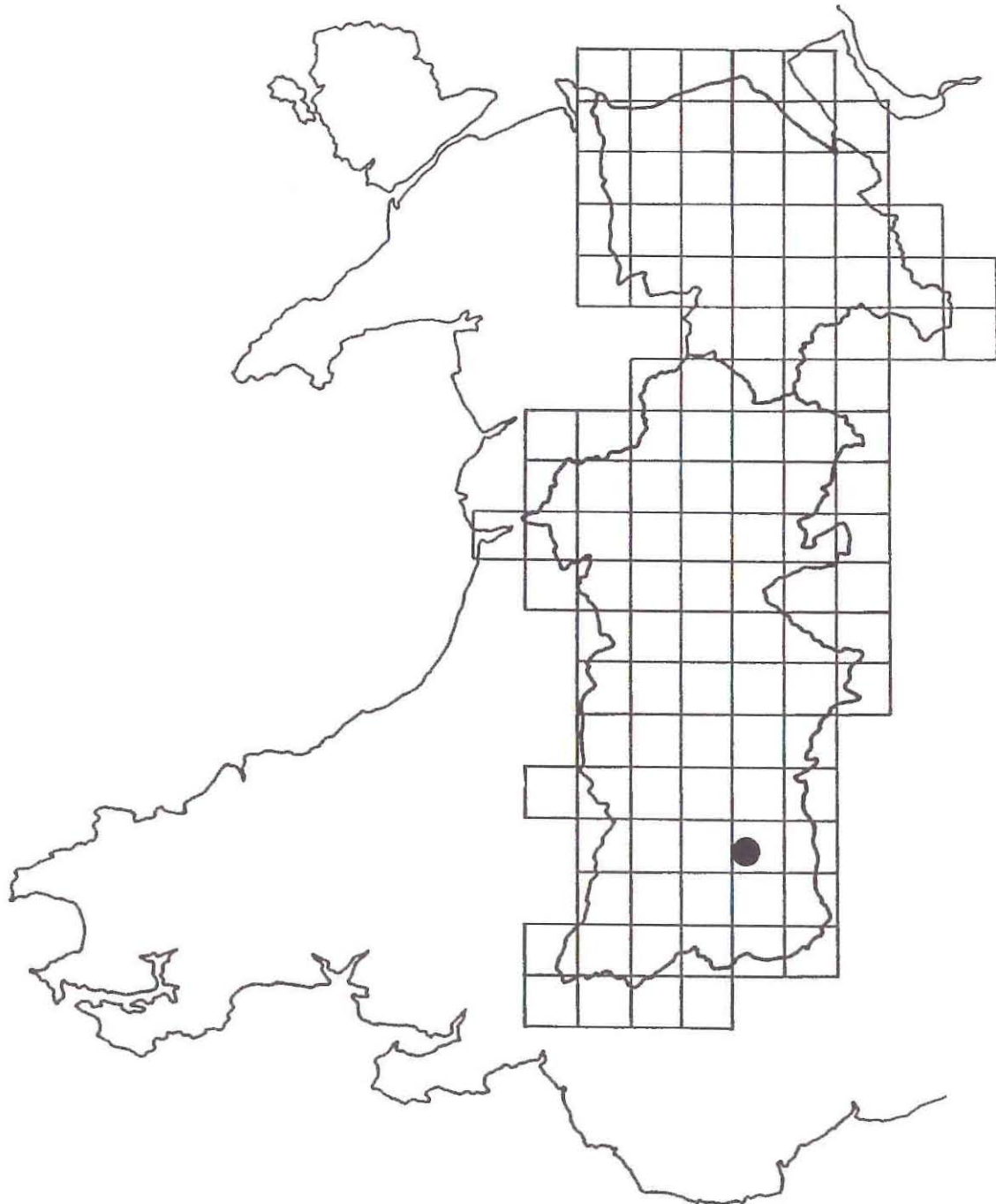


*Llanfilo Village, Powys*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



**CPAT Report No 118**

*Llanfilo Village, Powys*

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**by D Thomas**

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Report prepared for Mr M J Pryce

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## **SUMMARY**

An evaluation was undertaken in the village of Llanfilo by CPAT Contracting for Mr M.J. Pryce of Porthamel, Talgarth, Powys in response to his application to Brecknock Borough Council for a housing development (B007060). The evaluation has demonstrated the existence of a building and underlying features on the site which probably date to the medieval period. In view of the probable medieval date of the building and underlying deposits, and considering the proximity of the site to the church and a nearby moated site, it is felt that the site may represent an important element in the early history of Llanfilo.

## **LIST OF CONTENTS**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. BACKGROUND**
- 3. EXCAVATIONS**
  - 3.1 Introduction
  - 3.2 Trench A
  - 3.3 Trench B
- 4. CONCLUSIONS**
- 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
- 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Specification.  
Appendix 2: Archive and Finds

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

1. Location Plan of Trenches.
2. Plan of Trench A.
3. Plan of Trench B.

### **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**CPAT** Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust  
**EVB** Evaluation Brief  
**PAR** Powys Archaeological Number  
**SAM** Scheduled Ancient Monument  
**OD** Ordnance Datum  
**OS** Ordnance Survey



## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CPAT Contracting was commissioned in November 1994 by Mr M.J. Pryce of Porthamel, Talgarth, Powys, to undertake a pre-planning archaeological evaluation of the site of a proposed housing development on a portion of land in the village of Llanfilo in Powys (S011903325) (Fig 1). The evaluation was requested in response to a planning application (B007060) by Brecknock Borough Council on the advice of the curatorial section of CPAT acting in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the council.

1.2 A brief for the archaeological evaluation was prepared by CPAT on behalf of Mr Pryce which recognised the archaeological sensitivity of the site and specified that the assessment should consist of two evaluation trenches (CPAT EVB 84). A written specification for the work was subsequently prepared by CPAT Contracting and submitted to the client for approval (see Appendix 1). The specification was accepted and excavations commenced on December 2nd 1994 and were completed in 4 days. This report was prepared immediately afterwards.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The site lies at the southern end of the village immediately to the west of the churchyard boundary of St Bilo's church (PAR 20183) and north of a scheduled moated site (PAR 4494, SAM B195) (Fig 1). It is surrounded on all sides by minor roads and is currently open ground used for occasional farm storage. The plot is enclosed by a stone wall set on top of an earth bank on which several mature trees also stand.

2.2 The site lies on a generally flat terrace at  $\approx 209\text{m}$  OD on north facing ground which falls from  $\approx 212\text{m}$  OD at the southern end of the village to  $\approx 178\text{m}$  OD at the northern end.

2.3 The solid geology of the area is characterised by Old Red Sandstone overlain by glacial till which supports well drained loamy soils (Mackney et al. 1983 and Neville George, 1970). At the development site the natural subsoil encountered was a red-dish-brown natural hillwash.

2.4 No sites have been the subject of previous archaeological excavations in Llanfilo. It has however been the subject of research as part of the Brecknock Borough Historical settlements project (Martin and Walters, 1993, p82-4) which suggests that the village is likely to have its origin in the early medieval period. This is indicated by both the sub-circular churchyard and the British dedication of the church to St Bilo, a local saint and daughter of Brychan. The church itself was extensively restored in 1913 and so much of its early fabric has been lost, but it contains a rood screen dating to around 1500 and the Angelis Bell which has a supposed date of between 1380 and 1400 and is thought to be the oldest bell in the county. The substantial remains of the moated site (PAR 4494) are of probable medieval date and may represent the former manor site. The development



site lies within the supposed historic core of the village

### 3 EXCAVATIONS

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The two evaluation trenches were positioned to assess the nature of the archaeology where it was to be most affected by the proposed development. Accordingly one 10m x 2m trench (Trench A) was placed in the area directly affected by the proposed building, and a second trench measuring 7m x 2m (Trench B) placed along the line of the proposed new access road.

3.1.2 Excavations were carried out over a period of 4 days between the 2nd and 7th of December 1994 with a staff varying between two and four. The site was monitored by Mr Mark Walters of the curatorial section of CPAT on the 9th of December.

3.1.3 Modern topsoil and overburden were removed by machine after which work was continued by hand to assess the nature, preservation and date of the surviving archaeological deposits. Recording was undertaken using standard archaeological methods, as outlined in the specification (Appendix 1). Numbers in brackets in the following descriptions refer to context numbers recorded on site.

3.1.4 All height readings in the report are related to the OS datum using a temporary benchmark sited on a tree on the western boundary of the site. The temporary benchmark was established using the permanent benchmark sited on the south-east corner of the church.

#### 3.2 Trench A

3.2.1 Topsoil (01) varying between 0.1m and 0.3m deep was machined off an area approximately 10m x 2m and revealed the natural reddish brown clay-loam hillwash (02) lying between 207.21 and 207.84m OD. Part of a sandstone whetstone was recovered from the topsoil, and a small number of post-medieval pottery sherds. At the western end of the trench a wall (03) was encountered and an area of disturbance (Fig 2). Both of these were excavated by hand to assess their nature, and to recover information relating to their date. No other features were visible in the trench.

3.2.2 The disturbed area proved to be a ditch running from north to south (07). Only the eastern half of the ditch was present in the trench so its full width could not be determined, but it was at least 1.2m wide. It was filled by a dark-brown clay loam with abundant charcoal (05) overlying a primary fill of reddish brown silty clay (06). The apparent eastern side of the ditch was defined by a number of flat stones varying between 0.2 and 0.4m wide (04). A similar sized flat stone also formed part of the base of the ditch lying at 207.36m OD, 0.28m below the level of the subsoil. The ditch was possibly wider than it appeared because an ill-defined edge (08) ran approximately 0.8m to the east of the stone on the eastern side. Excavation of this edge was



however inconclusive because of the difficulty of recognising its edge as distinct from the subsoil, and the short length which was exposed during the evaluation.

3.2.3 The wall (03) lay in the south-west corner of the site and only its northernmost face was visible. The top of the wall was at 208.08m OD, 0.3m below the level of the present ground surface. Three courses of the wall remained but where it overlay the ditch (07) the courses followed the profile of the ditch, and at its maximum surviving height of 0.72m six courses remained. No obvious foundation cut for the wall was visible and it is therefore likely that the ditch was open when the wall was constructed. The two fills of the ditch (05 and 06) butt up against the wall and therefore these fills must post-date the wall. They may represent deliberate backfilling of the ditch immediately after the construction of the wall.

### 3.3 Trench B

3.3.1 Topsoil (01) was machined off an area approximately 7m x 2m and varied between 0.2m and 0.4m deep. At the southern end the trench was sited on the site boundary bank, and here only 0.05m topsoil was taken off to reveal the make-up of the bank (10) which was a rough dump of stones of variable size within a dark brown clay loam matrix. The bank material was not excavated.

3.3.2 A wall (11) ran across the trench from east to west. This was approximately 0.8m wide and the top of the wall was 0.4m below the present ground surface. The northern face survived to a height of 0.4m and was two courses deep and well defined. The southern side was more roughly faced, which may suggest that the wall was built against a bank. To the south of the wall the removal of the topsoil revealed the reddish-brown, natural clay loam hillwash at 208.24m OD (02), whereas to the north was a layer of flat stones in a clay loam matrix (09). Many of these stones were chamfered, and a few had holes in them indicating that they were roof tiles. One body sherd and two fragments of handle of green-glazed pottery of probable medieval date were recovered from this layer. The layer was approximately 80mm deep.

3.3.3 To the north of the wall was a shallow ditch (13) filled with a brown clay-loam fill (14) which appeared to extend below the wall. It was not recognised to the north of the wall, but may have been removed by the construction of a drain (see below, Para 3.3.4). Only the eastern half of this ditch was visible in the trench so its full width could not be determined, but it is at least 0.8m wide. The base lay at 208.01m OD, 0.23m below the top of the subsoil. Seven sherds of medieval cooking pot were recovered from the trench.

3.3.4 Beneath the stony layer (09) to the north of the wall was a compressed layer of reddish-brown clay loam (15) lying at 208.01m OD which may represent a beaten earth floor but may simply be the compressed top of the natural subsoil. Cutting through this layer was an ill-defined feature (16) capped with flat stones (12). This ran parallel with the wall (11) then turned a right angle to run from north to south close to the western section and could represent a drain.



## **4 CONCLUSIONS**

**4.1** The evaluation has clearly demonstrated the existence of archaeology on the site. The short lengths of the walls (03 and 11) revealed make it difficult to determine whether they are on precisely the same alignment and therefore form part of the same structure. Nevertheless, their general appearance, width and constructional traits are similar, suggesting that they form two sides of a substantial and relatively well preserved stone building approximately 8.5m wide.

**4.2** No buildings are present on the tithe map of the area nor on the first edition of the large-scale Ordnance Survey map. This means that the building must not only have been constructed, but also abandoned before the preparation of the tithe map in 1847. The presence of medieval pottery in an associated layer tends to favour a medieval date for the structure.

**4.3** Slight earthworks to the east and west of the excavated portions of wall indicate that the walls probably continue outside the excavated area and are again well preserved. The earthworks suggest that the building may be approximately 15m long with its axis aligned from east to west.

**4.4** The size, date and relatively well preserved nature of the building represented by the excavated walls suggests that it forms an important element in the early history of Llanfilo, particularly when considering its proximity to the moated site (PAR 4494) and St Bilo's church (PAR 20183) at the heart of the village.

**4.5** The features underlying the walls (07 and 14) may also have an important place in our understanding of the early history of Llanfilo, but the short lengths excavated mean that their significance is impossible to determine within the limits of the evaluation.

## **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

CPAT wishes to thank Mr M.J. Pryce for his assistance during the evaluation, and to Mr Pryce of Penishapentre for his work in removing the topsoil. My own thanks go to Mr Richard Hankinson, Mr Brian Hart and Mr Glyn Owen of CPAT for their assistance during the excavations, and again to Mr Richard Hankinson for his search of the map archive material. Thanks also to Mr Nigel Jones of CPAT for his informal comments on the pottery.



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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **LAND AT LLANFILO, near BRECON, POWYS**

#### **SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

##### **1 Introduction**

1.1 A proposed residential housing development (Brecknock Borough Council Planning Application B007060) on land in the centre of Llanfilo, lies within what is believed to be the historic core of the village in an area of what is considered to be of extreme archaeological sensitivity. A church was probably established here in the early medieval period and a short distance to the south is a significant moated site, recently scheduled as a site of national importance. Consequently, it has been pointed out that archaeological remains may exist in the area of the proposed development.

1.2 Brecknock Borough Council have decided on the advice of their archaeological advisers, the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) that an evaluation is necessary to assess the implications of the planning application on the archaeological resource in order that these can be taken into account during the determination of that planning. Accordingly a brief (CPAT EVB 84) has been prepared by the Curatorial Section of CPAT on behalf of the Brecon Beacons National Park which describes the scheme of archaeological works required.

##### **2 Objectives**

2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:

2.1.1 to reveal by means of two carefully located excavation trenches, the nature, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these are possible;

2.1.2 to record any archaeology so revealed;

2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the evaluation and incorporating sufficient information on the archaeological resource for the planning authority to assess the implications of the development.

##### **3 Methods**

3.1 The evaluation will take the form of two linear trenches, one 10m x 2m, the second 7m x 2m, as specified in the evaluation brief. The trenches will have the topsoil and any modern overburden removed mechanically, with this phase of the work being supervised closely by the archaeological team leader. This will



be followed by manual excavation of all areas deemed to be of potential archaeological significance within the trench. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate within the constraints imposed by time and safety considerations.

3.2 The excavation will be undertaken using standard evaluation procedures:

3.2.1 removal of modern overburden and sterile lower levels

3.2.2 evaluation of the archaeological deposits by hand trowelling to establish their importance and integrity, but avoiding any unnecessary disturbance of the deposits.

3.2.3 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 Evaluation Brief), and photographed in monochrome and colour. All drawn records will be related to control points depicted on modern maps.

3.2.4 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 an appropriate museum, subject to agreement being reached with the landowner and the museum curator.

3.3 Following the on-site work a report will be prepared according to the principles laid out in the Evaluation Brief.

3.4 The site archive will be prepared to specifications laid out in Appendix 3 in the Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991), to be deposited in the Powys County Sites and Monuments Record.

#### 4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The evaluation will be undertaken by a small team of skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of an experienced field archaeologist. Overall supervision will be by the Deputy Director of CPAT who is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

4.2 All report preparation will be completed by the same field archaeologist who supervised the evaluation.

4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will take four to five days and the subsequent report would be prepared immediately thereafter and submitted to the client within 15 working days of the completion of the fieldwork. This will be 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.

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.

R. J. Silvester  
14 September 1994



## APPENDIX 2

### ARCHIVE AND FINDS

#### ARCHIVE

##### Plans and section

Location plan of trenches at 1:50. Feature plans and section drawings of both trenches at 1:20. The archive is stored at the CPAT offices.

##### Photographic Archive

35mm colour transparencies of excavated trenches and features.

35mm black and white negatives and contact print of trenches and all excavated features.

Catalogue of all black and white photographs.

##### Context Records

Record forms describing all recorded contexts.

#### FINDS

Modern finds of pottery and glass were not retained from the machined-off topsoil layer. Finds have been washed and marked and are currently stored at the CPAT offices.

##### Pottery

Context 09	Two strap-handle fragments and one body sherd of externally green-glazed pottery with a fine clay fabric. 13th to 15th century date.
Context 14	7 body sherds of cooking pot from a relatively local source. 13th to 15th century date.

##### Stone

Context 01	Very fine grained micaceous sandstone whetstone.
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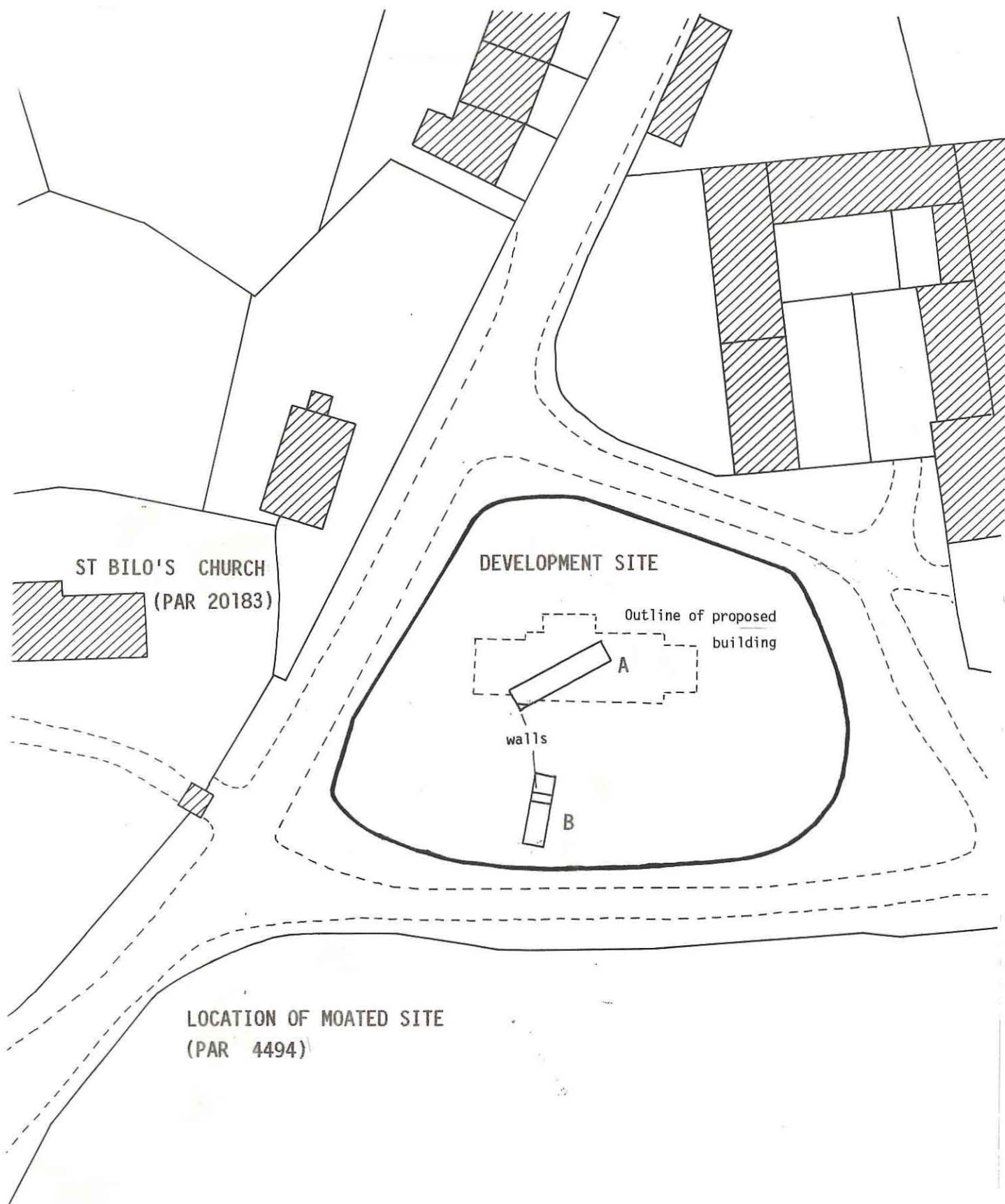


Fig 1. Location Plan of Evaluation Site Trenches (1:500).



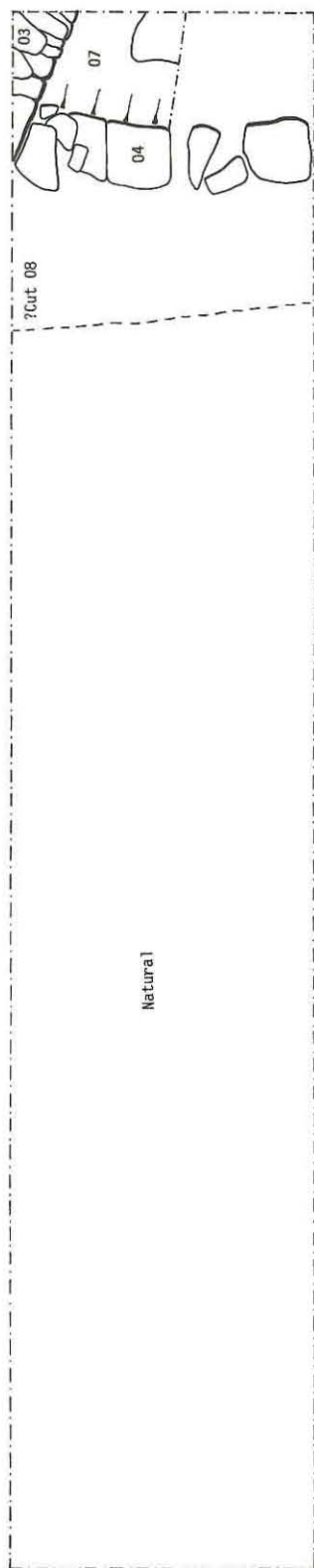


Fig 2:Plan of Trench A (1:50).

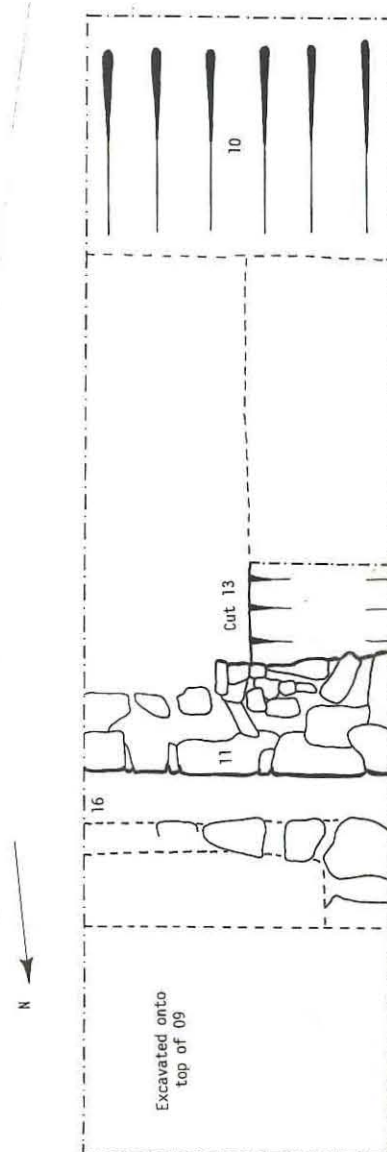


Fig 3:Plan of Trench B (1:50).