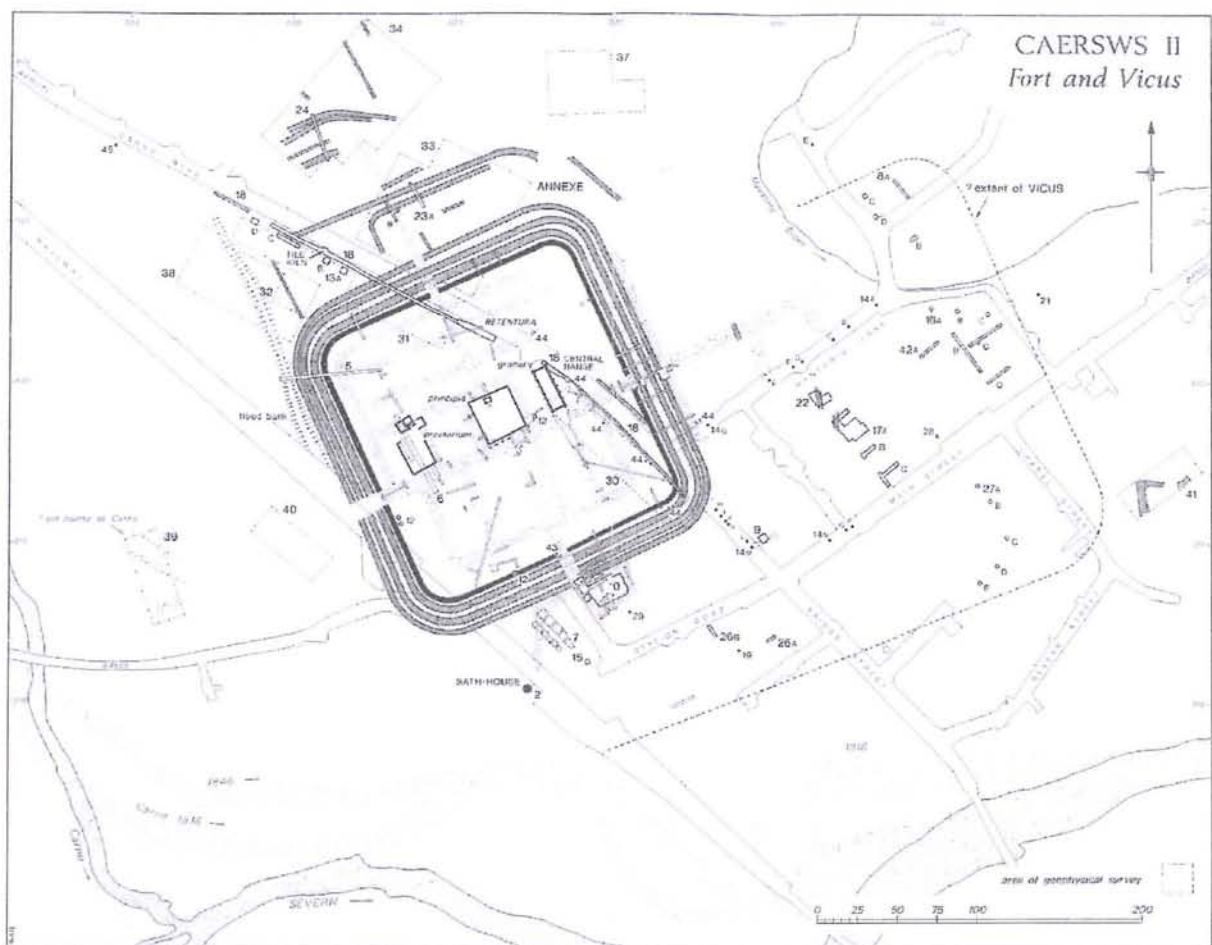


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Land adjacent to Gwalia House, Caersws, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 877

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

R. Hankinson
July 2007

Report for Mr R Owen




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

Report and status

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

- 1.1 In March 2007 the Contracts and Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Mr R Owen to prepare a specification and quotation for undertaking an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Gwalia House, New Street in Caersws, Powys.
- 1.2 The evaluation was the subject of a brief drawn up by Mr M Walters of the Curatorial Section of CPAT (CPAT EVB 656, dated 16th January 2007), acting in his capacity as archaeological curator for the region, which identified the need for a field evaluation prior to a proposed residential development. The CPAT specification and quotation were subsequently accepted by Mr Owen and the evaluation was undertaken between the 3rd and 5th July 2007. This report was compiled immediately thereafter.
- 1.3 The site lies in close proximity to areas already known to contain buried archaeological deposits relating to the civilian settlement that developed in association with the Roman fort at Caersws. It was therefore anticipated that significant buried archaeological deposits might have survived within the evaluation area.

2 GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Caersws lies on level ground on the floor of the Severn valley, approximately 10km upstream of Newtown in Powys. Immediately to the west of the village, the Severn is joined by two tributaries, the Afon Carno and the Afon Trannon, and this contributes to the fort's strategic location at the point where the valleys meet.
- 2.2 The area of the evaluation lies at the north-eastern end of New Street, which joins Bridge Street opposite the Unicorn Hotel, some 100m to the north-west of the bridge over the River Severn. The evaluation site is centred at SO 0320 9185, and is currently in use as a garage cum workshop with an adjoining parking area.
- 2.3 The solid geology of the area consists of Telychian siltstones and mudstones belonging to the Llandovery Series of rocks that form the earliest division of the Silurian period (1994 British Geological Survey map). The soils of the immediate area consist of fine loamy soils over gravel belonging to the Rheidol Association, although there is also present nearby some deep silty river alluvium belonging to the Teme Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Caersws occupies a focal point in the system of Roman forts that controlled mid-Wales. As part of the early Roman campaigns a large auxiliary fort, Caersws I, was founded before AD 70 in a strongly defended position on a spur overlooking the River Severn, to the north-east of the present village. This fort was relatively short-lived and was replaced by a more permanent fort, Caersws II, during the 70s AD, situated on the flood plain near the confluence of the Severn and its tributary, the Carno. Caersws II has been the subject of a series of excavations, most recently during the 1990s, the results from which have suggested that the main phase of occupation lasted until the late 2nd century AD and that by the early 3rd century the military tenure was effectively at an end, even though some form of activity continued on the site into the early 4th century (Jones 1993, 87).

- 3.2 A civilian settlement, or *vicus*, emerged as a development dependent on Caersws II fort, and evidence from a series of excavations, geophysical survey and aerial reconnaissance suggests that it may have covered an area of at least seven hectares on the south and east sides of the fort (Fig. 1), much of which is overlain by the present village of Caersws. Excavations just outside the south gate of the fort in 1985-6 (Britnell 1989) identified part of a flourishing commercial centre, revealing timber buildings and associated finds that suggested a possible tavern, shops and metal working workshops (Fig. 1, No 10). This commercial activity appears to have continued until the 130s AD, its decline possibly being associated with a withdrawal of troops to the northern frontier, as elsewhere in Wales (Jones 1993, 88).
- 3.3 The contemporary road leading east from the fort has been identified through aerial reconnaissance together with a side road leading from it to the south (Fig. 1). Excavations between Manthrig Lane and Main Street between 1989 and 1993 identified further elements of the *vicus*, comprising post-holes and beam slots for a series of timber buildings, including a likely Romano-British temple, or *temenos*, one phase of which was dated to the mid-2nd century (Grant 2004, 2).
- 3.4 More recently, the extent of the *vicus* was further demonstrated by two excavations, which lay outside the settlement boundary previously suggested by Jones (1993, fig.2). No evidence of Roman occupation was revealed in excavations on the north side of Severn Street (Hankinson 2003), but at Glan y Nant, which lies next to the Manthrig Brook in the eastern part of the modern village, traces of settlement and a Roman road were recorded (Grant 2004). The evaluation trench described in this report lay just outside the area of the *vicus* suggested by Jones in 1993, but was located only about 25m south-west of the nearest of a series of trial pits (Fig. 1, No 27A-E) that were excavated in the village playing fields, most of which revealed evidence of Roman occupation (Jones, 1993, 42).

4 EVALUATION (Fig 3)

- 4.1 The primary aim of the evaluation was to identify the nature and depth of any archaeological features within the area, with particular reference to determining whether evidence of the Roman *vicus* was present.
- 4.2 The evaluation comprised a single trench, measuring approximately 9.1m north-east/south-west by 1.9m, located at the north-eastern end of the development area. The depth of the deposits encountered meant that it proved impossible to excavate the full, L-shaped, trench specified in the brief as there was insufficient space for the spoil on site. The reduction in the original trench size and shape was agreed with the curator prior to the completion of machining.
- 4.3 The earliest material observed in the trench was a compact layer of small pebbles (13) at the north-western end of the trench, at a level of at least 1.0m below the existing ground surface. Its upper surface was slightly irregular and seemed to be moderately compacted, but the depth of the layer was not tested. At approximately 1.8m from the north-western end of the trench, the upper surface of the layer dipped with increasing steepness to the south-south-east until it levelled off at an added depth below the ground surface of approximately 0.3m. An assessment of the general alignment and nature of the Roman activity at Caersws suggests that this feature may represent the edge of a road adopting an east-north-east/west-south-west alignment, but the limited area of the feature that was visible renders this interpretation slightly uncertain.



Plate 1 Probable Roman road surface at the north-western end of the trench, from the south-south-east (Photo CPAT 2442-013)

- 4.4 Layer 13 was overlain by a subsequent accumulation of firm yellow-brown clay (12), up to 0.45m thick, whose upper surface sloped down gradually to the south-east and presented a raised profile where it overlay layer 13. No finds of any period were apparent in the layer and it may represent a natural accumulation. Following the formation of layer 12, a layer of milky-brown clay silt (11) was deposited, which varied from 0.1m thick at the north-western end of the trench to 0.4m thick at the south-eastern end of the trench where it was revealed in a sondage. Layer 11 contained finds which were exclusively Roman in origin, although it appeared to be more in the nature of a deposit of waste or secondary material and was devoid of archaeological features.
- 4.5 The remaining layers in the trench belonged to the post-medieval and later periods, as confirmed by the included finds. An initial deposit of yellow-brown clay (10) overlay layer 11, and varied from 0.05m to 0.2m thick, and this was in turn overlain by slightly stony grey-brown clay silt (9), between 0.2m and 0.3m thick and a mid-grey clay silt (4), which was between 0.2m and 0.35m thick. Layers 4 and 9 appeared to constitute the upper and lower parts of a garden soil which had accumulated in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Subsequent deposits were relatively recent in origin, comprising a gravel layer (3), up to 0.3m thick, overlain by building demolition rubble (2) and a very recent surface deposit of grey-green gravel (1), which provided the surface for a car parking area.



Plate 2 Evaluation trench after cleaning, from the north-west (Photo CPAT 2442-005)

- 4.6 The only discrete features which were revealed in the trench were two pits sealed by layer 4, and cutting layers 9, 10 and 11. Pit 5 measured 1.5m north-west/south-east and its fill of mixed yellowish-brown and grey clay silt (6) contained a sherd of glazed pottery of 19th-century date, while pit 7 measured at least 1.1m north-west/south-east and was evidently an animal burial, its relationship with layers 9 and 10 confirming that this feature was also of approximate 19th-century date.

5 FINDS

- 5.1 The evaluation produced a small assemblage of Roman pottery, exclusively from layer 11. A total of seven pottery sherds were recovered, of which five were Samian ware, one retaining faint evidence of decoration. One sherd was probably from a grey ware vessel, while the remaining sherd was undiagnostic. Two probable brick fragments were recovered, together with one larger lump of well-fired clay that may represent the base of an amphora handle.
- 5.2 The remaining finds belonged to the post-medieval and later periods. Layer 10 contained two brick fragments and two pieces of clay pipe, one of which was the base of a pipe bowl with a stamp bearing the letters G and S with a motif, perhaps an ear of corn, separating them. A single sherd of internally-glazed, coal-measures, red ware, probably belonging to the 18th century, was also recovered from layer 10. The only datable material from the discrete features in the trench comprised a single sherd of a probable white stoneware plate dating to the 19th century.
- 5.3 It has not been feasible to provide a detailed assessment of the Roman pottery in this report, but this will be carried out in the near future, with the presumption that the results

will be passed on to the Historic Environment Record once the planning process has been completed.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The evaluation has demonstrated the presence of Roman deposits within the area, which are presumed to relate to the civilian settlement, or *vicus*, that developed in conjunction with the Caersws II fort. This has slightly enlarged the putative area of the *vicus* suggested by Jones (1993, fig.2).
- 6.2 Although the small size of the excavation has limited the conclusions, the discovery of a probable Roman road at the north-western end of the trench is one of particular significance. It seems likely that this feature mirrors the alignment of other Roman roads in the settlement and it may have defined its southern extent, given that no evidence of Roman activity was revealed in a past excavation on the north side of Severn Street (Hankinson 2003), only 50m to the south.
- 6.3 At a slightly higher level in the trench than the probable road surface, a layer (11) containing entirely Roman material seemed to denote a later phase of activity. The deposition of a clay layer devoid of finds between the road and layer 11 demonstrates the near proximity of the river in the period and may help to explain the reason for this locality forming the southern boundary of the *vicus* associated with the Caersws II fort.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The writer would like to thank his colleague, Mr D Bull, for his assistance with the excavation.

8 REFERENCES

Britnell, J E, 1989. *Caersws Vicus, Powys: excavations at the old primary school, 1985-86*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports 205.

Grant, I, 2004, *Glan y Nant, Caersws, Powys*, Welshpool: CPAT Report No 632

Hankinson, R, 2003, *Land adjacent to Bridge End House, Caersws, Powys*, Welshpool: CPAT Report No 537

Jones, N W, 1993, Caersws Roman fort and vicus, Montgomeryshire, Powys, 1984-92, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 81, 15-96

Cartographic Sources

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)

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site archive

- 13 context record forms
- 2 A1 site plans
- 15 Digital images
- Photographic catalogue
- Context Register
- Drawings Register

Finds archive

Context 6

- 1 sherd of probable white stoneware (19th-century)

Context 10

- 2 brick fragments
- 2 pieces of clay pipe, including one bowl base with stamp
- 1 sherd of internally-glazed, coal-measures, red ware (probably 18th-century)

Context 11

- 5 sherds of Samian ware
- 1 sherd, probably grey ware (burnished surface ?)
- 1 undiagnostic sherd
- 2 brick fragments
- 1 possible base of an amphora handle

CONTEXT REGISTER

Context	Context Type	Comments
1	Gravel layer	Modern
2	Demolition rubble	Modern, probably related to the former use of the plot
3	Gravel layer	Former ground surface
4	Garden soil layer (upper)	19 th to 20 th -century in origin
5	Garden soil layer (lower)	19 th to 20 th -century in origin
6	Pit	Probably 19 th -century in origin
7	Pit fill	
8	Pit	Probably 19 th -century in origin
9	Pit fill	
10	Clay layer	Post-medieval
11	Soil layer	Finds entirely Roman in origin – perhaps a secondary deposit
12	Clay layer	Clean and without finds – perhaps a natural deposit
13	Roman road ?	Compact gravel layer. No finds to confirm possible dating but of typical Roman road appearance

DRAWINGS REGISTER

Drawing Number	Scale	Size	Comments
01	1:20	A1	Evaluation trench final plan
02	1:20	A1	Evaluation trench section (SW-facing)

APPENDIX 2

SPECIFICATION

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT GWALIA HOUSE, NEW STREET, CAERSWS, POWYS SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has been invited to prepare a specification of works for undertaking an evaluation in connection with proposals for a residential development on land at Gwalia House, New Street, 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 656).
- 1.2 The plot is situated at the southern end of the village off Bridge Street, and immediately to the east of Gwalia House (SO 03209185). The present village of Caersws overlies an important Roman fort and civilian settlement and it is therefore anticipated that buried archaeological deposits may survive within the plot.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the evaluation are:
 - 2.1.1 to reveal by 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 re-examination of existing evidence for Roman occupation in Caersws, based on sources held by the regional Historic Environment Record, CPAT, Welshpool.
- 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 totalling no more than 16m in length, the location and dimensions 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 trench 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 reseeded.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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 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.
- 3.9 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 small team of 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 four days with a team of two experienced archaeologists and the report will be completed within 10 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	<i>Archaeology in Wales</i> 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
21 March 2007

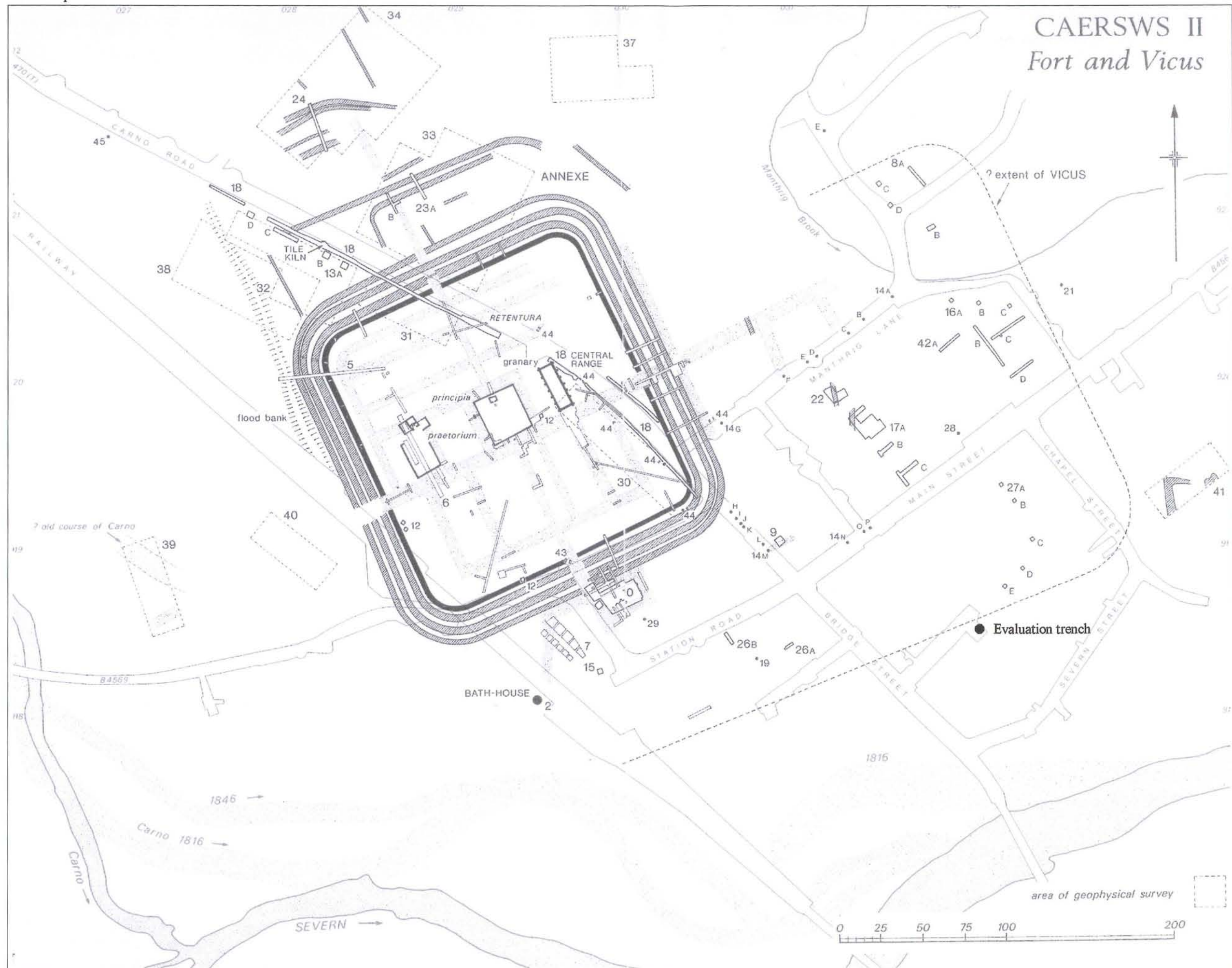


Fig 1 Caersws II Fort and Vicus

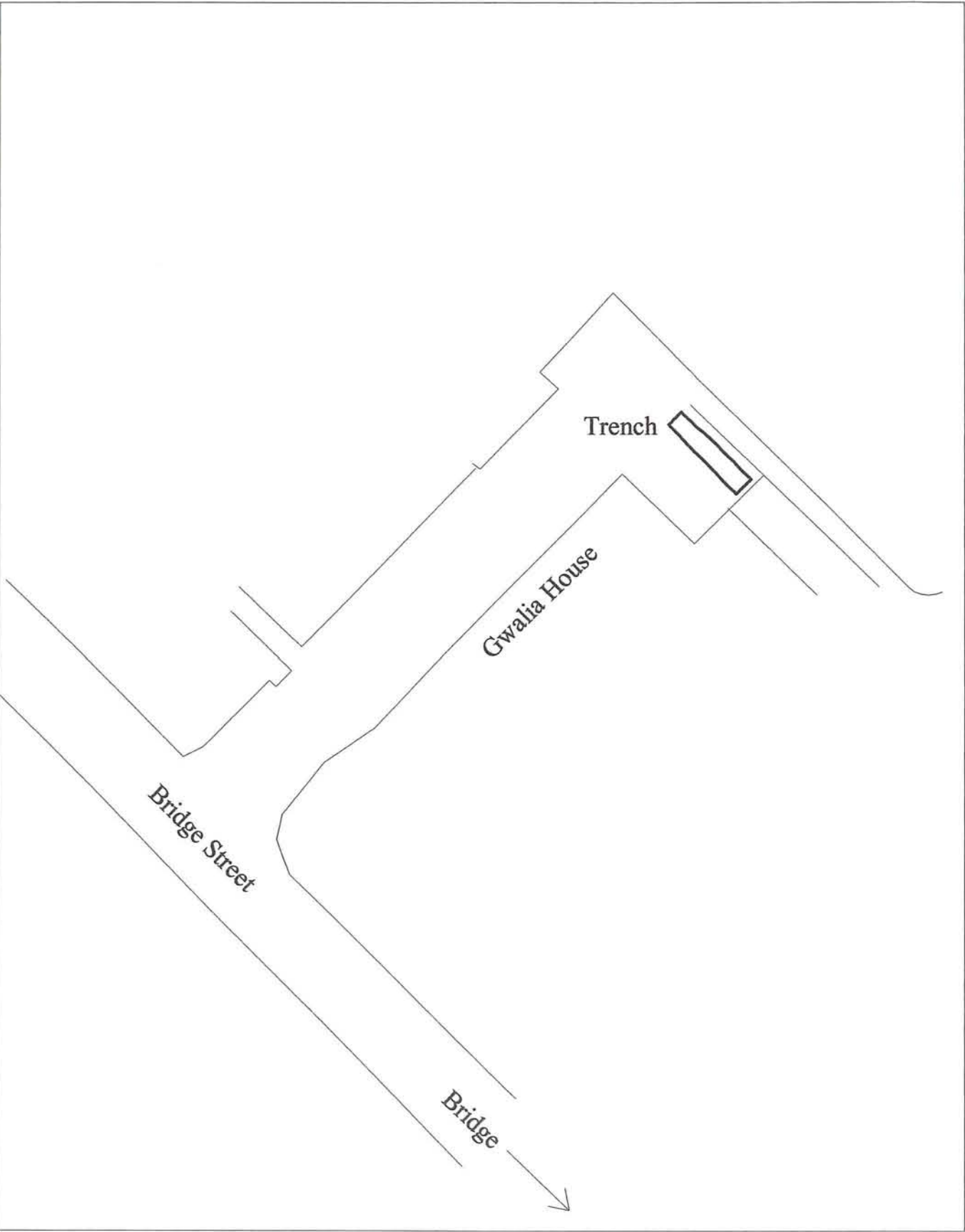


Fig 2 Location of evaluation trench Scale 1:500

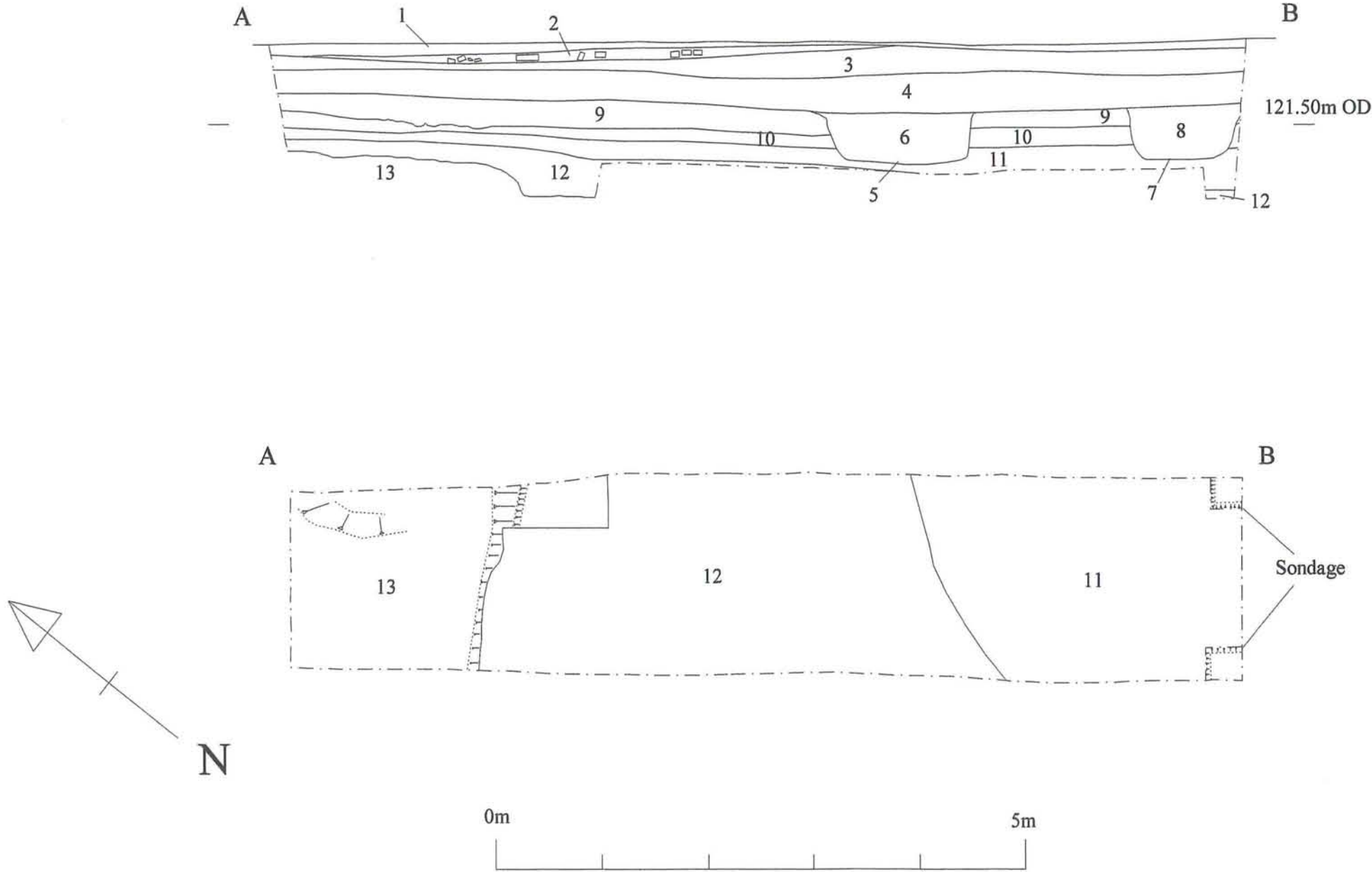


Fig 3 Excavation trench plan and section Scale 1:50