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## Preliminary Report on Excavations at Dan-Y-Graig House, Porthcawl

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PRELIMINARY REPORT

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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS AT DAN-Y-GRAIG HOUSE. ~~4732~~

by Richard Newman and Ian M Price

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS AT DAN-Y-GRAIG HOUSE, PORTHCAWL, MID GLAMORGAN

The site was located at S.S. 8407 7805, approximately 35 m. west and 15 m. south of the south-west corner of Dan-y-Graig House. Two trenches 2 m. x 10 m. at an alignment of 357° magnetic, were excavated on a landscaped terrace 1.5 m. east of a property boundary marked by a ha-ha. Prior to landscaping this area would have been at the base of a steep rise. The areas geology is carboniferous limestone.

4735m

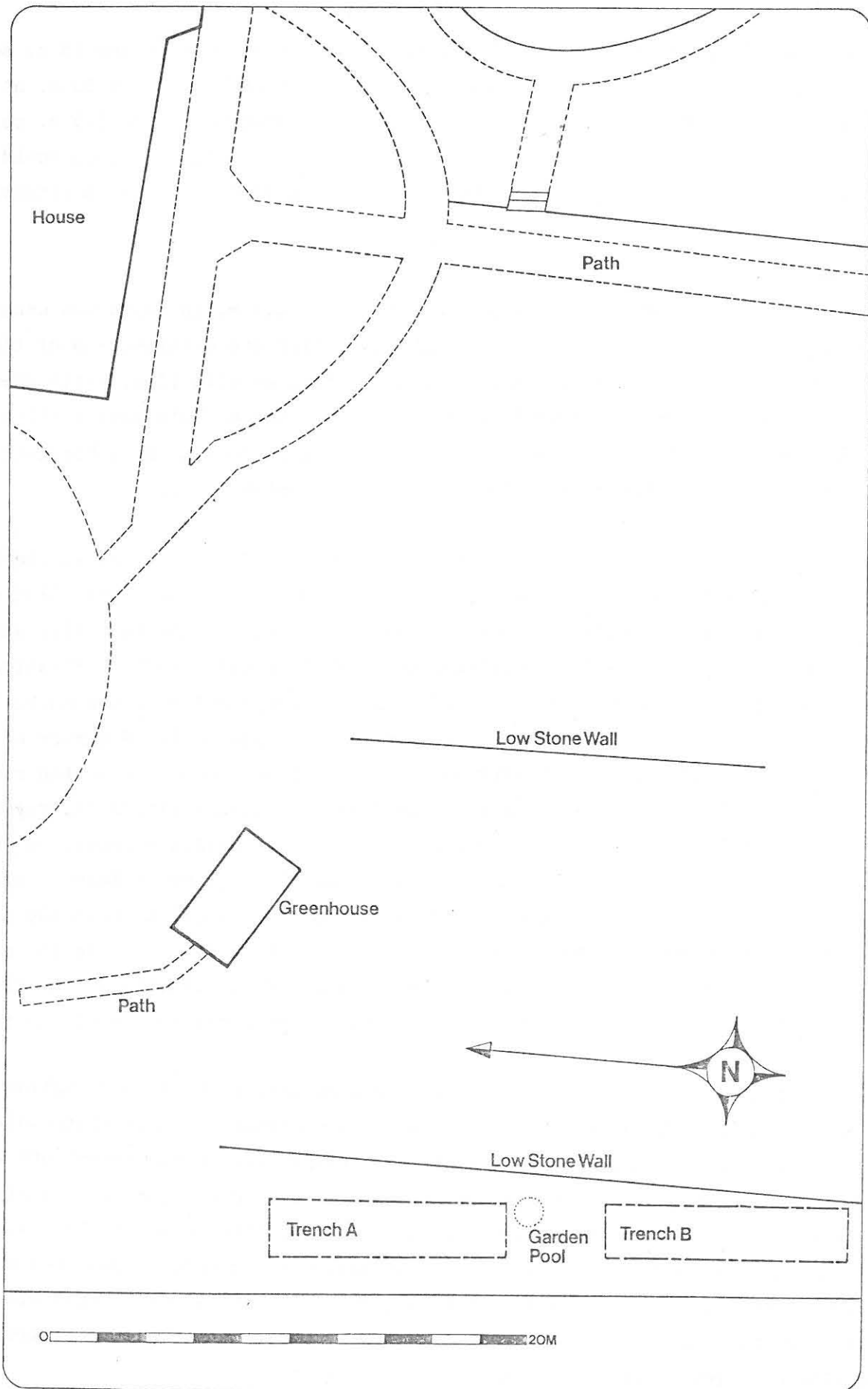
Trench A

Beneath the turf layer a mid-dark brown loam, about 0.3 m. in depth was encountered, it was probably laid down for landscaping after the construction of the ha-ha in c. 1850. It overlay a mid-brown loam, flecked with lime, which seemed to have been laid down for levelling at the time of the ha-ha's construction. This had been cut along the line of the eastern trench section by a hardcore path the finds from which indicated a late 18th - 19th century date.

Removal of the above levels revealed the surfaces in existence prior to the ha-ha's construction. At the southern end of the Trench was a bank consisting of a mid-dark brown loam containing large quantities of pennant sandstone tile and carboniferous limestone building rubble, some of which still had an off-white mortar/wall plaster adhering to it. Prior to the construction of the ha-ha this bank appears to have had its top removed and been levelled off. A spread of mid-dark brown loam extending northwards away from the bank appears to be the remnants of this material. A concentration of large limestone blocks within it, may relate to a wall that may have been on top of the bank. Shallow depressions in the top of this layer were filled with a largely stone free mid-brown loam. This and the underlying layer were cut by a solitary post hole, 0.9 m. from the southern end of the trench. It may have been one of many (the rest outside the excavation) forming a fence following an old field boundary, visible in the field to the west. The mid-brown loam formed a layer at the northern end of the trench.

Also underlying the lime flecked loam layer was an east-west aligned shallow robber trench 0.8 - 0.9 m. wide, the cutting of which can probably be associated with the formation of the mid-brown loam layer at the northern end of the trench and with the levelling of the bank to the south. It appeared to cut a compacted surface of thin limestone fragments and pennant sandstone tiles, this proved to be a layer of metalling that butted the robbed wall. This wall was encountered just below the surface of the robber trench fill. This suggests that it was not specifically dug out to rob stone, but merely as part of the 'post medieval' levelling process that this site experienced prior to the ha-ha's construction.





Location Of Trial Excavations At Dan-Y-Graig House.

The removal of the surfaces associated with the sites levelling revealed the bank at the southern end butted by the metalled surface which to the north butted the robbed wall, the northern face of which was butted by another similar metalled surface of thin limestone fragments and sandstone tile. There was no direct dating evidence for any of these features, but, on association with the underlying and overlying layers, it is likely that they represent the last stage of Roman activity on the site.

Both the bank and the metalled surfaces contained fragments of painted red and yellow wall plaster in their matrices. The robbed wall consisted of worked carboniferous blocks bound together by a mortar mixed foam lime and red sand. There was no evidence for plaster rendering on the wall. Removal of the surviving upper courses showed that its foundations were of packed carboniferous limestone within a red clay matrix filling a foundation trench to an unknown depth.

The removal of the metalled surface to the north of the above wall showed that it was 1.4 m. wide and 0.35 m. deep adjacent to the wall, becoming shallower to the north where it apparently cut a probably redeposited reddish-brown loam (more clay like than the overlying loam layers). The metalled surface to the south was 3.4 m. wide and 0.20 m. deep. It overlay an earlier superior quality metalled surface made of fist sized pebbles and hardcore, this was 1.6 m. wide and 0.30 m. deep and also abutted the south face of the wall. It had been packed into a cut through a reddish-brown loam and would appear to form a path or walkway. Its stratigraphical relationship with the overlying metalled surface shows that it was either contemporary with or more likely earlier than the bank at the south of the trench.

A similar earlier metalled surface was found abutting the north face of the wall, underlying the probably redeposited reddish-brown loam. This material may have accumulated between the abandonment of the earlier metalled surface and the construction of the later or it may have been laid down to level the area up prior to the construction of the later metalled surface. The earlier metalled surface to the north of the wall stretched to the limits of the excavation and varied from 0.03 - 0.20 m. in depth. In the north-west corner of the trench it was cut by a rectangular pit 0.55 m. x 0.50 m. containing a post hole, 0.24 m. in diameter in its south-eastern corner.

Both of the earlier metalled surfaces abutted not only the wall courses but the foundations of the wall, suggesting that they were laid down soon after the wall was built and therefore belong to a contemporary construction phase, which probably pre-dated the bank. This hypothesis is given further credence by the destruction

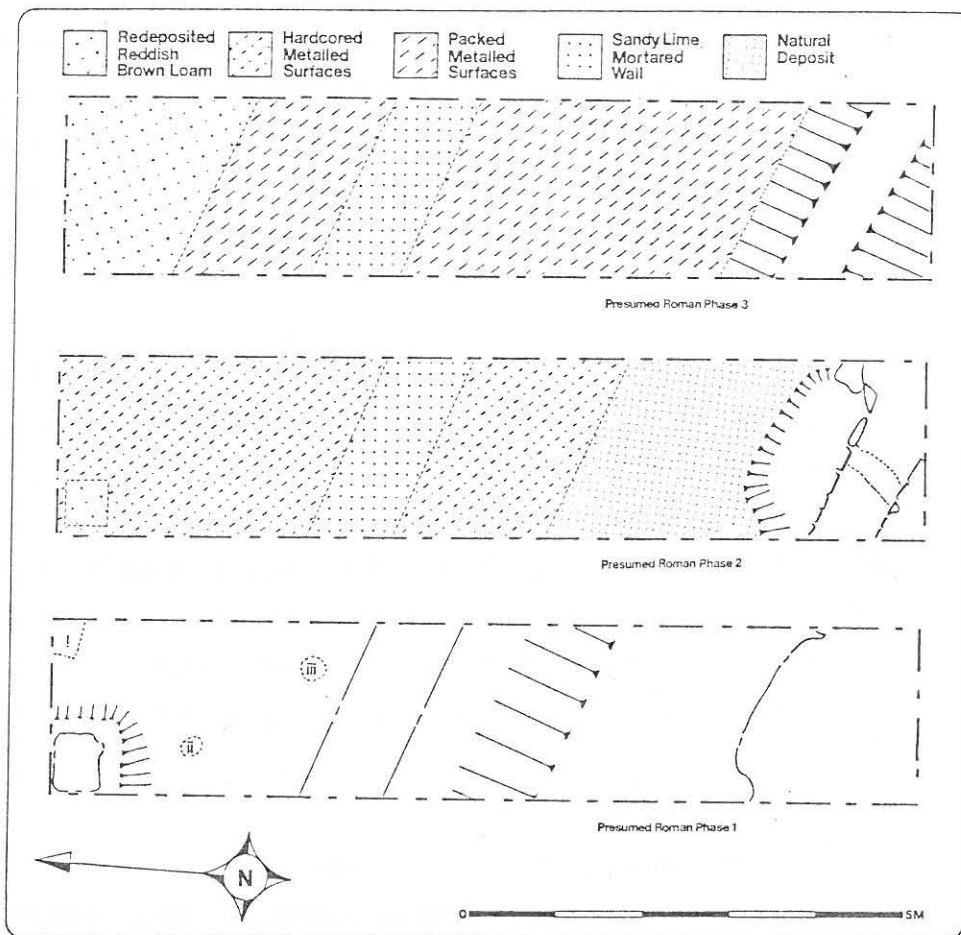
material contained within the bank, none of which is found within the earlier metalled surfaces. The only finds from within these two layers (apart from a nail) were large quantities of very burnt animal bone.

4732m

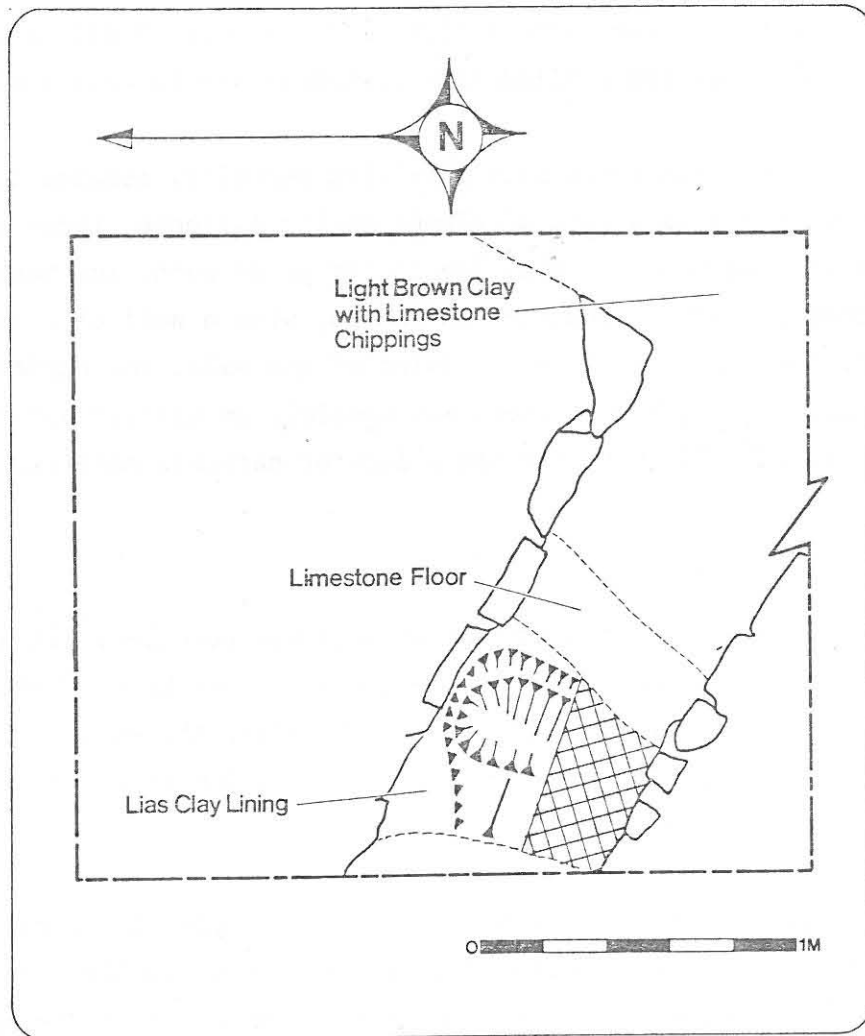
Underlying the above surfaces and therefore pre-dating the wall was the reddish brown loam layer. This was cut in the north-east corner of the trench by a void 0.46 m. x 0.3 m. (i) to the limits of the excavation, which was filled by large pieces of limestone rubble, the feature continued outside the excavation limits. Two post holes were also found, the one 0.27 m. in diameter and 0.11 m. deep (ii) and the other 0.27 m. in diameter and 0.35 m. in depth (iii). Both were filled with a grey gritty material apparently derived from the overlying metalled surface. The reddish-brown loam appeared to be about 0.15 m. in depth and overlay a red clay, but this was observed only in the excavation of post holes i and iii.

4733m

At the southern end of the trench the bank was removed to reveal a cut through the reddish brown loam. It was filled with a mid-brown loam containing large amounts of destruction rubble, consisting of mortared limestone blocks, painted wall plaster and fragments of sandstone roofing tiles, some with chamfered edges and nail holes. The layer was very similar to the overlying bank matrix, but con-



TRIAL EXCAVATIONS PRESUMED PHASES ONE, TWO AND THREE.



DETAILED PLAN OF PHASE TWO FEATURES.

4734m  
 tained larger quantities of building destruction debris. It seems likely that both the bank and this fill belong to the same phase of development. The fill was found to belong to a cut caused by the presumed robbing of an underlying stone structure. This structure has been tentatively identified as a 'T' shaped 'drying' kiln of a type often referred to, perhaps erroneously as a 'corn dryer'.

The kiln was found to consist of a stone lined flue filled by a dark grey loam containing many sandstone roofing tiles, animal bone, Romano-British pottery and a piece of worked red deer antler. It was 0.6 m. wide by 1.2 m. in depth and aligned to  $292^{\circ}$  magnetic. At its eastern end a right angled junction was observed, close to the trench side, this is assumed to be the northern branch of the 'T'. A layer of charcoal 0.1 m. deep ran the entire length of the flue, overlying at the eastern end a reddish brown clay with limestone chippings packed in it. To the west a line of limestone extended across the flue dividing the above surface from a burnt sand deposit. This extended over the western end of the flue and filled the upper level of a pit lined with a yellow clay. Underlying the burnt

sand in the pit was unburnt orange sand, which in turn overlay a grey grit. It would seem that this was some form of fire pit, but full investigation of this feature was curtailed by the limited time available for the excavation.

It would appear that beneath the site levelling deposits, assumed to be post-medieval although there is a lack of direct dating evidence, there exist Roman levels of at least two broad phases. The latest phase being the bank and the metalled surfaces containing destruction debris, with a wall of a previous phase still standing. The previous phase consisted of the wall, the hardcore metalled surfaces and probably the kiln. There was possibly an earlier Roman phase represented by cuts i, ii, iii but there was a lack of dateable material to confirm this.

### Trench B

Beneath the turf line an orange-light brown loam was revealed. It was redeposited material as it overlay an old turf line and contained Romano-British pottery. It had possibly been laid down during or shortly after the construction of the ha-ha. It was cut along the line of the eastern section of the trench by the hardcore path noted in Trench A.

Underlying the above was a light brown loam with a greyish tinge cut by an east-west aligned ditch filled with a grey loam and limestone rubble and containing 18th - 19th century pottery. Further work was concentrated at the northern end of the trench. The light brown greyish tinged loam was removed revealing a light brown-orange loam containing Romano-British coarseware and being at a depth of 0.60 - 0.70 m. The surface was marked with shallow depressions filled with material from the overlying layer. These were possibly caused by a large hooved animal. It seems likely that this trench was outside of the main area of occupation activity on the site.

### Conclusion

On the basis of two small trenches it is very difficult to interpret the features found. However enough evidence has been accumulated to suggest that there were probably at least two Romano-British phases at the site. Whilst it is impossible to know whether the wall found was part of a building, its width of about 0.90 m. suggests that it probably was, there was certainly at least one building close by as indicated by the worked masonry rubble, sandstone roof tiles and painted wall plaster. This plus the evidence of the metalled surfaces and the kiln suggest that there could be a villa complex at Dan-y-Graig. The main area of such a site probably lies to the west and north of these excavations and is marked by earthworks in the adjacent field.