
Pen y Cefn Water Treatment Works: **Dolgellau, Gwynedd**



Archaeological Evaluation

GAT Project No.2110

Report No. 866

May, 2010

Archaeological Evaluation: **Pen y Cefn WTW, Dolgellau**

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Prepared for
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

May 2010

By
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G2110 PEN Y CEFN WATER TREATMENT WORKS, DOLGELLAU

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Project No. G2110

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PEN Y CEFN WATER TREATMENT WORKS (G2110)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Summary

A series of seven archaeological trial trenches have been excavated in advance of a proposed expansion of the Pen y Cefn Water Treatment Works. A relict boundary bank was located in one trench, and a stone-filled pit in another. No other features of significance were found. The relict boundary may represent an earlier field system pre-dating the mid-18th century. The potential for the survival of any additional archaeology is considered low. A watching brief is recommended during initial top soil and sub-soil removal.

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked by Black and Veatch on behalf of their clients Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to carry out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in advance of expansion of the Pen y Cefn Water Treatment Works. The works are sited at SH 72891856 north of Dolgellau.

This project forms the third phase of an archaeological assessment, of which the first two phases have been completed. The first phase included a desk-based assessment and field visit, whilst the second phase involved a magnetometer survey. Both phases were undertaken in March 2010 (GAT Report 850). No potential sites were identified by the desk-based assessment and field walkover, however several potential features were identified by the magnetometer survey (GAT Report 850, Appendix I). The location of the proposed development and compound/enabling works areas were located, and these locations were used to define the level of impact (fig 2). This third phase of assessment, involving the excavation of a series of evaluation trenches, was proposed in response to the level of impact and the results of the magnetometer survey.

2. DESIGN BRIEF AND SPECIFICATION

A detailed brief was not prepared for this scheme, however an archaeological assessment was required by the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA), an outline of requirements having been presented to Howard Jones of Caulmert in December 2009. A specification for the assessment was submitted to the SNPA by GAT (Appendix 3). This report conforms to that specification, and to the guidelines specified in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (1994, rev. 2008).

A desk-based assessment is defined as ‘a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate’ (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*, IFA 2001, 2).

The aims of the assessment as given in the specification are:

- to identify and record the cultural heritage within the defined study area;
- to evaluate the importance of what has been identified;
- to recommend ways in which impact upon the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

To comply fully with the aims expressed above it can be necessary to undertake a programme of Field Evaluation following the Desktop study and Field Visit. This is because some sites cannot be assessed by desktop or field visit alone, and additional fieldwork is therefore required. This typically takes the form of geophysical survey and/or trial excavation, although measured survey is also a possible option. A full programme of assessment and evaluation may therefore consist of:

- Desktop study
- Field walkover
- Initial report
- Field evaluation
- Draft report
- Final report

A desktop study, field walkover and magnetometer survey were undertaken during the first phase of the assessment. This phase of the project saw additional field evaluation undertaken in the form of a programme of trial trenching and the production of a report.

3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1 Impact and proposals

The study area, as defined within GAT Report 850, is divided into three areas as indicated in figure 1. The north and east parts of the site are to be fenced off and excluded from the development area. Two compound areas are indicated. These will be stripped of topsoil, and the surface protected by a layer of terram and 200mm of crushed stone. It may be necessary to undertake a watching brief during the stripping to ensure the stripping does not impact upon potential archaeological areas below. The area proposed for development lies in the field west of the existing works, and occupies the south half of the field, with an access road along the east side. This area was evaluated by trial excavation as described below.

3.2 Trial trenching

The excavations conformed to the guidelines specified in IFA Standards and Guidance: Field Evaluation (1994, rev. 2008), where field evaluation is defined as “a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate”.

If archaeological remains or deposits are found, then a decision based on the nature and status of the findings will determine the next phase of the project.

The field evaluation involved the excavation of a series of six trenches with dimensions of 30m x 5m and one trench with dimensions of 30m x 2m, representing an investigation of 10% of the area of the site. The trenches were located both to examine features noted during the magnetometer survey and to examine other areas. The work was phased, so that the results from the earlier trenches could inform the location of later trenches.

The work was undertaken according to the following specification.

All trenches were initially opened by a 360° tracked excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under direct archaeological supervision.

All undifferentiated topsoil or overburden of recent origin was removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon, in successive, level spits. Following machine clearance, all faces of the trench that required further examination or recording were cleaned using hand tools. All investigation of archaeological levels was by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording both in plan and section. Spoil heaps were monitored to recover artefacts to assist in the analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts. Modern artefacts were noted but not retained.

Within significant archaeological levels a minimum number of features required to meet the aims were hand excavated. Occasional pits and postholes were subject to a 50% sample by volume. Linear features were sectioned as appropriate. No archaeological deposits were entirely removed. The stratigraphy of all evaluation trenches was recorded even where no archaeological deposits were identified.

3.3 Processing data, illustration and report

Following the completion of the field work, the results were processed, final illustrations compiled and a report produced which details and synthesises the results. Survey drawings and a sample of relevant photographs are used to illustrate the report.

4. FIELD EVALUATION RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Six 30m x 5m trenches and one 30m x 2m trench were excavated (fig 2 and fig 3). In all cases the topsoil was dry and silty with low levels of organic matter. Occasional sherds of 18th/19th Century pottery were observed in the topsoil in all of the trenches. These were infrequent and presumably derived from manuring. No other artifacts or charcoal were recorded in the topsoil horizon apart from those noted in the individual trench descriptions below.

Subsoil was somewhat variable with extremely well cemented, hard stony silt in the upper part of the field and softer grey and orange-brown silts in the lower part of the field. The trenches were excavated between the 12th and the 20th April 2010. A series of geological test pits dug on the 21st April 2010 were also monitored.

4.2 Trench descriptions

Trench 1: Dimensions 30m x 5m

Between 0.4m and 0.5m of topsoil was excavated revealing clean orange-brown silt with patches of light grey very hard stony silt. One feature (004 Fig. 4), a concentration of stones, was visible. This extended beyond the southern side of the trench. A 4m x 2m extension to the trench was excavated in order to fully investigate the feature. It was half sectioned revealing a hollow with dimensions of 2.3m x 1.8m and a depth of 0.9m. The southern half and some of the lower part of the hollow was filled with silty loam similar to the topsoil. Overlying this on the northern side was a concentration of sub-rounded stones which extended into the lower part of the subsoil and appeared to have been plough-dragged to form a tail of stones to the north-west. No finds were recovered from the feature. There was little indication of the origin of the hollow; it was fairly regular suggesting that it was not a tree root bole. Possible interpretations are a large stone hole associated with field clearance or a deliberately dug pit of unknown date and function. The fills suggest that it was either partly backfilled or partly filled by eroded soil and then filled with stones. The stones are typical of the larger stones in the topsoil and it seems likely that this is a feature created during field improvement.

A linear anomaly on the geophysical survey crosses this trench. Nothing was observed during the topsoil stripping and the anomaly was not visible as a subsoil feature. A very slight bank c. 0.2m wide and 0.05m high can be seen to run down the field in an alignment that appears to match that of the geophysical anomaly. Examination of the trench section revealed no obvious change in the soil at the crossing point although there may be a slight increase in the stone concentration in the topsoil around this area. It seems likely that the geophysical anomaly was caused by the mostly ploughed out remnants of a field boundary that now only exists as an amorphous variation in the topsoil.

Trench 2: Dimensions 30m x 5m

Topsoil was excavated from this trench down to a depth of about 0.35m revealing natural subsoil. This consisted of very hard, well cemented, grey silt with frequent rounded and sub angular stones. A patch of loose reddish brown silty loam with dimensions of 1.9m x 0.75m was identified (005, Fig. 6). This was half-sectioned and then fully excavated revealing an irregular sided roughly kidney shaped hole 0.6m deep. There were several other small hollows in the top of the subsoil around this feature. No finds were recovered apart from two or three small charcoal flecks. The most likely interpretation is for this feature, given its irregular form, is a small root bole.

Trench 3: Dimensions 30m x 5m

Topsoil was excavated to a depth of between 0.5 and 0.6m revealing slightly undulating natural subsoil. This again consisted of very hard, well cemented, grey silt. The undulations in the surface of the subsoil were

irregular and widely spaced and were interpreted as natural variations. No archaeological features were identified in this trench apart from a linear patch of redeposited grey subsoil that could be seen to run across the trench. This corresponded to a slight linear hollow running across the field and was interpreted as a modern land drain. This feature was not excavated

Trench 4: Dimensions 30m x 5m

Topsoil was excavated to a depth of between 0.5 and 0.6m revealing clean orange-brown silt with patches of hard, grey, stony silt. An irregular topsoil-filled hollow in the subsoil (014) about 1.5m in diameter was investigated and found to be a shallow disturbance and probably the result of root action. A continuation of the land drain observed in trench 3 was also recorded.

Trench 5: Dimensions 30m x 5m

Topsoil was excavated to a depth of between 0.5 and 0.6m revealing clean orange-brown natural silt with patches of hard, grey, stony silt. Four small features were identified cut into the subsoil (Fig. 5).

Feature 007 was visible as a sub-circular patch of soil and charcoal with dimensions of 0.6m x 0.7m. This was sectioned and found to be the fill of a small hollow or pit 0.1m deep. The fill was fairly uniform and contained flecks of charcoal and burnt clay. The sides of the hollow were irregular giving the impression that this was a natural depression. A second, slightly smaller, irregular depression (009) 0.5m to the north also contained flecks of charcoal. Interpretation of these slight features is difficult but agricultural activity such as tree root or stone removal seems most likely. The features seem to be too slight and irregular to have been deliberately cut. An irregular patch of charcoal rich soil about 1.2m in diameter (010) was identified in the lower 0.2m of the topsoil close to the centre of the trench. This was hand excavated showing it to be distinctly root-shaped with small linear charcoal lines radiating from the edges of the feature. This is best interpreted as the burnt remnants of a small tree root presumably associated with field clearance. Its survival in the topsoil suggests that it may post-date the deepest ploughing and may be fairly recent.

Feature 012 was a regular oval pit with dimensions of 0.6m x 0.5m. It was sectioned and found to be 0.1m deep. The fill contained charcoal and fragments of burnt clay that were fairly randomly distributed and therefore did not appear to be *in situ* burning. The sides of the feature were fairly regular indicating either a deliberate cut or a round stone-hole. No artifacts were recovered. The function and date of this feature are unknown but it could again relate to clearance or other agricultural activity.

Trench 6: Dimensions 35m x 5m

Topsoil was excavated to a depth of 0.6m revealing clean orange-brown natural silt with patches of harder, grey, stony silt. No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 7: Dimensions 30m x 2m

This trench was located in order to investigate a somewhat irregular linear geophysical anomaly in response to plans to realign the access road. The trench was excavated using a 3T mini-digger due to health and safety concerns about working beneath electricity cables. Topsoil was removed to a depth of between 0.2m and 0.5m. The only archaeological feature present was a spread stony bank (013, Fig 7) that corresponded to both the geophysical anomaly and a slight earthwork in the field. The bank consisted of an 8.0m wide spread of rounded stones and reddish brown loam sitting directly on the subsoil. It was a maximum of 0.25 m deep. The stone was most concentrated in the southern part of the bank suggesting that it had mostly been spread downhill (i.e. to the north) presumably by ploughing. There was a build up of reddish-brown loam on the uphill (southern) side of the bank indicating that this feature is a plough-damaged lynchet.

The poor condition of this feature makes identification and dating difficult, but it is best interpreted as a relict field bank. The map regression evidence (see GAT report 850) indicates that the current field pattern has remained unchanged since 1760, which suggests the boundary pre-dates the mid-18th century.

Test pit monitoring

The excavation of six geological test pits was monitored. All were approximately 1.3m wide and 5m long and were excavated to a depth of between 2.5m and 4.0m. Their locations are shown on Fig 2. No archaeological features were observed in any of the pits. The topsoil varied between 0.22m and 0.42m

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The trenches revealed no sign of occupation, and no significant artefacts or paleoenvironmental evidence were found. Two possible field banks were identified. The first (passing through trenches 1 and 2) was visible as a slight above ground rise which coincided with a linear feature on the magnetometer survey, however there was no below ground archaeological evidence visible. In trench 7 a similar slight earthwork was visible as a spread of rounded stones lying above the natural clay and below the topsoil. This is interpreted as a former field bank, however it is not shown on the 18th century estate map, so if the interpretation is correct the field bank pre-dates 1760. These two possible boundaries, as indicated on the magnetometer survey (fig 2), may continue to the north and west to meet and form a right-angled corner of an enclosure.

5.2 Recommendations

The results of the assessment and evaluation suggest the area proposed for impact is of low archaeological potential. Two possible pre-1760 banks have been identified, though only one could be identified as a below-ground feature. This feature will only be crossed by the access road, and will not be impacted upon elsewhere. No other potential boundaries were identified on the magnetometer survey, so there is very little potential for the identification of any additional examples by further fieldwork. There remains very slight potential for the identification of non-linear features, such as pits or postholes, which are too small to show clearly on the magnetometer survey. A watching brief during the initial construction phase is recommended to ensure any such features are identified and recorded.

APPENDIX I: CONTEXT REGISTER

GWYNEDD ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

CONTEXT REGISTER

PROJECT NAME AND CODE, G2011 PEN Y CEFN WTW, DOLGELLAU
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No.	Site Sub-division	Description	Initials	Date		
001	Tr 1	General Number for Top Soil	MJ			
002	Tr 1	General Number for Natural soil	MJ			
003	Tr 1	Stone Spread/ Fill	MJ			
004	Tr 1	Cut/ Natural hollow containing (003)	MJ			
005	Tr 2	Irregular Pit	DH			
006	Tr 5	Area Of Intense Bunning	MJ			
007	Tr 5	Natural hollow/ Rough Pit	MJ			
008	Tr 5	Soil with Charcoal Fill of [007]	MJ			
009	Tr 5	Natural hollow/ Rough Pit	MJ			
010	Tr 5	Tree Bowl Irregular Pit	DH			
011	Tr 5	Fill of small Pit /Hollow Charcoal rich	MJ			
012	Tr 5	Cut of (011) Small Pit /Hollow	MJ			
013	Tr 7	Stoney Bank	DH			

APPENDIX 2

PEN Y CEFN WTW, DOLGELLAU

PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION (G2110)

Prepared for Black and Veatch, March 2010

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has been asked by Black and Veatch on behalf of their clients Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to provide a cost and project design for carrying out an archaeological evaluation in advance of expansion of the Pen y Cefn Water Treatment Works. The works are sited at SH 72891856 north of Dolgellau.

An archaeological assessment, including a magnetometer survey, was undertaken in March 2010 (GAT Report 850). No potential sites were identified by the desk-based assessment and field walkover, however several potential features were identified by the magnetometer survey (GAT Report 850, Appendix I). The location of the proposed development and compound/enabling works areas were located, and these locations have been used to define the level of impact.

This design is to be agreed by the Snowdonia National Park Archaeologist, who is monitoring the archaeological programme on behalf of the Park.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS

A desk-based assessment is defined as “a programme of assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate” (IFA 2001, 2)

The aims of the assessment are:

- to identify and record the cultural heritage within the defined study area;
- to evaluate the importance of what has been identified;
- to recommend ways in which impact upon the cultural heritage can be avoided or minimised.

To comply fully with the aims expressed above it is necessary to undertake a programme of Field Evaluation following the Desktop study and Field Visit. This is because some sites cannot be assessed by desktop or field visit alone, and further, intrusive, investigation is therefore required. The full programme of assessment and evaluation will therefore consist of:

- Desktop study
- Field walkover
- Initial report
- Topographical survey and report
- Field evaluation
- Draft report
- Final report

This design is for the last three phases. The final report will contain details of mitigation recommendations. These might range from avoidance, which will ensure there is no impact upon the site, to full excavation of archaeological features.

3. METHOD STATEMENT

3.1 Impact and proposals

The study area, as defined within GAT Report 850, is divided into three areas as indicated in figure 1. The north and east parts of the site will be fenced off and excluded from the development area. Two compound areas are indicated. These will be stripped of topsoil, and the surface protected by a layer of terram and 200mm of crushed stone. It will be necessary to undertake a watching brief during the stripping to ensure the stripping does not impact upon potential archaeological areas below. The area proposed for development lies in the field west of the existing works, and occupies the south half of the field, with an access road along the east side. This area will be evaluated by trial excavation as described below.

3.2 Trial trenching

The excavations will conform to the guidelines specified in IFA Standards and Guidance: Field Evaluation (1994, rev. 2008), where field evaluation is defined as “a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate”.

If archaeological remains or deposits are found, then a decision based on the nature and status of the findings will determine the next phase of the project.

This phase of the work will involve the excavation of a series of trenches each 1.8m wide, with the aim of ensuring that some 10% of the site is investigated. The exact layout will be determined through consultation with the clients and the SNP Archaeologist. However a suggested layout is given in fig 1. The trenches have been placed both to examine features noted during the magnetometer survey and to examine other areas. The work will be phased, so that the results from the earlier trenches can inform the location of later trenches.

The work will be undertaken according to the following specification.

All trenches will be initially opened by machine. This will normally be a JCB 3CX type excavator or a 360° tracked excavator with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. All machining will be undertaken under direct archaeological supervision.

All undifferentiated topsoil or overburden of recent origin will be removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon, in successive, level spits. Following machine clearance, all faces of the trench that require examination or recording will be cleaned using hand tools. All investigation of archaeological levels will be by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording both in plan and section. Spoil heaps will be monitored to recover artefacts to assist in the analysis of the spatial distribution of artefacts. Modern artefacts will be noted but not retained.

Within significant archaeological levels a minimum number of features required to meet the aims will be hand excavated. Occasional pits and postholes will be subject to a 50% sample by volume. Complex clusters of pits will be sampled more selectively. Linear features will be sectioned as appropriate. Features not suited to excavation within narrow trenches will not be sampled. No archaeological deposits will be entirely removed unless this is unavoidable. It is not necessarily the intention that all trial trenches will be fully excavated to natural stratigraphy, but the depth of archaeological deposits across the site will be assessed. The stratigraphy of all evaluation trenches will be recorded even where no archaeological deposits have been identified.

3.3 Processing data, illustration and report

The level of post-excavation analysis and reporting for the purposes of the evaluation will be sufficient to establish the character, scale, date range, artefactual and palaeo-environmental potential and overall significance of the remains.

The level of artefact analysis will be sufficient to establish date ranges of archaeological deposits, a general assessment of the types of pottery and other artefacts to assist in characterising the archaeology, and to establish the potential for all categories of artefacts should further archaeological work be necessary.

Palaeo-environmental samples, if appropriate, will be processed and scanned to establish the site's potential for yielding valuable information of this type. The scanning will be performed by specialists with appropriate experience of assessing the significance and potential of such material on the basis of limited analysis. Samples

will be retained for possible future detailed analysis.

The significance of any archaeology will be judged by general reference to the non-statutory criteria for scheduled monuments. The report on the evaluation will provide an assessment of the impact of the scheme and an outline of mitigation measures proposed. The findings will be discussed with the Development Control archaeologist.

Following the completion of the field work, the data will be processed, final illustrations will be compiled and a report will be produced which will detail and synthesise the results. Survey drawings and a sample of relevant photographs will be used to illustrate the reports.

The report will include:

- Introductory statements
- Aims and objectives
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusions and mitigation recommendations
- Archive location
- Appendices
- Illustrations
- References and bibliography

3.4 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 Sites and Monuments Record) within six months of the completion of the project. All digital data will be written to CD-ROM and stored with the paper archive. Copies of the report will be placed with the regional HER, Snowdonia National Park and National Monuments Record. The results will be published in an appropriate format if relevant.

4. PERSONNEL

The work will be supervised by Mr Andrew Davidson, Principal Archaeologist. The work will be undertaken by one of the Trust's Archaeologists experienced in the relevant skills/periods required. Details of personnel involved, with *curricula vitae*, can be supplied upon request.

5. MONITORING AND TIMING

Monitoring visits can be arranged during the course of the project with the clients and with the appropriate Development Control archaeologist.

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** (2006). Risks will be assessed prior to and during the work. A Method Statement, Health and Safety policy and Risk Assessment will be agreed with the clients prior to the start of the project.

7. INSURANCE

The Trust holds public liability insurance with an indemnity limit of £5,000,000 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).

8. OTHER

Any queries concerning the above should be directed to Mr Andrew Davidson or Mr John Roberts at the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Offices, Garth Road, Bangor. Telephone (01248) 352535.

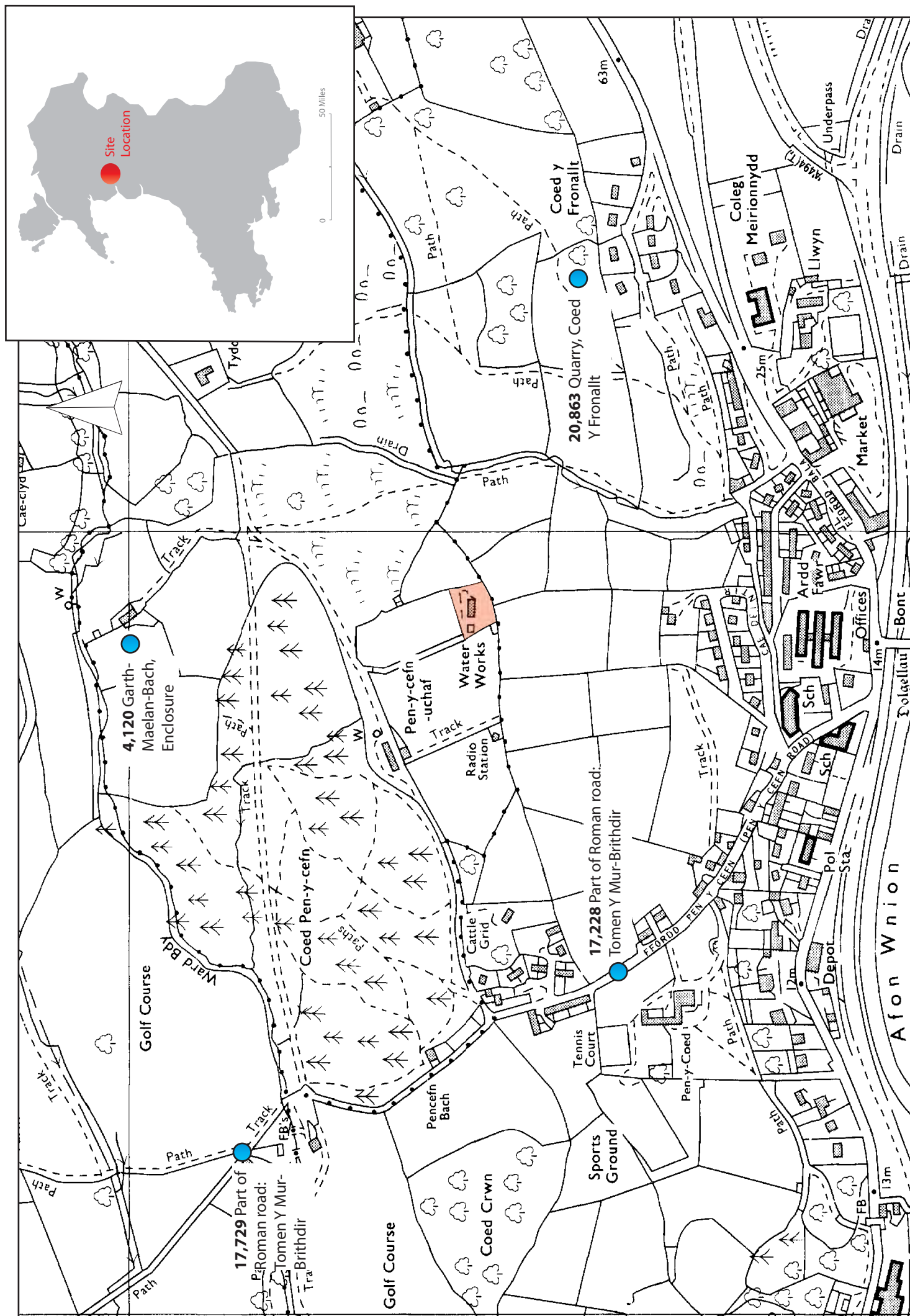




Fig. 2 Trench location, areas of impact and geophysical survey results

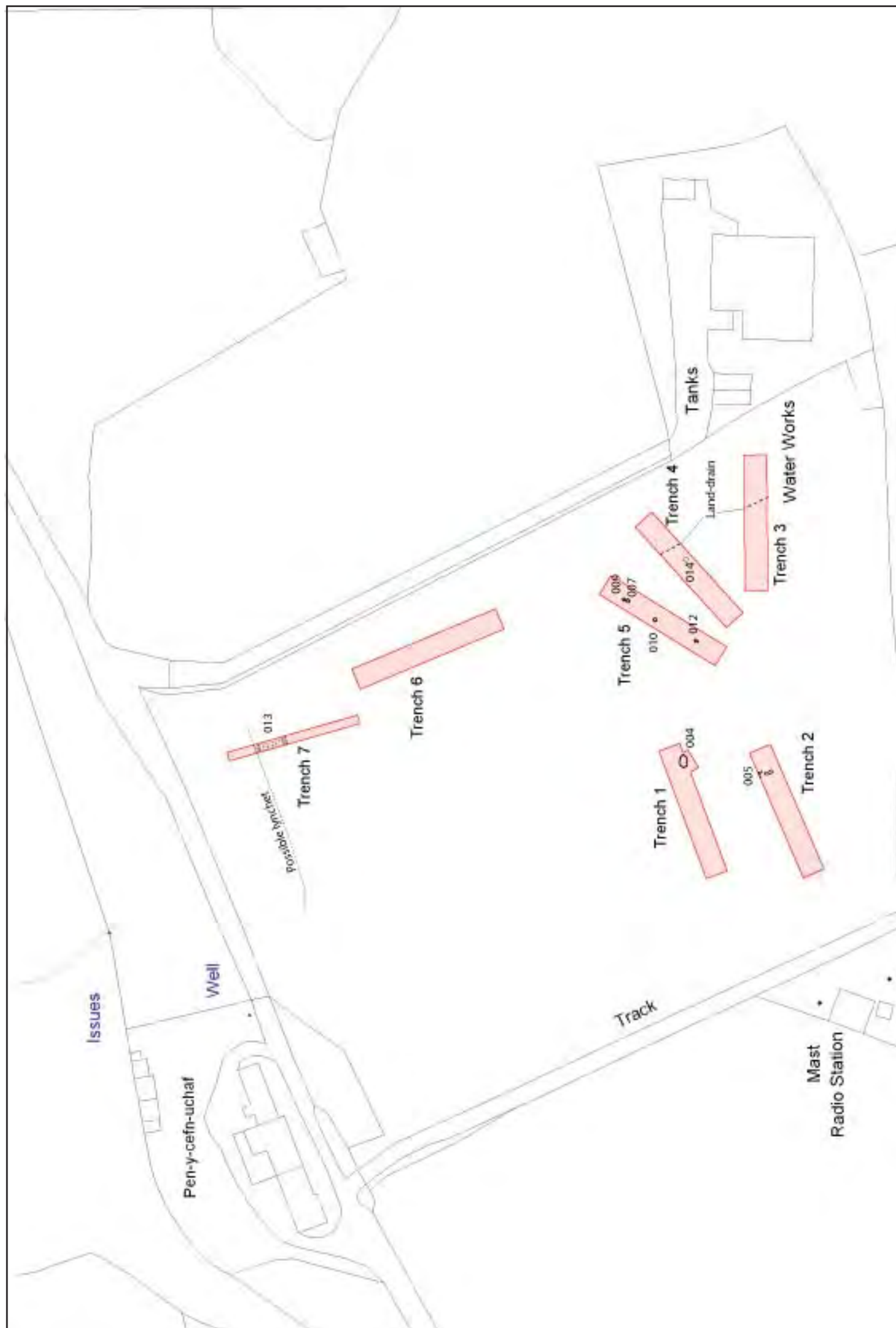


Fig 3 Trial trench and archaeological feature location

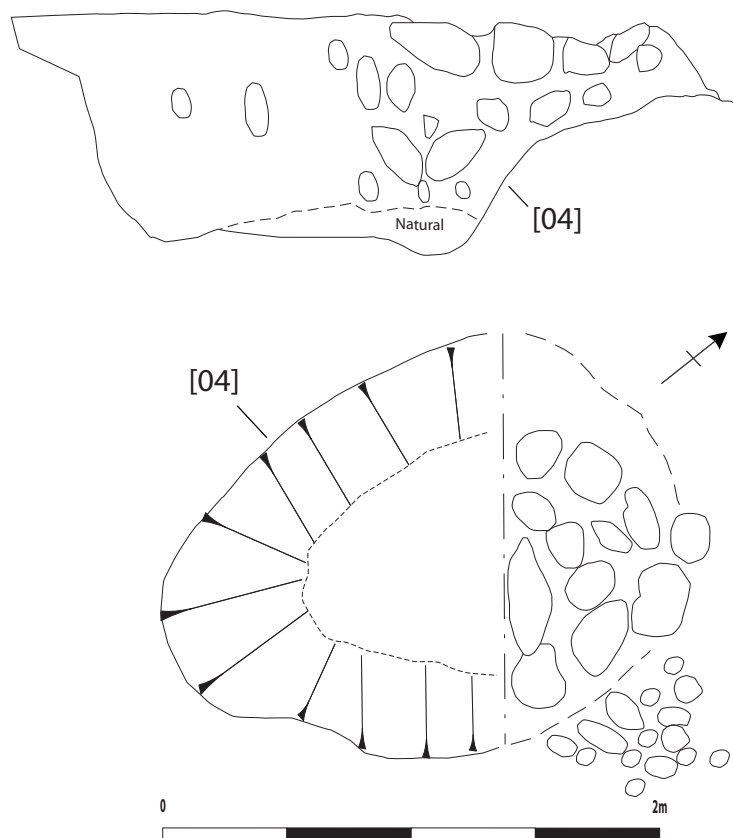


Fig. 4 Stone-filled pit (04) in trench 1

Feature 007



Feature 010



Feature 012

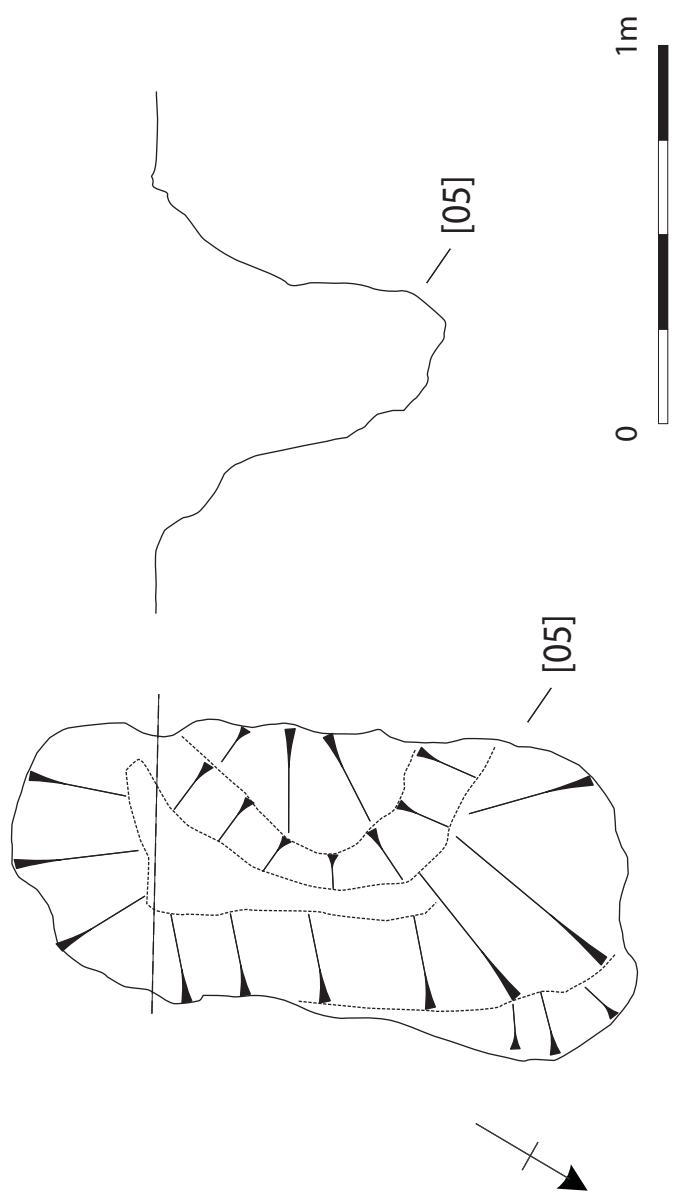
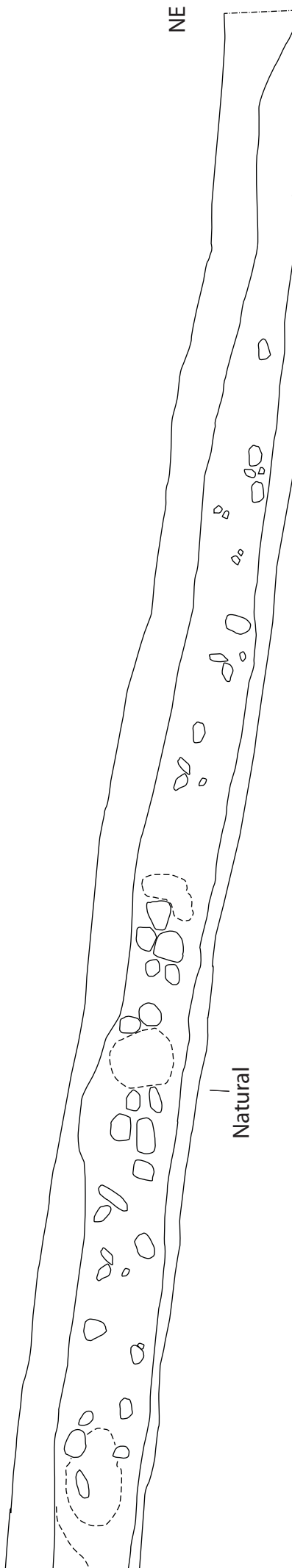


Fig. 6 Feature (005) in Trench 2

Fig. 6 Feature (005) in Trench 2



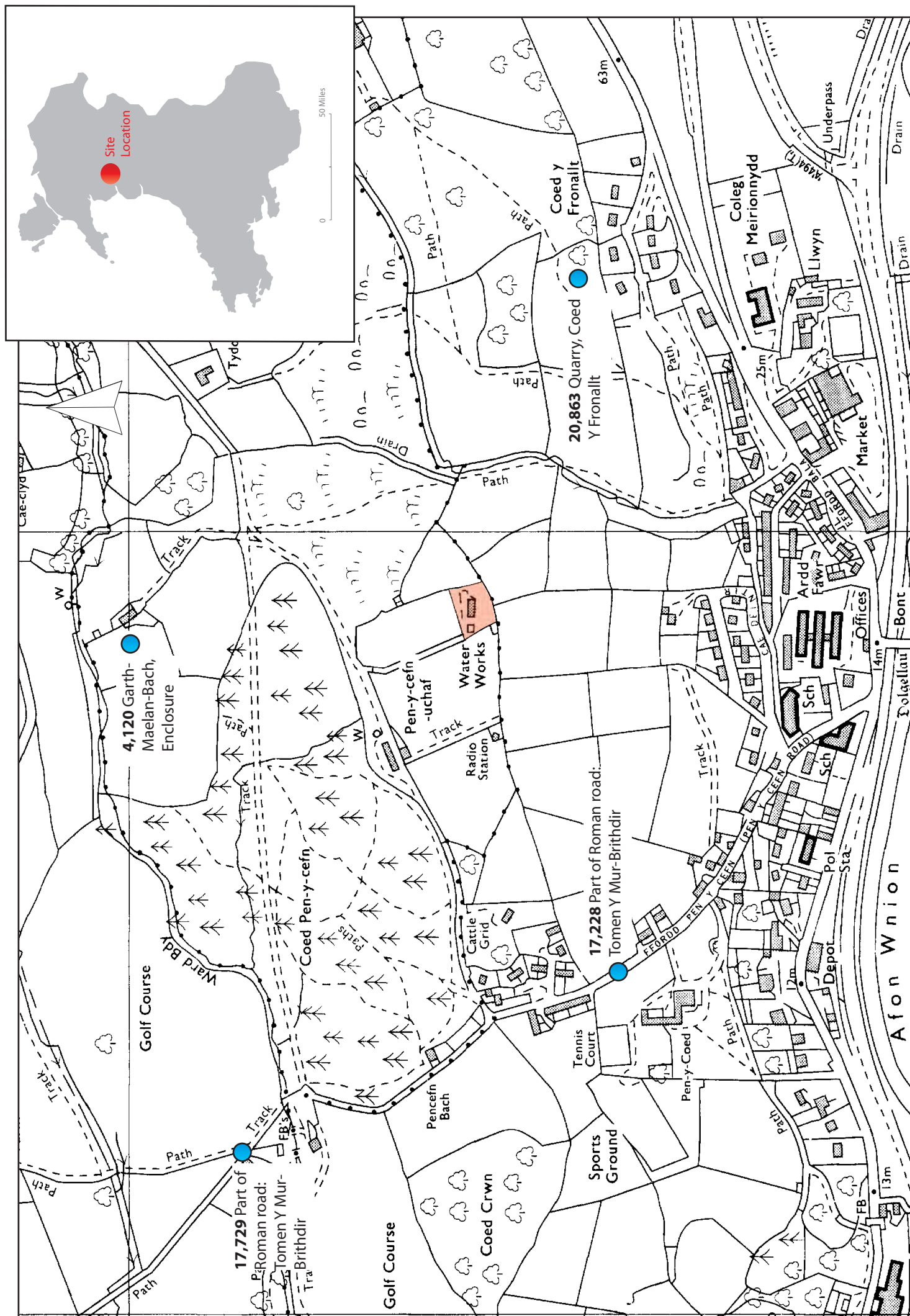




Fig. 2 Trench location, areas of impact and geophysical survey results

Feature 007



Feature 010



Feature 012

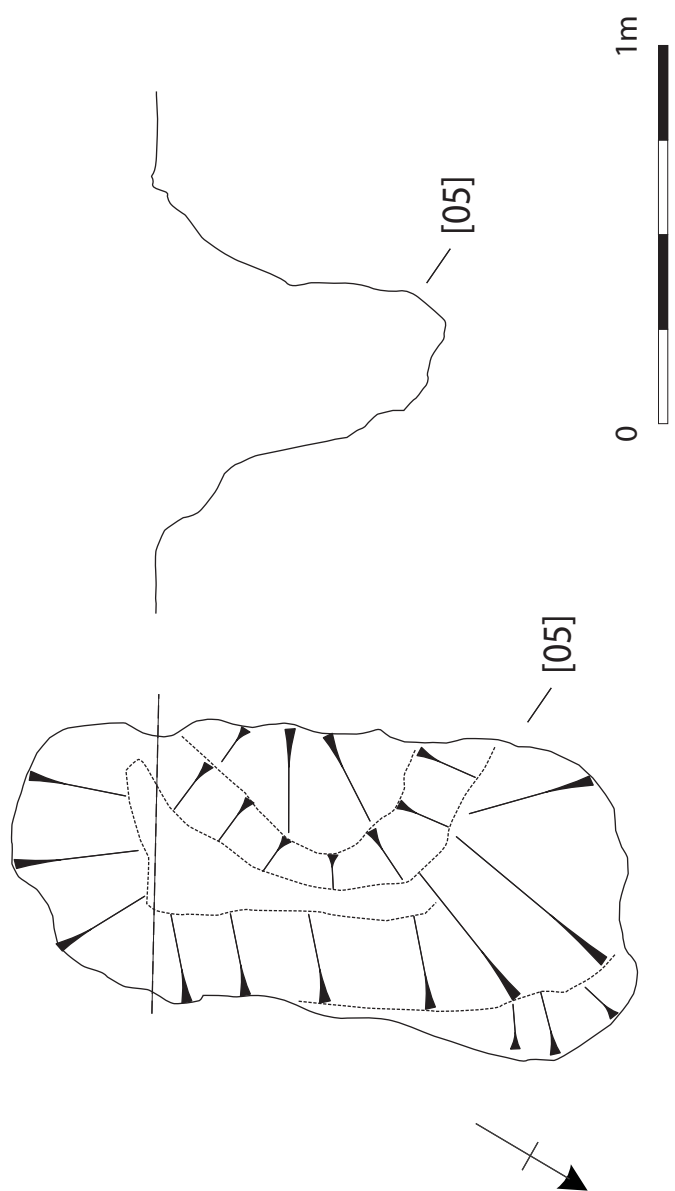
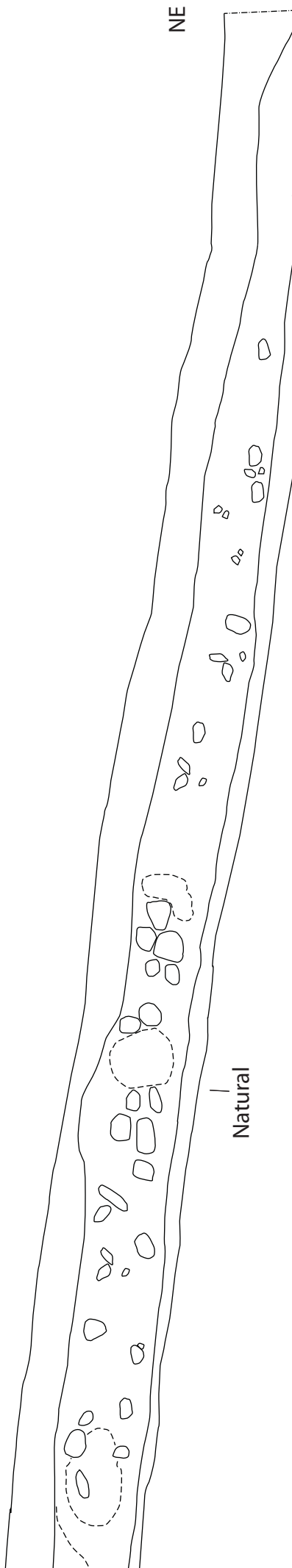


Fig. 6 Feature (005) in Trench 2

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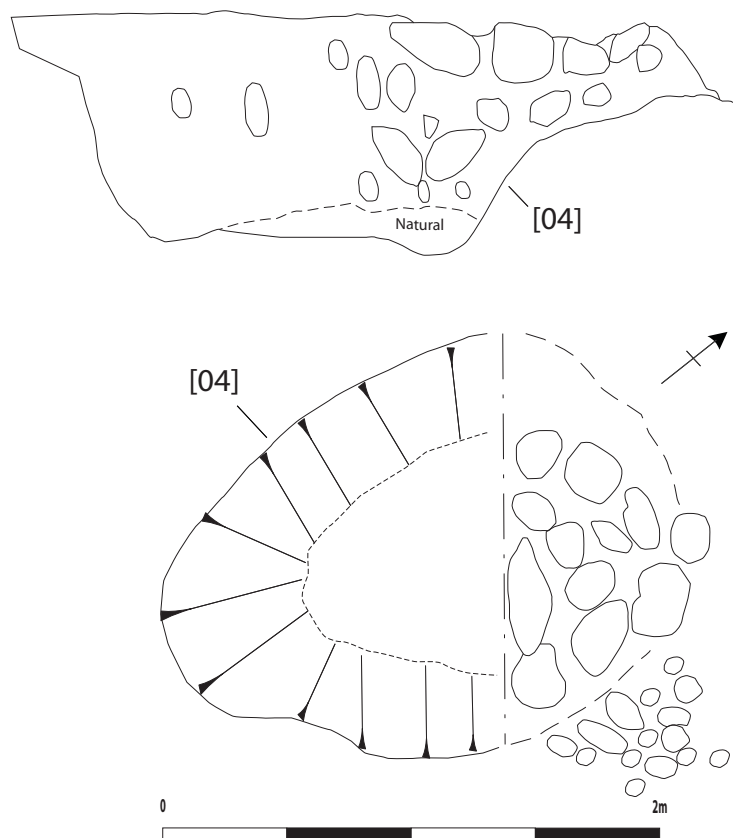


Fig. 4 Stone-filled pit (04) in trench 1

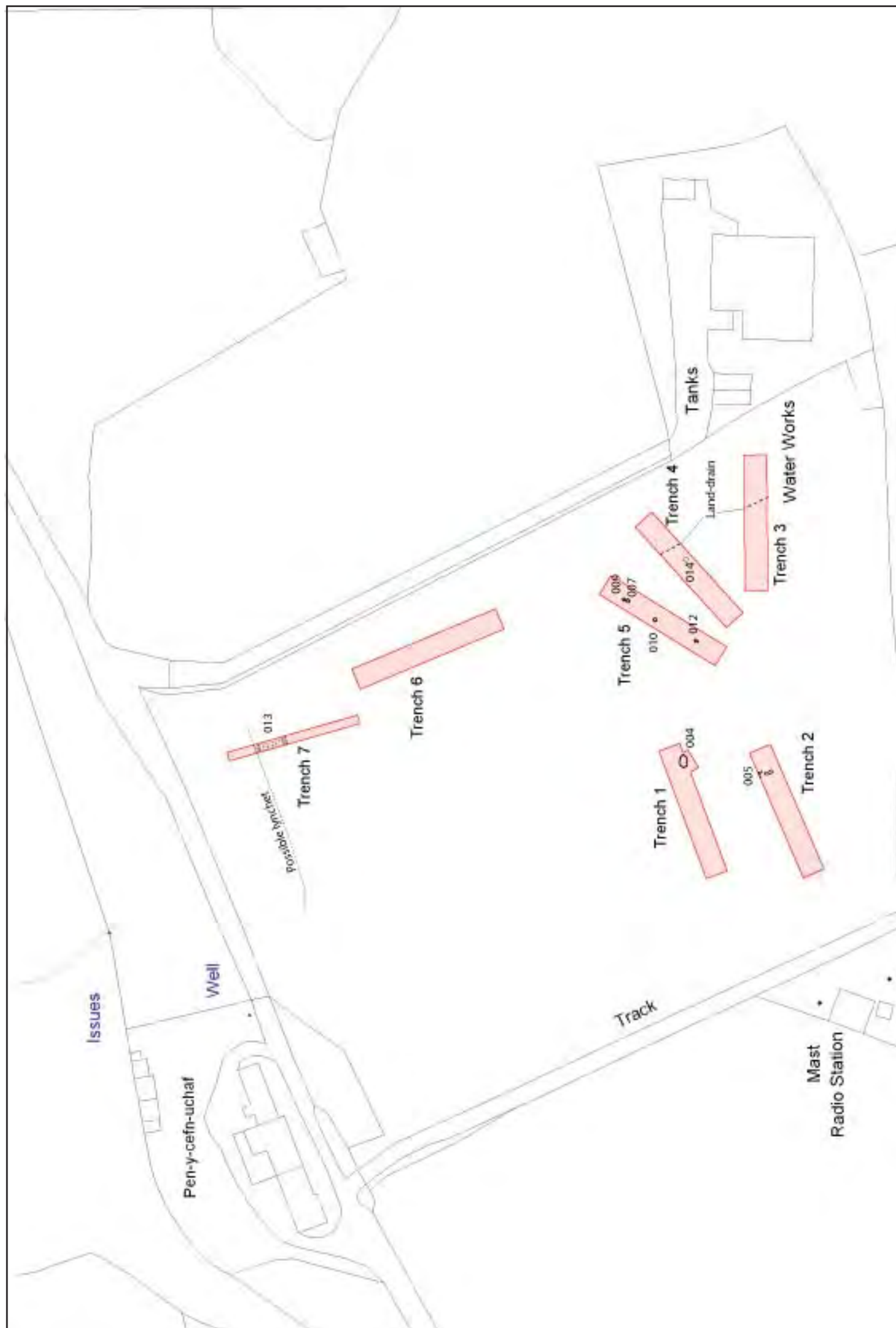


Fig 3 Trial trench and archaeological feature location