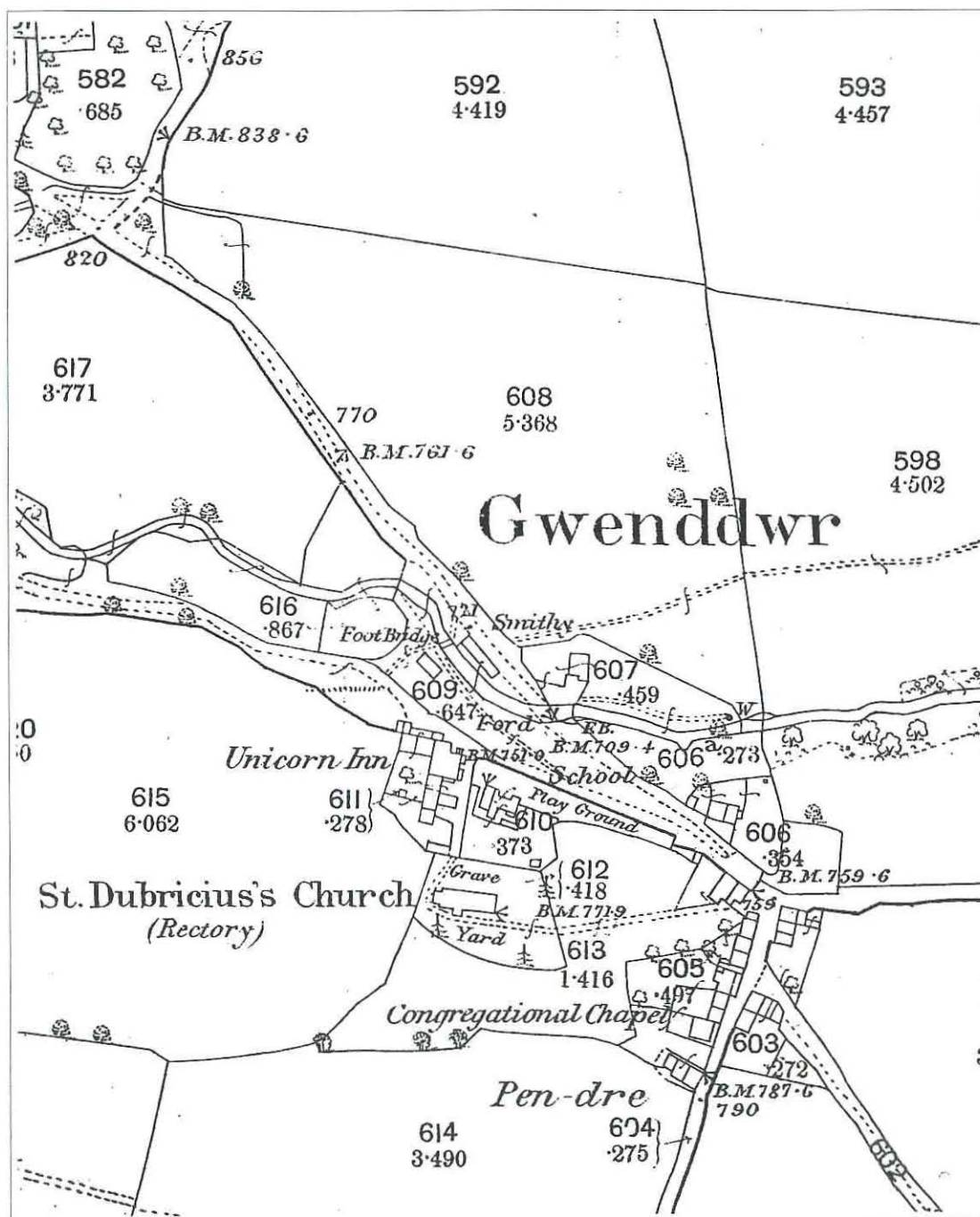


Church House, Gwenddwr, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 359

Church House, Gwenddwr, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

NW Jones
April 2000

Report for Mr and Mrs Thursfield

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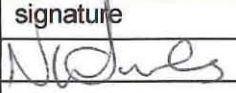

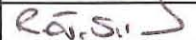
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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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Internal memo

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Contracts Section (CPAT Contracts) was approached in March 2000 by Mr and Mrs Thursfield to produce a specification and quotation for an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Church House, Gwenddwr, Powys. The quotation was accepted in late March and the evaluation undertaken during April 2000.
- 1.2 The evaluation was undertaken in response to proposals for the construction of a new barn on land to the rear of Church House (Powys County Council Planning Application B99/0297), in order to assess the implications of the proposed development on the putative early churchyard and its boundary which had been identified as an archaeological resource. The evaluation had been requested by the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in their capacity archaeological advisors to the local authority, and a brief (No EVB 367 dated 01/03/00) had been prepared describing the scheme of archaeological works required.
- 1.3 This development area lies within the historic core of Gwenddwr as defined by the Brecknock Borough Historic Settlements Survey (CPAT Report 60, 1993), and close to the existing churchyard of St Dubricius Church.

2 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1 The proposed development is located immediately to the west of the churchyard (SO 06454325; fig. 1) at approximately 235m OD. The field is pasture, with the land falling to the north.
- 2.2 The soils are typically brown podzolic soils of the Manod Association (Soil Survey 1983).

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Stage one of the evaluation involved the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, photographic and oral sources at the following repositories: County SMR, CPAT, Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and Powys County Archives, Llandrindod Wells.
- 3.2 Gwenddwr was traditionally founded in the 6th century by St Dubricius, to whom the church is dedicated, and who is said to have had a 'seminary named after him on the banks of the Wye in the parish of Gwenddwr'. Documentary evidence suggests that Gwenddwr had a Priory in the 14th century, a daughter house of the Cistercian foundation at Abbey D'Or in Herefordshire, although its location is unknown.
- 3.3 The present church dedicated to St Dubricius (PRN 20157) is a single cell extensively restored after a fire in 1875, although some 14th-century masonry survives. The church lies within a sub-rectangular churchyard, the form of which suggests that it may have been substantially reduced in size. The location of the church on the western side of the churchyard, together with the curve of the southern churchyard boundary has led to the suggestion that the original church enclosure was once considerably larger (Martin and Walters 1993, 47; PRN 2918), and would have extended into the area of the proposed development. A larger churchyard would be in keeping with an early foundation and the monastic associations of the site.
- 3.4 There is considerable evidence to suggest that the medieval settlement at Gwenddwr was substantially larger than the present village. A series of earthwork platforms in the field to the east of the church (PRN 2919), and more extensively in fields on the opposite side of the valley (PRN 3913), indicate the former location of a significant number of buildings, which it may be assumed, were largely dwellings of timber construction. A detailed ground survey of the earthworks was undertaken by CPAT in 1993 (Fig. 1; Jones 1993a).
- 3.5 The earthwork platforms to the east of the church (PRN 2919) were the subject of an evaluation by CPAT in 1993 (Jones 1993b), in response to proposals to extend the present graveyard. The

excavation investigated one of three terraces adjacent to the eastern boundary of the churchyard, together with a curving bank or lynchet further to the west (Fig. 1 A and B). The excavation was hampered by poor weather and it is unlikely that the lowest and therefore earliest deposits were investigated. The results revealed limited evidence for occupation on the platform, consisting of a single undated posthole, but with pottery generally indicating activity during the post-medieval period up until c. 1750, after which the plot appears to have been abandoned.

- 3.6 The earliest available cartographic evidence consists of the Ordnance Survey surveyor's drawing of 1817 (NLW; No. 196), although this reveals no evidence for the development area.
- 3.7 The Tithe Survey of 1841 (Fig. 2) provides the earliest detailed cartographic evidence for the area, although the copy reproduced here is unfortunately very faint. The development plot is listed in the Apportionment as no. 310, Waun y Pentre, meadow. The churchyard is depicted as being sub-rectangular in plan, with no suggestion of a curved southern boundary, as at present. However, this may be a somewhat stylised interpretation by the surveyor, rather than an accurate depiction of the boundary at that date, particularly since the church itself is shown only as a cross symbol, located centrally within the churchyard, rather than in its true position on the west side of the enclosure. A house is indicated in the north-west corner of the churchyard (272, house and garden), while the present Unicorn House, to the north of the proposed development, is listed as no. 271 house and garden.
- 3.8 The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" surveyed in 1887 and published in 1889 (Brec. 16.5), shows Gwenddwr much as it appears today (Fig. 3). The churchyard has the distinctive curving southern boundary and there is no indication of any features within the development plot. The Unicorn Inn occupied the street frontage to the north of the proposed development, with a range of buildings adjoining to the south, presumably including the present Church House. The 2nd edition map (Fig. 4) published in 1904 is virtually unchanged and shows no alterations within the immediate area of the development.
- 3.9 An examination of the aerial photographic collections held by CPAT, Welshpool and RCAHMW, Aberystwyth reveal no evidence for any archaeological features within the proposed development area.

4 EXCAVATION (Fig. 5; plate 2)

- 4.1 The excavation was undertaken over a two-day period between 10-11 April 2000 and consisted of an L-shaped trench measuring 10.7 x 6m and 2m wide. The location of the trench differed slightly from that indicated in the brief, being c. 3.5m further to the west, following instructions from the client who intended to amend the position of the proposed barn to avoid damage to the roots of nearby yew trees within the churchyard (plate 1). The trench was mechanically excavated to a maximum depth of c. 0.5m, after which the sections and base were cleaned by hand. A full written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout, details of which are given in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The removal of c. 0.3m of topsoil (1), consisting of a reddish brown clay-loam, revealed a similar layer (2) up to 0.12m thick, slightly lighter in colour, and containing small stones. This was removed to reveal the undisturbed subsoil at an average depth of 0.5m, consisting of reddish-brown silty clay (3). The subsoil was exposed in the whole of the area investigated, and thorough cleaning failed to reveal any archaeological features either cut into it, or visible in section.
- 4.3 The only finds were recovered from the topsoil (1), and consisted of seven sherds of 18th- and 19th-century pottery, and a very small abraded sherd of possible medieval or early post-medieval date. The latter was of a sandy micaceous fabric with abundant small rounded quartz.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The evaluation failed to reveal any evidence for the possible earlier extents of the churchyard, or for any other features of archaeological significance within the area of the proposed development. The desk-top study revealed that the area appears little changed since the mid-19th century, while the excavation produced no evidence for any archaeological features within the area investigated.

- 5.2 The question of whether the churchyard originally extended into the development plot remains unanswered as the projected line of the churchyard boundary was not investigated during the evaluation. The negative evidence from the excavation does suggest, however, that even if the churchyard was formerly more extensive, the area investigated does not appear to have been used for burial.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The excavation was undertaken by Glyn Owen and Richard Hankinson of CPAT. The author would also like to thank the following for their assistance: Mr and Mrs Thursfield; Medwyn Parry, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

7 REFERENCES

- Jones, NW, 1993a. *Brecknock Borough Historic Settlements: earthwork survey*. CPAT Report No. 83.
 Jones, NW, 1993b. *Gwenddwr, Powys: Trial excavations Dec. 1993*. CPAT Report No. 84.
 Martin, CHR, & Walters, MJ, 1993. *Brecknock Borough Historic Settlements*. CPAT Report No. 60.
 Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983. *Soils of England and Wales, Sheet 2*. Harpendon: Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Aerial photographic sources

Oblique photographs at CPAT, Welshpool

87-MB-248 to 247

90-MB-178 to 180

94-2-26 to 27

94-C-45 to 47

95-13-30 to 33

95-2-26 TO 27

Vertical photographs at RCAHMW, Aberystwyth

RAF	1945	Sortie 106G/UK/844	3011
	1946	Sortie 106G/UK/1471	2133-5, 4134
	1960	Sortie 58/3609	147-9, 177-8

OS	1972	72-328	328
	1975	75-071	142, 178

APPENDIX 1 SITE ARCHIVE

2 A1 site drawings
3 context record forms
1 Black and white negative film, contacts and archive prints
1 colour slide film
1 colour print film
photographic catalogue

7 sherds of 18th or 19th century pottery
1 sherd of late medieval or early post-medieval pottery

correspondence

The site archive will be deposited with Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

APPENDIX 2

CONSTRUCTION OF A BARN AT CHURCH HOUSE, GWENDDWR, POWYS SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of a new barn on land to the rear of Church House, Gwenddwr, Powys (Powys County Council Planning Application B99/0297).
- 1.2 This area lies within the historic core of Gwenddwr as defined by the Brecknock Borough Historic Settlements Survey (CPAT Report 60, 1993), and close to the churchyard of St Dubricius Church, which is traditionally a 6th century foundation.
- 1.3 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in their capacity archaeological advisors to the local authority have determined that an archaeological evaluation is necessary to assess the implications of the proposed development on the archaeological resource. Accordingly a brief (No EVB 367 dated 01/03/00) has been prepared by MJ Walters which describes the scheme of archaeological 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 recommendations 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 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 an L-shaped trench measuring 10.7 x 6m and 2m wide. Where required these 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 35mm format monochrome and colour print and colour slide. 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 (section 7). 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 2 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 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 desk-based assessment will be completed within 3 days and the excavation will take no more than 5 days in all. 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 Details relating to the timing, siting, duration, re-instatement and health and safety procedures for the excavation will be agreed with the client prior to work commencing. The enclosed estimate assumes the provision of a JCB for the excavation and reinstatement at the cost of the client.
- 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
6th March 2000

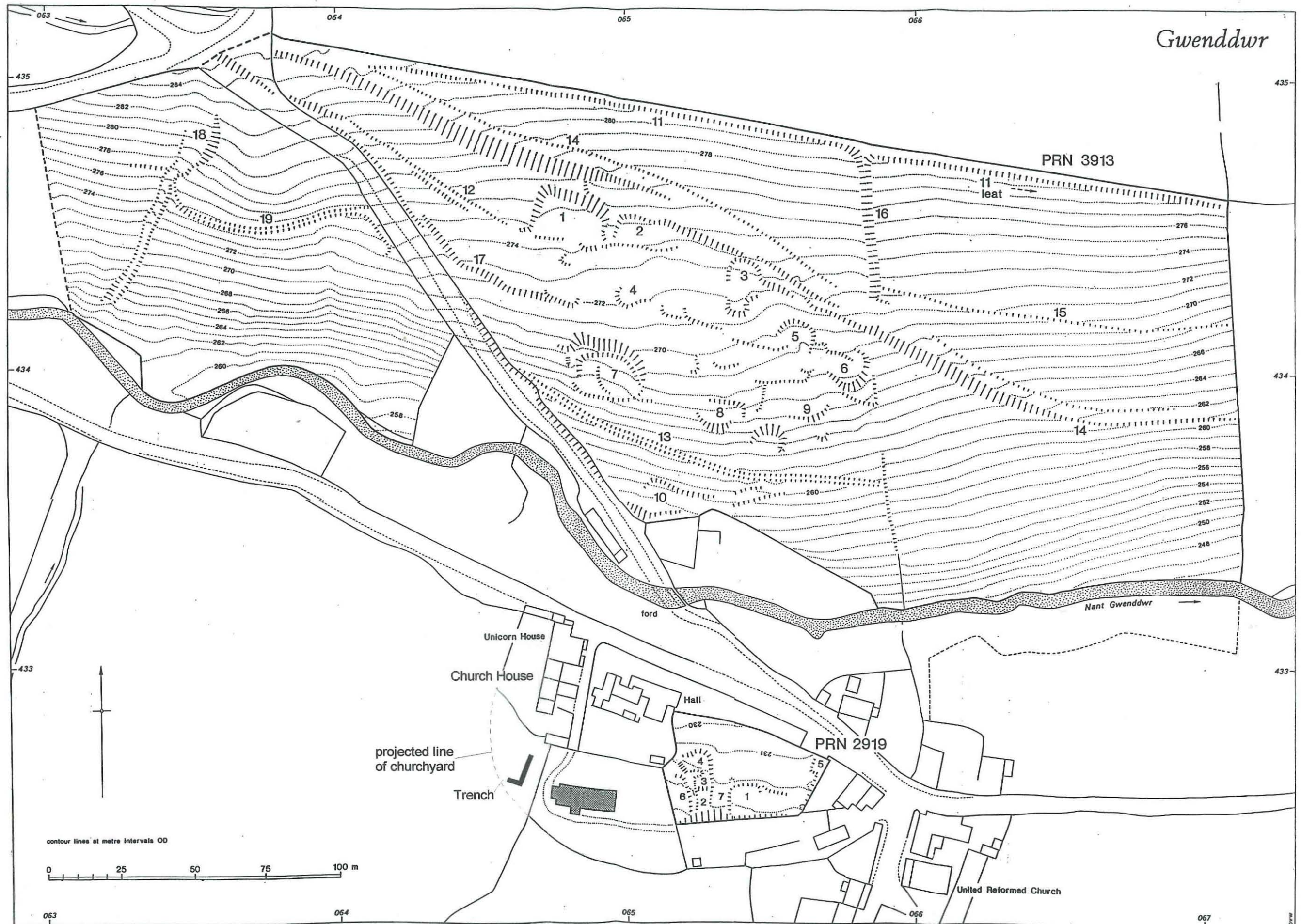


Fig. 1 Site location and deserted settlement earthworks, scale 1:1,250

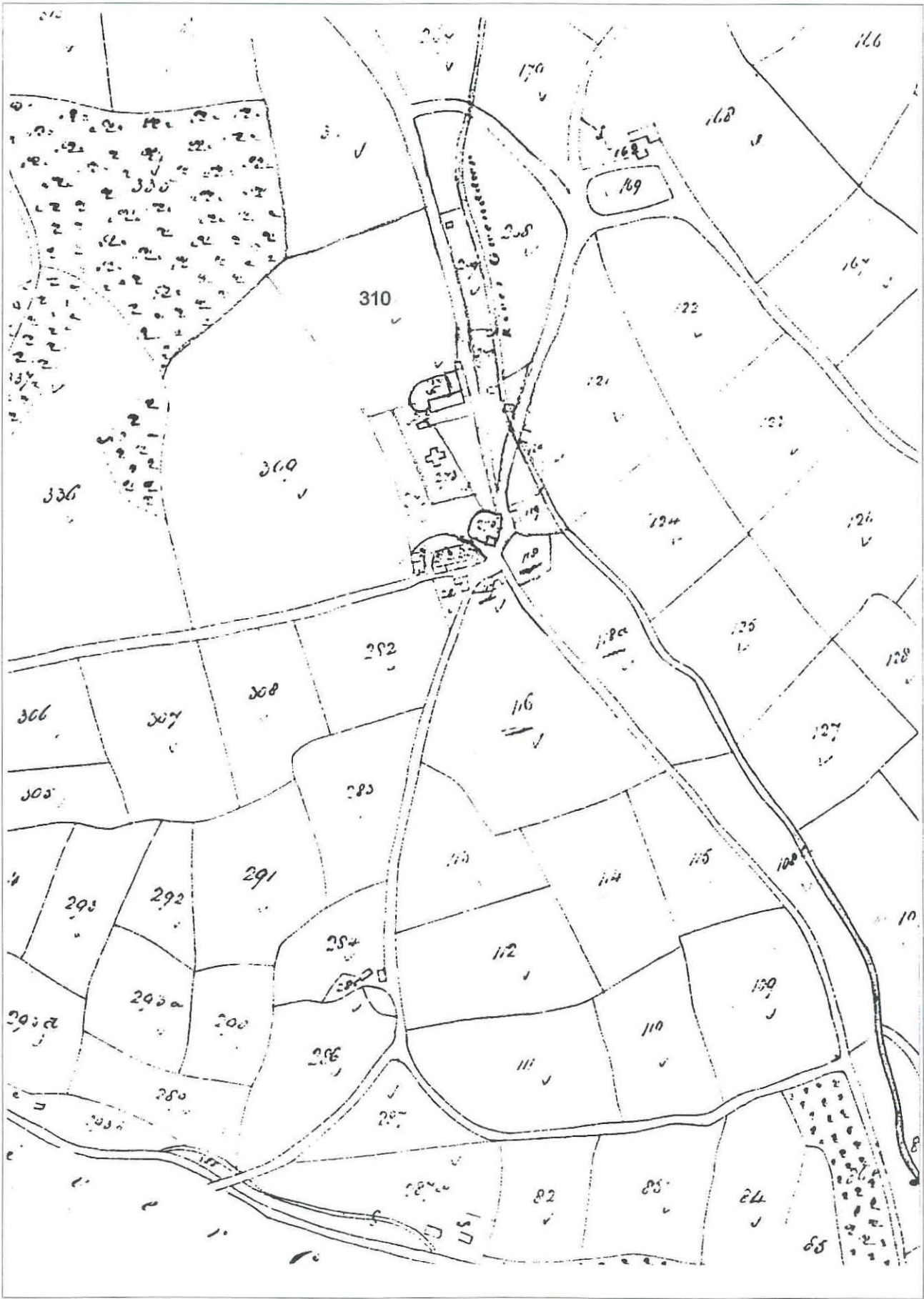


Fig. 2 Tithe Survey of 1841

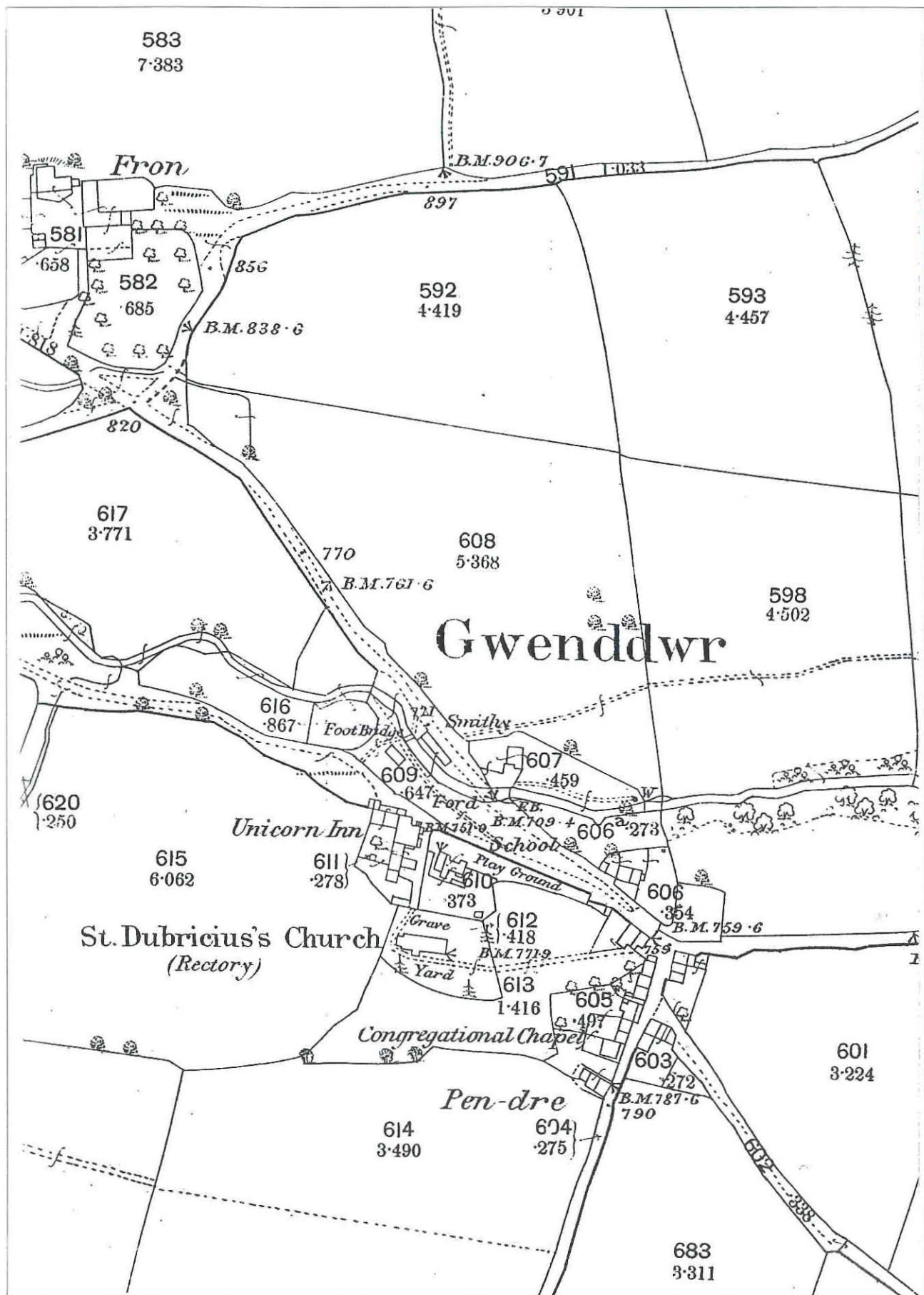


Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" published 1889

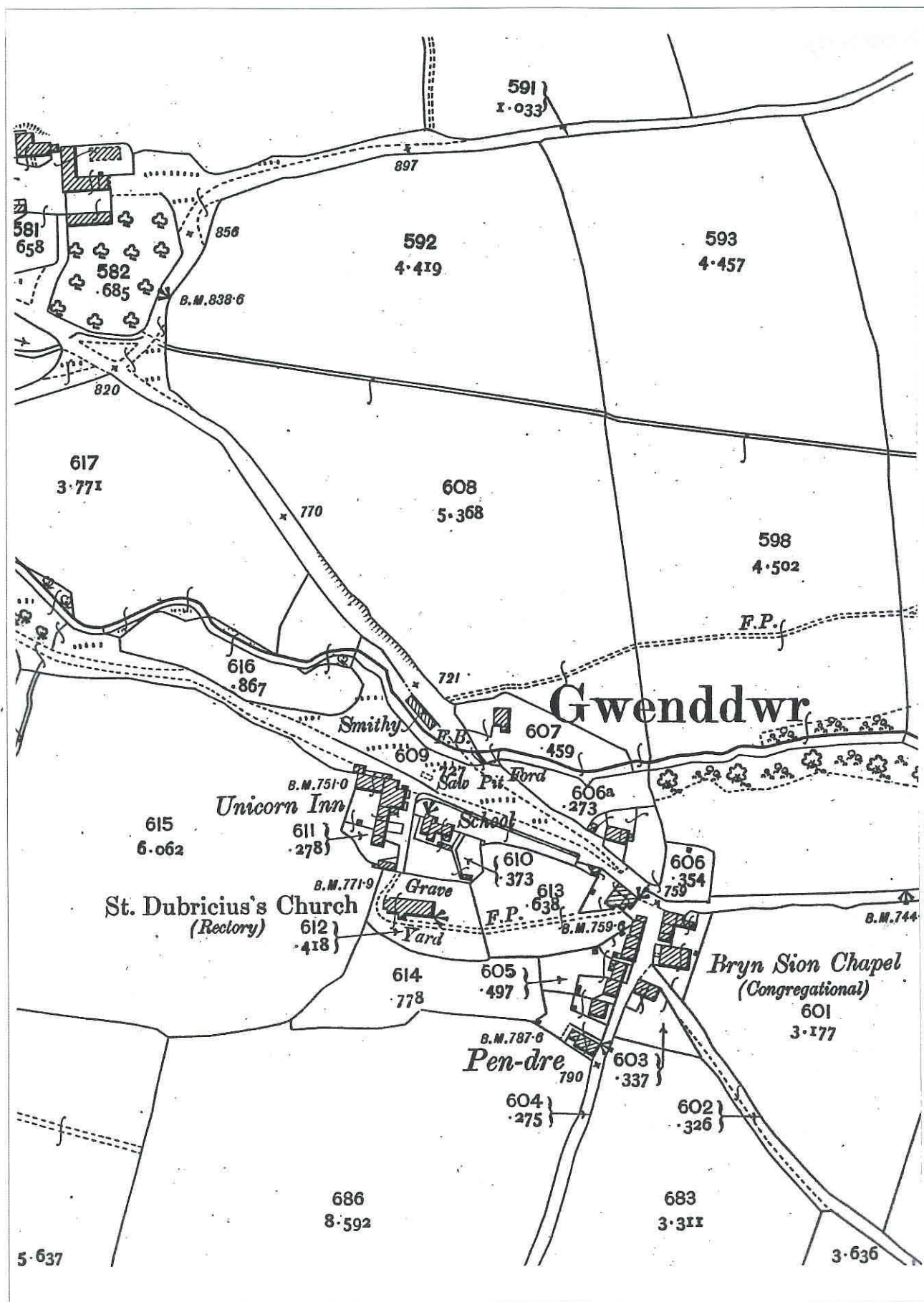


Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" published 1904

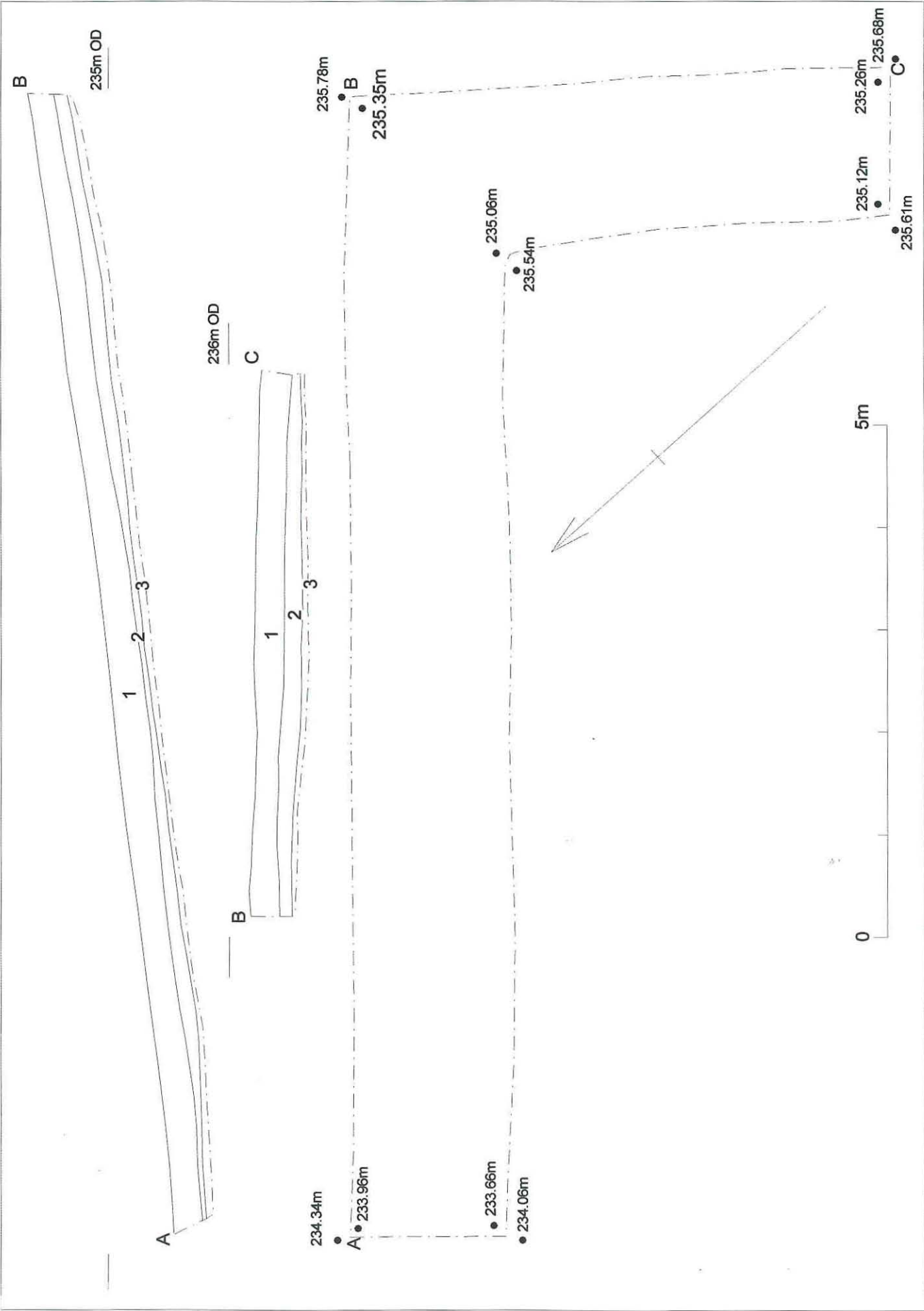


Fig. 5 Excavation plan and sections



Plate 1 Trench location from W. Photo CPAT 943.11



Plate 2 View of trench from N. Photo CPAT 943.8