

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Lymore View, Montgomery, Powys

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND METAL DETECTOR
SURVEY**

CPAT Report No 565

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R Hankinson and R J Silvester
October 2003

Report for Severn Trent Water



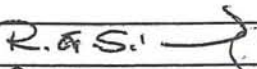
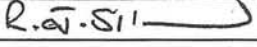
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2003 the Contracts Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by Severn Trent Water Ltd to submit a detailed specification and quotation for conducting an archaeological watching brief and metal detector survey during groundworks related to the construction of a replacement sewerage pipeline on the east side of the town of Montgomery in north-eastern Powys. The work had been recommended by Mr M Walters of the Curatorial Section of CPAT, acting in his capacity as the archaeological curator for the region, owing to the potential for the pipeline to pass through an area which reputedly formed part of the site of the English Civil War battle of Montgomery. The works were the subject of a brief (INV 510) drawn up by Mr Walters, on which the specification was based.
- 1.2 The specification was approved by Mr Walters, and the accompanying quotation was accepted by Severn Trent Water Ltd on 30 July 2003. Contractors' work on the pipeline occupied August and the earlier part of September 2003, with visits being undertaken intermittently according to the progress of the works. Close consultation with Mr Ian Theedam of Severn Trent Water was maintained throughout. This report was compiled in the period immediately following the completion of the groundworks.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The pipeline which has been constructed runs northwards from the Lymore View housing estate on the east side of Montgomery, at NGR SO 22599662, to its junction with an existing pipeline at NGR SO 22609676 (see Fig 1). In doing so it crosses two fields, one of them – the more southerly – a school playing field.
- 2.2 The pipeline site runs near the base of a moderate east-facing slope below the main part of the town of Montgomery, at an altitude of 140m OD. To the west, the ground rises up more steeply to the town and medieval castle, with a range of low hills beyond culminating in the summits of Town Hill at 320m OD and Ffridd Faldwyn at 248m OD. On the east side of the site, the land stretches away to an area of undulating lowland which forms the Vale of Montgomery, locally occupying elevations between 110m OD and 160m OD.
- 2.3 The solid geology of the immediate area consists of undivided mudstones and siltstones belonging to the Caradoc period of rocks of Ordovician age (1994 British Geological Survey map). The soils of the area consist of fine silty and clayey soils belonging to the Cegin Association (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Prehistoric activity near Montgomery is represented by the Iron Age hillfort of Ffridd Faldwyn, which overlay a much earlier Neolithic settlement, approximately 1km to the west-north-west. No prehistoric sites are known to have been recorded in the immediate locality of the pipeline.
- 3.2 In the early medieval era the border between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Welsh was marked by Offa's Dyke, at least in the 8th century. This great earthwork runs across the Vale of Montgomery, only a short distance to the east of the pipeline route. The archaeology of Montgomery is dominated by sites of the medieval period, notably the castle and adjoining medieval town. The castle was built in 1223, replacing the earlier motte and bailey castle at Hen Domen, 1.5km to the north-west, itself constructed by Roger de Montgomery between about 1070 and 1074. The 13th-century castle was constructed for Henry III, the area having become the property of the Crown in the early 13th century, and he established the town, granting it borough status in 1227 (Arnold 1990, 86).

- 3.3 The area in which the pipeline is located falls on the east side of the medieval town, which is defined by the circuit of the town walls which are themselves a significant survival of the structures used to defend the borough during the medieval period. Beyond the town defences it can be assumed that the immediate locality was used for agriculture, organised on the open, 'strip field' system. A number of these large areas of arable land are known on the north, east, and south-east sides of the town, some modern fields still displaying areas of faint earthwork ridge and furrow cultivation.
- 3.4 The town became a site of conflict during the English Civil War in September 1644, when Parliamentary and Royalist forces fought a battle in its vicinity. The initial focus of the battle seems to have been to the north and north-east of the town, but the conflict is believed to have spilled over into other areas. The remnants of the defeated Royalist army are thought to have retreated towards Lymore Park at the end of the battle, and were presumably harried by the victorious Parliamentary forces.
- 3.5 Montgomery castle was partially demolished at the end of the Civil War to prevent its refurbishment. The subsequent history of Montgomery consists largely of the gradual development of the town and its agricultural hinterland, with housing only more recently extending beyond the circuit of the medieval defences.

4 METAL DETECTOR SURVEY (Fig. 2)

- 4.1 The metal detector survey was carried out over the whole of the area which was topsoiled for the pipeline wayleave. The upper part of the topsoil, which had been removed prior to the commencement of the survey, was also examined thoroughly. The survey transects over the area of the wayleave were each 3m in width, as specified by the brief, and those finds that were recovered were located three-dimensionally against the Ordnance Survey national grid.
- 4.2 A total of only three metal finds were recorded in the wayleave area, and no significant material was identified in the topsoil which had already been removed to one side. The location and a brief description of each find is recorded in the table below, only Find No 3 is described in detail.
- 4.3 *Finds recovered from the pipeline wayleave*

Find no	NGR	Depth	Material	Description
1	SO 2259396685	0.4m	Lead	Lump, possibly waste material
2	SO 2258596652	0.3m	Lead	Lump, possibly waste material
3	SO 2258696660	0.4m	Silver	Coin

- 4.4 The initial appraisal of Find No 3 suggested that it might be a medieval silver coin and scanned images were sent to Mr E Besly of the National Museums & Galleries of Wales for identification. He defined the coin as follows: "A Duchy of Brabant silver *double patard* of Duke Philippe le Beau (1482-1506), struck at Malines in 1485. Double patards were legal tender in England and Wales from 1469, as a result of a treaty between the Duchy and Edward IV. They were the equivalent of the English *groat* (4d) and are thought to have circulated widely in this country until at least the 1530s". Brabant was originally founded in about AD 1100 and at the time the coin was struck, covered much of what is now Belgium, together with a smaller portion of the Netherlands.

5 WATCHING BRIEF (Fig. 2)

- 5.1 The watching brief comprised a series of site visits during the construction phase of the pipeline, to record any features of archaeological interest that might be revealed. Features that were encountered were drawn, described and photographed in appropriate fashion. However, the nature and depth (around 3m) of the excavated pipe trench, as well as the

method of excavation which because of the nature of the task was intermittent and unpredictable, made observation difficult. It would not have been practicable to have cleaned up the long sections in their entirety, and even then in the dry conditions it would have been extremely difficult if not impossible to detect features whose fills were little different from the surrounding subsoil.

- 5.2 As noted in para 4.1 the topsoil was stripped from both fields, leaving a patchy and uneven subsoil surface. Despite careful examination no features of potential archaeological significance could be seen within this surface horizon.
- 5.3 In the more northerly of the two fields the new pipeline followed its predecessor precisely. Although the new trench was slightly wider, it was assumed that much of the material exposed in the trench sides would have been disturbed and it was felt that field observation would yield little in the way of new information.
- 5.4 In the more southerly field, the new pipeline diverged slightly from its predecessor and a watching brief was maintained where possible. Two features were recognised during the course of the work.
- 5.5 Feature A was observed in the east-facing side of the trench (at SO 22599668), about 8.1m to the south of the hedge that formed the northern boundary of the field. It had the appearance of a ditch or large gully, albeit an irregular one, with a width of 1.55m and a depth of nearly 0.9m below the top of the subsoil. Its fill of reasonably homogeneous, tight, mottled grey and yellow silt containing only a very occasional stone contrasted with the slightly looser, yellow buff loamy silt containing angular shale fragments that distinguished the subsoil here. Although it appeared lightly that this was a linear feature and was likely to cut across the line of the pipe trench, perhaps at a slight angle, no certain trace of it could be detected in the opposite trench face. No finds were recovered from the feature.
- 5.6 Feature B was observed about 28m to the south of the hedge boundary (its central point was estimated at 27.8m at SO 22599666). It was defined by a band of mottled grey and orange loamy silt, similar to the fill in Feature 1. The band was clear on the north side but became more diffuse to the south perhaps because of some later disturbance. The form adopted by the silt band implied a somewhat irregular round-based profile to the feature. Dropping down almost vertically from this band was a narrow layer of similar silt, suggestive of a fissure in the subsoil that had filled up with silt. This vertical deposit was also visible in the opposite, east-facing section of the trench, but the feature was rather less evident, possibly because there was more disturbance from the old pipe trench. A linear feature here seems assured but no dating evidence was recovered.
- 5.7 The nature of the two features identified in section in the pipe trench cannot be established from the available evidence, and unfortunately the very dry and compacted ground subsoil surface left after topsoil stripping was not conducive to the identification of their extension. One and possibly both were linear features and it is conceivable that they represent the remnants of field divisions of medieval or early post-medieval date. This, however, is speculative, and only further work in adjacent areas will clarify the situation.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No finds or features were found which could be definitely ascribed to the Civil War battle. Two small pieces of lead found during the metal detector survey could represent material intended to be used in the manufacture of musket balls, but these are undatable.
- 6.2 A single silver coin was also recovered during the metal detector survey. This was identified as a Duchy of Brabant *double patard* of 1485, which was legal tender in England and is likely to have circulated in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The find is interesting in demonstrating the trading links of the period and signifies late 15th to early 16th-century activity in Montgomery.

- 6.3 The watching brief after both topsoil stripping and trench cutting was hampered by poor conditions. Only two features were recognised in the side sections of the trench and neither of these could be dated.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The writers would like to thank the following people for their assistance during the project: Mr M Grant for assistance with the metal detector survey; Mr E Besly of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff for identifying the coin found during the metal detector survey; and Mr Ian Theedam, Severn Trent Water for facilitating the programme of work.

8 DEPOSITION OF FINDS

- 8.1 Subject to the approval of Powys County Council on whose land the material was found, it is anticipated that in due course the finds will be deposited in the Montgomery Civic Society Museum in the town.

9 REFERENCES

9.1 *Documentary sources*

Arnold, C J, 1990, *The Archaeology of Montgomeryshire*, Welshpool

Gaunt, P, 1991. *A Nation Under Siege - The Civil War in Wales 1642-48*, London: HMSO

9.2 *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)

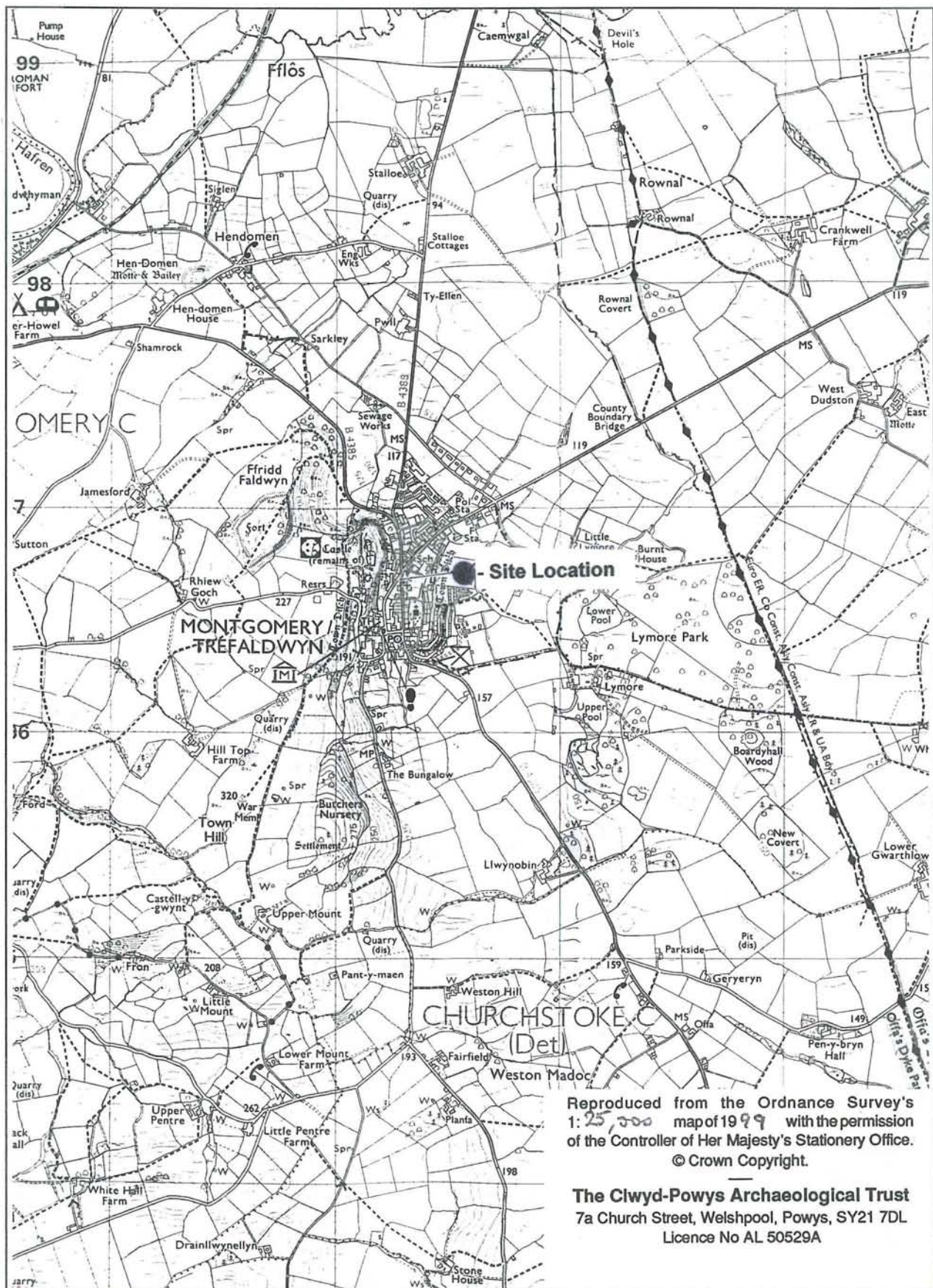


Fig. 1 Site Location Scale 1:25,000

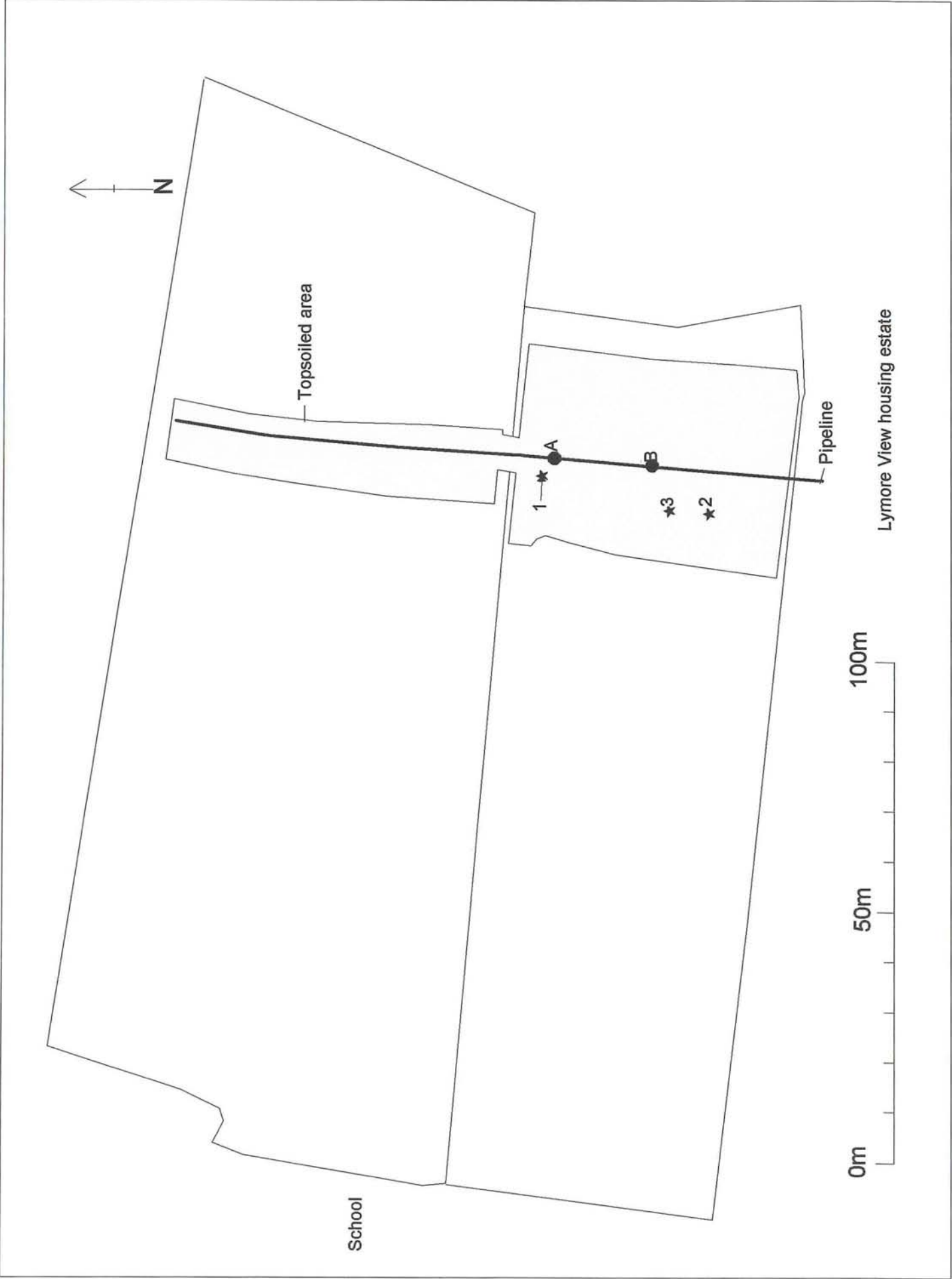


Fig. 2 Pipeline area showing location of recorded features and finds