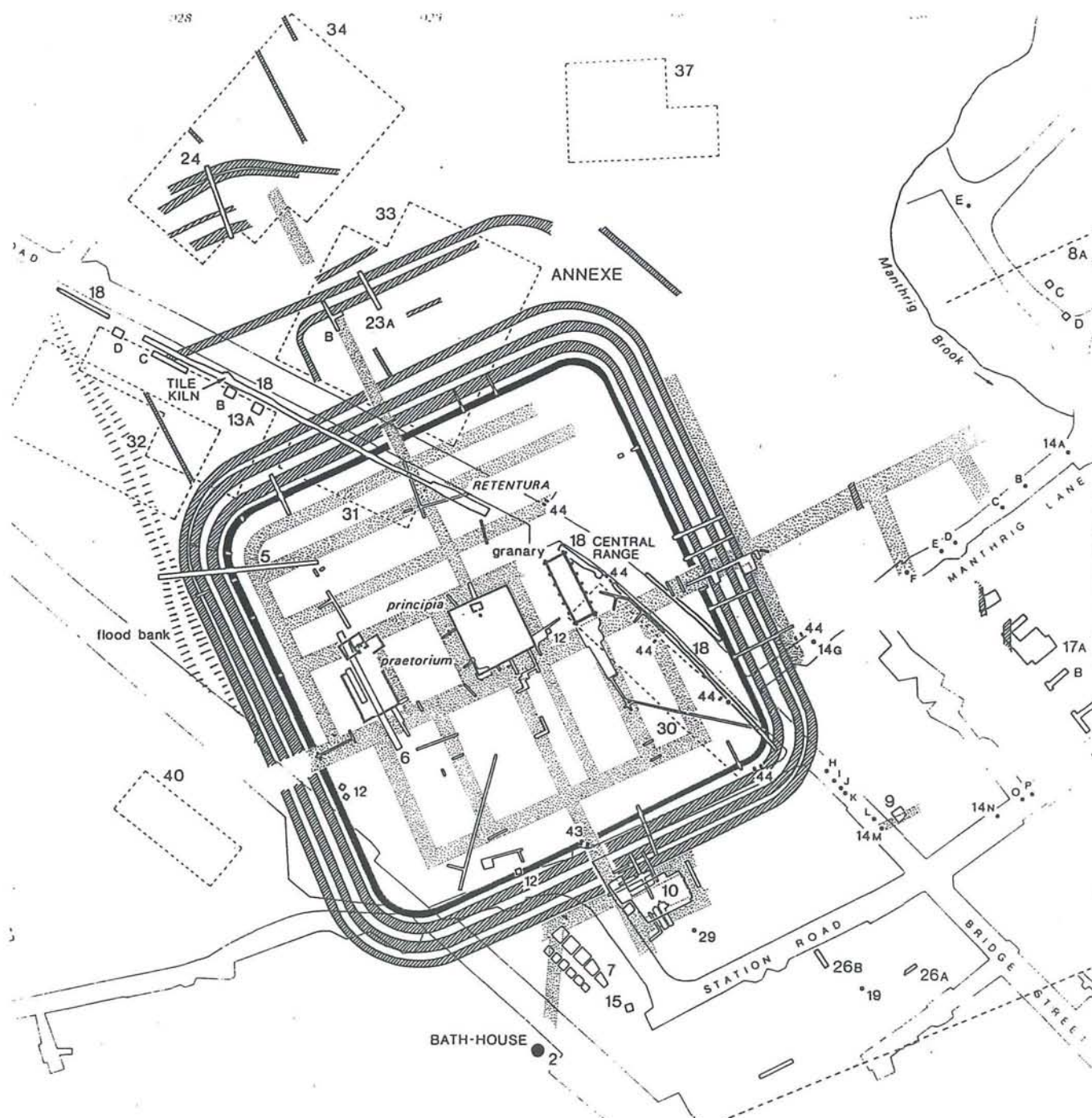


Station Road, Caersws, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 566

Station Road, Caersws, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

R Hankinson
September 2003

Report for Llandinam Developers Ltd

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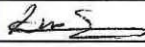
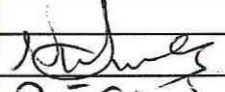
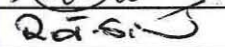
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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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CPAT Project Name	Station Road, Caersws		
CPAT Project No	1091	CPAT Report No	566
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Internal memo

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2003 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Llandinam Developers Ltd to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Station Road, Caersws, Powys. The area of the evaluation has been designated as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM Mg222) and the work was required by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments to assist in their determination of an application by Llandinam Developers Ltd for scheduled monument consent to erect three houses on the site.
- 1.2 The CPAT specification for the work was approved by Cadw, and the associated quotation was accepted by Llandinam Developers Ltd. The archaeological evaluation was carried out in August 2003 and this report compiled immediately thereafter.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The excavation was located at SO 02949185, immediately to the east of a level crossing, where the B4569 road crosses the Central Wales railway line in the village of Caersws in Powys (see Fig. 1).
- 2.2 Caersws lies on the valley floor of the River Severn, at the confluence of the river with its tributary streams of Afon Carno and Afon Cerist/Trannon. The area is relatively level and low-lying, varying in elevation between 120m OD to 125m OD.
- 2.3 The solid geology of the area consists of mudstones and siltstones belonging to the Telychian phase of the Llandovery Series of rocks, the earliest division of the Silurian era (1994 British Geological Survey map), although these rocks are locally overlain by fluvio-glacial silts and gravels of the Pleistocene era. The soils in the immediate area of the evaluation consist of fine loamy soils over gravel belonging to the Rheidol Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Caersws occupies a focal point in the system of Roman forts, controlling access to and from central 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, which was 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, 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*, developed in association with Caersws II fort, and evidence from various 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 present excavations are located within 50m of the south gate of the fort, in an area previously investigated by excavations in 1968 which revealed intensive occupation by timber buildings from AD 75 to the latter half of the 3rd century, as well as extensive metal surfaces which included a road branching off the fort perimeter road towards the bath-house (Fig. 1, 7). These excavations were subsequently published (Daniels *et al.* 1970).

4 EVALUATION (Figs 2-5)

- 4.1 Discussions with Dr Sian Rees, Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, concerning the nature of the evaluation, resulted in the work comprising a total of three 8m by 1.5m trenches (A-C), one within the location of each proposed new dwelling. It was specified that the evaluation should be entirely non-destructive with regard to features and layers belonging to the Roman period. The aim of the evaluation was to identify the depth below the existing ground surface at which Roman deposits were first encountered, their condition and their likely significance.
- 4.2 The modern overburden in each trench was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, with all subsequent cleaning onto the top of the Roman deposits being carried out by hand. The interpretation of the archaeological deposits at the base of each trench can only be provisional as these deposits could not be investigated (see above). The numbers in brackets in the following text refer to contexts given to those features and layers which were identified during the excavation. A drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout.
- Trench A (8.3m x 1.9m; Fig. 3)**
- 4.3 Trench A was excavated in an area known to have been previously investigated by excavations undertaken in 1968 which revealed a series of timber buildings and metalled surfaces (Daniels *et al.* 1970).
- 4.4 The present excavations revealed a series of metalled surfaces, potentially representing successive phases of roads or yards. The deposits in the base of the trench at its south-west end consisted of a layer of grey-brown gritty silt (29), overlain by a metalled surface formed from rounded stones compacted within a yellowish-brown silty matrix (28). Most of the metalled surface was sealed by a layer of brown stony clay silt (27), which appears to be a post-Roman soil deposit. A layer of randomly placed stones with brick fragments (42), 0.15m thick and also apparently of post-Roman date, was present above the metalled surface at the south corner of the trench.
- 4.5 On the north-east side of the metalled surface, layer 29 appeared to overlie two spreads of stone, layers 41 and 43, which probably represent the earliest deposits present in the base of the trench. Layer 41 was composed of rounded stones in a brown silt matrix and seemed to be redeposited river gravel, while layer 43 was superficially similar apart from having a matrix of mid-grey silt. A further deposit of brown stony silt (30), similar to layer 27 and probably of the same origin, formed a bank, 0.3m high, visible in the trench section. This bank of material overlay layer 29.
- 4.6 The north-east edge of layers 29 and 41 were defined by a further cut (32) which was aligned north-west/south-east and may denote the south-west edge of a linear gully. There are a series of layers filling this putative gully, the earliest of which appears to be composed of small stones set in a dark grey-brown clay silt (39). Above layer 39 was a layer of brown gritty clay silt (38) containing Roman finds, which was overlain by a spread of yellow-mottled brown gritty silt (40) containing charcoal. Layer 40 may represent a Roman occupation deposit.
- 4.7 At the north-east end of the trench, layer 38 was overlain by a layer of stones set in pale orange-grey clay (37). Two abutting layers appeared to have been deposited on top of layer 37, comprising a layer of small stones set in orange-yellow silt (35) and a layer of dark brown stony clay silt (36). What was probably the latest layer belonging to the Roman period at this end of the trench, was represented by rough cobbling (34), composed of stones up to 0.5m in diameter and including reddish-purple fragments of sandstone which may have originated from the stone facing used in a late phase of the nearby fort. The upper surface of the cobbling had a marked hollow which may suggest an unstable underlying deposit or fill. A 0.15m thick lens of dark-grey brown gritty clay silt (33), which filled the hollow in the surface, may represent the surviving remains of a post-Roman soil accumulation.
- 4.8 In the south-western part of the trench, layers 27, 28, 29 and 30 all appeared to have been truncated by an excavated hollow (26), at least 4m in width where it coincided with the north-west section of the trench, and was cut to a depth of 0.6m. The resulting surface of the feature had the appearance and 'feel' of having been cleaned archaeologically, prior to its backfilling with a mix of black gritty silt, yellow clay and brown stony silt (25). The most likely interpretation of this feature is that it represents the edge of a backfilled trench from the archaeological excavations carried out in this locality in 1968.
- 4.9 The remaining layers in the trench represented relatively recent dumps of material. At the north-east end of the trench the probable Roman layers appeared to be truncated and were overlain by a layer

of orange-brown stony silt (31), up to 0.25m thick. Above layer 31, and also the fill (25) of the possible 1968 archaeological excavation trench, was a recent dumped layer of mixed grey-brown stony silt (24), up to 0.5m thick, containing fragments of tarmac. A thin lens of angular grey gravel (23), up to 0.08m thick overlay layer 24 at the north-east end of the trench.

- 4.10 The probable Roman deposits in this trench occurred at a depth of between 0.45m and 0.7m. The deposits at the centre of the trench had been truncated by later activity.

Trench B (8.3m x 1.5m; Fig. 4)

- 4.11 The excavations revealed a series of metalled surfaces, some of which were thought to be continuations of features in Trench A. The earliest deposits were present at the north-west end of the trench and consisted primarily of a metalled surface of small pebbles set in a yellow-grey silt matrix (21). A narrow band of yellow-brown clay (22), up to 0.15m wide, appeared to protrude through the surface, but the relationship of the two deposits was not investigated as their surface appearance suggested that they represented Roman activity.
- 4.12 At a distance of 3m from the north-west end of the trench, the upper surface of layer 21 dipped, which suggested that the edge of the metalled surface had been reached. A layer of rounded stones in a brown clay silt matrix (20) overlay the descending edge of the layer.
- 4.13 Layer 20 was itself overlain by three successive metalled surfaces (17-19), each composed of small stones set in a grey-brown silt matrix, the latest of which (17) contained fragments of Roman brick incorporated into its uppermost part.
- 4.14 The post-Roman deposits in the trench varied from 0.15m to 0.4m in thickness and consisted of an initial layer of brown stony clay silt (16), up to 0.15m thick, which probably represented a post-Roman soil accumulation. This was overlain by black to dark grey silt (15), up to 0.25m thick, that contained coal and slag and was evidently related to previous use of the site by the adjoining railway.

Trench C (8.1m x 1.5m; Fig. 5)

- 4.15 Following the removal of post-Roman and modern overburden a series of in situ Roman deposits were revealed at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.6m below ground surface. At the north-west end of the trench a pale yellow-grey clay silt (7) was identified which, given its position, seems likely to have represented the upper fill of the central of the three fort ditches. To the south-east was a metalled stone surface (8), lying between the presumed middle ditch and a layer of mixed grey, dark grey and brown clay silt (9) which may have represented the upper fill of the outer fort ditch.
- 4.16 The south-east side of layer 9 was overlain by a series of metalled surfaces, sealing the deposit and indicating that the outer ditch had been abandoned by this time. The earliest surface consisted of a layer of stone (10), set in a yellow-grey clay matrix, which seemed to have been partly truncated by later disturbance (44). Two areas of later metalling (11 and 12), possibly contemporary, appeared to represent later resurfacing.
- 4.17 The post-Roman deposits in the trench varied from a thickness of 0.6m at the north-west end of the trench to 0.4m at the south-east end of the trench. The lowest of these deposits consisted of a thin lens of pale greyish-yellow clay (14), which overlay layer 12. A probable post-hole (4), approximately 0.5m in diameter and 0.2m deep, had been cut through layer 10 and appeared to be post-Roman in date. A layer of brown stony clay silt (3), up to 0.35m thick, represented a probable post-Roman soil accumulation and overlay layers 7, 8, 9 and 14. Above layer 3 was a layer of mixed grey-brown to dark grey stony silt (1), up to 0.25m thick, which forms the existing ground surface. Coal and slag within the layer suggested that it was related to the use of the area by the adjoining railway. At the north-west end of the trench, a layer of stones (2), up to 0.2m thick, were recorded within layer 1.

5 ROMAN POTTERY

- 5.1 A very small assemblage of Roman pottery, comprising only 56 sherds (934g) was recovered from the excavation trenches. The pottery was examined macroscopically with the aid of a x8 hand lens and sherds were compared with samples from the CPAT fabric type series. Small quantities of each of the following fabric groups were identified: Samian, Mortaria, Red wares, Grey wares, Black Burnished ware, White ware, Colour coated ware and Amphorae. The range of fabrics and forms is generally similar to other previously published assemblages from Caersws (Britnell 1989; Jones 1993). The pottery assemblage is too small to allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the dates of the contexts in which it occurred.
- 5.2 The majority of the assemblage was composed of small and undiagnostic body sherds. The only vessel forms complete enough to be identifiable with certainty were a grey ware flanged bowl with dark exterior surface, decorated with two grooves (as Britnell 1989, no.125, early 2nd century), a small bowl with a mortaria-like downward-pointing flange in a smooth cream fabric, and a flanged bowl and a grooved bowl in Black Burnished ware. Body sherds from Dressel 20 South Spanish olive oil amphorae were recognisable, as was a small body sherd from a creamy-white mortarium with red-brown trituration grits (perhaps from Mancetter-Hartshill). The majority of the red ware sherds coated with cream slip externally are assumed to be from flagons, as are the base and body sherds of a white ware vessel. It was not possible to identify vessel forms of any of the red ware sherds, nor the fabrics, with any certainty, but several sherds appear to be in fabrics resembling Severn Valley ware.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The evaluation demonstrated that archaeologically significant deposits associated with the Roman fort and *vicus* are present within the area of the proposed development. These deposits were recorded at a minimum depth of 0.15m below the existing ground surface (in Trench B), but more generally between 0.4m and 0.6m in depth, beneath relatively modern overburden.
- 6.2 Although the evaluation was non-destructive, it was evident that the exposed deposits represented a succession of layers from the later phases of Roman activity in Caersws. The main evidence of this activity consisted of a series of metalled surfaces, one or more of which may overlie the outer of the three fort ditches. Evidence from previous excavations suggests that these surfaces represent part of the perimeter road and an offshoot leading towards the bath-house.
- 6.3 There was evidence of some previous disturbance on the site, probably from agricultural activity as there were possible former ploughsoil deposits present, although some might be related to the adjoining railway. This disturbance may have led to partial truncation of the uppermost Roman layers, but the compact nature of the metalled surfaces seems to have prevented deep, large-scale damage.
- 6.4 The site had previously been the subject of excavations in 1968 (Daniels *et al.* 1970), which revealed significant Roman deposits, including metalled surfaces and structures. Part of one of these areas of earlier excavation was revealed in Trench A. Excavations during 1985-6 on the opposite side of Station Road revealed deeply stratified Roman deposits (Britnell 1989), suggesting that the general area outside the south gate of the fort was intensively occupied.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Fiona Johnson, Nigel Jones and Wendy Owen, CPAT; Mr P Edmunds for his assistance in clearing sections of the yard prior to the commencement of the evaluation; and Lord Davies of Llandinam Developers for facilitating the excavation.

8 REFERENCES

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

Daniels, C, Jones, G D B, & Putnam, W G, 1970. Excavations at Caersws, 1968, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 61, 37-42.

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

Cartographic sources

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
LAND AT STATION ROAD, CAERSWS, POWYS - CAERSWS ROMAN FORT AND VICUS
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of three new dwellings on land adjacent to Station Road, Caersws, Powys. The site lies within the Scheduled Area of Caersws Roman Fort and Vicus (SAM Mg222) and Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, acting as archaeological advisors to the National Assembly, have determined that an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource.
- 1.2 The development site lies between Station Road and the railway, in an area where limited archaeological excavations were undertaken in 1968 (Daniels *et al* 1970). The results from these excavations demonstrated that the area was one of high archaeological sensitivity, identifying the foundations of a number of timber structures relating to the Roman civilian settlement which developed to the south and east of the fort from AD 75 to the latter half of the 3rd century. In addition, the outer two fort ditches lie partly within the northern end of the plot, along with the perimeter road and a side road branching towards the adjacent bath-house (Jones 1993, 37, 90 & fig. 2). It is therefore anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits are likely survive within in the area of the proposed development and the following specification has been designed to evaluate the depth and significance of these deposits.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the assessment are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of 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 Following discussions with Dr Sian Rees, Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, it has been determined that the field evaluation should consist of three 8 x 1.5m trenches, located within the area of each proposed new dwelling. 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 Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments in advance. The evaluation will be entirely non-destructive and designed to determine the depth at which archaeologically sensitive deposits survive, together with their nature condition and significance.
- 3.2 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 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.
- 3.3 All artefacts will be related to their contexts from which they were derived and treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and will be processed by trained CPAT staff.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared in A4 format, containing conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Archaeological Background; Evaluation; Conclusions 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), to be deposited with the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). All artefacts will, subject to the permission of the owner, be deposited with the Powysland Museum, Welshpool.

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 (IFA). CPAT is an IFA Registered Organisation.
- 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 evaluation will be completed within 5 days. The report will be completed within 2 weeks of the completion of on-site works. Copies of the report will be provided to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, with a further copies to be deposited with the Regional SMR and the National Monuments Record. The Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments 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.

References

- Daniels, C, Jones, G D B, & Putnam, W G, 1970. Excavations at Caersws, 1968, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 61, 37-42.
- Jones, N W, 1993. Caersws Roman Fort and Vicus, Montgomeryshire, Powys, 1984-92, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 81, 15-96.

N.W. Jones
16th April 2003

APPENDIX 2

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive

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

Digital archive

Penmap location plan: 1091.pts

Finds

Roman pottery

Context 3

Number	Weight (g)	Diam	Rim %	Vessel type	Fabric group	Comment
1	1				Samian	
2	5			Flagon ?	White ware	
13	12				Red ware	

Context 16

Number	Weight (g)	Diam	Rim %	Vessel type	Fabric group	Comment
1	34	19	8	Flanged bowl	Grey ware	Early 2nd C.
1	12			Jar ?	Grey ware	
1	23			Dressel 20	Amphora	
9	44			Dressel 20	Amphora	Dressel 20 (burnt sherds?)
4	9			Flagon ?	Colour coat	cream slip externally
1	4	9	6	Flagon ?	Colour coat	
2	4				Red Ware	
1	1				Red ware	Possibly Severn valley ware

Context 31

Number	Weight (g)	Diam	Rim %	Vessel type	Fabric group	Comment
1	10	13	9	Flanged bowl	White ware	Mortaria-like form
1	10			Flanged dish/bowl	Black burnished	Rim sherd. ?3rd-4th C
1	5			Grooved bowl	Black burnished	Rim sherd. ?Antonine form
1	6			Cooking pot	Black burnished	sherd with lattice decoration
3	12			Flagon ?	Colour coat	cream slip externally
1	2	9	6	Flagon ?	Colour coat	cream slip externally
1	2			Mortarium	Mortaria	White fabric/red brown grits. ?Mancetter-Hartshill
1	5			Jar?	Red Ware	
3	9				Red ware	

Context 38

Number	Weight (g)	Diam	Rim %	Vessel type	Fabric group	Comment
4	14			Flagon ?	White ware	base & body sherds
3	710			Dressel 20	Amphora	scar of handle attachment

Other finds**Iron**

Context	Number	Weight (g)	Comment
16	2	60	including one possible nail fragment
25	1	29	disc-shaped object ?
31	3	72	including one possible nail

Copper alloy

Context	Number	Weight (g)	Comment
31	3	4	possibly part of a brooch or clasp

Brick/tile

Context	Number	Weight (g)	Comment
3	6	178	assortment of brick and tile fragments, some Roman
5	2	41	Roman
25	2	4	Post-medieval
31	2	120	Post-medieval

Glass

Context	Number	Weight (g)	Comment
16	4	2	small fragments, possibly Roman
25	1	1	small fragment, probably post-medieval

Clay pipe

Context	Number	Weight (g)	Comment
16	1	1	small fragment of pipe stem

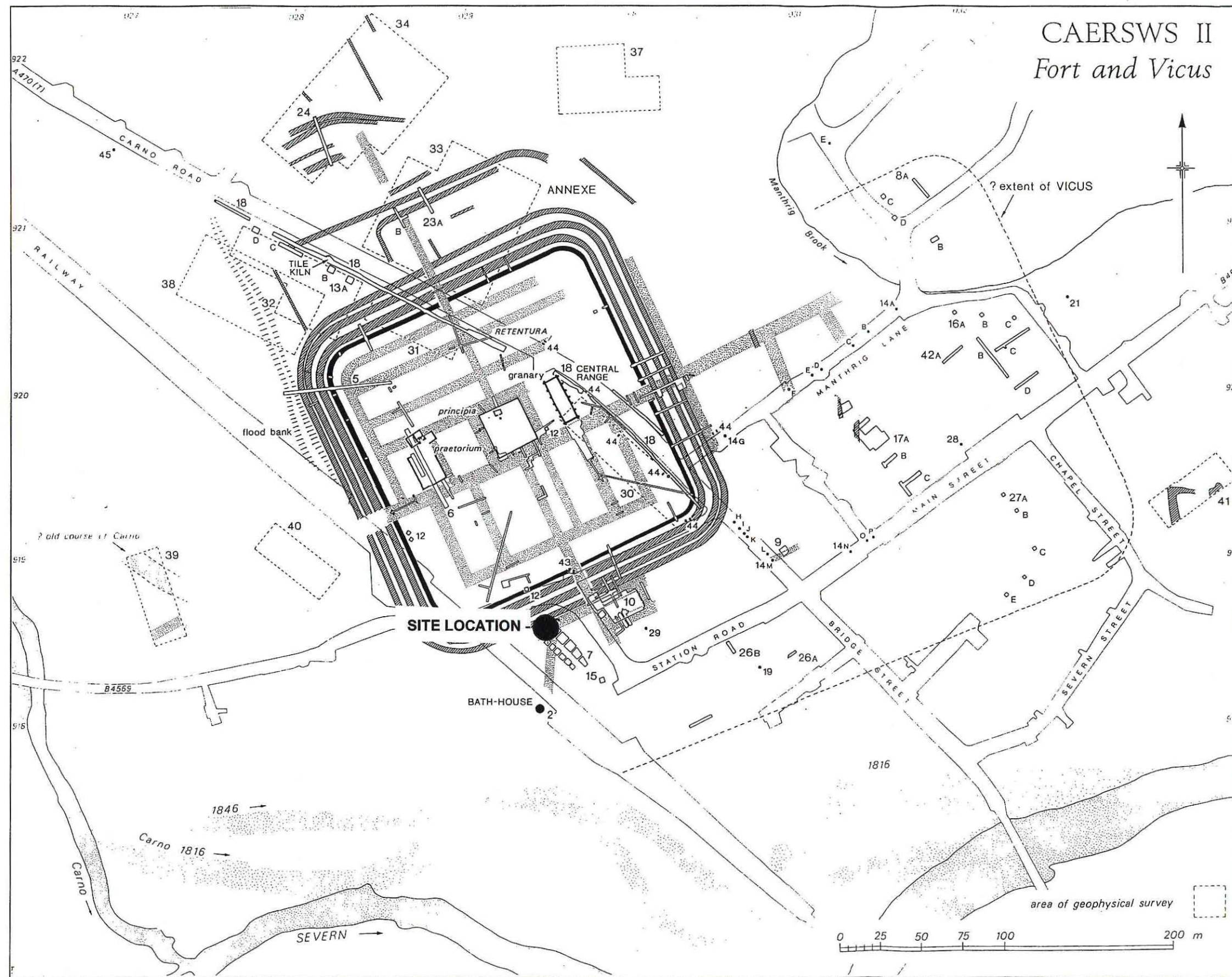


Fig. 1 Caersws Roman fort and vicus showing location of excavations (after Jones 1993, Fig.2)

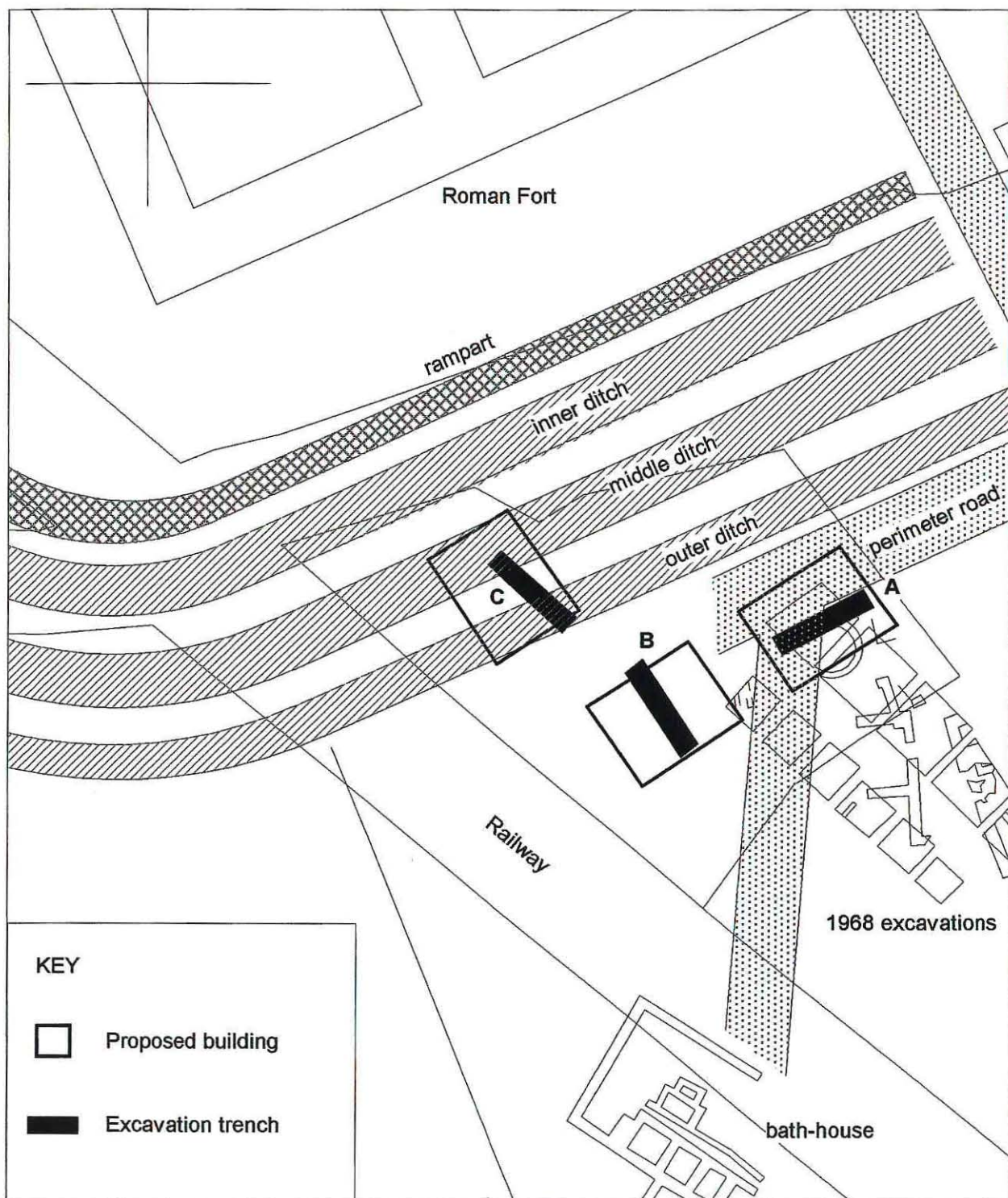
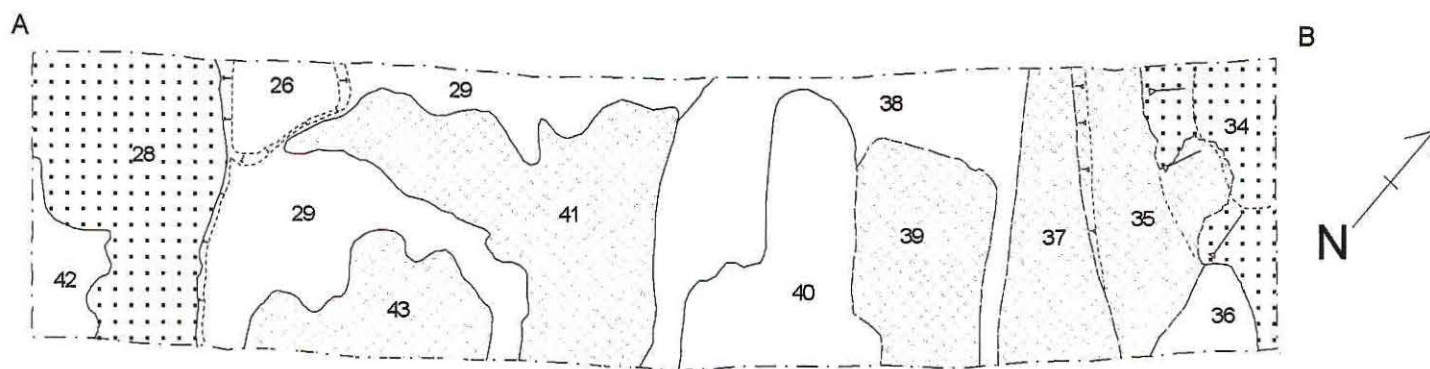
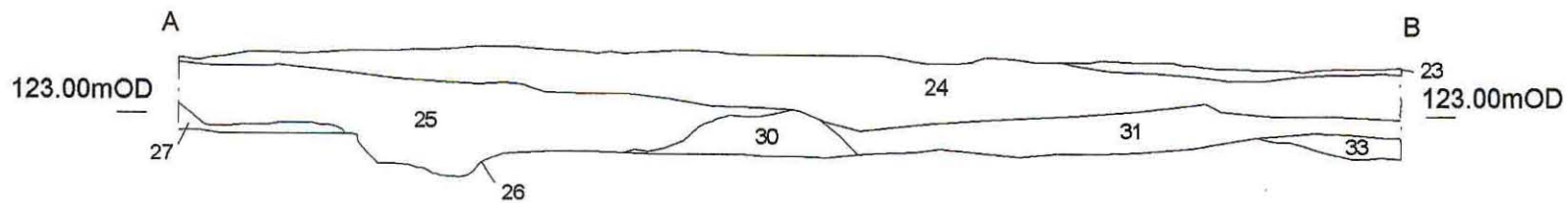


Fig. 2 Trench locations in relation to proposed buildings



Key



Metalled surface



Layer of stone



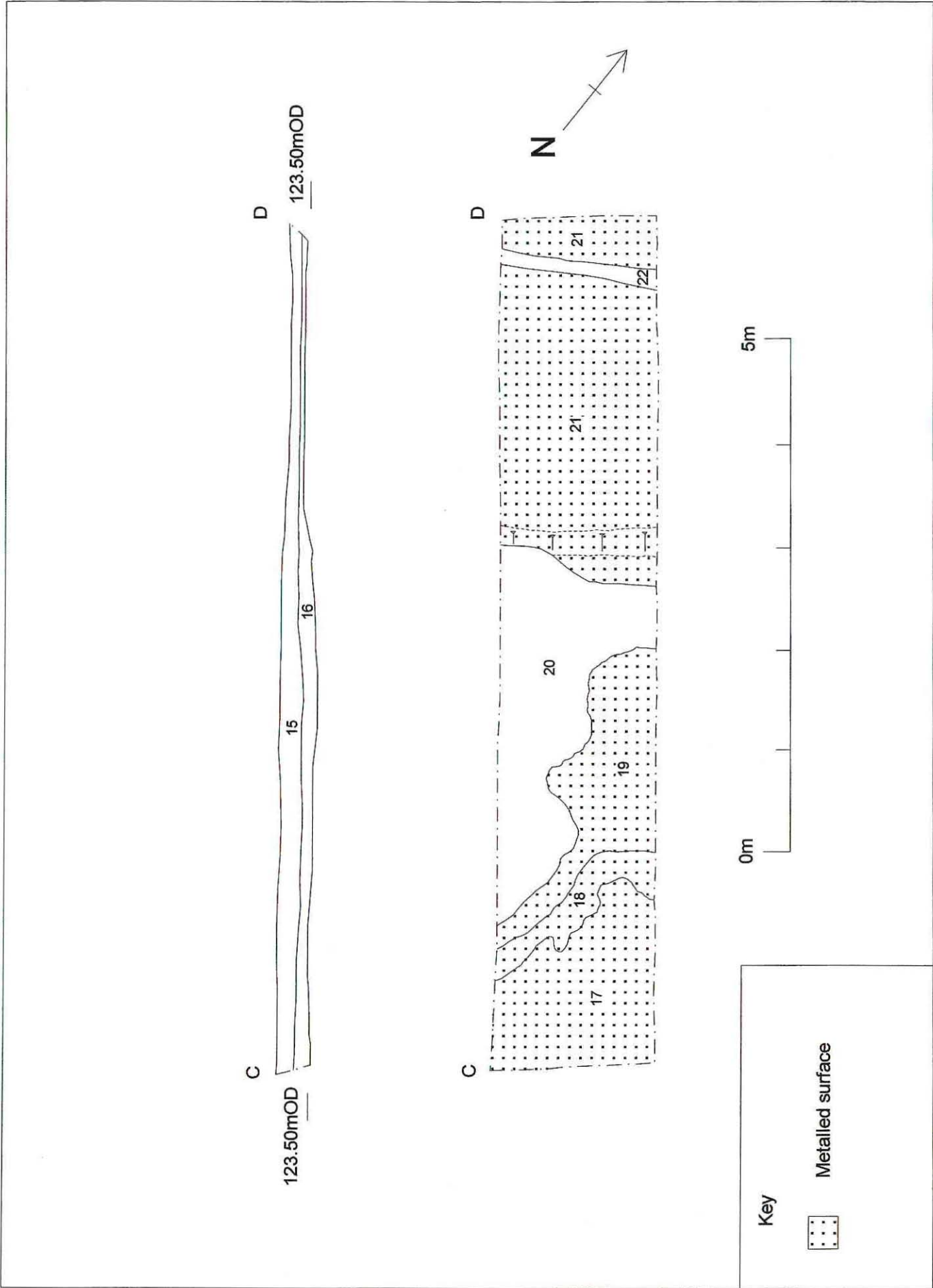


Fig. 4 Trench B plan and section (Scale 1:50)

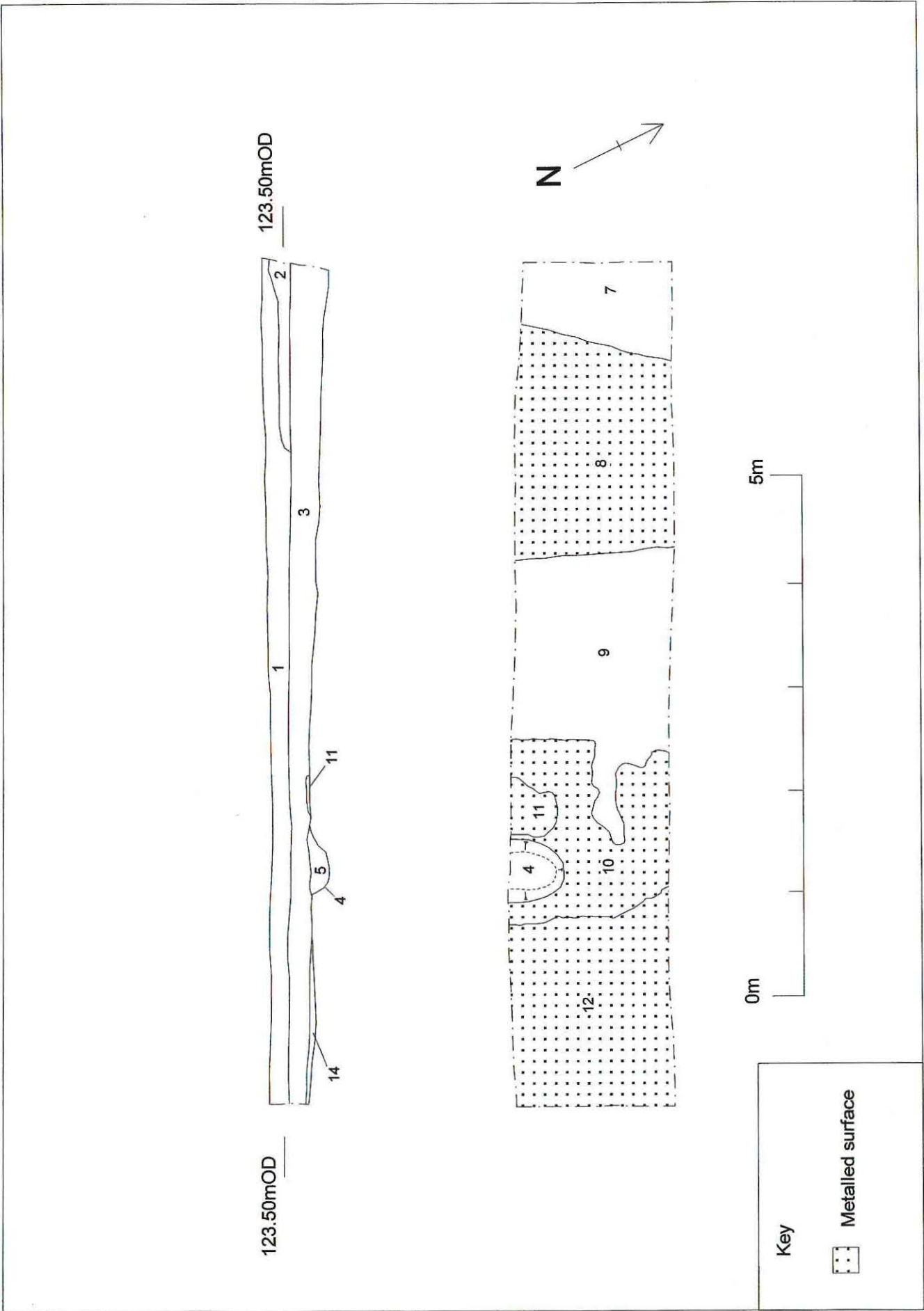


Fig. 5 Trench C plan and section (Scale 1:50)



Plate 1 Trench A from NE (Photo CPAT 1486.02)



Plate 2 Trench A section showing probable backfill of 1968 excavation, from SE (Photo CPAT 1486.09)



Plate 3 Trench B from SE (Photo CPAT 1486.06)



Plate 4 Trench C from SE (Photo CPAT 1486.03)



Plate 5 Edge of fort ditch in Trench C, from SE (Photo CPAT 1486.05)

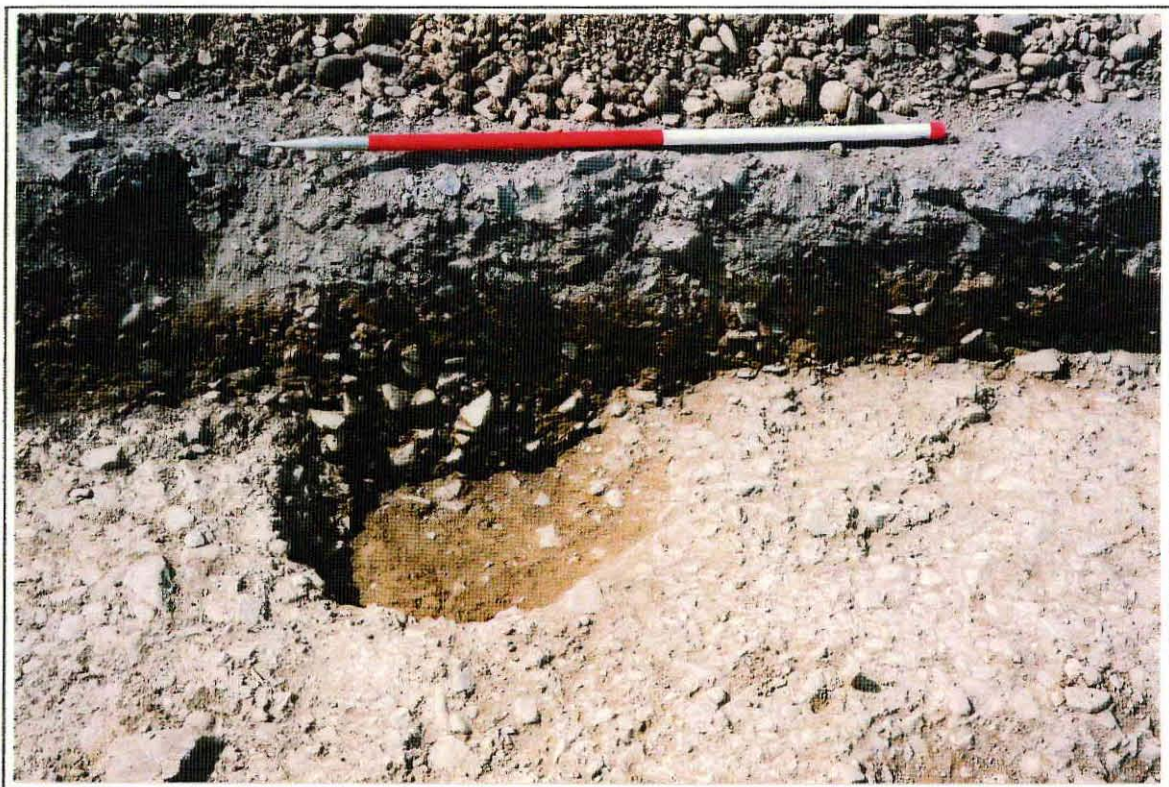


Plate 6 Probable post-hole of post-Roman date in Trench C, from NE (Photo CPAT 1486.08)