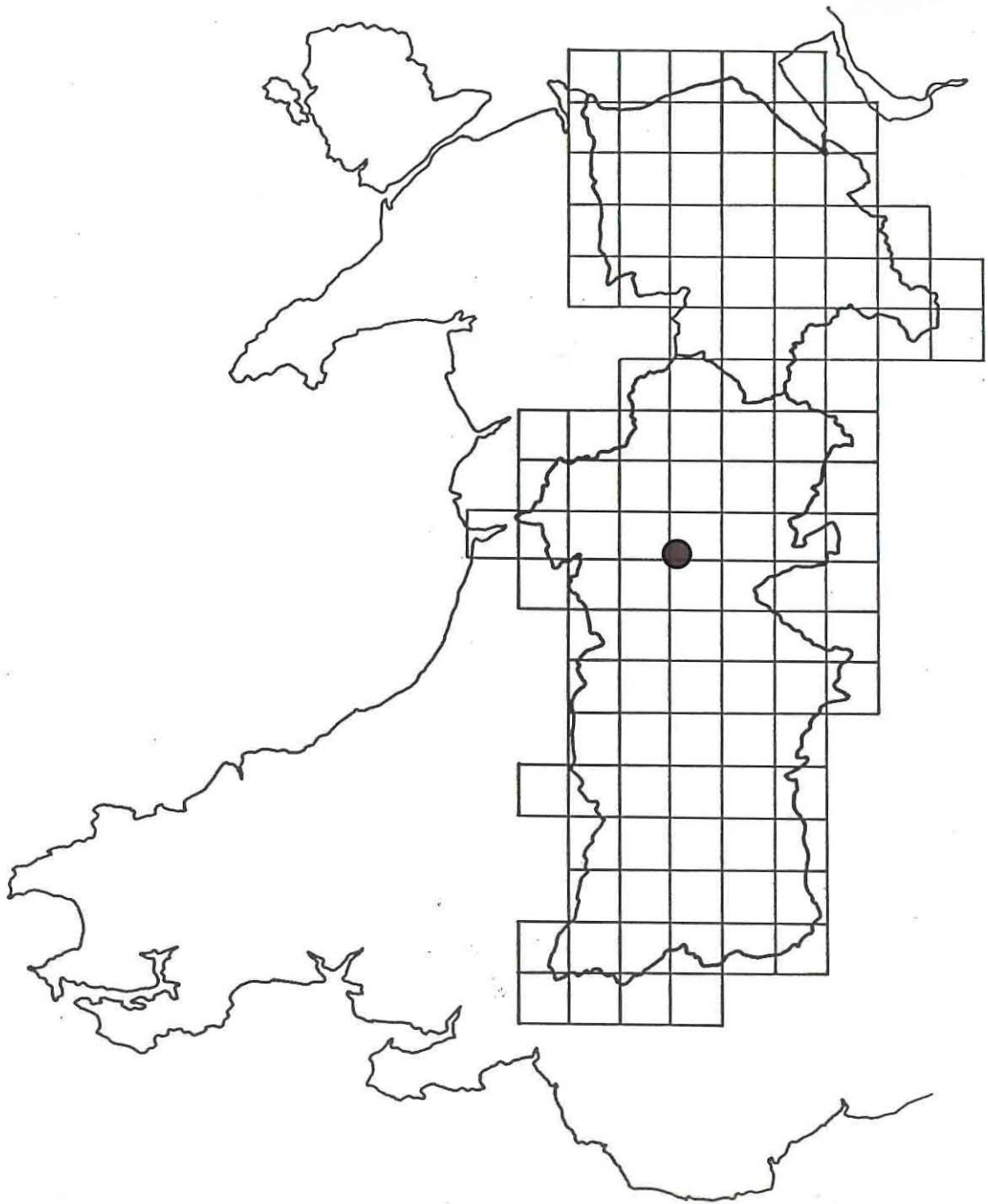


Lower Green, Caersws, Powys

FIELD EVALUATION



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Report prepared for Jones, Peate & Edmonds

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following archaeological evaluation was carried out in response to a planning application for a residential development on land adjacent to Green Villa, Caersws, Powys NGR: SO 0277 9182 (Montgomeryshire District Council planning application M23460). The proposed development lies at the western edge of the village to the south of the B4569, and is currently an area of wasteland which has recently been used as a dump for building rubble (Fig 1).
- 1.2 The development is located within an area of potential archaeological importance, c.120m from the south-west corner of the Roman fort.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The earliest evidence for Roman occupation in Caersws consists of a short-lived auxiliary fort at Llwyn y Brain, to the east of the modern village. Although unexcavated, it is thought to be of pre-Flavian date (Jarrett 1969, 66), presumably constructed as part of the early campaigns in Wales.
- 2.2 The early fort was replaced, probably during the early to mid 70s AD, when a slightly smaller fort (Fig 1) was constructed near the confluence of the Rivers Severn and Carno. The fort was defended at various periods by up to three external ditches and in its last phase by a substantial stone revetted rampart. To the north of the fort an annexe was defended by a single ditch, and to the west a flood bank protects the fort and annexe. The courses of the Severn and Carno have altered considerably since the Roman period, and excavations in 1966 revealed a former river channel c. 5m to the west of the flood bank (Daniels *et al* 1966, 112). Geophysical survey conducted during 1991 to the west of the fort (Caersws 39 and 40) revealed a length of the Roman road leading from the west gate as well as possible former river courses (Jones 1993, 15).
- 2.3 A civilian settlement or vicus developed to the south and east of the fort, covering an area of over 3 ha. A series of excavations have revealed part of the settlement's layout, indicating development along the main streets issuing from the south and east gates of the fort, together with a network of smaller side streets. Major excavations by CPAT in 1984-5 in the grounds of the Old Primary School (Caersws 10) produced evidence for a flourishing commercial centre consisting of shops, workshops and a possible tavern to the east of the south road (Britnell 1989, 21). Similar activity had been previously identified to the west of the road during the 1960's (Daniels *et al* 1970, 37-8).
- 2.4 Excavations in 1854 located and excavated the bath-house (Davies 1857), the exact position of which was subsequently lost. However, the location is known to be beneath the railway yard, and recent geophysical survey may have identified its position. It is likely that the bath-house was served by an aqueduct which took water from the Carno (Jones 1993, 87). The 1854 excavations also revealed evidence for a cemetery consisting of inhumation burials and cremations to the south-west of the bath-house (Davies 1857, 164-5). Reference had previously been made to cremations and grave goods being washed out of the river bank

(Fisher 1917, 35).

- 2.5 Although the present village is thought to have medieval origins due to its regular street pattern, none of the excavations have produced any evidence for medieval occupation. Whatever the origins of the present settlement, Caersws was already in decline by the 1530s having lost its weekly market, and by 1776 it was described by Pennant as a "hamlet with a few houses". The enclosure award of 1826 shows the development plot to be part of the Upper Green, an area of former waste land allotted to T.I.Wemyss Esq (Jones 1985, 62-68).

3 THE EVALUATION

- 3.1 The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned to undertake the evaluation, which was carried out between 19th and 21st July 1993. In accordance with the evaluation brief (CPAT EVB 54), a single trench was excavated to determine the extent of the surviving archaeology and to evaluate the significance and likely dating of any features revealed (Fig 2). The trench was excavated initially by machine with subsequent cleaning, excavation and recording by hand. A full drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout. The results from the excavations were as follows:

- 3.2 Trench A (18.8m x 1.5m, Fig 3). Numbers in brackets refer to Figure 3.

- 3.2.1 The upper circa 60cm of modern overburden were removed by machine. At the eastern end of the trench this revealed the surface of a layer of silty clay with stones (9) and over the remainder of the trench, a layer of yellow-brown silty clay (2) which was partially removed by machine. These layers were subsequently removed by hand over part of the excavated area, and were found to contain pottery of 18th or 19th century date. Beneath layer 9 was a layer of stones cemented together with silt (10) which produced no finds and was probably natural. Layer 3 is the fill of a modern post hole recorded only in section. A box section was removed by machine at the W end of the trench cutting c. 40cm into the natural river gravel.

- 3.2.2 Removal of layer 2 revealed an undated gully (5) c. 80cm wide running roughly NE-SW. The gully was cut into natural river gravels and appeared to have been deliberately filled with fairly clean yellowish grey clay (6).

- 3.2.3 To the E of gully 5 a layer of stone (7) c. 6cm thick formed a possible fragmentary surface, partly sealed by clay layer 6. Part of the stone surface lay directly over the natural river gravels and part over a layer of probably naturally deposited silty clay (11) up to 36cm thick, which in turn sealed a layer of natural gravel (4).

4 THE FINDS

- 4.1 In the course of the evaluation sherds of Post Medieval pottery were recovered from the layers above 4, 6, 7 and 11; all of which were probably of later 18th or 19th century date. No finds of Roman date were recovered

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The only obvious feature revealed by the evaluation was gully 5, the fill of which did not produce any dating evidence. The possible stone surface (7) to the E may be associated with the gully, and one interpretation is that these are the remains of a Roman road with a drainage gully to the side. However, the lack of a corresponding gully to the E within the area excavated, and also the fragmentary nature of the stone layer might argue against this.
- 5.2 From the composition of the overburden it is clear that the area has been used for dumping rubbish within the recent past, and the finds recovered from layers 2 and 9 would suggest that a general levelling of the site took place during the 18th or 19th centuries.
- 5.3 Overall, the evaluation produced no clear evidence of Roman occupation within the area excavated, although the results do not necessarily preclude the existence of such within the remainder of the area of the proposed development.

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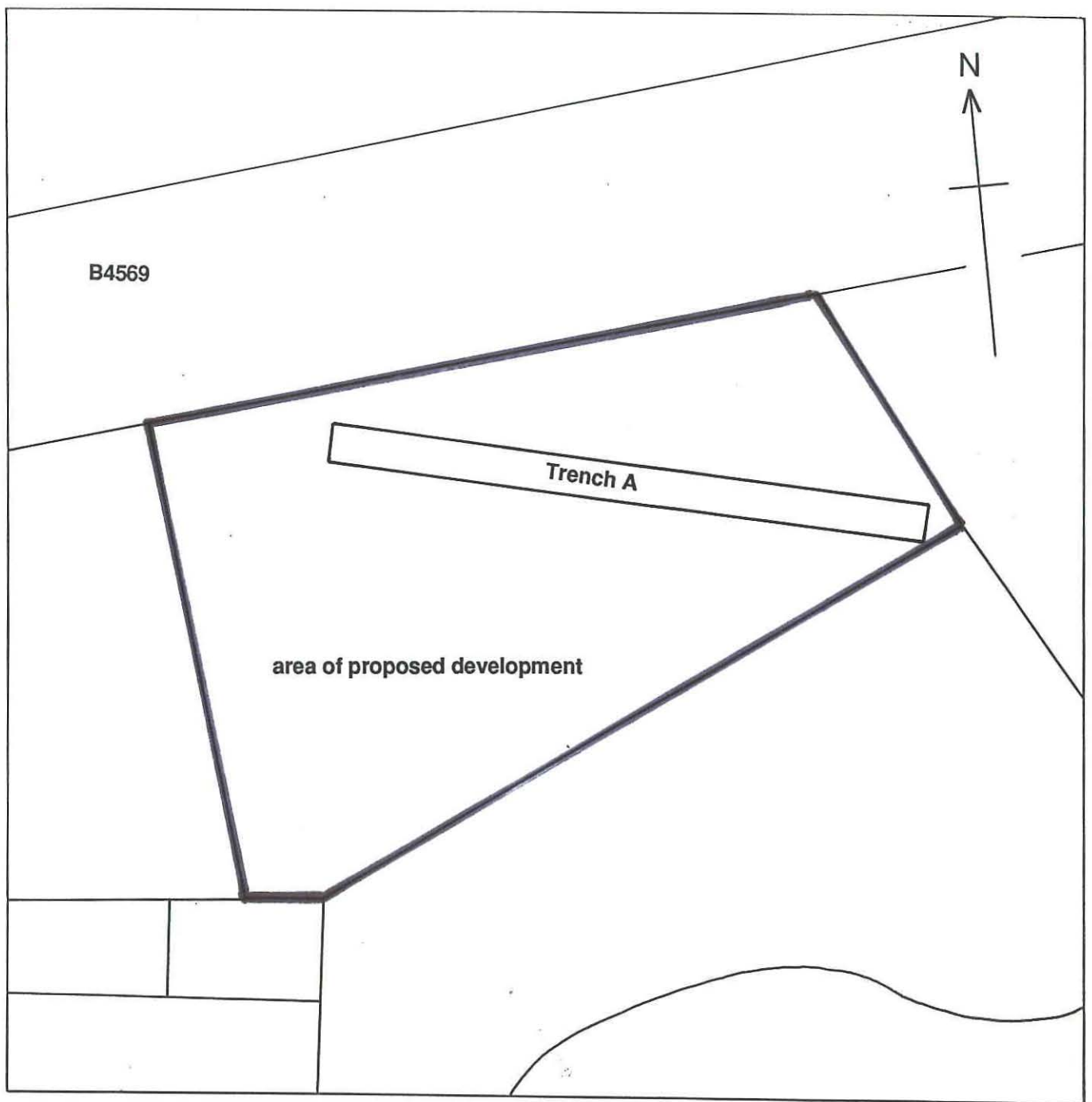


Fig 2 Location of evaluation trench. Scale 1:200

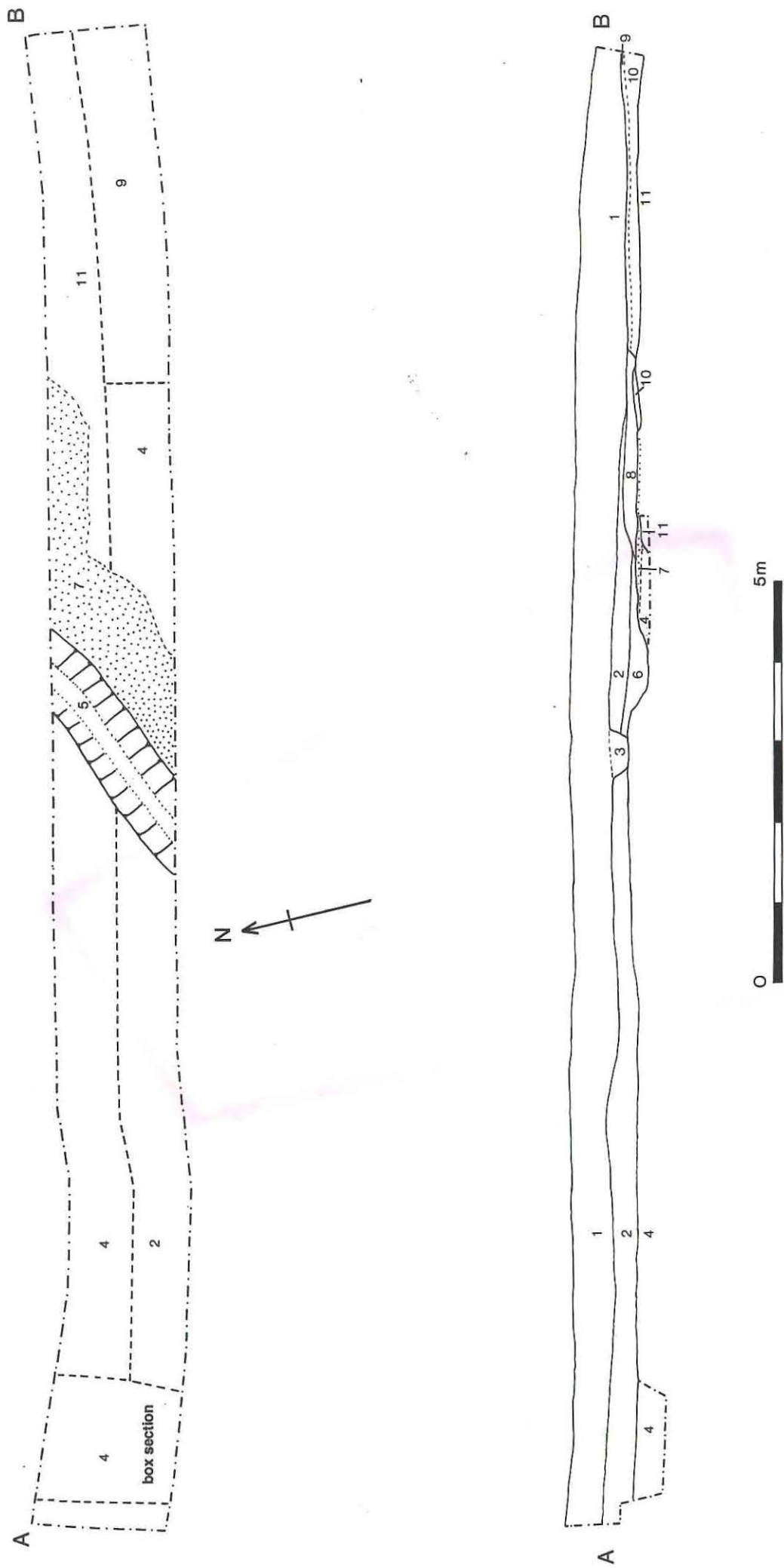


Fig 3 Plan and section of evaluation trench.