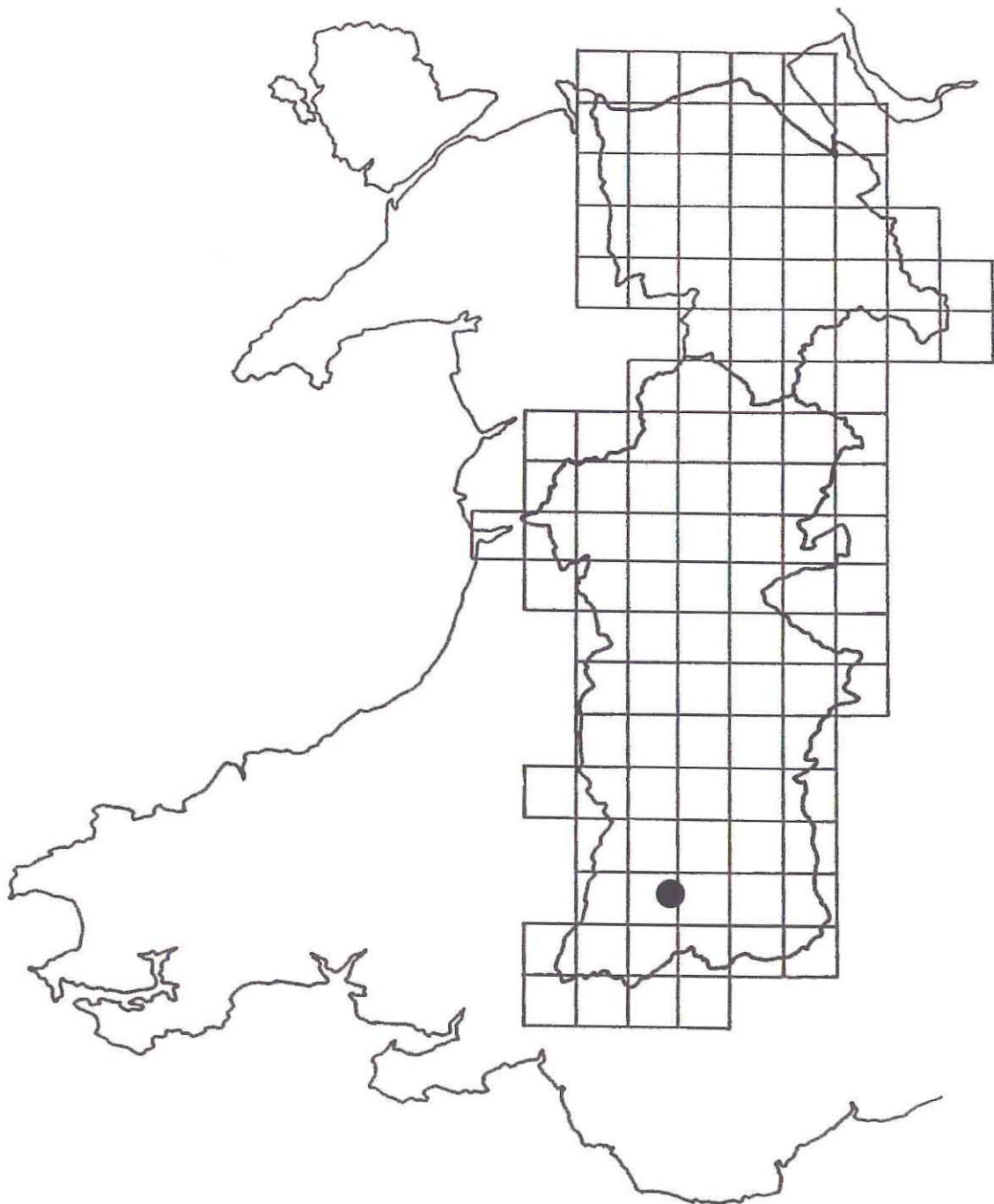


Christ College Brecon:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

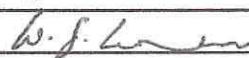
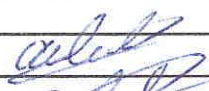



CPAT Report Record

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Internal memo

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL

tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179

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Christ College Brecon:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

by **W.G. Owen**
June 1996

Report prepared for Christ College Brecon

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Contracting Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was invited by Morgan & Horowskyj, architects acting on behalf of Christ College, Brecon to submit a quotation for an archaeological evaluation at Christ College based on a Brief previously prepared by the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust acting in their capacity as advisers to the Brecon Beacons National Park. A quotation and a specification (see Appendix 3) was submitted and were accepted on 23rd April 1996.
- 1.2 An evaluation was considered necessary by the Curatorial Section as a precondition prior to the consideration by the planning authority for the Full Planning Application for an extension at the College for the provision of additional classrooms, practice rooms and storage areas (Planning Application K14733).
- 1.3 The proposed extension was located within the walled precinct of the former St. Nicholas Friary which was founded in the mid thirteenth century and is designated as an area of high archaeological sensitivity within the historic core of Brecon as defined by the Brecon Town Study (CPAT Report No 58, 1993). It was, therefore, considered that archaeological deposits relating to the pre-dissolution and early medieval period would be disturbed or destroyed by the proposed extension.
- 1.4 The Brief specified two elements to the evaluation: a rapid desk-top appraisal of available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial and oral sources relating to the friary and in particular to the area to the north of the church buildings and, subsequently, archaeological excavation to determine the presence or absence of sub-surface archaeological deposits.
- 1.5 After the completion of the desk-top appraisal, excavation was carried out between May 24th and 31st 1996 and this report prepared immediately afterwards.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

- 2.1 The location of the proposed extension is an open, flat area to the north of the Music School and Arts Centre within the precincts of Christ College (NGR SO 0417 2852; figs 1 & 2).
- 2.2 Soils in this area are generally reddish, fine silty soils which are formed from river alluvium which is itself derived from the Devonian Old Red Sandstone (Rudeforth et al. 1984, 168).

3 DESK-TOP STUDY

- 3.1 The area of the desk-top study falls within the boundaries of the Dominican Friary of St Nicholas, the largest of the Dominican Friaries in Wales. It has been suggested (Knight 1978, Parry 1991) that the friary was founded in approximately 1250, although the first record of its existence dates to 1269. Only very few sources relating to the friary have survived, and the most detailed knowledge we have relating to it is contained within the deed of surrender to Henry VIII, dated 29/8/1538. The friary grounds were then rented prior to the relocation of the prebendal college at Abergwili to the friary site in 1541, which became the College of Christ of Brecknock.
- 3.2 The prebendal college continued its occupation of the site, with various changes in fortune, up to 1851 when it was closed. During this period of over three centuries some loss of the Dominican buildings occurred, particularly around 1660, although much of the church and both of the present dining halls did survive. It is evident that by the middle of the 19th century the college was in a poor state, and much of it was being used to house livestock.
- 3.3 In 1853 an Act of Parliament which re-established the college was passed and the college was re-opened in its modern form on 31/1/1856 (Parry 1991, 14). Following the re-opening of the college, and in the later Victorian period, a substantial building programme was carried out, which included restoration of the Church. The remainder of the buildings used by the college are of mid to late 20th century date.

- 3.4 The specific area of the desk-top study appears to fall outside the area of the Dominican buildings, being located some 25m-30m to the north-west of the Church; the other surviving or known buildings of this period were situated to its south. An endorsement on the deed of surrender of the friary (translated in Davies 1968) demonstrates that its lands included orchards and meadows and this is enlarged upon by the first rent roll of the friary grounds following its dissolution (PRO Special Collections 6, Roll 5595, reproduced in Davies 1968), for Michaelmas 1538 to Michaelmas 1539, which refers to "...four small gardens and two small meadows, called the churchyard, containing one acre of land...". It seems most probable that the churchyard referred to would have been centred on the Church, and it may have extended as far as the area of this study.
- 3.5 By the late 16th century the churchyard was apparently disused, as deposition 13 (in the Cecil Papers 214/15 at Hatfield House, reproduced in Davies 1968) taken on behalf of Bishop Middleton (1582-92), apparently before the Court of High Commission, states "...the churchyard was plowed for many years ago, and that the ridges and furrows do yet appeare, and that none hath been buryed there in ye remembrance of any of ye witnesses examined, and yet divers of them were 60 yeares of age". Jones and Bailey (1930, 189), originally written in the early 19th century, considered that the ancient cemetery was probably in the field to the north of the present chapel, and Pratt (1846) suggests that the then field to the north of the chapel was the burial ground, giving in confirmation evidence of four skulls and other bones disturbed during widening work on Bridge Street in 1845. This evidence is supported by a map of 1851 (reproduced in Parry 1991, 19), which depicts a field to the north and east of the church described as an "Ancient burying ground". The implication of the above evidence would appear to be that the cemetery of the Dominican friary extended at least as far as the present road line, and probably included the development area.
- 3.6 The first rent roll of 1538-9, following the dissolution of the friary, also refers to "one tenement with appurtenances lying near the gate of the friary...", this may be the gate depicted in the wall fronting onto Bridge Street on Speed's map of Brecon dated 1610. Further confirmation of the existence of a gate to the friary is provided by a Visitation by the Commissioners of Archbishop John Tillotson on 11/8/1694 (National Library of Wales SD/BC/15 and 16, reproduced in Davies 1968), this states that "...there is no outward gate to the said college as formerly". It is probable that the gate, and perhaps the wall also, were lost when a number of the college buildings were destroyed by Roger Thomas around 1660. His grandson, Hugh Thomas, in his "Essay towards the History of Brecknockshire" of 1698 (Jones-Davies 1967, 15) reports that "...much of the fair Building belonging to the College was utterly destroyed in the quarrel aforesaid....", probably referring to the dispute in June 1660 concerning his grandfather, related in Parry (1991, 18).
- 3.7 It seems unlikely that the location of the entrance to the college would have moved substantially following the destruction of the gate and wall. Accordingly, if the entrance depicted on the 19th century maps is in the same location as the friary gate, then the gate would have been located approximately 20m to the west of the development area.
- 3.8 There is little detail relating to the college evident on maps predating the 19th century; no buildings are depicted in the development area on these maps. Wood's map of Brecon (Fig 3), dated 1834, depicts a wall that crosses the development area, running from the College Church to Bridge Street; this wall is not depicted on a drawing of the Church made by Hugh Thomas in the late 17th century (Jones-Davies 1967, 16). A plan of 1851 within Parry (1991, 19) also shows this wall which forms part of the south-western boundary of the "Ancient burying ground", mentioned above, although there is some discrepancy between the depiction of the junction between the wall and the church. The wall was still extant in 1903 when the revisions were undertaken for the second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (Brecknock 28.13) of the area.
- 3.9 The first edition (surveyed in 1887) and second edition Ordnance Survey maps (Figs 4 and 5) depict one further feature in the development area. According to the conventions this was a greenhouse, measuring some 6m north-east/south-west x 4m north-west/south-east, located to the west of the wall mentioned above, on or near the south-western edge of the development area. The greenhouse is not depicted on any of the previous maps and is therefore likely to date to the latter half of the 19th century.
- 3.10 In the vicinity of the study area two excavations have taken place in recent years. Mr D. Morgan, the Archaeology teacher at Christ College, reports that the excavation of the swimming pool, located immediately to the east of the study area, only revealed river silt deposits. In addition, an

archaeological excavation of the foundations for the cadet hut, some 10m to the west of the development area, revealed sawn animal bones at a depth of 1.2m.

4 EXCAVATION

- 4.1 The Brief originally specified that a 22m x 2m wide trench should be excavated across the area of the proposed extension. However, because of the presence of underground services at a point approximately halfway along the proposed trench, it was agreed that a 2 x 2m area at this point remain unexcavated (fig 2).
- 4.2 Prior to excavation, the sectional concrete slab covering most of the evaluation area was cut and the concrete broken and stockpiled for backfilling at the base of the excavated trench at a later stage.
- 4.3 Both trenches were initially excavated by machine, removing modern and post-medieval overburden. Subsequent excavation and cleaning was carried out manually. A full written, drawn and photographic record was maintained throughout. Numbers were allocated to each archaeological context identified which appear in brackets in the following descriptive text and illustrations.

4.4 Trench A (10 x 2m; fig 6)

- 4.4.1 The trench was mechanically excavated to a depth of approximately 0.90m below the exposed ground surface during the course of which successive layers exposed were examined for features and finds of archaeological significance. Below this depth the trench was excavated and cleaned by hand and recorded in plan and section.
- 4.4.2 The upper layers contained post-medieval and modern finds and sealed to top of a wall (23) at the western end of the trench. The wall was constructed of stone and brick and survived to a maximum height of 0.65m extending beyond the limits of excavation at either end. Late post-medieval finds were recovered from ash-filled cavities in its structure (30, 31 & 32) Its position appeared to coincide with the greenhouse depicted on the 1st and 2nd Edition O.S. maps (figs 4 & 5; par. 3.10 above).
- 4.4.3 At the eastern end of the trench, an iron pipe (7) was exposed at a depth of 0.66m below the surface which extended across the width of the trench. The gravelly fill of the pipe trench (6) and layers it cut through were of modern origin judging from finds recovered from these layers.
- 4.4.4 Two features were visible in the base of the trench: a pipe-trench (27) which extended tangentially across the trench to the north-east and an earlier ditch (29) cut by 27 at its northern end. Pipe-trench (27) had been excavated around the earlier iron pipe (7) and contained a pipe of modern date (28) The ditch (29) was of an U-shaped profile and butt-ended at the northern end and extended beyond the excavation to the south, partially sealed by a layer of brown loam (11) which was of post-medieval origin. The eastern side had been cut by pipe-trench 6 giving a surviving width of c1.10m. The ditch extended to a maximum depth of 0.75m below the base of the trench and its layers of fill (16, 17 & 18) contained redeposited finds of both post-medieval and medieval date.
- 4.4.5 In places, the undulating nature of the soil horizon dividing layers (19) and (20) suggested the possibility that it represented remnant ridge and furrow cultivation. However, the evidence for this was inconclusive.
- 4.4.6 The base of the trench consisted mainly of a reddish-pink, fine, clayey silt (20) which extended down below the limits of excavation for a further 0.30m according to the results of augering through the base of the trench. Below this depth deposits gradually became coarser until, at a depth of 2.00m below the level of the modern surface. A layer of water-washed, very coarse pebble was reached.

4.5 Trench B (10 x 2m; fig 7)

- 4.5.1 Trench B was excavated mechanically to a depth of $\leq 1.00\text{m}$. Thereafter, as in Trench A, it was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.10m manually, cleaned and recorded. As in Trench A, the base of the trench consisted of a similar, clean, clayey-silt (20) which was undisturbed apart from two animal burrows (40 & 41) and the base of narrow pit 0.10m diameter which was interpreted as a stake-hole (42).
- 4.5.2 No features of archaeological interest were exposed in soil layers above (20) and finds recovered from them were all of modern or post-medieval origin. Layer 35 was a dark brown loam containing abundant lime fragments probably indicating cultivation in the past. It was sealed by a stiff orange silty clay (36) probably spoil originating from the time the adjacent swimming pool was constructed (D.Morgan pers. comm.). Towards its western end layer 35 butted on to layers of material consisting of black cinder and coal (34) and a reddish-brown, mixed compact silty clay (37). Finds recovered from both layers indicated a modern origin.
- 4.5.3 At the extreme western end of the trench a well-constructed wall (43) 0.60m high was uncovered which extended the full width of the trench. Its base rested on a layer of loose, rounded cobbles (44) $\leq 0.30\text{m}$ thick which itself rested on the undisturbed clayey-silt (20). At a level 0.20m above the top of the cobbles there was a step in the wall (46) $\leq 0.10\text{m}$ wide extending the width of the trench above which the wall rose a further 0.40m . Above this the wall was truncated by the sub-base of the concrete slab and it appeared that some of the uppermost stones had been displaced. The wall was roughly mortared with a mixture of a black, gritty material and reddish-pink clay. Soil layers adjacent to the wall were very mixed and there were no visible traces of a foundation trench.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Documentary sources consulted alluded to the previous existence of a churchyard to the north of the chapel (Pratt 1846; Jones & Bailey 1930; Jones-Davies 1967; Davies 1968; Parry 1991) and that this extended possibly as far as Bridge Street and may, therefore have been included in the development area. Neither the present excavation nor the excavation carried out by Mr David Morgan at the time of the construction of the swimming-pool yielded any evidence of inhumations. It is possible, therefore, that by the time of its abandonment in the late 16th century burial had not extended as far as this.
- 5.2 Nineteenth century maps dating back to Wood's map of 1834 show the presence of a boundary wall extending in a northerly direction from the chapel indicating that it predates the restoration of the chapel. However a drawing made in 1804 by Mary Anne Mills (in Parry 1991, 12) does not show it extending from the chapel although this does not preclude the possibility that it was standing somewhere to the north. Its position as denoted on Wood's and subsequent maps appears to coincide with the position of the wall exposed in Trench B but insufficient of it was revealed to be certain that it was, indeed, a boundary wall.
- 5.3 There is documentary evidence that the area was ploughed in the 16th century (Davies 1968) and there was some undated evidence for remnant ridge and furrow in Trench 1 (par 4.10 above) although none was visible in Trench B.
- 5.4 In general, much of the area excavated indicated a high level of disturbance and most of the pottery finds were either post-medieval or modern in origin or, if earlier were clearly redeposited.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 CPAT would like to acknowledge the assistance and interest shown by the headmaster and members of the staff of Christ College during the course of the evaluation. In particular, thanks are due to Mr David Morgan, the teacher of archaeology at Christ College for his valuable suggestions. We would also like to thank the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, the County Sites and Monuments Record, CPAT, Welshpool, and Brecon Museum, in particular Mr David Moore, for their help and assistance.

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Cartographic Sources

1610 Speed's Map of Brecon.

1744 Ichnography of the town of Brecknock from a Plan by Meredith Jones.

1834 Plan of Brecknock by John Wood.

1887 (surveyed) first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, Brecknockshire 28.13.

1903 (revised) second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, Brecknockshire 28.13.

APPENDIX 1**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT THE MUSIC SCHOOL, CHRIST COLLEGE, BRIDGE STREET,
BRECON****SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST CONTRACTS SECTION****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of an extension to provide additional classrooms, practice rooms and storage areas within a vacant plot in the school curtilage, located at SO 04172852.
- 1.2 The proposed development lies within the walled precinct of the former St. Nicholas' Friary, now known as Christ College, which was founded in the mid thirteenth century. Although the full extent of the range of buildings belonging to the friary are not known prior to Speed's map of 1610, there is considered to be a strong potential for intact sub-surface archaeology belonging to the medieval occupation.
- 1.3 It has been assumed that any archaeological deposits relating to the pre dissolution and early post medieval periods may be partially or wholly disturbed or destroyed by the proposed development. Accordingly, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT), acting in their capacity as archaeological curators for the county, have determined that an evaluation is necessary to assess the archaeological sensitivity of the proposed development area. A Brief has been prepared by CPAT (EVB 163 dated 25th March 1996) which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological work are as follows:
 - 2.1.1 to identify a significant sample of surviving archaeological evidence by the use of a desktop, field survey and trial trenching techniques. Sufficient information must be gathered to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the whole area likely to be affected by the proposed development;
 - 2.1.2 to prepare a report detailing the results to allow a reasonable and informed planning decision to be made regarding the appropriate management of the archaeological resource.

3 Methods

- 3.1 The evaluation will consist of a desk-based study and limited trial trenching.
- 3.2 The desk-based study will involve an appraisal of all readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial and oral sources relating to the friary, and particularly to the northern half of the friary enclosure north of the church building. This will include material held by the following: National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; the County SMR, CPAT, Welshpool; Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Aberystwyth; County Records Office, Powys County Council; Brecon Town Library.
- 3.3 Excavation will consist of a single trench measuring 22 x 2m, as located on the plan accompanying the Brief.
 - 3.3.1 It is noted in the Brief that a pipe access cover is situated adjacent to the area of the excavation. The client should investigate the nature and direction of these and any other services within the immediate area and inform CPAT Contracts Section of their location prior to any excavation. Any relocation or amendments to the evaluation trench resulting from the location of services will be agreed with the curator.

- 3.3.2 The concrete slab covering the area will be cut to enable the excavation of the trench, with minimal disturbance to the remaining concreted area. The concrete within the area of the excavation will be broken into manageable pieces before removal to an adjacent area.
- 3.3.3 Once the concrete has been removed, all topsoil and any other modern overburden will be removed onto the surface of the first recognisable archaeological horizon using a machine excavator fitted with a wide toothless blade. Thereafter, all contexts will be excavated by hand unless the use of a machine is considered necessary.
- 3.3.4 All contexts will be adequately sampled and fully recorded by written, drawn and photographic records as appropriate. The presence of natural subsoil/bedrock will be tested for in at least one area.
- 3.3.5 If deposits extend beyond a depth of 1.2m, continuation of the excavation will be dependent on consultation with the curator and health and safety considerations.
- 3.3.6 During the excavation, arrangements will be made for monitoring of the work by the appropriate archaeological curator.
- 3.3.7 For the duration of the excavation the area containing the trench and spoil will be adequately fenced to provide a secure barrier and maintain access to adjacent buildings. CPAT Contracts Section has a stock of orange barrier fencing which it is considered would be sufficient for these needs, which would be erected with the appropriate warning notices and beacons as necessary. Since the fencing is already available to us, the cost of its provision would provide a minimal addition to the overall cost of the excavation, to allow for the purchase or hire of certain items such as beacons. A separate quotation for fencing has therefore not been provided since the costs fall largely within the overall excavation budget.
- 3.3.8 Following the completion of the excavation, it is proposed that the trench be reinstated with the broken concrete at the base and the remaining spoil on top, the whole then compacted using a plate vibrator. Under the conditions of the Brief, a separate quote is required for the full reinstatement of the concrete slab. Following consultation with the agents for Christ College, it is considered that this option is not appropriate and a quotation for such has not been provided. However, should this subsequently prove necessary, CPAT Contracts Section will arrange for a quotation from a local sub-contractor.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Brief. This will be in A4 format and contain sections on the following: Site Location, Topography and Geology, Historic Background, a synthesis of the results from the Desk-based Survey, Conclusions, Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices. The report will be fully illustrated with plans at an appropriate scale, indicating the location of all features identified. The conclusions will include an interpretation of the results, placing them in a local, region and, if appropriate, national context.
- 3.5 The nature of the site may result in the recovery of artefacts or environmental samples which it may prove necessary to have analysed by a specialist. Accordingly, a contingency has been included within the quotation to cover for this eventuality.
- 3.6 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 Overall supervision of the project will be conducted by Dr A. Gibson, a senior member of CPAT's staff, who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 The desk-based survey will be undertaken by an experienced member of CPAT's staff with particular expertise in this method of assessment.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that the desk-based survey will take no more than three days to complete. The excavation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists and is estimated to take up to

five days. Following the completion of the desk-based survey and excavation, the report will be produced by a senior member of CPAT's within one week.

- 4.5 It has been assumed that the client will arrange access for CPAT and their agents. The client should also provide clean working drawings at a suitable scale which may be used as a basis for producing plans to be included in the report.
- 4.6 At the time of writing, the earliest starting date would be May 7th 1996 due to existing commitments. However, should an earlier date prove necessary, CPAT Contracts Section will make every effort to accommodate the clients wishes.
- 4.7 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and their sub-contractor.
- 4.8 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance as well as Professional Indemnity Insurance.

N.W. JONES
16th April 1996

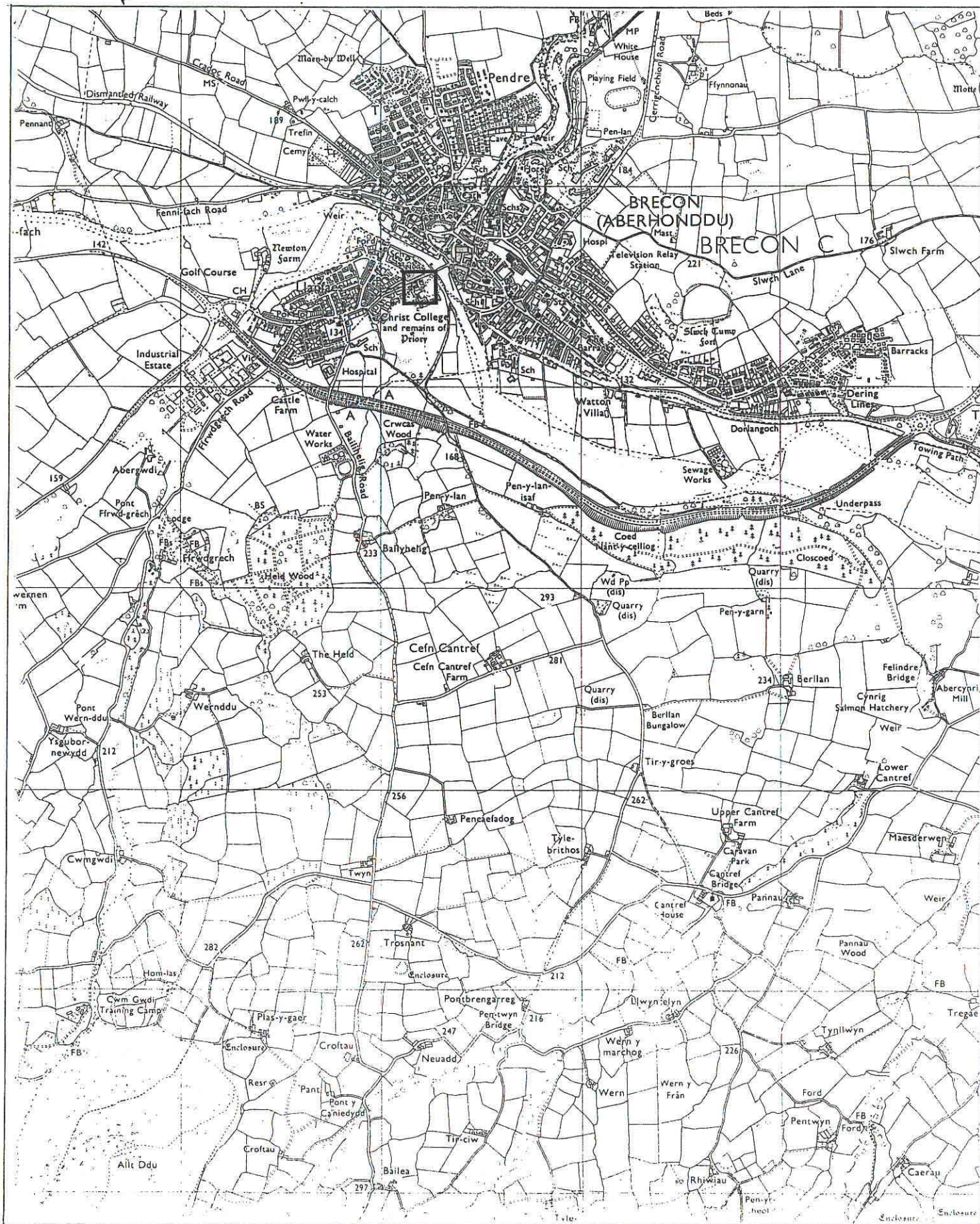


Fig. 1: Christ College, Brecon, location.

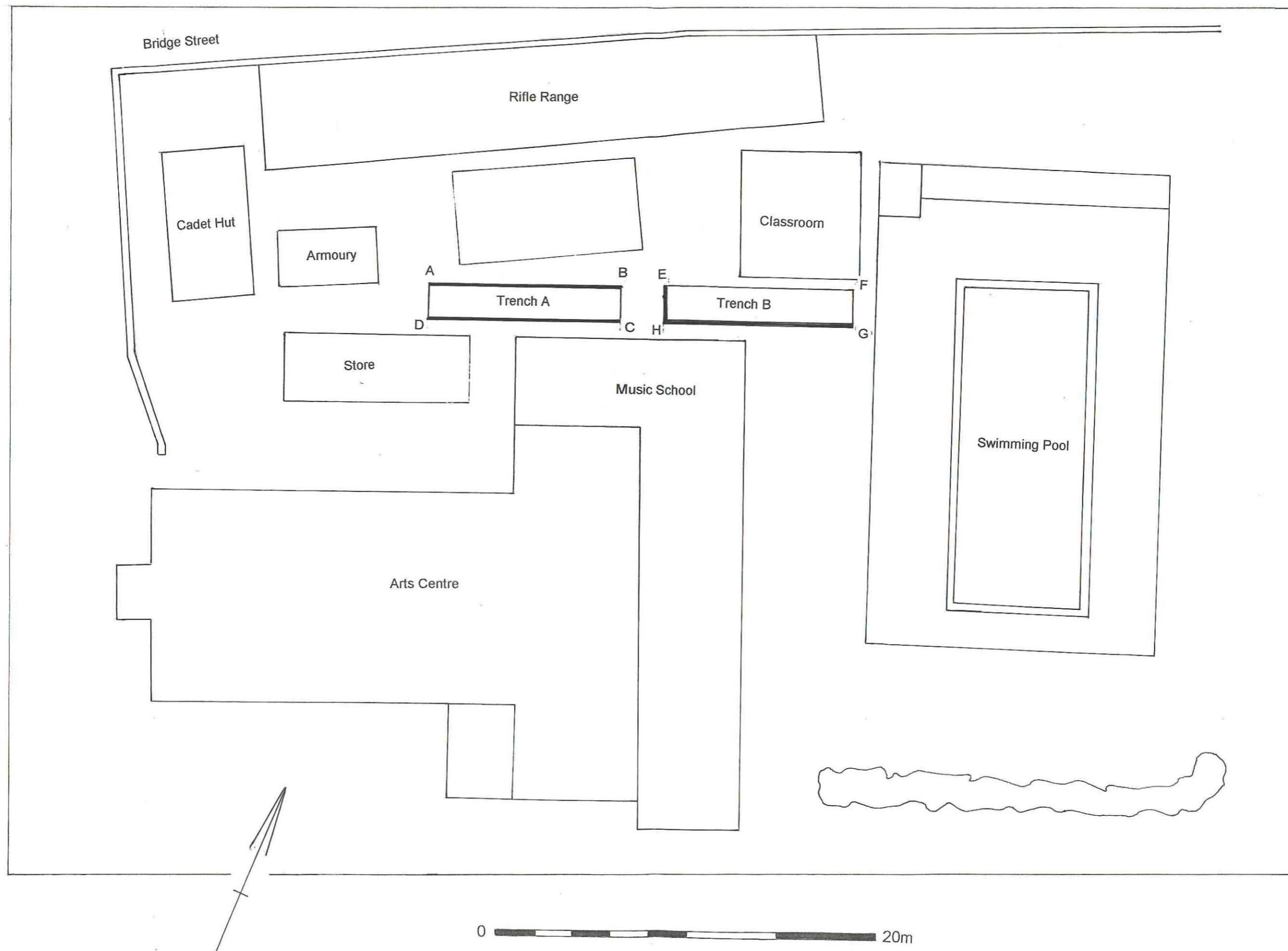


Fig. 2: Christ College, Brecon, trench location. Scale 1:200

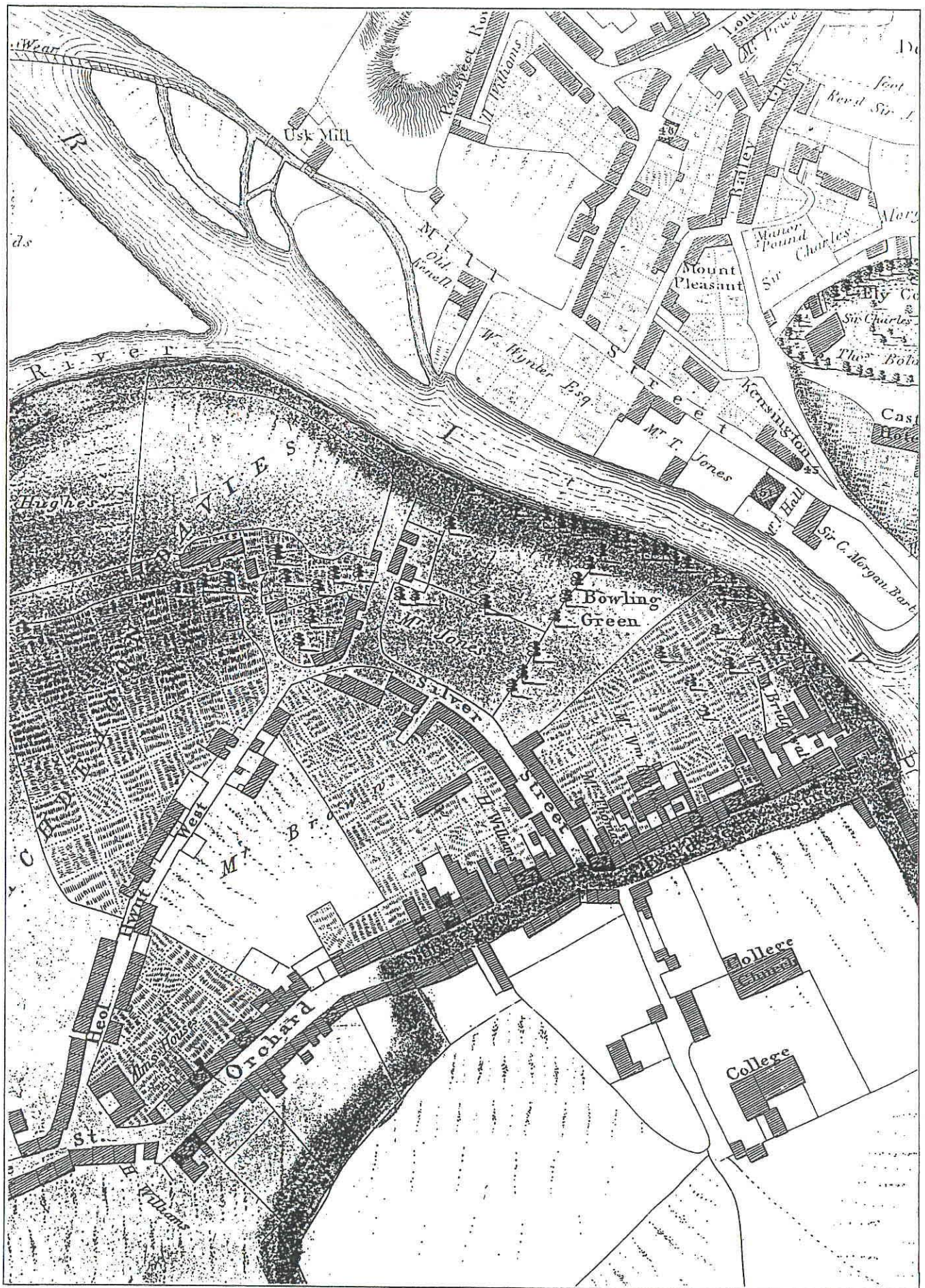


Fig. 3: Plan of Brecknock by John Wood 1834

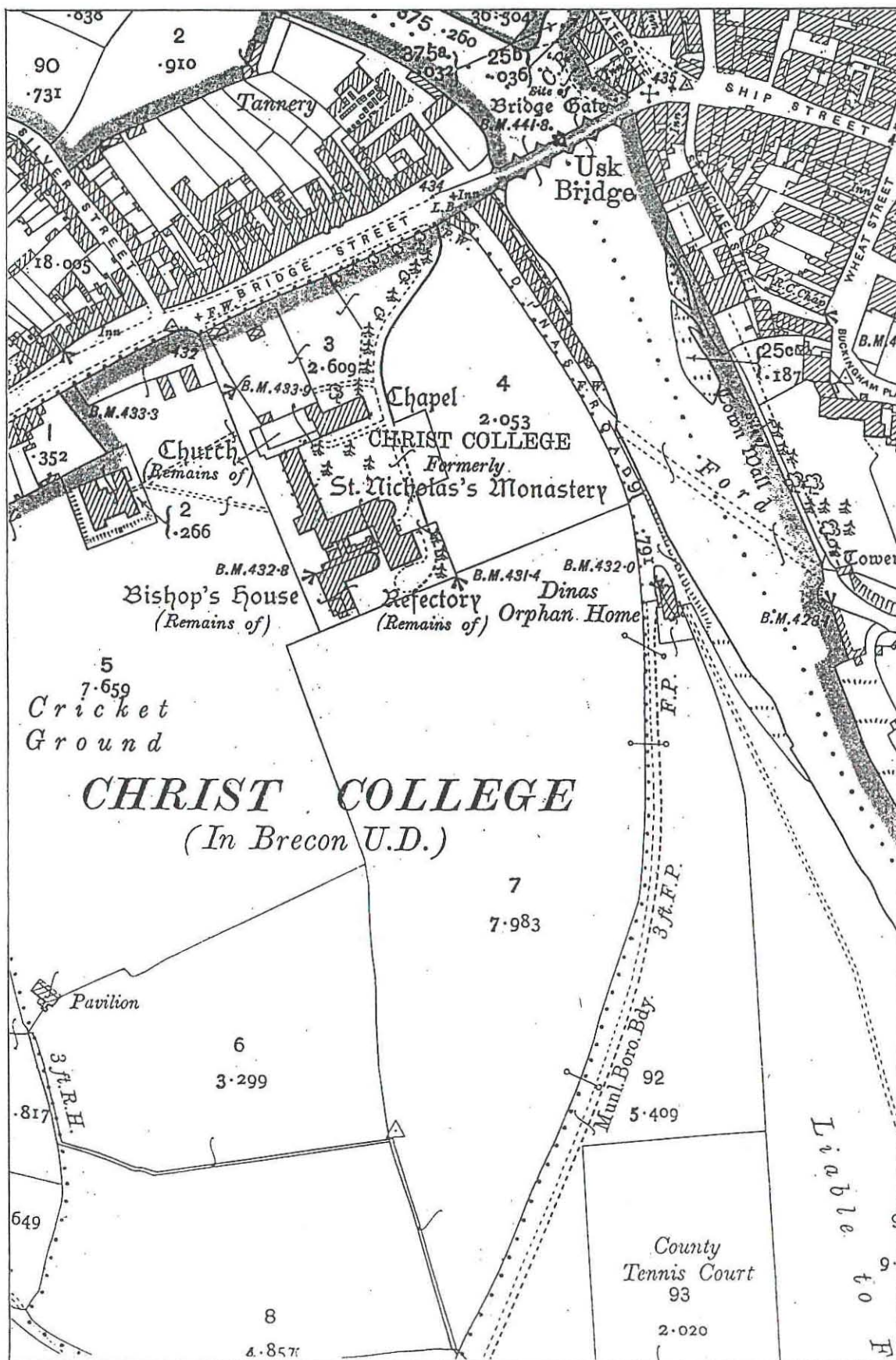


Fig. 5: Second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500, revised 1903 (Brec. 28.13)

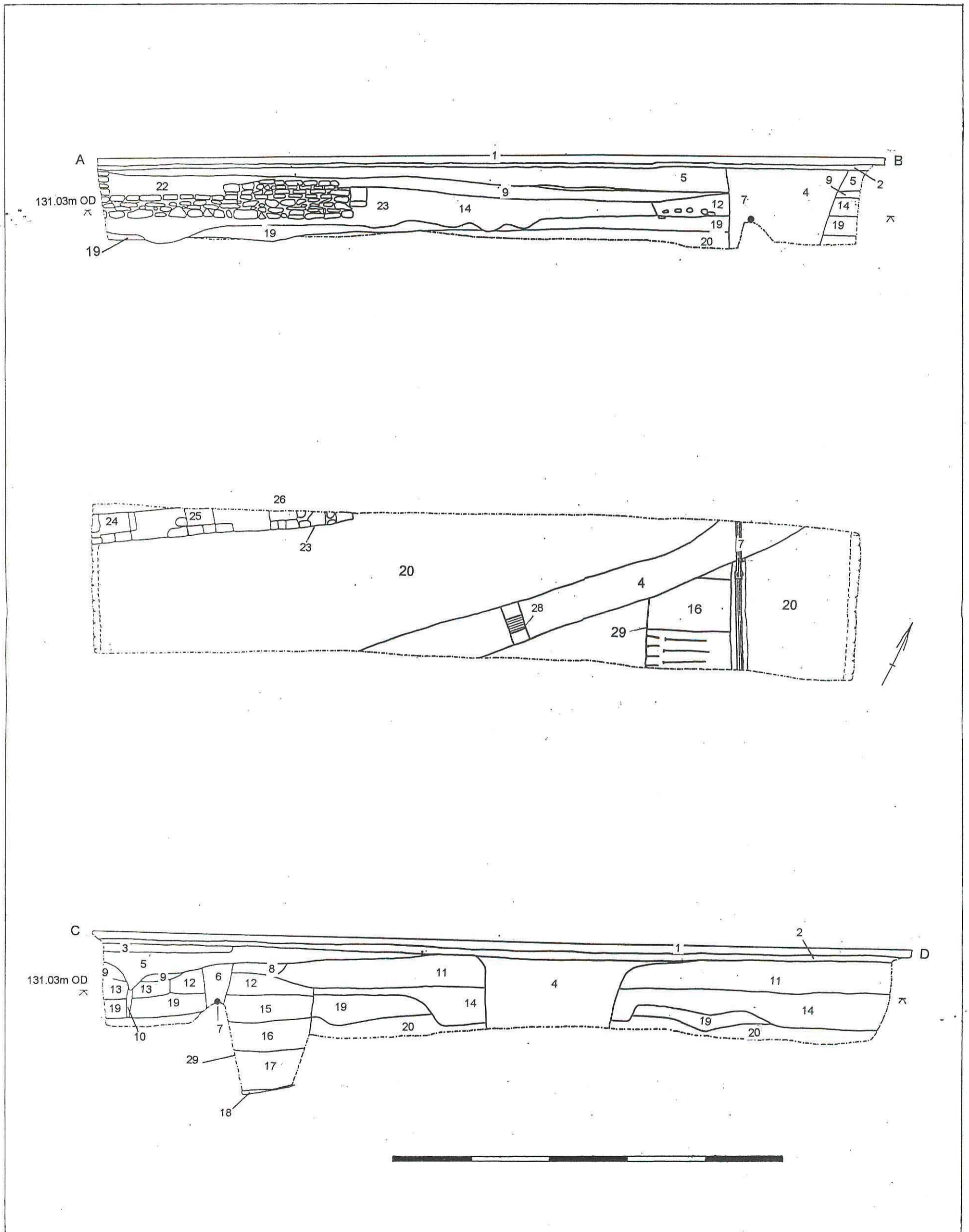
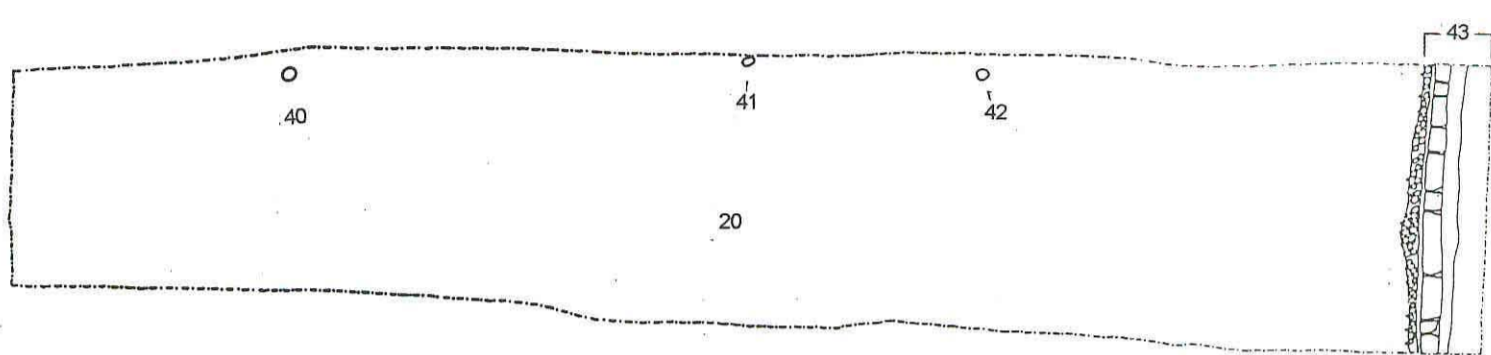
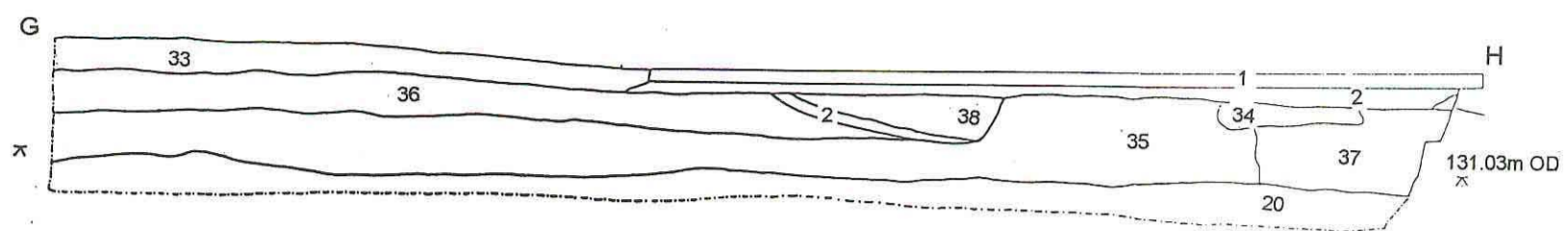
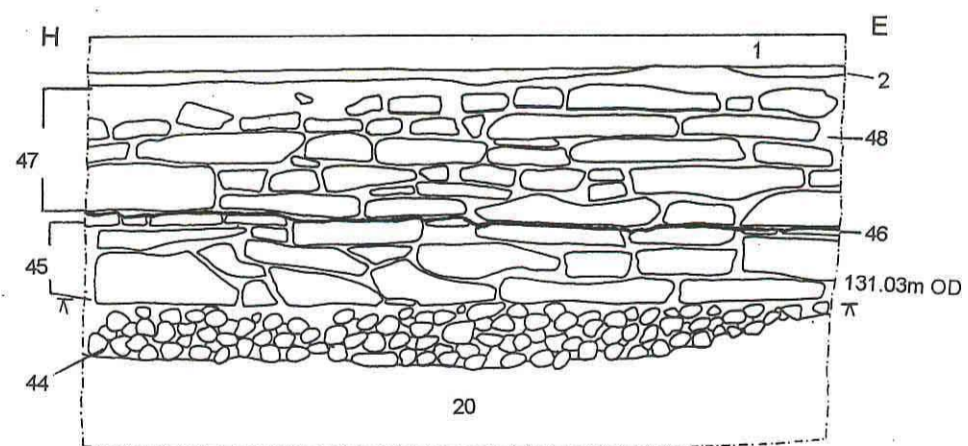


Fig. 6: Trench A plan and sections



0 5m



0 1m

Fig. 7: Trench B plan and sections