

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*Heolgerrig, Swansea Road, Merthyr Tydfil*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

CPAT Report No 146

*Heolgerrig, Swansea Road, Merthyr Tydfil*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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Report prepared for: Hunt Winter Partnership

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The contracting section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT Contracts) was commissioned in May 1995 by Hunt Winter Partnership, Chartered Architects of Liskeard, Cornwall acting on behalf of their clients Charles Robertson (Developments) Ltd, to carry out an archaeological assessment of the former Heolgerrig brickworks site and surrounding area (centred at SO 032 066), in the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

1.2 The area is the subject of an outline planning application submitted by Charles Robertson (Developments) Ltd to develop the area as a shopping centre and leisure park. The Local Planning Authority, on the recommendation of their archaeological advisors, the Curatorial Section of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, subsequently requested that the applicant commission an archaeological assessment based on a brief prepared by their archaeological advisors prior to a determination of the planning application.

1.3 A specification and quotation for the work was subsequently prepared by CPAT Contracts recommending that the assessment should consist of both desk-top study and field visit and a report prepared based on the results of the assessment. A copy of the specification is included in this report as Appendix 1.

## **2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY (Fig 1)**

2.1 The proposed development site covers an area of approximately 436 Ha of derelict land on the south-western edge of Merthyr Tydfil. To the north it is bounded by Swansea Road, to the east by the extension to the A470 trunk road, which is currently under construction, whilst to the south and west the area is bounded either by housing estates, waste tips or open land.

2.2 The area is on the lower slopes of Mynydd Aberdar and has an east-facing prospect. Predominantly, the area is occupied by industrial waste tips dating from the nineteenth century but with small, remnant areas of unimproved mountain land surviving on the eastern side (centred at SO 027 067). More sheltered areas support woodland copses many of which are well-established and mature.

2.3 Merthyr Tydfil lies close to the northern edge of the Lower Coal Series of the Coal Measures and a feature of its geological location is the abundance of iron ore as well as coal contained within this series both of which occur at relatively superficial levels. To the north of the town, at a distance of some 3 kilometres, outcrops of Carboniferous Limestone occur which, again, has been significant in the past development of the iron industry of the area.

### 3 THE DESK-TOP STUDY

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The desk-top study included consultation of the County Sites and Monuments Record, the examination of cartographic and documentary sources held by the County Record Office, the National Library of Wales, the Ironbridge Institute, the National Monuments Record, the Merthyr Tydfil Museum and the Merthyr Tydfil Library. The aerial photographic collections of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments and a record of archaeological features recorded during a recent rapid survey of the site by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments were also consulted.

#### 3.2 Cartographic Sources

3.2.1 The earliest available map of the area was the Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing of 1814 (Drawing No 192; Fig 2). The scale of this drawing (1:63,360) imposes limitations on the detail shown but, nevertheless, it seems clear that much of the area was, at that time, subdivided into fields and the drawing clearly shows trackways or tramways running across it from mine workings on Mynydd Aberdar to the Cyfarthfa Ironworks. These follow similar alignments to tramways shown on later maps of the area (Figs.2- 5).

3.2.2 The Tithe Map of 1850 depicting the Apportionment of 1846 (Fig 3), indicates that the land was owned by Lord Dynevor and that William Crawshay of Cyfarthfa was one of several lessees. Many of the Apportionment descriptions refer to cinder and rubbish tips (Nos 1594,1610,1656,1675 and 1686) but there are also pasture and arable fields and meadows intermingled with these which appear to be associated mainly with the cottages of Brynteg, CoedcaBrenteg, Penyrhoel and Heolgerrig and others which are un-named on the map. A single cottage and garden (No 1674) which is located within the study area is shown on the Tithe Map as is also a small rectangular enclosure (not numbered) a short distance to the north-west of it. The map also shows the same tramways referred to on the Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing but does not show the positions of mining levels within the area nor is there any reference to a quarry to the east of Penrhoel.

3.2.3 The Ordnance Survey 1st Edition Sheets of the area (Glamorgan Sheets 11NE and 12NW; Fig 4), published in 1885 but surveyed 1868-1878, shows more graphically than does the 1850 Tithe Map, the positions of spoil heaps. It also depicts the positions of seven ironstone levels either within or close to the boundary of the area. As well as showing the same main tramways referred to previously, detail is also given of tramway lines linking ironstone levels to these main lines and also to active tipping areas. The placenames referred to above (Par 3.2.2) recur but it is of interest to note that CoedcaBrenteg and Penrhoel have changed to Pen-coedcae and Six Bells Farm respectively.

Immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary of the proposed development site, the embankment carrying the B.& M.R. and L.& N.W. Joint Railway of 1868 is shown. A tramway is shown approaching this embankment from the south and which appears to continue below it by means of a tunnel. It then proceeds north to the Cyfarthfa Iron Works. A subsidiary tramway from the Pen-yr-Heolgerrig quarry joins this tramway at a point immediately to the south of the tunnel indicating that the quarry was active at this time. At the north-eastern corner of the area another tramway is seen to pass below the embankment again to proceed towards the Cyfarthfa Works.

**3.2.4** The features associated with the railway are more clearly depicted on 2nd Ordnance Survey Edition of 1904 (Fig 5), six years before the closure of the Cyfarthfa Iron Works in 1910. It shows that the Pen-yr-Heolgerrig quarry was still active and that, in fact, two tramways were carried below the railway at the north-eastern corner of the area. These O.S. Sheets also indicates that all the ironstone levels shown on the 1st Edition Sheets were by this time referred to as 'Old Levels' or had disappeared and this is repeated in the 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey sheets of 1919 (Fig 6). The 3rd Edition sheet 12.1 does, however, show that tramlines from the Pen-yr Heolgerrig quarry had been removed which probably indicates that the quarry had ceased to operate by that time.

### **3.3 Documentary Sources**

**3.3.1** A search of the National Monuments Record, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust and Merthyr Tydfil Museum Sites and Monuments Records yielded no data immediately relevant to the proposed development area.

**3.3.2** The Tredegar Park and Badminton Collections held by the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth and which may have contained material relevant to the area were not available.

**3.3.3** The Tithe Apportionment of 1846 indicates that much of the study area was agricultural and associated with the several cottages referred to in Par. 3.2.2 above. A study of farms in Senghenydd Supra prior to the industrial revolution (Davies 1991) refers to Brynteg as being a principal farm in the township of Gellideg as early as the seventeenth century but no reference is made to Penrhewl or Heolgerrig. The Rent List for the Parish of Merthyr Tydfil (1756-7) does, however, include both farms and states that the rateable value of Penrheolgerrig farm in 1769 was ?3-0 (Wilkins 1867). It is also of interest to note that by 1866 its rateable value had increased to ?53-0, a possible inference to the increased industrial potential and value of its lands.

**3.3.4** Lease No 3969 of the Maybery Collection held by the National Library of Wales (Maybery Vol 1, p41) states that a lease for 99 years of the field or close called Trench bach, part of Nant cau in Merthyr Tydvil, was transferred to Richard Crawshay on 24-7-1790 with liberty of scouring

(hushing) in fields called Cae Rhig and Wain Newydd both of which may possibly have been within the study area. The reference to scouring is of interest as it infers that prospecting for mineral-bearing ores was taking place in this area at that time. It also appears that both coal and ironstone were mined from pits in the hamlet of Gellideg at a time prior to 1828 (Pedlar 1930) and there is also reference to the existence of an ironstone pit known as the Lewis Jenkins Pit at that time (Pedlar 1930).

### 3.4 Aerial Photographic Archive

3.4.1 Two RAF aerial photographs examined (106G/UK 1120/14-1-46/4007 and F21 542/RAF/205/11-6-55/0043) show that the area was predominantly one of industrial waste tips. The later of the two shows that the brickworks located on the eastern side of the study area was in existence at that time. It is not, however, shown on the 1946 aerial photograph.

## 4 THE FIELD SURVEY (Fig 7)

4.1 A rapid field survey of the proposed development area was carried out on 23 June 1995. Features noted are as follows:

1 Site of former brickworks (centred at SO 3600 0646). An area at the eastern end of the site at present consisting largely of the former concrete floor of the works. No above-ground structural features remain.

2 SO 0355 0660 - SO 0340 0660 A tramroad cutting approximately 140m long and  $\approx$  2.0m basal width. No visible remains of tramline itself apart from a few displaced stone blocks. The cutting is truncated by later tipping at both east and west ends.

3 SO 0348 0661 Possible old level now blocked and overgrown. This may be the ironstone level shown to the north of the tramline in approximately this position on the 1st Edition OS map and which was served by a branch line from it.

4 SO 0340 0660 - 0290 0665 A tramroad cutting approximately 500m long and  $\approx$  2.0m basal width. Blocked in several places by later tipping and embankments supporting later trackways.

5 SO 0343 0658 - 0338 0646 Line of former tramroad approximately 120m long. This has now been converted to a metalled track  $\approx$  2.5m wide leading to the Six Bells housing estate to the south. Overlooked from the east by a steep-sided tip.

6 SO 0345 0645 An old level consisting of a blocked shaft and with a cutting extending to the north-west which is heavily overgrown and truncated by later tipping after a distance of some 45.0m. This appears to be the coal level

with associated tramlines shown on the 2nd Edition OS map in this position.

7 SO 0290 0665 - 0274 0683 A tramroad cutting approximately 280m long which has been partly blocked in places by later tipping. Several stone tramline blocks remain undisturbed in places and which show that the rails supported were 1.10m apart.

8 SO 02900665 - 0275 0653 A tramroad cutting cutting approximately 200m long and c 2.5m wide partly obscured by later tipping and with the eastern part converted to a trackway.

9 SO 0277 0651 House and yard. This is shown on the Tithe Map of 1850 and subsequent OS maps. The present house is of a later construction.

10 SO 0269 0655 Site of enclosure shown on 1850 Tithe Map. Now a scrapyard.

11 SO 0361 - 0637 Pen-yr-heolgerrig quarry. This consists of a stone quarry face c 45.0m long E-W and c 11.0m max. height. Very overgrown with several mature deciduous trees overlooking it. A tramroad cutting extends for c 100m to the north-east but beyond this its original line has been destroyed by later works associated with the brickworks.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Most of the proposed development area is occupied by waste tips associated with the former exploitation of the area for ironstone, coal and, in the case of the former Pen-yr-heolgerrig quarry, for building stone (Pedler 1930). Within this complex of tips, considerable lengths of the main tramway routes shown on early maps remain in the form of fairly well-defined cuttings with in situ stone blocks of the tramline remaining in one instance (No 7 above).

5.2 The sites of two former levels were identified (Nos 3 and 6 above) both of which appear on early Ordnance Survey sheets. Others have clearly been obscured or destroyed by later activity.

5.3 One area of apparently undisturbed ground supporting a moorland type of vegetation was identified (SO 027 067) but there were no visible features of archaeological interest within this area.

5.4 Two enclosed areas dating at least to 1846 were identified (Nos 9 and 10 above) but clearly their functions have changed by the present time.

5.5 A precise date for the construction of the Butterley Brickworks site was not established but aerial photographic evidence suggests that this was sometime between 1946 and 1955.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CPAT Contracts wishes to acknowledge the assistance given by the staffs of the National Library of Wales, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales, the National Monuments Record, the Glamorgan Records Office, the Glamorgan-Gwent Sites and Monuments Record, The Ironbridge Institute, The Merthyr Tydfil Museum and the Merthyr Tydfil Library.

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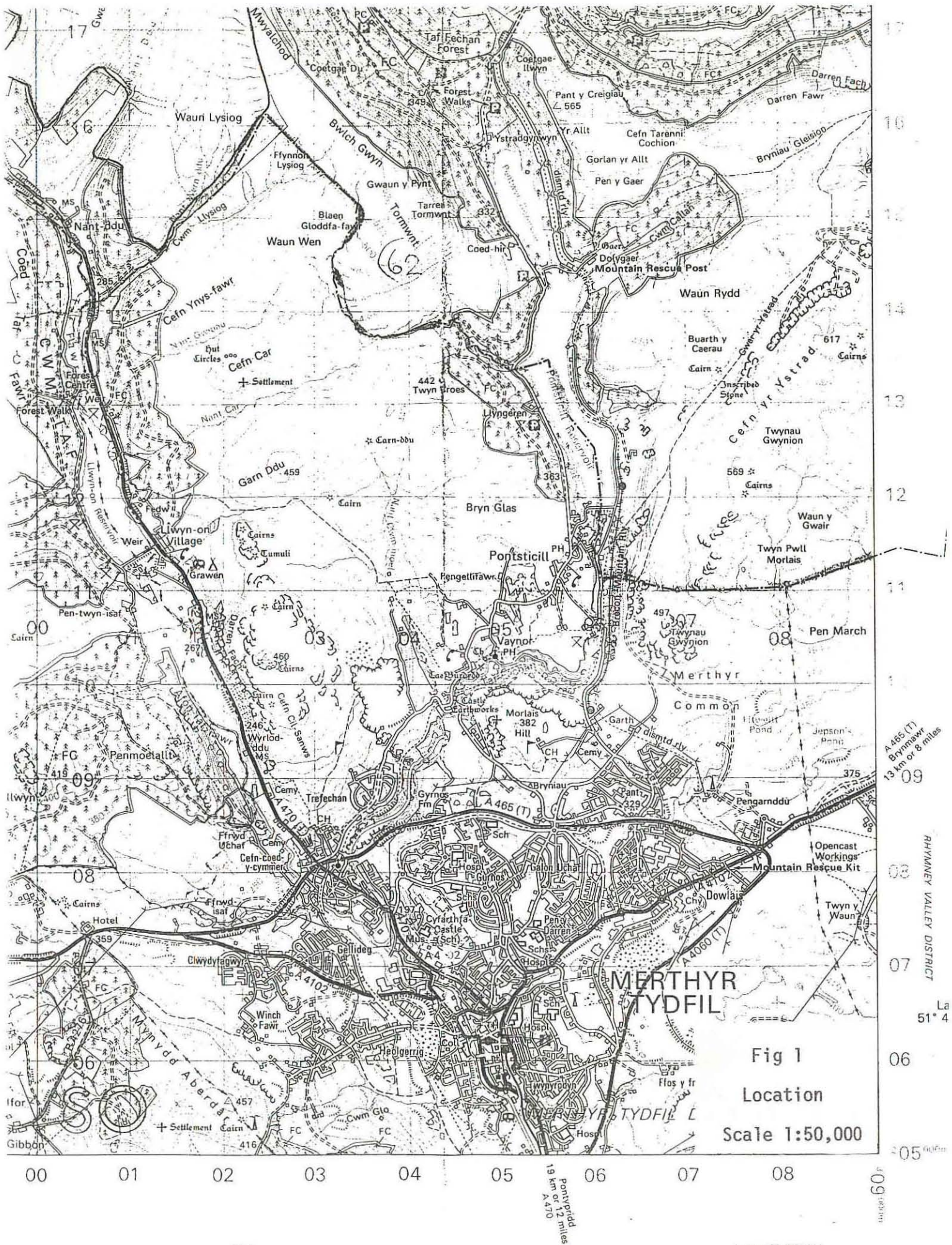
Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing No 192, 1814; Scale 1:63,360

Tithe Map and Apportionment, Merthyr Tydfil, 1850 (National Library of Wales)

Ordnance Survey Map, 1st Edition 1885, Glamorgan Sheets 11NE, 12NW; Scale 1:10560

Ordnance Survey Map, 2nd Edition 1904, Glamorgan Sheets 11.4, 12.1; Scale 1:2500

Ordnance Survey Map, 3rd Edition 1919, Glamorgan Sheets 11.4, 12.1; Scale 1:2500



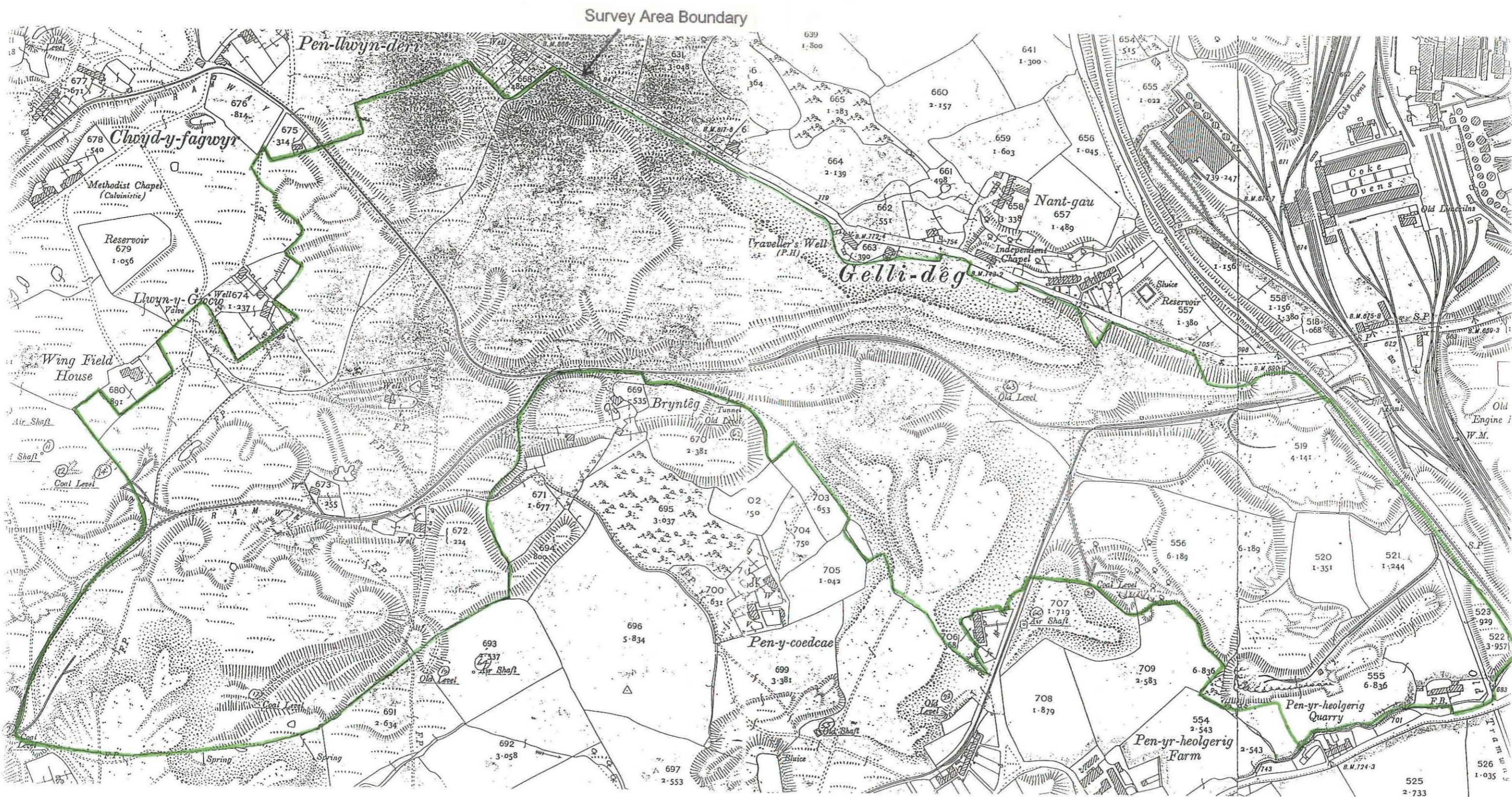


Fig 5

Extract from 2nd Edition O.S. Sheet

Scale 1:2500 (reduced)

Survey Area Boundary

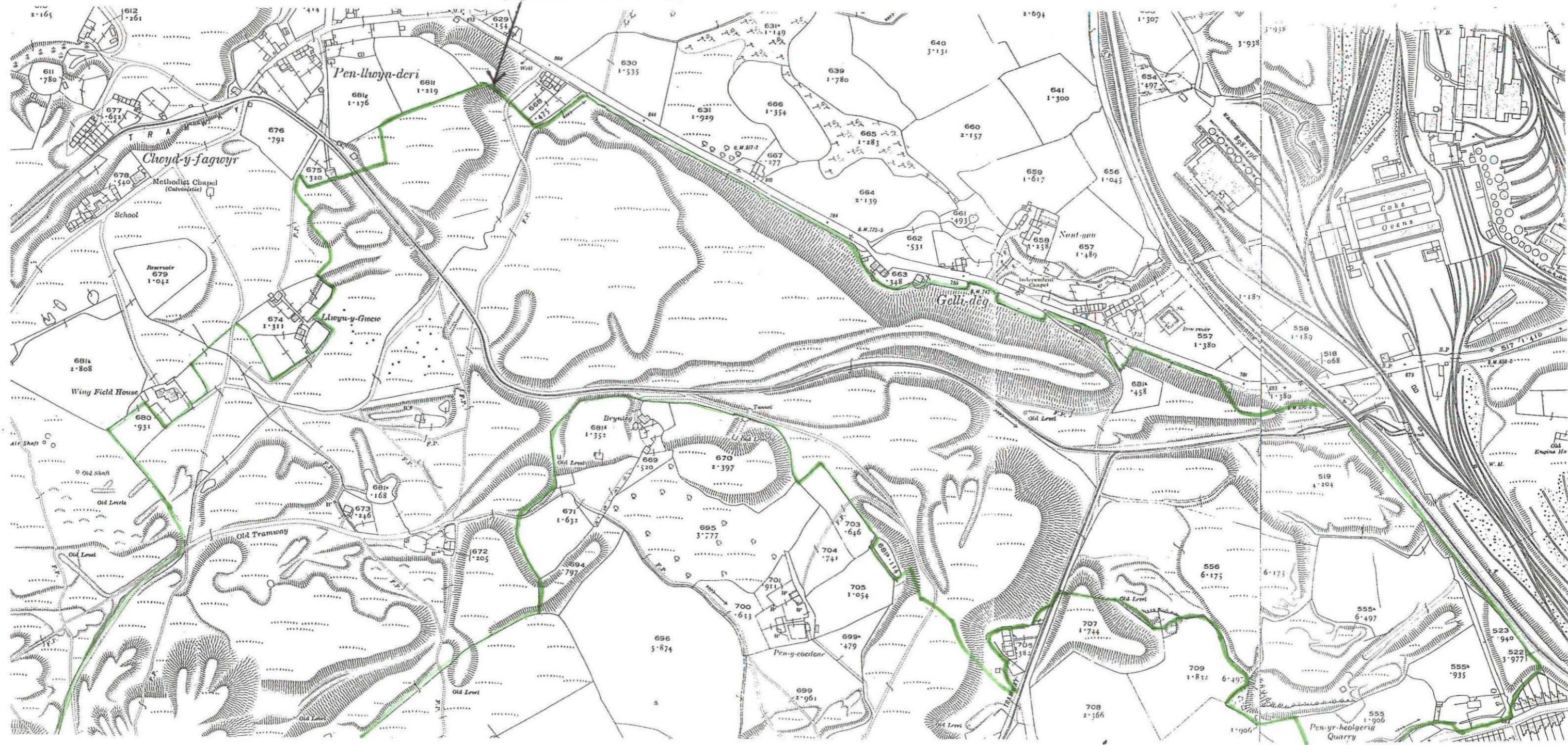


Fig 6

Extract from 3rd Edition O.S. Sheet

Scale 1:2500 (reduced)

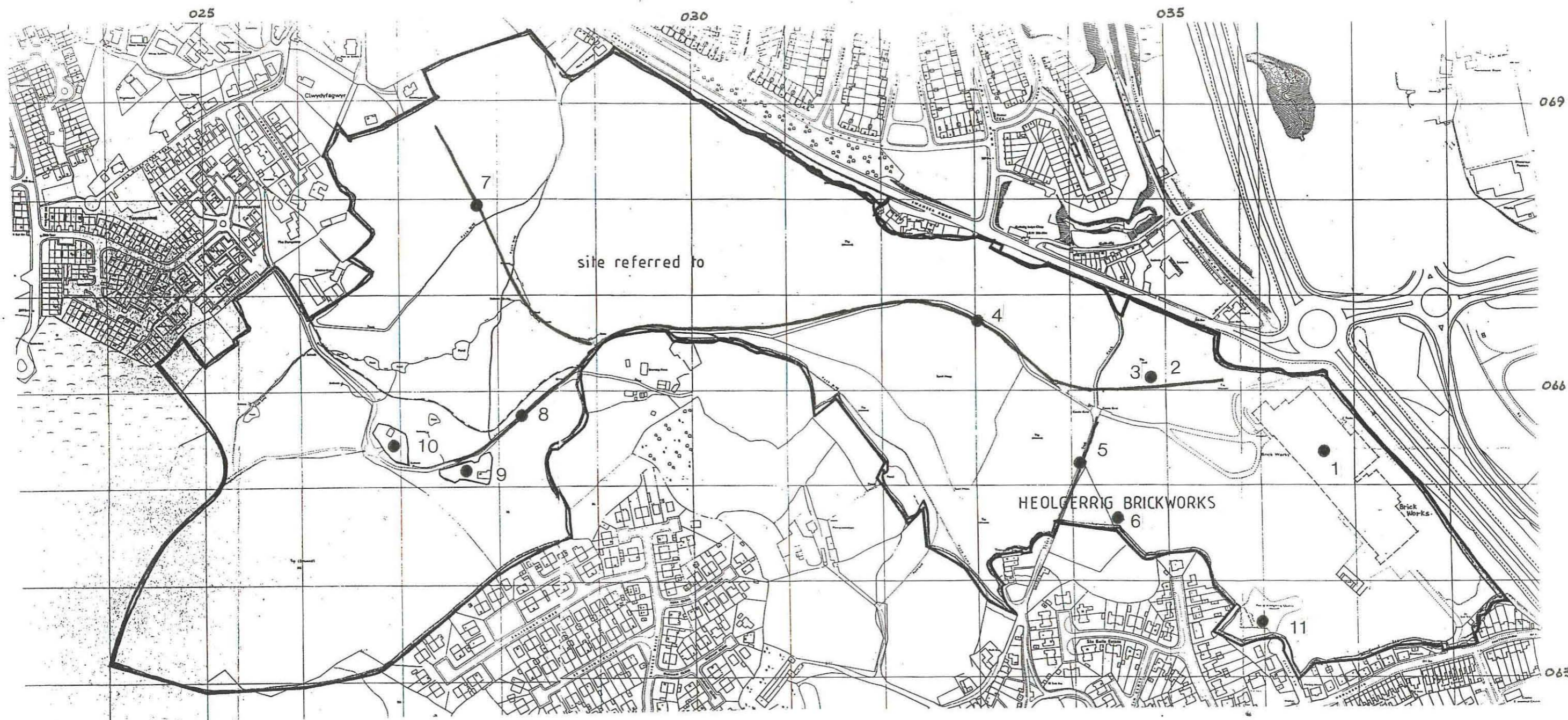


Fig 7

Site Plan

Scale 1:2500 (reduced)