizontal angle of the silts suggests that the trench was situated not far from the centre line of the hillfort ditch (Fig. 4).

Trench 2:
This trench was shallower and excavation over most of it ceased at –0.25m when natural subsoil of clayey silt was reached. At the south-east corner of the trench the edge of the hillfort ditch (Fig. 3, 3) was exposed. The shallower area, which contained no archaeological features, was clearly part of the berm or terrace between the rampart and the ditch. The hillfort ditch edge sloped down at a steep angle, possibly suggesting that it had never been exposed for a very long period as then a shallower weathering cone might be expected. The same layers were encountered as those in Trench 1 but tipping at a steeper angle at the ditch edge (Fig. 4).

7 CONCLUSION

The proposed building may cut into the subsoil of the berm of the hillfort ditch if a foundation trench technique is used, but there are no archaeological features in this area, other than the hillfort ditch edge itself.

The upper layers of the hillfort ditch that may be affected by the construction are all of post-medieval date and so an archaeological watching brief would be unproductive.

The area of ditch deposits that will be sealed beneath the building is not of significance for any future interpretation of the hillfort, such as it might be if it was close to an entrance, for instance, where deposits of artefacts might be expected.

The proposed building itself will have little effect on the setting of the hillfort and less than the existing stone building to the north, which was built partly on a platform terraced into the inner rampart.

6 REFERENCES AND OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED

Gardner, W. 1947. Dinorwig Hill-Fort, Llanddeiniolen, Caernarvonshire, *Arch. Camb.* 99, 231-248.

Gwynedd Historic Environment Record.

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 maps, 1889, 1900 and 1914.

RCAHMW 1960. *An Inventory of the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Caernarvonshire. Vol II: Central*, London.

APPENDIX 1 PROJECT DESIGN

DINAS DINORWIG

PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (G1968)

Prepared for J N Morgan, October, 2007

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked by J N Morgan to provide a cost and project design for carrying out an archaeological evaluation in advance of scheduled monument consent (SMC) for a proposed house extension. The house, Pen Dinas, is located at Dinas Dinorwig Camp (Scheduled Ancient Monument CN017), a prehistoric hillfort, centred on NGR SH55006540.

The proposal is for an extension to the existing main building, to be attached to the southeast facing elevation.

An archaeological evaluation at the location of the extension has been requested by Cadw. The Application for Scheduled Monument Consent for the extension (A-CAM 001-02-1008-04) states that, "the application for the construction for the proposed extension does not contain any details of the foundations. The impact on any buried archaeological remains is difficult to assess. Therefore, in order to establish the nature and depth of any archaeological remains, an evaluation will be necessary before…application for SMC may be considered".

This design incorporates an amendment to the existing SMC (Ref.: A-CAM 001-02-1008-04) with an alternative trench methodology, approved by Jon Berry.

2. BACKGROUND

Dinas Dinorwig (SAM CN017; PRN 5) is a multi-vallate hillfort, occupying one of the summits of a long ridge which runs north-east to south-west in the parish of Llanddeiniolen. The hillfort encloses a pear-shaped interior, *c*.1.0ha. in size. The defences consist of an inner wall surrounded by two massive banks and an outer ditch with a counterscarp bank. The two banks separate on the northeast side to form a wedge-shaped annexe, which is the location of the current farmhouse and outbuildings.

The 1st to 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Maps (1889, 1900 and 1914), show the farm at the same location as present, with a similar distribution of buildings. It appears that recent additions have been made to the farm, however, with a new outbuilding at the western end of the farm and extensions added to the main long range building, including a square block at the southeastern end of the long range. The proposed extension will be an addition to this square block, joining the long range to the main farmhouse. The available map evidence suggests that the majority of the current extensions and additions were made in the late twentieth century. As the current extension is not on the Ordnance Survey 1:10000 County Series Map published in 1973 (SH56 NW; SH56 NE), the work was completed after this date.

A watching brief was conducted in November 1996, monitoring the widening of the entrance to the farm. The works did not impinge in any archaeological remains.

A second watching brief was undertaken on the 8th and the 9th November 2000, whilst a blocked sewer was repaired within the square block extension. The works did not impinge in any archaeological remains

3. REQUIREMENTS

The requirements are for an archaeological evaluation in advance of Scheduled Monument Consent. All archaeological work is to be undertaken by a suitably qualified archaeological contractor, approved in writing by Cadw. The suitable archaeologist/archaeological contractor shall be a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). The evaluation excavation shall follow the guidelines laid out in the relevant Standards and Guidance note issued by the IFA.

4. METHOD STATEMENT

4.1 Archaeological Evaluation

The archaeological evaluation methodology has been agreed in principle with Cadw. Two trenches are to be dug: Trench 01 is to be positioned along the length of the proposed south facing foundation of the extension; Trench 02 is to be positioned across the central area of the proposed extension. The aim of the two trenches is to determine the presence and depth (or otherwise) of any surviving archaeology.

Excavation will be conducted either to natural levels or to the depth of the highest relevant archaeological layers or to a depth of 1.50m (whichever is the shallower). The SMC states that the trenches should measure 1.m in width, however the standard ditching bucket width is 1.6m, and this width would be preferable.

All areas affected by services, including surface water drainage shall be excavated.

If surviving archaeological deposits are identified, a 10% sample programme of archaeological assessment shall be undertaken, to determine fully the character of the investigated structures and deposits.

Provision should also be made for all archaeological work on site, including the post-excavation analysis, conservation of artefacts, any supplementary scientific analysis and for the subsequent publication of results in an appropriate journal.

4.2 Photographic Record

As detailed in the Scheduled Monument Consent A-CAM 001-02-1008-04, a colour photographic record of the site before, during and after the evaluation. The photographs will be dated and indexed, and related to a basic site plan that might be taken from a published OS map as appropriate. It is anticipated that digital photographs will form the principal record.

4.3 Processing data, illustration, report and archiving

Following completion of the evaluation as outlined above, a report will be produced incorporating the following:

- Non-technical summary
- Introduction
- Specification and Project Design
- Methods and techniques
- Archaeological Background
- Results
- Summary and conclusions
- Bibliography of sources consulted.

Illustrations, including plans and photographs, will be incorporated within the report.

4.3 Archive

A full archive including plans, photographs, written material and any other material resulting from the project will be prepared. All plans, photographs and descriptions will be labelled and cross-referenced, and lodged in an appropriate place (to be decided in consultation with the regional Historic Environment Record) within six months of the completion of the project.

5. STAFF

The project will be supervised by Andrew Davidson, Principal Archaeologist at the Trust, who has worked in various aspects of British archaeology for 18 years, and who has been responsible for managing all contract work at the Trust for the past five years, including archaeological programmes

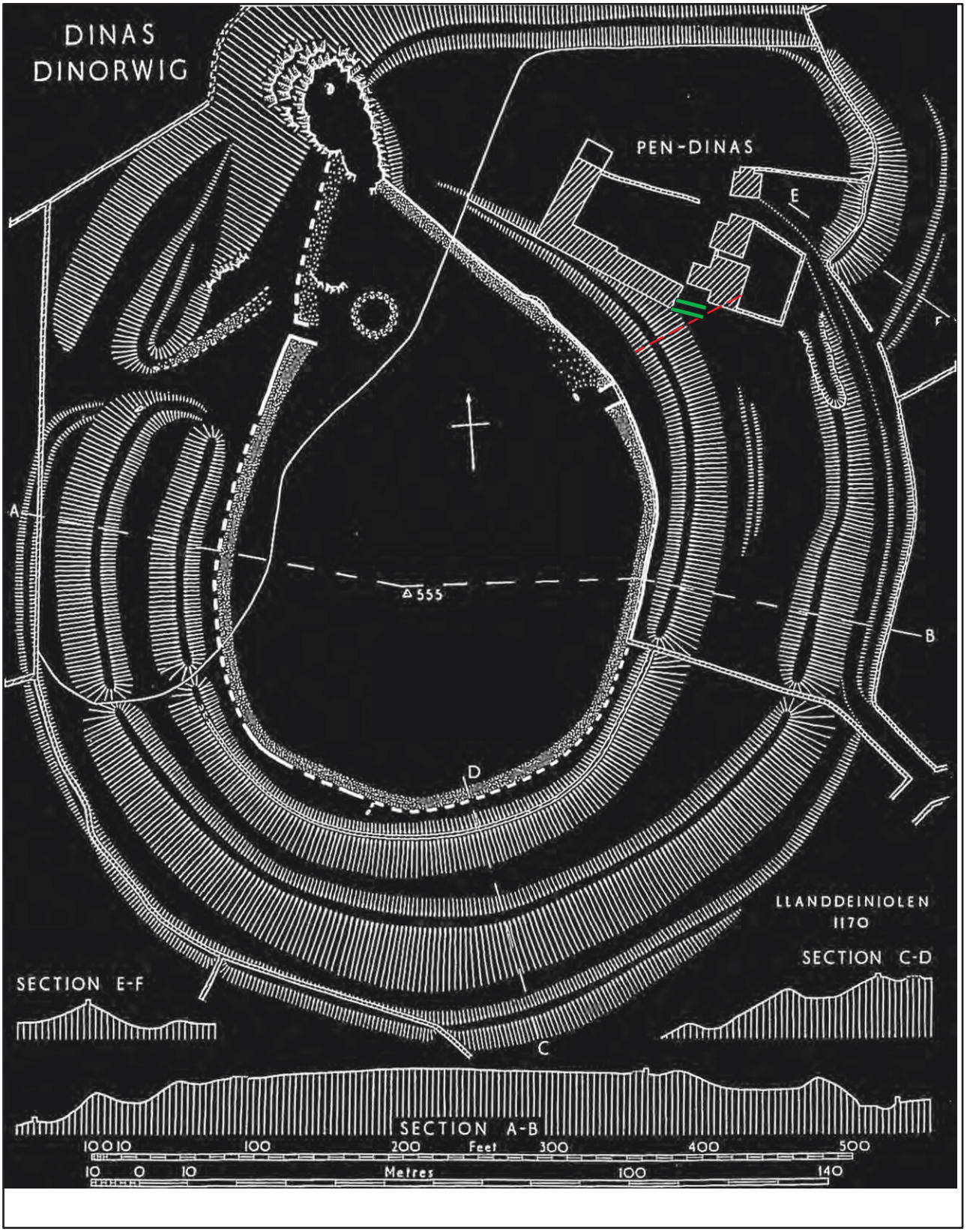
for major road contracts, pipeline construction and new development sites. The work will be carried out by fully trained Project Archaeologists who are experienced in conducting watching briefs and working with contractors and earth moving machinery. (Full CV's are available upon request).

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Trust subscribes to the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) Health and Safety Policy as defined in **Health and Safety in Field Archaeology** (1999).

7. INSURANCE

The Trust holds public liability insurance with an indemnity limit of £2,500,000 through Russell, Scanlon Limited Insurance Brokers, Wellington Circus, Nottingham NG1 5AJ (policy 01 1017386 COM), and Professional Indemnity Insurance for £2,000,000 per claim (policy No. 59A/SA11818791).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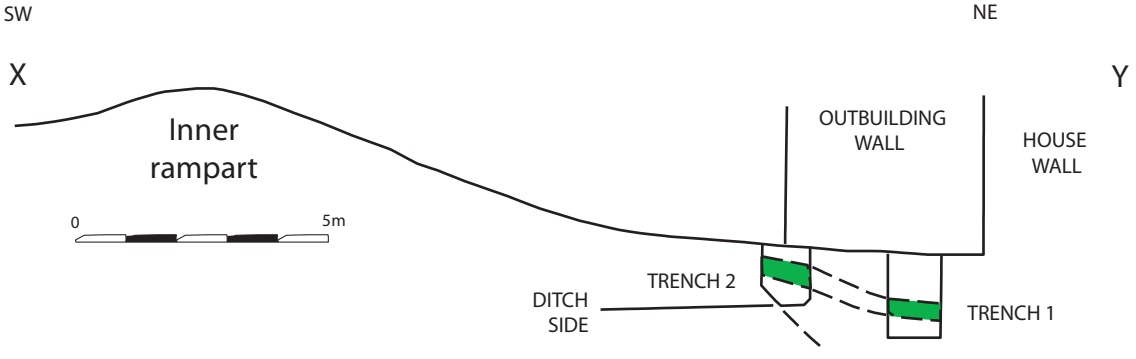
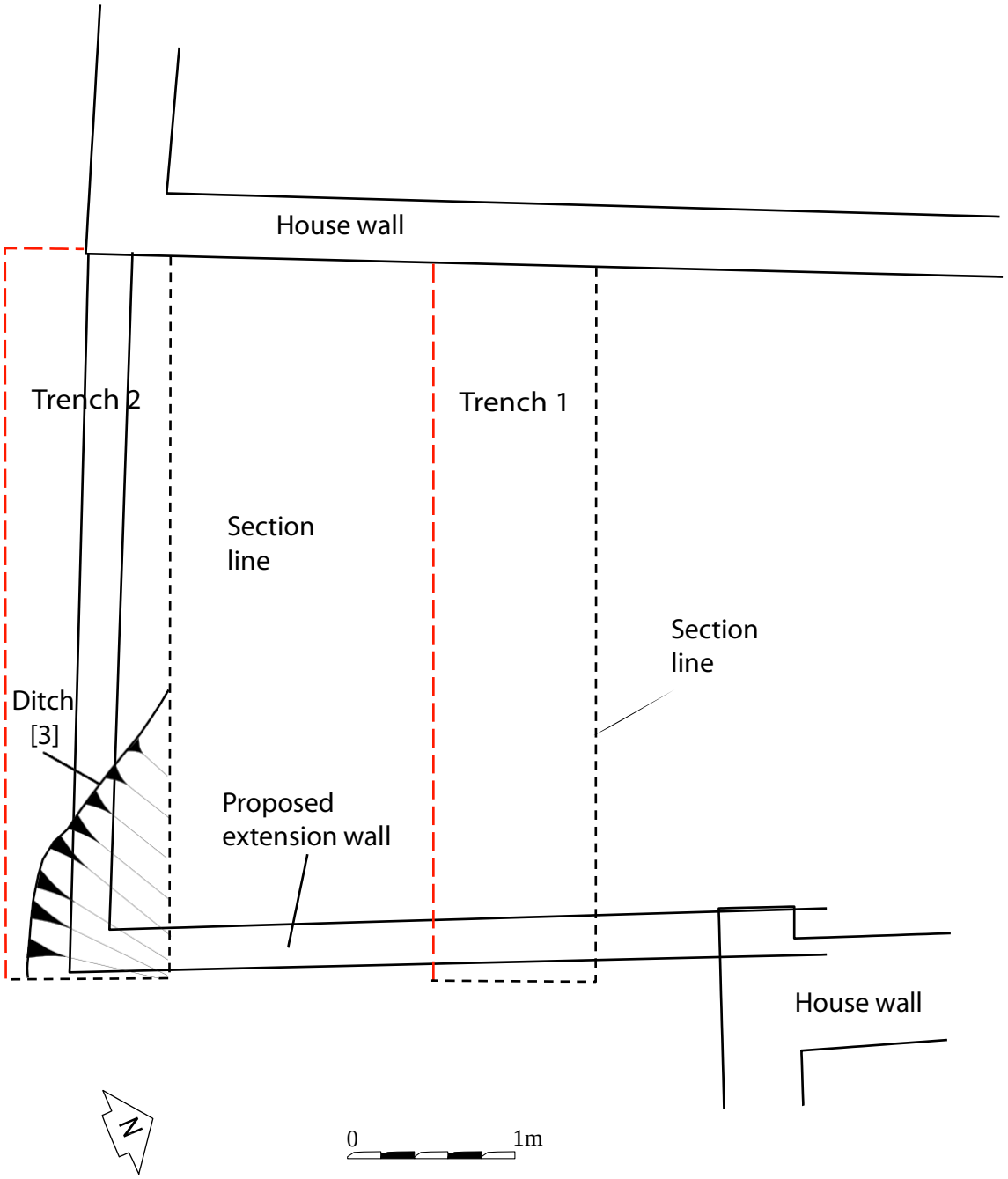
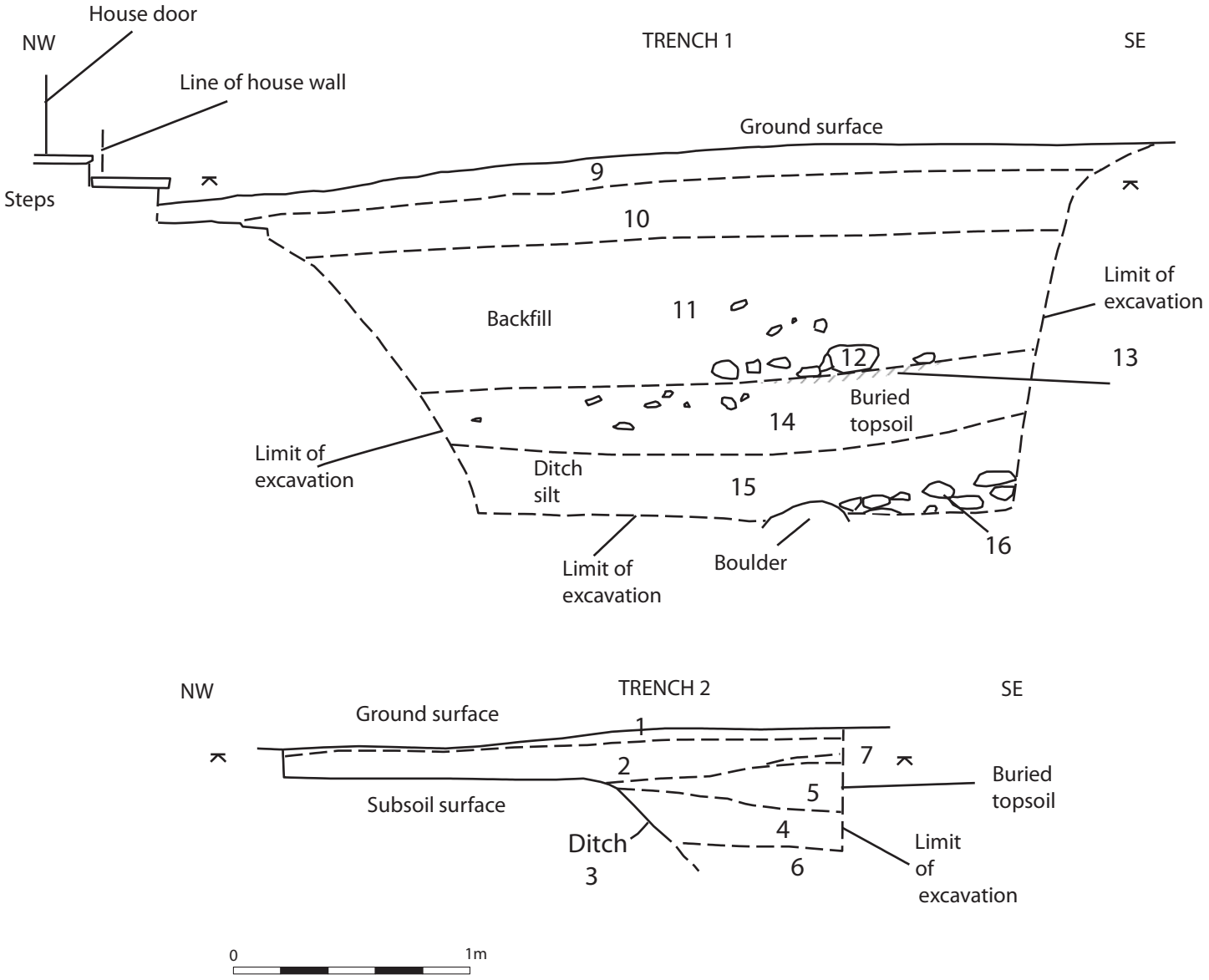

SW
NE
X
Y
Inner
rampart
0
5m
OUTBUILDING
WALL
HOUSE
WALL
TRENCH 2
DITCH
SIDE
TRENCH 1

Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 1a Plan of hillfort (after RCAHMW) showing location of trenches and levelled profile and 1b Profile of inner rampart and evaluation trenches

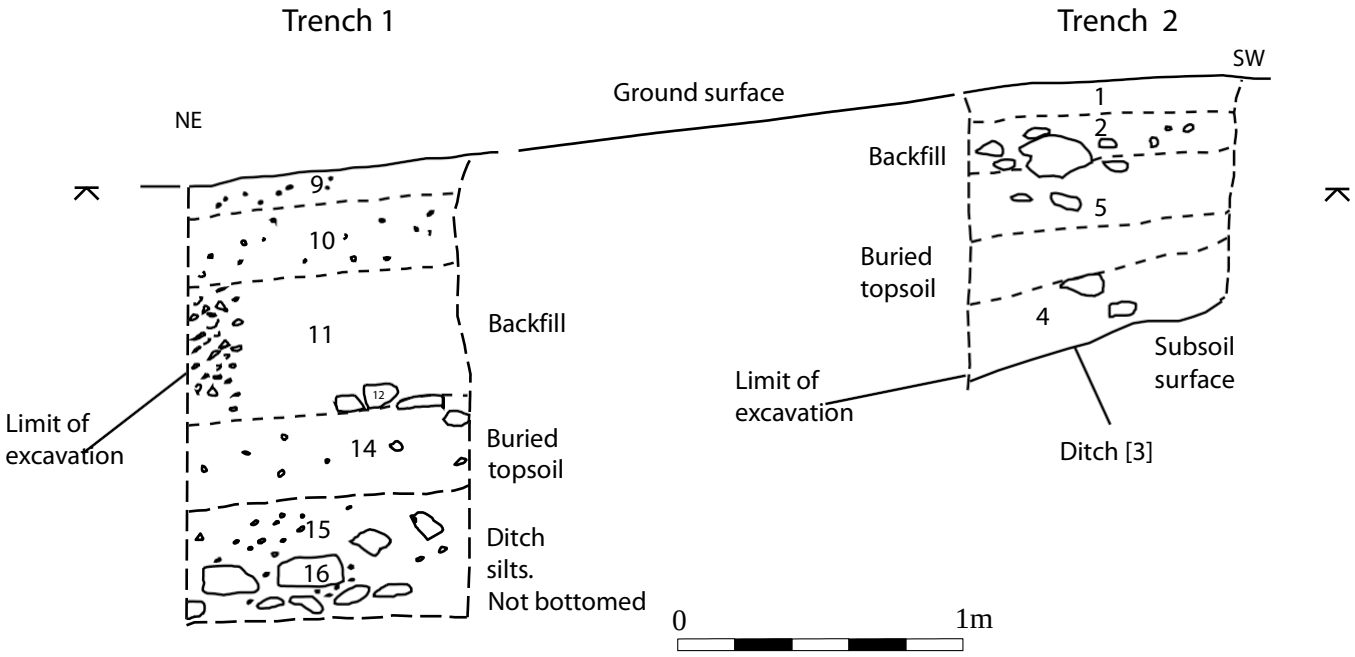


Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 2
Plan of evaluation trenches in relation to the proposed building extension



Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 3

Evaluation trenches, south-west facing sections



Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 4
Combined sections of trenches at south-east end showing ditch edge and silt lines

Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 5
Evaluation area before excavation. 1m scales

Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 6
Trench 1 after excavation showing ditch silts. 2m scale

Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 7
Trench 2 after excavation showing edge of hillfort ditch. 2m scale

Dinas Dinorwig Fig. 8
Evaluation area after backfilling

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