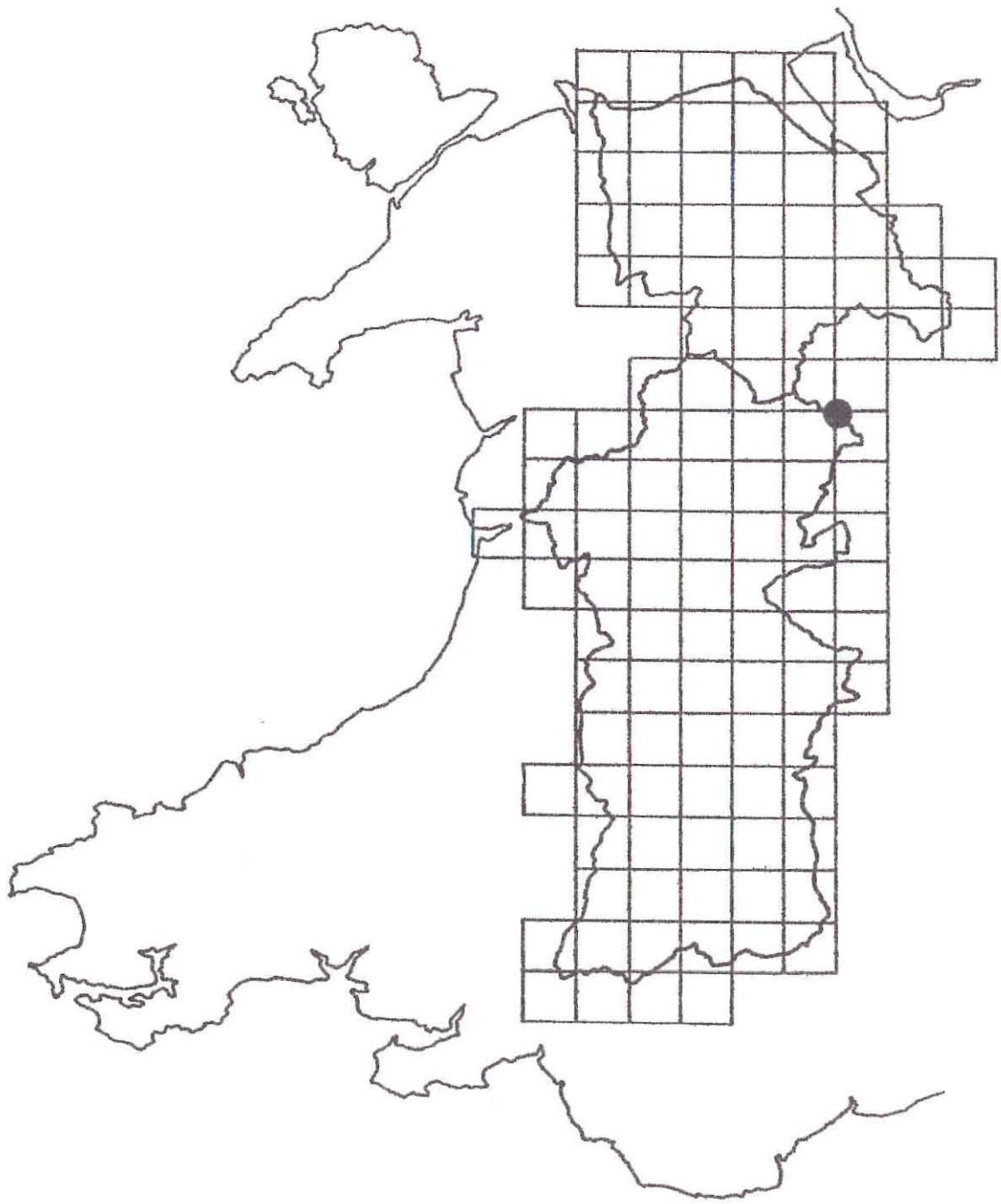
THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Llanymynech Hillfort, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 136

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Llanymynech Hillfort, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Report prepared for Llanymynech Golf Club

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SUMMARY

CPAT Contracting were commissioned by the Llanymynech Golf Club to undertake a field evaluation of a plot of land at Llanymynech golf-course on which it is proposed that a new staff room and machinery shed be built. The site lies within Llanymynech hillfort, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Mg 30), and the evaluation is required as part of Llanymynech Golf Club's application for Scheduled Monument Consent.

The evaluation revealed no structural evidence of prehistoric occupation in the excavated areas, but the recovery of small sherds of Iron Age pottery, metal working debris and calcined bone from a possible old ground surface, and a flint core from the topsoil could indicate significant prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the evaluation area.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Contracting section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was commissioned in March 1995 by the Llanymynech Golf Club to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the site of a new machinery store and staff room at Llanymynech Golf Course, Carreghofa, Powys (SJ 26542201). The site lies within the scheduled area of Llanymynech hillfort (SAM Mg 30) and the evaluation was required by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments to determine the archaeological sensitivity of the site and to assist the Secretary of State in his assessment of Llanymynech Golf Club's application for Scheduled Monument Consent to carry out the proposed work.

1.2 The brief for the work was prepared by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, and this formed the basis for CPAT's specification. A copy of this specification is included in this report as Annex 1. The specification was accepted by Llanymynech Golf Club and excavations commenced on the 4 April 1995 and continued for two days involving a staff of two. This report was prepared shortly afterwards.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Llanymynech hillfort lies on a prominent outcrop of carboniferous limestone on the western edge of the Shropshire Plain overlooking the confluence of the Vyrnwy, Tanat and Cain Rivers to the south-west and the Severn Valley to the south-east. The three kilometre circuit of the ramparts encloses an area of approximately 57 ha, making it one of the largest hillforts in England and Wales. The evaluation site lies in a slight hollow, which may be partially artificial, close to the centre of the enclosed area.

2.2 Llanymynech hillfort is one of a number of large Iron Age sites in the area. The most significant of these are the hillforts at Old Oswestry, Llwyn Bryn-dinas and the Breiddin, the latter two of which have recently been the subject of excavations (Musson *et al.*1992; Musson 1991). There are also a number of smaller enclosures nearby, including the hillslope enclosure at Collfryn which has been the subject of recent extensive excavations (Britnell 1989).

2.3 Little archaeological work has previously been carried out at Llanymynech hill. In 1981 a section through the ramparts was recorded during the laying of a pipe trench adjacent to the approach road to the golf-

course (Musson 1981; Musson and Northover 1989). This revealed the stone rampart and ditch of the inner defences, and metal working debris behind the rampart. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal associated with two separate pits show that the metalworking could have been undertaken from the 4th century BC to the 1st century AD (Musson and Northover 1989, 20). Studies have also been carried out on the Llanymynech Ogof mine, which lies approximately 200m north of the evaluation site, and within the fort (Adams 1970). This has revealed evidence for Roman and possibly earlier copper and lead mining. Recent work by G.D.B Jones close to the fifth green is as yet unpublished.

2.4 Apart from the study of peat deposits in a pond (at SJ 269221; Martin 1992), the interior of the fort has not been the subject of any detailed archaeological investigation. In general this lack of evidence for the nature of occupation of the interior is true of all the large hillforts in the area, mainly because of the tendency to concentrate on the defences. Only during the excavation of the Breiddin have significant areas within the interior been properly investigated and this site produced evidence for a fairly dense occupation consisting of a series of small four-post structures and larger roundhouses (Musson 1991, 184). Excavations of the ramparts at Llwyn Bryn-dinas revealed evidence of copper smelting behind the rampart similar to the evidence from the 1981 excavations at Llanymynech. Extensive excavations at Collfryn have also produced evidence of a fairly dense occupation of the interior.

2.5 The later history of Llanymynech hill is mainly concerned with mining activities. It is assumed that mining was carried out in the medieval period, although as yet there is no direct evidence. Post-medieval mining is well attested, although most of the Llanymynech mine workings now visible are a result of nineteenth-century exploitation. Possible lead smelting sites were perhaps present, suggested by the reported existence of lead boles but these have been disturbed by later activity on the site and are no longer visible. By the end of the nineteenth century mining was in decline, but quarrying continued until the 1920s. A golf-course was first established on the site in the 1950s.

3. EXCAVATIONS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Two areas were excavated as part of the evaluation. Both were totally hand excavated. Area A was an L-shaped trench excavated around the northern corner of the present machinery store. It measured 4m along its north-western arm and 3m along its north-eastern and was 1m wide. Area B was a 1m-square trench excavated close to the western corner of the present machinery store.

3.1.2 In the following description numbers in brackets refer to context numbers recorded on site, and are used in Figures 2 and 3 which show the trench in plan and section.

3.2 Area A

3.2.1 Turf and gravel was removed from the area to reveal a dark brown clayey loam topsoil (01). Part of the south-eastern end of the area was covered with a concrete slab which formed part of the apron in front of the machinery store. The slab was approximately 0.12m deep, below which was the topsoil layer. Cutting through the topsoil layer was a modern stone filled trench (03). This trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m, but not fully emptied. It was considered that there would be little advantage in removing the whole feature as any traces of archaeological features would have been destroyed by the trench. Furthermore, any larger features would have been recognisable in the subsoil to either side. The trench is probably related to the water storage tank close to the excavated area. A lower layer of yellow-brown clayey loam topsoil (04) was recognisable in the north-eastern part of the trench, but was less distinct in the north-western part of the trench. The topsoil layers contained modern pottery and glass, and a single flint core was recovered (see below, para 4.1).

3.2.2 The removal of the topsoil revealed a mixed layer of dark-brown clay loam and clay lumps (06), the top of which lay 0.3 to 0.4m below the present ground surface. Occasional fragments of charcoal, slag, calcined bone, Iron Age pottery and vitrified material were recovered from this horizon (see below, para 4.2-4) which may represent an old ground surface or even an occupation layer. The layer was not recognised in the north-eastern part of the trench and was best preserved at the south-western end where it was approximately 0.1m deep.

3.2.3 Beneath the mixed layer the natural yellow-brown clay natural was recognised (05). This had not been cut through by any features apart from the modern stone filled trench (03).

3.3 Area B

3.3.1 The removal of the turf in Area B revealed the dark brown clay loam topsoil (01) which was recognised in Area A, beneath which was the yellow-brown clay subsoil (05). There was no trace of the possible old ground surface (06), although in the limited area excavated it may have been less readily recognisable. No features were recognised in the Area.

4. FINDS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The modern finds of pottery and glass were not retained from the topsoil, nor was the calcined bone recognised in the posible old ground surface layer (06). The finds retained and described below are currently stored at CPAT offices, 20 High Street, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7JP

4.2 Flint

4.2.1 A single core from the topsoil (01), probably of either Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

4.3 Vitrified Material

4.3.1 Four fragments of vitrified material were recovered from the possible ground surface layer (06), one of which represents a portion of furnace lining weighing 24g. The interior of the lining is heavily vitrified, coloured black/red on its surface, and grades from a greenish grey to a purplish grey next to the unvitrified red clay of the exterior. The furnace lining is almost identical to that recovered from the hearths excavated at Llanymynech in 1981, which were associated with radiocarbon dates of 2020 $\pm$70 BP (CAR 534) and 2170 $\pm$70 BP (CAR 535) (Musson and Northover 1989, 20-1). The material is likely to come from copper smelting.

4.3.2 The three other fragments of vitrified material, with a combined weight of 6g, could be derived from the lining, but could also be vitrified fragments of limestone.

4.4. Slag

4.4.1 A single fragment of bloom slag was recovered from the possible ground surface layer (06) and weighed 110g. The slag had clearly undergone a high firing temperature as there is some crystallisation on the surface. The slag is consistent with early firing methods.

4.4 Ceramic Material

4.4.1 Five fragments of ceramic material were recovered from the possible ground surface layer (06), three of which, weighing in total 18g, represent a type of pottery known as stony VCP. Examples of this pottery are known from a number of Iron Age sites in the area of Llanymynech hillfort, such as the Breiddin (Musson 1991, 130), Collfryn (Britnell 1989, 124) and Llwyn Bryn-dinas (Musson *et al.* 1992, 272). They are believed to be salt containers, probably from north Cheshire (Morris 1985).

4.4.2 A single small vesicular sherd of black pottery weighing 1g was recovered from the possible old ground surface (06). It probably represents pottery made just north of the Malvern Hills (Morris 1981, 151-3). Sherds of the same type were recovered during the excavations at the Breiddin (Musson 1991, 124), and Llwyn Bryn-dinas (Musson *et al.* 1992, 272).

4.4.3 A single small sherd of grey ceramic material recovered from the old ground surface (06) and weighing 2g could represent part of a bronze smelting crucible. Similar material has been recovered from the excavations at Collfryn, the Breiddin and Llwyn Bryn-dinas (Britnell 1989, 126; Musson 1991, 147; and Musson *et al.* 1992, 272-5).

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The evaluation trenches revealed no structural features of archeological interest. However the Iron Age pottery and calcined bone from the possible old ground surface (06), and the flint core from the topsoil (01) suggest that there is a strong possibility of prehistoric occupation nearby.

5.2 The finds recovered suggest that Llanymynech hillfort has close affinities with the other Iron Age sites in the immediate area. There may have been fairly intensive occupation of the interior, partly associated with the processing of copper derived from mines on Llanymynech hill. The recovery of the flint core from the site may also suggest that the hill was occupied before the supposed fortification of the hill in the early Iron Age.

4.3 The hollow in which the proposed building is to be built has been accentuated in recent years by the levelling of the Golf Club car park, but much of it is undoubtably natural. It could have provided shelter and a natural focus for human activity and for the reasons outlined in the report is likely to have significant archaeological potential.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CPAT Contracting wish to thank Llanymynech Golf Club, and in particular Mr David Thomas, the secretary and Mr Alun Lewis, the head green keeper for their assistance during the evaluation.

My own thanks go to Mr Bill Britnell and Dr Alex Gibson, of CPAT for their comments on the pottery, and to Mr Mark Walters, also of CPAT, for his comments on the vitrified material and the slag. Thank you also to Richard Hankinson for his assistance during the excavations.

FIG 1: Llanymynech Hillfort, Powys. Location of Evaluation Area (1: 10,000)

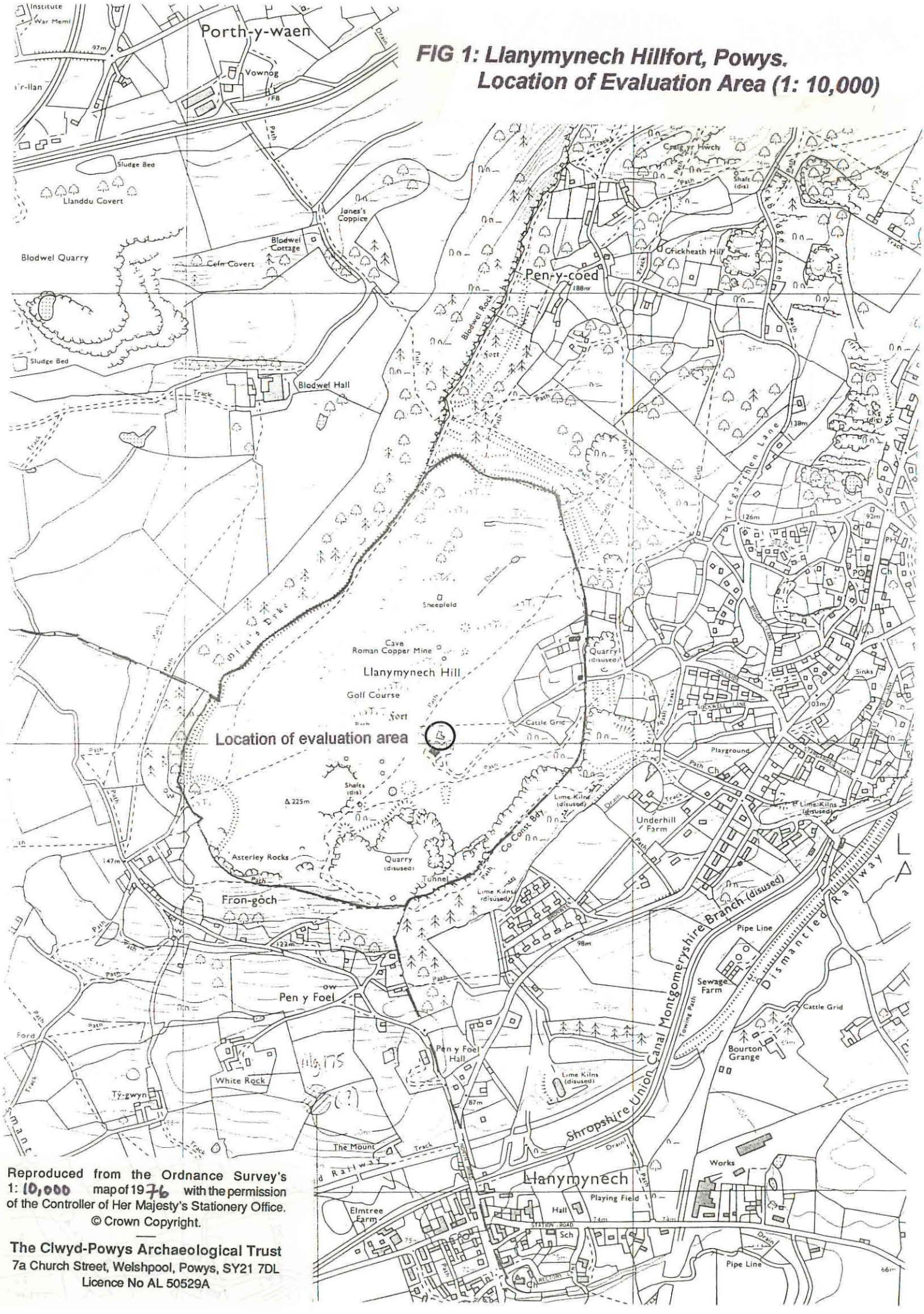

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FIG 2: Plan of Evaluation Areas (1:50)

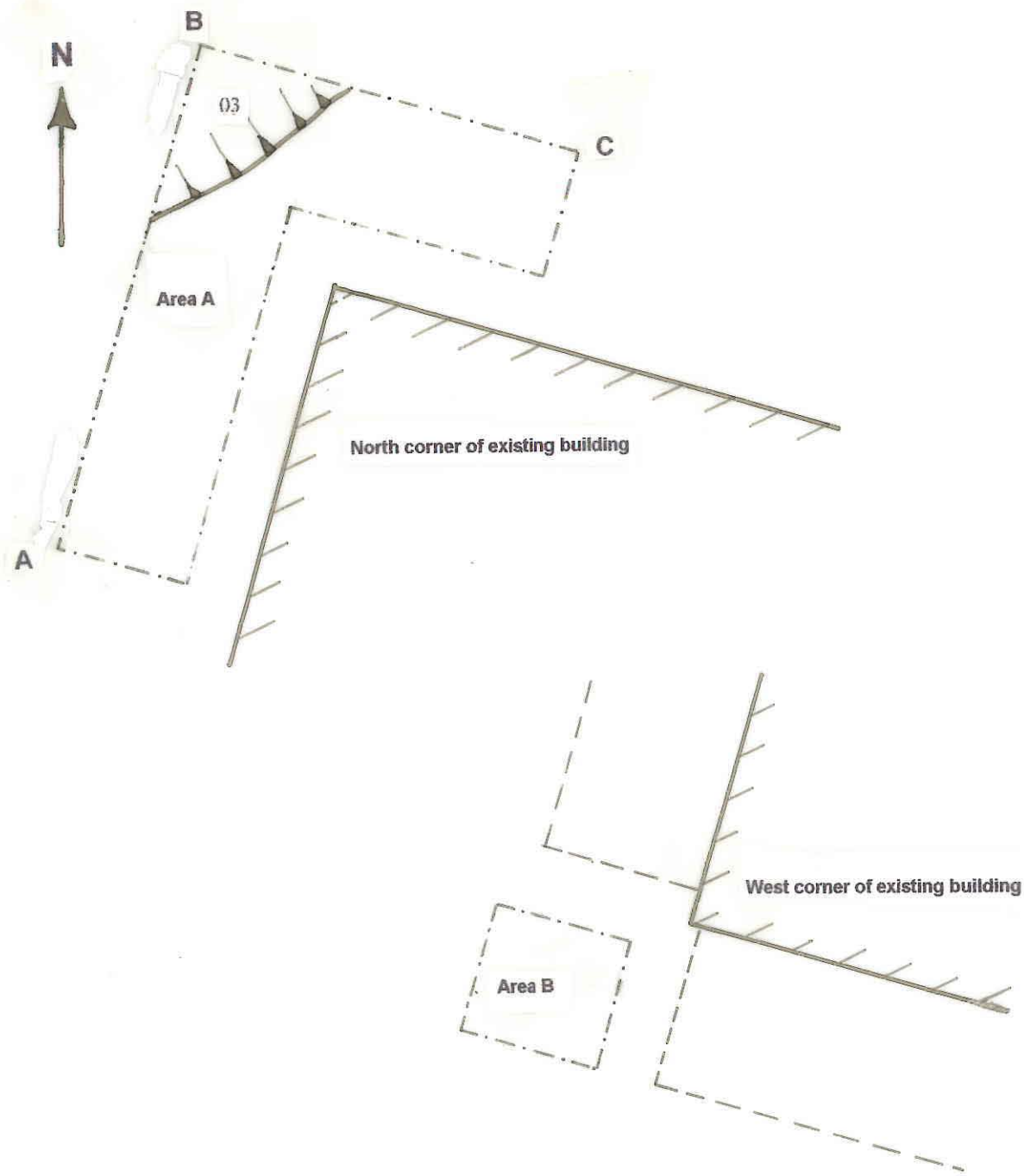
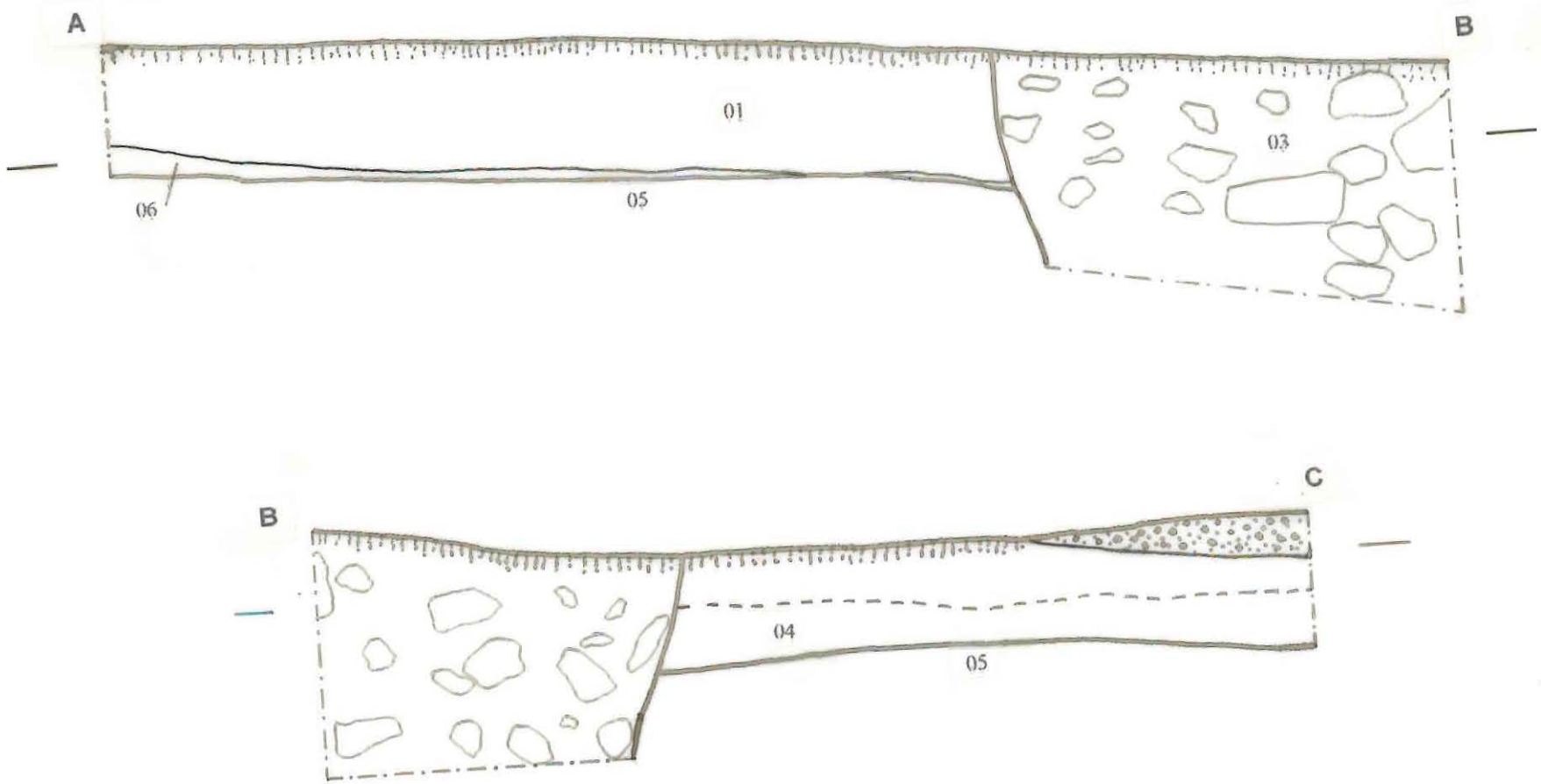


FIG 3: Sections of Area A (1:20)



ANNEX 1

PROPOSAL FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS IN ASSOCIATION WITH AN APPLICATION FOR SCHEDULED MONUMENT CONSENT AT LLANYMYNECH HILL FORT, SHROPSHIRE

SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION TO BE CONDUCTED BY CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

1.1 These proposals have been prepared by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Contracting (henceforward referred to as CPAT Contracting) at the request of Llanymynech Golf Club in a letter from their agents, Munro Associates of Welshpool, dated 7 February 1995. Subject to a satisfactory agreement being reached between the Golf Club and CPAT Contracting, the results of the proposals will be used in conjunction with an application for Scheduled Monument Consent to The Secretary of State.

1.2 It is proposed by Llanymynech Golf Club to erect a machinery store and staff room, within the area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Llanymynech hillfort (SAM Mg 30). In agreement with Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments, the Golf Club has agreed to undertake an archaeological evaluation of the area affected by the development.

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 any archaeology within the area of the proposed development in so far as these objectives are feasible;

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 Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments to assess the implications of the development.

3 Methods

3.1 The evaluation will take the form of two trenches, one L-shaped with arms of 4m and 3m length and a consistent width of 1m, the other a square with dimensions of 1m by 1m, as specified in the letter of 10 February from Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments to Munro Associates. The trenches will be excavated by hand, either to the surface of the subsoil or to the level of any archaeological strata. All features encountered will be examined as fully as appropriate in order to satisfy the requirements of para 2.1.1, but 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 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 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 for submission to Cadw/Welsh Historic Monuments.

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 led by 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 no more than two 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
15 February 1995