

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Land off Domgay Road, Four Crosses, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 487

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**Land off Domgay Lane, Four Crosses,
Powys
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

N Jones
August 2002

Report for Jennings Estates

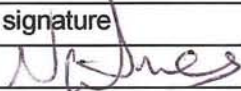
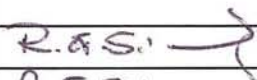
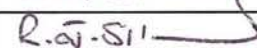
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 2002 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Jennings Estates Ltd, to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land off Domgay Lane, Four Crosses, Powys. The pre-planning evaluation was the subject of a brief drawn up by Mr M Walters of the CPAT Curatorial Section (CPAT EVB 457, dated 23 May 2002), acting in his capacity as archaeological curator for the region, which identified the need for a detailed desktop study and geophysical survey. The specification and quotation were duly accepted and the evaluation was undertaken during July 2002.
- 1.2 The plot proposed for development occupies roughly 2.5ha between the A483 and a disused railway within an area known to contain extensive prehistoric activity. The Regional Sites and Monuments Record records a number of features identified from aerial reconnaissance which appear to include at least six ring ditches which are likely to represent the remains of ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mounds, or round barrows. Three of the sites were subject to excavations by CPAT during the 1980s. These excavations produced evidence of activity from the Mesolithic through to the Dark Ages. The western boundary of the plot is formed by 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 at the north-east edge of the village of Four Crosses, between the A483 and Domgay Lane (fig. 1; SJ 27071877). The site comprises three fields, bounded to the west by Offa's Dyke and Hafod Offa, to the south-east by a row of houses with an access road, to the north by a farm track leading to Cae Hen, and to the south-east by the line of a former railway. Two additional houses have been built to the north of Hafod Offa and two more along the southern boundary of the area since the Ordnance Survey mapping in 1973.
- 2.2 The evaluation area lies on a gravel terrace with soils consisting of well-drained brown earths (Warrilow *et al.* 1986). The area has been intensively cultivated in the past, but is now utilised for pasture and hay crops.

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 assessment 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 figs 1-2). A search of oblique aerial photographs held by RCAHMW failed to identify any new or previously unrecorded cropmarks.
- 3.3 The recorded features include six ring ditches, likely to represent the remains of ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mounds, or round barrows, together with a number of linear features (plates 1-2). The known ring ditches form part of a much wider complex of prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments which extends for at least 1.4km, most of the elements of which have been identified through aerial reconnaissance. Eight ring ditches within the whole complex were excavated by CPAT during the 1980s, including three sites within the area defined for evaluation (Warrilow *et al.* 1986).
- 3.4 The excavation of PRN 3604 (plate 3; Warrilow *et al.* Site II) revealed a ring ditch 13m in diameter, 2.4-3.2m wide, and around 1.0m deep, with no surviving central mound. A central burial pit was identified, although there was no surviving trace of the burial itself. A pit containing Beaker pottery produced radiocarbon dates ranging from 2240 ± 70 bc to 1740 ± 70 bc. A small satellite ring ditch

(PRN 6129) was identified to the south-west, 6.8m in diameter with a shallow central grave. Even earlier activity was suggested by a chisel arrowhead of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date, while two radiocarbon dates indicate possible Mesolithic activity. As well as the Bronze Age funerary monuments there was also evidence for later activity. A small metal-working hearth had apparently been cut into the side of the central mound and charcoal from within this hearth produced a date of 180 ± 60 bc, placing it within the Iron Age. Furthermore, Romano British occupation nearby is suggested by pottery from the upper fill of the ditch. The final phase of activity consisted of an inhumation cemetery of five shallow graves, one of which had been cut into the upper fill of the ditch and contained fragmentary skeletal remains. Although a radiocarbon date of 100 ± 70 bc was yielded by skeletal and charcoal fragments, there was some doubt about the validity of the date. On the opposite side of the ring ditch an iron javelin and spear were found, the closest parallels for which are from the 6th to 7th centuries AD (Barfoot *et al.* 1986), and it may well be that these were contemporary with the inhumation cemetery.

- 3.5 The other excavated ring ditch (plate 4; PRN 5372) was 7.7m in diameter, the ditch itself an average of 2m wide and 0.6m deep, but with no evidence for a central burial. It had been disturbed by the ditch of a field boundary which was first recorded on the Enclosure Map of 1799, although its origin may have been rather earlier.
- 3.6 Immediately to the west of the area is Offa's Dyke, the 8th-century earthwork which is generally accepted 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).
- 3.7 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, which is depicted is readily described. That part of the assessment area which is shown was divided into strip fields, with a diagonal boundary running SW-NE across the SE portion of the area; this is depicted in fig. 1, having been plotted as a cropmark from aerial photography.
- 3.8 The Tithe Survey for Llandysilio parish of 1842 and its earlier Apportionment (1839) show the area after enclosure, divided into four fields, all recorded as being under pasture (fig. 3). Recorded field names offer no further insight into land use or tenure: 408, Lane Field; 409, Bull Field; and 410, Common Piece. The field pattern appears to be much as it is today, with the exception that what is now the larger, north-eastern field, was then divided by a boundary running roughly north-west to south-east.
- 3.9 The first edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, surveyed in 1883 and published in 1886 (fig. 4), shows a similar situation to the Tithe Survey, with the addition of the Welshpool to Oswestry Railway (PRN 7763), opened in 1862. The precursor to Hafod Offa is also shown and named as Bwlch.

4 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY (fig. 5)

- 4.1 The geophysical survey was undertaken by ArchaeoPhysica, and their full report is provided under separate cover (ArchaeoPhysica 2002b). The survey comprised two elements: a magnetometer survey with resolution along traverses 0.5m apart varying between approximately 0.1m and 0.16m, but interpolated to 0.25m for analysis; and an electrical resistance survey giving pairs of adjacent readings 0.5m apart every 1.0m at the upper level and one reading every 1.0m at the lower level along traverses 1.0m apart.
- 4.2 The results from the surveys have shown up far more detail than had previously been provided through aerial reconnaissance and the plotting of the resultant cropmarks. A complex of features has been revealed which relate to human activity over the past 4000 years. The earliest features identified consist of a series of ring ditches, some of which are likely to represent further ploughed-out remains of Bronze Age round barrows, or burial mounds. Six such features were already known from aerial reconnaissance, three of which have been the subject of excavation (see 3.4). The surveys have identified at least a further two ring ditches, including one along the north-east boundary (RD1) which appears at ground level to be a substantial upstanding earthwork, and a smaller site (RD2) with

a probable central burial pit. The ring ditches are general less than 15m in diameter, but a much larger circular feature (RD3), 35m in diameter, has been tentatively identified from the resistance data alone. Although it is not clear, and does not appear in the magnetic data, it is possible that this is a large ring ditch, possibly the remains of a ritual site of a type known as a henge, or hengiform monument, rather than a round barrow, as may the large ring ditch previously identified from aerial reconnaissance (PRN 38091).

- 4.3 A complex series of linear features has been identified which appear to represent several phases of land division. One feature (PRN 38089) previously identified as a cropmark is known to be a former field boundary depicted on 19th-century maps (figs 3-4), to the south-west of which is a parallel feature which may be contemporary with it. The majority of the remaining linear features appear to divide the area into small fields, some with possible entrances, the form of which may imply an Iron Age or Romano-British origin, though this is necessarily speculative. A line of pits (PA1) running north-south can be identified as an extension of a pit alignment already known to the north of Cae Hen (see fig. 1), while two shorter sections (PA2-3) have also been tentatively identified further to the east. Several pit alignments around Four Crosses have previously been excavated and are generally believed to be early land divisions, although no dating evidence has yet been recovered from any of the Four Crosses examples (Owen and Britnell 1989).
- 4.4 A significant number of pits has been identified throughout the area, the nature of which cannot be determined from geophysical survey alone. Several large pits lie between two ring ditches (PRNs 3604 and 6129) and include one which appeared to be a new grave within the small inhumation cemetery revealed during excavations (Warrilow *et al.* 1986). It may therefore be the case that at least some of the newly identified pits are also graves. The large number of pits is reminiscent of the results from a survey undertaken at Baschurch, Shropshire, again in the vicinity of a group of Bronze Age round barrows. Following excavation, these pits were mostly determined to be artificial rather than natural and some contained burnt material in their fill (ArchaeoPhysica 2002a; Marches Archaeology 2002).

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The results from the evaluation have demonstrated the presence of a complex of features within the area of the proposed development which provide evidence for human activity from the Mesolithic period onwards. Although all but one of the sites identified has no visible upstanding remains, the results from excavations during the 1980s has demonstrated most clearly the potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains in the area.
- 5.2 Artefacts recovered from the excavations have indicated human activity within the area during the Mesolithic and Neolithic, although the earliest identified features date from the Bronze Age. During this period the Four Crosses area appears to have been the focus for a large and significant funerary and ritual complex which has been identified through aerial reconnaissance and excavation, and comprises around 20 ring ditches. The evaluation area contains at least 9 such features, some of which were revealed only as a result of the geophysical survey, although three sites were totally excavated during the 1980s.
- 5.3 The geophysical survey has revealed a complex set of linear features representing a series of superimposed landscapes consisting of enclosed, presumably agricultural fields, not visible on the surface of the ground but evident below the ploughsoil. The most obvious field pattern which has materialised consists of a series of sub-rectangular enclosures aligned north-west to south-east, some with possible entrances, which are likely to be Iron Age or Romano-British in date. Finds of this period were recovered from the upper fill of one of the ring ditches, and an Iron Age hearth was also identified.
- 5.4 At least one, and possibly up to three pit alignments have also been identified within the evaluation area, forming part of a wider complex covering a known area of about 650 x 1900m. The pit alignments are undated, although it has been suggested that they could be of medieval or even early post-medieval origin on the basis of their apparent correlation with the present day field pattern (Owen and Britnell 1989). Elements of the 18th and 19th-century landscape are also represented in the form of former field boundaries, now surviving only as ditches.

- 5.5 The 1980s excavations also revealed a small inhumation cemetery, further elements of which have been tentatively identified from the geophysical survey. Although one burial produced an Iron Age radiocarbon date, it has been suggested that the burials may be contemporary with a 6th or 7th-century iron spear and javelin recovered from the upper fill of a ring ditch (Warrilow *et al.* 1986).
- 5.6 A significant number of additional anomalies has also been identified by the geophysical survey, including a large number of pits of potential archaeological significance.
- 5.7 Finally we should note that the presence of Offa's Dyke on the western 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 writers would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Bob Silvester, CPAT; John Reah, Jennings Estates; the owners, Mr and Mrs Davies; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

7 REFERENCES

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ArchaeoPhysica 2002a. *Geophysical Survey of land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire.*

ArchaeoPhysica 2002b. *Domgay Lane, Four Crosses: magnetic gradient and electrical resistance surveys.*

Marches Archaeology 2002. *Ruyton Road, Baschurch, Shropshire. A report on an archaeological assessment and field evaluation.* Marches Archaeology Series 240.

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)

CPAT oblique aerial photographs

1975

75-A-0021

1979

79-13-0024

79-18-0030

79-18-0032

79-CM-0015

79-CM-0016

79-CM-0017

79-CT-0006

1982

82-C-0239 to 0245

1983

83-18-0002

83-19-0017

83-C-0106

83-C-0388 to 0390

1984

84-01-0008 and 9

84-01-0012

84-01-0030 to 0033

84-04-0001A to 6A

84-17-0000

84-C-0094

84-C-0195 to 0199

84-MB-0365

1986

86-MB-0777

86-MB-0781 and 0782

1987

87-02-0034

87-MB-0749

87-MB-0750

RCAHMW Oblique aerial photographs

1989

895061.24

1990

90-cs-037 to 039

1994

94-cs-1321

945152.60

1995

95-cs0094

1999

995096.41 to 45

99-cs-1996 to 1998

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OFF DOMGAY LANE, FOUR CROSSES, POWYS SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A pre-planning development proposal is being considered by Jennings Estates Ltd regarding a plot of land off Domgay Lane, Four Crosses. 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 457 dated 23/05/02) which details the works required.
- 1.2 The plot occupies roughly 2.5ha between the A483 and a disused railway within an area known to contain extensive prehistoric activity. At least five ring ditches have been identified from aerial reconnaissance, two of which were excavated by CPAT in 1983. These excavations produced evidence of activity from the Mesolithic through to the Dark Age. The western boundary of the plot is formed by Offa's Dyke, which is protected as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM Mg033).

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 geophysical survey 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 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 consist of a geophysical survey covering the whole of the development area of c. 2.5ha, subject to suitable access and ground conditions. A full copy of the geophysical survey specification has been made available separately.
- 3.3 The survey will be conducted using a standard grid established by total station surveying and tied-in to field boundaries. In order to identify features of 0.5-1.0m width the survey will be conducted using caesium vapour gradiometry and electrical resistance, taking samples at 0.25m intervals along lines 0.5m apart, giving 3200 samples in a nominal 20m square. Following processing of the results a report will be presented on the geophysical survey which will identify and attempt to interpret all features of archaeological potential. The report will be fully illustrated with grey-scale and colour survey plots, together with an interpretative illustration.
- 3.4 Following receipt of the geophysical survey report an illustrated and bound evaluation report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief, incorporating the results from the geophysical survey. 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 and client prior to the production of the final report.

- 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 desk-top study will be undertaken by a skilled archaeologist 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. The geophysical survey will be conducted by Anne and Martin Roseveare, ArchaeoPhysica Ltd.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist who conducted the desk-top study.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the desk-top study will be completed within 2 days, and the geophysical survey will be completed within 10 days. The report will be completed within 3 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. CPAT normally require 2 weeks written notice prior to the commencement of a project.
- 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
13th June 2002

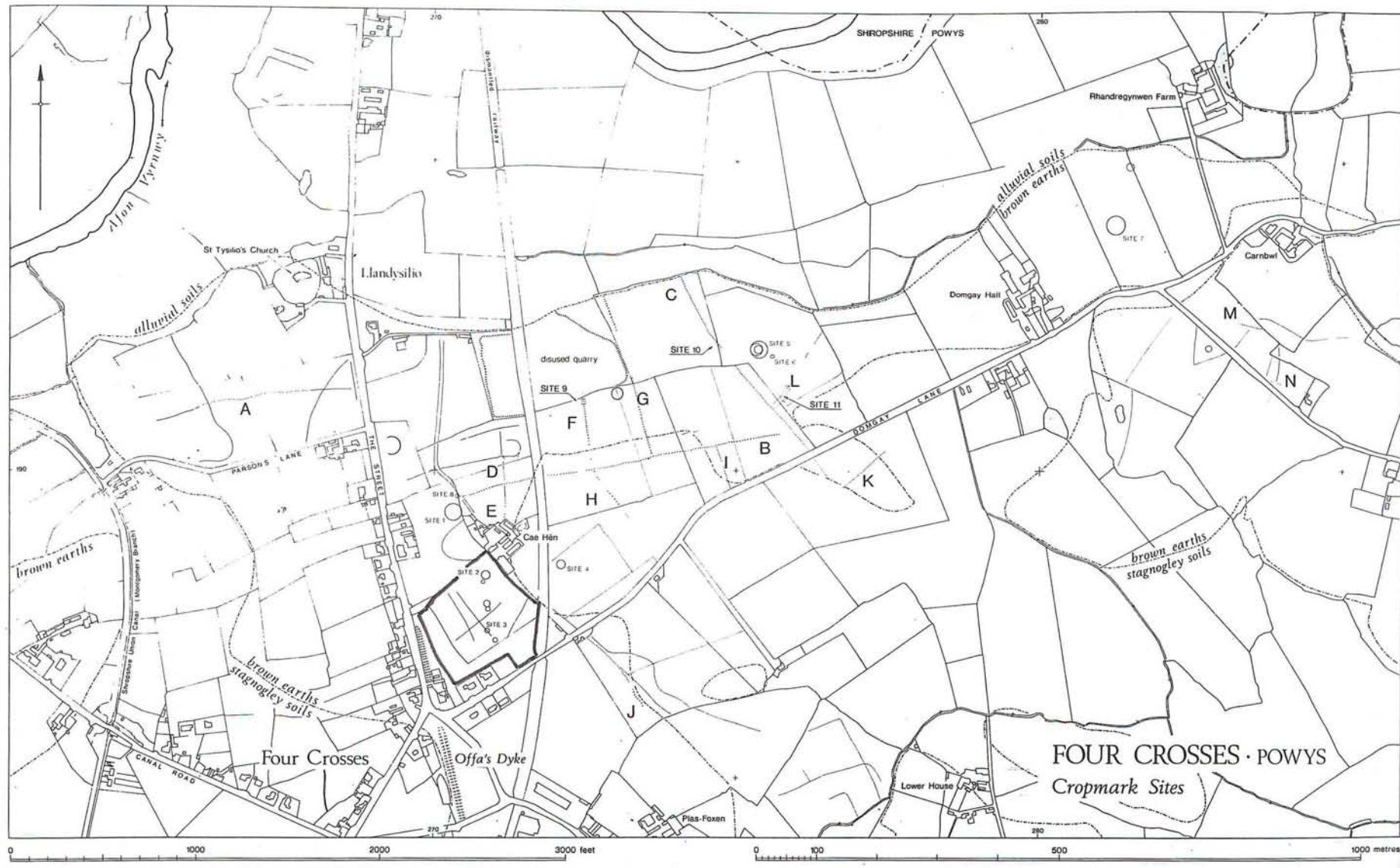


Fig. 1 Site location and cropmark sites (after Owen and Britnell 1989, fig. 1)

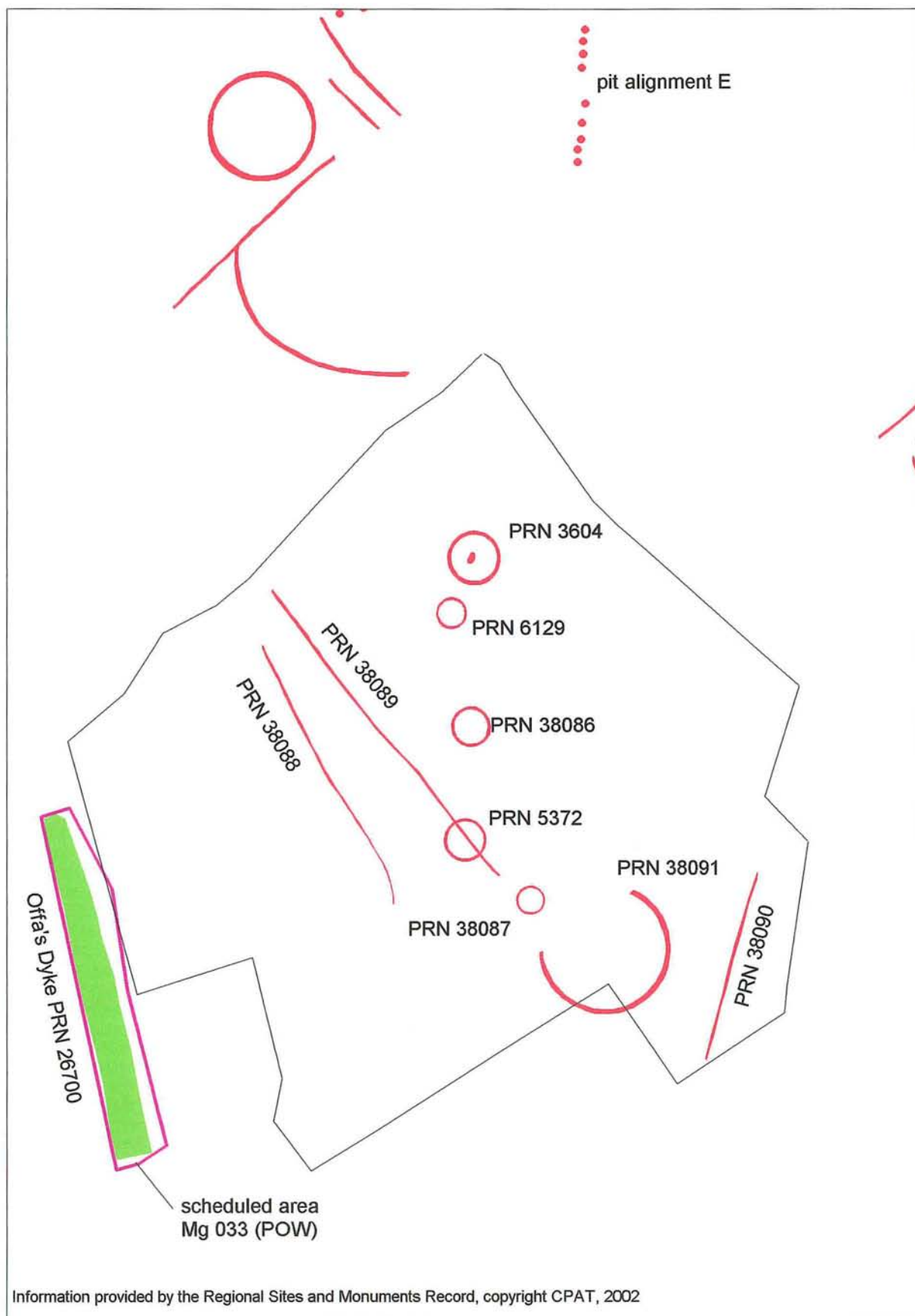


Fig. 2 Previously recorded archaeological sites within the area of the proposed development, scale 1:1500

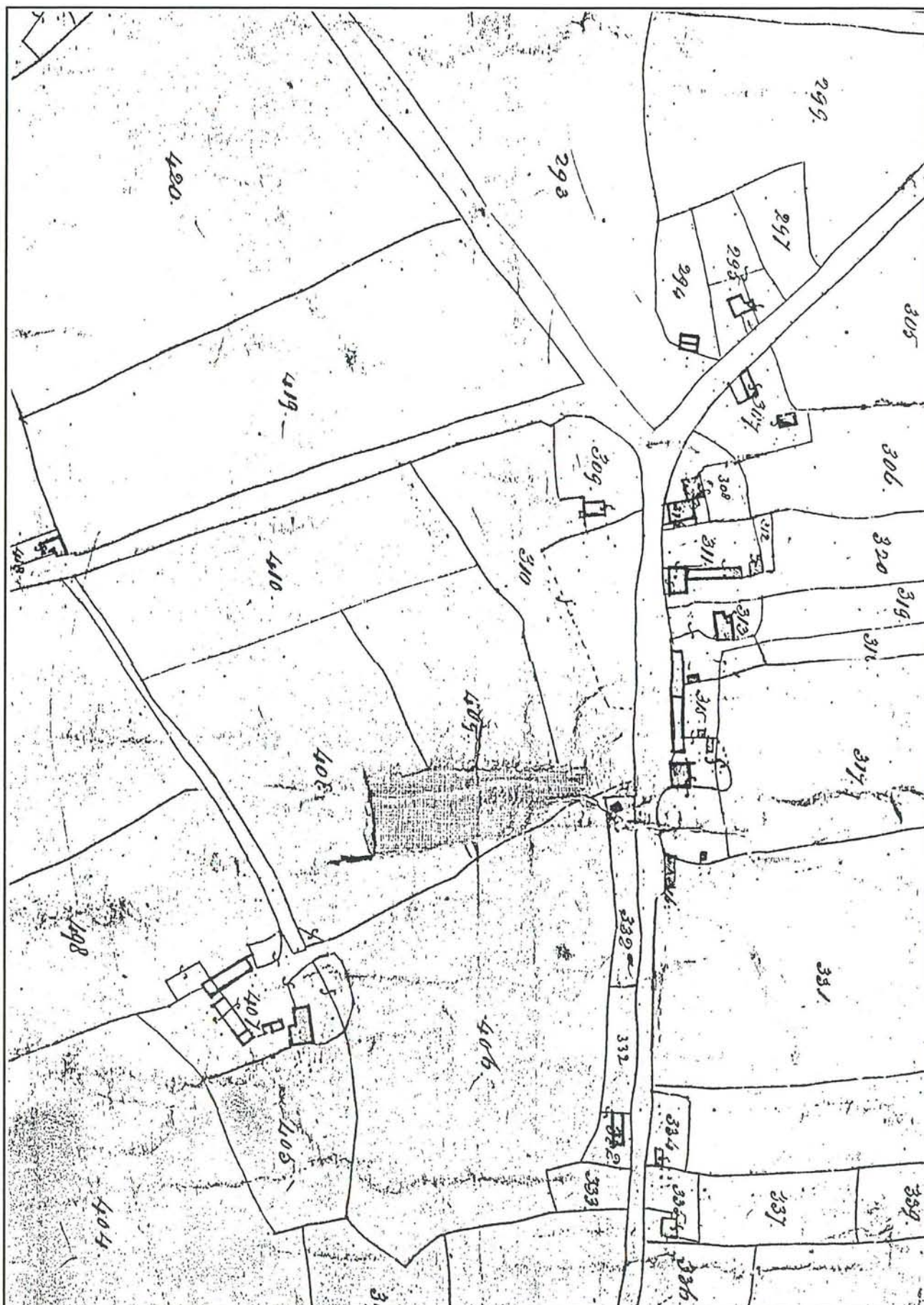


Fig. 3 Tithe Survey for Llandysilio parish, 1842

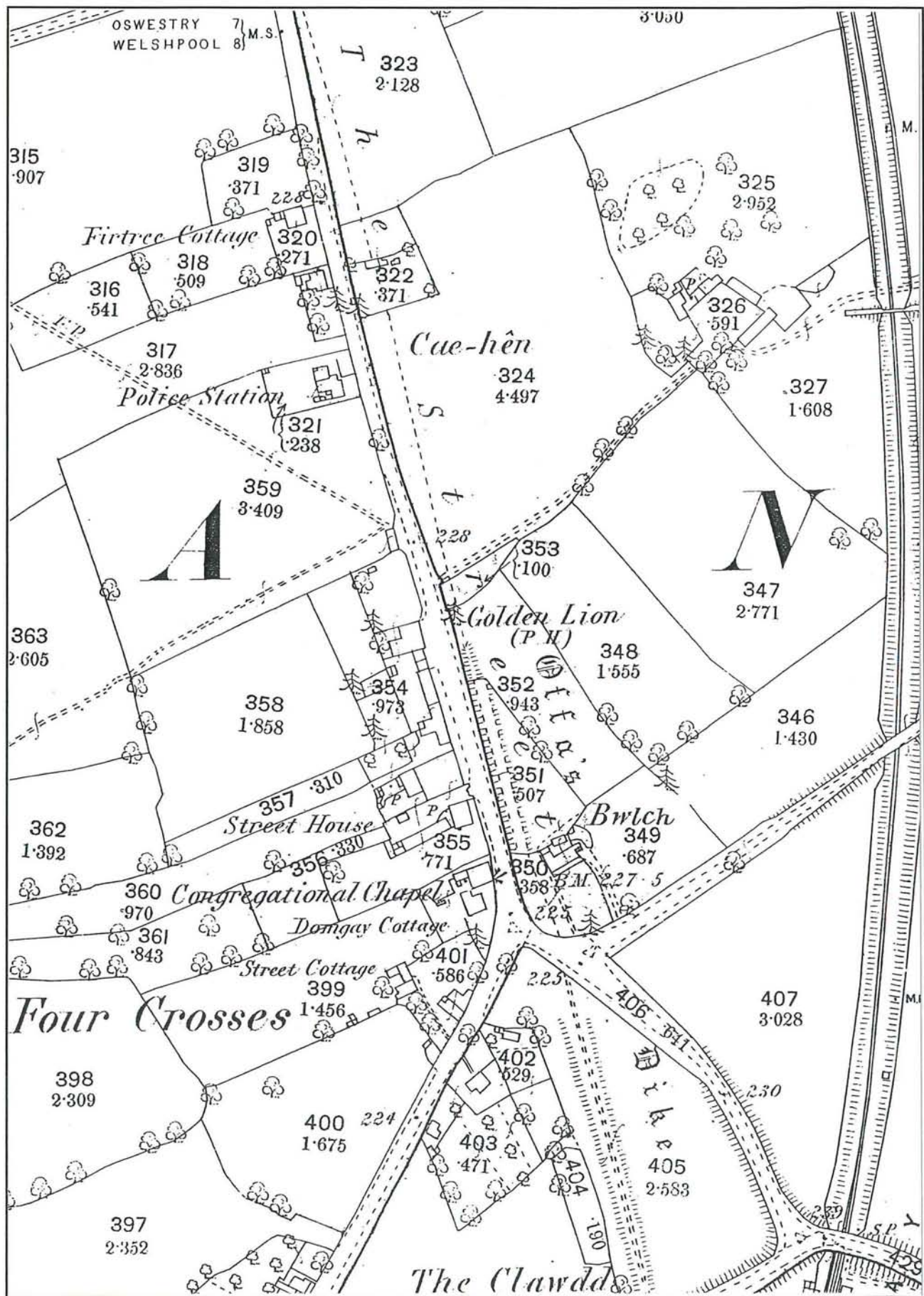


Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 (Montgomery 11.9), surveyed 1883, published 1886

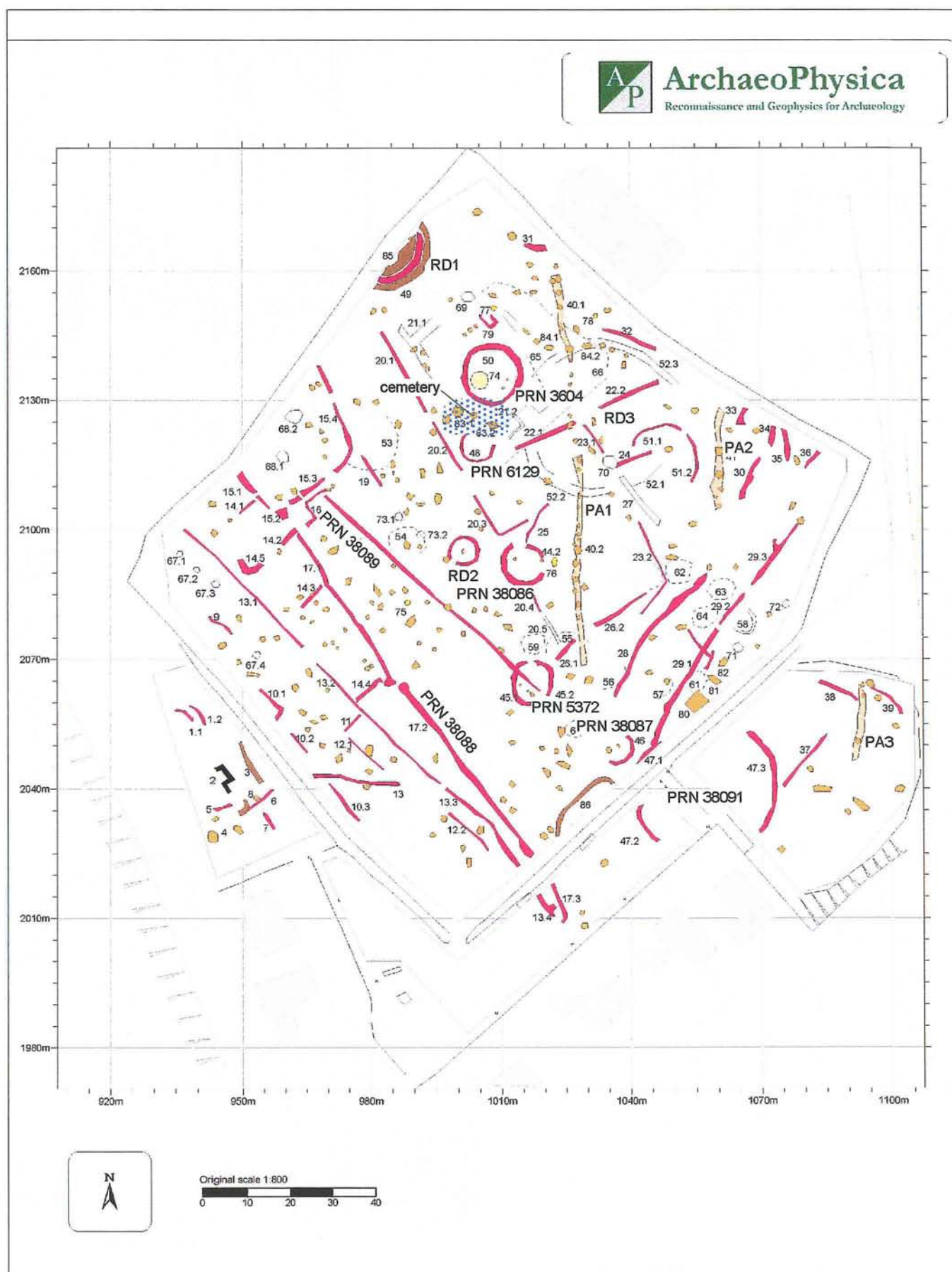


Fig. 5 Geophysical survey interpretation

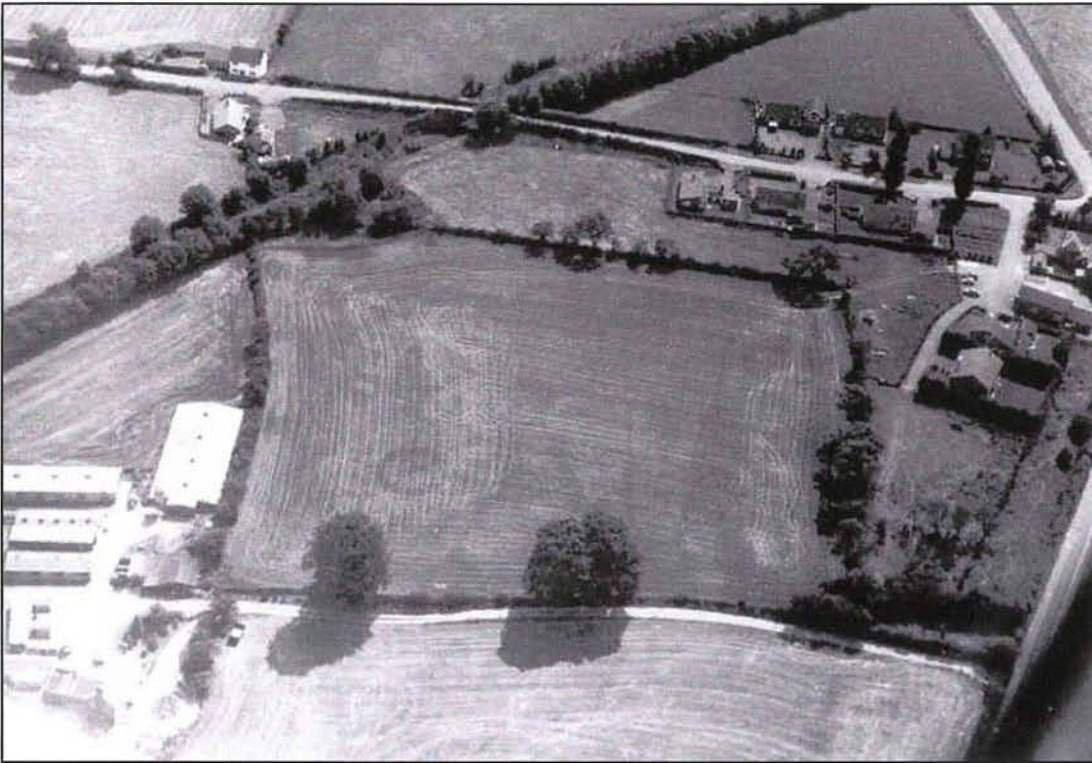


Plate 1 1983 aerial photography from N. Photo CPAT 83.18.02



Plate 2 1983 aerial photograph from SW. Photo CPAT 83.19.17



Plate 3 PRNs 3604 and 6129 under excavation in 1984 from W. Photo CPAT 84.1.33



Plate 4 PRNs 3604, 6129 and 5372 under excavation in 1984. Photo CPAT 84.1.4