

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Welsh College of Horticulture, Northop,
Flintshire
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

CPAT Report No 212

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*Welsh College of Horticulture, Northop,
Flintshire*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Report for Welsh College of Horticulture

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Contracts Section of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was commissioned in September 1996 by The Welsh College of Horticulture, Northop, Flintshire to undertake a watching brief during the construction of an equine unit at the College. This was in accordance with the conditions specified by the Planning Department of Flintshire County Council in granting planning permission for the development (Application No. P/96/30/00518).

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND LAND-USE

- 2.1 The proposed equine unit lies within the College grounds at SJ 2387 6890 to the east of the main College buildings. The plot is on a gradual north-east facing slope immediately adjacent to Celyn Wood on the west and overlooking agricultural land to the east and north-east. Formerly the land was used for horticultural purposes.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Immediately to the north of the College at SJ 2370 6933, is Llys Edwin, the ruinous fortified house of Eadwine of Tegeing which is noted in the Domesday book. Eadwine was a descendent of Howel Dda and lived in the mid-11th century and Pennant (1784) notes that he "flourished about the year 1041". The site was excavated in the 1930's when multiple phases of construction were recorded, the earliest of which was thought to be a wooden structure of Saxon date (Glen 1934). In the Norman period a large stone built house was constructed on the same site within a moated enclosure. The site is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 3.2 A short distance to the north is the putative site of the battle between Henry II and Owain Gwynedd in 1157 (SJ 2370 6950). There is a record of this battle in the Welsh Brut y Tywysogion or Chronicles of the Princes (Jones 1952) and in the excavation report for Llys Edwin (Glen 1934). The latter gives the site of the battle as being "in the pass or meadow between Llys Edwin and Bryn Edwin on the border of the vill of Coleshill, a field yet known as 'Battle'".
- 3.3 During the 1931 excavations at Llys Edwin, a polished stone axe or adze and flints were found which probably date to the Neolithic period of prehistory. Also found in 1931 in the corner of a field within the wood near to Llys Edwin (SJ 236 694) was another polished axe again probably of Neolithic origin (Glen 1934).
- 3.4 Perhaps also related to Edwin are possible ridge and furrow cultivation strips spread over several fields in this area (SJ 239 694). These were recognised on RAF aerial photographs taken in 1946, 1948 and 1951 and also on the Geonex aerial photographs taken in 1993 (Hankinson 1994).
- 3.3 Cropmarks have also been noted at SJ 2405 6932 (Hankinson 1994). These were visible on a Geonex vertical aerial photograph taken in 1993 and centred at the above location. Many were faint and ill-defined but two of these - one circular and one rhomboid - prompted comparison with cropmark burial sites excavated at Tandderwen near Denbigh in 1987-1988.
- 3.4 It seems clear, therefore, that the Welsh College of Horticulture and the proposed development site is within an area of several important archaeological sites spanning a period of at least 5000 years.

4 THE WATCHING BRIEF

- 4.1 A watching brief was kept on December 23rd 1996 during the course of the excavation of 18 stantion pits for the indoor riding area and stables. These were at 5m centres with 9 pits on the west side of the area and 9 on the east side. Each pit on the west side was 1.70 x 1.90 x 1.20m deep and were cut into a reddish brown sandy subsoil which gradually became more clayey below 0.60m. No features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded. On the east side, each pit was approximately 1.70 x 1.00 x 1.50m deep and cut through subsoil fill derived from the west side of the site and which had been deposited on former ground surface visible as a greyish brown horizon 0.10 - 0.20m thick. This

graded irregularly into a subsoil which varied from a reddish brown clayey sand to a yellow silty sand. Again, no features or finds of archaeological significance were recorded.

- 4.2 On April 23, 1997 the site was re-visited to examine areas of the development site excavated subsequent to the watching brief. All drainage trenches and pits examined were on the west side of the site and therefore cut through subsoil. No features or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Particular attention was given during the course of the watching brief to the buried ground surface in stantion pits on the eastern side of the indoor riding area and to the underlying subsoil. Here, there was the possibility of finding archaeological features and finds if any existed. None were, however, found possibly due to the level of cultivation that had taken place in the recent past (Rod Evans pers. comm.). Other pits on the western side of the riding area were cut into subsoil at a depth c. 2.0m below the former ground surface and unlikely, therefore, to yield any archaeological features or finds.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writer would like to acknowledge the kind help of Mr Rod Evans of the Welsh College of Horticulture during the course of this project.

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Fig. 1
Location
Scale 1:25000

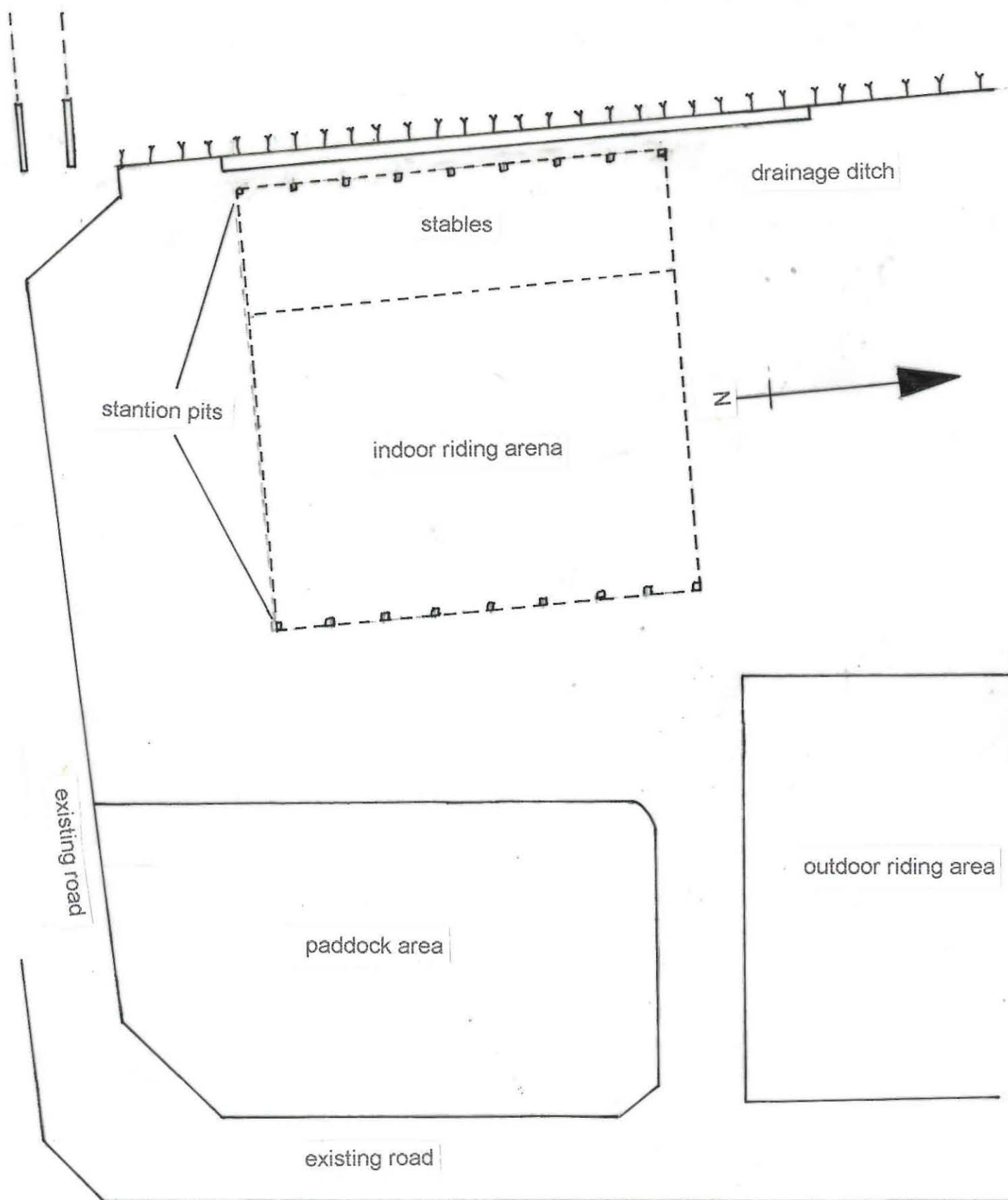


Fig. 2
Site plan
Scale 1:500