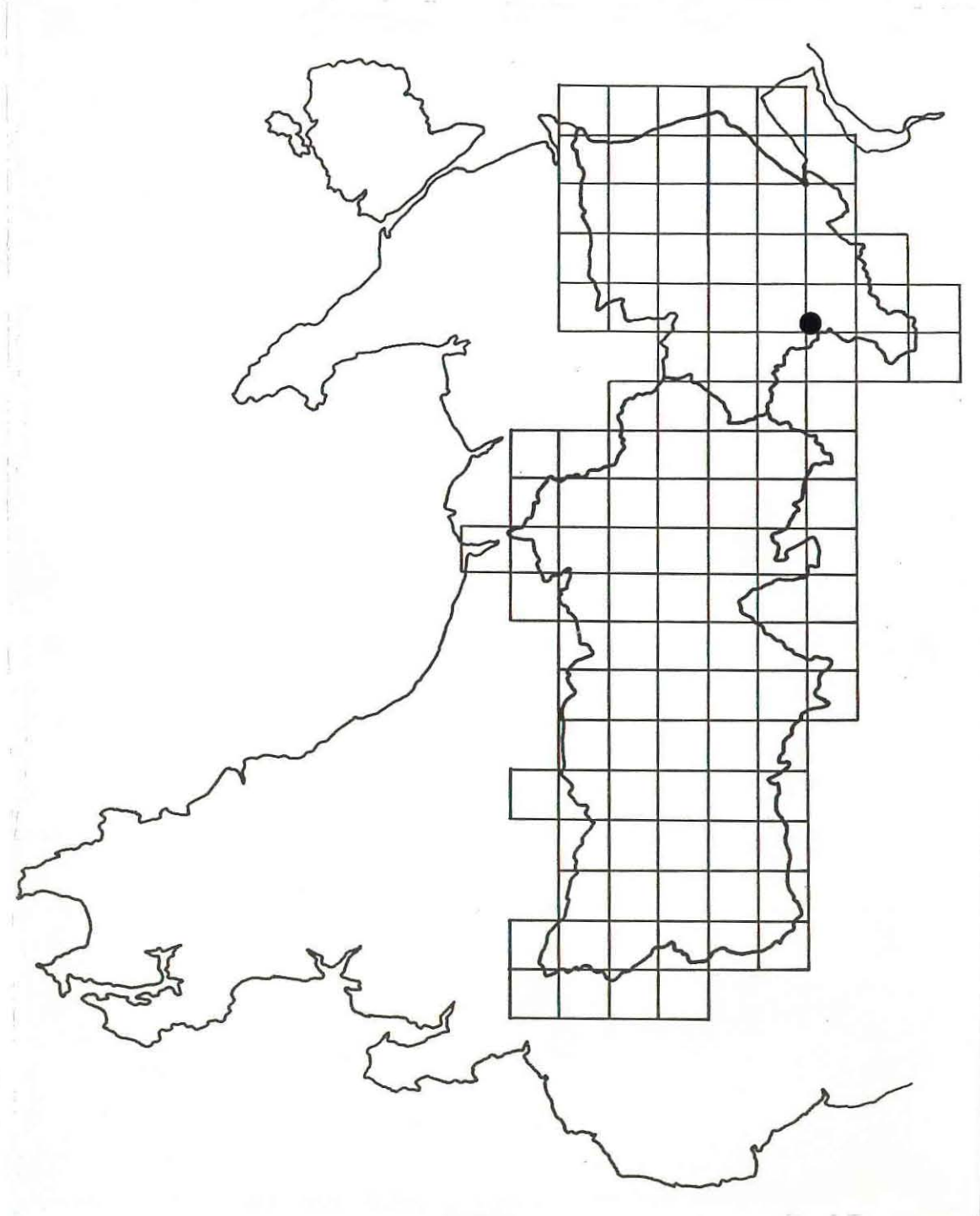
THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Chirk Sewage Treatment Works Phase II

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT DARLAND WOOD



CPAT Report No 41

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Chirk Sewage Treatment Works Phase II

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT DARLAND WOOD

by W G Owen

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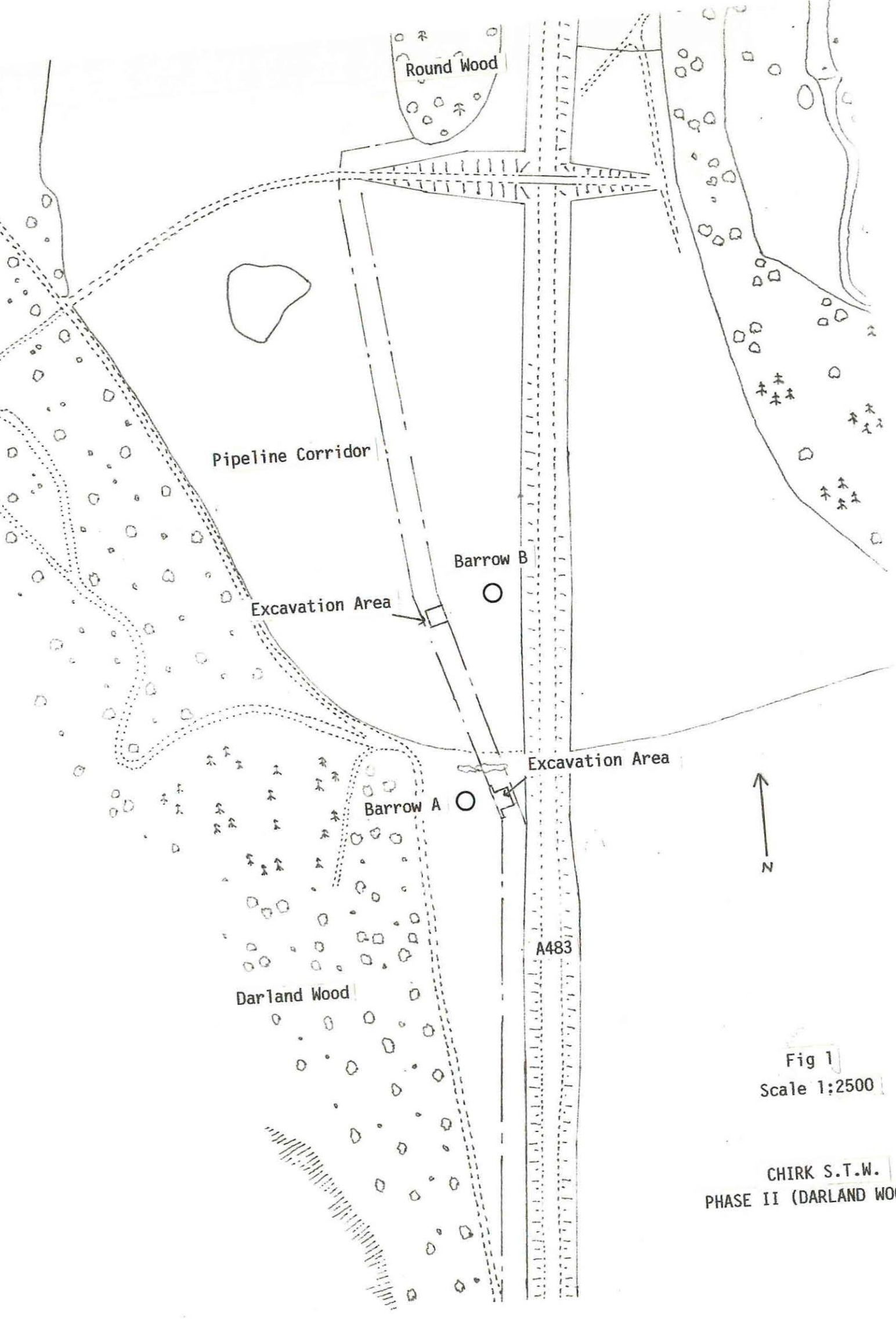


Fig 1
Scale 1:2500

CHIRK S.T.W.
PHASE II (DARLAND WOOD)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned in July 1992 by Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water through their consulting engineers Wallace Evans to undertake a programme of archaeological excavation and a watching brief in advance of pipe-laying in the vicinity of two Bronze Age round barrows near Darland Wood (Fig 1). This was in response to recommendations by the County Sites and Monuments Record, a section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, who act as archaeological curators for Clwyd.

1.2 Darland Wood lies approximately 4.0 kilometres north-east of Chirk and overlooks the valley of the Dee immediately to the west. The barrows, located at SJ 29854209 and SJ 29874221, are both within 200m of the upper edge of ground that falls steeply for 55m to the valley bottom from an altitude of 105m OD. Both barrows, but more particularly Barrow A (Fig 1), have been reduced and spread by cultivation and, consequently, it is difficult to define their precise position and their size, although a survey of each was prepared during the project.

1.3 Both barrows are scheduled ancient monuments (SAM De223) and it was considered that although the pipeline corridor respected the scheduled areas any archaeological features adjacent to these barrows and located within the corridor could most satisfactorily be evaluated by trial excavation. Two areas, 10m x 10m, were therefore selected for excavation at the places closest to where the pipeline corridor passed each barrow (Fig 2) and subsequently a watching brief was maintained at the time of topsoil-stripping along this stretch of the wayleave and in places during the digging of the pipe-trench.

2. Topography, Land Use and Soils

2.1 In the vicinity of Darland Wood, the proposed pipeline corridor passes through an area of intensively cultivated agricultural land situated in an undulating landscape. The reddish soils are of the Salop Association (Rudeforth et al. 1984, 222), formed from glacially deposited tills derived from Carboniferous shales, sandstones and coal measures. Locally they are moderately permeable sandy loams and are generally stony.

3. The Excavations

3.1 The excavations were conducted between 18th and 26th of August 1992 by a small team of five excavators. In both areas the surface ploughsoil was excavated mechanically by a JCB 3CX, stockpiled within the wayleave area and examined for finds. The underlying subsoil was then manually cleaned and this surface examined for features and finds of archaeological significance.

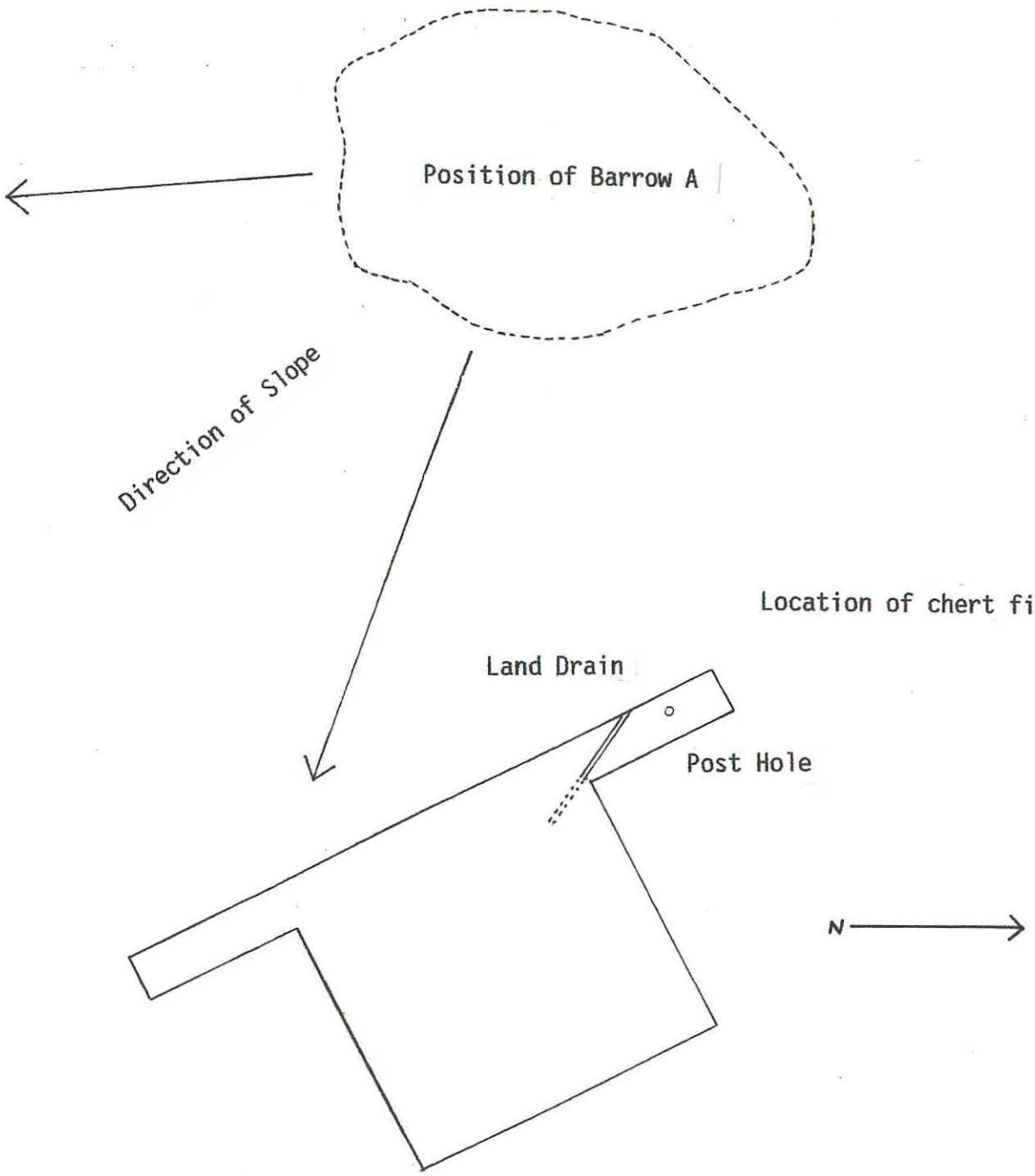
3.2 Area 1

3.2.1 The excavation area was, at its closest point, located 16m to the east of Barrow A (Fig 2) on moderately sloping ground. The surface ploughsoil, a

CHIRK S.T.W
(LAND WOOD)

Scale 1:200

Fig 2



fairly stony dark brown silty loam, was, (at the upper northern end of the site) clearly delineated from the underlying sandier and stonier subsoil. Both layers contained substantial quantities of post-medieval pottery sherds uniformly spread throughout the area. It is likely that this material was introduced over a number of years through manuring during cultivation rather than it being associated with a settlement site in the immediate vicinity.

3.2.2 Towards the southern, lower edge of the site the subsoil was less clearly separated from the humic ploughsoil a feature attributable to the accumulation of hillwash downslope of the ridge on which Barrow A stands. Within this accumulation there was no evidence of eroded barrow material which might have appeared as discontinuous layers or lenses of gleyed and panned material or a stony layer atypical of the local soil profile.

3.2.3 The excavation area was extended 5m to the north and south by two narrow trenches 1.5m wide. The southern extension revealed no archaeological features. The northern extension trench, however, exposed a field-drain constructed of brick and stone at the base of the ploughsoil running approximately 4.0m in a north-west/south-east line. At the extreme northern end of this trench a layer of limestone fragments approximately 0.05m thick separated the ploughsoil from a loose sandy silt layer containing lenses of fine coal fragments. The limestone layer faded out in the vicinity of a post-hole which contained post-medieval pottery fragments. Both features were interpreted as being of late post-medieval date.

3.2.4 A single worked chert fragment recovered from the ploughsoil/subsoil interface at the extreme northern end of this trench is probably of prehistoric origin. A smaller fragment of chert from the same location and context may be artefactual but equally could be of natural origin.

3.2.5 Subsequently, a physical examination of a sample of the loose coal layer by dry-sieving to a minimum size of 0.5 mm failed to isolate any fragments of artefactual origin.

3.3 Area 2

3.3.1 This excavation area was located on level ground 38.0m to the west of Barrow B. The soil profile was, in general terms, similar to that in the northern half of Area 1 consisting of approximately 0.20m of dark brown humic ploughsoil above a reddish-brown stony subsoil. Excavation revealed no identifiable eroded barrow material and finds were limited to a small number of modern pottery and glass fragments. No features of archaeological significance were revealed.

4 The Watching Brief

4.1 A watching brief was carried out by the writer on September 2nd 1992 at the time of mechanical topsoil stripping along the wayleave in the vicinity of the barrows. The exposed subsoil, the excavated sections and the excavated topsoil were examined as closely as was possible for any archaeological features that might be associated with the barrows. The results of this examination were negative apart from the observation that there was a

noticeable and perhaps significantly higher incidence of chert fragments along approximately a 100m length of the wayleave to the east of Barrow A. None of these fragments, however, showed any signs of having been worked manually and although they could be interpreted as naturally-deposited till material it is also possible that they represent flint-working debris.

4.2 The second stage of the watching brief was conducted by a member of CPAT's staff on October 23rd 1992 along part of the same section of the wayleave at the time of mechanical excavation of the pipeline trench. Again, no features of archaeological significance were noted, the trench passing through undisturbed sands and gravels.

Acknowledgments

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by both Mr Peter Jones and Mr Leslie Frankland of Wallace Evans during the course of the these investigations.

Reference

Rudeforth, C.C., Hartnup, R., Lea, J.W., Thompson, T.R.E. and Wright, P.S. 1984 Soils and Their Uses in Wales (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden)