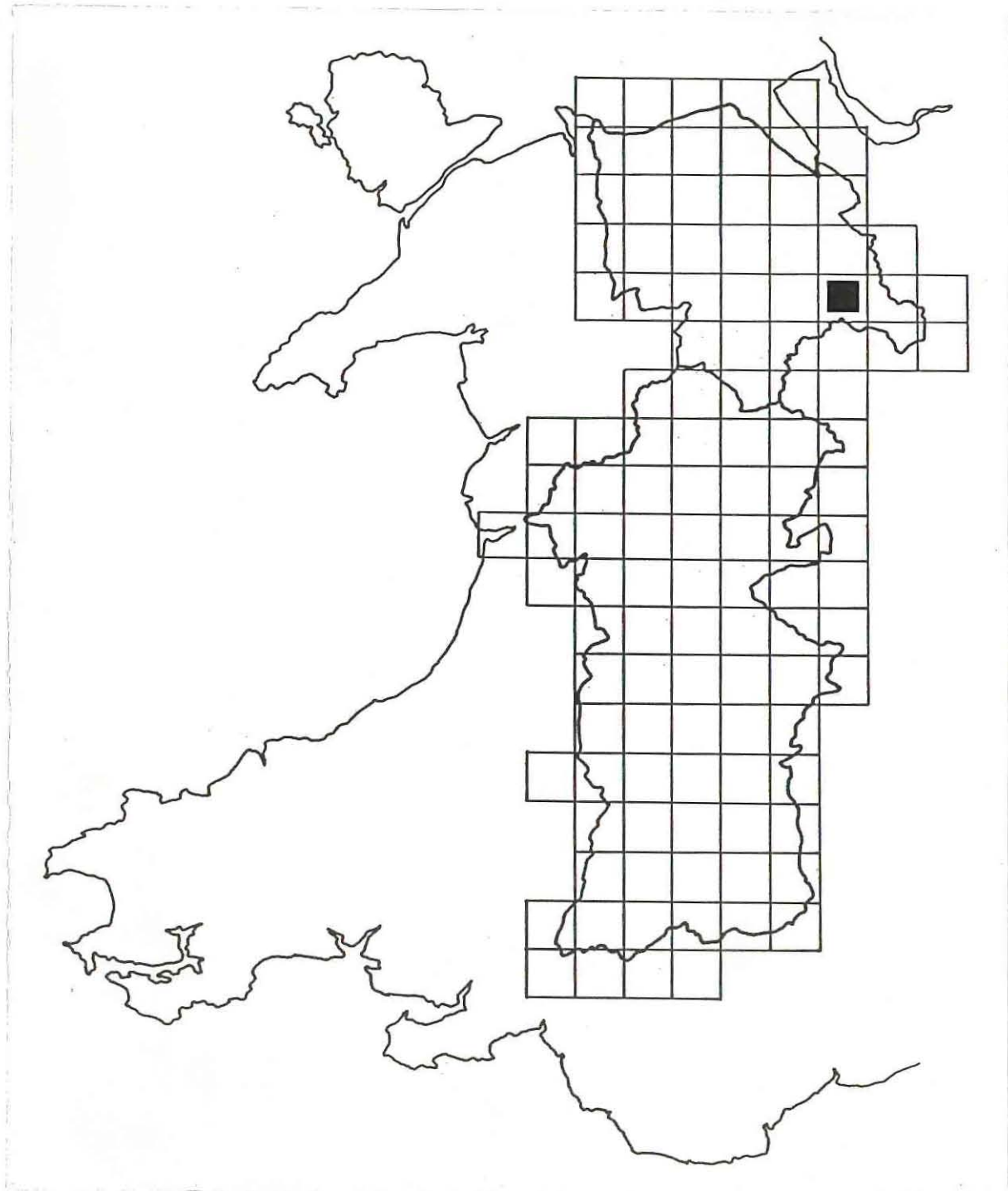


*Plassey Golf Course Extension,
Eyton, near Wrexham, Clwyd*

FIELD EVALUATION



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by R Hankinson

May 1993

Report prepared for A J Minshull, on behalf of
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1 Introduction

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was commissioned in April 1993 by Mr A.J.Minshull, Architectural and Building Design Consultant, of Overton-on-Dee, on behalf of R.Brassey and A.J.Brookshaw, Plassey Golf Club, Eyton, Clwyd, to carry out a field evaluation of the proposed extension to Plassey Golf Course. The field evaluation was required as part of the client's planning application (21238) to Wrexham Maelor Borough Council, as specified in the brief prepared by the Council's archaeological adviser, the Curatorial Section of CPAT.

1.2 The desk-top research and field survey stipulated by the brief was carried out in early May 1993 and the report prepared immediately afterwards.

2 Location

2.1 The area designated for the proposed golf course extension covers approximately 71 acres (28.75 hectares) bounding the Plassey golf course to the north and centred at a point (SJ 3490 4450) approximately 2km to the south-south-west of the village of Marchwiell and within the community of the same name. The community (previously the parish) boundary separates the extension from the present golf course which, together with Plassey itself, is in the community of Erbistock.

3 Topography and Land-Use

3.1 Plassey house is situated on the edge of the flood plain of the River Dee with both the present golf course and the extension covering rolling terrain behind it. This terrain has been caused by streams cutting the local boulder clay.

3.2 Land-use is presently agricultural pasture although there are some small areas of woodland associated with the water-filled pits which are found throughout the area. This is typical for the area with fields occasionally being ploughed for pasture improvement but rarely put down to crop. The fields themselves are surrounded by thorn hedges with occasional oak trees set within.

4 Archaeological Methodology

4.1 The desk-top research comprised examination of the 1841 Tithe survey of Marchwiell and the available 25 inch Ordnance Survey maps situated at the Clwyd County Record Office in Ruthin; and examination of the series of vertical aerial photographs for Clwyd taken in 1984 and which are held at the Planning Library, County Hall, Mold. Other sources used include the County Sites and Monuments Record for Clwyd held by CPAT, articles relating to the local brick making industry and other, secondary sources (see section 7).

4.2 The field survey was carried out by systematically walking the area and recording any features of archaeological interest observed.

5 Archaeological Features

5.1 There are two types of feature in the area of the proposed golf course extension which have relevance to the historic landscape. These are:

- a) A large area of ridge and furrow cultivation.
- b) A number of clay extraction pits.

5.2 The ridge and furrow cultivation (PRN 105445) covers much of the area examined in the course of the field survey and is also visible on the present golf course. The cultivation is generally variable in width from 3m to 7m and results from the regular ploughing of strips of land in a consistent direction. Some furlongs (i.e groups of ridges) show definite curves. The northern boundary of the ridge and furrow seems to be defined by two headlands, although the lack of surface evidence in the fields further to the north does not necessarily preclude the presence of ridge and furrow in the past. Later agricultural use may have obliterated such remains.

5.3 Ridge and furrow cultivation is generally recognised as a feature of medieval farming but it may well have continued into subsequent centuries. During the desk-top research it was noted that the areas of ridge and furrow visible on the vertical aerial photography coincided with field boundaries on the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1899. This might suggest that cultivation continued after enclosure; the division of the open fields in this region is undated but in the adjacent county of Shropshire much of the land had been enclosed before 1700 (Dodd 1971, 55). The lack of enclosure awards for Marchwiell and Erbistock seems to confirm that the land around Plassey was already enclosed at the beginning of the 19th century.

5.4 The proximity of a now destroyed medieval moated site adjacent to the present house at Plassey (Clwyd Sites and Monuments Record: PRN 100141) and the extensive ridge and furrow cultivation might suggest a close relationship, akin to other moated sites in Wrexham Maelor, as at Halghton, Hollybush and Lightwood Green (Silvester *et al.* 1992).

5.5 There are 15 clay pits visible in the area of the proposed golf course extension. These may be dry or water-filled and occasionally have been deliberately backfilled with debris. PRN 105455 is the largest pit which does not appear to have been altered by recent landscaping and is rectangular in shape with dimensions of 42m by 20m, its depth being unknown as it is water-filled. PRN 105457 is the only water-filled pit for which a depth was ascertained. This was discovered to be approximately 10m deep during recent cleaning operations by the landowners.

5.6 Clay pits of this type are a common feature of the landscape in the region which has long been recognised as a centre for brick manufacture. The subsoil in this particular area, however, is boulder clay which has been suggested as more likely to support only small scale local brick and tile manufacture probably associated with agricultural estates (Edwards 1987, 49). This, along with the impermeable nature of the subsoil, may have been a contributory factor to the large number of these holes in the area. Only a relatively small quantity of clay would have been required at any one time and a hole would therefore have been likely to flood before its re-use and enlargement.

5.7 The surface evidence for brick manufacture locally is supported by two field names given in the Tithe Survey of 1841 for Marchwiell. These are Cae Marl (SJ 3464 4550) and Erw Cinders (SJ 3515 4550), the second of which would appear to suggest a site for brick manufacture although nothing was seen there during field work.

5.8 The only feature which appears anomalous is PRN 105449, a large rectangular platform, 44m by 27m in size, which may have resulted from a different method of obtaining clay for brickmaking. Its size would appear to preclude it from being a house site, but its true nature is unknown.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The landscape which is encompassed by this proposal seems to be a reasonably typical tract of the Wrexham Maelor countryside.

6.2 In 1841, as today, the area of the extension was farmed from Plassey, one of a number of larger farms in the area. This may reflect a pattern of land exploitation running back into the medieval period, but this hypothesis would require considerably more documentary research to confirm it.

6.3 No traces of earlier settlement/dwellings were recognised in the area of the proposed extension. The features that are discernible relate to agricultural and small-scale local industrial use.

7 References

Dodd A.H., 1971, The Industrial Revolution in North Wales, University of Wales Press, Cardiff. Republished 1990.

Edwards I., 1987, Gazetteer of Clayworks in the Wrexham and Ruabon District, Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions 36.

Silvester, R. J., Walters, M. and Wayne, D., 1992 Wrexham Maelor Historic Settlements (CPAT Report No. 42).

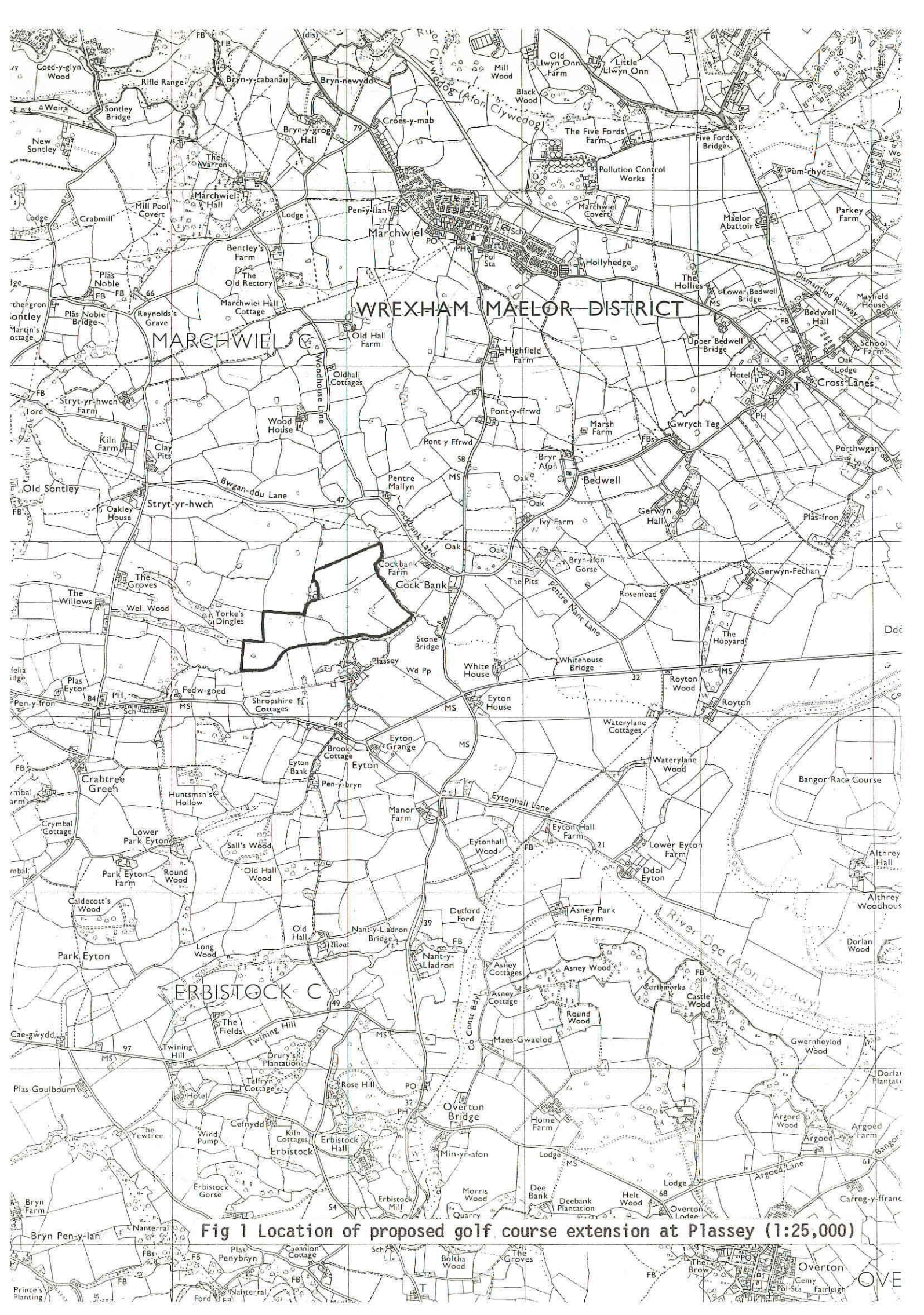


Fig 1 Location of proposed golf course extension at Plassey (1:25,000)

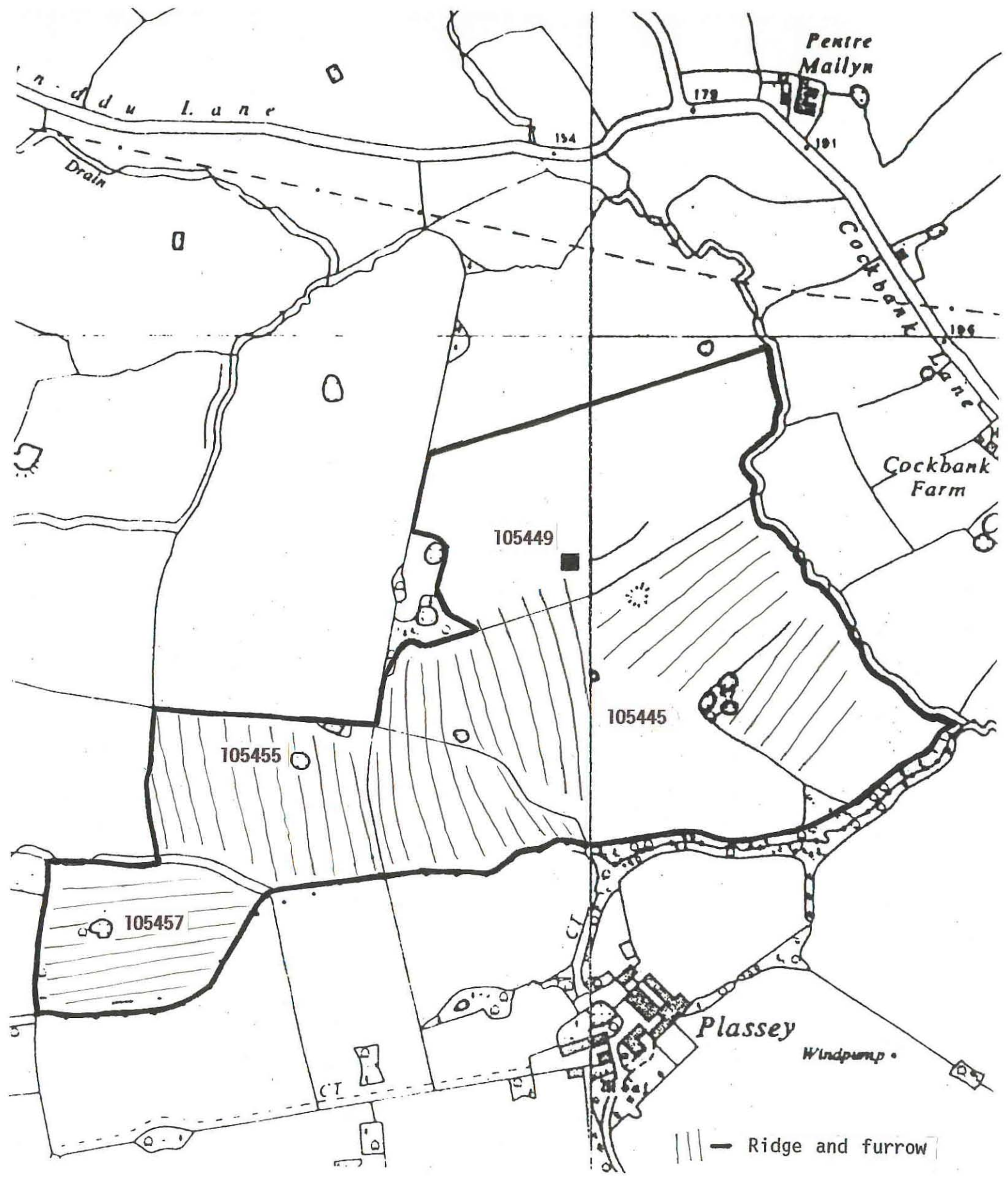


Fig 2 Historic Landscape Features (1:5280)