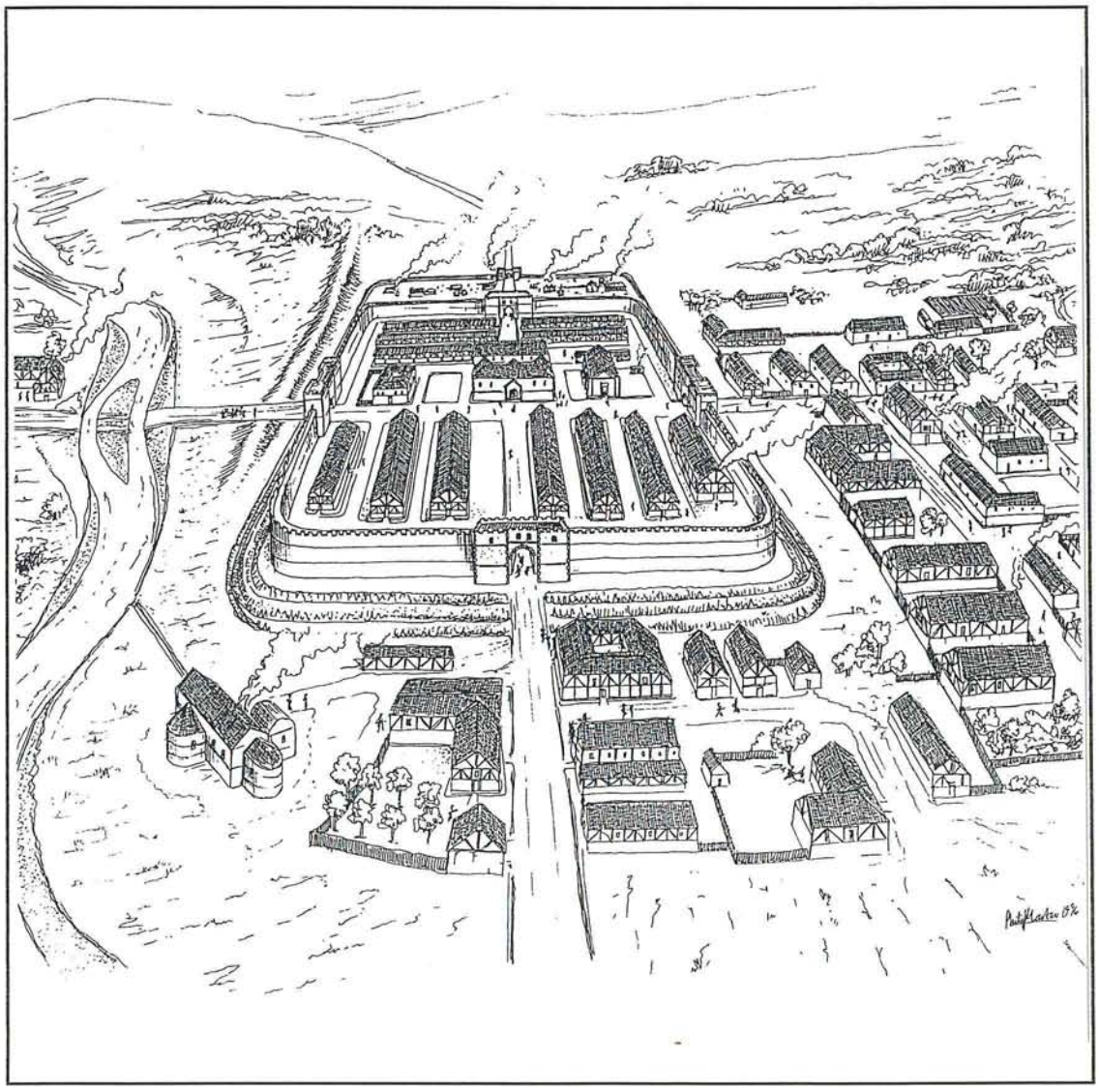
THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Caersws Pumping Main Replacement

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



CPAT Report No 523

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

I Grant
March 2003

Report for Severn Trent Water

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax (01938) 552179
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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In June 2002 the Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited to undertake a watching brief during the course of pipe-laying, carried out on behalf of Severn Trent Water, along Trefeglwys Road and Station Road, Caersws. The watching brief was undertaken following recommendations by the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust in a brief that emphasised the need for such an archaeological input in the works programme (CWAT 240, dated 13 June 2002).

1.2 The pipeline was located in close proximity to the Roman fort in Caersws (fig. 1), which is known to have been occupied from the late 1st century until the 3rd century AD. A civilian settlement, or *vicus*, developed outside the fort and excavations have demonstrated intensive activity close to the south gate of the fort (Britnell 1989; Jones 1993).

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The pipeline extended for a total of *c.* 300m from the corner of Station Road across the railway and westwards along Trefeglwys Road, before turning south into Lower Green (Fig. 2).

2.2 The solid geology of the area consists of Telychian siltstones and mudstones belonging to the Llandovery Series of rocks that form the earliest division of the Silurian period (1994 British Geological Survey map). The soils of the immediate area consist of fine loamy soils over gravel belonging to the Rheidol Association, though there are fine silty and clayey soils belonging to the Conway Association nearby (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Caersws occupies a focal point in the system of Roman forts and controlling mid-Wales. As part of the early Roman campaigns a large auxiliary fort, Caersws I, was founded before AD 70 in a strongly defended position on a spur overlooking the River Severn, to the north-east of the present village. This fort was relatively short-lived and was replaced by a more permanent fort, Caersws II, during the 70s AD, situated on the flood plain near the confluence of the Severn and its tributary, the Carno. Caersws II has been the subject of a series of excavations, most recently during the 1990s, the results from which have suggested that the main phase of activity lasted until the late 2nd century AD and that by the early 3rd century the military tenure was effectively at an end, although some form of activity continued into the early 4th century (Jones 1993, 87).

3.2 A civilian settlement, or *vicus*, grew up in the vicinity of Caersws II fort, and evidence from a series of excavations, geophysical survey and aerial reconnaissance suggests that it may have covered an area of at least 7ha on the south and east side of the fort (Fig. 1). Excavations just outside the south gate of the fort in 1985-6 (Britnell 1989) identified part of a flourishing commercial centre, revealing timber buildings and associated finds suggesting a possible tavern, shops and metal working workshops (Fig. 1, 10). This commercial activity appears to have continued until the 130s AD, its decline possibly being associated with a withdrawal of troops to the northern frontier, as elsewhere in Wales (Jones 1993, 88).

3.3 The road leading east from the fort has been identified through aerial reconnaissance together with a side road leading from it to the south (Fig. 1). Excavations between Manthrig Lane and Main Street between 1989 and 1993 (Jones 1996; Fig. 1, 17 and 22) identified further elements of the *vicus*, comprising post holes and beam slots for a series of timber buildings, including a likely Romano-British temple, or *temenos*, one phase of which dated to the mid 2nd century (Jones 1996, 33).

3.4 An earlier watching brief during borehole testing along the route failed to reveal any deposits of archaeological significance (Owen 2002).

4 WATCHING BRIEF (figs 2-3)

4.1 The watching brief was undertaken to monitor groundworks associated with the pipeline, and was carried out in a series of visits between 4 and 25 February 2003, the timing being dependent on the contractor's progress. A drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout the watching brief. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual contexts recorded in the site archive. In accordance with the curator's brief the site archive has been deposited with the Regional Sites and Monuments Record, administered by CPAT at Welshpool.

4.2 The original programme of works involved using directional drilling machinery to install the pipeline without the need for extensive surface excavation. Prior to pipe-laying commencing, two test pits, one either side of the railway, were excavated under archaeological supervision to identify existing services and examine the nature and depth of deposits. Neither pit revealed any features or deposits of archaeological significance.

4.3 Four small trenches were machine-excavated under archaeological supervision to install the drilling machinery. Work commenced at the Station Road end of the pipeline and proceeded as far as Pit 3, west of the railway, before extensive deposits of river gravel prevented the drilling operations from proceeding further. At this point the decision was taken to lay the remainder of the pipeline in a machine-excavated trench.

Trench 1

4.4 Trench 1 was located in Station Road and measured 1.65 x 1.0m and 1.65m deep. Beneath the modern road surface and makeup (01-05) a thick deposit of small river gravel in a clay matrix (06) was identified, comprising successive layers of metalling that formed the main Roman road heading south from the fort. The road was up to 0.52m thick and sealed a thin layer of charcoal (07), beneath which was a deposit of fairly loose gravel and silty sand (08) containing a significant quantity of charcoal, burnt bone and iron nails, along with several sherds of amphora. The deposits may have been the fill of a large pit, although this could not be confirmed in the limited area investigated.

Trench 2

4.5 Trench 2, which measured 6.6 x 1.3m and 2.1m deep, was located at the northern end of Station Road, immediately east of the railway. In the eastern part of the trench the remains of a 20th-century weighbridge were uncovered, the construction of which had removed all evidence of any archaeological deposits. At the western end of the trench modern overburden (10-12) sealed a layer of fairly loose clay-silt and pebbles (13) which produced a sherd of late medieval pottery. Beneath this was a layer of orange-brown silty-clay (14) containing fragments of Roman pottery and red sandstone, which in turn overlay a deposit of fine silty-sand (15), also containing fragments of red sandstone. Given the location of the trench, both layers may be upper fills of the middle fort ditch, the southern edge of which could be represented by the boundary between these layers and a layer of compact clay (16), perhaps the undisturbed natural subsoil. The red sandstone fragments are significant as the material is not local to Caersws and large blocks have been identified during previous excavations, forming the base of the fort rampart.

4.6 The trench was later extended to the west by a further 4.0m, revealing the same stratigraphic sequence as before and further confirming the likely presence of the outer fort ditch.

Trench 3

4.7 Trench 3 was located to the west of the railway and measured 4.4 x 1.15m and 1.25m deep. Beneath modern overburden (17-19) a possible metalled surface (20) was identified, composed of rounded pebbles in a silty-clay matrix, beneath which were further layers of compacted stone (21-24). No dating evidence was recovered, although subsequent findings in Trench 4 suggest that these deposits are of post-medieval date and comprise successive road surfaces which have built up to form the embankment on which the modern road now lies.

Trench 4

4.8 Trench 4 was located towards the western end of the pipeline, where it turns south from Trefeglwys Road towards the pumping station. The trench measured 4.8 x 0.8m and 1.1m deep. A similar sequence of deposits was identified as had been observed in Trench 3, with modern overburden (26-28) sealing successive layers of river pebbles and gravel in a clay matrix (29-34), the lowest layer (34) of which produced sherds of post-medieval pottery.

4.9 The watching brief continued to monitor works as the pipe trench was excavated between Trenches 3 and 4, confirming the sequence of deposits.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Not unexpectedly, the watching brief has produced further limited evidence relating to Roman occupation in the area of the *vicus* immediately south of the fort. In particular, in Trench 1 a section was recorded through the main road running south from the fort, while deposits in Trench 2 would appear to have confirmed the position of the middle fort ditch.

5.2 No evidence was revealed for any Roman activity to the west of the railway and it may be presumed that the *vicus* did not extend into this area due to the risk of flooding, particularly since it has been assumed that the Carno was significantly closer to the fort during the Roman period (Jones 1993, 87). Evidence was revealed, however, for a succession of post-medieval road surfaces along Trefeglwys Road which have built up to form the embankment on which the modern road now lies.

6 REFERENCES

Britnell, J E, 1989. *Caersws Vicus, Powys: Excavations at the Old Primary School, 1985-86.* British Archaeological Reports 205.

Jones, N W, 1993. Caersws Roman Fort and Vicus, Montgomeryshire, Powys, 1984-92, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 81, 15-96.

Owen, W G, 2002. Caersws Pumping Main Replacement, Borehole Investigations: Archaeological Watching Brief. CPAT Report No. 480.

APPENDIX 1

SITE ARCHIVE

Site Records

34 context records
Watching brief daily visit records
1 A2 drawing
black and white negatives
colour print negatives
colour slides

Finds

Trench	Context	Number	Weight (g)	Description	Date
1	08	4	198	Dressel 20 Amphora	late 1st-early 2nd century AD
1	08	9	33	iron nail fragments	
2	13	1	56	internally glazed jug/jar	Medieval
2	14	3	52	Severn Valley Ware flagon	late 1st-early 2nd century AD
4	34	1	82	glazed base sherd	Post-medieval

APPENDIX 2

CAERSWS SEWAGE PUMPING MAIN
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

1.1 It has been proposed by Severn Trent Water that a new sewage pumping main will be constructed between Trefeglwys Road and Station Road, Caersws. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust have determined that a watching brief should be undertaken during the initial stages of construction. Accordingly, a brief has been prepared (CWAT 460, dated 13/06/02) which details the works required.

1.2 The proposed pipeline will cross the defences of Caersws Roman fort as well as part of the civilian settlement, or *vicus*, which developed outside it.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are:

2.1.1 to monitor all works involving ground disturbance;

2.1.2 to record the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of any archaeological deposits and/or features revealed within the area of the proposed works in so far as these aims are possible;

2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the watching brief.

3 Methods

3.1 The watching brief will be carried out according to the principles laid out in the brief and involve the examination of all works involving ground disturbance.

3.2 A photographic record will be maintained in 35mm black and white and colour print, and colour slide, with a photographic scale visible in each view.

3.3 Should any significant archaeological deposits be revealed sufficient opportunity must be allowed for adequate recording and excavation as appropriate. All contexts will be recorded on standard individual context forms and drawn in section and/or plan as appropriate. All features will be tied-in to the Ordnance Survey as accurately as possible.

3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to section 8 of the brief. This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Catalogue of sites identified with notes on their condition and significance, Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

3.5 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991).

3.6 An agreement will be reached with the client regarding the deposition of any artefacts.

4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The watching brief will be undertaken by a skilled and experienced archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by Mr R J Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the watching brief.

4.3 The duration of the watching brief will be entirely dependent on the client's/contractor's programme of work and that the subsequent report will be prepared immediately thereafter. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client. Contingency sums have been allowed for radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic dating. Artefacts will be reported on by Wendy Owen, CPAT's in-house Roman finds specialist. The cost of archive preparation, reporting and deposition is included within the given costings.

4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.

4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones
19th June 2002

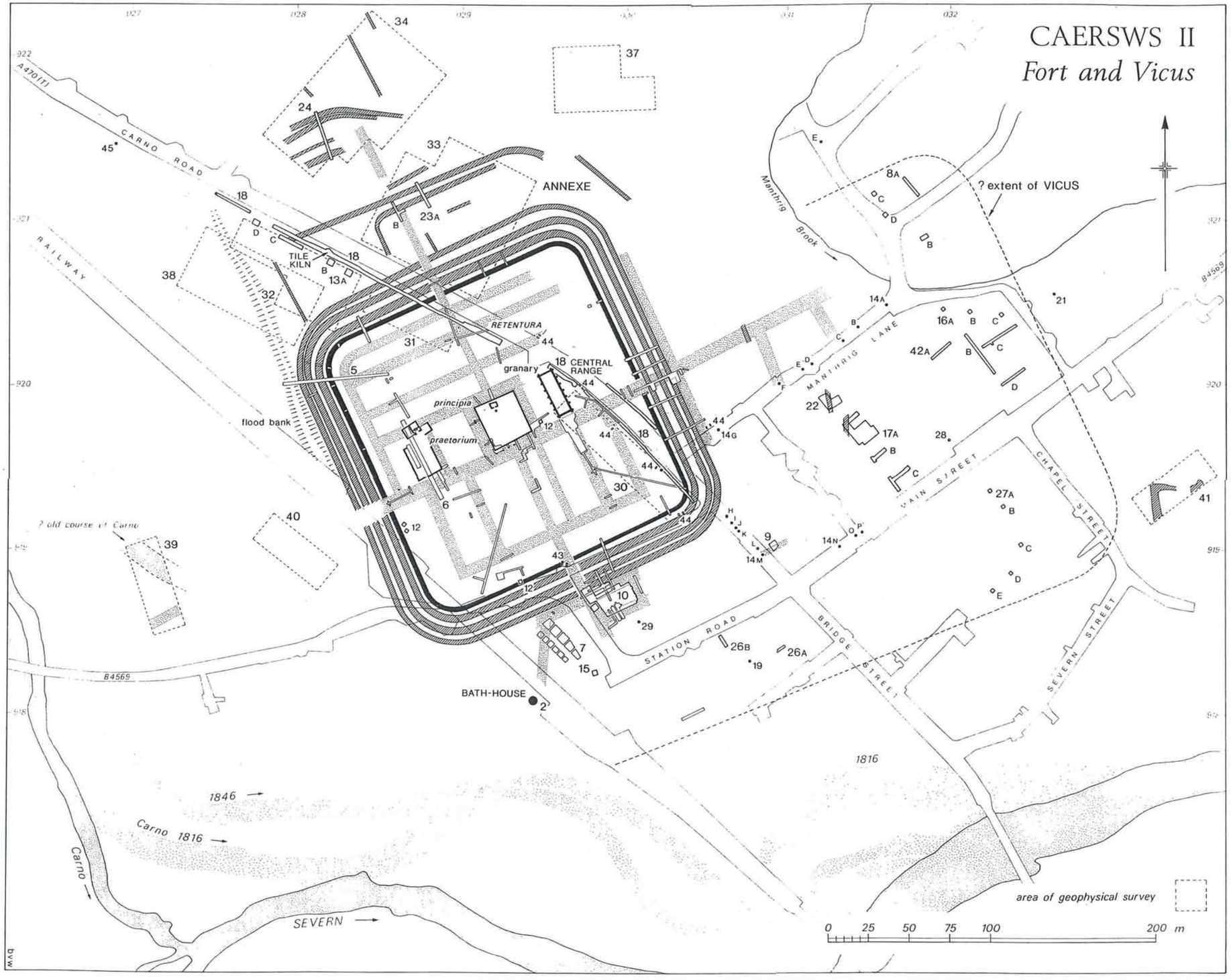

Fig. 1 The Roman Archaeology of Caersws (after Jones 1993

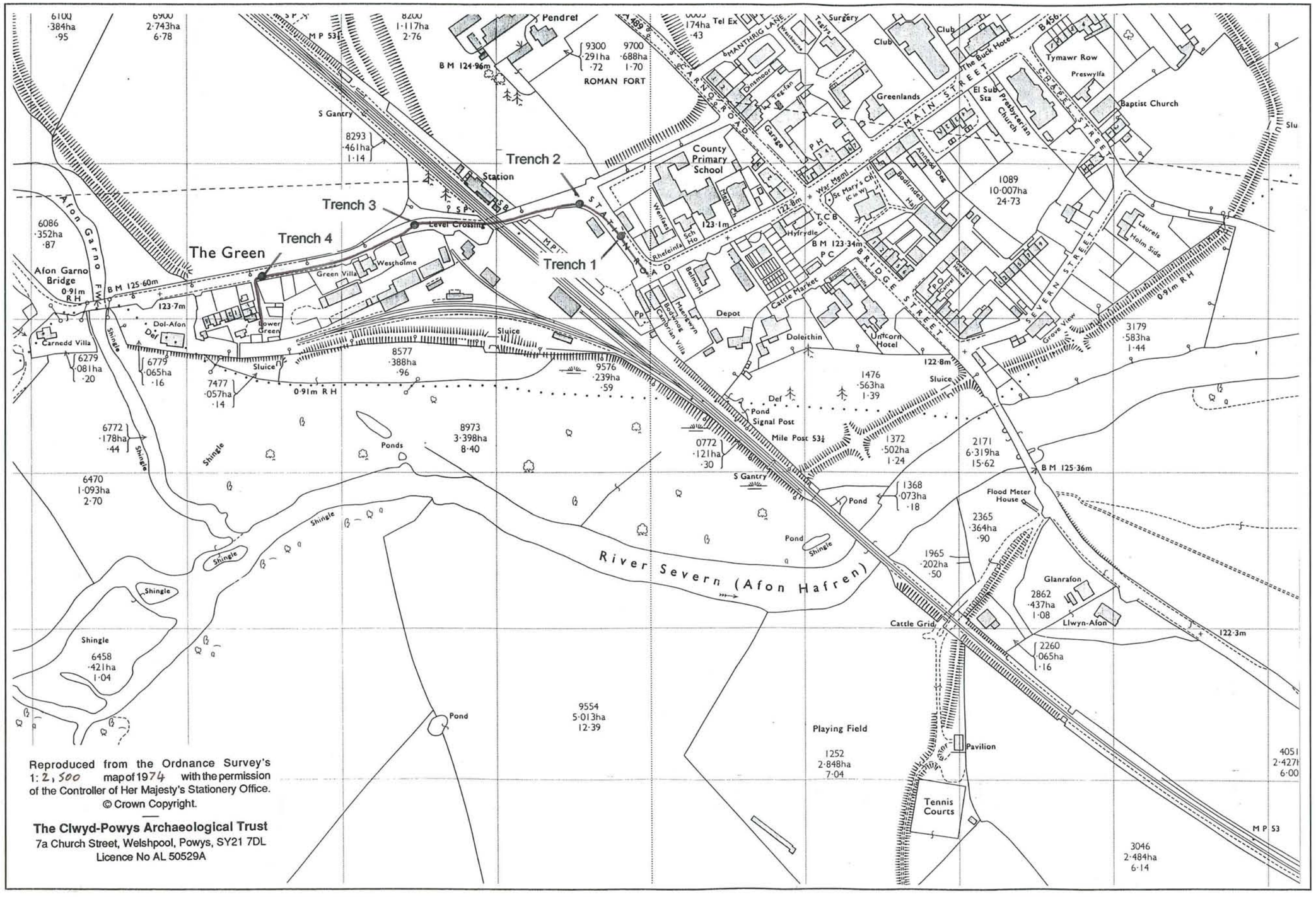

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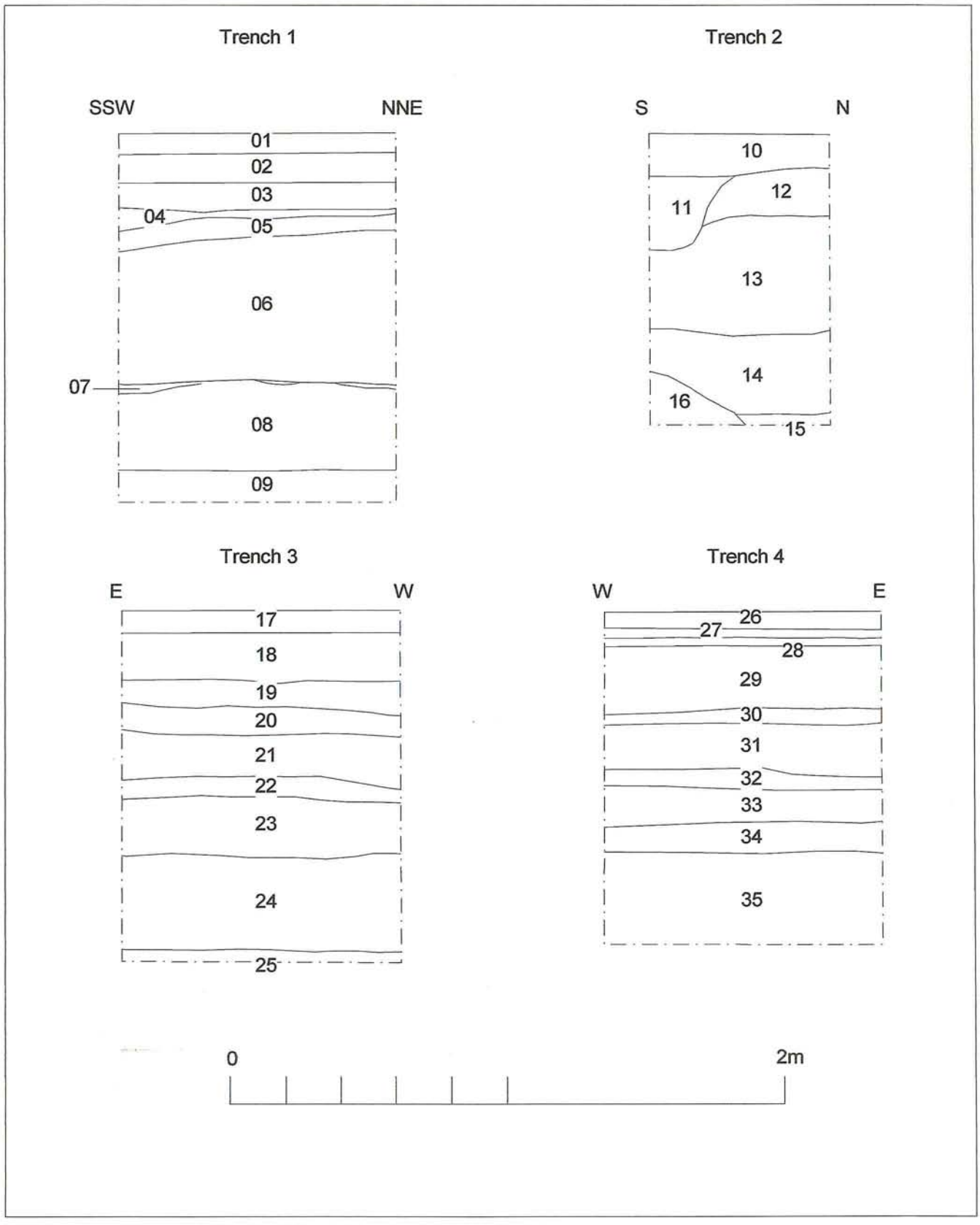
Fig. 2 Pipeline and trench location, scale 1:2,500



Fig, 3 Trench sections