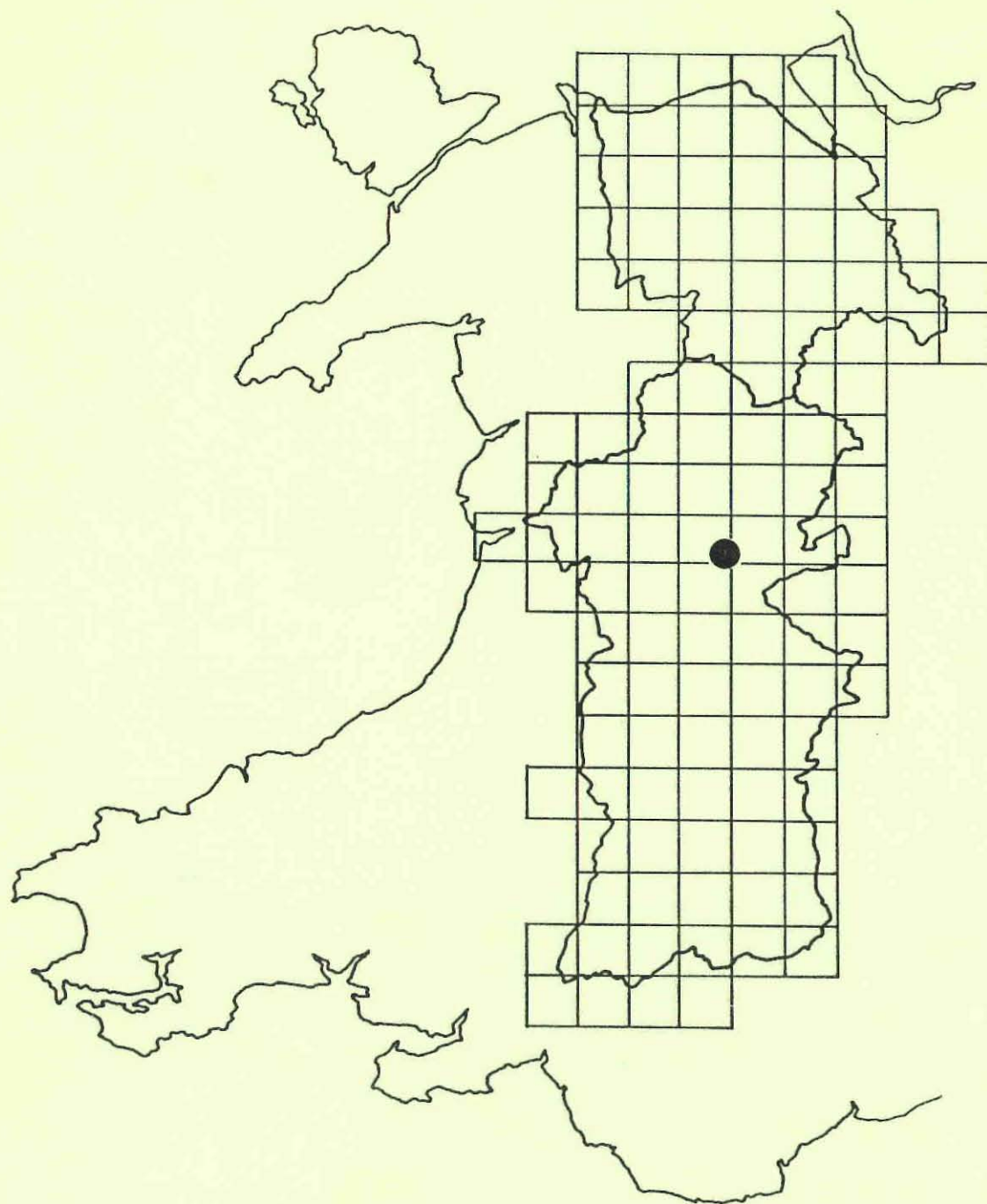


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*An Archaeological Assessment of the
proposed Golf Course at Rhydlydan Farm,
Aberhafesp, Powys*



CPAT Report No 31

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A REPORT PREPARED FOR RHYDLYDAN ESTATES

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 In April 1992 the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was commissioned by Rhydlydan Estates Ltd of the Old Rectory, Aberhafesp, Newtown, Powys to carry out an archaeological assessment of a proposed golf course development at Rhydlydan Farm, Aberhafesp. The assessment was required as part of the client's planning application (M21913) to Montgomeryshire District Council, as specified in the brief prepared by the Council's archaeological advisor.
- 1.2 Desk-top research and field survey were undertaken in early May and this report was prepared immediately afterwards.

2 Location

- 2.1 The proposed development covers a single and roughly rectangular tract of land lying to the north-west of Rhydlydan Mill and extending to some 56.6 hectares, being centred at SO 05509350 (Fig 1). The whole is within the community of Caersws and is located about 6km west of Newtown in mid-Powys.

3 Landscape and Topography

- 3.1 Occupying a typical valley side location, the survey area is situated on a sloping spur at the edge of a river terrace 0.5km to the north of the Severn. The land rises gently from approximately 120m OD at its south-eastern end to just above the 190m OD contour in the north-west. For most of its northern extent the ground drops sharply to a small stream which forms a natural boundary to the property, whilst to the south-east the area is bounded by a minor road which runs up from Rhydlydan Bridge to Esgair and beyond.
- 3.2 With the exception of one small (0.5 hectare) field of rough grazing and some wooded areas along the edge of the stream bed the whole of the survey area is laid to improved pasture, and modern agricultural use would seem to be predominantly pastoral.

4 Known Archaeology

- 4.1 As far as we are aware no detailed field survey of this specific area has been previously undertaken. As a result, the Powys Sites and Monuments Record (PAR) contains no entries for features of archaeological significance within the bounds of the proposed golf course. There are, however, a number of known sites nearby which suggest that there has been significant and (almost certainly) continuous activity in this general area since at least late prehistoric times (Fig 1).
- 4.2 Early settlement is witnessed by the substantial oval earthwork at Gwyn Fynydd (PAR 771), 2km to the west of Rhydlydan. This defended settlement is likely to have Iron Age origins.
- 4.3 At the confluence of routes into mid-Wales and to the south and north, the area was of strategic importance during the Roman period. A kilometre to the south an early fort was set up at Llwyn-y-brain (PAR 1575) in c.50-75 AD. This was superseded during the last quarter of the

1st century by the fort at Caersws (PAR 772) which continued in occupation into the 4th century AD. A road running northwards from this later fort passes within 200 metres of the western boundary of the survey area.

- 4.4 Building remains including a cruck-framed barn at Tre-gastell (PAR 1581, PAR 20908) show activity on the land here during the later medieval period.
- 4.5 During the early 19th century, evidence of land enclosures (Section 5.3) suggests agricultural expansion and it is to this period that Rhydlydan Mill itself belongs. The building and its unusual machinery (PAR 20908) reflect a period of local prosperity and are of particular interest to agricultural historians.
- 4.6 The variety and significance of these surrounding sites clearly illustrates that the area under survey lies within an wider historical landscape of considerable importance.

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The assessment at Rhydlydan Farm was produced by a combination of research into written, cartographic and photographic sources and a systematic survey of the area.
- 5.2 Research into the written sources and early maps helps to build up a picture of land use since the beginning of the 19th century and can sometimes hint at what may have been there before. This can provide a fuller explanation for what we may encounter on the ground.
- 5.3 An example of this is an Ordnance Survey drawing, dated 1817, which shows that a trackway then ran across the fields from Rhos-goch to a building, known as Ffinnant, just across the stream which forms the northern boundary to the survey area (Fig 1. A). This drawing also shows that the four fields at the north-western end of the development area were then un-enclosed and were "waste" or common land belonging to Esgair Gwynfynydd. By 1826 however, the Llanwnog Enclosure Award shows them as being "taken in" and as having their modern boundaries.
- 5.4 Other helpful information was taken from the Tithe Apportionment of 1846 which shows boundaries, ownership, field names and the type of land use at the time. The names of fields, in particular, can occasionally allude to features of archaeological interest as well as giving an idea of their traditional use.
- 5.5 As a preliminary to the site visit the vertical aerial photographs (taken as part of the coverage by Montgomery District Council in 1984) were examined and possible cropmarks noted for inspection on the ground.
- 5.6 On site the entire area of the proposed development was examined systematically by walking transects about 30m apart. Each field was covered in turn and particular attention was given to field boundaries and the stream bed along the northern side.
- 5.7 Where features of interest were encountered these were measured, located on the plan, described and - where appropriate - photographed. These features are outlined on Figure 1. A more detailed record will be lodged with the County Sites and Monuments Record in due course.

6 The Archaeology

- 6.1 Ridge and furrow Ridge and furrow appears on the ground as a corrugated surface and is indicative of an agricultural practice prevalent from at least medieval times until the 19th century. The survey area contained considerable areas of ridge and furrow and in places - most notably the two fields immediately to the north of the farm - it was well preserved (Fig 1). The direction of the ridging was recorded and, where possible, its width measured as this may give some indication of relative date. Dating these patterns with any certainty is not possible. However, it might be noted that the fields in which they survive correlate quite accurately with those reported as being under arable cultivation in the 1846 Tithe Apportionment (Section 5.4).
- 6.2 Field Boundaries Contrasts between the shape, size and form of the field boundaries at Rhydylydan Farm are suggestive of changing land-use patterns. Most obvious is the contrast between the boundaries of the fields at the north-western end of the area and those in the south-east. The former have a rectilinear appearance whereas those lower down near the farmstead form a much more irregular pattern. This difference was apparent in the survey with the lower fields generally having much more substantial boundary banks than those to the north which were only enclosed in the early 19th century. Within the survey area the remains of a number of derelict boundaries were discovered (Fig 1. B,C & D). A number of others are suggested by the extent of ridge and furrow. Dating is difficult but at least one of these boundaries (B), and probably others, almost certainly predate the Ordnance Survey drawing of 1817.
- 6.3 Trackways The presence of a known early trackway running north-east from Rhos-goch was noted above (Section 5.3). Only its northern section (Fig 1. E) is now visible. This survives as a substantial hedge bank on the western side with a parallel bank to the east. Three other tracks were recognised (Fig 1. F,G & H). Track F is known from the modern Ordnance Survey map but now only survives at its northern end as a shallow depression. Track G is better preserved at its south-eastern end where it survives as a distinct hollow way. The evidence of track H is slighter. This trackway survives as a slight hollow and bank and runs from an elbow in the field boundary to the south to a steep cutting in the bank down to the stream in the north.
- 6.4 Earthen Bank In the same field as this last trackway there is a visible bank (Fig 1. J) of sizable proportions (approximately 50m long and up to 1.6m high). Whilst this vaguely regular feature may have man-made origins (eg the edge of a large platform) it is felt that the most likely explanation is a natural one.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.1 The assessment at Rhydylydan Farm produced a considerable number of features of interest relating to the historic landscape, most notably the extent of ridge and furrow and the differing morphology of the field boundaries. Indeed, if the discovery of the building known as Ffynnant (Section 5.3: Fig 1. A) - which is just outside the proposed development area - is excluded then all of these features relate to land use as

opposed to specific settlement sites. It is clear that this land has been cultivated over a long period and it is therefore likely that any very early features have been largely eroded by later farming practices. There is, however, a strong possibility that, in this locality, the land has been actively farmed since the medieval period and probably much earlier.

- 7.2 In the authors' opinion, whilst this information is of great interest to wider landscape studies in the region, there would seem to be nothing that merits preservation in situ nor does there appear to be any need for further archaeological work within the area proposed for development.

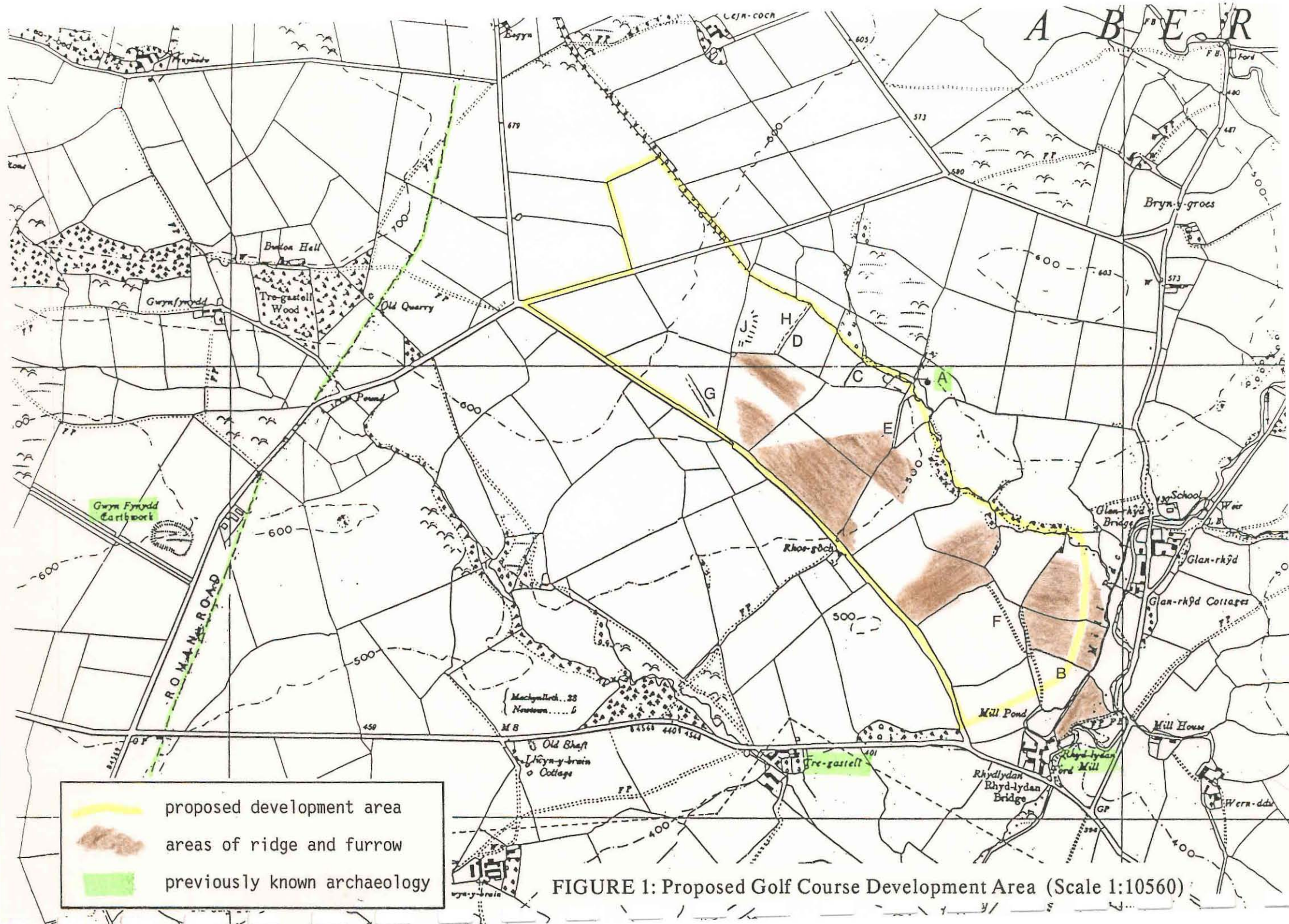


FIGURE 1: Proposed Golf Course Development Area (Scale 1:10560)