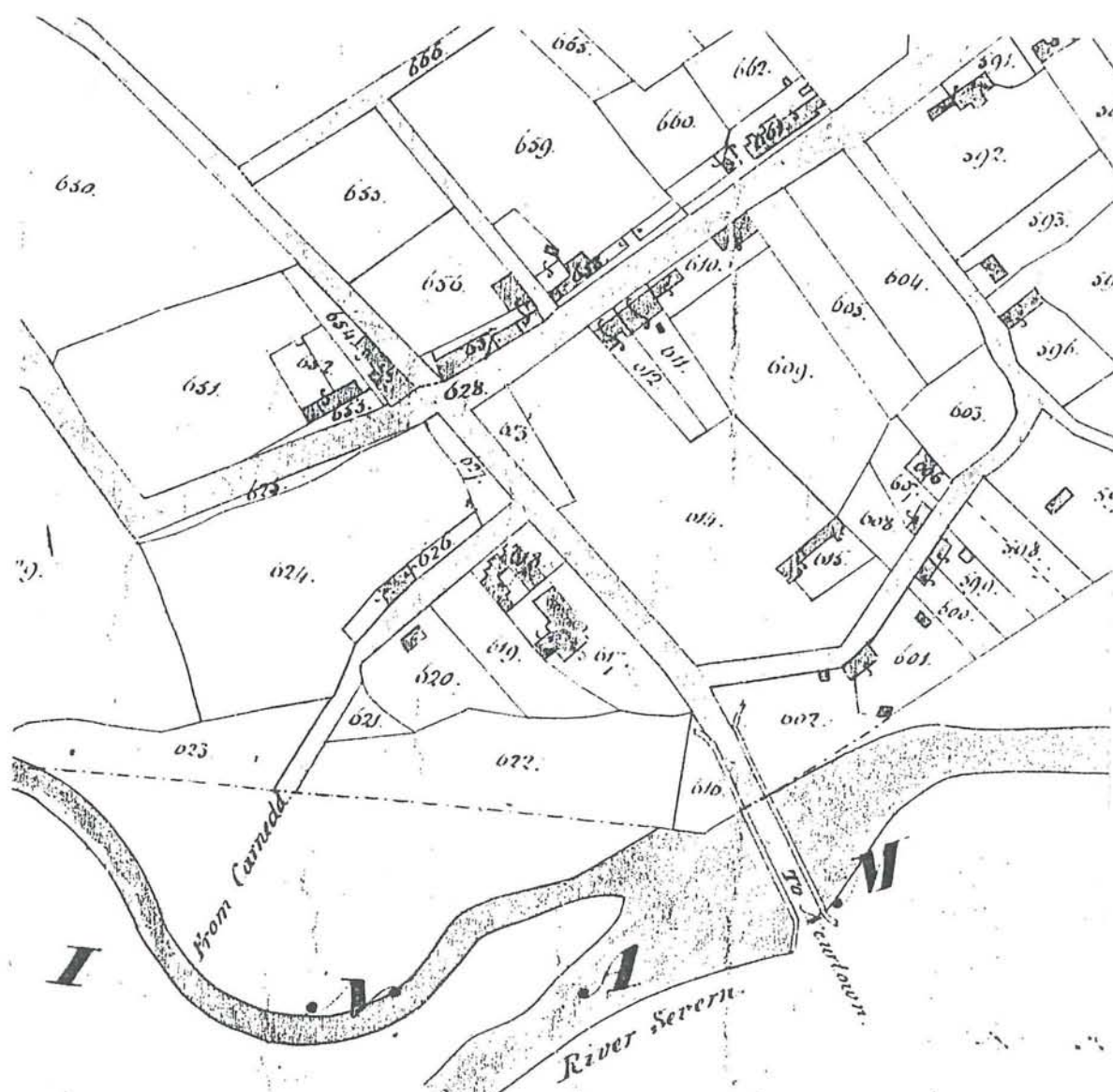


Land adjacent to Bridge End House, Caersws, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 537

**Land adjacent to Bridge End House,
Caersws, Powys**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

R Hankinson
May 2003

Report for Mrs J Lewis




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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Land adjacent to Bridge End House, Caersws, Powys: Archaeological Evaluation		
CPAT Project Name	Bridge End House, Caersws		
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checked by	N.W. Jones		08/05/03
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2003 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Gwynfor Humphreys Ltd, acting on behalf of Mrs J Lewis, to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Bridge End House, Caersws, Powys. The evaluation was the subject of a brief drawn up in May 2002 by Mr M Walters of the CPAT Curatorial Section (CPAT EVB 454), acting as the archaeological curator for the region, in relation to a planning proposal for the construction of a new dwelling.
- 1.2 The specification was approved by Mr Walters, and the accompanying quotation was accepted by Gwynfor Humphreys on behalf of Mrs Lewis. The archaeological evaluation was carried out at the end of April 2003 and this report was compiled immediately thereafter.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The area of the evaluation comprises the eastern part of the garden plot at the rear (east) of Bridge End House, centred at SO 03229180. The plot is situated on the north side of Severn Street, which is the minor road that runs east-north-east from Bridge Street on the southern side of Caersws. The surrounding area is occupied by a combination of dwellings and associated garden plots, fronting Severn Street.
- 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 (British Geological Survey map, 1994). The proposal area lies on the boundary between fine loamy soils over gravel, belonging to the Rheidol Association, and stoneless silty river alluvium belonging to the Teme Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales map, 1983).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Caersws occupies a focal point in the system of Roman forts 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 Carno. Caersws II has been the subject of a series of excavations, most recently during the 1990s, and the results 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*, developed in association with 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 of Britain, as elsewhere in Wales (Jones 1993, 88).
- 3.3 Excavations elsewhere in Caersws have been used to define the putative extent of the civilian settlement, which is depicted on Fig. 1. As can be seen, the nearest excavations to the area of the proposed development (27 A, B, C, D and E) consist of small trial trenches, excavated in the Playing Fields as part of a general programme of assessment (Jones 1993, 42). Trenches C-E produced evidence of soil and stone layers, postholes and pits of Roman date, thereby demonstrating the presence of the civilian settlement. No excavations have previously been carried out in the immediate vicinity of Severn Street, so that the extent of the settlement in this direction remains untested.

- 3.4 The only other work carried out in this part of Caersws consisted of a watching brief undertaken during the laying of new drains along Bridge Street in 1988 (Jones 1993, 91). No evidence of Roman features or deposits were recognised, although this does not preclude the existence of deposits in the locality.

4 DESK-TOP STUDY

- 4.1 The earliest accurate plan which depicts the proposal area is the Tithe map for Llanwnnog parish (Caersws village), dating to 1846 (Fig. 6). It is evident from the map that this part of Severn Street and the north-east side of Bridge Street were unoccupied when the map was compiled.
- 4.2 A later map which shows the proposal area is the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1891 (Montgomeryshire 35SE; Fig. 7). This demonstrates that the pattern of settlement in Caersws had effectively taken its present form in the second half of the 19th century. In the immediate area of the proposal, the buildings appear identical to those which survive to the present day and it seems that the area formed part of the garden at the rear of Bridge End House. No structures are evident in the proposal area at this time.
- 4.3 The latest available historic cartographic source for the proposal area is the second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1902 (Montgomeryshire 35.16; Fig. 8). In general the locality appears to be little changed from 1891, although an extension was evidently added to the rear of the north-east range of outbuildings at Bridge End House in the intervening period. This structure was rectangular and occupied the north-west end of the proposal area, running along the boundary in a north-east/south-west direction.
- 4.4 No other documentary sources have been found. The existing layout of the proposal area is the same as that which was depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891. The extension seen on the second edition map of 1902 has subsequently been removed and no surface trace of it now remains.

5 EXCAVATION (Figs 2-5)

- 5.1 The investigation consisted of three trenches (Fig. 2), initially excavated by machine to the top of the first archaeologically significant horizon. Thereafter, excavations to investigate the deposits were undertaken entirely by hand. Trenches A and B were placed on a north-west/south-east axis, in order to aid the definition of any areas of the Roman civilian settlement which might be encountered, while Trench C was placed to assess the possibility of there having been structures fronting onto Severn Street. A drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout (see Appendix 1).

Trench A (3.0 x 1.9 x 1.5m deep; Fig. 3)

- 5.2 Trench A was aligned north-west/south-east and was located near the north-western boundary of the proposal area, crossing the location of the extension depicted on the second edition Ordnance Survey map. The upper 1.05m of deposits, consisting of 0.3m of loose dark grey loam (1), above 0.5m of grey-brown clay loam with lime flecks (2), 0.15m of mixed orange stony clay (3), and 0.1m of smooth grey-brown clay silt (4), were removed by machine as separate units. Finds recovered from these layers demonstrate that they are deposits of 18th to 19th-century date. A post-hole (6), 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep, was revealed in section, having been cut into layers 2 and 3. This may represent a surviving feature belonging to the extension depicted on the second edition Ordnance Survey map (see 3.7).
- 5.3 The removal of the four upper layers of deposits revealed the upper surface of a layer of yellowish-orange clay (5). Cleaning of the surface by hand revealed a small number of finds which suggested that this was also a post-medieval deposit. A section, 0.65m wide, was accordingly excavated through layer 5, adjoining the north-east section of the trench, which demonstrated that it was up to 0.35m in thickness. At the north-west end of the trench, the removal of layer 5 revealed the undisturbed subsoil, consisting of a brown flecked yellow clay (23). The subsoil had been cut by a broad shallow gully (22), up to 0.2m deep and at least 2.1m wide, extending beyond the limits of the excavation. The gully was filled by a pale grey sticky clay (21), sealed beneath layer 5, which appeared to

represent the silting up of the feature over time and a section of clay pipe stem within it demonstrated that this occurred in the post-medieval period.

Trench B (3.1 x 2.0 x 1.1m deep; Fig. 4)

- 5.4 Trench B was aligned north-west/south-east and was equidistant from the north-west and south-east boundaries of the proposal area, but offset towards the north-eastern boundary to avoid a large tree. The upper 1.0m of deposits, consisting of 0.2m of loose dark grey loam (8), above 0.55m of grey-brown clay loam with lime flecks (9), and 0.25m of orange clay loam with lime flecks (24), were removed by machine as separate units. Finds recovered from these layers demonstrate that they are deposits of 18th to 19th-century date. An apparently machine-cut trench (10) had been excavated through layers 9 and 24 and was examined by hand to a depth of 1.5m without its base being encountered. The nature of the feature and the finds within its mixed fill (11) demonstrate that it is of relatively modern origin and may have been excavated to carry services of some type.
- 5.5 The removal of layer 24, revealed a layer of yellowish-brown clay silt (19). This was removed by hand and proved to be less than 0.1m in thickness; its appearance suggests that it may have been derived by the erosion of exposed natural subsoil of the type revealed in Trench A. Beneath layer 19 was a mixed natural deposit of gravel and gritty brownish-yellow clay (20), over 0.6m thick. At the north corner of the trench, the removal of layer 24 revealed part of a pit (17), at least 0.75m by 0.4m in plan and 0.6m deep, which cut both layers 19 and 20. The pit was filled by orange-brown stony clay silt (18), containing brick, mortar/plaster and sherds of 18th to 19th-century pottery.

Trench C (2.5 x 2.0 x 1.2 deep; Fig. 5)

- 5.6 Trench C was aligned north-east/south-west and was situated near the south-eastern boundary of the proposal area. The upper 0.8m of deposits, consisting of 0.2m of loose dark grey loam (12), above 0.25m-0.4m of grey-brown clay loam with lime flecks (13), and 0.15m-0.3m of orange-brown clay loam with lime flecks (29), were removed by machine as separate units. Finds recovered from these layers demonstrate that they are deposits of 18th to 19th-century date.
- 5.7 Beneath layer 29, was a compact layer of gravel set in gritty grey silt (14), with an uneven surface, and this was partially removed by machine after examination. The lower part of the layer was removed by hand onto the top of the layer below giving a total thickness of 0.2m. A small number of badly abraded sherds of pottery were recovered, all of which are undiagnostic but are probably of Roman date.
- 5.8 Once layer 14 had been removed, the deposits in the base of the trench were examined by the hand excavation of a section, 0.8m wide, adjoining the north-west section of the trench. The upper layer consisted of brown silty clay (15), 0.08m thick, beneath which was a layer, 0.03m in thickness, of grey pea gravel (25). This sequence of silty clay overlying gravel was repeated beneath layer 25, where layers 26 (brown clay) and 16 (gravel) were both 0.08m in thickness. A final layer of brown earthy silt (27), 0.2m thick, was present beneath layer 16, and part of this was removed onto the surface of a natural gravel layer (28). The only finds recovered from this sequence of silts and gravels consist of some abraded brick and possible pottery fragments from layer 16, potentially of Roman date.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The excavations have demonstrated that the main occupation evidence in the proposal area belongs to the post-medieval period. No significant in-situ Roman deposits were recorded, suggesting that the area may lie outside the civilian settlement, or *vicus*, that developed to the south and east of Caersws II fort during the late 1st and 2nd centuries AD.
- 6.2 The post-medieval occupation evidence consists of a silted gully (22) in Trench A and a pit (17) in Trench B, both of which are sealed beneath one metre of later deposits. The limited size of the excavated areas precludes a detailed understanding of this activity. Trenches A and B also retain evidence of more recent activity, in the form of a possible service trench (10) in Trench B and the post-hole (6) in Trench A, the latter perhaps relating to a building which was erected between 1891 and 1902, but has subsequently been demolished.

- 6.3 The upper deposits in all trenches represent an accumulation of soils up to one metre in depth. It seems most probable that these soils accumulated as a garden deposit, created when Caersws village expanded in the second half of the 19th century.
- 6.4 The only finds belonging to the Roman period were recovered from the lower layers of Trench C and a post-medieval deposit in Trench A. While it is possible that the layers in Trench C are of Roman date, the degree of abrasion on the pottery and brick fragments, together with the nature of the deposits, suggests that they represent periodic flooding episodes of the River Severn, which have resulted in silt and gravel deposition. Material originating from the fort and *vicus* appears to have been redeposited into this location.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Ian Grant, CPAT, for assisting with the excavation; Wendy Owen, CPAT, for identifying the Roman ceramics.

8 SOURCES

8.1 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.

Jones, N W, 1996. *Excavations within the Roman Vicus at Caersws, 1989-93*. *Montgomeryshire Collections* 81, 15-96.

8.2 Cartographic sources

1846 Llanwnnog (Caersws village) Tithe map (Fig.6)

1891 Ordnance Survey first edition 1:10,560 map (Montgomeryshire 35SE; Fig. 7)

1902 Ordnance Survey second edition 1:2,500 map (Montgomeryshire 35.16; Fig. 8)

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale)

1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale)

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive

29 Context record forms
1 black and white negative film
1 colour slide film
1 colour print film
Photographic catalogue
1 A1 site drawing
1 A2 site drawing

Finds

Context 2

18 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery
2 complete stoneware vessels (inkwells ?)
1 complete glass bottle
2 shards of plate glass
1 fragment of clay pipe stem
1 spent cartridge case (rifle)

Context 3

2 fragments of slag
1 green glass bottle shard
1 clear glass shard
2 sherds of 17th-18th century pottery
4 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery

Context 5

1 sherd of post-medieval pottery
1 sherd of possible Roman red ware
1 green glass (bottle?) shard
1 brick fragment

Context 9

1 clay pipe stem fragment
1 small glass bottle
15 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery

Context 11

1 brick fragment
7 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery

Context 13

2 coloured glass shards
15 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery

Context 14

1 base sherd of a Roman grey ware vessel (jar ?)
2 pottery/brick fragments (possibly Roman)

Context 16

1 brick fragment
6 small pottery/brick fragments (undiagnostic)

Context 18

2 brick fragments
3 sherds of 18th-19th century pottery
4 plaster/mortar fragments

Context 19

1 small nail

3 small brick fragments

Context 21

1 clay pipe stem fragment

APPENDIX 2

LAND ADJACENT TO BRIDGE END HOUSE, CAERSWS, POWYS SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of a new dwelling on land adjacent to Bridge End House, Severn Street, Caersws, Powys (Powys CC Planning Application M2002/0181). The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local authority, have determined that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a Brief has been prepared (EVB 454 dated 07/05/02) which details the works required.
- 1.2 The development site lies within an area of high archaeological sensitivity relating to the Roman civilian settlement which developed to the south and east of the fort in the 1st to 3rd centuries AD. It is therefore anticipated that buried archaeological deposits may survive within in the area of the proposed development.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the assessment are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of a combination of desk based study and field evaluation, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;
 - 2.1.2 to record any archaeological sites identified during the field evaluation;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the assessment, incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the future management of the archaeology.

3 Methods

- 3.1 Stage one of the assessment will involve the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, photographic and oral sources. Repositories consulted will include the following: County SMR, CPAT, Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; Powys County Archives, Llandrindod Wells.
- 3.2 Stage two will take the form of a field evaluation consisting of three 3 x 2m trenches. The programme of works will be agreed with the client, and the position of the trenches approved by the curator, in advance of site work commencing. Any alterations to this scheme will only be undertaken following full consultation with the curator and client.
- 3.3 The excavations will be undertaken using a machine excavator with a toothless bucket to remove modern overburden down to the level of the first recognisable archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation will be conducted by hand unless otherwise agreed with the curator in advance. All archaeological contexts identified will be adequately sampled to define their function, date and relationship to other features, in so far as these aims are possible.
- 3.4 Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms and be drawn and photographed as appropriate. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white and colour print and colour slide. All features will be located as accurately as possible with respect to buildings and boundaries identified on modern Ordnance Survey maps and levels will be related to Ordnance Datum where possible.

- 3.5 All artefacts will be treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and will be processed by trained CPAT staff. Any environmental sampling will be conducted by CPAT following the advice of an appropriate specialist. Contingency sums have been allowed for one radiocarbon date and general specialist fees.
- 3.6 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief. This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Evaluation; Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds. A draft report will be forwarded to the curator prior to the production of the final report.
- 3.7 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the overall supervision of Mr RJ 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 evaluation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the desktop study will be completed within 2 days, and the evaluation will be completed within 4 days. The report will be completed within 2 weeks of the completion of on-site works. A copy of the report will be deposited with the Regional SMR. The curator will be informed of the timetable in order to arrange for monitoring if required.
- 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
27th May 2002

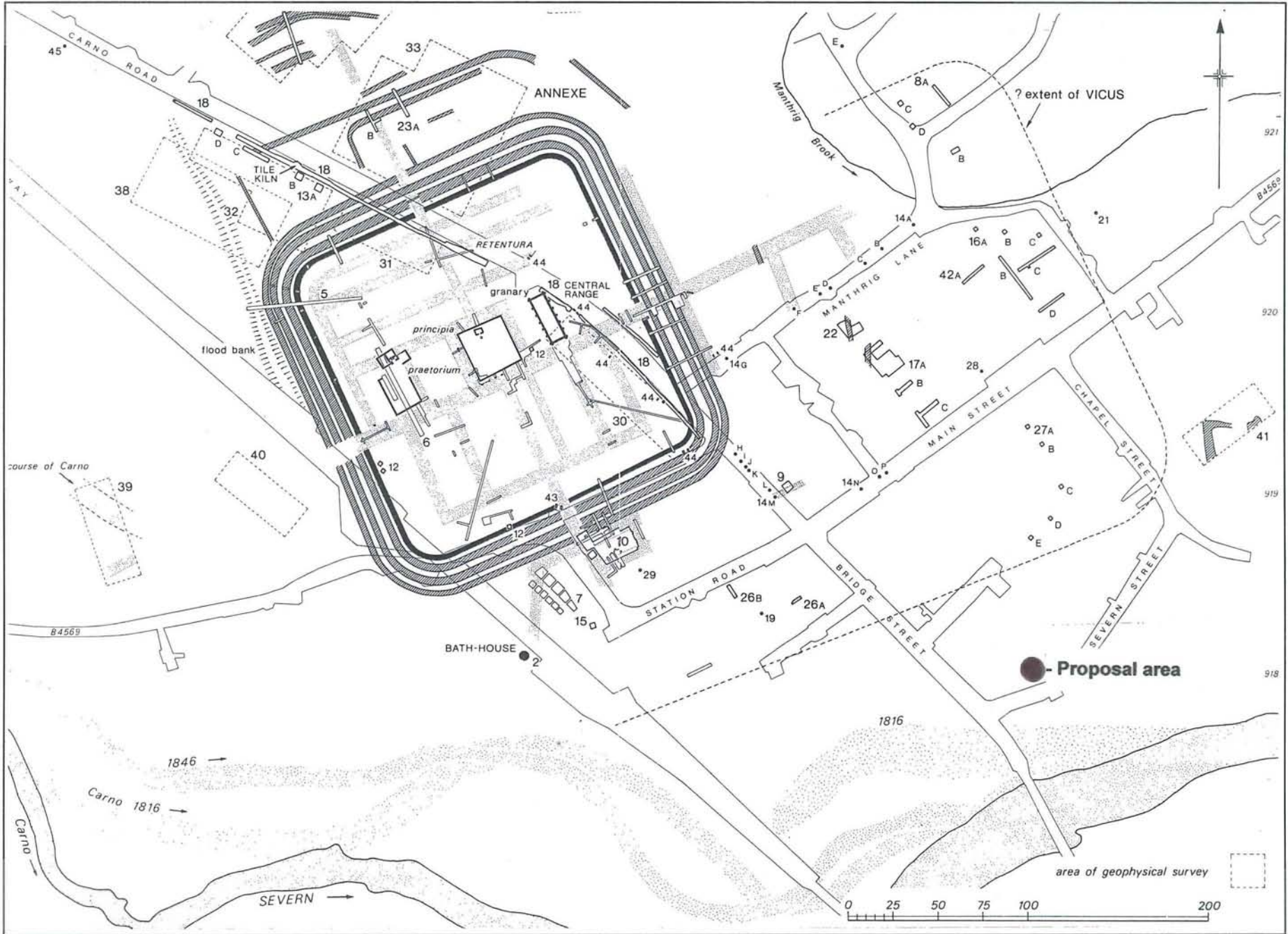


Fig. 1 Caersws II Fort and Vicus in relation to the proposal area

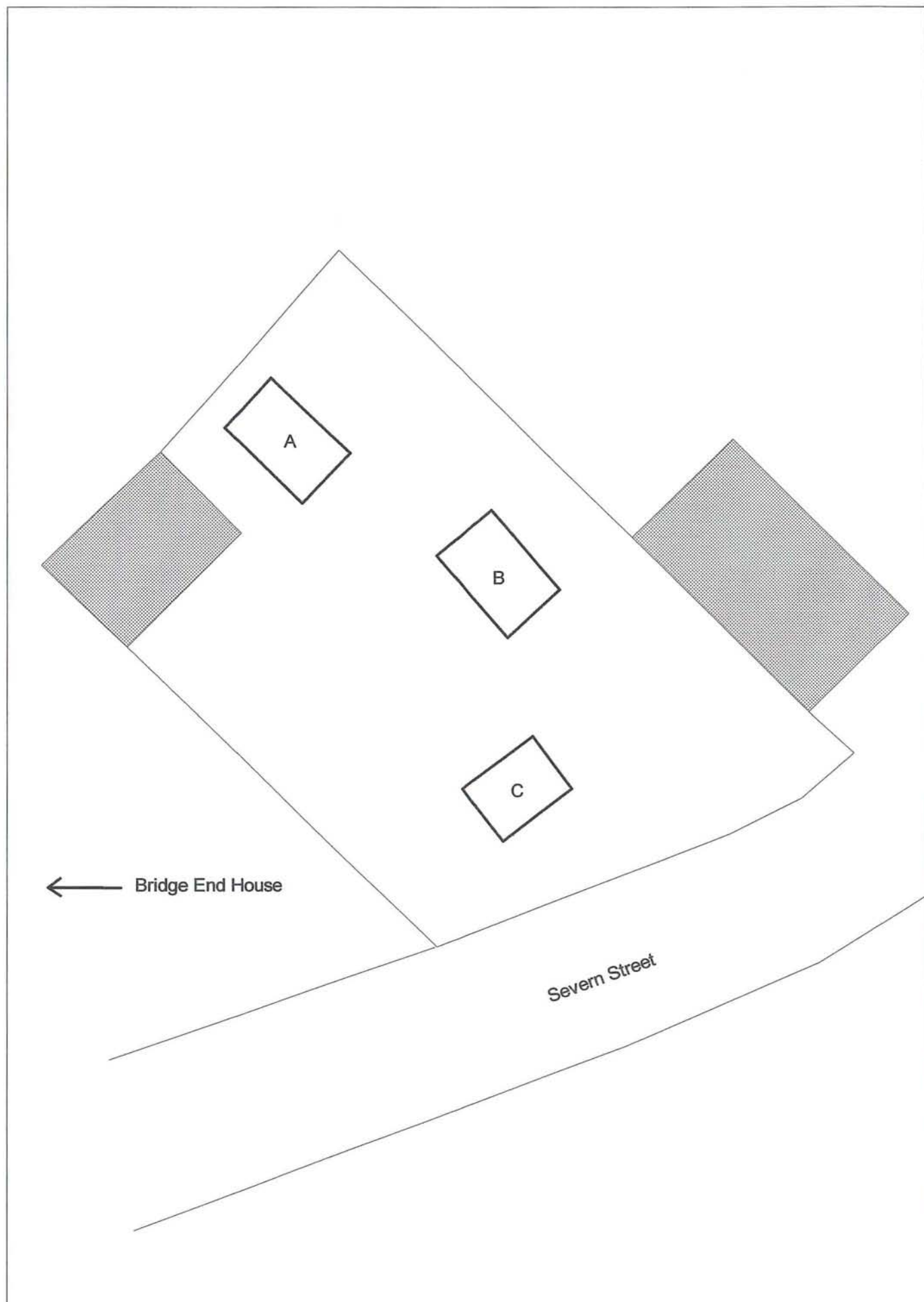


Fig. 2 Plan of evaluation area, showing adjoining buildings and trench locations Scale 1:150

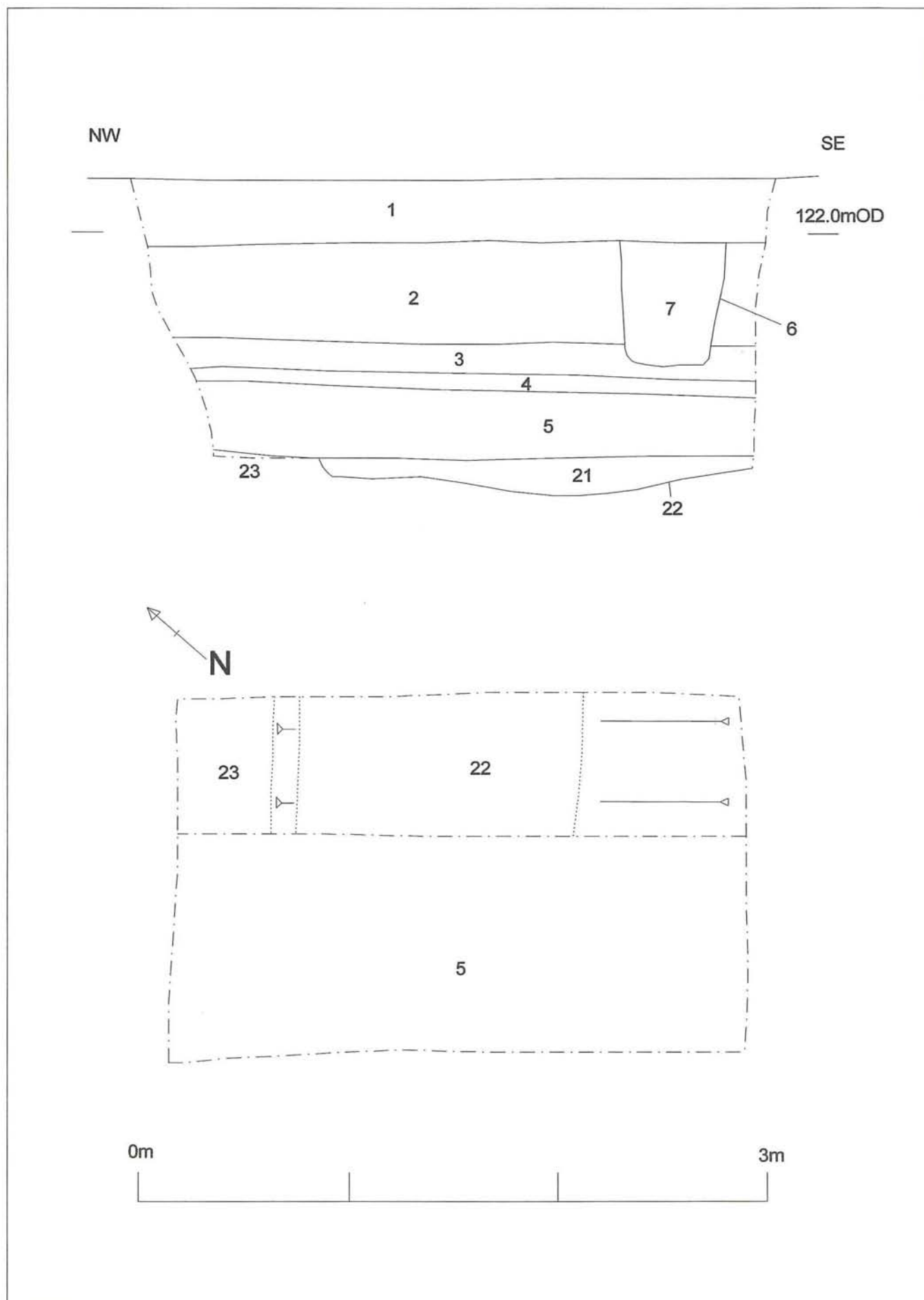


Fig. 3 Trench A plan and section. Scale 1:25

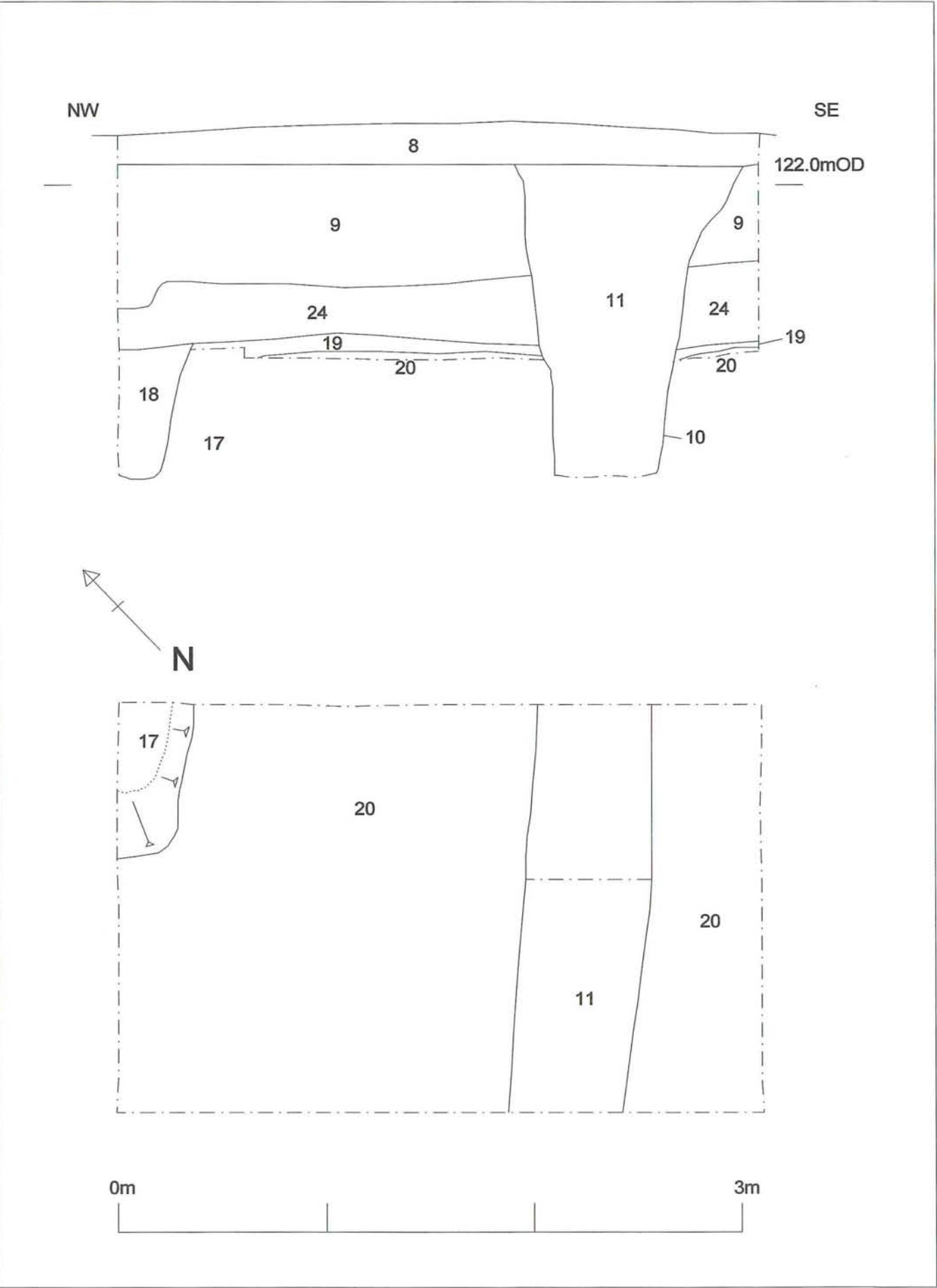


Fig. 4 Trench B plan and section Scale 1:25

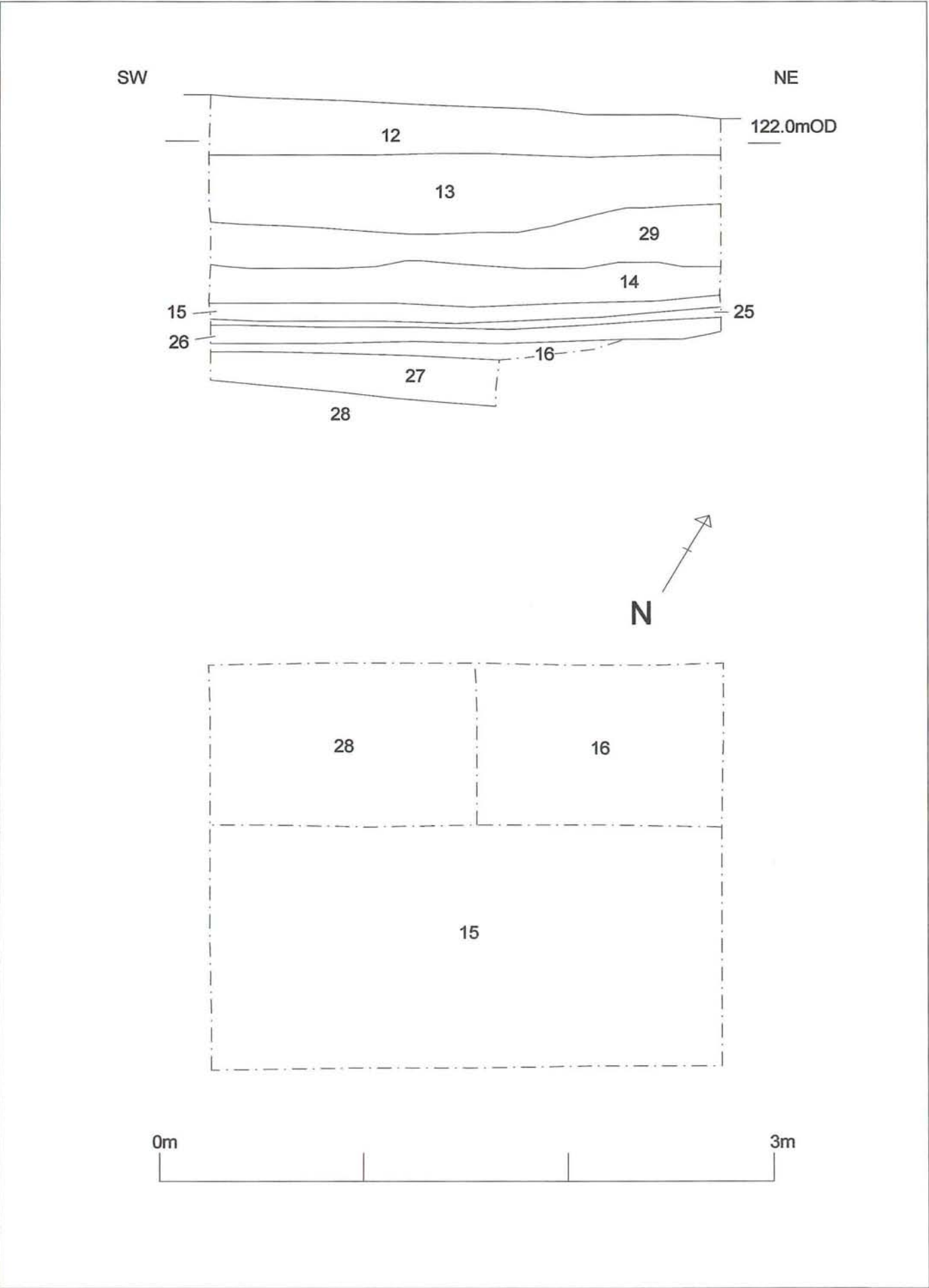


Fig. 5 Trench C plan and section Scale 1:25

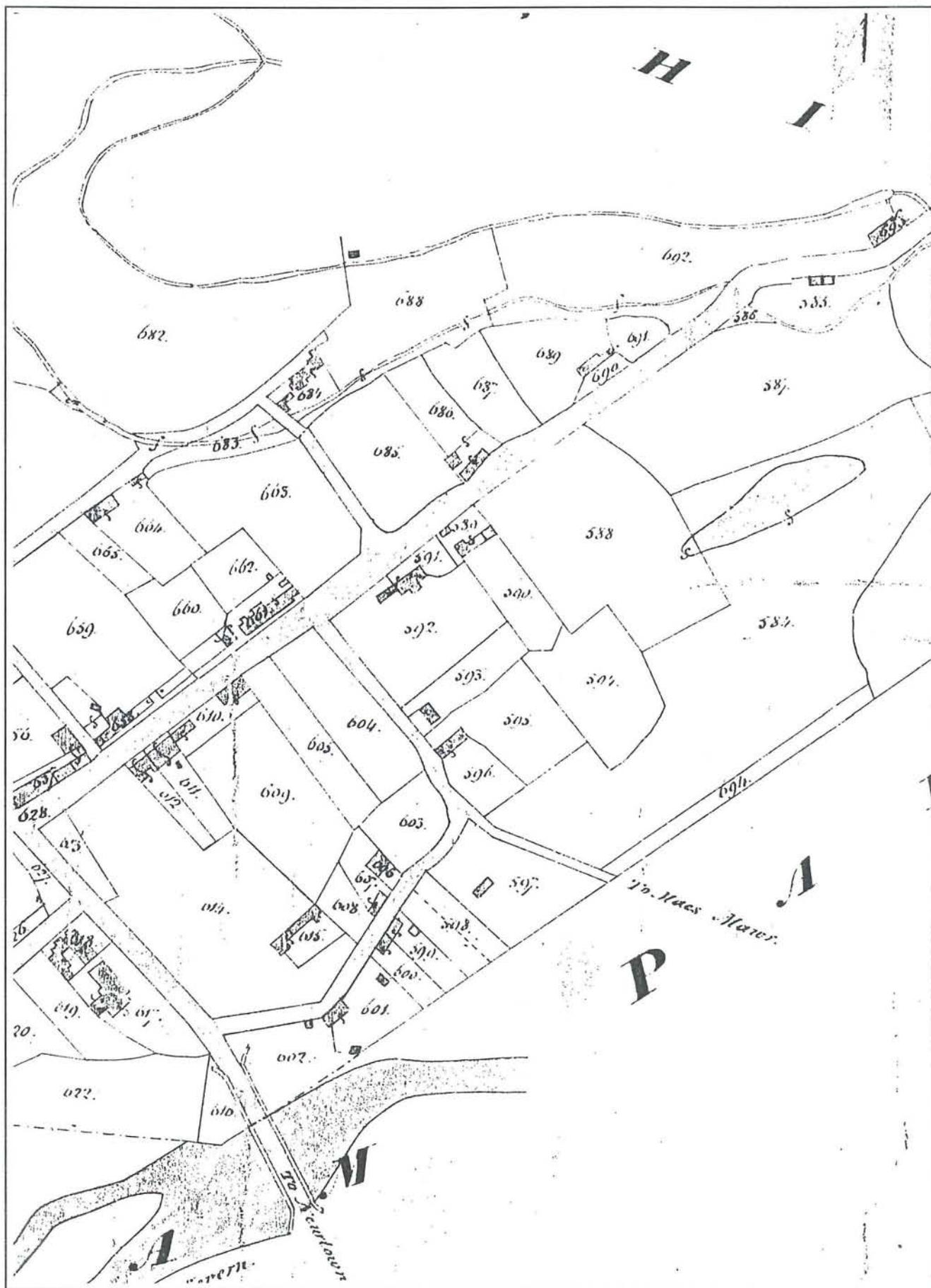


Fig. 6 Llanwnnog (Caersws village) Tithe map of 1846

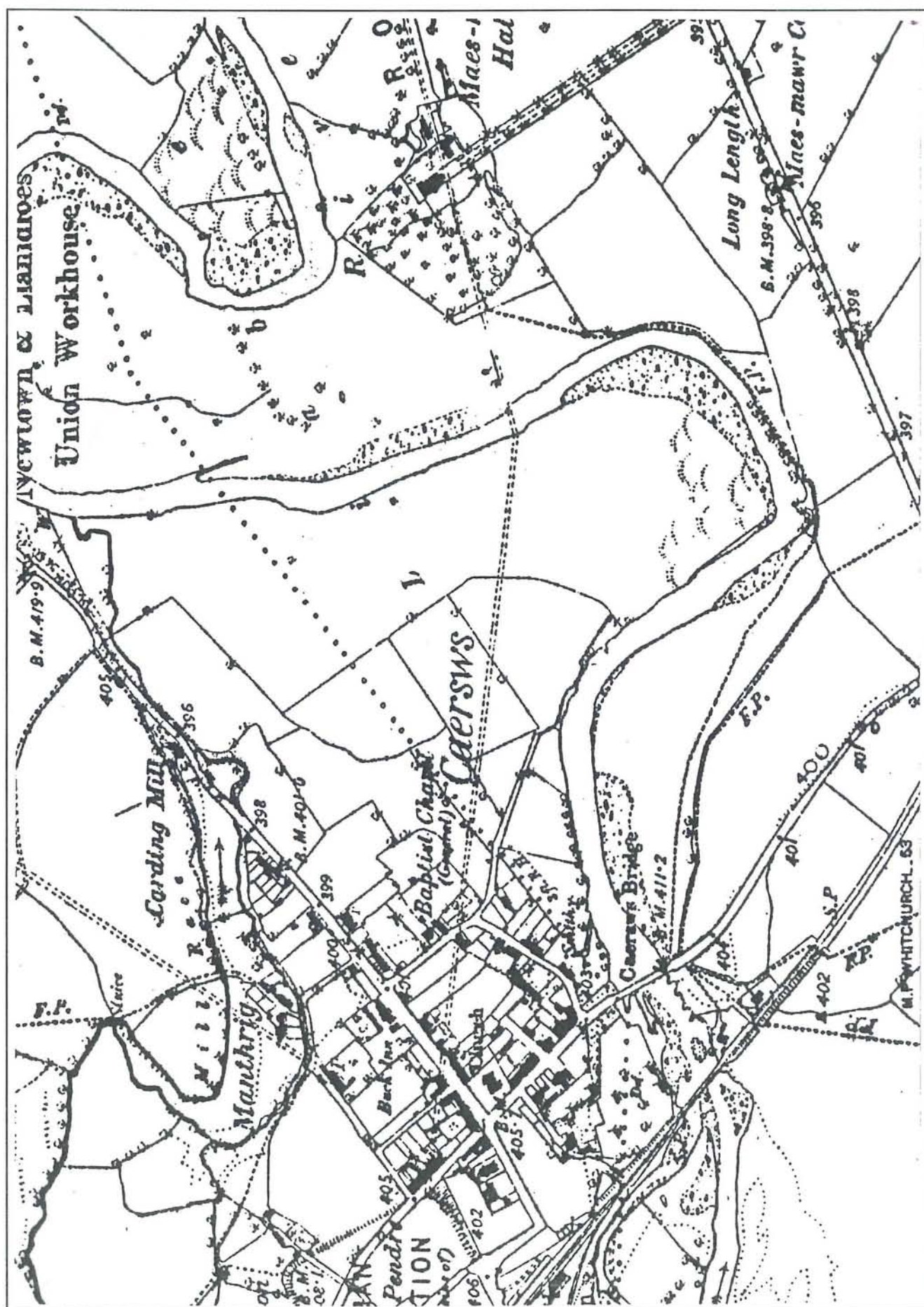


Fig. 7 First edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1891(Montgomeryshire 35SE)

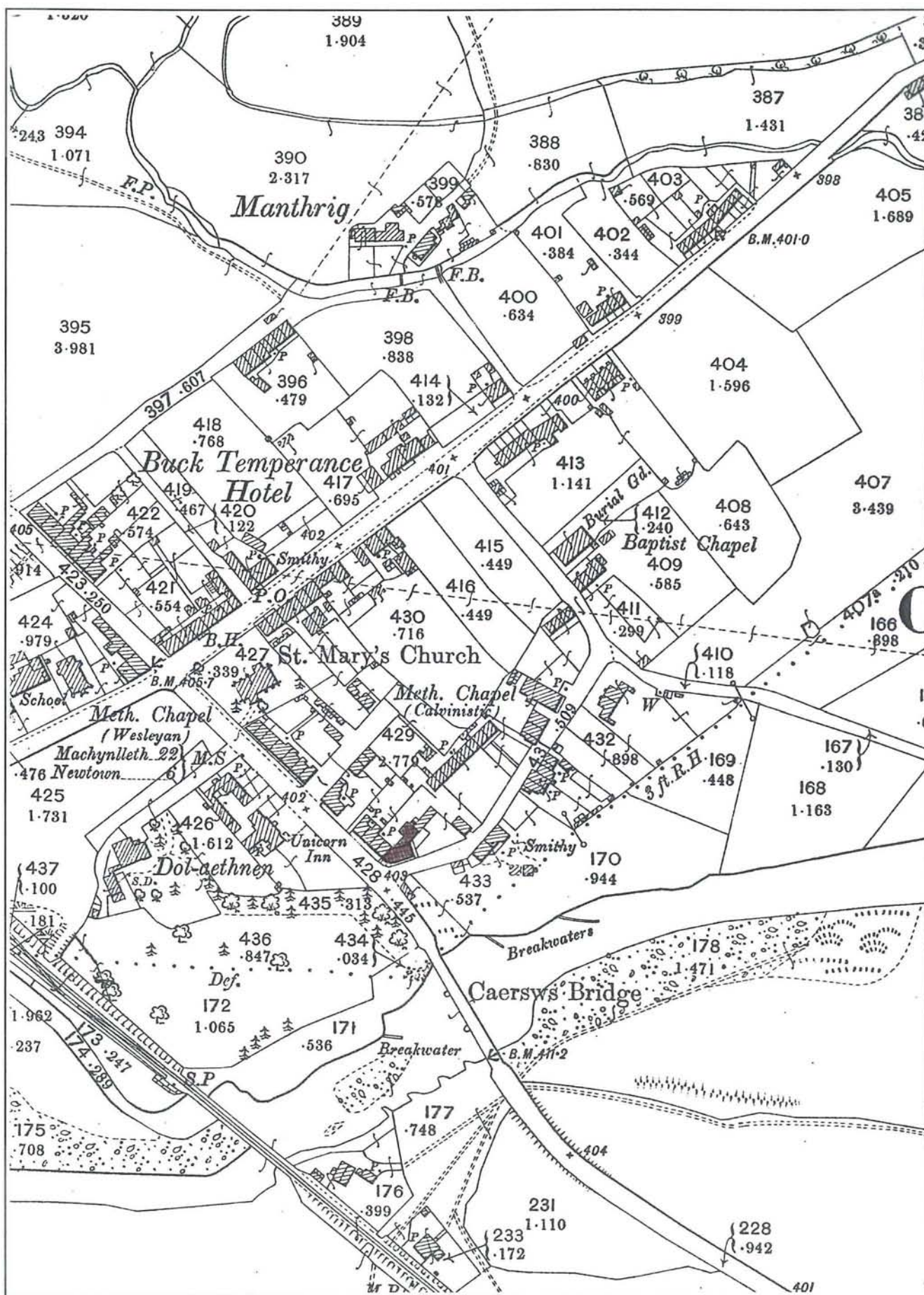


Fig. 8 Second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1902 (Montgomeryshire 35.16)



Plate 1 SW facing section of Trench A after excavation (Photo CPAT 1346.06)



Plate 2 SW facing section of Trench B after excavation (Photo CPAT 1346.05)



Plate 3 SE facing section of Trench C after excavation (Photo CPAT 1346.07)