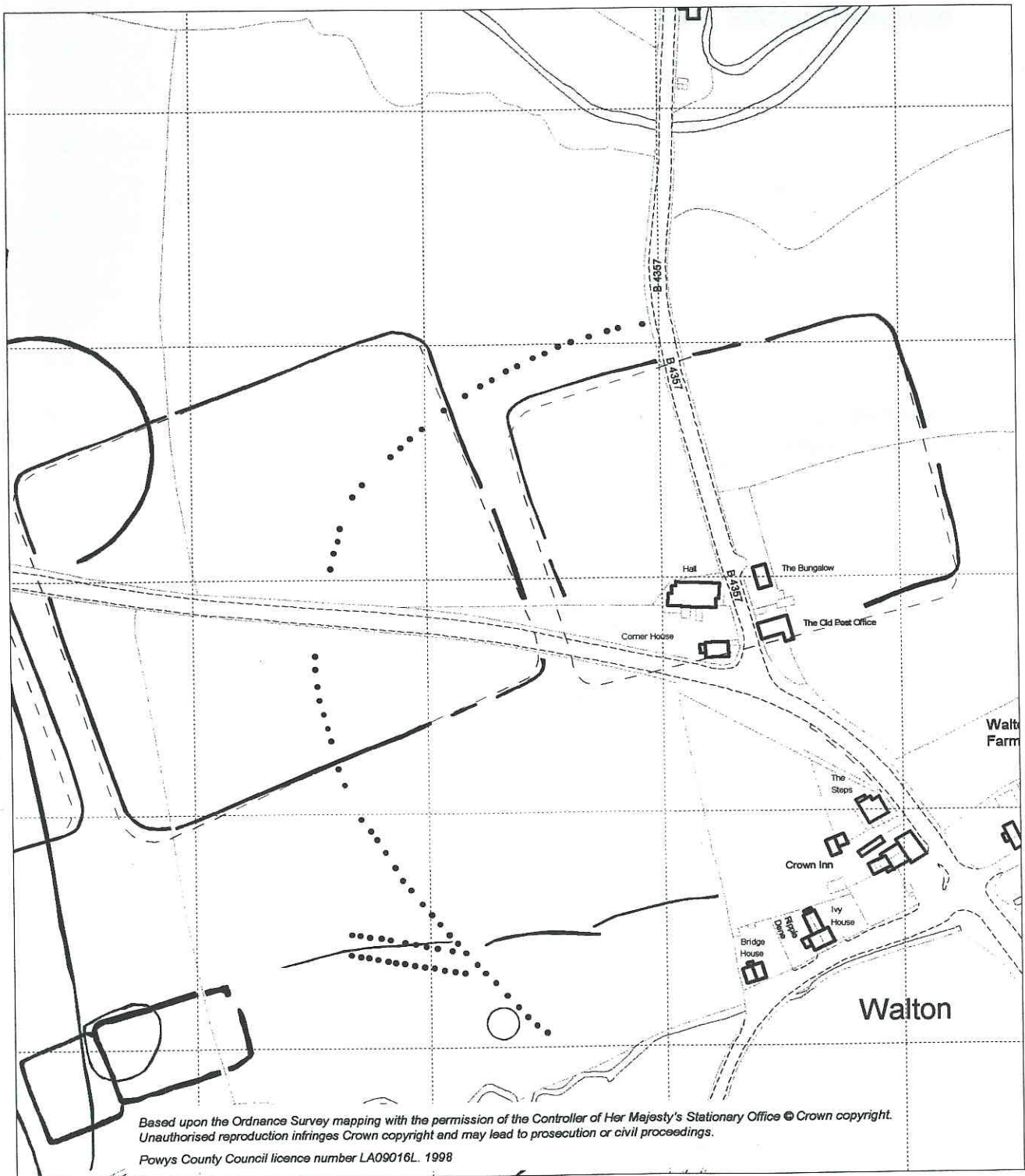


Walton Pit Circle, Radnorshire

TRIAL EXCAVATION 1998



CPAT Report 298

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November 1998

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS	2
3	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	2
4	EXCAVATION	2
5	CONCLUSIONS	3
6	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY	3
8	APPENDIX 1. SITE ARCHIVE	4

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. The Walton Pit Circle and other cropmarks. Scale 1:2,500	5
Figure 2. Location of Excavation Trench. Scale 1:1,250	6
Figure 3. Plan and section of the half-sectioned pit	7

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Trial excavation of the Walton pit circle (NGR SO25455990; PRN 4255) was undertaken by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in an attempt to confirm the nature and date of this site.
- 1.2 Following consultation with the landowner to negotiate access, the excavation took place from the 7-11 of September 1998.
- 1.3 Funding for the project was partly by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments as part of the Walton Neolithic Enclosures Project (Project 766) and partly through the SEPAH Project (Survey, Exploration and Protection of the Archaeological Heritage), funded by the European Commission as part of the Raphael Programme in 1998/99.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

- 2.1 Walton pit circle lies within the Walton (or Radnor) basin, to the west and north of Walton village, lying between the Summergil Brook and Riddings Brook (Fig. 1) at an altitude of approximately 189m OD.
- 2.2 The site is currently under arable cultivation and is located on deep well-drained fine loamy soils with slowly permeable subsoils overlying drift from Palaeozoic sandstone and shale (Rudeforth *et al*, 1984), as well as some stream terrace gravels (Gibson 1998, 1.1).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The high archaeological potential of the area has been attested by excavation, fieldwalking, survey, aerial photographic survey and geophysical survey, carried out as part of the Walton Basin Project (see Gibson 1998). One of the larger sites in the basin, the Walton pit circle, was first discovered by Dr J K St Joseph in 1975 (Joseph 1980, 49) and consists of a curvilinear alignment of pits visible as individual cropmarks on aerial photographs. The cropmark appears to represent part of western side of a sub-circular palisaded enclosure measuring about 300m across, possibly associated with a double alignment of pits (PRN 5295) forming an avenue to the SW (Fig. 1). There is no cropmark evidence for the eastern side of the enclosure, and it is possible that the Ridding Brook formed the southern boundary. Walton village lies to the SE and presumably overlies part of the site. On the basis of comparisons with a similar types of enclosures, for example Meldon Bridge, Peebleshire (Burgess 1976) this site has been attributed to the later Neolithic (Gibson 1998, 2.1). The site is overlain by two scheduled Roman marching camps (PRNs 370 and 371; SAM Rad 138), with a third (PRN 372) lying further to the west. Other cropmarks within the immediate area include a ring ditch (PRN 33128) and a series of intermittent slightly curving ditches, which may be associated with a cropmark enclosure (PRN 5133) lying to the west, or are possibly modern drainage ditches.
- 3.2 While the potential importance of this site has been recognised, the necessity of trial excavation to attempt to confirm the nature and date of the site was also noted (Gibson 1998). The trial excavations were carried out in an attempt to fulfil these twin aims.

4 EXCAVATION

- 4.1 The choice of locations for excavation were limited by factors including the extent of the scheduled ancient monument area of the Roman marching camps and the wish to cause as little disruption as possible to the field in question. Consequently, it was decided to excavate one of the cropmark pits immediately adjacent to the field boundary along the western side of the B4357 (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 The area for the excavation was identified using information from rectified aerial photographic plots. The excavated area measured 11 x 9m, with the plough soil (1) being removed by machine to a depth of approximately 0.5m. A full drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context records in the site archive.
- 4.3 The removal of the ploughsoil revealed the natural subsoil (2), composed of a poorly sorted, compact, green-grey gravel, with larger subrounded to subangular clasts and patches of gravely clay in the upper levels. This surface was cleaned by hand.

- 4.4 Approximately central to the trench an oval feature (3) was identified, measuring 4.3 x 2.0m, and aligned NNE-SSW (Fig. 3). Half-sectioning of the feature revealed a post pit c. 1.3m deep below the surface of the natural subsoil at the NNE end, becoming shallower towards the SSE. The remains of the post-pipe could be identified at the deeper end of the feature, narrowing from 0.9m at the top to 0.4m at the bottom. The fill (5) consisted of a friable, gravely silty clay, orangy red-brown in colour, with subrounded to subangular clasts up to 0.1m in diameter. Patches of brown silty clay loam were also present throughout the context, as were flecks of charcoal. Larger pieces of charcoal were also present, particularly towards the bottom of the feature (see stippled area on Fig. 3). There was a sufficient concentration of charcoal to suggest that it was associated with the post-pipe, but there was no clear indication of whether it might represent the charred base of the post itself.
- 4.5 To the SSE of the post-pipe the post pit had been constructed with a sloping base to form a ramp to facilitate the erection of the post. The fill consisted of material which had presumably been packed into the feature after the post had been erected. The basal fill (6) was a loose, poorly sorted, grey green gravel, with subrounded clasts, and a small percentage (less than 5%) of orange-red silty clay. Overlying this lay a loose, grey green gravel with components of subangular clasts up to 0.12m diameter and red-brown silty clay (less than 25%) (7), and a loose, friable, poorly sorted red-brown gravely silty clay with larger clasts up to 0.15m diameter (4), which may represent later disturbance to the upper fill of the pit.

Charcoal Identification by Kate Barrow

- 4.6 A sample of charcoal taken from the base of context 5 was sent to the Department of Archaeology, University of Lampeter, for identification. Twenty samples of charcoal were identified as being representative of the 2mm fraction, all of which have been identified as oak which appears to have originated from relatively slow growing wood.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The excavated feature represents a post-pit measuring about 4.3 x 2m, for a post 0.4m or more in diameter, with post ramp to one side. The charcoal identified from towards the base of the post-pipe has been retained, but for the time being it has been considered to be unsuitable for a reliable radiocarbon date for the precise date of construction of the post-pit given the uncertainties about what the charcoal represents and the fact that it appears to represent slow-growing wood.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 Assistance with the excavation was provided by Glyn Owen and Pat Frost. Report editing and illustrations were by Nigel Jones. CPAT would like to thank the following: the landowner, Mr Jones, for permission to excavate; Mr and Mrs Goodwin for their continued support and assistance; Kate Barrow and Astrid Caseldine, Department of Archaeology, University of Wales Lampeter, for the charcoal identification; and Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments and the European Commission for funding.

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APPENDIX 1: SITE ARCHIVE

Site Data

7 context forms

1 A3 annotated site plan/section

EDM survey, rectified to OS grid, Mapinfo table

1 black and white negative film, prints and contact prints

1 colour slide film

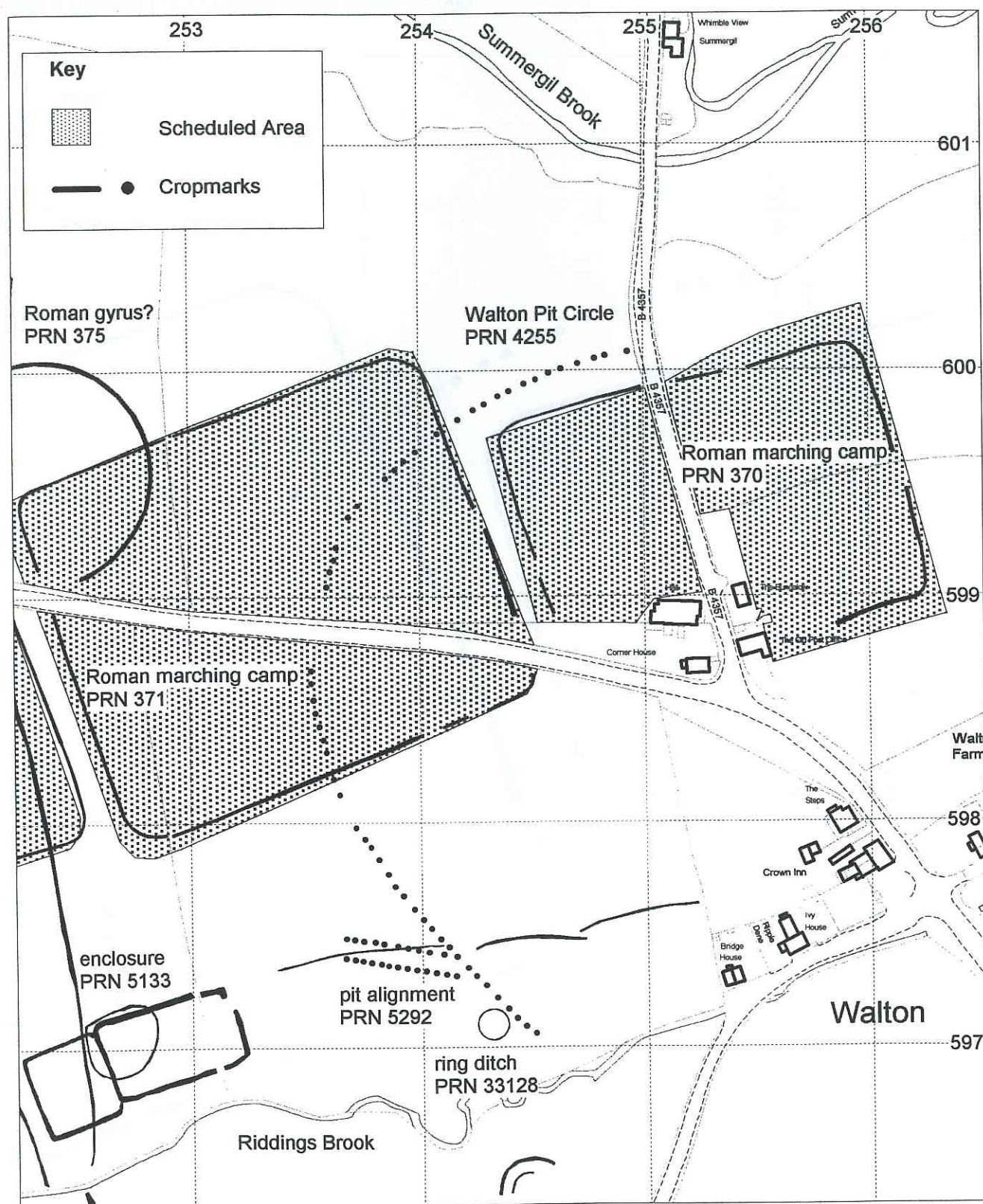
Photographic catalogue

Finds

3 soil samples from context 5

1 charcoal sample from context 5

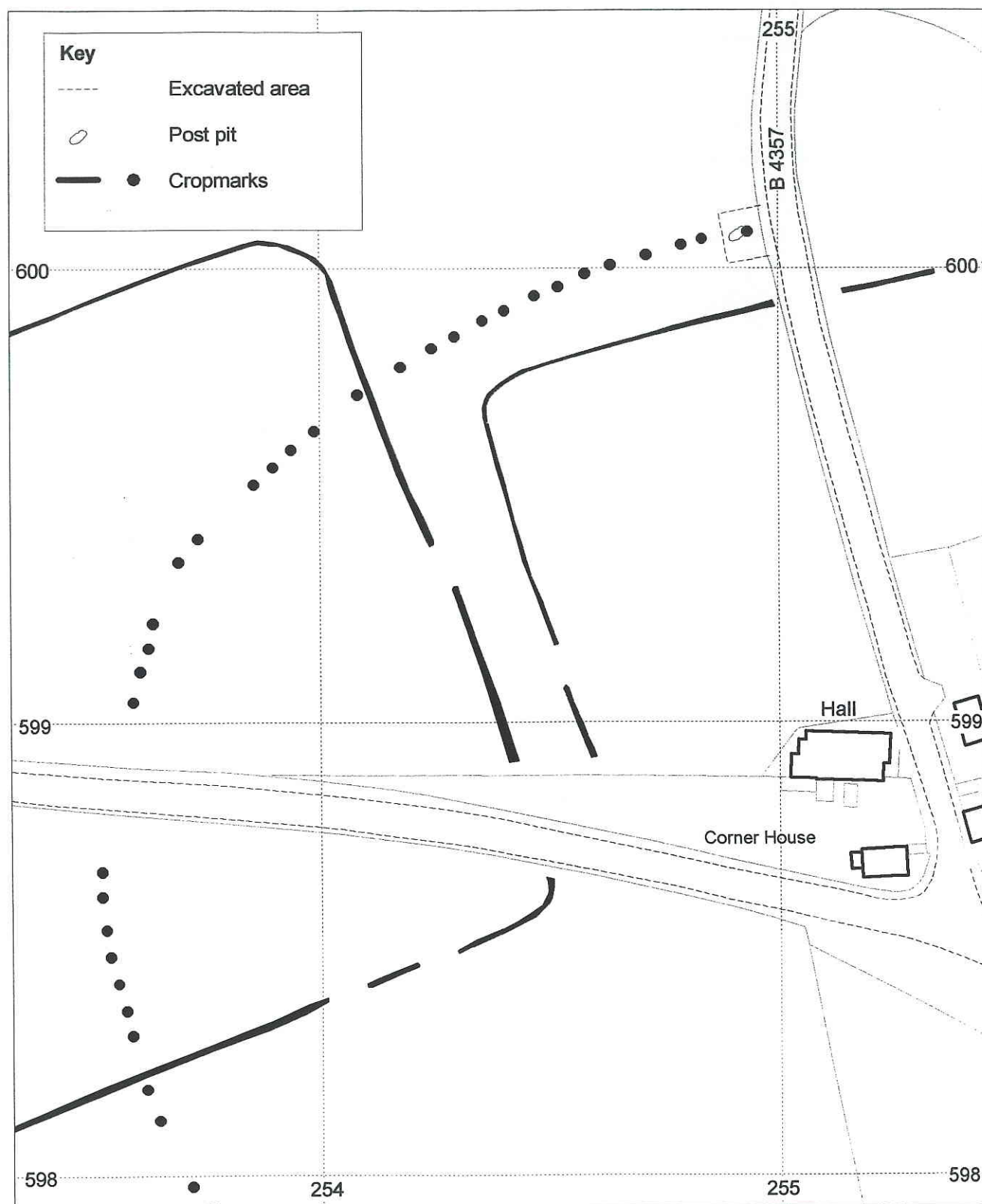
Fig. 1 The Walton Pit Circle and other cropmarks. Scale 1:2,500



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Fig. 2 Location of Excavation trench. Scale 1:1,250



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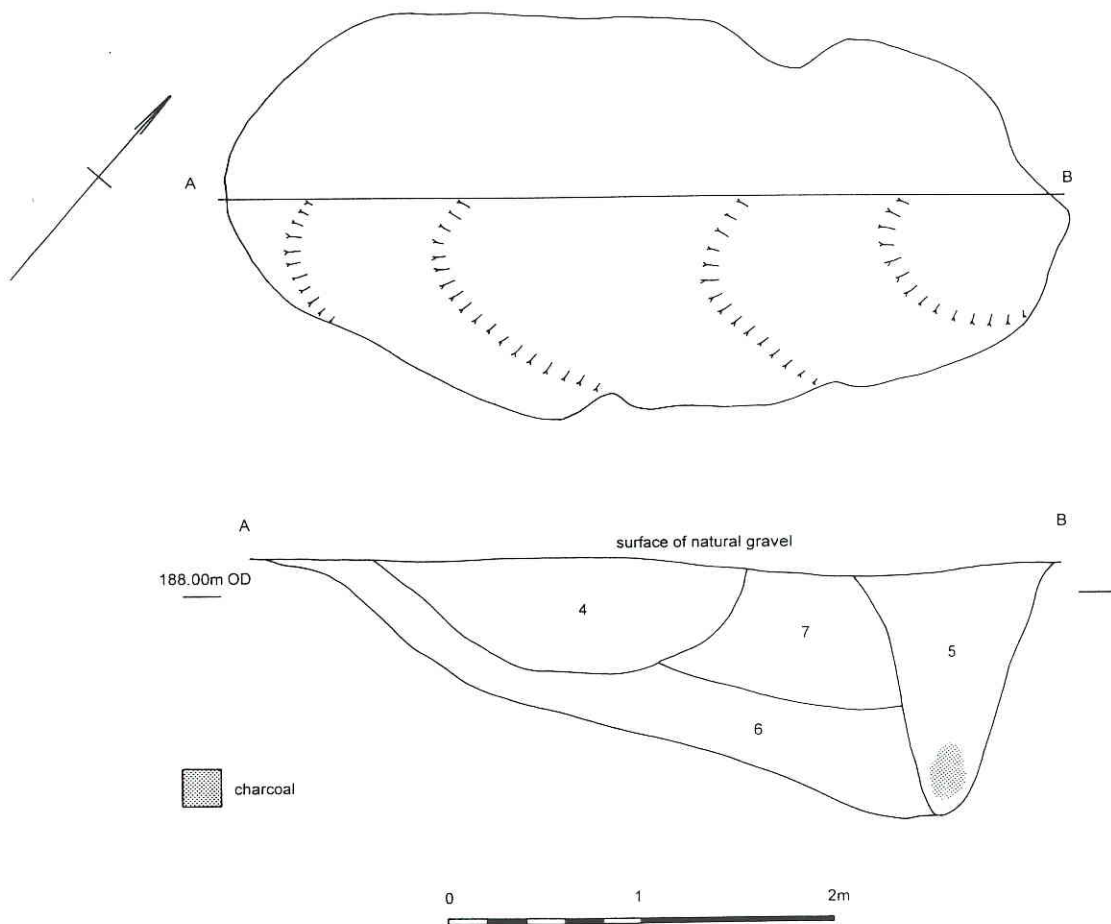


Figure 3. Plan and section of the half-sectioned pit.