CPAT Report No 956

Wynnstay Road, Ruthin, Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

E Farley
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Report for I.M & B.M Roberts

CPAT Report Record

Report and status

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Internal control

	name	Signature	date
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Internal memo

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Contracts and Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by IM & BM Roberts to undertake an archaeological evaluation in connection with proposals to construct a new dwelling with access on land adjacent to Wynnstay Road, Ruthin. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, had determined that an archaeological evaluation was required to identify the potential impact on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a brief was prepared which details the works required (CPAT EVB 686).

1.2 The proposed development lies within the presumed historic core of the town and it was generally assumed that sub-surface archaeological deposits might survive within the area which related to medieval and later occupation, while the possibility of Roman and even earlier activity cannot be ruled out.

2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The town of Ruthin developed on the westernmost of two north to south glaciated ridges set within the Vale of Clwyd. The solid geology consists of weathered Permo-Triassic sandstone, overlain by boulder clay and fluvio-glacial deposits.

2.2 The area of the evaluation lies to the rear of 27 Well Street off Wynnstay Road, Ruthin (SJ 12545823; see Figure 1), on level ground, enclosed by boundary walls on all sides.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Stage One of the evaluation, as defined by the curatorial brief, involved the examination of readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic and photographic sources for the area of the development and its immediate environs. The repositories that were consulted included the following: the regional Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; the National Monuments Record, held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth; and Denbighshire Record Office, Ruthin.

3.2 Prehistoric finds from the Ruthin area include a stone axe found in an allotment to the north of the town, and a polished example (PRN 106417) found in Mwrog Street, south-west of the town centre, in the 1980s. As yet, however, little of prehistoric origin has come from the more western of the two glacial ridges which is occupied by the castle and the historic town. On the more easterly ridge across to which Ruthin has now expanded, the excavations at Brynhyfryd Park also produced six sherds of pottery and over 100 worked flints of prehistoric date.

3.3 Roman activity is well attested in the more recently developed part of Ruthin to the east in the Brynhyfryd Park area. Roman pottery vessels that had perhaps contained cremations were found during an extension to the hospital in 1981. East of the hospital in Brynhyfryd Park, Roman activity has been detected over an extensive area, particularly during a series of excavations that took place in 1989. Views differ as to whether the features that were identified represent a Roman fort and its associated *vicus* or a civilian settlement (for details the reader is referred to Waddelove *et al*. 1990; Jones 1992). On the western ridge, a recent evaluation along Record Street, some 25m west of the development area, produced several sherds of Roman pottery and in situ deposits likely to date to the late 1st or 2nd centuries AD (Grant 2005).

3.4   In the medieval era, prior to the Edwardian Conquest in the second half of the 13th century, Ruthin is believed to have developed as a *maerdref*, the administrative centre of the commote of Dyffryn Clwyd. As a result a Welsh settlement of some size probably developed in the area of modern Well Street, formerly 'Welsh Street'. Claims of a Welsh stronghold, 'the Red Fort', beneath or close to the later castle, are not backed by substantive evidence, but in the absence of excavation cannot be conclusively refuted (Soulsby 1983).

3.5   Dyffryn Clwyd was disputed by the English and Welsh throughout the mid-13th century. However, the area came under Edward I's control in 1277 and the construction of Ruthin Castle commenced immediately. The town was returned to David, brother of Llywelyn, soon after, but following an abortive Welsh uprising in 1282, Dyffryn Clwyd was bestowed on Reginald de Grey who continued the castle building programme and also started to lay out a town focused on the existing Welsh *tref*. Ruthin became the *caput* or central place of a lordship that extended over three commotes.

3.6   A charter granted privileges to the newly established borough in 1282 or soon after, and this 'reflected the prosperity of the town under the Welsh princes and the relatively peaceful transition into a marcher borough, where despite the initial number of English immigrants, a genuinely Anglo-Welsh community was created' (Jack 1978).

3.7   St Peter's church was founded as a chapel in 1282 or thereabouts, and was subsequently rebuilt in 1310 as a collegiate church with seven priests, although the *Taxatio* of 1291 apparently refers to a 'flourishing collegiate establishment', implying an earlier foundation. With the castle and the market place it represented one of the three focal points of the medieval town, the centre of which was St Peter's Square, the permanent market place from 1295. A timber-framed court house (PRN 102550) was erected in the centre of the square in 1401. Restored in 1926, it now houses a bank and the remains of a gallows project from one wall, while a few original prison cells survive below ground. Nearby, a town hall was built of stone from the old collegiate church in 1663, with a meat market occupying the ground floor.

3.8   The street pattern extending from the square is relatively rectilinear and traces of burgage plots are still discernible off Clwyd Street (formerly Mill Street), Castle Street and other central streets. Dog Lane appears to be a medieval name, although as late as 1826 its significance in terms of the houses giving on to it was very slight. Record Street and Well Street were previously Castle Lane (though an alternative name, New Hall Street, appears in 1823) and Welsh Street respectively. Market Street was created during the mid-19th century. The road from Corwen originally adopted a straight course, running close to the castle and merging with Castle Street. In the early 19th century, it was diverted further to the east to its present line. Housing almost certainly extended westwards across the River Clwyd: New Street (previously Borthyn) and Mwrog Street were both mentioned in a register of tenants of the local lordship in 1324.

3.9   By 1324 there were 70 burgesses controlling 100 burgages, one third of them Welsh and concentrated mainly in the Well Street area. A weekly market and thrice-yearly fairs centred on the market place which was established properly in 1295-6.

3.10   Ruthin was sacked by Owain Glyndwr in 1400 and again perhaps in 1402, and it was only as a result of these attacks that town defences were added, a murage grant being recorded in 1407. This reputedly led to the construction of a ditch around the town, though no traces of any defences now remain or indeed have even been traced. The town recovered quickly and by 1496 90 burgesses holding 209 burgages were recorded.

3.11   Henry VII purchased the lordship of Ruthin in 1508 and in the same year he granted a charter to the borough confirming market rights and other privileges. During the Civil War it was besieged in 1644 and again in 1646 by Parliamentary forces, and when it finally fell the castle was razed. From 1536 it functioned as one of the county towns of Denbighshire. Quarter Sessions and Great Sessions courts were held in the town, and in 1775 the county gaol was built there.

3.12   The development area lies to the rear of 27 Well Street, a grade II listed building (PRN 26039). The house is probably 18th-century in origin, but has been considerably modified.

Wynnstay Road in Cartographic Sources

3.13   Unfortunately, Ruthin was not a town that was mapped until the 19th century, or it may be that whatever maps were produced have subsequently been lost. Not that the absence is necessarily critical. Almost every larger scale map of Ruthin during the 19th century demonstrates that the northern front of Well Street displayed an unbroken line of tenements and narrow properties running north or north-westwards, the only breaks being minor access ways, probably little more than alleys or footpaths, to the closes behind the properties. Some of these are visible on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (see Figure 1).

3.14   Most of the earlier 19th-century maps do not depict the closes and the burgage plots that lay behind Well Street, although the earliest estate map, probably attributable on stylistic criteria to the later 18th century (which cannot be reproduced here for copyright reasons), indicates that much of the land belonged to a Mr Marsden. That these were originally medieval burgage plots there can be little doubt, although the pattern of long narrow strips running off the street frontage had been much modified by amalgamations and sub-divisions by the 19th century. The position of the development plot can be gauged from its location opposite the Wynnstay Hotel which before the 1850s was known as the Cross Foxes Inn.

3.15   A plan of around 1850, probably a sale map, shows the Well Street plot that is the subject of the evaluation. There was a block of buildings on the street frontage little different in outline from that there today. The rear of the plot was empty of all features. To either side was land owned by Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart, and it is likely though unproven that he also owned the plot between (i.e. north-east of the development area). To the west was the burgage plot which was subsequently removed to create Wynnstay Road, and it is clear too the surviving strip of the Wynn tenement plot not required for the road was added to the area of the present development to create the wedge of land with its arcing side that is visible today. It may mean that a tenement boundary, running north to south is fossilised within the plot.

3.16   The first edition of the large-scale Ordnance Survey map, published in 1875 (see Figure 1), confirms that the plot formed part of 27 Well Street. In passing it can be noted that Well Street was re-numbered during the 19th century. Smith's map of Ruthin from 1859 correlates with the 1826 plan in indicating that the present number 27 was no 53 or perhaps no 54 in the 19th century.
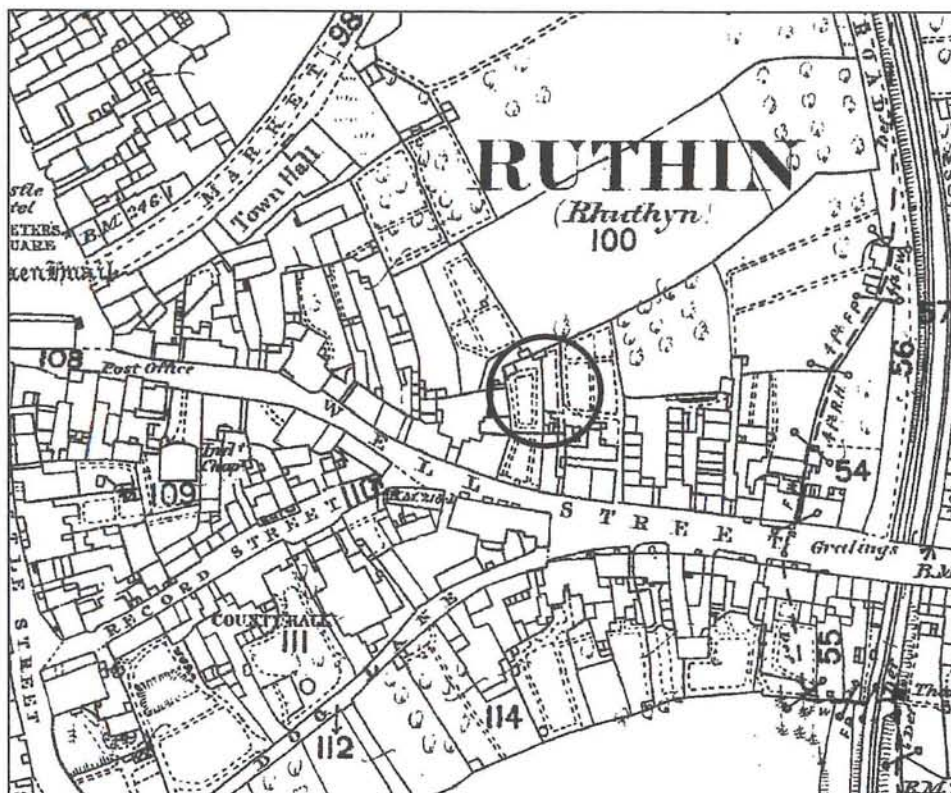
Figure 1. Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map published 1875

3.18 Wynnstay Road, which now links Wells Street and Market Street, was constructed towards the end of the 19th century, and is first depicted by the Ordnance Survey in 1900 (see Figure 2).
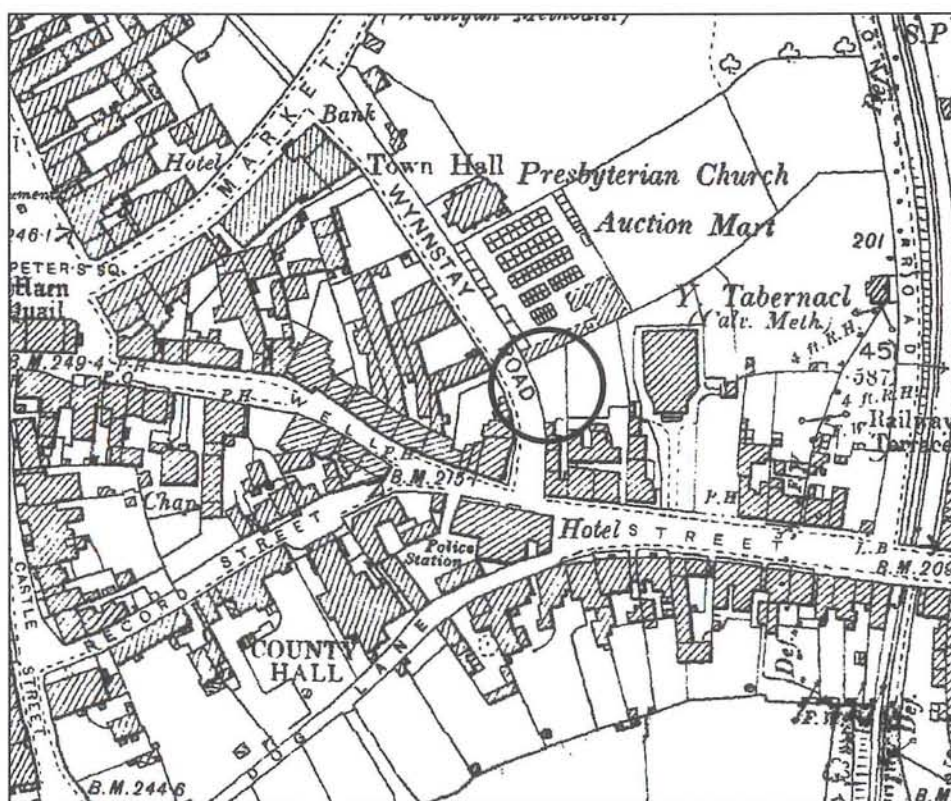

Figure 2. Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500 map published 1900

4   EVALUATION

4.1   The evaluation comprised a single, linear trench that ran north to south, measuring 11.40m by 1.50m (see Figure 3). Site conditions, specifically focused upon the restricted space available for the storage of spoil, resulted in the re-sizing of the trench from what was specified in the curatorial brief.   However, this did not in any way compromise the conditions of the archaeological brief.

4.2   The trench was excavated by machine down to the level of the first significant archaeological horizon or the top of the natural subsoil, which ever was first encountered, with all subsequent cleaning and excavation being carried out by hand. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to contexts given to those features and layers which were identified during the excavation. A drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout the duration of the evaluation (see Appendix 2).

Trench 1 (see Figure 4)

4.3   No significant archaeological horizons were identified during the initial machining, which was continued down to the top of the natural subsoil.

4.4   The topsoil (01) comprised a modern, dark blackish-brown gritty silt which contained modern debris in the form of red bricks, concrete slab fragments, glass and plastic fragments and also a thin band of cement, the whole extending to a maximum depth of 0.74m. No significant archaeological horizons were identified at this depth, and the trench was further machine-excavated to the top of the next deposit.

4.5   This lower deposit consisted of a mid greyish-brown clay silt (02) that contained some clay pipe fragments and ceramic finds of post-medieval date to a maximum thickness of 0.66m No other archaeological horizons were visible.

4.6   Underlying (02), was a mid reddish-brown clay silt (03) that was identified throughout the excavated area, to a maximum thickness of 0.32m.   This deposit was fairly sterile in comparison to (01) and (02); however, seven sherds of medieval pottery were discovered. Again, no archaeological horizons were recognised and the trench was machine-excavated to the top of the next deposit.

4.7   A thin band of mid-grey sandy clay that continued throughout the trench and contained gravel (04), to a maximum thickness of 0.18m. No archaeological finds or features were discovered within this deposit.

4.8   The natural subsoil consisted of a bright orange-yellow clay, which contained no recognisable archaeological finds nor features.

Figure 3. Trench after cleaning from south. (Photo CPAT 2670-004)

Figure 4. West facing section of trench. (Photo CPAT 2670-011)

5 FINDS

5.1 The evaluation produced a small collection of artefacts typical of a town site such as this, primarily consisting of sherds of post-medieval pottery and fragments of clay pipe. The majority of the pottery was post-medieval in date, including 17th- and 18th-century slipwares and later glazed earthenwares.

5.2 A small number of sherds of medieval pottery were found during the evaluation, although they were recovered from a post-medieval context (03). They are, nevertheless, significant in demonstrating a reasonable level of medieval activity in the locality.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The site of the evaluation is located within the historic core of Ruthin, to the rear of Well Street which is known to have been a thoroughfare of medieval and post-medieval date. The proposed development plot is likely to have occupied the rear of a burgage plot associated with a property fronting onto Well Street.

6.2 The upper deposits within the evaluation trench (contexts 01 and 02) were of fairly modern origin (post-medieval and later) with associated finds. The upper layer (01) in particular has been used as a modern dumping layer for some time, whilst (02) appears to be a 19th-century garden deposit.

6.3 Although several sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the deposit (03) it also contained sherds of later pottery. Apart from the medieval pottery sherds, there was no evidence for medieval activity within the excavated area, and in particular no evidence for structural remains. No archaeological remains were found in the deposit (04).

6.4 No sub surface traces relating to the medieval burgages associated with Well Street were revealed by this archaeological evaluation.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 The writer would like to thank Richard Hankinson, and Nigel Jones of CPAT for their help and assistance with the excavation. Also the staff of the following repositories for their help with the desk-top study; the Historic Environment Record, CPAT, Welshpool; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; the National Monument Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth.

8 REFERENCES

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1826 *Plan of the Town of Ruthin.* . Denbighshire Record Office *DD/DM/274/166*

1839 Tithe Map of Ruthin. Copies in Denbighshire Record Office and National Library of Wales

c.1850 *NLW/Longueville 33*

1854 *NLW/RM A248*

1859 William Smith's map of Ruthin. National Library of Wales

APPENDIX 1

SPECIFICATION

1 Introduction

1.1 The Contracts and Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been invited by IM & BM Roberts to submit a tender for undertaking an archaeological evaluation in connection with proposals to construction a new dwelling with access on land adjacent to Wynnstay Road, Ruthin (SJ 12545823). The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, have determined that an archaeological evaluation is required to identify the potential impact on the archaeological resource. Accordingly, a brief has been prepared which details the works required (CPAT EVB 686).

1.2 The proposed development lies within the presumed medieval core of the settlement, and sub-surface archaeological deposits may survive within the area which relate to medieval and later occupation.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:

2.1.1 to reveal be means of a desktop study and field evaluation, the nature, condition, significance and, where possible, the chronology of the cultural heritage within the area of the proposed development in so far as these aims are possible;

2.1.2 to record any archaeological sites identified during the evaluation;

2.1.3 to prepare a report outlining the results of the evaluation.

3 Methods

3.1 Stage 1 of the evaluation will involve the examination of all the readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources at the following repositories:; the regional Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, Welshpool; the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth; Denbighshire Record Office, Ruthin.

3.2 All cartographic sources consulted will be included within the desktop section of the report, together with transcriptions of relevant documents and copies of plans, maps and photographs containing relevant information.

3.3 The Stage 2 evaluation will consist of a single L-shaped trench, 2m wide and up to 13m in length, the location and dimension of which will be agreed with the curator in advance.

3.4 All excavations will be undertaken using a machine excavator with a toothless bucket to remove modern overburden down to the level of the first recognisable archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all excavation will be conducted by hand unless otherwise agreed with the Curator in advance. The evaluation will be entirely non-destructive and designed to determine the depth at which archaeologically sensitive deposits survive, together with their nature condition and significance. The depth of natural deposits will be determined to assess the extent of any stratified deposits which may be encountered.

3.5 It has been assumed that the area in question has sufficient access for a JCB or other mechanical excavator. Excavated material will be temporarily stored adjacent to the trench, which will be reinstated with this material upon completion. The trenches will be surrounded by plastic barrier fencing during the excavation if required but no provision has been made for stripping or relaying any surfaced areas or reseeding.

3.6 Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms and be drawn and photographed as appropriate. All photography will be in digital format to a minimum resolution of 6 mega pixels. All features will be located as accurately as possible with respect to buildings and boundaries identified on modern Ordnance Survey maps and levels will be related to Ordnance Datum where possible, with the use of total station surveying.

3.7 All artefacts will be related to their contexts from which they were derived and treated in a manner appropriate to their composition and will be processed by trained CPAT staff. Provision has been included for sampling deposits for dating, environmental and technological evidence as appropriate.

3.8 A photographic survey of the former bakery is also proposed, unless the building is of modern construction. This will be in digital format using 4+ mega pixel resolution. Photos will be taken of the exterior, setting, internal rooms, fixtures and fittings. A brief written description will also be made.

3.9 Following the on-site work an illustrated and bound report will be prepared in A4 format, containing conventional sections on: Site location, Topography and Geology; Archaeological Background; Evaluation; Building Recording; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

3.10 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 with the regional Historic Environment Record (HER). All artefacts will, subject to the permission of the owner, be deposited with an appropriate museum.

4 **Resources and Programming**

4.1 The assessment will be undertaken by a team of two to three skilled archaeologists under the direct supervision of Mr R J Silvester, a senior member of CPAT's staff who is also a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. CPAT is also an Institute of Field Archaeologist Registered Organisation.

4.2 All report preparation will be completed by or with the assistance of the same field archaeologist(s) who conducted the assessment.

4.3 It is anticipated that the evaluation will be completed within 4 days with a team of two experienced archaeologists, and the report will be completed within 10 days following the on-site work. A draft report will be presented to the curator prior to the submission of the final report. At present CPAT would be in a position to undertake the evaluation in September 2008 subject to the receipt of sufficient advanced notice from the client.

4.4 The following contingency sums have been allowed at the request of the Curator. The need for such contingencies, and their potential cost, would be subject to discussions between CPAT, the client and the curator once the fieldwork has been completed. The following figures are therefore only for guidance and the final cost, should any of the services be required, may be more or less than the estimates provided.

Curatorial monitoring	£50 per visit
Finds conservation etc	£100
Dating	£200

Environmental sampling   £100
Museum deposition and storage no extra charge
Publication   *Archaeology in Wales* at no additional charge

4.5   Requirements relating to Health and Safety regulations will be adhered to by CPAT and its staff.

4.6   CPAT is covered by appropriate Public and Employer's Liability insurance, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

N W Jones
23 July 2008

APPENDIX 2

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive
01 A1 site plan
11 digital photographs
photographic catalogue
contexts register
drawings register
finds catalogue
Specification, brief and correspondence

Contexts Register

Context	Type	Comment
1	Deposit	Dark blackish-brown gritty silt, modern dumping layer
2	Deposit	Mid greyish-brown clay silt
3	Deposit	Mid reddish-brown clay silt, probable medieval deposit
4	Deposit	Mid grey sandy clay containing gravel
5	Deposit	Natural sub-soil

Drawings Register

No	Scale	Contexts	Sheet No.	Comment
1	1:50		1	Overall site plan showing trench location
2	1:20		1	West facing section of eastern side of trench

Finds catalogue

Context	Type	Number	Comment
(02)	Post-medieval pottery	1	Slipware
(02)	Post-medieval clay pipe fragments	2	
(02)	Post-medieval pottery	2	
(03)	Post-medieval pottery	1	
(03)	Medieval pottery	6	

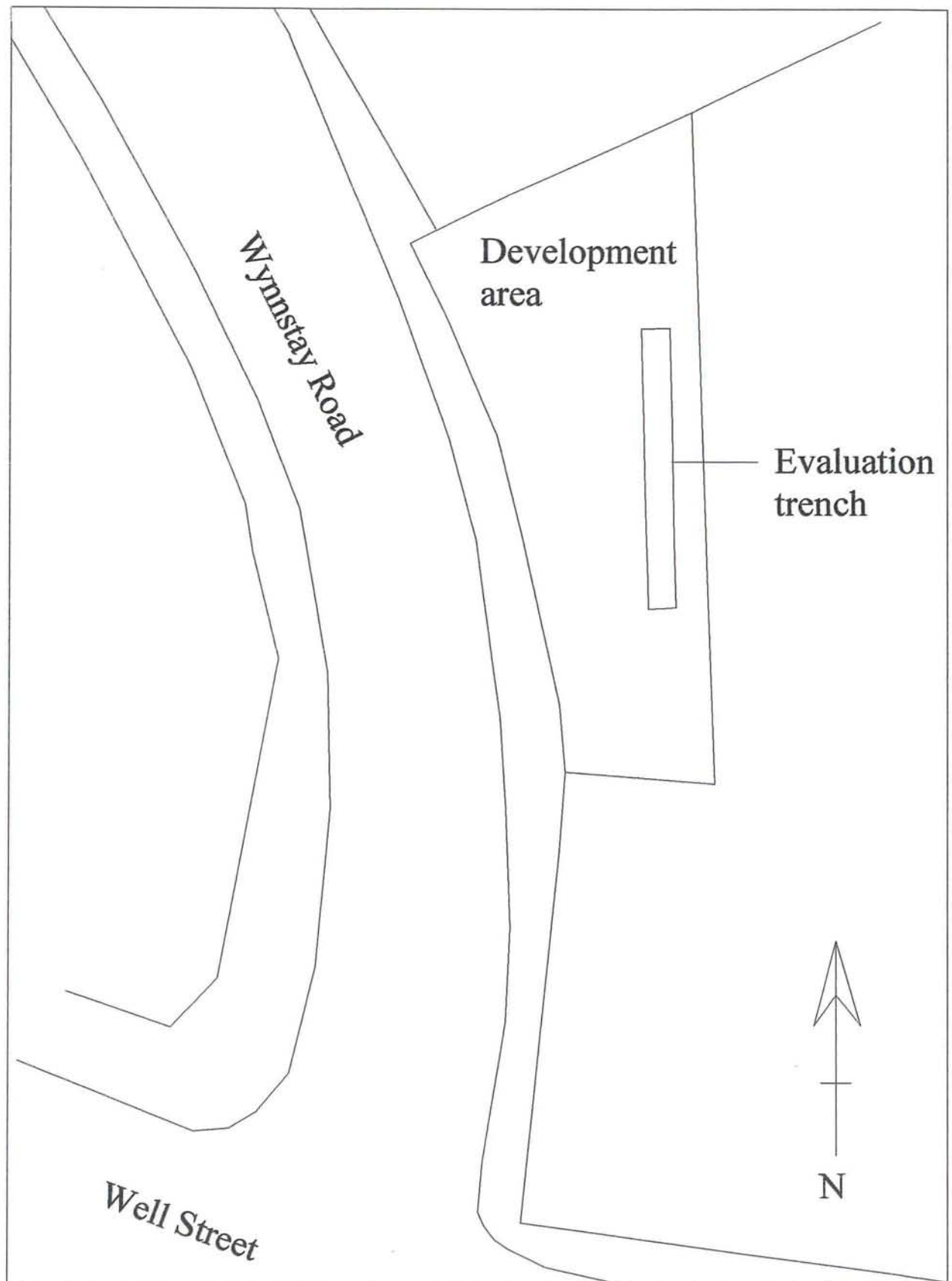Figure 5. Trench Section

Wynnstay Road

Development
area

Evaluation
trench

Well Street
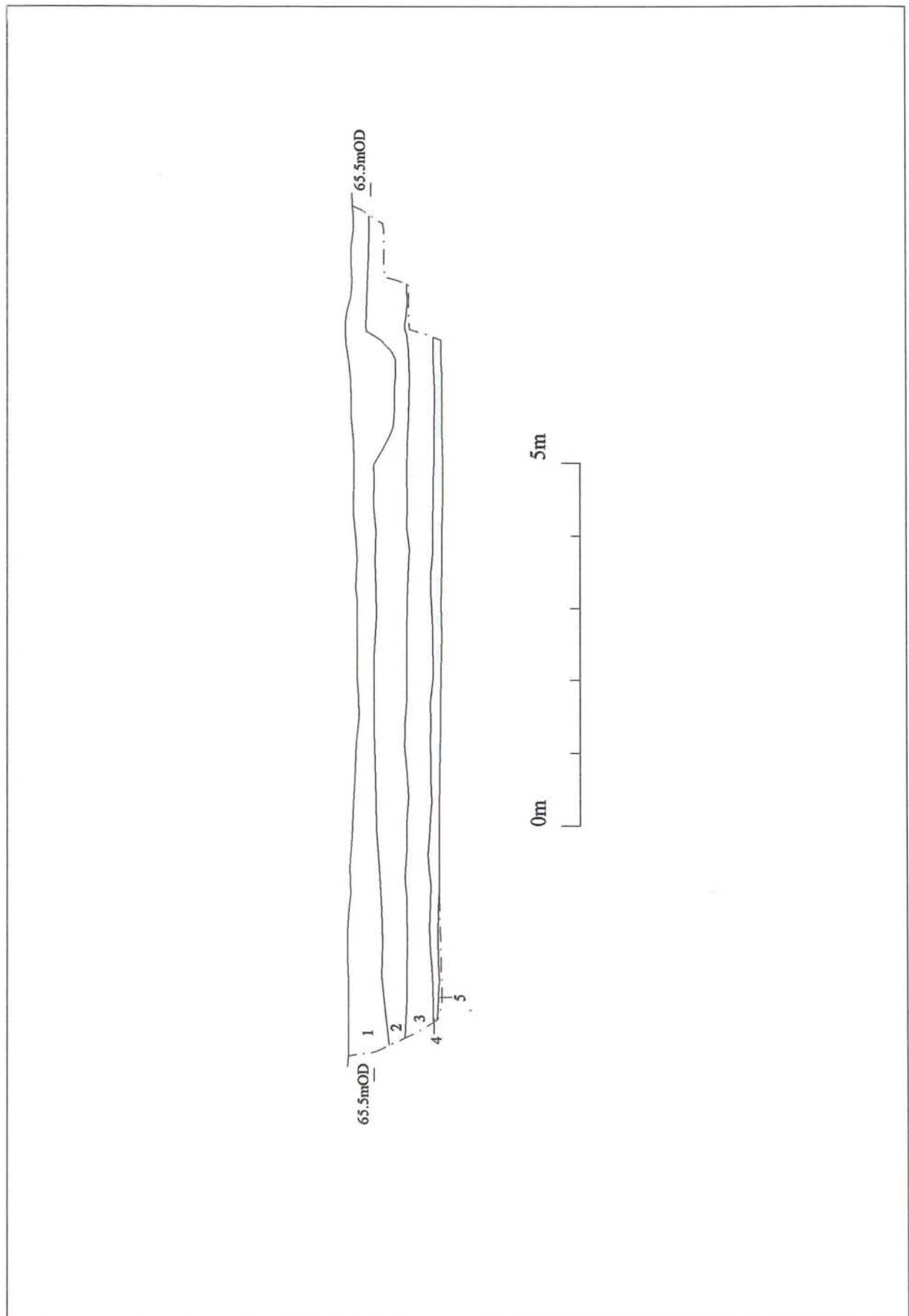
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Figure 6. Trench location plan. Scale 1:250