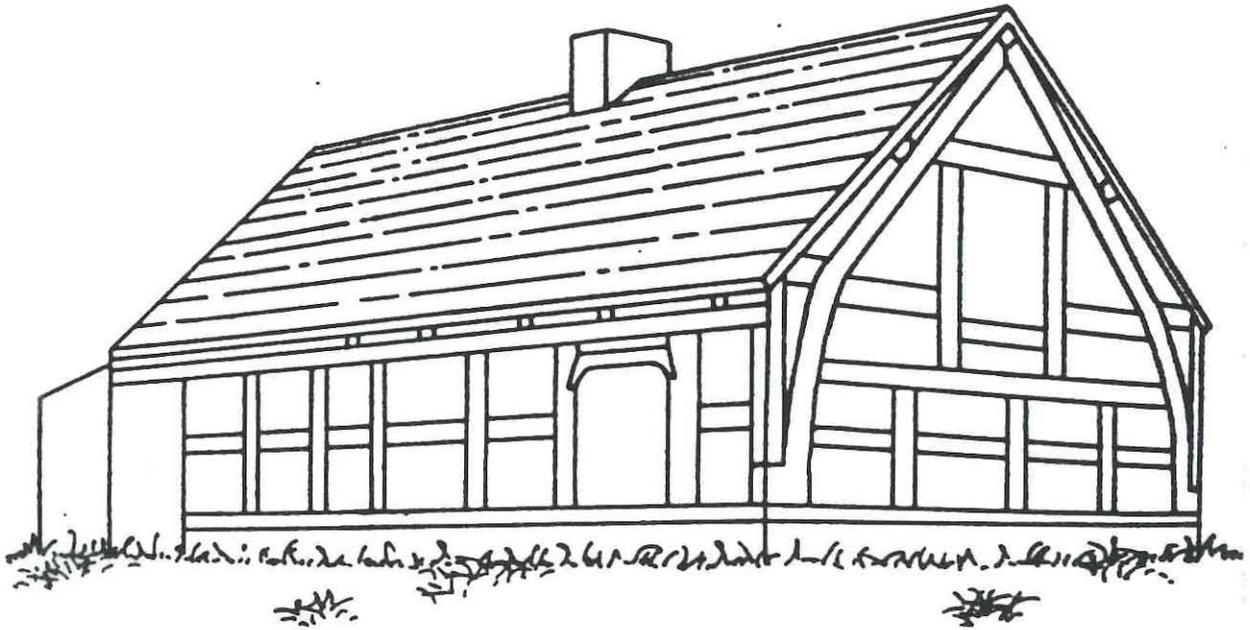


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Y Wyffydd, Pen-y-lan, Ruabon
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 260

Y Wyffydd, Pen-y-lan, Ruabon
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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January 1998

Report for Mr D. Shone

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CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY
- 3 HISTORIC BACKGROUND
- 4 EXCAVATION
- 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
- 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX 1: SITE ARCHIVE

APPENDIX 2: SPECIFICATIONS

- Fig. 1 Location: Scale 1:25000
- Fig. 2 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Denbs. 35.16 SW) 1873: Scale 1:2500
- Fig. 3 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Denbs. 35.16 SW) 1899: Scale 1:2500
- Fig. 4 Tithe Map: 1845: Scale approx. 1:5000
- Fig. 5 Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing No. 316: Surveyed 1819: Scale 1:31680
- Fig. 6 Sketch Plan of Wyddfid Tenement:1778: N.T.S.
- Fig. 7 Trench location, scale 1:50
- Fig. 8 Trench A Plan, scale 1:20
- Fig. 9 Trench A Section, scale 1:10
- Fig. 10 Trench B Plan and Section, scale 1:10
- Fig. 11 Trench C Plan and Section, scale 1:20

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 1997, the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was asked by Strutt & Parker, Chartered Surveyors, acting on behalf of their client Mr David Shone, to submit a specification and quotation for an archaeological evaluation at Y Wyffydd, Pen-y-Lan, Ruabon, Wrexham.
- 1.2 Planning permission had been granted for refurbishment and extensions to Y Wyffydd by Wrexham Borough Council (Application No. CB1592). As there were reasonable grounds for believing that there could be important archaeological remains on the site, it was recommended by the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust that an evaluation be carried out. Strutt & Parker therefore invited the Wrexham Archaeological Service to prepare a design brief detailing the archaeological works required.
- 1.3 The project design submitted by CPAT was approved by the Wrexham Archaeology Service and, subsequently, Strutt & Parker commissioned CPAT to carry out the evaluation.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 Y Wyffydd is located in a pasture field at approximately 89.59m OD, lying 0.8km to the south-east of the village of Pen-y-Lan and 2km west of Erbistock (Fig. 1; SJ 3372 4161).
- 2.2 To the north and west of Y Wyffydd the topography is very gently undulating whilst to the south and east is a steeply contoured bank descending some 45m to the flood-plain of the River Dee. The drift geology of the area is Boulder Clay which overlies the Coal Measures (Smith & George 1961). Soils are well-drained coarse loamy and sandy soils of the Wick 1 Association (Rudeforth *et al.* 1984).

3 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Y Wyffydd has been the subject of a previous architectural survey which was carried out by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW) in 1986. It has been described by Smith (1988, Fig. 28a) as being a Regional house Type B (Hall-house conversion) of cruck-framed construction with arch-braced timber framed walls, an ornate open roof, and windbraces. The building was given a Grade II listing in 1993 as "a building of late-medieval origin which retains a substantial amount of its original half-timbered, cruck-framed structure", at which time it was stated to be abandoned and in poor condition. The listing notes that the eastern and northern walls have substantially retained their original features while the western and southern walls have been largely rebuilt in brick and sandstone; internally there are said to be two full cruck trusses, an inserted stone fireplace with a second fireplace added later, and two staircases believed to suggest that the building was once divided into two cottages.
- 3.2 The first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of the area (Denbighshire 35.16: Fig. 2) demonstrates that the plan of the house remains unchanged from 1873, when the survey for the map was carried out, to the present day, although there have been subsequent changes to the adjacent field boundaries and loss of the presumed garden plot depicted on this map to the south of the house. In addition, four small structures, approximately 2m x 2m in size, are depicted on the western, northern, and eastern sides of the house; their function remains unknown, but it is possible that they represent sheds. The second edition 1:2500 map (Fig. 3), revised in 1898, demonstrates that there were some alterations to the adjacent boundaries, and the loss of the square structures noted above, in the intervening period.
- 3.3 The Tithe map of 1845 (Fig. 4) depicts the house in its present position, with a second building approximately 10-15m to the south measuring c. 20m east-west x 6m, which may have been a barn or similar agricultural building; the farm is not named in the Tithe apportionment dated 9/4/1844. This arrangement of structures also appears on the old series Ordnance Survey 1:63360 map (Sheet 74NE; reproduced in Margary, 1992) published in 1837, although the small scale of the map makes the dimensions of the structures difficult to confirm. The Ordnance Surveyors drawing (No 316) was surveyed in 1819 and formed the basis of the 1:63360 map. Fig. 5 is the best available copy of the

drawing and appears inconclusive, but examination of the original confirms that no buildings were depicted at the location of Y Wyffydd, although probable buildings are depicted adjoining the road c. 250m to the west. These buildings are no longer extant, but the Tithe apportionment of 1844 supports their existence, giving the name of field No 47, adjoining the road, as "Old house field".

- 3.4 The name of Y Wyffydd has not been traced any further back than 1873, when the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map was surveyed; the existing building is first depicted on the old series Ordnance Survey 1:63360 map published in 1837. It is interesting to note, however, that there are references to a house called "Wyddfyd" dating to the 16th, 17th, and late 18th centuries. Palmer (1992, 52) refers to four gafaels (a form of Welsh land tenure) in the manor of Dininlle held in several portions, mentioned in a survey of the 23rd year of Henry VII (c. 1508), stating that "...none had left any trace by the time of the survey of 4th Elizabeth, 1562, unless we find it in the place name of "Y Wythfed" (the eighth, in the sense of the eighth part), a name which still persists. John Wynne o'r Wyddfyd was buried at Ruabon, 31 March 1631/2". An assignment preserved in the Pen y Lan Estate papers dated 6/2/1792 (Denbighshire Record Office DD/PL/112) includes "Wyddfed" in a list of tenements, and it is depicted on a map which is part of a Pen y Lan Estate survey of 1778 (Denbighshire Record Office DD/PL/143). It should be noted that the adjacent field pattern depicted in the 1778 survey (Map not copied, sketch reproduced as Fig. 6) does not match that at Y Wyffydd. However, a pencil note on the map comments "Buildings levelled and land put to the park"; possible dates of 1824 or 1846 for this amendment are given in pencil at the front of the volume. The latest references to the name Wyddfyd relate to mortgage deeds of "a farm called Widdvid" dated between 1831 and 1838 (Denbighshire Record Office DD/PL/49, 50 & 64).
- 3.5 It seems possible that the house named "Wyddfed", which is depicted in the 1778 survey and is referred to in the preceding paragraph, was located in a different position to Y Wyffydd and it could be that it was one of the subsequently demolished buildings depicted adjacent to the road to the west of Y Wyffydd on the Ordnance Surveyors drawing of 1819 (see discussion in para 4.3, above); there appear to be no other suitable candidates within the area of the Pen y Lan park on subsequent maps. The only factor which casts doubt on this hypothesis is the continuation of the name as "Widdvid" up to 1838 (ie post-dating the 1837 Ordnance Survey map), at which time these buildings had been lost; it may be that the name was transferred to another house which had been constructed using parts of the demolished structure.
- 3.6 The fact that Y Wyffydd was first depicted on the 1837 Ordnance Survey 1:63360 map and was not present on the surveyors drawing of 1819, on which the map was substantially based, suggests that it had been constructed in the intervening period. Although no direct evidence linking the house known as "Wyddfyd" or "Wythfed" with Y Wyffydd has been found, the circumstantial evidence related above tends to suggest the possibility that "Wyddfyd" was demolished to make way for an expansion of the Pen y Lan park between 1819 and 1837. A substantial part of "Wyddfyd" may then have been used to construct Y Wyffydd, which is first depicted on the 1837 map. It seems likely that the name "Wyddfyd" continued in use after this hypothetical reconstruction and mutated to the present "Y Wyffydd" prior to 1873, when the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map was surveyed.

4 EXCAVATION

- 4.1 A total of three trenches were excavated during the evaluation. A single 8.2m x 1.5m trench was excavated to the south-east of the present house on the line of the footings for the proposed extension, while two trenches, measuring 5.3m x 1.1m and 3.6m x 1.0m, were excavated by hand in the interior of the house (Fig. 7).
- 4.2 **Trench A** (5.3m x 1.1m; Figs 8 and 9)
- 4.2.1 Trench A was excavated by hand in the main (western) ground floor compartment of the house, assumed to have been the original hall. Removal of the existing quarry tiled floor (1), which was set on a mortar base (2), revealed a layer of red-brown gritty gravel (3), c. 0.07m thick, which had been laid as a base for the floor. Prior to the deposition of the gravel layer it appeared that the ground surface had been roughly levelled as a scoop (8) in the natural red clay subsoil (11) had been filled by a mixture of fragments of red sandstone and lime mortar (7). It seems possible that the sandstone and mortar fragments may represent the remains of a section of the sandstone slab floor (9) which now only survives at the northern end of the trench. A single sandstone slab of the floor (9) was removed and was seen to underlie the sleeper wall (39) on which the timber framing of the northern

wall of the house rests. The brown clay layer, c. 0.04m thick which underlies the surviving section of the sandstone floor was seen to contain an 1862 farthing with a hole punched near its rim and a fragment of slate pencil. The farthing may not have been within a sealed context as it was discovered in the top of the layer adjacent to a crack between two slabs.

4.2.2 At the approximate mid-point of the trench a shallow, possibly rectangular, pit (6) was discovered which had been cut into the natural subsoil (11). The initial fill of the pit was a grey-brown sandy clay (5) containing sandstone fragments (some burnt), charcoal, two small fragments of calcined bone, possible brick or burnt clay fragments, and a fragment of a mussel shell. Although some of the material found within the pit had been burnt, the feature itself showed no indication of burning and no dating evidence was recovered. Overlying the initial fill and sealing the pit was a layer, up to 0.1m thick, of yellow-brown clay (4).

4.2.3 At the southern end of the trench the natural clay subsoil had been cut into by the concrete footings (37) of the modern brick wall (38) which forms the southern wall of the house.

4.3 Trench B (3.6m x 1.0m; Fig. 10)

4.3.1 Trench B was excavated by hand in the secondary (eastern) ground floor compartment of the house. This was thought to have originally been part of the hall with service rooms at the eastern end, although a later inserted fireplace be have been associated with the conversion to a kitchen (Smith 1988, Fig. 28a). The fireplace had already been removed with no trace surviving in the area of the excavation. Removal of the existing brick floor (12), which was set on a lime mortar base (13), revealed a layer of brown sand (14), c. 0.05m thick, which appeared to have been laid to provide a level base for the floor. An area of disturbance (21) towards the south-east corner was later shown to be a rats' nest and burrow. Beneath the sand, a layer of lime mortar (15) lay directly on the natural clay and may have formed an earlier floor surface. Two narrow, shallow parallel slots (22 and 23) were visible cut into the mortar layer c. 0.35m apart. The position of these slots coincides with the position of a former partition wall for service rooms suggested by Smith (1988, Fig. 28a). Removal of the mortar layer 15 revealed a circular post hole (25), 0.38m in diameter and 0.44m deep, together with three possible stakeholes (17, 19, 27). Non of these features produced any evidence for dating.

4.4 Trench C (8.2m x 1.5m; Fig. 11)

4.4.1 Trench C was excavated to the south-east of the house on the line of the eastern footings of the proposed extension, in a position where it was thought that evidence may be revealed for the building identified on the Tithe Map of 1845. After the initial removal of up to 1.20m of soil by machine, the base of the trench was cleaned by hand and any features seen were examined. The material removed by machine consisted of an initial layer of brown sandy loam topsoil (28) up to 0.4m thick, and an underlying layer of dark grey loose soil (29), up to 0.9m thick, which appeared to represent a modern rubbish deposit. A layer of reddish redeposited clay (40), c. 0.4m thick, was present within the rubbish deposit (29).

4.4.2 Two drainage pipes were present within the trench; one (8) had been laid within the rubbish deposit (29), while the second had been laid within a trench (31) cut into the natural clay subsoil (11) below the rubbish deposit, which it pre-dated. The pipe trench (31) cut three successive layers of clean reddish (32), grey-brown humic (33), and clean reddish clay (34) located at the northern end of the trench. A possibly rectangular sandstone and brick lined pit (35), cut into the natural subsoil (41), was discovered towards the northern end of the trench; the function of the pit remains unknown but the loose brown soil (36) which filled the pit was seen to contain modern glass.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The results from the desktop study provided limited cartographic evidence for the standing building dating back to the Ordnance Survey of 1837. However, earlier cartographic sources, together with documentary evidence, have suggested the possibility that the structure may have originally been that known as Wyddfyd, depicted at a different location and demolished between 1819 and 1837. If this were so, then it is conceivable that the building known as Y Wyffydd was constructed during the same period, reusing elements from the original building.

5.2 The evidence provided by the two trenches excavated within the building gave no indication of any surviving earthen floor levels which might have been associated with a late medieval structure. Within Trench A, the latest quarry tile floor was seen to be laid on levelling material lying directly on

the natural subsoil. However, it would seem likely that there was an earlier sandstone slab floor, part of which survived within the excavated area. This is of some significance since the surviving slab lay beneath the sleeper wall for the timber framing of the north wall. This would suggest that the floor is at least contemporary with, and probably more likely to predate the wall. This evidence may therefore cast doubt on the dating of the north wall as being an original feature surviving *in situ*. In Trench B the existing brick floor and its makeup sealed an earlier mortar surface within which two parallel grooves indicated the position of a former partition wall.

- 5.3 Several features were revealed in both trenches suggesting some activity predating the identified floors, but with no dating evidence being recovered. In Trench A a shallow scoop had been infilled to level the area prior to laying the tiles, while a shallow pit filled with rubbish had been sealed by a layer of clay. In Trench B a post hole and three possible stakeholes were revealed beneath the mortar surface. From the limited areas investigated it is uncertain what these features represent and whether they may be associated with an earlier phase of the existing structure not identified within the excavations or possibly an earlier period of activity predating it.
- 5.4 Trench C, excavated externally within the area of the proposed extension, revealed no evidence for any features or layers earlier than the nineteenth century.
- 5.5 The results from the evaluation have therefore introduced some doubt regarding the dating and previous interpretation of the standing structure. The possibility that the building consists partly of a reconstruction and relocation of an earlier building could not be conclusively demonstrated by the excavated evidence. However, the discovery that the north sleeper wall had been constructed on top of the sandstone flooring does at least introduce some doubt regarding the likely date of its present construction. The lack of any early floor levels and a complete absence of any artefacts predating the nineteenth century may also be of some significance. However, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions from the limited areas investigated and it would seem probable that further evidence may be revealed once the remaining floor areas have been cleared.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The writers would like to thank the following for their co-operation and assistance: Mr David Shone, Y Wyffydd; Mr Peter Smith, Strutt and Parker; Nigel Jones, CPAT.

7 SOURCES

7.1 References

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Smith, P., 1988, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, London: HMSO.

Smith, B., & George, N., 1961, *British Regional Geology: North Wales*. London, HMSO.

7.2 Documentary Sources

Denbighshire Record Office, Ruthin

DD/PL/49 Deed dated 1-2/11/1831.

DD/PL/50 Mortgage dated 17/1/1832.

DD/PL/64 Assignment of mortgage dated 13/12/1838.

DD/PL/112 Assignment dated 6/2/1792.

National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

Tithe apportionment, Ruabon except Christionydd Kenrick, dated 9/4/1844.

7.3 Cartographic Sources

1961 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (SJ 3241/3341).

1898 (revision) second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, Denbighshire 35.16. (Fig. 3).

1873 (survey) first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, Denbighshire 35.16. (Fig. 2).

1845 Tithe map, Ruabon except Christionydd Kenrick. (Fig. 4).

1837 Old series Ordnance Survey 1:63360 map Sheet 74NE (reproduced in Margary 1992).

1819 Ordnance Surveyors drawing No 316 (at a scale of 1:31680). (Fig. 5).

1778 Survey of the Pen y Lan Estate (Denbighshire Record Office DD/PL/143). (Sketch reproduced as Fig. 6).

APPENDIX 1
SITE ARCHIVE

41 context record forms

3 A1 site drawings

Soil sample post hole 25

soil sample pit 6

1862 farthing and slate pencil fragment, context 10

2 sherds modern pottery and 1 of glass from context 3

2 black and white negative films, contacts and archive prints

2 colour slide films

1 colour print film

photographic catalogue

correspondance

Documentary/cartographic research photocopies

Report illustrations

APPENDIX 2**Y WYFFYDD, PEN Y LAN, RUABON
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The development site occupies a pasture field south-east of Pen y Lan, Ruabon (SJ 33724161).
- 1.2 Y Wyffydd was originally constructed as a timber framed hall of cruck construction likely to date to the early Tudor period. A central fireplace and oven were added c. 1700 and a stone extension was added at the west end c. 1850. The main archaeological interest relates to the possible survival of remains relating to the occupation of the former hall itself and in the potential for associated structures in close proximity which might be affected by the development. The proposed development intends to refurbish and extend the existing structure (planning application CB1592).
- 1.3 An evaluation was recommended by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust as there were reasonable grounds for believing that there may be important archaeological remains on the site. Accordingly, a Brief was prepared by Wrexham Archaeology Service detailing the works required.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by means of a combination of desk-based assessment and evaluation trenches, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;
 - 2.1.2 to record any archaeology revealed in the evaluation trenches;
 - 2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the field evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for a reasonable planning decision to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the area affected by the proposed development;
 - 2.1.4 to identify and recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further provision for that resource where it is considered necessary.

3 Methods

- 3.1 Stage one of the evaluation will involve a desk-based examination all readily available documentary, cartographic and photographic sources relating to the development area. This will involve the study of sources at the following repositories: County Record Office, Hawarden; County Record Office, Ruthin; National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; National Monuments Record, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, Aberystwyth; Regional Sites and Monuments Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool.
- 3.2 Stage two will take the form of three evaluation trenches as follows: Two trenches measuring 3 x 1m and 5 x 1m within the existing structure and one trench measuring 8 x 1.5m in the area of the proposed extension. Where required this will be taken to a maximum depth of 1.2m below the existing ground surface. Consultation with the client and the curator will be necessary before this depth is exceeded.
- 3.3 The evaluation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures:

- 3.3.1 removal of modern overburden by machine, where possible;
- 3.3.2 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate to fulfil the requirements of the evaluation and within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.
- 3.3.3 all archaeological contexts recorded using the standard numbered context system employed by CPAT. All significant contexts to be planned and/or drawn in section at appropriate scales (as defined in the Curatorial Brief), and photographed in monochrome and colour slide 35mm format. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps.
- 3.3.4 all archaeological artefacts and environmental samples recorded and processed in a manner appropriate to the material involved. Those requiring conservation or other specialist treatment will be stored in a stable environment until such times as they can be examined by a specialist. All finds, except those deemed to be Treasure Trove, are the property of the landowner. It is anticipated that they will be donated to the appropriate local or regional museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.
- 3.4 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Curatorial Brief (page 5). This will be in A4 format and contain conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Historic Background; Excavation; Conclusions and Recommendations and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.
- 3.5 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 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of two skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist, who will also be responsible for undertaking the desk-based assessment. Overall supervision will be by Dr A Gibson, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 4.2 All report preparation will be completed by the same field archaeologist who conducted the evaluation.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the assessment and evaluation will take no more than ten days in all and that the subsequent report would be prepared immediately thereafter, dependent on the client's instructions and the arrangement of a suitable timetable. The date of commencement, at the time of writing, has yet to be agreed with the client, and will be dependent on the state of the site and negotiated access. In general, three weeks written notice would be required in advance of works being undertaken. The archaeological curator will be informed of the detailed timetable and staffing levels when agreement has been reached with the client.
- 4.4 Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.
- 4.5 CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance.

N.W.Jones
17th December 1997

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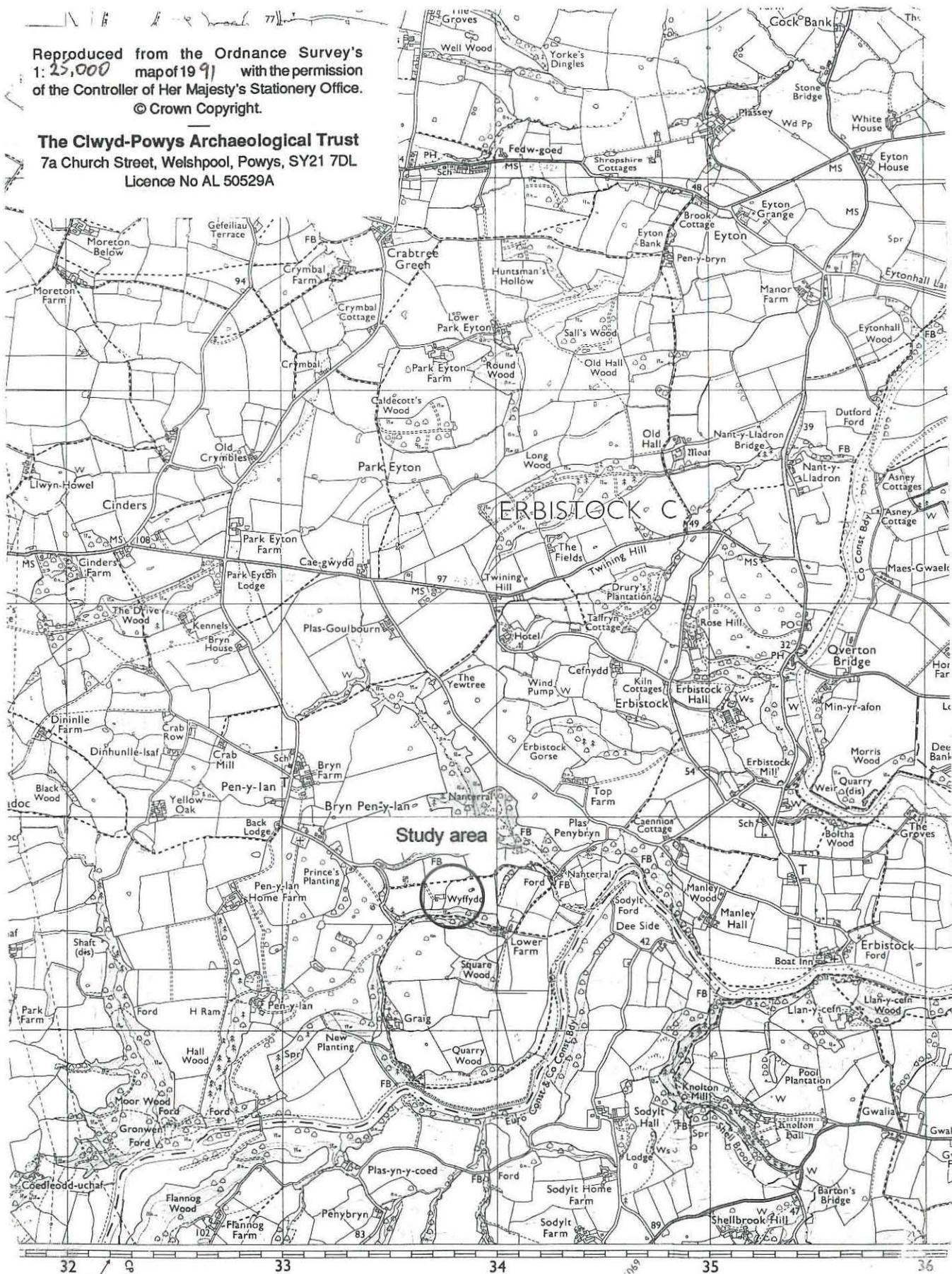


Fig. 1 Location: Scale 1:25000

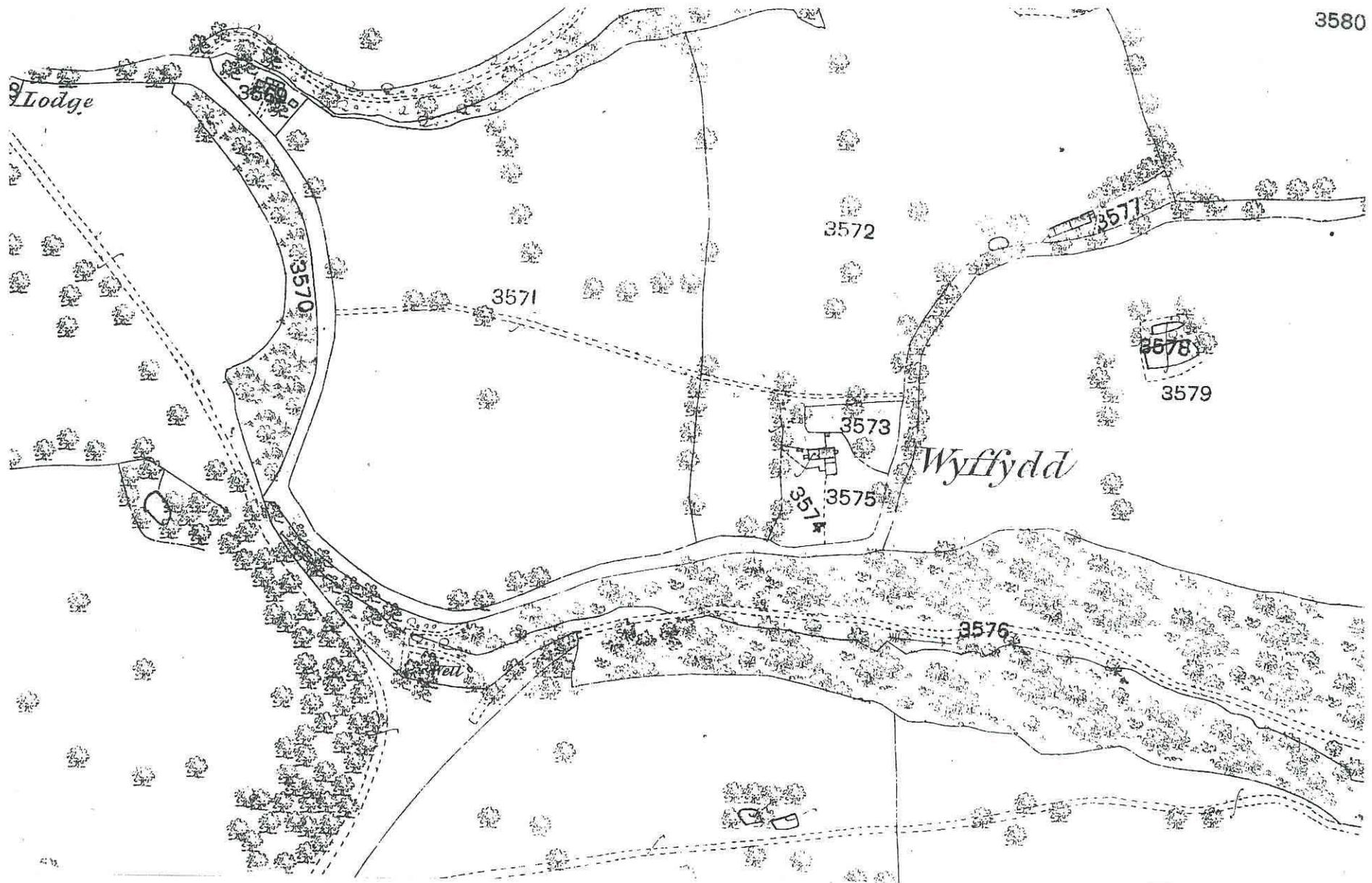


Fig. 2 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Denbs. 35.16 SW) 1873: Scale 1:2500

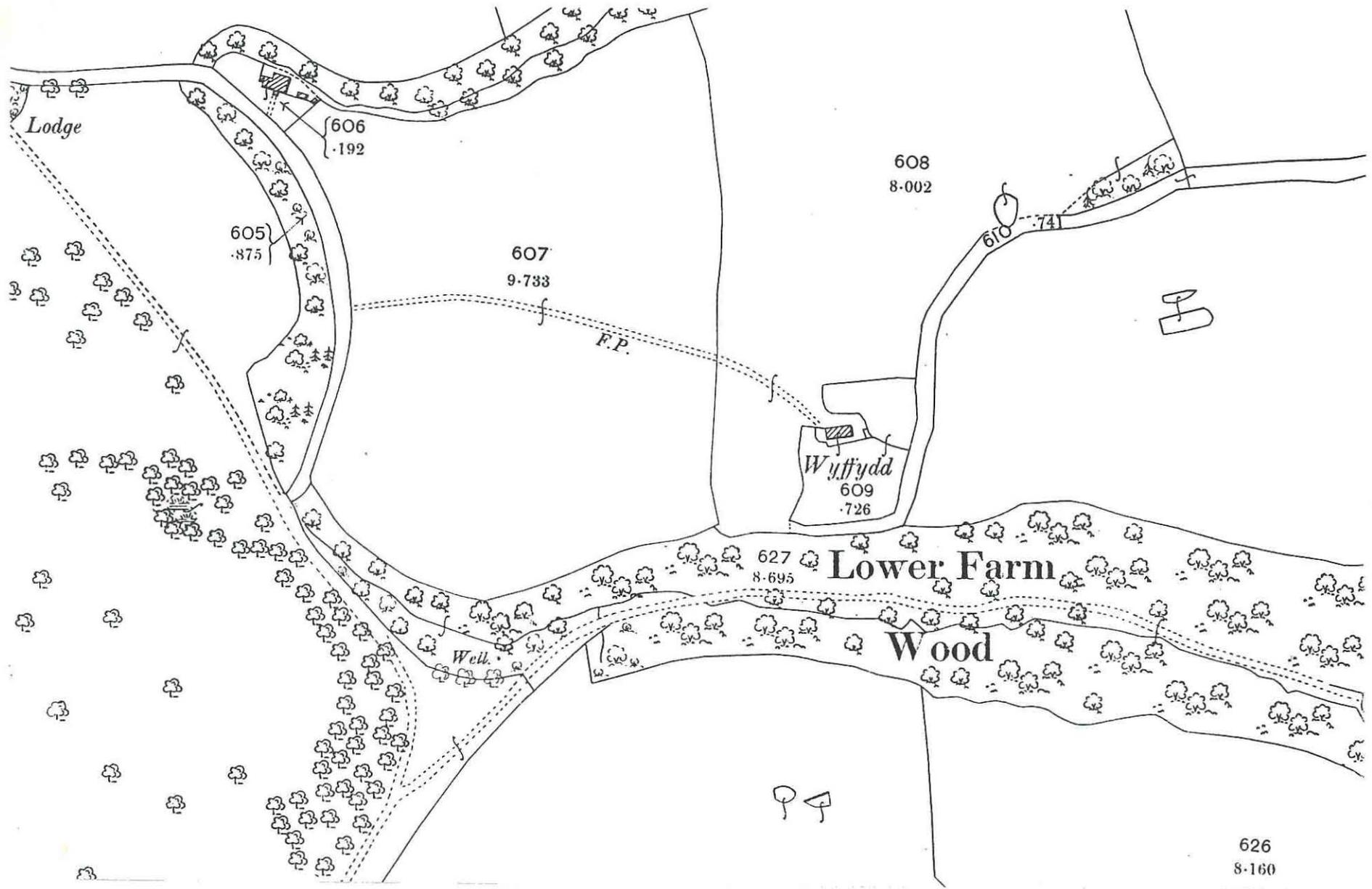


Fig. 3 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Denbs. 35.16 SW) 1899: Scale 1:2500

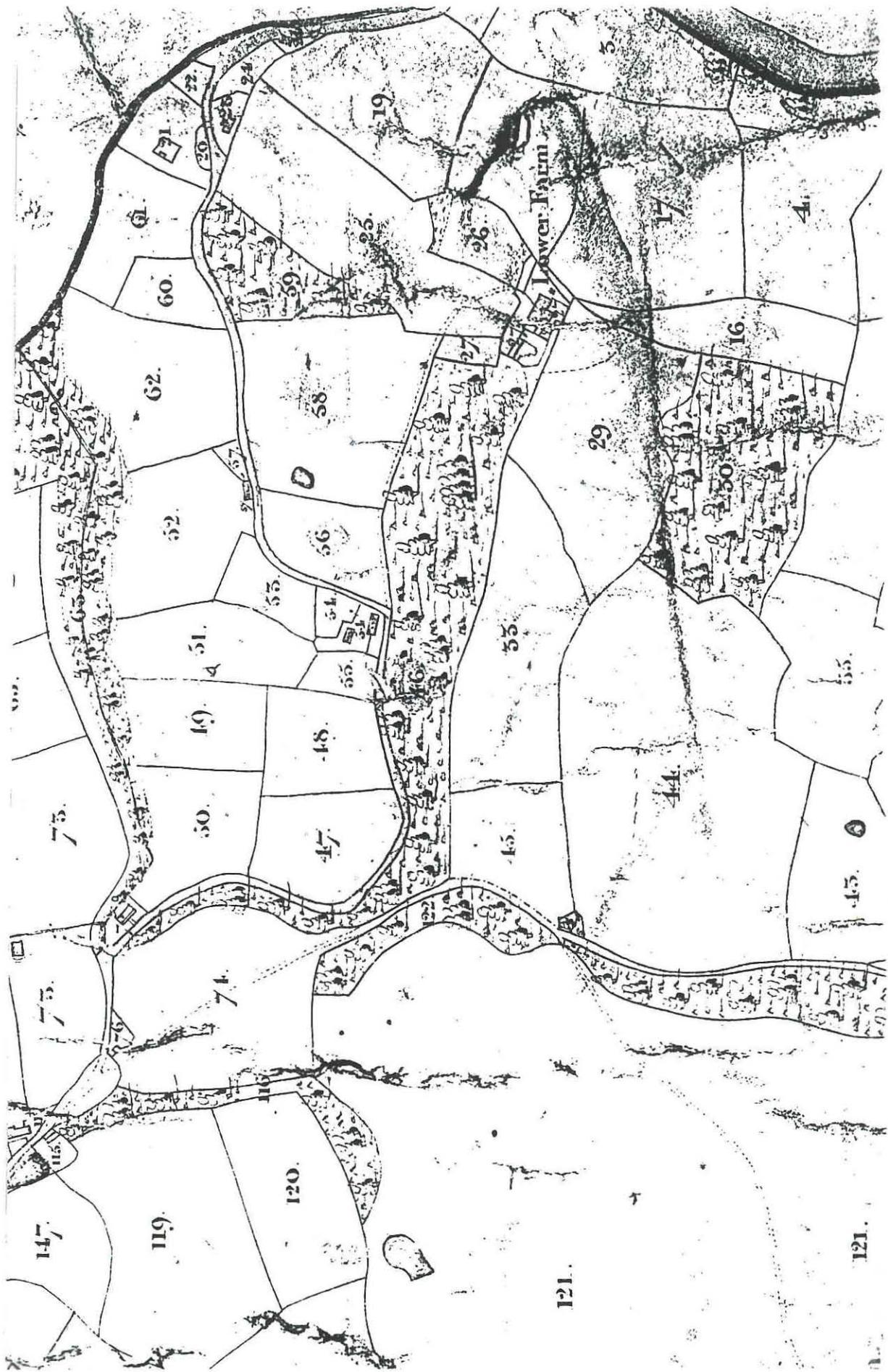


Fig. 4 Tithe Map: 1845: Scale approx. 1:5000



Fig. 5 Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing No. 316: Surveyed 1819: Scale 1:31680

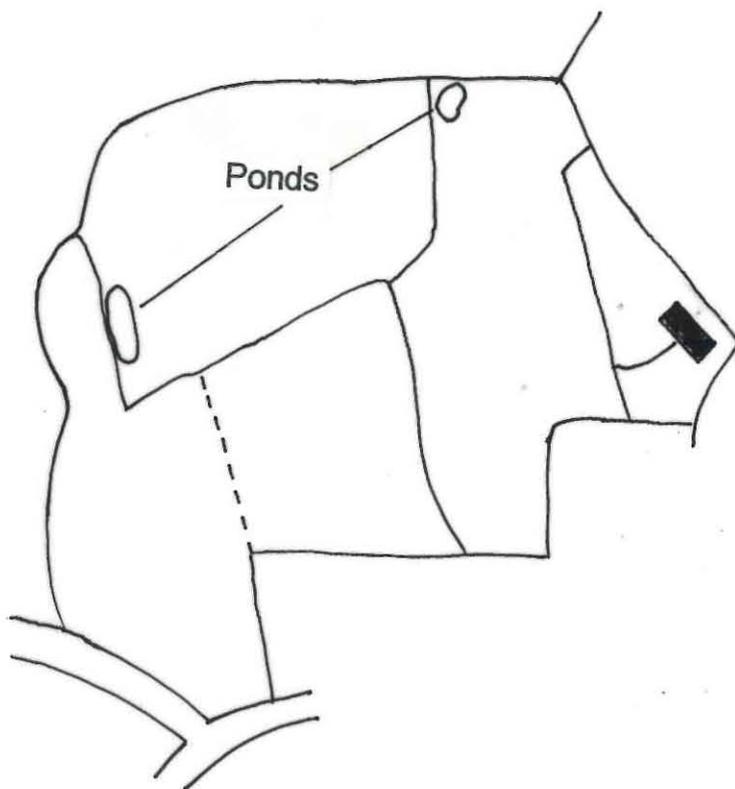
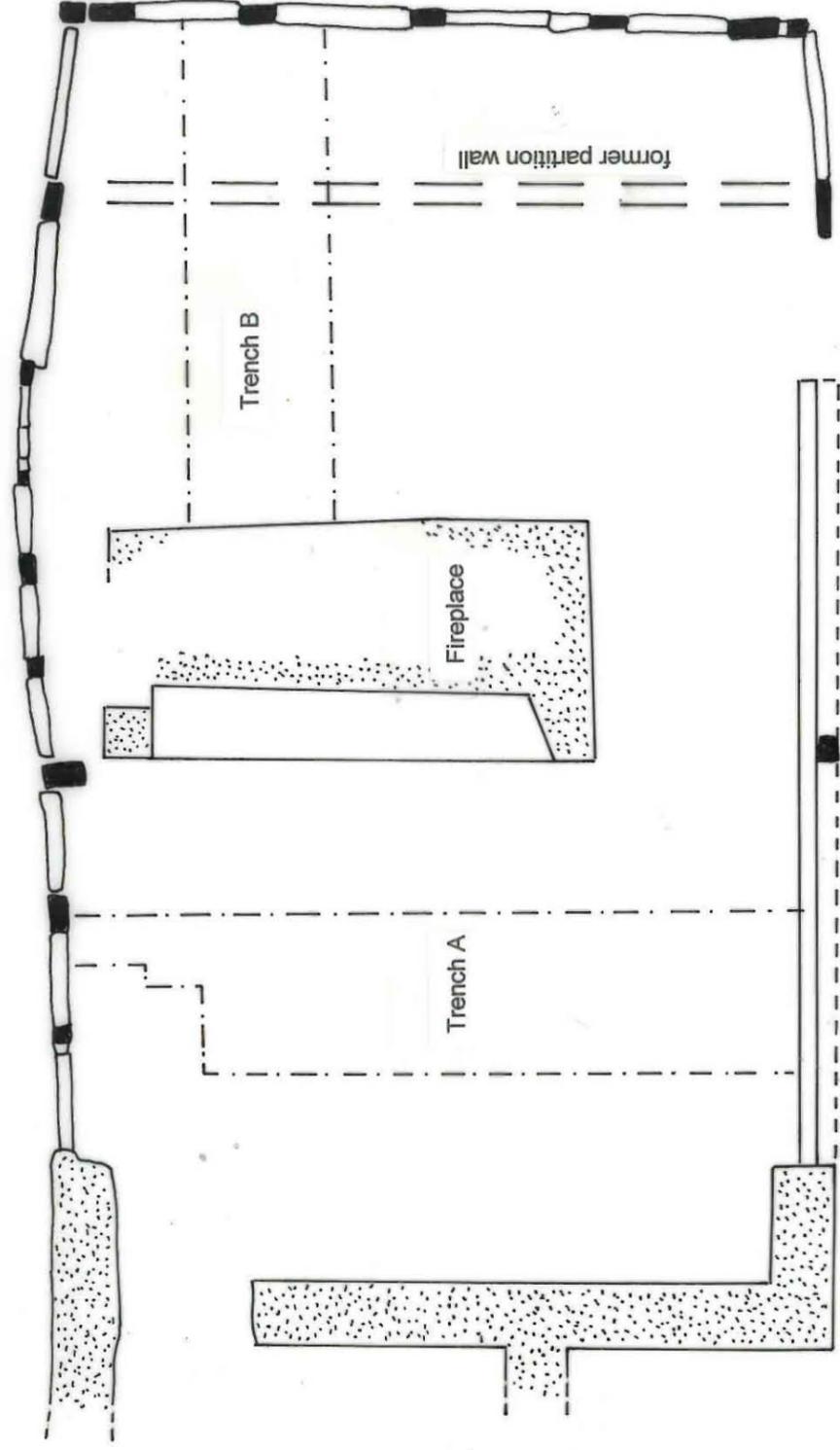


Fig. 6 Sketch Plan of Wyddfild Tenement:1778: N.T.S.



timber



sandstone



Trench C

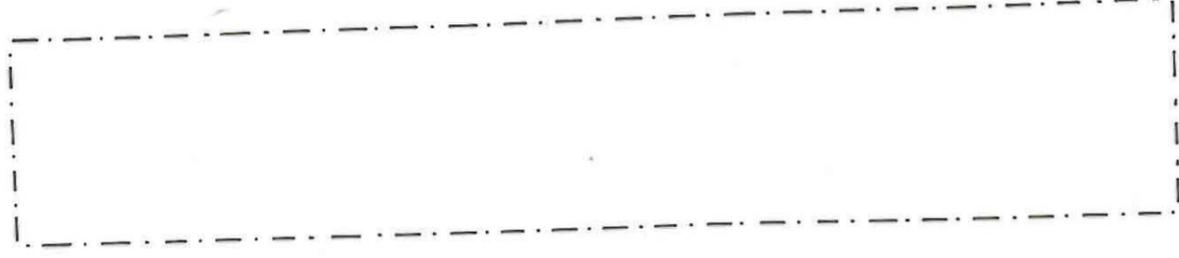


Fig. 7: Trench Location Scale 1: 50

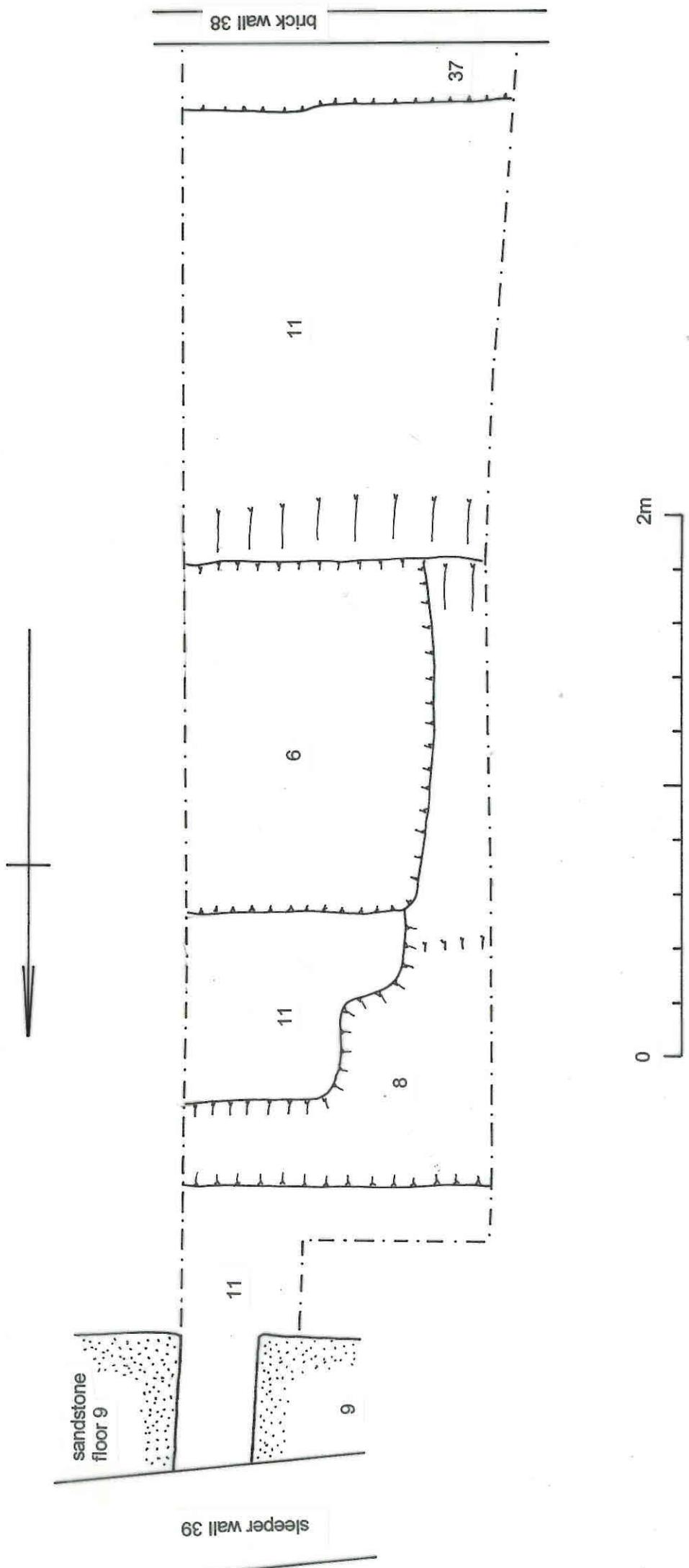
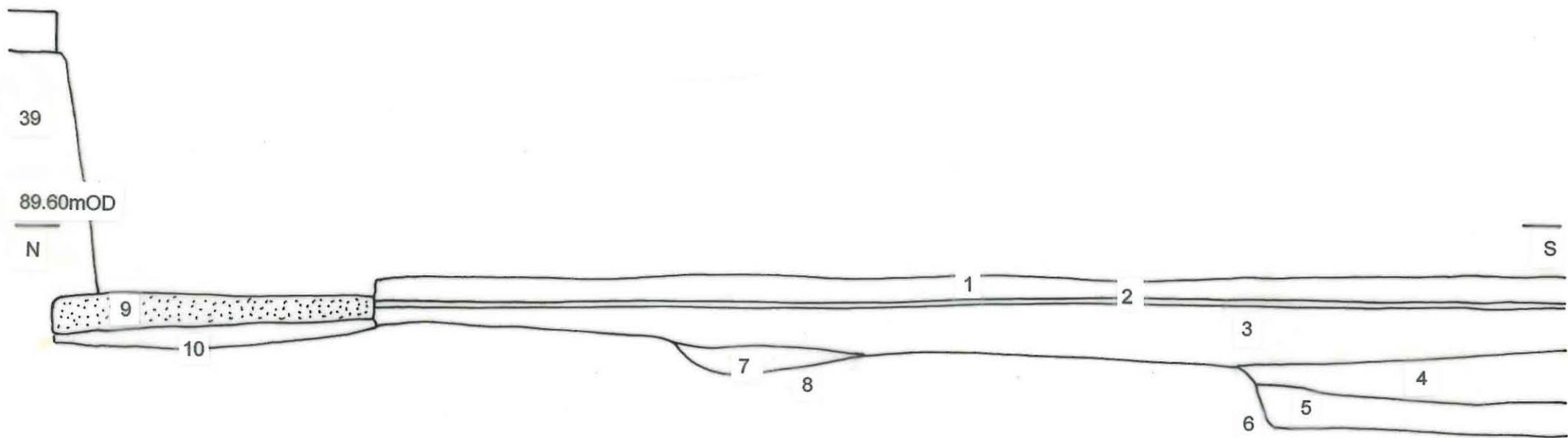


Fig. 8: Trench A Plan Scale 1:20



 sandstone

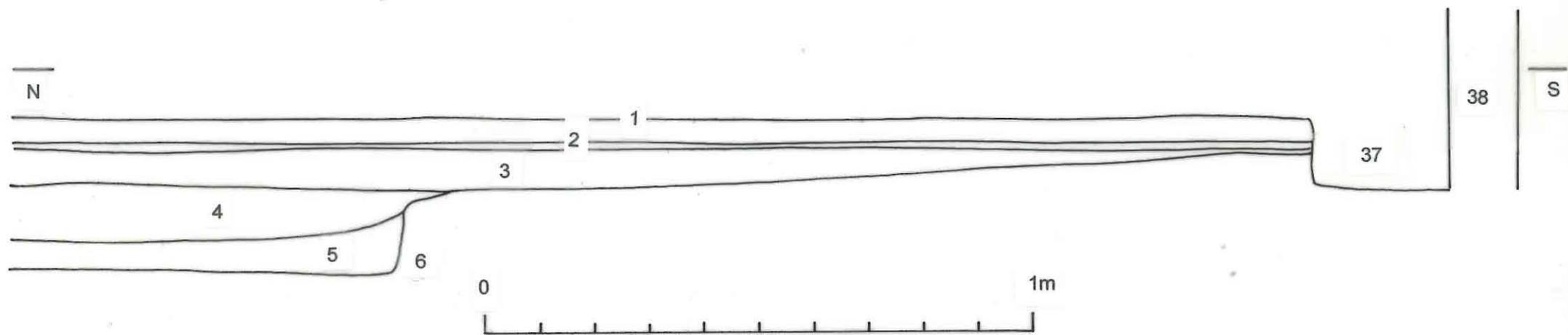


Fig. 9: Trench A Section Scale 1:10

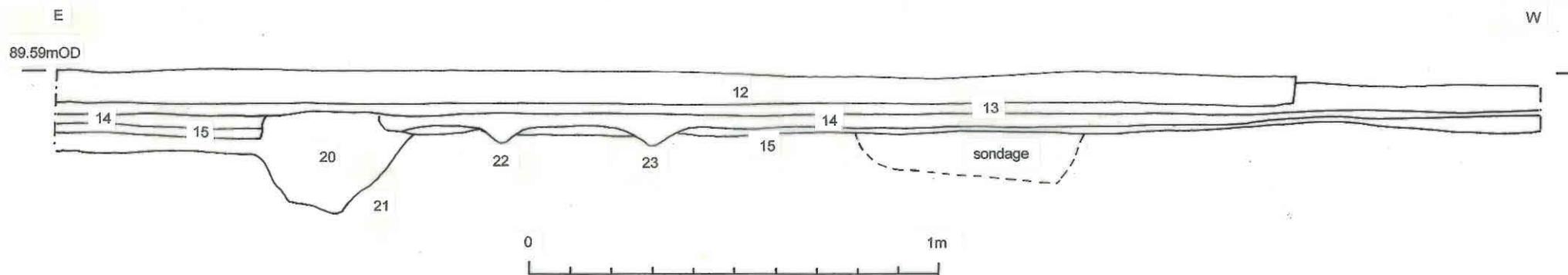
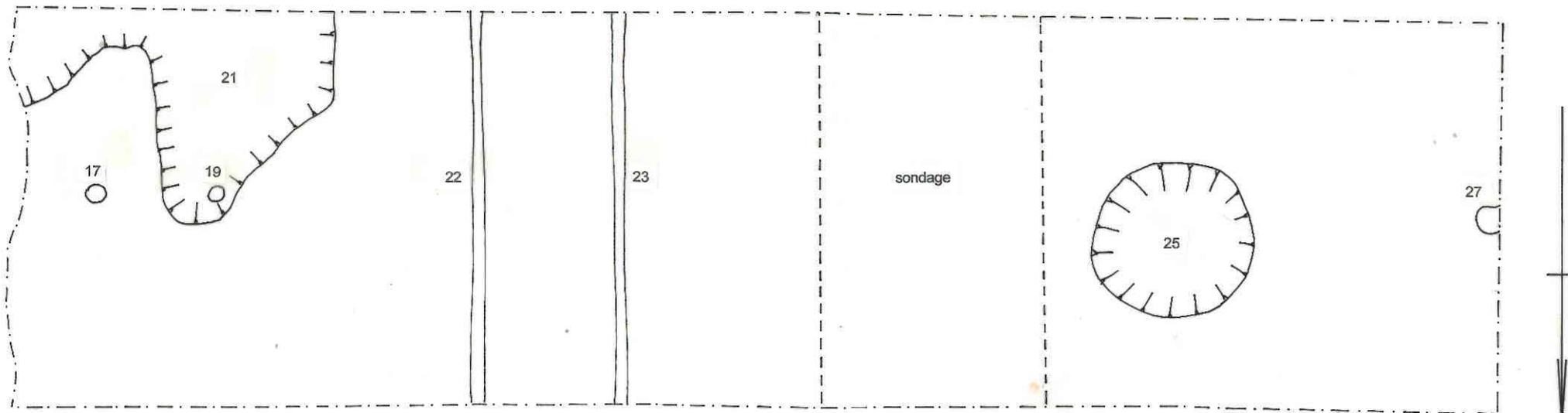


Fig. 10: Trench B Plan & Section Scale 1:10

90.25mOD

S

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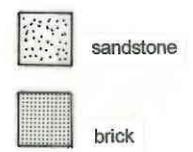
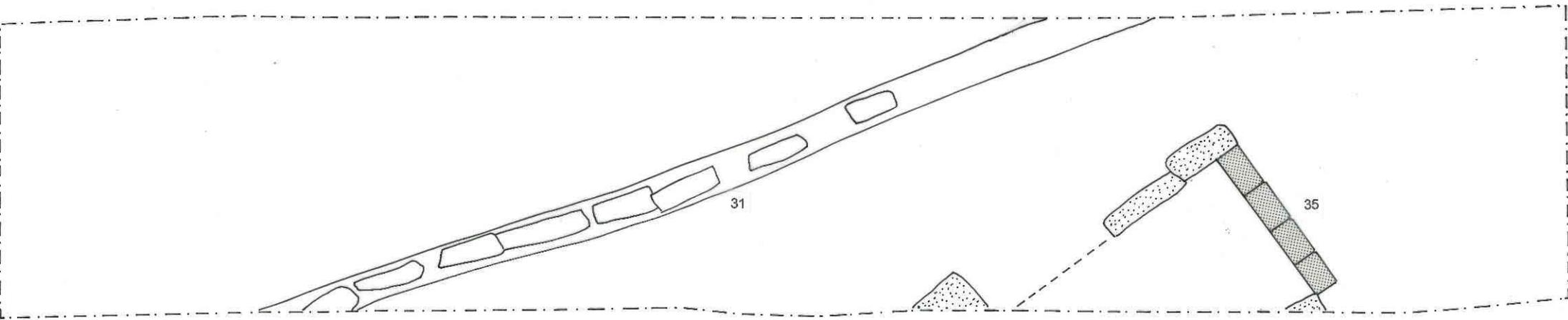
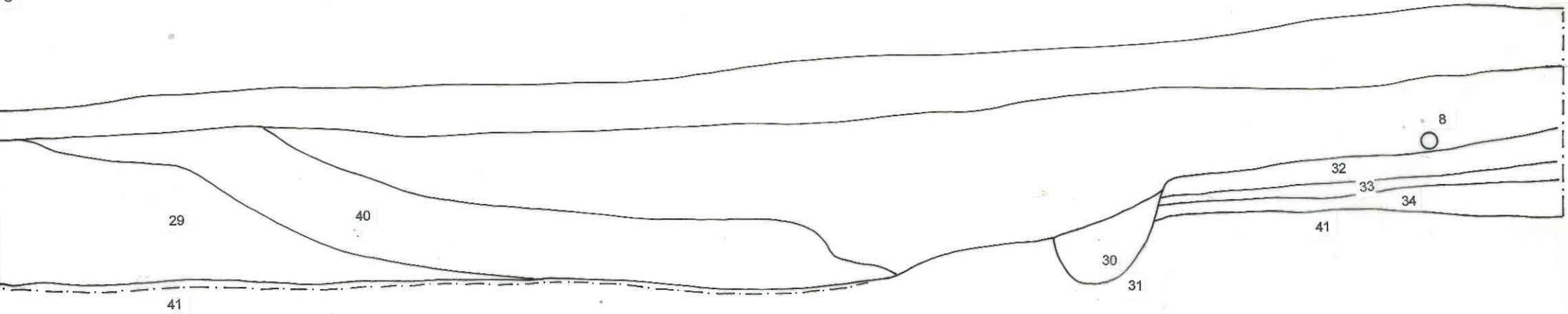


Fig. 11: Trench C Plan & Section Scale 1:20