THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Llandysilio School, Four Crosses, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CPAT Report No 902

CPAT Report No 902

Llandysilio School, Four Crosses, Powys
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

R Hankinson
November 2007

Report for Powys County Council

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax (01938) 552179

CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Llandysilio School, Four Crosses, Powys: Archaeological Evaluation		
CPAT Project Name	Llandysilio School		
CPAT Project No	1499	CPAT Report No	902
Confidential (yes/no)	Yes	draft/final	Final

Internal control

	name	signature	date
prepared by	R. Hankinson		16/11/07
checked by	R.J. Silvester		16/11/07
approved by	R.J. Silvester		16/11/07

Revisions

no	date	made by	checked by	approved by

Internal memo

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL
tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4 EVALUATION

5 FINDS

6 CONCLUSIONS

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8 REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1: SPECIFICATION

FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In October 2007 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Capita Symonds Ltd, on behalf of Powys County Council, to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Llandysilio School at Four Crosses, in Powys, in connection with proposals to construct a new extension to the building. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, had determined that a programme of archaeological works should be undertaken in advance of the development and produced a brief detailing the works required (EVB 673).

1.2 The plot is situated just north of the centre of the village on the east side of the A483 and occupies an open area adjacent, and to the south of, the school building. The site lies along the line of Offa's Dyke, the earthen bank of which survives as a low earthwork in the field to the south, while the associated ditch lies beneath the A483. It was therefore anticipated by the archaeological curator that the proposed extension might impact on any surviving remains of the bank, or on deposits buried beneath it.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The area of the evaluation lies at the north-east edge of the village of Four Crosses, on the east side of the A483, and occupies an open area adjacent to the school building and adjoining car park (Fig. 1; SJ 26951885).

2.2 The evaluation area lies on a gravel terrace with soils consisting of well-drained brown earths (Warrilow *et al.* 1986). The area has been intensively cultivated in the past, and was a pasture field until relatively recently.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The immediate area is known to be rich in archaeological remains from prehistory through to the early medieval period. The principal prehistoric features are a series of ploughed-down burial mounds, a number of which have now been excavated, including one within the same field as the present evaluation.

3.2 The excavation in question (see Plate 1) was reported by Warrilow (*et al.* 1986, Site I; SJ 27031892) and revealed a large burial mound comprising a ring ditch about 24m in diameter, and between 1.6m to 1.8m in width. In the central area, some of the original mound material survived to a height of up to 0.25m and sealed a buried soil, charcoal from the surface of which has been radio-carbon dated to 1360 ± 70 bc. At the centre of the ring ditch, a sub-rectangular pit, 2.15m long by 1.2m and 1.45m deep, was considered to represent an inhumation grave, although human skeletal material was absent, probably due to the acidity of the soils. A series of stake-settings were identified in the excavations, with four stake-holes thought to be associated with the central pit, surrounded by a total of six concentric stake circles, varying from 3.90m to 20.75m in overall diameter. Earlier activity was suggested by some residual finds thought to have been accidentally incorporated into the mound, including a chisel arrowhead, scale-flaked knife and some plain sherds of possible Beaker pottery. Evidence of secondary burials within the mound was also revealed, while Middle Bronze Age urn fragments were found in or near the upper fill of the ring ditch. Two Romano-British pottery sherds were found within eroded mound material overlying the ditch.

Plate 1 Excavations in 1982 on the site of a Bronze Age burial mound adjacent to the school

3.3 The excavation of a large burial mound in the field to the south of the above excavation (Warrilow *et al.* 1986, Site II; SJ 27091881) revealed a ring ditch 13m in diameter, 2.4-3.2m wide, and around 1.0m deep, with no surviving central mound. A central burial pit was identified, although there was no surviving trace of the burial itself. A pit containing Beaker pottery produced radiocarbon dates ranging from 2240 ± 70 bc to 1740 ± 70 bc. A small satellite ring ditch was identified 3m to the south-west, 6.8m in diameter with a shallow central grave. Even earlier activity was suggested by a chisel arrowhead of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age date, while two radiocarbon dates indicate possible Mesolithic activity. As well as the Bronze Age funerary monuments there was also evidence for later activity. A small metal-working hearth had apparently been cut into the side of the central mound and charcoal from within this hearth produced a date of 180 ± 60 bc, placing it within the Iron Age. Furthermore, Romano British occupation nearby is suggested by pottery from the upper fill of the ditch. The final phase of activity consisted of an inhumation cemetery of five shallow graves, one of which had been cut into the upper fill of the ditch and contained fragmentary skeletal remains. Although a radiocarbon date of 100 ± 70 bc was yielded by skeletal and charcoal fragments, there was some doubt about the validity of the date. On the opposite side of the ring ditch an iron javelin and spear were found, the closest parallels for which are from the 6th to 7th centuries AD (Barfoot *et al.* 1986), and it may well be that these were contemporary with the inhumation cemetery.

3.4 More recently, an extensive programme of excavation was undertaken in the field to the south, in advance of housing development. This revealed further evidence for prehistoric burial features, as well as Romano-British occupation. However, details of these discoveries are not yet in the public domain.

3.5 The line of Offa's Dyke crosses the development plot. The 8th-century earthwork, consisting of a large bank and a ditch to the west of it, is generally accepted to have formed the western boundary to the kingdom of Mercia. The Dyke survives as a substantial earthwork bank in the field to the south of the car park and at that point is statutorily protected as a monument of national importance (Scheduled Ancient Monument Mg 033).

4 EVALUATION

4.1 The primary aim of the evaluation was to determine whether any deposits relating to Offa's Dyke were present in the area of the proposed extension to the school. At this point, the alignment of the dyke ditch is thought to occupy the route of the main A483 trunk road, with that of the associated bank running to its east, perhaps beneath the western part of the school site. The proposed extension to the school occupies ground to the south of the existing buildings, and the evaluation trench was therefore sited within the narrow grassed area lying between a recent car park and the main A483 trunk road on this side of the school.

4.2 The evaluation brief anticipated that the remains of the dyke embankment would be present beneath the grassed area and specified that only the more recent deposits should be removed by machine, with all subsequent investigations being carried out by hand.

4.3 The evaluation comprised a single trench, measuring approximately 4.7m north-south by 4.8m. In the event, no evidence of in-situ bank deposits was encountered immediately beneath the modern topsoil, so machining continued to a greater depth than had been originally anticipated. In the following description, numbers in brackets refer to context descriptions given to individual layers or features within the site archive.

4.4 The natural subsoil of mixed orange-grey gravel and yellowish to orange silt (5) was encountered at a depth of between 0.65m and 0.80m below the existing ground surface. The earliest feature within the trench was a small, meandering gully (11); it was perhaps 0.5m in width and up to 0.3m deep, but only part of it was visible in the north-western corner of the trench. No material was found within the fill (10) of the feature to provide any dating evidence, although the irregularity of the visible parts of the feature suggest it could have been caused by tree growth.

Plate 2 Evaluation trench from east (Photo CPAT 2495-001)

4.5 No other features were observed in the natural subsoil, this being sealed by a layer of mid grey-brown clay silt (4), which averaged 0.25m thick and was devoid of datable material. It had the appearance of an old ploughsoil. Towards its western end, the layer appeared to become progressively more truncated where it met the lower surface of a deposit of grey-brown silt (2), which became correspondingly thicker to the west, until it occupied the full depth of the trench at its western edge.

4.6 Layer 4 was overlain by a band of milky-orange clay silt (3), which averaged 0.15m thick and was truncated in a like manner to layer 4. Layer 3 appeared to represent redeposited natural subsoil, and contained finds of 18th and 19th-century date. The appearance of the east-west trench section (see Fig 2 & Plate 3) suggested that layers 3 and 4 would have given the appearance of a raised bank or scarp prior to the deposition of layer 2, but the nature of the material in question suggests that this feature was probably post-medieval in origin.

Plate 3 North-facing section of trench (Photo CPAT 2495-004)

4.7 The presence of layer 2 has already been noted above, and this first appears at an approximately central position in the east-west section of the trench; its origin in the 19th century is assured by the finds incorporated within it. No evidence to confirm the reason for the deposition of the layer was forthcoming, but one possibility is that it was in some way associated with activity along the route of the road which has become the main A483 in more recent times.

4.8 All layers were sealed by a very modern deposit of grey-brown stony silt (1), 0.25m to 0.35m thick. This contained very recent material and was evidently soil placed for landscaping purposes at the time of the construction of the adjoining car park. At the western edge of the trench, the eastern end of a machine-cut slot (6), 0.45m wide, was encountered. This had been excavated through all layers, including layer 1 and was evidently of very recent origin, perhaps relating to the time that the nearby fence, which forms the boundary between the A483 and the car park, was erected.

5 FINDS (Not retained)

5.1 The finds recovered from individual layers are briefly described by their context, below. All were of post-medieval origin and none has been retained.

5.2 *Context 2*
2 sherds of coal measures buff ware
1 sherd of coal measures red ware
1 sherd of creamware
1 sherd of mottled ware

5.3 *Context 3*
1 sherd of Midlands yellow ware
2 sherds of coal measures buff ware
1 sherd of coal measures red ware
Part base of green glass bottle
Iron nail
1799 George III penny

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 No evidence of any in-situ remains of Offa's Dyke was apparent in the evaluation. The deposits exposed in the evaluation appeared to represent an old ploughsoil capped with material of 18th to 19th-century date, creating a scarp or embankment. A subsequent deposit of 19th-century material overlay the scarp on its western side, and was perhaps related to the adjoining road.

6.2 A single feature was found cut into the natural subsoil, although this was fairly irregular and could have been caused by the growth of tree roots.

6.3 No finds predating the post-medieval period were revealed by the evaluation.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 The writer would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Bob Silvester, CPAT; the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; and the staff of the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.

8 REFERENCES

8.1 Published sources

Barfoot, P M, Owen, W G, & Britnell, W J 1986. Iron spearhead and javelin from Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys. *Medieval Archaeology* 30, 103-106.

Owen, G, & Britnell, W, 1989. Pit alignments at Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys. *Montgomeryshire Collections* 77, 27-40.

Warrilow, W, Owen, G & Britnell, W, 1986. Eight ring-ditches at Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys, 1981-85. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 52, 53-87

8.2 Unpublished sources

ArchaeoPhysica 2002a. *Geophysical Survey al land at Moor Farm, Baschurch, Shropshire.*

ArchaeoPhysica 2002b. *Domgay Lane, Four Crosses: magnetic gradient and electrical resistance surveys.*

8.3 Cartographic sources

1799 Enclosure Award for Llandrinio, Llandysilio and Llansantffraid.

1842 Tithe Survey and Apportionment (1839) for Llandysilio parish

1886 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25", Montgomery 11.9, surveyed 1883

1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map (Sheet 2 - Wales) and Legend (1:250,000 scale)

1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition at 1:250,000 scale)

8.4 CPAT oblique aerial photographs

1975
75-A-0021

1979
79-13-0024; 79-18-0030; 79-18-0032; 79-CM-0015; 79-CM-0016; 79-CM-0017; 79-CT-0006

1982
82-C-0239 to 0245

1983
83-18-0002; 83-19-0017; 83-C-0106; 83-C-0388 to 0390

1984
84-01-0008 and 9; 84-01-0012; 84-01-0030 to 0033; 84-04-0001A to 6A; 84-17-0000; 84-C-0094; 84-C-0195 to 0199; 84-MB-0365

1986
86-MB-0777; 86-MB-0781 and 0782

1987
87-02-0034; 87-MB-0749; 87-MB-0750

8.5 RCAHMW Oblique aerial photographs

1989
895061.24

1990
90-cs-037 to 039

1994
94-cs-1321; 945152.60

1995
95-cs0094

1999
995096.41 to 45; 99-cs-1996 to 1998

APPENDIX 1

SPECIFICATION

1 Introduction

1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been invited to prepare a tender and specification of works for undertaking an evaluation in connection with proposals to construct an extension to the existing school building at Llandysilio School in Four Crosses, Powys. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, have determined that a programme of archaeological works should be undertaken and have produced a brief detailing the works required (EVB 673).

1.2 The plot is situated just north of the centre of the village on the east side of the a483 and occupies an open area adjacent to the school building (SJ 26951885). The site lies along the line of Offa's Dyke, the earthen bank of which survives as a low earthwork in the field to the south, while the associated ditch lies beneath the A483. It is therefore anticipated that the proposed extension will impact on any surviving remains of the bank, or deposits buried beneath it.

2 Objectives

2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:

2.1.1 to reveal be means of a 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 The evaluation will consist of a single trench measuring 5m x 5m, the location of which will be agreed with the curator in advance.

3.2 All excavations will initially 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.

3.3 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 trench will be surrounded by security fencing during the excavation but no provision has been made for stripping or relaying any surfaced areas or reseeding.

3.4 Contexts will be recorded on individual record forms and be drawn and photographed as appropriate. All photography will be in 35mm format black and white print and colour slide. 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.

3.5 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.

3.6 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; Conclusions and References, together with appropriate appendices on archives and finds.

3.7 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 Llandrindod Wells Museum.

4 Resources and Programming

4.1 The assessment will be undertaken by a team of two 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 three days with a team of two experienced archaeologists and the report will be completed within 5 days following the on-site work. As required in section 7.1 of the curatorial brief a draft report will be presented to the curator prior to the submission of the final report.

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	£200
Dating	£300
Environmental sampling	£200
Museum deposition and storage	£50
Publication	*Archaeology in Wales* at no additional charge

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, as well as Professional Indemnity insurance.

N W Jones
23 August 2007

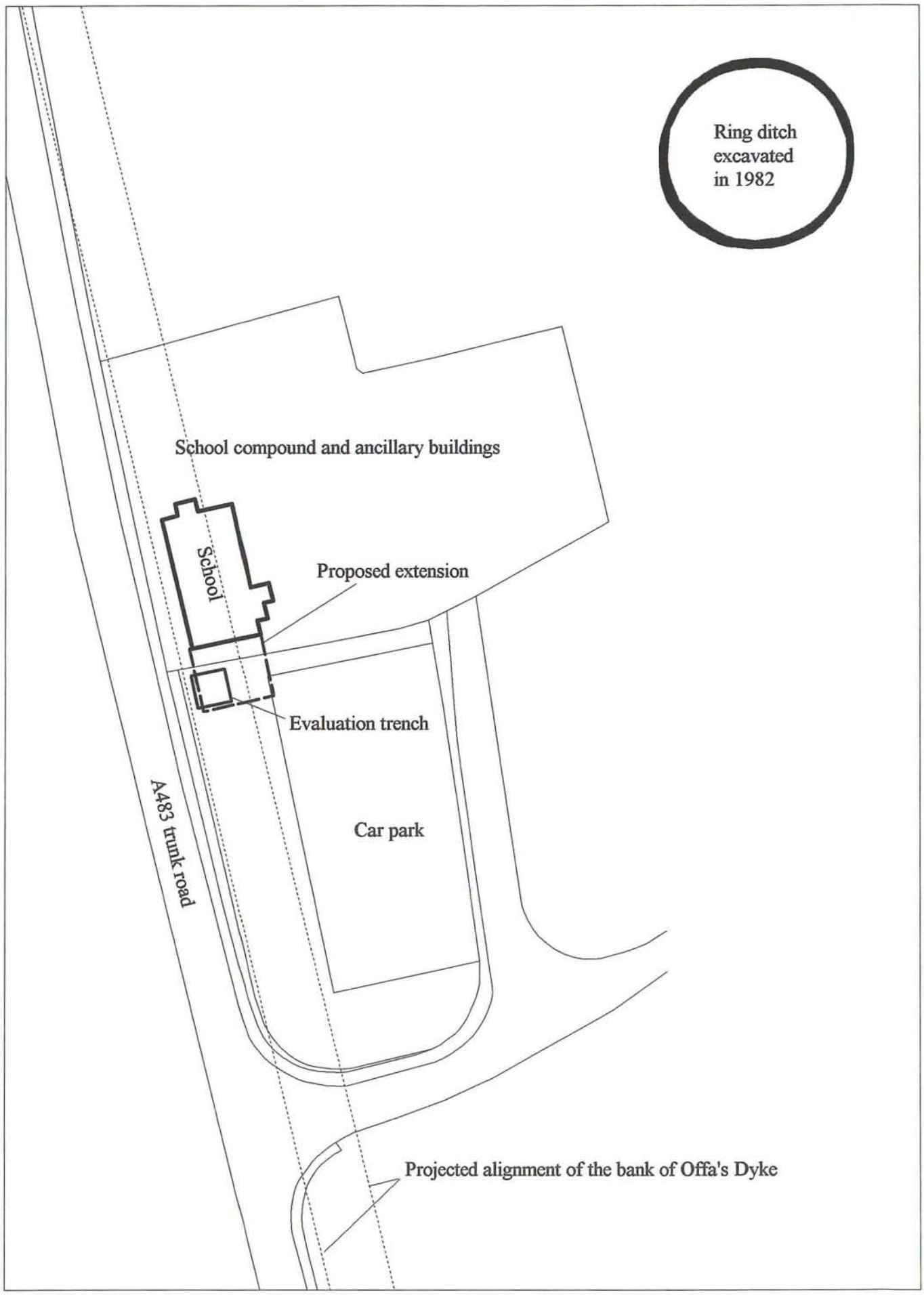

Fig 1 Location of evaluation in relation to school and known archaeological features Scale 1:750

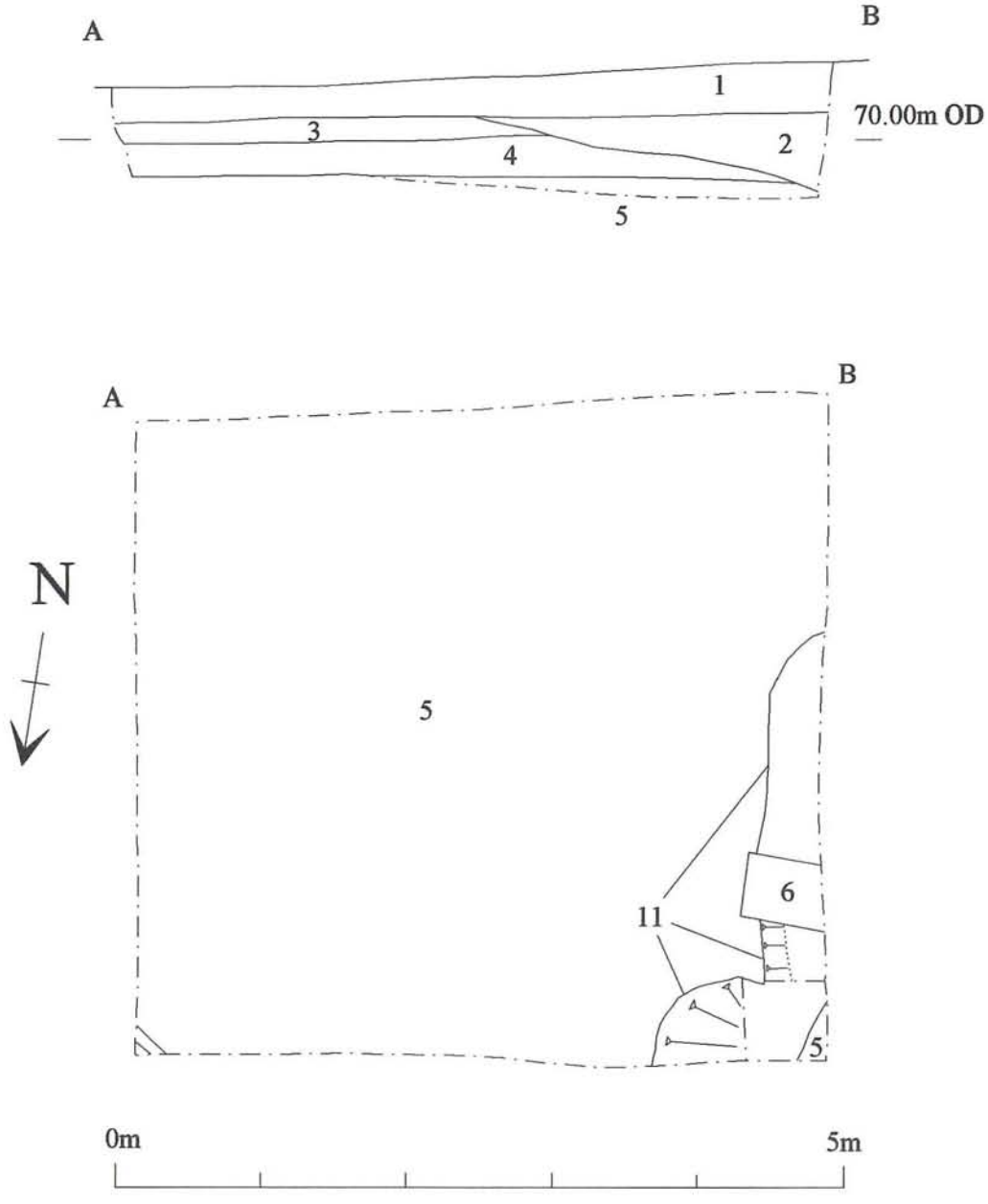

Fig 2 Excavation plan and section Scale 1:50