

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Sundale, Brynhyfryd Park, Ruthin,
Denbighshire
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

CPAT Report No 205

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Denbighshire
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

N.W.Jones
November 1996

Report for Mr J. Carroll

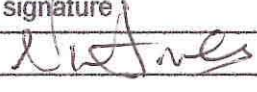
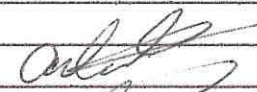

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Report and status

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Fig. 1 Location

Fig. 2 Previous excavations at Brynhyfryd Park

Fig. 3 Development plot and trench location showing excavations at Torino and Roman fort defences

Fig. 4 Trench A plan and section 1:50

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was invited to submit a quotation and specification for an archaeological assessment at Sundale, Brynhyfryd Park, Ruthin, based on a Brief prepared by Denbighshire Archaeology Service acting in their capacity as advisors to Denbighshire County Council. The quotation was accepted and CPAT were invited to undertake the assessment.
- 1.2 An assessment was considered necessary prior to the consideration of a planning application to develop a vacant plot adjacent to Sundale, involving the construction of a single dwelling (Planning Application No. 02/630/96/PR).
- 1.3 Denbighshire County Council had been advised by the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust that there were reasonable grounds for believing that there may be significant archaeological remains on the site and a pre-determination archaeological evaluation was recommended. At the invitation of the applicant, Denbighshire Archaeology Service prepared a Brief for an archaeological evaluation (dated 23rd October 1996), which detailed the works required.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

- 2.1 The site of the proposed development (SJ 130583) is located within Brynhyfryd Park housing development to the east of the town, which is situated on a low ridge in the Vale of Clwyd (figs 1-3). The plot, which is currently vacant and grassed, occupies c. 450m² at approximately 84m OD.
- 2.2 The solid geology of the area is composed of reddish-brown Permo-Triassic sandstone over which lies patchy glacial and fluvio-glacial drift, consisting of boulder clay, sand and gravel.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The first stage of the assessment consisted of a desk-based study of previously published material relating to the archaeological history of the site. A study of the cartographic evidence, including examination of the Tithe Map of 1839 and the early editions of the Ordnance Survey revealed no significant evidence.
- 3.2 Although a Roman presence at Ruthin had been postulated for sometime, it was not until 1981 that any evidence of such was uncovered, before any major development had begun at Brynhyfryd Park. This followed the discovery of part of a Roman cremation cemetery during building work at the hospital, c. 180m south-west of the present development (fig.1). Associated with the cemetery were vessels of Flavian/Trajanic date, which led to the suggestion that the Brynhyfryd Park area might be the location of a Roman fort (Waddelove 1982).
- 3.3 Although a planning condition had been attached to the consent for the Brynhyfryd Park development, construction work commenced in July 1988 without notification or the required archaeological presence. However, evidence for Roman activity on the site was recovered by Mr Waddelove during intermittent visits to the site, including mid to late 2nd century Samian from a variety of features identified in the foundation trenches. Following these discoveries a programme of rescue excavation was undertaken by CPAT during February and March 1989, with further work during May and August of that year. At the same time other areas of the site were investigated by Mr Waddelove and Prof. G.D.B.Jones of Manchester University.
- 3.4 A series of interim reports on the Waddelove and Jones excavations were produced, which argued that the development area covered part of a later 1st century fort and vicus (Waddelove *et al* 1989a, 249-254). Further investigations during 1989 identified features which were interpreted as a multiple ditched defence belong to a 2nd century fort located on the Old Laundry site, immediately north of Brynhyfryd Park adjacent to the present development plot. The defences consisted of a timber box-rampart of pink clay, fronted to the west by three close-set ditches (figs. 2 and 3). The innermost ditch was 1.6m wide, while the others measured 1.5m and 0.9m across, cut only 0.5m into the natural. (Waddelove *et al* 1989b, 3232-35 and 1990, 299-302).

- 3.5 The areas investigated by CPAT during three stages of work in 1989 (fig. 2) revealed evidence for occupation ranging from the Neolithic to early medieval periods (Jones 1992). The prehistoric activity was concentrated in Site 6, and comprised a series of ditches, gullies and scoops, from which a small assemblage of flints and generally undiagnostic pottery was recovered. The main focus of the excavations was the Romano-British occupation, consisting of a series of ditches and gullies, and including a hollow-way and a small rectangular structure in Site 10 which was interpreted as a possible mausoleum. The remains of three cremations were also found in the area around the supposed mausoleum. Cremation as a funerary practice generally belongs to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. the pottery ranged in date from the late 1st century to possibly the late 3rd or early 4th century. A small inhumation cemetery of likely early medieval date was uncovered consisting of 12 graves.
- 3.6 An evaluation was undertaken by CPAT in 1995 on an adjacent plot, at Torino, immediately to the west of the development site (figs 2 and 3). The evaluation, which consisted of a single trench, revealed a single ditch oriented at 251° from grid north. This measured 0.74m wide and was cut 0.31m into the natural. A single sherd of undated Roman pottery was recovered from the fill of the ditch.

4 TRIAL EXCAVATION (figs 3 and 4, Trench A)

- 4.1 A single trench measuring 18 x 1.5m was excavated by machine onto the surface of the archaeological deposits. Subsequent cleaning and excavation was undertaken by hand. A full photographic, drawn and written record was maintained throughout (Appendix 1). Numbers in brackets refer to the individual contexts recorded and illustrated in the accompanying figures.
- 4.2 Following the removal by machine of up to 0.45m of topsoil (01), a layer of yellow-brown sandy silt (02) was revealed. This layer, which was up to 0.18m thick, was also removed by machine onto the surface of the natural, which varied between pink stony clay and fine red-brown sand.
- 4.3 Several features were identified in the base of the trench cutting into the natural. A modern service trench (3) ran across the trench from north-west to south-east, the cable being visible in the base of the trench. A group of four pits (5, 7, 9, 11), cut into the natural by up to 0.09m, all contained fills similar to the topsoil. Pit 5 produced one sherd of post-medieval pottery and a fragment of glass bottle. All are assumed to be features relating to the former use of the plot as a garden, and are considered to be relatively modern.
- 4.4 A pit identified in the south-west corner of the trench (13) was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m below the surface of the natural. The fill was composed of yellow-brown sandy silt very similar to, and indistinguishable from layer 2. Two sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the fill.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The published accounts of excavations within the Brynhyfryd Park area clearly indicate the existence of occupation in this area over a considerable time period although the main focus has been on the Romano-British occupation. There would appear to be clear evidence for a Roman fort in the vicinity, together with an associated civilian settlement, or *vicus*. However, the excavations to date have been unable to provide a clear plan of the settlement or indicate with any certainty its likely extent. Such features which have been recorded have been spread over a wide area with no definite focus.
- 5.2 The two excavations nearest to the development plot have both produced evidence for Romano-British occupation. The discovery of a triple ditch and rampart system only 450m to the north-west (Waddelove *et al* 1989a) would appear to indicate a Roman fort lying to the east, but with no indication of the southern extent towards the development plot. The shallow ditch identified to the west at Torino (Thomas 1995) is not on the same alignment as the ditch system, and may therefore be unconnected with it. It would seem likely that this ditch does extend into the development plot, but the fact that it was not present within the trial trench may suggest that it runs further to the north.

- 5.3 The trial excavations provided no indication of occupation earlier than the post-medieval period within the area investigated. Of the features identified, most were considered to be relatively modern, with only one pit which may have been of greater antiquity, although even this contained post-medieval pottery.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to thank Mr J. Carroll for his assistance during the assessment.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX 1
SITE ARCHIVE

Site data

14 context record forms

1 A4 site plan 1:50

1 A4 section 1:50

1 black and white negative film, contacts and archive prints

1 colour slide film

Photographic catalogue

Finds

5 sherds of post-medieval pottery from context 1 (topsoil), not retained

2 sherds of post-medieval pottery from context 14, not retained

1 sherd of post-medieval pottery and 1 frag bottle glass from context 6, not retained

APPENDIX 2**SUNDALE, BRYNHYFRYD PARK, RUTHIN, DENBIGHSHIRE
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION
BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The proposed development of a block of land adjacent to Sundale, Brynhyfryd Park, Ruthin (SJ 130583) involves the construction of a single dwelling on a vacant plot covering c. 450m² (planning application 02/630/96/PR).
- 1.2 The proposed development lies within an area of known archaeological significance which includes extensive Romano-British occupation, possibly including fort defences, as well as prehistoric and medieval or early post-medieval remains.
- 1.3 An evaluation was considered necessary by the Denbighshire Archaeology Service as a pre-planning assessment to determine the likely effect of the proposed development on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a Specification was produced (dated 23rd October 1996) which detailed the works required.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of a combination of desk-based assessment and evaluation trenches, 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 archaeology revealed in the evaluation trenches;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the field evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed development;
 - 2.1.4 to identify and recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further provision for that resource where it is considered necessary.

3 Methods

- 3.1 Stage one of the evaluation will involve a desk-based examination all readily available documentary sources relating to the development area. Previous excavations within Brynhyfryd Park have already provided a wealth of published information regarding the archaeology of the area and a review of these works will provide a sound basis for the desk-based study.
- 3.2 Stage two will take the form of an evaluation trenches measuring 18 x 1.5m. Where required this will be taken to a maximum depth of 1.2m below the existing ground surface. Consultation with the client and the curator will be necessary before this depth is exceeded.
- 3.3 The evaluation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures:
 - 3.3.1 removal of modern overburden by machine;
 - 3.3.2 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate to fulfil the requirements of the evaluation and within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.
 - 3.3.3 all archaeological contexts recorded using the standard numbered context system employed by CPAT. All significant contexts to be planned and/or drawn in section at appropriate scales (as defined

in the Curatorial Brief), and photographed in monochrome and colour. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps.

- 3.3.4 all archaeological artefacts and environmental samples recorded and processed in a manner appropriate to the material involved. Those requiring conservation or other specialist treatment will be stored in a stable environment until such times as they can be examined by a specialist. All finds, except those deemed to be Treasure Trove, are the property of the landowner. It is anticipated that they will be donated to the appropriate local or regional museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief (page 5). This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Excavation; 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).

4 Resources and Programming

- 4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of two skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist, who will also be responsible for undertaking the desk-based assessment. Overall supervision will be by Dr A Gibson, 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 the same field archaeologist who conducted the evaluation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the assessment and evaluation will take no more than eight days in all and that the subsequent report would be prepared immediately thereafter, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client, and will be dependent on the state of the site and negotiated access. The archaeological curator will be informed of the detailed timetable and staffing levels when agreement has been reached with the client.
- 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
28th October 1996

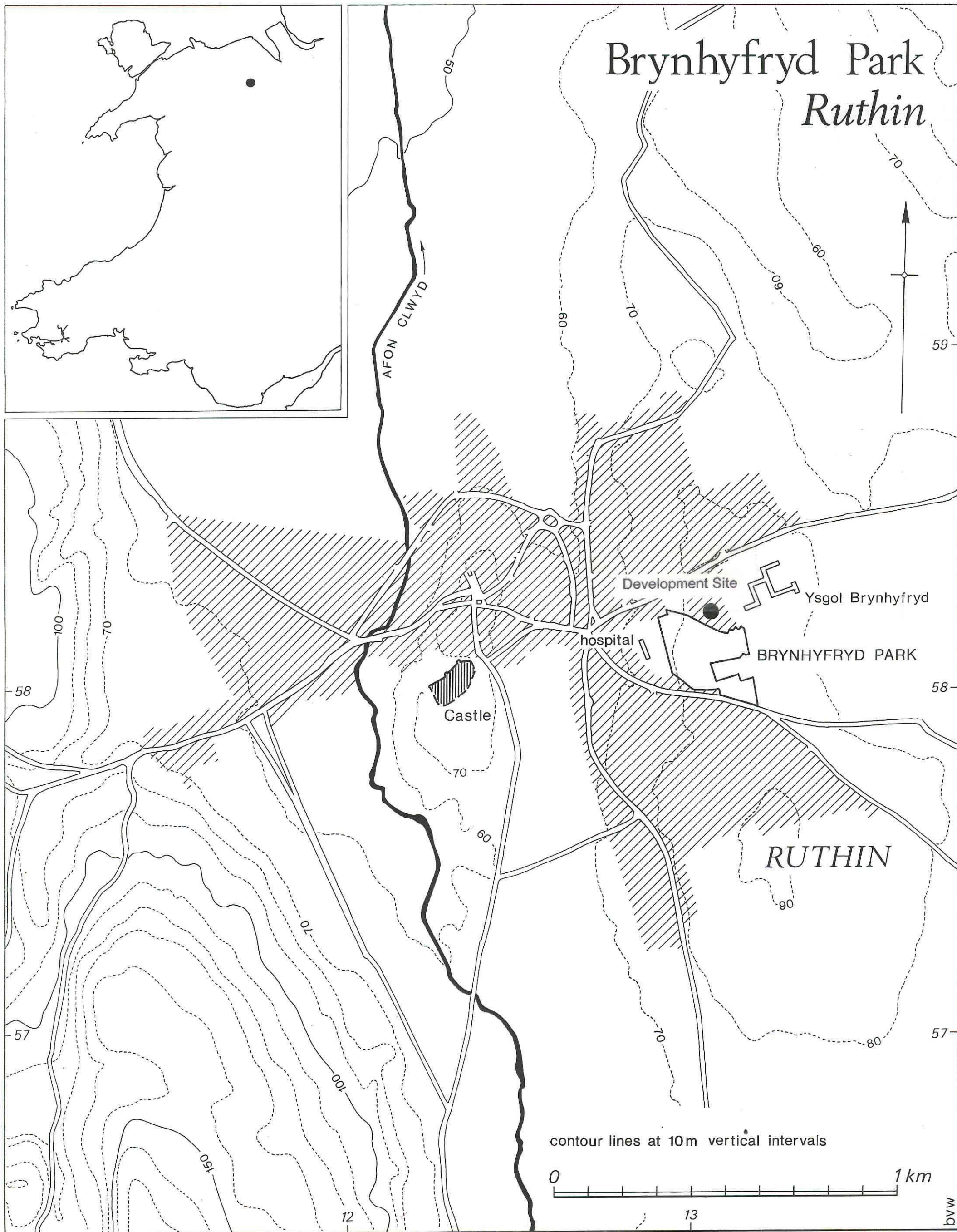


Fig. 1 Development Site location

Brynhyfryd Park, RUTHIN site plan

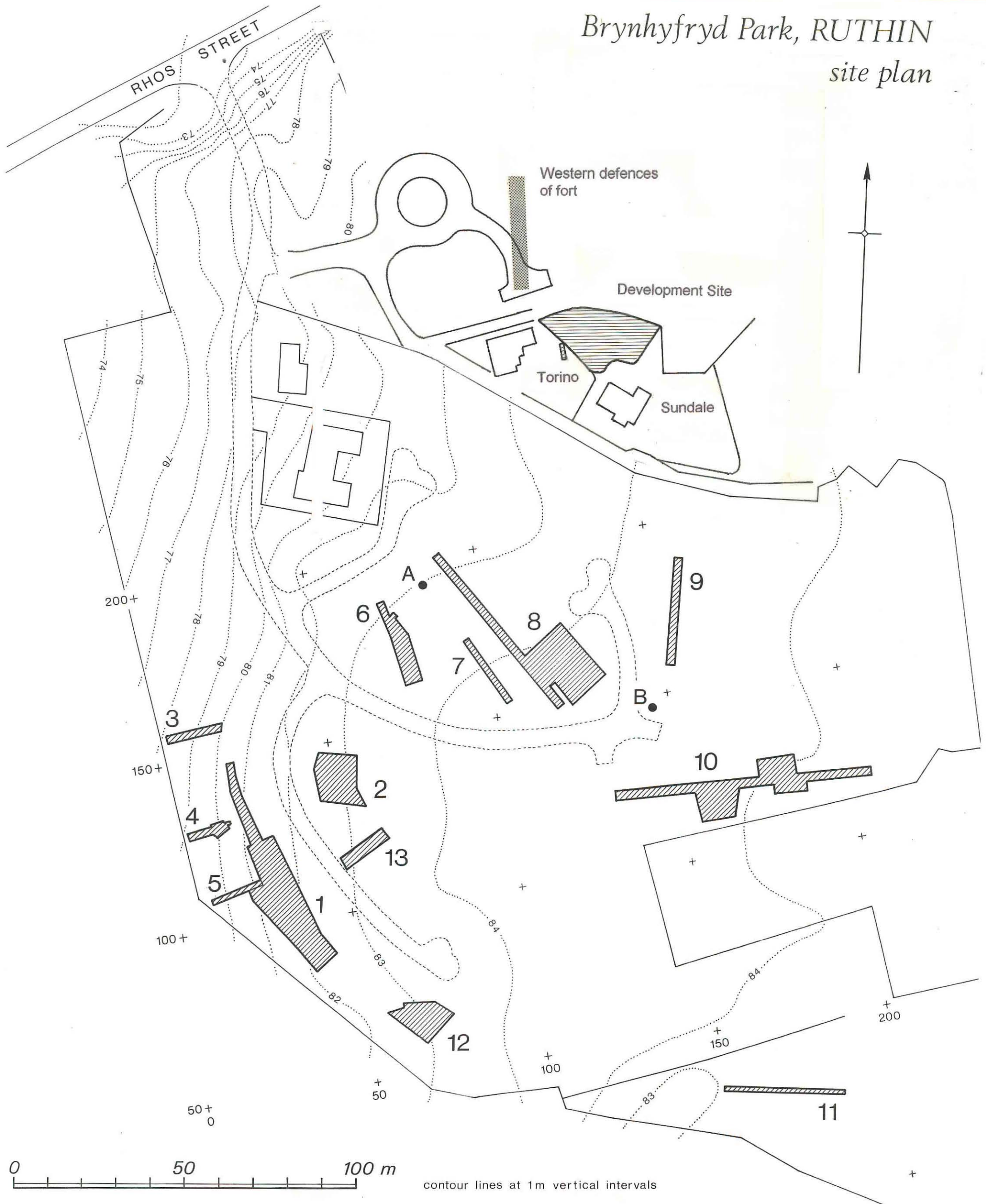


Fig. 2 Previous excavations at Brynhyfryd Park
(after Jones 1992)

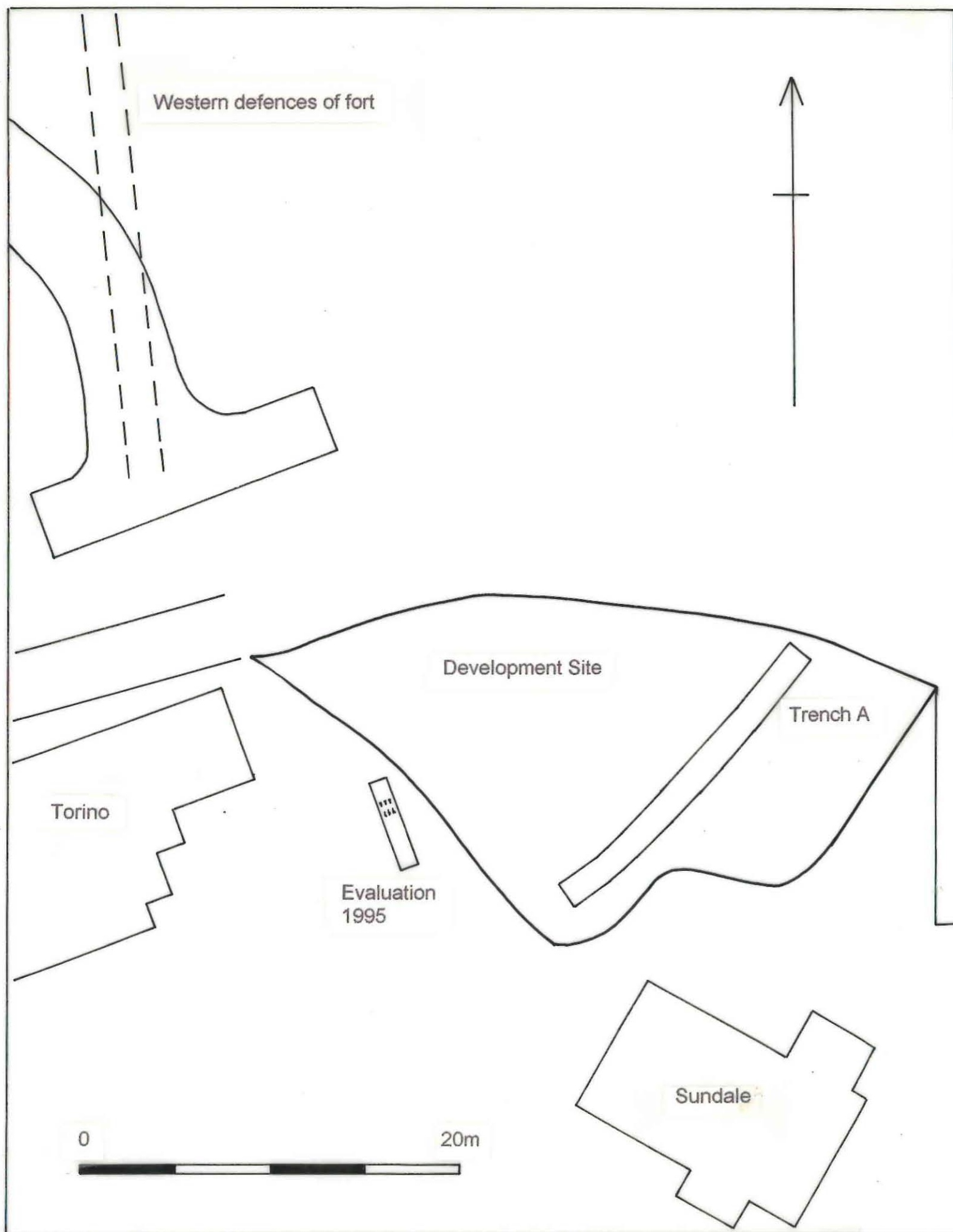


Fig. 3 Development plot and Trench A showing excavations at Torino and Roman fort defences

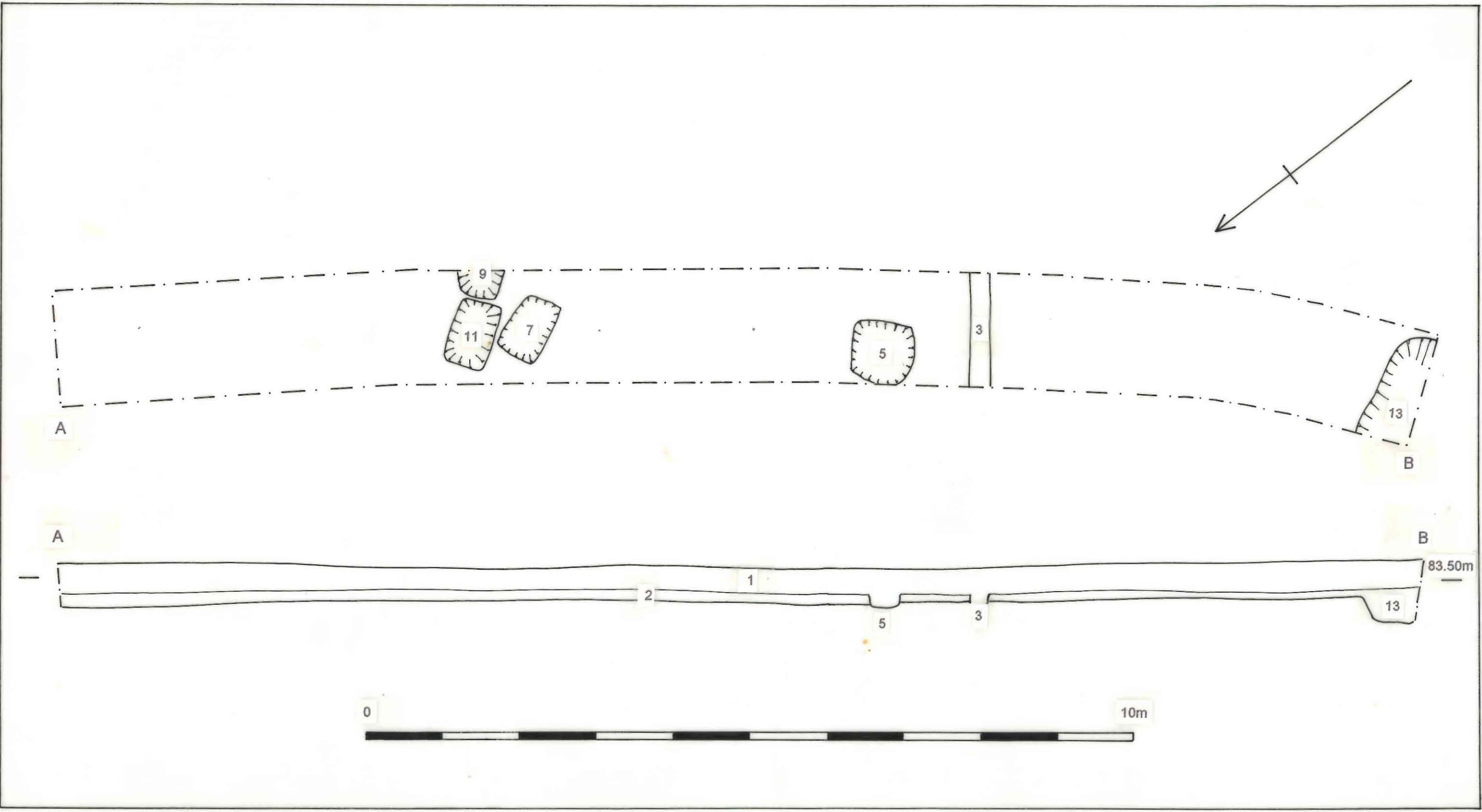


Fig. 4 Trench A plan and section, 1:50