

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

The Nest, Four Crosses, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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The Nest, Four Crosses, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

F Johnson
June 2003

Report for R A Francis & K J Williams

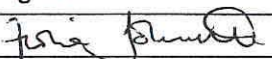

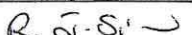
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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2003 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by R A Francis and K J Williams to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land at The Nest, Four Crosses, Powys. The pre-planning evaluation was the subject of a brief drawn up by Mr M Walters of the Curatorial Section of CPAT (CPAT EVB 484, dated 14th March 2003), acting in his capacity as archaeological curator for the region, which identified the need for a detailed desktop study and field evaluation. The specification and quotation were duly accepted and the evaluation was undertaken during June 2003.
- 1.2 The Regional Sites and Monuments Record records a number of features to the north of the site identified from aerial reconnaissance. These appear to include at least fourteen ring ditches which are likely to represent the remains of ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mounds, or round barrows. Eight of these sites were subject to excavations by CPAT during the 1980s, and produced evidence of activity from the Mesolithic through to the Early Medieval period. Recent evaluation in the area immediately to the south and south-east produced further evidence of prehistoric activity. To the east of the plot is the great Early Medieval earthwork known as Offa's Dyke, which is statutorily protected as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM Mg033).

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The area of the assessment lies centrally in the village of Four Crosses, between the A483 and Offa's Dyke (fig. 1; SJ 26971850). The site comprises the south-eastern end of the rear garden area of the The Nest, a house that lies in the northern area of the plot generally known as The Clawdd.
- 2.2 The evaluation area rests on a gravel terrace with soils consisting of well-drained brown earths (Warrilow *et al.* 1986). The area has been enclosed as an arable plot known as The Croft since at least 1842 (fig. 2).

3 DESKTOP STUDY

- 3.1 Stage One of the assessment involved the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources. Repositories consulted included: the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held by CPAT in Welshpool; the National Monuments Record held by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW) in Aberystwyth; the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; and Powys County Archives in Llandrindod Wells.
- 3.2 A search of the SMR identified a number of significant archaeological sites within the immediate area. A collection of oblique aerial photographs held by CPAT reveals a number of features identified by cropmarks, which have already been the subject of detailed analysis and plotting (see fig 1). A search of oblique aerial photographs held by the RCAHMW failed to identify any new or previously unrecorded cropmarks.
- 3.3 As noted above the recorded features include at least fourteen ring ditches, likely to represent the remains of ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mounds, or round barrows, eight of which were excavated by CPAT in the 1980s (Warrilow *et al.* 1986). In addition, a number of early but undated linear features and pit alignments have also been excavated and are believed to represent possible field enclosures (Owen and Britnell 1989).
- 3.4 Immediately to the south and south-east of the site in the area known as The Clawdd, a recent evaluation in advance of development identified possible prehistoric activity in the form of postholes, pits and shallow linear features, together with associated prehistoric pottery (Halfpenney 2000).

- 3.5 To the east of the area is Offa's Dyke, the 8th-century earthwork which is generally considered to have formed the western boundary to the kingdom of Mercia. The Dyke survives at this point as a substantial earthwork bank and is statutorily protected as a monument of national importance (Scheduled Ancient Monument Mg 033).
- 3.6 The earliest available cartographic source for the area is the Enclosure Award of 1799 for the contiguous communities of Llandrinio, Llandysilio and Llansantffraid, although it is not possible to reproduce the map in this report because of copyright restrictions. The assessment area is shown as part of a larger plot, but no further details of any archaeological significance were revealed.
- 3.7 The Tithe Survey Map for Llandysilio parish of 1842 and its earlier Apportionment (1839) shows the area prior to the building of The Nest. The evaluation area is shown within a single arable plot known as The Garth, associated with the cottage, garden and orchard of Mary Roberts immediately to the north. At this time, the field to the south and south-east of the evaluation area was a hay field, but earlier evaluation work here has identified ridge and furrow formed by ploughing activity, possibly but not certainly in the medieval period (Halfpenney 2000).
- 3.8 The first edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, surveyed in 1883 and published in 1886 (fig. 3), shows the plot with the addition of The Nest fronting onto the road (now the A483).

4 EVALUATION (fig. 5)

- 4.1 The evaluation comprised a single machine-excavated trench, the size (8m x 2m) and position (fig. 4) of which was determined in advance with the curator. All machine excavation was undertaken under close archaeological supervision onto the surface of the first recognisable archaeological horizon, as required by the curatorial brief. A drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout the archaeological works (see Appendix 1). Context numbers in the following text, usually in brackets, refer to individual on-site records of different layers, and many will be found on the accompanying plans and sections.

Trench 1 (Fig. 5 and Plates 1-6)

- 4.2 The topsoil (01), a dark greyish-brown, friable silty-loam containing frequent inclusions of brick, charcoal and small stones, and an underlying brown silty-clay deposit (02), were removed by machine, to a depth of approximately 0.5m. This revealed a soil layer (07/08) comprising a mottled light olive brown, firm silty-clay, with occasional flecks of charcoal. The layer extended throughout the trench, with a maximum thickness of 0.26m, and was removed by hand onto the surface of the natural undisturbed subsoil (03), which consisted of a light olive grey, plastic clay with brownish yellow mottling.
- 4.3 Several features were revealed cutting into the surface of layer 07/08. In the south-western corner of the trench a feature interpreted as a probable pit (13) was revealed in plan as a quarter circle or oval, the visible extents of which were approximately 0.6m north-west to south-east by 0.4m north-east to south-west. The feature was fairly steep sided with a flat base, and was approximately 0.29m deep, and contained two fills (28) and (14). The primary fill (28), a soft, light olive brown clay containing charcoal fragments, suggested the pit had remained open for some time to allow natural silting to occur. The secondary fill (14) was a soft brown silty clay. The feature had been disturbed by later animal burrowing (11/12).
- 4.4 Two small features were identified immediately to the north-east of pit (13), comprising a shallow oval feature (15), measuring 0.2m north to south and 0.09m east to west and 0.09m deep, and a possible posthole (17), extending beyond the limits of excavation. The latter appeared to be roughly circular, 0.12m in diameter and 0.10m deep, with steeply sloping sides tapering to a pointed base. The fills (16 and 18 respectively), of both features were similar, consisting of an olive brown soft silt. Both features had been truncated by the animal activity (11/12) noted above.
- 4.5 A possible posthole (19) was identified abutting the north-eastern side of the trench, 1.7m to the northwest of cut (13). This was circular in plan, with a diameter of 0.38m at its upper surface, and a depth of 0.10m. The sides sloped fairly steeply to the base, which then sloped gently to

a central point. An apparent lip on the south-western side was attributed to later animal activity.

- 4.6 An irregular feature (24) was detected in the southern corner of the trench, roughly oval in shape and approximately 0.5m long by 0.2m deep, extending beyond the limits of excavation. It contained a soft, light olive brown clay fill (25), and appeared to have been subsequently truncated by a further irregular cut (09) which contained a very soft, very dark greyish brown fill (10), which was interpreted as a probable animal burrow. It is possible that feature (24) represents an early pit, but its irregular nature and the distortion caused by animal activity makes interpretation difficult.
- 4.7 The base of a small posthole (26) abutted the south-eastern edge of the trench, approximately 1.65m from the truncated edge of feature (24). This cut was V-shaped in profile, with a maximum diameter of 0.11m and a depth of 0.13m.
- 4.8 A linear ditch (22) (plate 4), ran north-west to south-east across the centre of the trench. The ditch was approximately 0.8m wide at its upper surface and 0.36m deep with gently concave sides sloping to a flattish base. The deposits immediately north of the ditch appear to be very similar to the ditch fills, suggesting that some of this material had been washed into the ditch, allowing a primary fill of soft, light olive brown clay to accumulate. A secondary fill (23), of slightly more yellow-orange, light olive brown, silty-clay overlay the primary silting layer, and persisted as a thin deposit for approximately 0.8m beyond the ditch cut to the north, overlying deposit (07). It is suggested that this deposit represents the upcast from the original ditch cutting which, after some time, had been allowed to slump in to, and partially refill, the ditch cut itself. A similar scenario may be proposed for the southern edge of the ditch, with deposit (21) representing the upcast material, suggesting that a bank may have existed on both sides of the ditch. However, later recutting of the ditch (04) has removed the earlier deposits in this area (see 4.9 below).
- 4.9 Overlying the above mentioned features was deposit (02), which may be associated with medieval, or early post-medieval cultivation of the area, as suggested by ridge and furrow which has been identified in the surrounding area (Halfpenney 2000). A recutting (04) of the ditch, on a slightly different alignment, had cut through this deposit and removed (at the point of the excavated section), the southern side of the earlier ditch (22) (plate 4). This later ditch appeared to run on a slightly more north to south alignment than its predecessor and was 0.34m deep with a maximum width of 1.45m, and gently sloping concave sides and a flattish base. Its fill (05) consisted of a mid olive brown, soft silty-clay, with occasional small pebbles (less than 0.02m in diameter), and occasional charcoal fragments. Two sherds of probable 19th-century pottery were located at its upper interface with deposit (01).
- 4.10 With the exception of the ditch recut (04), no artefacts were recovered from any of the features or layers investigated.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The evaluation has demonstrated the existence of several undated features within the area investigated. An undated ditch runs north-east to south-west across the site, and may be compared with a similar ditch identified during earlier excavations to the south-east (Halfpenney 2000, fig.11), although their relative positions indicates that they are distinct and independent features (see fig. 4). Both ditches appeared to have pit or posthole features along their southern sides, suggesting that they may have functioned as boundaries, and both had been recut at a later date on a slightly different alignment. That the pit and posthole features identified during the current evaluation may be related to the earliest ditch cut is suggested by their apparent following of the line of the ditch. The later recutting of the ditch suggests that a linear hollow persisted after the infilling of the earlier ditch, which perhaps encouraged waterlogging of the area and thus encouraged a renewal of the ditch.
- 5.2 Previous work has identified human activity within the Four Crosses area from the Mesolithic period onwards. During the Bronze Age this area served as an apparent focus for a large and significant funerary and ritual complex. Various linear features and pit alignments provide

evidence of a series of superimposed landscape divisions and field systems dating from the Iron Age or Romano-British period to the 18th and 19th centuries.

- 5.3 Finally we must note that the presence of Offa's Dyke on the eastern periphery of the area is also of significance. Any development will inevitably have a visual impact on the setting of this monument.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Bob Silvester, Nigel Jones, Wendy Owen, Peter Jones, CPAT; the owners, R A Francis and K J Williams; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

7 REFERENCES

Published sources

Barfoot, P M, Owen, W G, & Britnell, W J 1986. Iron spearhead and javelin from Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys. *Medieval Archaeology* 30, 103-106.

Owen, G, & Britnell, W, 1989. Pit Alignments at Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys. *Montgomeryshire Collections* 77, 27-40.

Warrilow, W, Owen, G & Britnell, W, 1986. Eight Ring-ditches at Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys, 1981-85. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 52, 53-87

Unpublished sources

Halfpenney, I, 2000. 'The Clawdd' Four Crosses, Oswestry, Desk-top assessment and archaeological evaluation, Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. Report No 113

Cartographic sources

1799 Enclosure Award for Llandrinio, Llandysilio and Llansantffraid.

1842 Tithe Survey and Apportionment (1839) for Llandysilio parish

1886 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25", Montgomery 11.9, surveyed 1883

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)

Oblique photography held by CPAT

84-01-0001

84-01-0013

84-C1-0008

84-MB-0520

87-02-0033

RCAHMMW Oblique aerial photographs

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive

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

Context Register

context	type	fill of	filled by	above	below	part of	cuts	cut by
1	layer of soil	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
2	layer of soil	-	-	6, 7, 21, 8	1	-	-	4
3	natural subsoil	-	-	-	7, 8	-	-	-
4	cut feature	-	5	-	-	-	6, 8, 21, 23	-
5	fill deposit	4	-	6, 23	1	-	-	-
6	layer of soil	-	-	7, 23	2	-	-	4
7	layer of soil	-	-	3	2	-	-	-
8	layer of soil	-	-	3	2	-	-	4, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22, 26
9	cut feature	-	10	-	-	-	3	-
10	fill deposit	9	-	25	-	-	-	-
11	cut feature	-	12	-	2	-	8, 14, 28	-
12	fill deposit	11	-	8, 14, 28	2	-	-	-
13	cut feature	-	14, 28	-	2	-	3, 8	-
14	fill deposit	13	-	28	2	-	-	11
15	cut feature	-	16	-	2	-	3, 8	-
16	fill deposit	15	-	3, 8	2	-	-	-
17	cut feature	-	18	-	2	-	3, 8	-
18	fill deposit	17	-	3, 8	2	-	-	-
19	cut feature	-	20	-	2	-	3, 8	-
20	fill deposit	19	-	3, 8	2	-	-	-
21	soil layer	-	-	8	2	-	-	4
22	cut feature	-	6, 23	-	2	-	7, 8	-
23	fill deposit	22	-	3, 7	6	-	-	4
24	cut feature	-	25	-	2	-	3	-
25	fill deposit	24	-	3	2	-	-	-
26	cut feature	-	27	-	21	-	8	-
27	fill deposit	26	-	8	21	-	-	-
28	fill deposit	13	-	3	14	-	-	11

Finds

Interface between context 05 and 01:

1 sherd	2g.	coal measures buff	C19th
1 sherd	9g.	creamware	C19th

APPENDIX 2

THE NEST, FOUR CROSSES, 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 residential development on land at The Nest, Four Crosses, Powys. 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 484 dated 14/03/03) which details the works required.
- 1.2 The development site lies within 20m of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Offa's Dyke and within an area of general archaeological sensitivity.

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 features 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 a single 8 x 2m trench. The programme of works will be agreed with the client, and the position of the trench 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 3 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 The following contingency sums have been allowed:
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| On-site conservation, finds reporting | in house and inclusive |
| 1 radiocarbon date | £300 |
| Environmental sampling | £200 |
| Museum deposition | inclusive |
| Final reporting | inclusive |
- 4.5 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.6 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W. Jones
24th April 2003

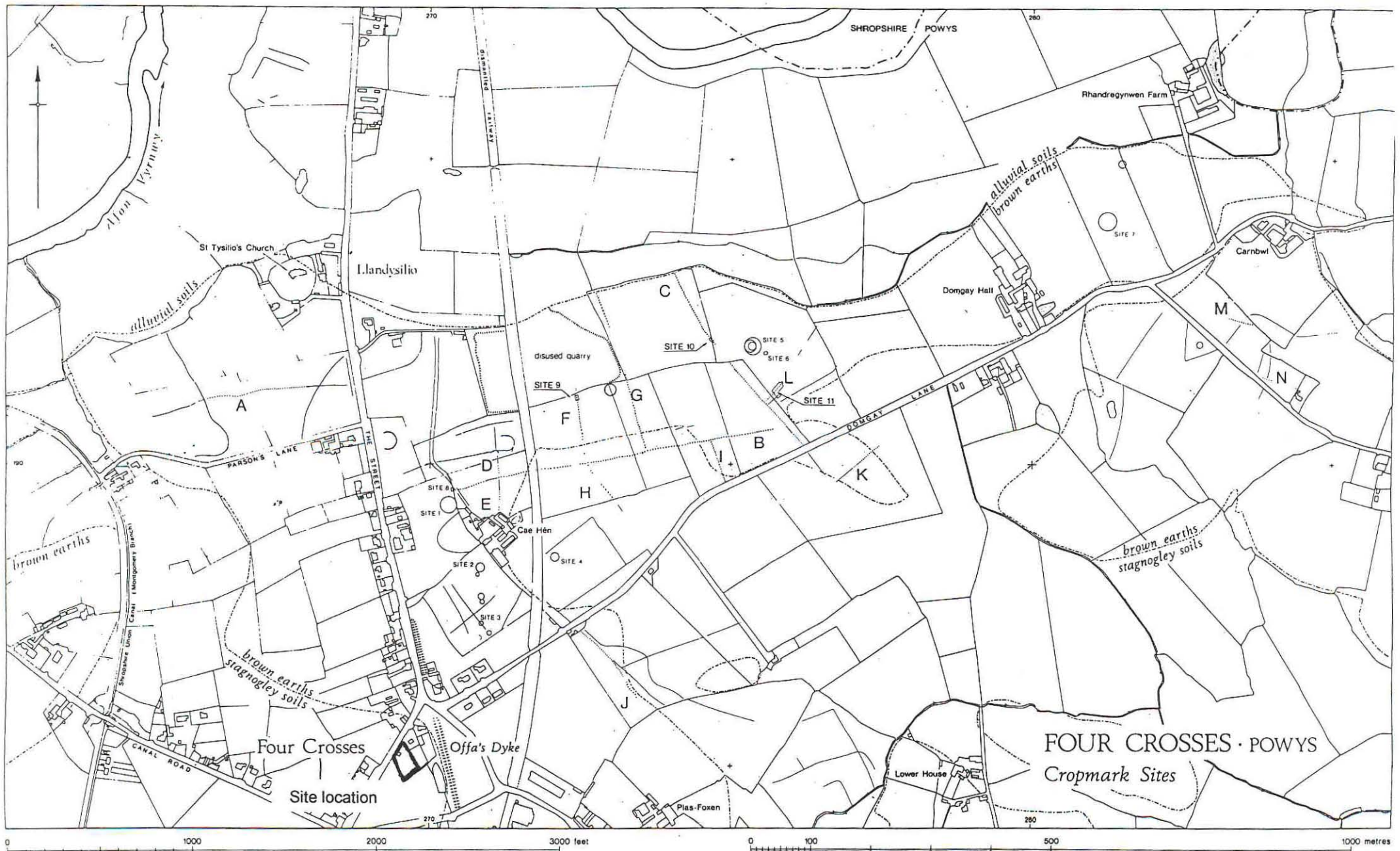


Fig. 1 Site location, (after Owen and Britnell, 1989, Figure 1)

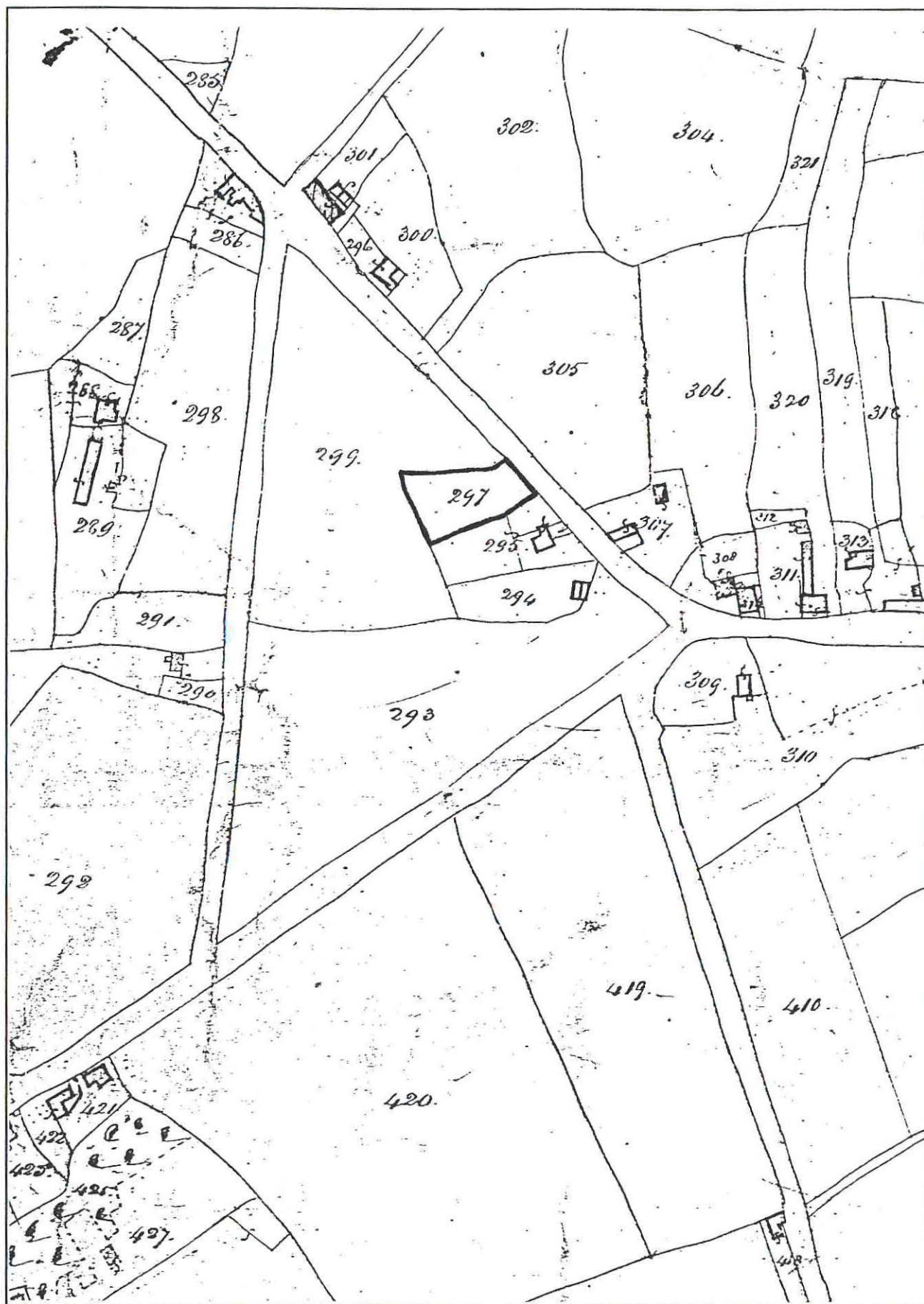


Fig. 2 Tithe Survey for Llandysilio parish, 1842

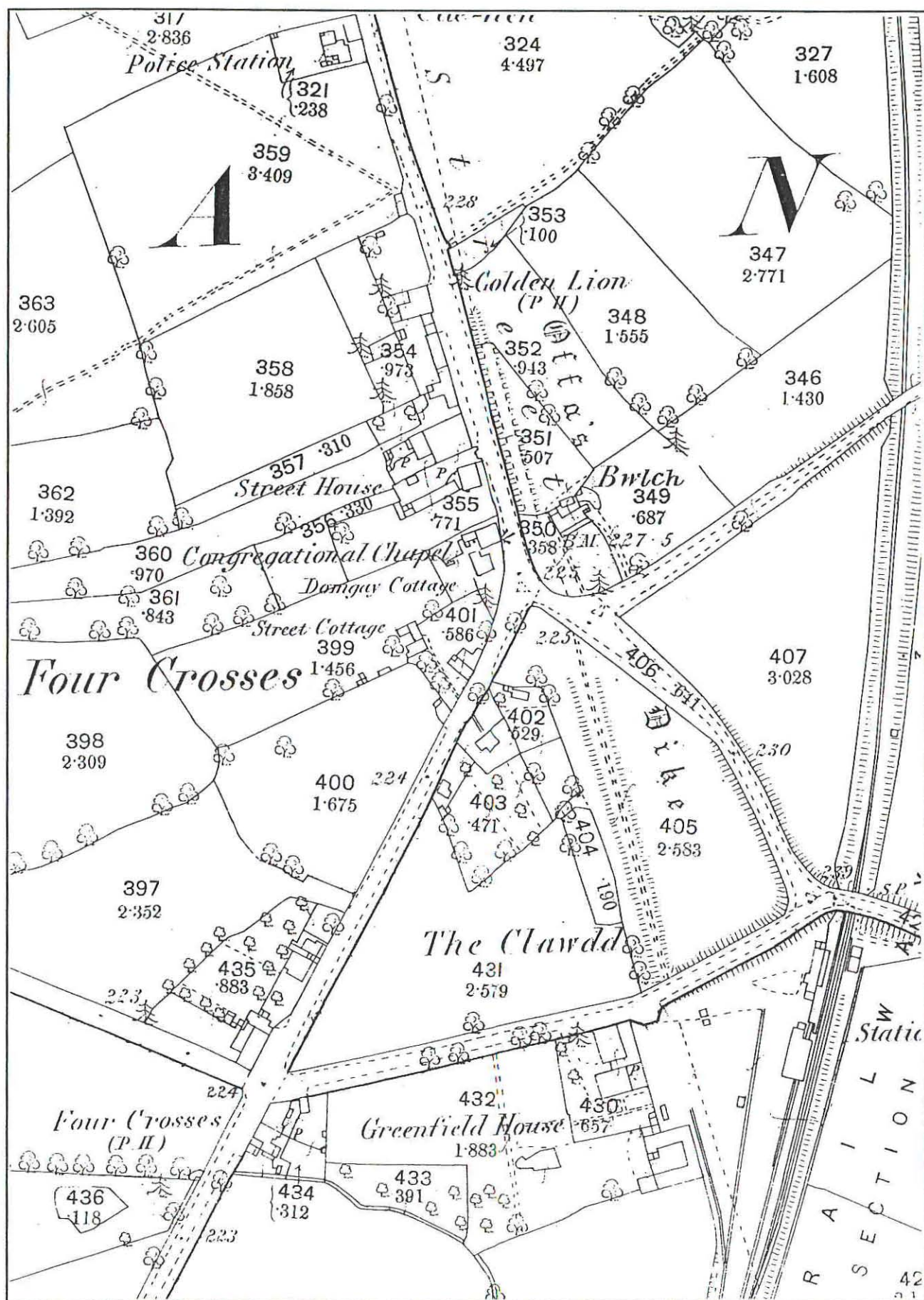


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 (Montgomery 11.9), surveyed 1883, published 1886

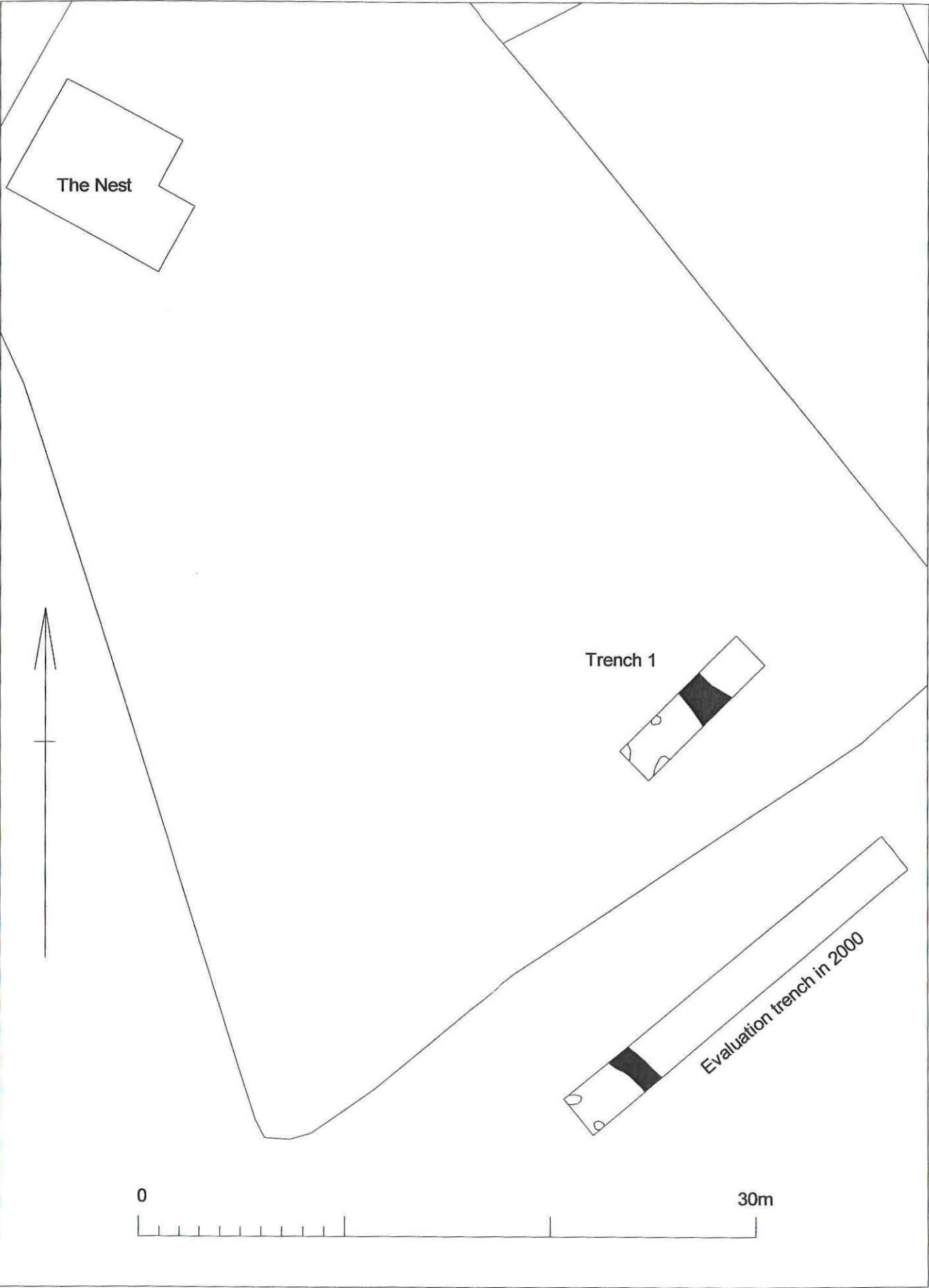


Fig. 4 Trench location, scale 1:250

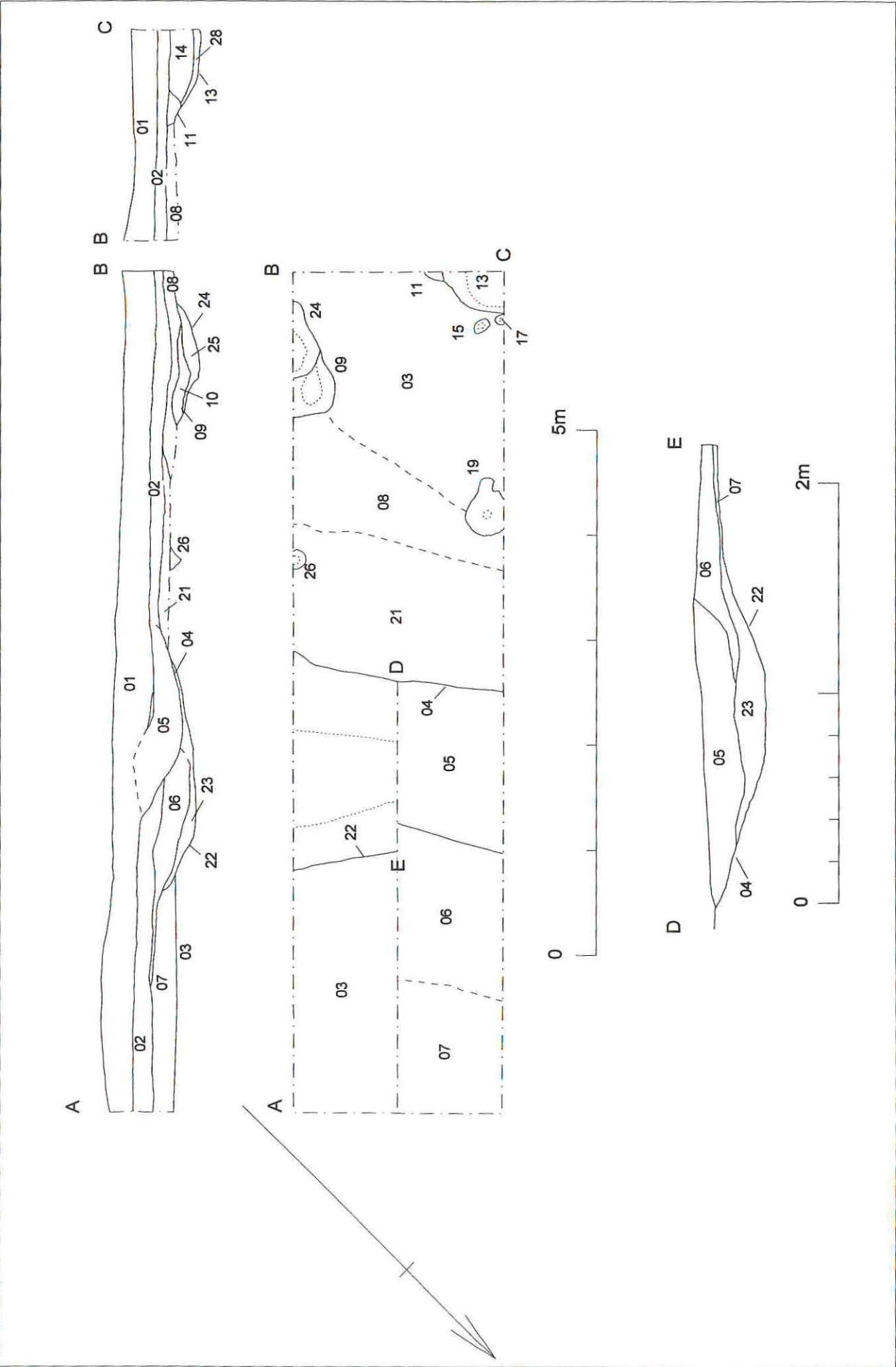


Fig. 5 Trench 1 plan and sections, scale 1:50

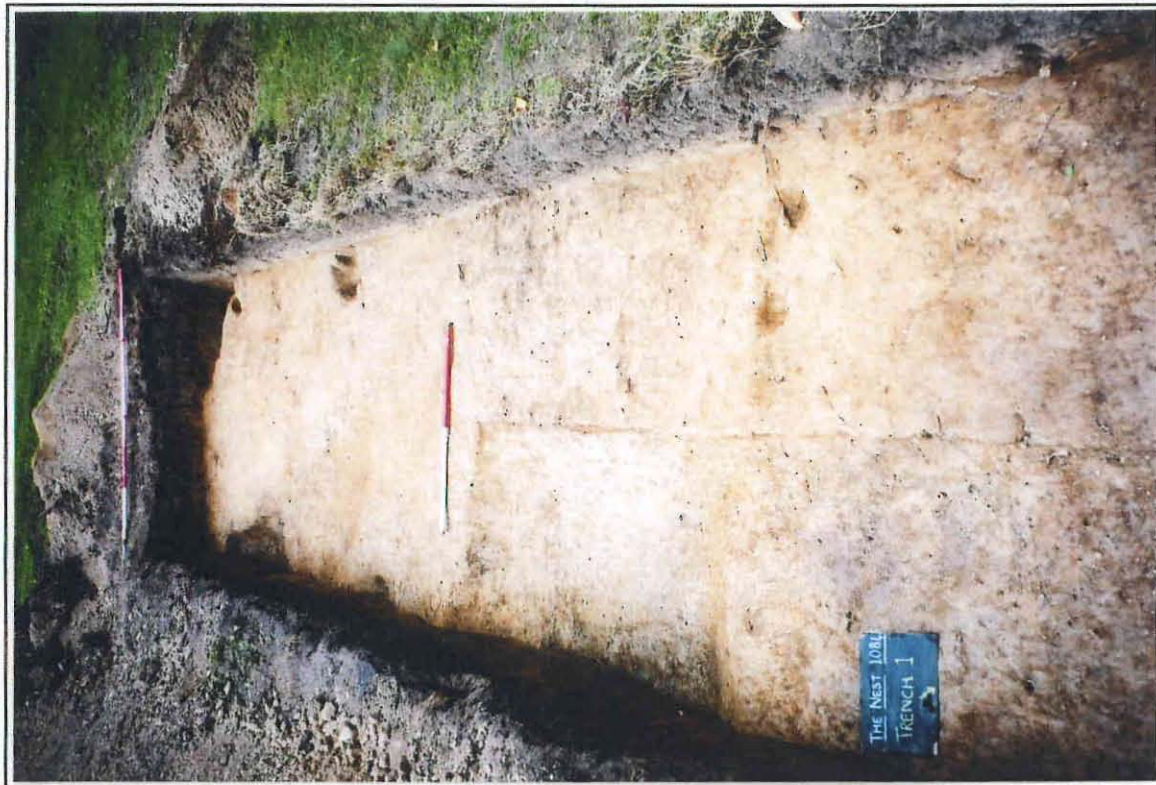


Plate 1 Trench 1, viewed from north-east, after excavation. Photo CPAT 1361.27



Plate 2 Trench 1, from south-west, after excavation. Photo CPAT 1361.26



Plate 3 Trench 1, north-west facing section, northern end. Photo CPAT 1361.30



Plate 4 Cuts 04 & 22, north-west facing section. Photo CPAT 1361.34

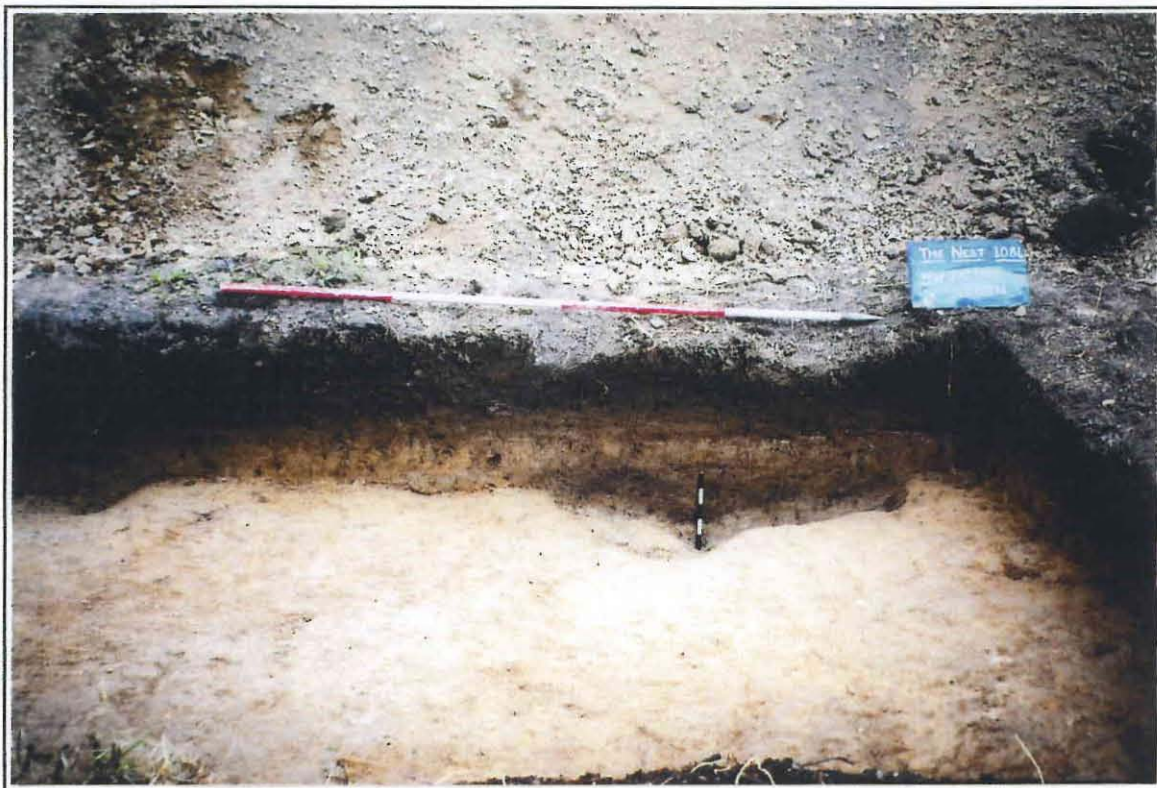


Plate 5 Trench 1, north-west facing section, southern end. Photo CPAT 1361.33



Plate 6 Trench 1, north-east facing section. Photo CPAT 1361.35