

*Land at Llwyn Onn, Wrexham, Clwyd*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

**by W G Owen**

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Report prepared for Gordon Mytton Developments Ltd

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### **SUMMARY**

A desk-top assessment and rapid field survey of a small block of pasture land to the south-east of Wrexham in Clwyd, proposed for residential development revealed no features of archaeological significance. The surrounding area, however, has in the past few centuries seen significant industrial activity and was undoubtedly farmed in the Middle Ages.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 In December 1994, the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited by the Parry Davies Partnership, Chartered Architects of 4 Bridge Street, Denbigh, Clwyd, acting on behalf of their client, Gordon Mytton Developments Ltd, to tender for a desk-based archaeological assessment and field survey of an area to the south-east of Wrexham, Clwyd, referred to as Llwyn Onn (centred at Grid Reference SJ 3550 4910).

1.2 The basis for the assessment and field survey was determined by a specification prepared by the Clwyd Archaeology Service, a part of Clwyd County Council, on behalf of Gordon Mytton Developments Ltd, who had applied for planning permission from Wrexham Maelor Borough Council for a residential development scheme on the site of Llwyn Onn (Planning Application No. 6/22813).

1.3 The Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was subsequently commissioned by the Parry Davies Partnership to carry out the assessment. This was done in late December and this report was prepared immediately afterwards.

## 2 Archaeological Requirement

2.1 The aim of the evaluation was to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features within the application area (see also Appendix 1). This would allow the Local Planning Authority to make a reasonable and informed decision regarding the subsequent conservation of the resource or the need for additional archaeological work.

2.2 A context for any features located within the zone of proposed development area would be provided by examining the immediate environs of the application area, the emphasis being on medieval land use and post-medieval industrial activity.

## 3 Location and Description (Fig 1)

3.1 The application site, which lies immediately to the south-east of the town of Wrexham at a height of approximately 60m OD, consists of a single large field covering about 7.2ha. It is currently under pasture.

3.2 The topography of this area is undulating with the natural slope generally from north to south. It is bounded to the west by Frog Lane, and to the north by a hedge-line which separates it from an area of derelict land formerly used as an amenity area and playground. Eastwards, it is bordered by Cefn Lane whilst to the south steeply sloping wooded ground separates it from the Clywedog River.

3.3 Soils are deep and well-drained sandy loams of the Newport 1 Association derived from glaciofluvial drift (Rudeforth et al. 1984).

## 4 Methodology

4.1 The desk-top research comprised a search of all easily accessible primary and secondary records relating to the site and its environs. These included a consultation of the Clwyd County Sites and Monuments Record, the examination of available cartographic and documentary sources lodged at both the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and the Clwyd Record Office in Ruthin. A search was also made of vertical and oblique aerial photography held by Clwyd County Council in Mold, the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Aberystwyth and the Welsh Office in Cardiff.

4.2 The field survey was carried out by walking the area systematically and recording any features of archaeological interest that were observed.

## 5 The desk-top assessment: development area and its environs (Figs 2-4)

5.1 The study area lies within the former township of Abenbury Fechan which, in the medieval period, belonged to the manor of Fabrorum. In 1884, however, it was amalgamated with Abenbury Fawr to form the larger Abenbury township (Palmer 1903).

5.2 The earliest known map to include Llwyn Oon is the Tithe Apportionment Map of 1838 (Fig 2). This indicates that the area was divided at that time into three separate fields which, according to the details of the accompanying survey were under arable. One of these, which occupied the eastern half of the area (no. 91) and through which ran the Flintshire/Denbighshire county boundary, was called Ffrith, a term commonly associated with upland land division. The current search of archive material failed to locate cartographic records, such as estate maps or an Enclosure map of the area. Consequently an explanation for this field-name in an essentially lowland context was not established.

5.3 Immediately to the south of the area, reference is made in the Tithe map and apportionment to two industrial features characteristic of the area in post-medieval times. Both were associated with the Clywedog river, then known as the Pickhill Brook.

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1003  
5.4 Mill Buildings (no. 85 on Fig 2) refers to Llwyn-on Mills, one of the two ironworks located in Abenbury (SJ 355 490). Its position is also depicted on both the 1st and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey sheets of the area published in 1873 and 1900 respectively. Surviving building foundations and standing walls adjacent to the north bank of the river undoubtedly represent the ruins of this wire mill and iron foundry complex which was still working in 1880 (Palmer 1903). This location, however, has also been assigned to the Llwyn-on Paper Mill (Powell 1985) though the validity of this attribution is uncertain, as is the location of Llwyn-on flour mill, said to have occupied the same site (Powell 1985).

5.5 Forge Wood (no. 95) is, again, probably a reference to the location of Llwyn-on Mills (Palmer 1903). Other building remains, still visible some 100m to the south-east of the mill



site and taking the form of three embanked platforms, may also have been associated with the complex.

102866 5.6 To the south-west of Llwyn-on Mills (SJ 351 488), and again reflecting the importance of the Clywedog in the industrial history of the district, are the remains of Abenbury Forge. It is recorded as having been built in 1726 (Turley 1978), although it may have a history extending back to the early 17th century (Palmer 1903). In the 18th century, its local importance is reflected in its ownership by John Wilkinson as a subsidiary of the Bersham works.

5.7 The significance of the river in the industrial history of the area is also reflected in the operation of corn-mills alongside it. The closest to Llwyn-on is King's Mill (SJ 347 491). The earliest reference to a mill on the Clywedog dates to 1332, though there is mention of the presence of a water-mill in a survey of Wrexham in 1315 which may refer to the same one (Pratt 1980). It is generally assumed that this was King's Mill, a Crown possession until 1769. The present building was erected during the second half of the 16th century and re-constructed by Philip Yorke of Erddig in 1769. The mill enjoyed a monopoly of corn-milling in Wrexham until 1854. Thereafter, it relied mainly on the production of animal feedstuffs and was finally closed in 1940. In 1973, it was acquired by Wrexham Borough Council who instituted a programme of restoration work.

5.8 Brick and tile manufacture has been an important feature of the Wrexham/Ruabon area since Victorian times and two brickworks survived until recent times in the district, namely, the Kingsmill brickworks (SJ 349 493) dating to 1885, and the Abenbury brickworks (SJ 349 491) dating to 1895 (Edwards 1987). Both works produced terracotta bricks, ornamental ridge tiles and chimney pots from the Red Marl of the nearby Erbistock Beds. The two works were amalgamated in 1964 and the Abenbury site extended for the manufacture of insulating bricks. Production declined in the 1980s and the sites were subsequently closed and demolished.

5.9 Little survives of other industrial sites known to have existed in the area. For example, no trace remains of Hafod y Wern Wire Mill (SJ 3475 4936) built in 1800 or of the Kingsmill smithy (SJ 347 492).

5.10 Possibly dating to the medieval period, the field-name Twmpath (SJ 3608 4898) is often associated with castle mounds of the Middle Ages. However, no trace of such a mound now remains at this location in the vicinity of Old Llwyn Onn Farm to the south-east of the proposed development.

5.11 Medieval cultivation traces in the form of ridge and furrow though commonplace only a few kilometres to the east and generally highly visible on early aerial photography, are not in evidence in the vicinity of the development area.

5.12 Other field- or place-names, e.g. Caer Croes (SJ 342 495) suggesting the possible existence of historic or prehistoric features exist in the surrounding area but, in each case, no supporting evidence has been revealed during fieldwork.

5.13 Aerial photographs of the proposed development area reveal no features of significance, though earlier field divisions are suggested by the RAF photography of 1946, and a cottage,

depicted on the Tithe Map in 1838 between the proposed development and the road to the north was also still visible on the post-war photography.

## **6 Field Survey**

6.1 No features of any significance were recorded within the proposed development area during the course of the field survey.

## **7 Conclusions**

7.1 A search of available documentary and cartographic sources relating directly to the proposed development area encountered no references earlier than the Tithe Apportionment Map of 1838. Its history prior to this date cannot be ascertained, at least from records.

7.2 An examination of available aerial photography and a field survey of the area revealed no features of archaeological significance.

7.3 The surrounding area is rich in the relics of past industry but none of this bears a direct and interpretable relationship to the proposed development area.

## **8 Acknowledgements**

8.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust would like to thank the staff of the Clwyd County Record Office, Ruthin, the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments, Aberystwyth, the Architects Technical Planning Library, Shire Hall, Mold and the Aerial Photograph Archive of the Welsh Office in Cardiff for their assistance. The role of the Clwyd Archaeology Service is also acknowledged.



## 9 Sources

### 9.1 Published Sources

Edwards, I. 1987 'Gazetteer of Clayworks in the Wrexham and Ruabon District', Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions, 36, 47-83.

Ellis, T.P. 1924 'The First Extent of Bromfield and Vale A.D. 1315', London

Jones, J. 1859 Wrexham and its Neighbourhood

Palmer, A.N. 1903 A History of the Country Townships of the Old Parish of Wrexham

Powell, M.C. 1985 'The Paper Industry of the River Clywedog', Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions, 34, 9-55

Pratt, D. 1980 'King's Mill, Wrexham', Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions, 29, 115-159

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. Bulletin No 11.

### 8.2 Cartographic

Townships of Abenbury Fawr and Abenbury Fechan Tithe Map 1838 (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth)

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 1st Edition 1878 Denbighshire Sheet 28 SE

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 1st Edition 1876-1881 Denbighshire Sheet 29 SW

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 2nd Edition 1899 Denbighshire Sheet 29 SW

Ordnance Survey 1:10560 2nd Edition 1900 Denbighshire Sheet 28 SE

### 8.3 Vertical Aerial Photography

RAF: 106G/UK/1454/4122 (02-05-1946)

Meridian Airmaps Ltd (for Clwyd County Council): No 38 74 012 (14-06-1974)

J.A. Storey & Partners (for Clwyd County Council): No 18 85 111 (01-06-1985)

Geonex (for Countryside Council for Wales): No 111 92 106 (26-06-1992)

## Appendix 1

### LAND AT LLWYN ONN, WREXHAM, CLWYD

#### SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The proposed development (Planning Application ref. 6/22813) on land at Llwyn Onn, Wrexham in Clwyd (centred at SJ 3550 4910) lies on the south-east side of the town, north of the River Clywedog in an area of putative medieval activity and industrial use.

1.2 Wrexham Maelor Borough Council have decided on the advice of the Clwyd Archaeology Service in their capacity as archaeological curators for the county that a field assessment is necessary to assess the implications of the proposed development on the archaeological resource in order that these can be taken into account during the determination of the planning application. Accordingly a brief (specification) has been prepared by the Clwyd Archaeology Service which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

### 2 Objectives

2.1 The objective of the evaluation is to gather as much information as is readily available to establish the likelihood of archaeology in the area proposed for development, and to provide a context for this by looking at the immediate environs of the study site.

2.2 Special attention will focus on medieval land use and post-medieval industrial activity in the immediate area.

2.3 This will be presented in a report detailing the archaeological resource, in as much as this can be determined, to enable the planning authority to assess the implications of the development.

### 3 Methods

3.1 The readily available documentary resources will be examined, to include the regional Sites and Monuments Record, published and unpublished archaeological reports on the area, early cartography and any relevant aerial photography.

3.2 A rapid field survey will assess whether there are any ground remains of significance in the development area.



#### 4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The desk-top assessment will be undertaken by an experienced archaeologist who will also be responsible for the preparation of the report. Overall supervision will be by the Deputy Director of CPAT who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

4.2 It is anticipated that the assessment will take up to two weeks to complete and this will include the preparation of the report. The research will commence immediately and it is anticipated that the report will be submitted to the client in the first week in January 1995.

R. J. Silvester  
19 December 1994

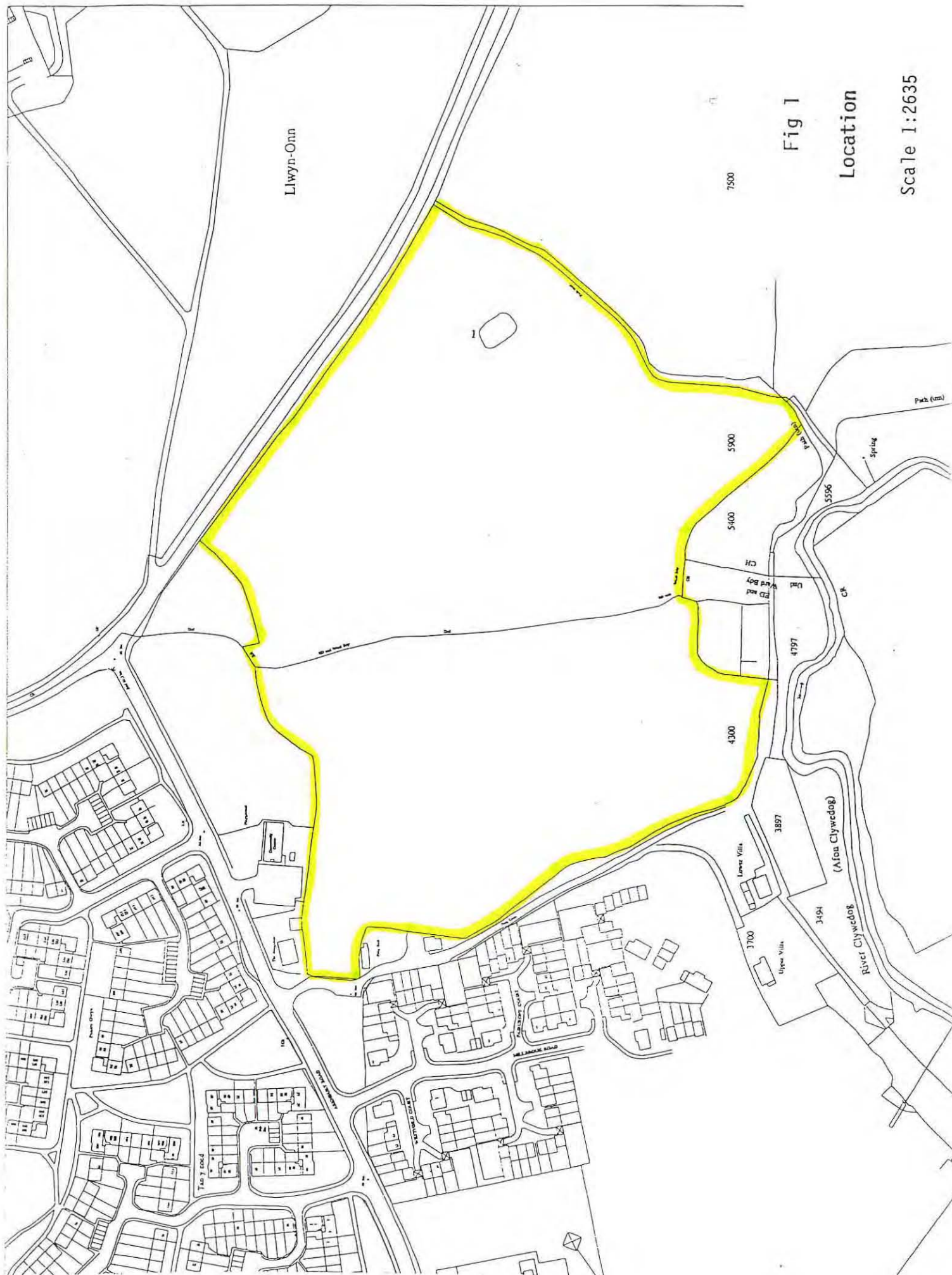
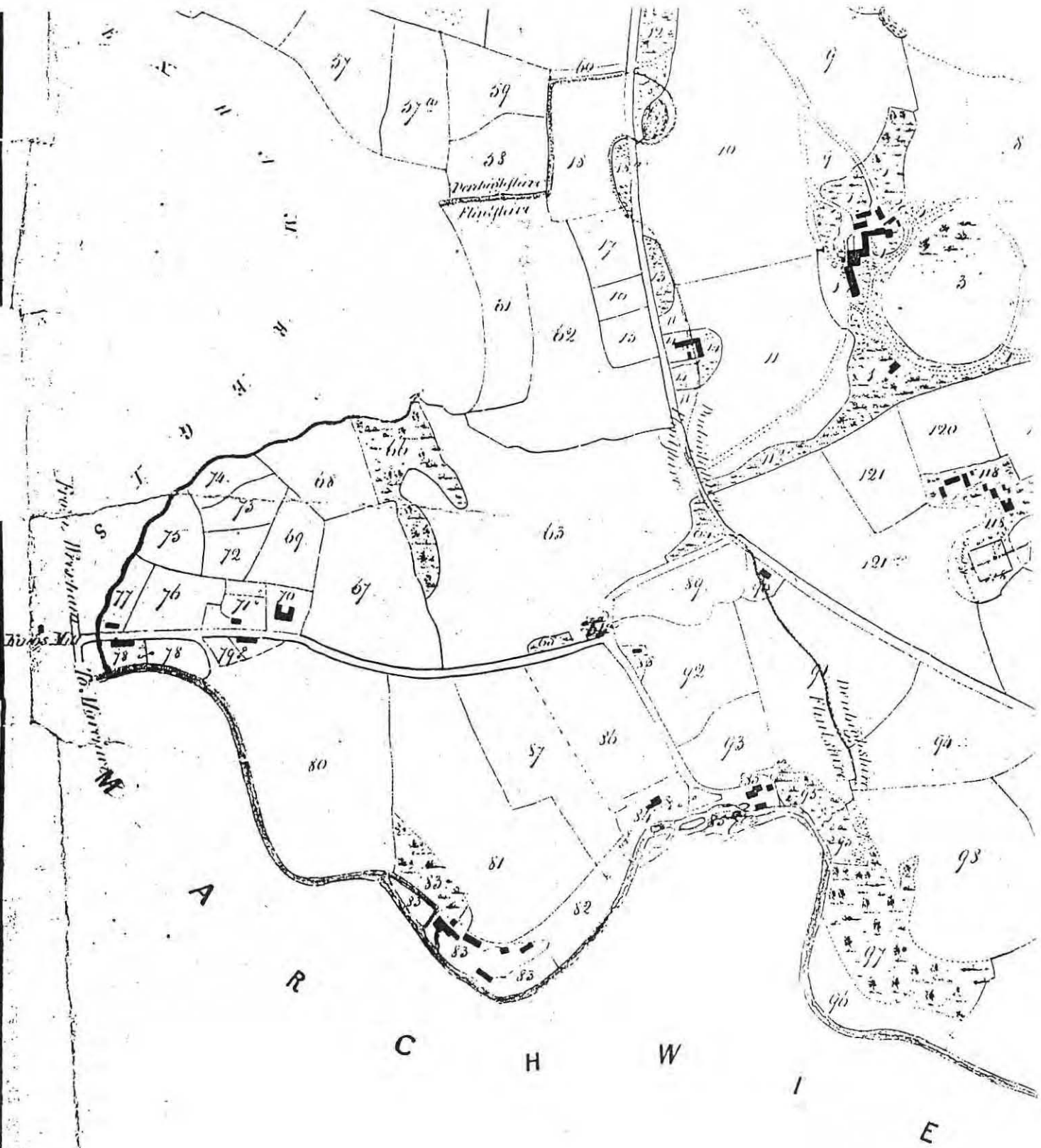


Fig 1

Location

Scale 1:2635





SCALE OF 8½ CHAINS TO AN INCH

Fig 2

Signed, Anewin  
*et al*

Extract from 1838 Tithe Map



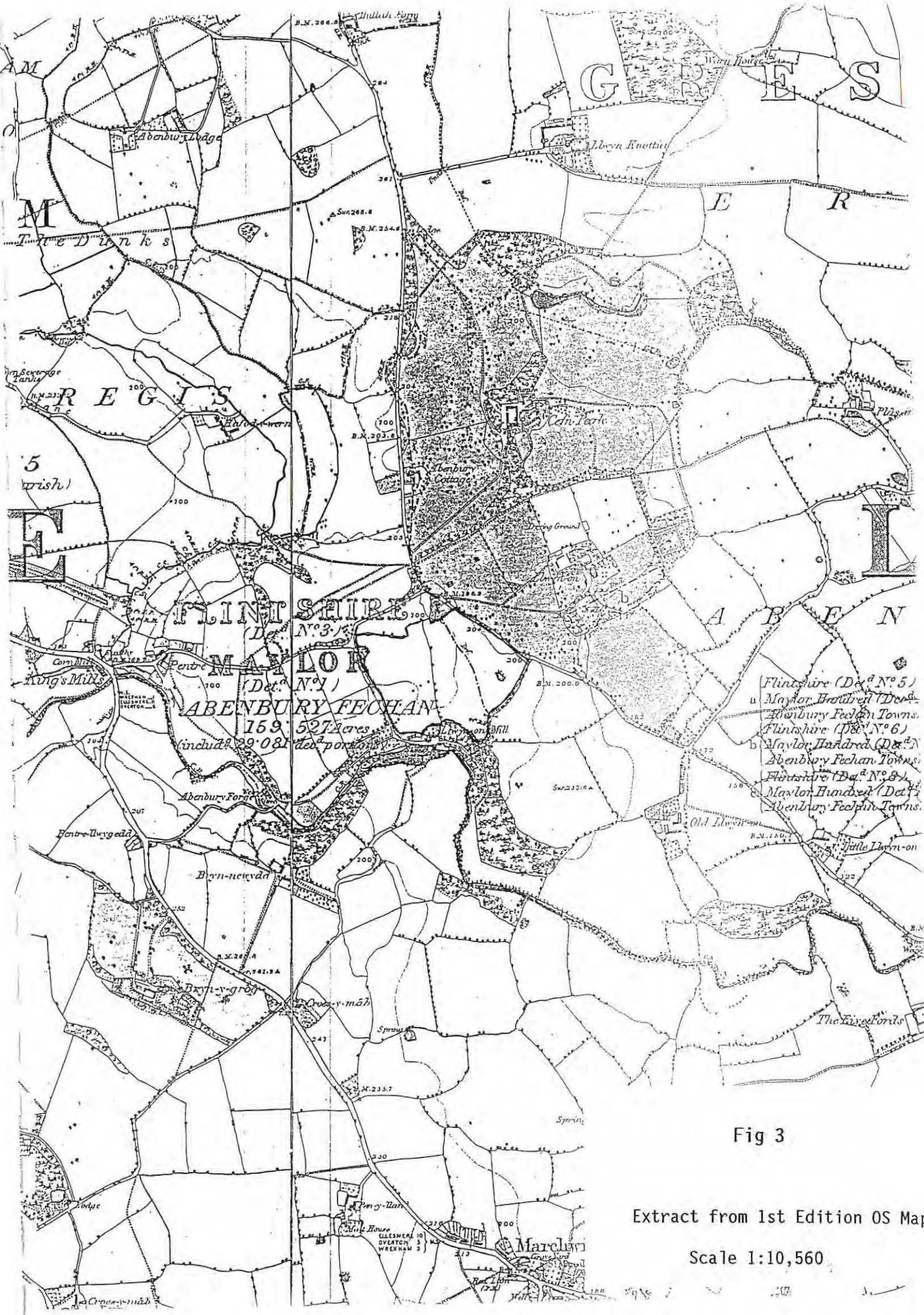


Fig 3

Extract from 1st Edition OS Map

Scale 1:10,560



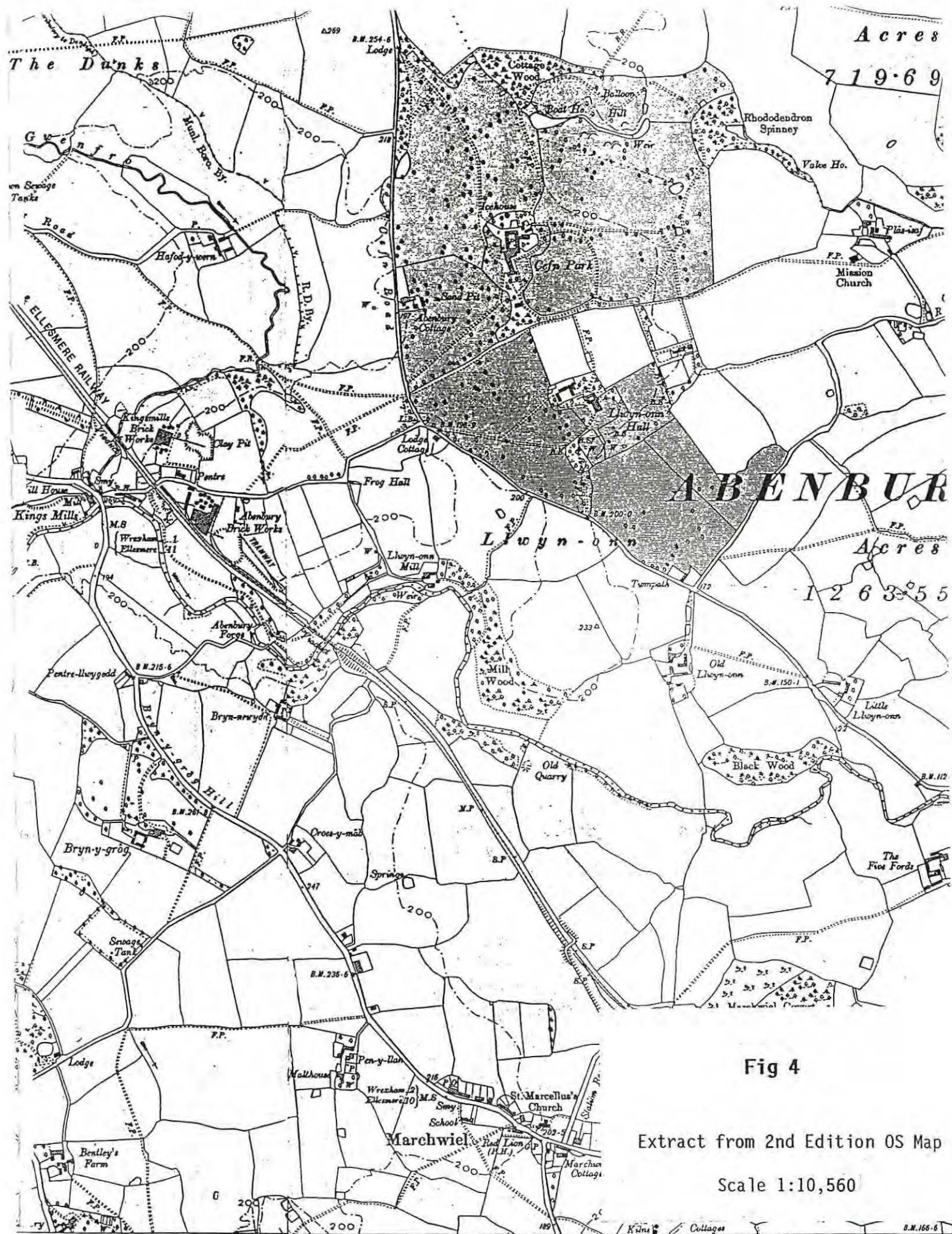


Fig 4

Extract from 2nd Edition OS Map

Scale 1:10,560