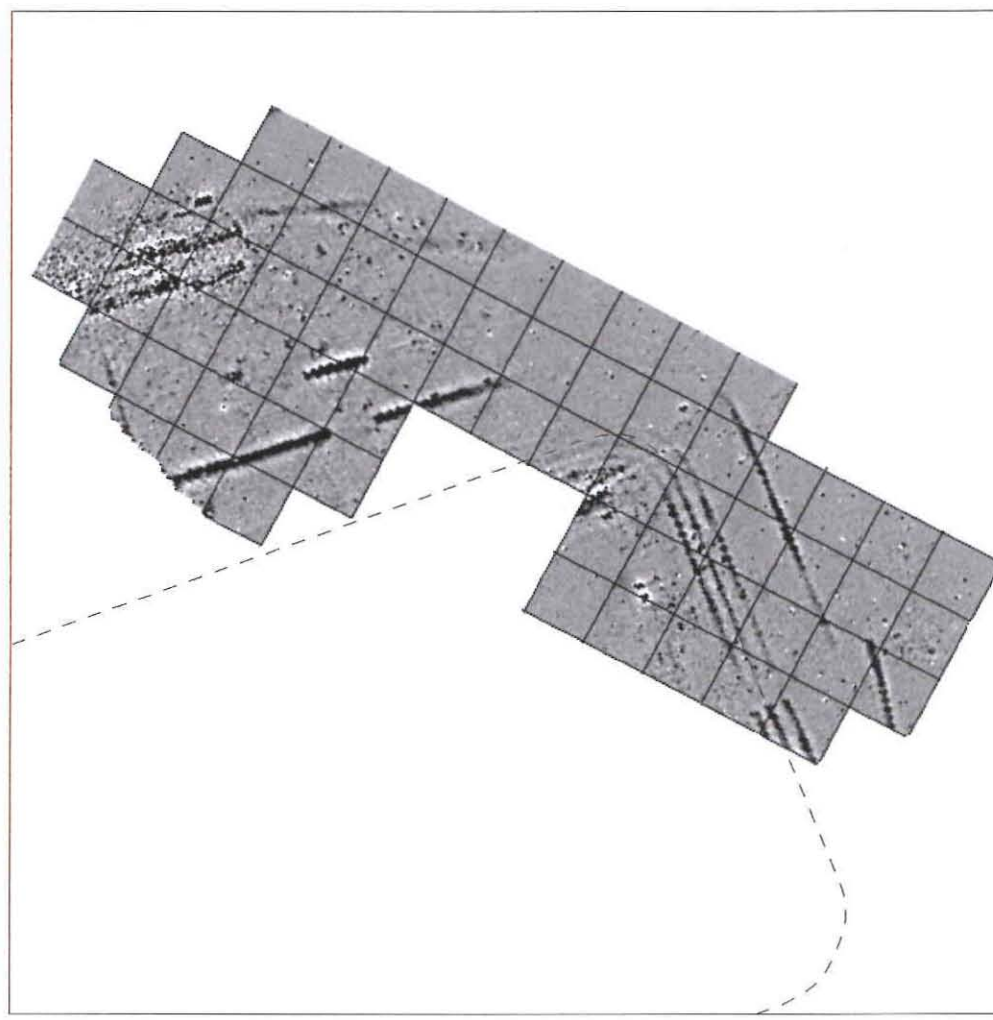
THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Roman Military Sites in north-east and east Wales

Geophysical survey at Caersws I, Dolau Bridge near Nantmel and Clyro

Assessment of possible forts in north-east and east Wales



CPAT Report No 854

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Report for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE 2006-7 ROMAN MILITARY SITES PROJECT

1.1 The Clwyd-Powys region contains a significant number of Roman military sites, many of which were permanently occupied. Some thirteen forts have been confirmed and a further sixteen examples suggested, in addition to which there is a handful of fortlets and supply depots. Major lacunae in the military network still exist, however, in north-east Wales. The region also has a wide network of Roman roads, proven and proposed. The Trust has a long history of involvement in specific forts and their extramural areas such as Caersws and Forden, and has held the view for some time that an assessment of both the forts and the roads that linked them would be extremely useful. Cadw concurred with this view and in 2001 a project was set up, initially to examine Roman roads, and subsequently the forts and allied military sites.

1.2 The first year of the project (2001/02) saw the setting up of a project GIS and database, desk-top and record enhancement work on Roman roads in Powys, initial contacts with a number of active fieldworkers in the Clwyd-Powys area, and the production of a short progress report. The second year of the project (2002/03), included some further desk-top and record enhancement for Powys, but primarily the focus was on the whole of the former county of Clwyd. There was further liaison with active fieldworkers and new, oblique aerial photography was targeted on specific roads in the Clwyd-Powys area. Limited fieldwork was conducted, designed to confirm the existence and condition of stretches of Roman road and identify the potential for scheduling recommendations and management issues. A progress report covering the desk-top assessment was completed at the end of the March 2003 (Silvester and Owen 2003).

1.3 The third year of the project (2003/04) included the completion of the field examination of selected lengths of road to assess their condition and identifying possible stretches for statutory protection. The production of a further progress report formed an integral part of the work (Silvester 2004a). In addition a scoping study was completed to define an extension to the project that would examine the related Roman forts and their vici, bringing this Trust's project into line with those conducted by some other Trusts (Silvester 2004b). An informal liaison meeting with two other trusts in the autumn of 2003 was reconstituted on a formal basis in December 2003 to initiate a pan-Wales project.

1.4 In 2004/5, geophysics was conducted on three Roman forts in Powys: Caerau, Colwyn Castle and Brecon Gaer (Silvester, Hopewell and Grant 2005). An assessment was made of Barri Jones' archive for his Montgomeryshire excavations, and this allowed for the reunification, at the NMR, of the entire archive, which had been dispersed between different bodies. Finally, an assessment of Forden Gaer (Montgomeryshire) and its immediate hinterland confirmed the scale and extent of the archaeology and considered the management problems and options (Jones 2005). In 2005/06 geophysics continued at Brecon Gaer and also examined extramural areas at Forden Gaer and Pen-y-gaer (Brecknock), a measured survey was conducted of the earthworks at Colwyn Castle (and a plan prepared to publication standard), and a synthesis of Barri Jones' Montgomeryshire excavations was prepared for publication (Silvester and Hankinson 2006).

1.5 The sixth year (2006/7) has extended the geophysics work to three further forts and fortlets: Caersws I (Montgomeryshire), Clyro (Brecknock) and Gaer Dolau (Radnorshire). In addition, an in-depth assessment has been made of about ten possible forts in the region where the existing reports in the HER appear equivocal in an attempt to establish their integrity. The present report covers these studies.

1.6 General References

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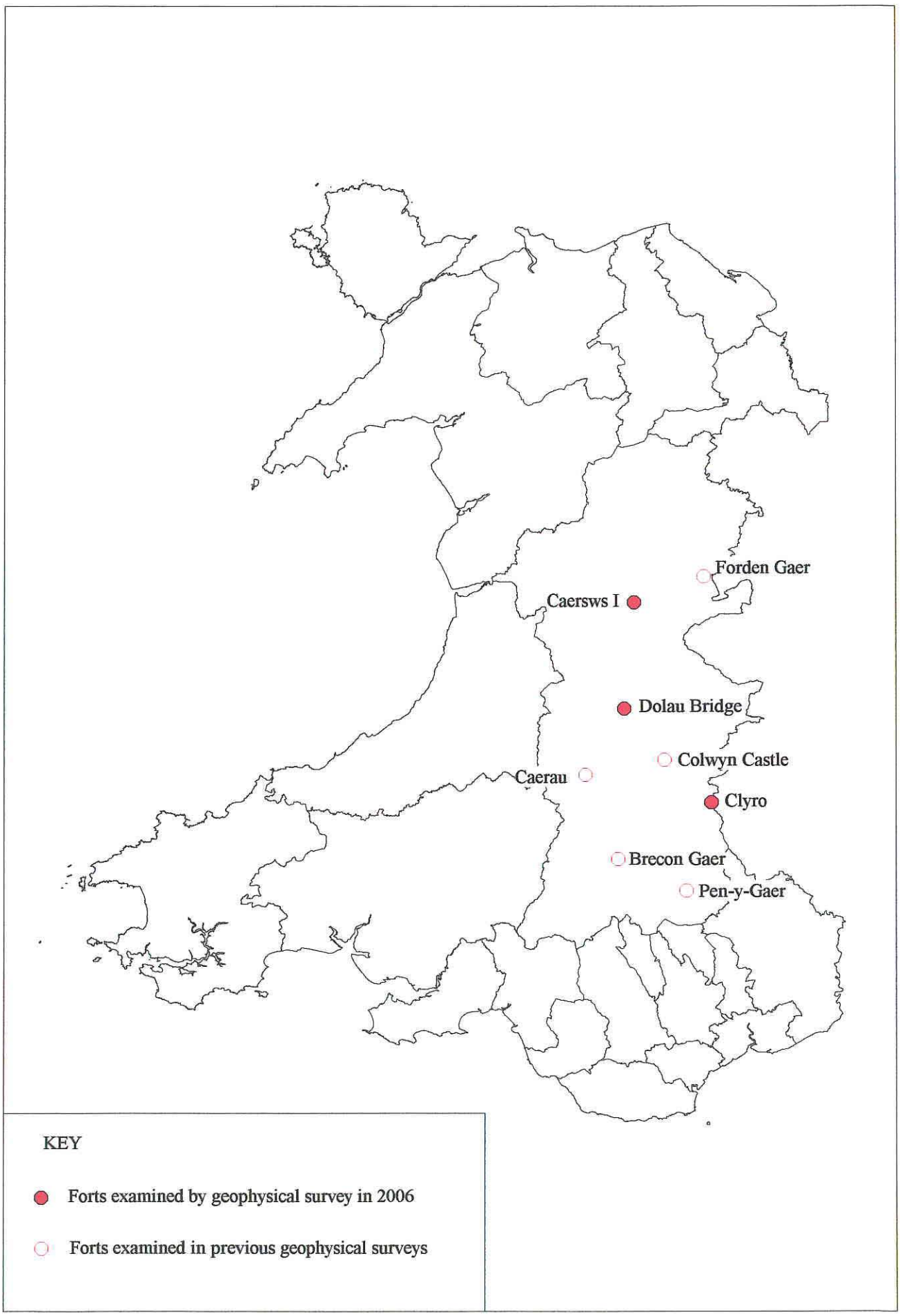

Fig 1 Geophysics undertaken at Roman military sites in Powys

2 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AT ROMAN FORTS IN POWYS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 This part of the present report details a programme of geophysical survey carried out by the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) at three Roman forts in Powys during 2006. The work formed part of a Cadw-funded pan-Wales study of Roman roads and fort environs, and was intended to add to the present state of knowledge regarding the communications and civilian settlement associated with each of the forts examined.

2.1.2 The survey used a fluxgate gradiometer and the methodology employed was that previously used by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust on *vici* and forts in the pan-Wales study (Silvester *et al* 2004), both in their area and in Powys. The survey followed on from similar work carried out by CPAT at the *vici* associated with Forden Gaer, Brecon Gaer, and Pen y Gaer near Tretower in 2005-6 (Silvester and Hankinson 2006).

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Fluxgate gradiometer survey provides a rapid, non-invasive, method of examining large areas for magnetic anomalies. It is particularly effective in the context of this study, as much of the daily activity around Roman forts leads to the soil becoming magnetically enhanced. This has been borne out by earlier work carried out by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, where a wide range of features has been detected at and around forts. Most well-established forts have produced evidence of *vici* developed along one or more of the roads leading from the fort.

Instrumentation and background

2.2.2 The geophysical work was carried out using a Geoscan FM36 fluxgate gradiometer, which detects variations in the earth's magnetic field resulting from the presence of iron minerals in the soil. These minerals are generally the weakly magnetised iron oxides that are normally found in topsoil. Features cut into the subsoil can be detected by the instrument when topsoil has formed part of their fill, whether directly or by silting.

2.2.3 There are a variety of other processes which may result in detectable anomalies, such as the presence of iron objects in the soil, which produce high readings. The potential to detect areas of burning is perhaps of more interest, as the survey method can identify hearths and kilns where the fired clay has acquired a thermo-remnant magnetic field upon cooling.

2.2.4 Unfortunately, not all soils are conducive to the use of this method, particularly in cases where the topsoil and subsoil have similar magnetic properties. Occasionally, high or random levels of magnetic material within the soil can effectively mask the results and prevent detection of artificial features. The lack of detectable anomalies should not be taken to mean that there is no surviving archaeology in a locality. On the other hand, recent work on the Berriew 'cursus' for another Cadw sponsored project , has demonstrated that in some circumstances magnetometry can give more satisfactory results than resistivity survey.

2.2.5 The Geoscan FM36 is a hand-held instrument which allows readings to be taken automatically as the operator walks at a constant speed along a series of fixed-length traverses. The sensor consists of two vertically aligned fluxgates, set 500mm apart, whose Mumetal cores are driven in and out of magnetic saturation by a 1,000Hz AC current passing through two opposing driver coils. As the cores come out of saturation, the external magnetic field can enter them, producing an electrical pulse proportional to the field strength in a sensor coil (Clark 1990, referred to in Hopewell 2004).

2.2.6 Magnetic fields and variations are measured in nanoTeslas (nT). The Earth's magnetic field is approximately 48,000nT, but archaeological features generally produce instrument readings of less than 15nT. Areas of burning and iron objects produce higher readings, perhaps up to several hundred nT. The gradiometer can detect changes as low as 0.1nT.

Data Collection

2.2.7 The gradiometer has an on-board data logging device which enables readings to be taken at specific time intervals. These readings can then be correlated with geographical locations. Readings in the surveys reported on here were taken along parallel traverses of a 20m by 20m grid, with a traverse interval of one metre. The speed of each traverse was controlled such that readings were taken every 0.5m, thereby giving a total number of 800 readings per full grid.

Data processing and presentation

2.2.8 The dataset is transferred from the data logger to a computer, where it is compiled and processed using Geoplot 3.0 software. A minimum of processing is carried out, although compensations are made for instrument drift, gradual changes in the earth's magnetic field and inconsistencies in data collection.

2.2.9 The results are presented in greyscale format, along with an interpretation drawing. The greyscale plot produces a plan view of the survey and allows subtle changes in the data to be displayed.

2.2.10 Some processing has also been carried out to reduce the effect on the grey-scale plot of very high readings caused by iron objects in the soil, although care was taken to examine the results for burnt features which might produce similar results. Other processing which may have been employed, includes smoothing to help with very noisy or complex sites, interpolation to help reduce the amount of pixellation in the greyscale plot, and low pass filtering to reduce background noise and make anomalies easier to see.

Grid location and the plotting of the geophysical survey results

2.2.11 Prior to the commencement of each geophysical survey, the survey grids were laid out and then located in relation to nearby field boundaries by topographic survey using an EDM with Penmap software. These results were then related to the Ordnance Survey base mapping by using the AutoCAD and Mapinfo programs, which enabled the National Grid co-ordinates of points on the survey grid to be determined.

2.2.12 The greyscale plot of the geophysical survey results was produced using Geoplot 3.0 software and the plot was exported as a Windows Bitmap. This was then rotated to match grid north using Paint Shop Pro software and registered in relation to the Ordnance Survey grid using the co-ordinates derived from the topographical survey. It was then imported into GIS using Mapinfo. In contrast to previous reports, a trace plot was not produced as it was felt that the greyscale plots were more readily interpreted. However, the raw data, from which a trace plot could be prepared, has been retained.

2.2.13 The GIS layer of the greyscale plot can be contrasted with a variety of other sources, such as aerial photography, and this enables a more comprehensive assessment of the results. It also allows the results of the geophysical survey to be more easily archived and readily available in digital format for any future work at the site in question.

2.3 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS

Caersws I (Figs 2-3)

2.3.1 Caersws I, in the Severn Valley in southern Montgomeryshire, was originally discovered from aerial photographic sources, and there is little trace of any surviving earthworks on the site. The cropmarks are thought to represent an early campaign fort, on an eminence overlooking the Severn, at SO 04209253, and with an annexe at its south-west end. At some point the fort was abandoned and a second fort (Caersws II) was built on the floodplain approximately one kilometre to the south-west. It is more than probable that Caersws I was intentionally levelled at the time that the second fort was constructed.

2.3.2 No evidence of a *vicus* has ever been recorded at Caersws I, in contrast to the extensive settlement well-evidenced at Caersws II, underlying much of the present village. The aims of this survey were to ascertain whether a *vicus* was present in the environs of the fort, although, if the hypothesis that the fort represents pre-Flavian military activity is correct, then little evidence of a civilian settlement might be expected. In addition to examining the areas outside the north-west and north-east gates of the fort for evidence of a *vicus*, the survey was positioned in order that known cropmark evidence of the fort ditches could be tested to demonstrate the quality of the magnetic response generated from the soils.

2.3.3 The initial assessment of the fort environs suggested that the area with the greatest potential for the siting of a *vicus* was a broad shelf of flat ground on the north-west side of the fort, although some possibility existed of occupation on a slight ridge to the north-east. The remaining environs of the fort seemed to be less favourable, with the south-west side occupied by the annexe and the external area on the south-east side sloping down quite steeply to the floodplain of the Severn, where it seems unlikely that a *vicus* would have been sited. Accordingly, a single area of sixty-three whole or partial grids, covering approximately 2.5ha was examined. This encompassed part of both the north-east and north-west sides of the fort, together with ground lying outside the fort in these directions. One figure (Fig 2) is used to present the greyscale plot, while a second (Fig 3) gives the interpretation of the results in relation to the local topography by depicting the individual and collective geophysical anomalies that were revealed. These anomalies have been given a sequence of numbers which are mentioned in brackets in the text that follows, for descriptive purposes.

2.3.4 Marked anomalies were revealed, corresponding with the ditches of the fort, although the level of response at the northern corner of the fort was rather slight in comparison to the remainder. The main defences (1) were represented by three ditches, collectively 15m wide, with a fourth ditch (2) some 15m beyond the outermost ditch. An entrance gap (3), 8m wide, was revealed at the mid-point of the north-east side of the fort, while on the north-west side, the entrance (4) was represented by a gap of 15m in the outer ditch with a further ditch, or *titulum*, 20m long, some 15m to its north-west. The outer ditch was splayed outwards by approximately 10m on the south-east side of the north-east entrance.

2.3.5 Internally, there was evidence of a major anomaly (5) in the northern corner of the fort, perhaps representing some form of oven, hearth or smelting area. Slight traces of structures or internal roads (6), in the form of linear marks, appear on the inner side of the defences on the north-east side of the fort and there also appears to be a possible oven (7) in this area.

2.3.6 Despite the presence of the broad, flat area on the north-west side of the fort, no convincing evidence of an extra-mural settlement was found. Of the two features detected in this area, a linear ditch (9), running north-west/south-east, perhaps represents some form of drainage feature. Further to the north-west the results were confused by background 'noise', potentially generated by a Second World War bomb which is believed to have been fallen in the corner of the field.

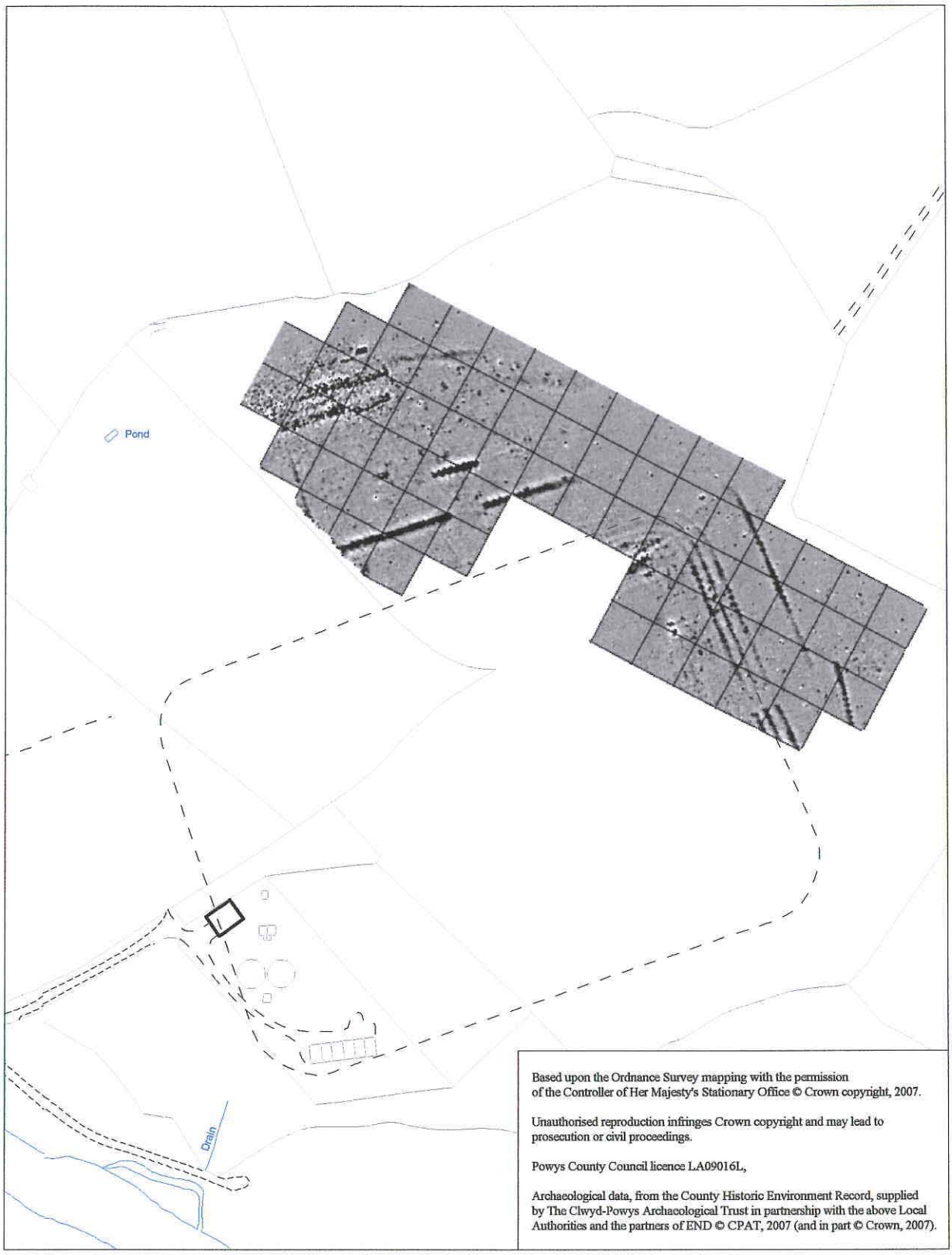

Fig 2 Greyscale plot of geophysics results at Caersws I fort Scale 1:2,500

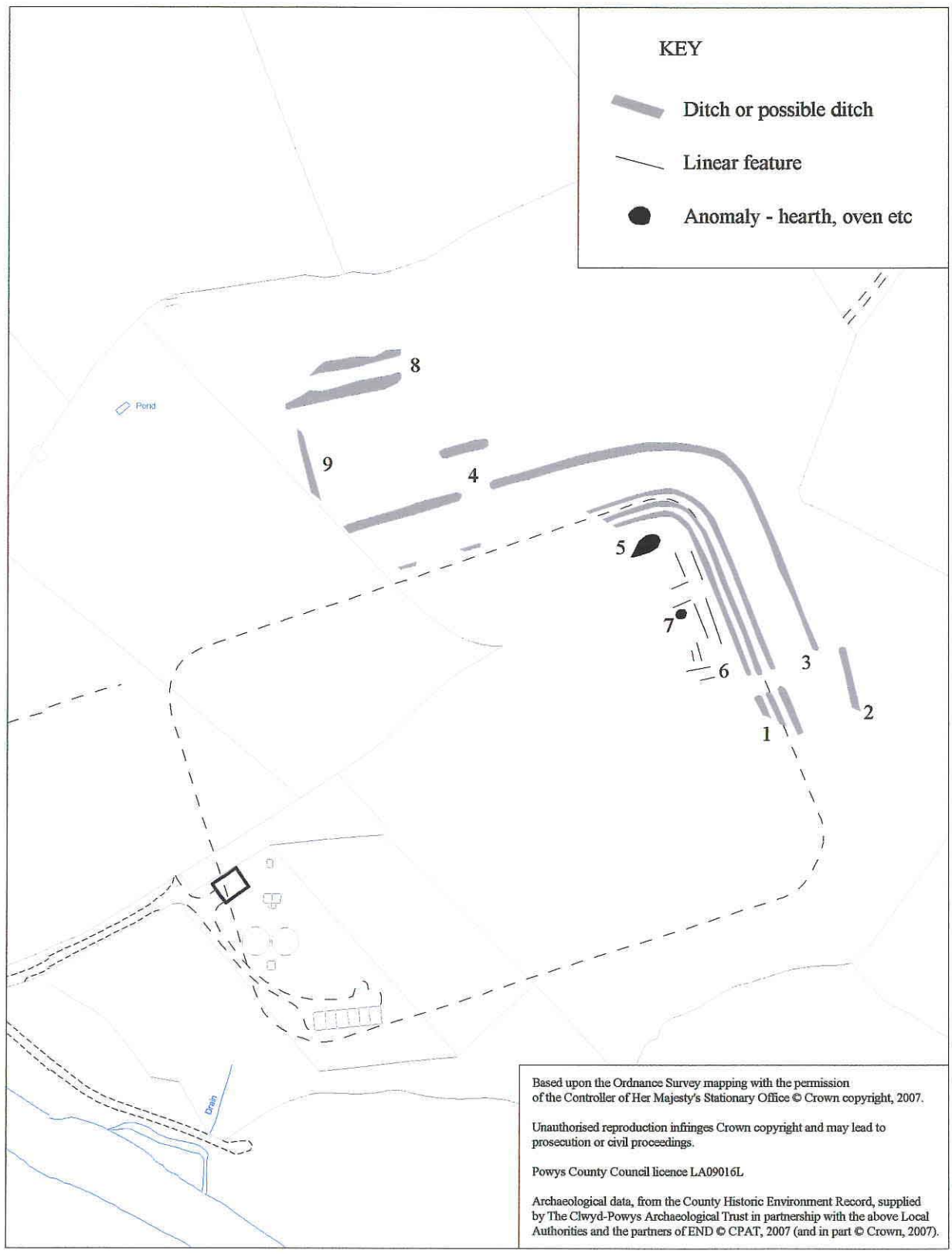

Fig 3 Interpretation of the geophysics results at Caersws I fort Scale 1:2,500

Despite the resulting interference, two possible ditches (8) were identified, running parallel to both each other and the main defences of the fort. These possible ditches terminate after a short distance and do not therefore seem to form an appended enclosure, but insufficient evidence is available to come to any definite conclusions.

2.3.7 A further and more extensive geophysical survey of the Caersws I fort is due to be conducted in the Spring of 2007, at the instigation of Dr Jeff Davies of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and funded by a grant from the Cambrian Archaeological Association.

Dolau Bridge, near Nantmel (Figs 4-5)

2.3.8 Dolau Bridge, near Nantmel in the historic county of Radnorshire, lies some 5km to the south-east of Rhayader on a slight rise above the little Afon Dulas at SO 01906652. A similar distance to the south-south-east is the fort of Castell Collen, just outside Llandrindod Wells. The name of the site originates from the farm and bridge a short distance to the east-south-east, but the Ordnance Survey maps term it 'The Gaer'. The Roman road from Castell Collen to Caersws (RRX 58) passes the site some 300m to its south-west. The site was first noted in the early 20th century, but even then mention was made that heavy ploughing had taken place and that only the north and west sides remained. Dressed stones had allegedly been found on the site. A section was cut through the defences in 1965 by Prof G D B Jones and M Jarrett, which revealed a ditch 3.3m wide and 0.6m deep, while the bank measured 2.75m wide and 0.25m high. No internal features were recorded during the 1965 excavations and this, together with the nature of the rest of the evidence gathered so far, seems to suggest that the site represents a Roman marching camp. Jarrett, however, thought that it was more than a marching camp and claimed that 'it is most likely a camp held for a short period by a unit on campaign or manoeuvres' (Jarrett 1969, 140). Unsurprisingly, no evidence of a *vicus* has been recorded.

2.3.9 An area of approximately 2.8ha was surveyed, which encompassed the interior of the supposed fort, together with the ground lying outside it on the north-west and south-west sides. The north-east and south-east sides are unsuitable for any settlement, lying on the floodplain of two streams. Readings were taken from a total of seventy-one whole or partial grids, in an attempt to discover whether any evidence of a *vicus* was present, as well to determine whether any features were discernible within the enclosure which might provide a clearer impression of its nature or function. One figure (Fig 4) is used to present the greyscale plot, while a second (Fig 5) gives the interpretation of the results in relation to the local topography by depicting the individual and collective geophysical anomalies that were revealed. These anomalies have been given a sequence of numbers which are mentioned in brackets in the text that follows.

2.3.10 The ditch (1) that forms part of the north-western side of the visible defences was readily identifiable on the geophysics results, although some unexpected complexity was encountered on the south-west side, where there appeared to be two or even three parallel ditches (2); this remains to be explained, probably only by excavation. New information regarding the extent of the site was provided by a curving section of ditch (3) at the southern corner of the defences, suggesting that the south-east side of the site lies approximately along the line of an old field boundary.

2.3.11 Little in the way of internal features was revealed by the survey, most of the evidence relating to probable field drains (5) or to linear features which are likely to represent traces of ploughing (6). The one exception to this is the substantial sub-circular anomaly (4), which could represent a field oven or some similar type of activity within the confines of the defences.

2.3.12 The geophysical anomalies at this site were fairly faint in comparison to those found on other sites, which could confirm that it was occupied only on a temporary basis. The readings obtained gave very little contrast with which to identify features, and even visible earthworks were poorly represented. Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties, it seems that the dimensions of the site can now be more readily determined, it covering an area that measures a minimum of some 170m north-west/south-east by 140m, externally, giving an area of approximately 2.4ha. The north-east side remains as difficult to determine as it was to Jones and Jarrett. No surface traces or geophysics anomalies reveal its presence, and we must assume that it has been lost to erosion.

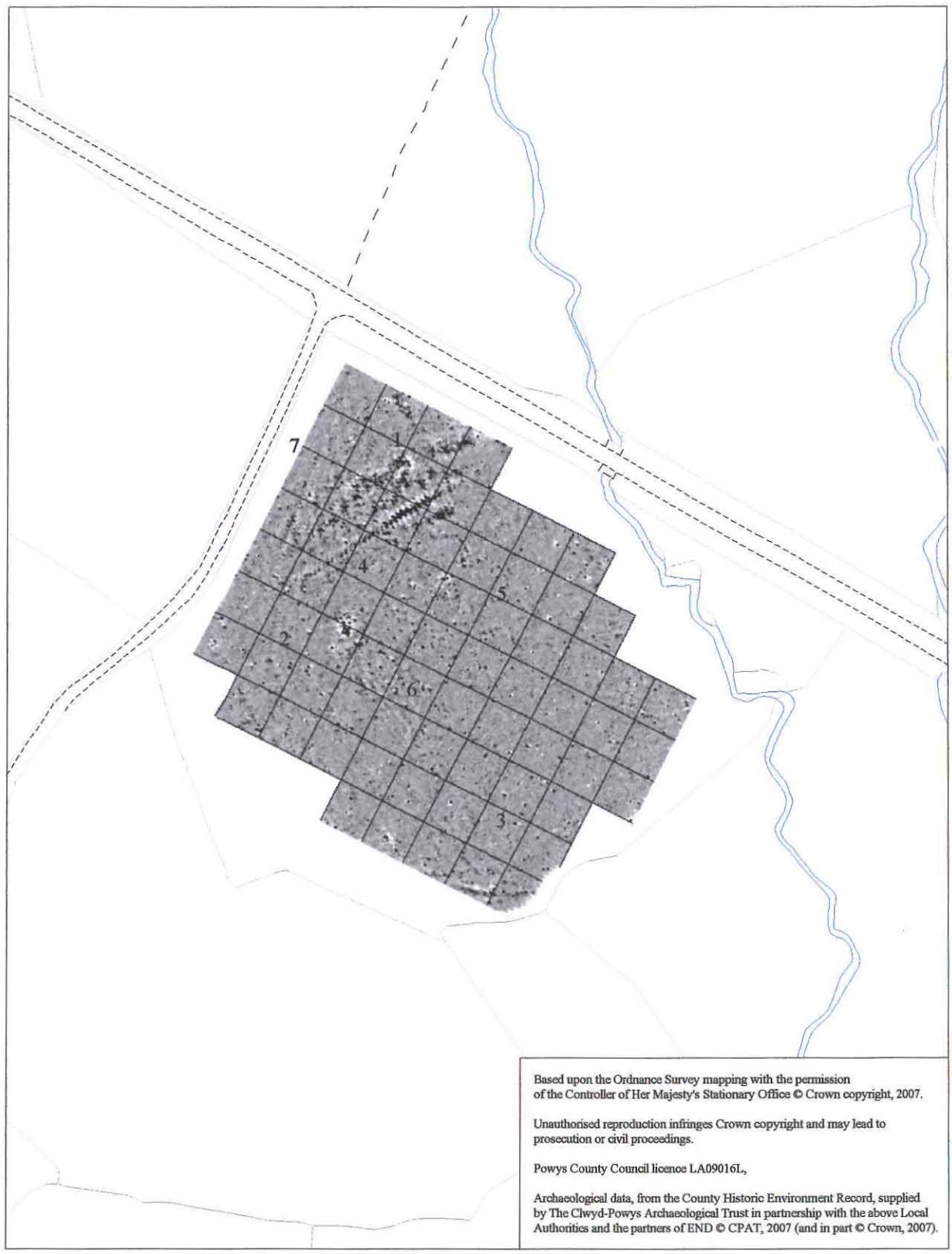

Fig 4 Greyscale plot of geophysics results at the Dolau Bridge Enclosure Scale 1:2,500

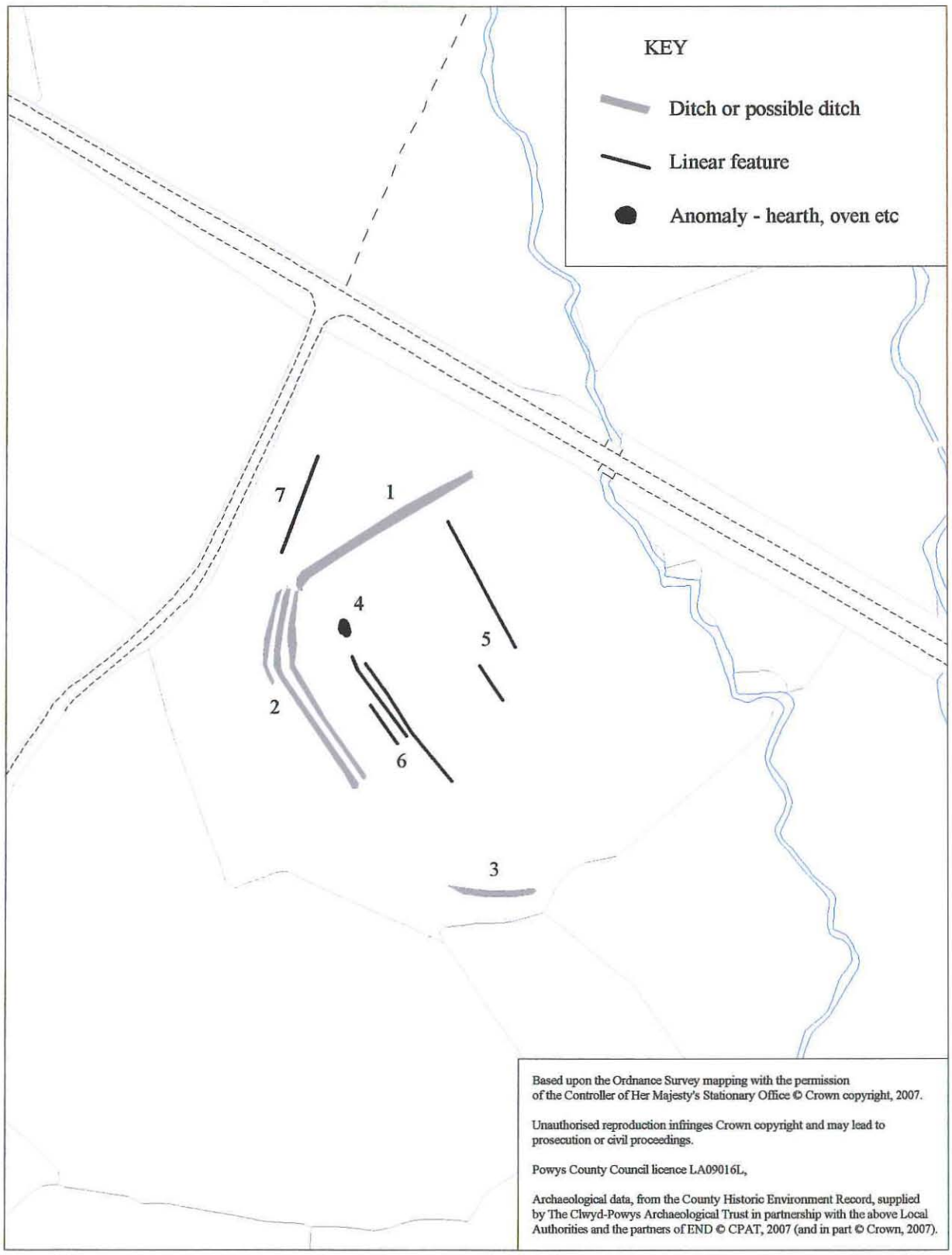

Fig 5 Interpretation of the geophysics results at the Dolau Bridge Enclosure Scale 1:2,500

Clyro (Figs 6-7)

2.3.13 The fort at Clyro, in the old county of Radnorshire (at SO 22864347), and on the opposite bank of the Wye to Hay-on-Wye, has been known for some considerable time, in part owing to its surviving earthworks which are fairly pronounced features of the landscape. The fort was originally judged to cover an area of 8ha, but this was extended by the work of St Joseph in the 1950s, when it was assessed to encompass an overall area of 10.4ha. Further relevant information was provided by excavations carried out in the 1960s (Jarrett 1969, 77), which apparently revealed two phases in the defences on the south-east side. It has also been noted that aerial photographic evidence has revealed two ditches on the north-east side of the fort.

2.3.14 An area of approximately 4.1ha was surveyed, encompassing three localities centred on the north-east, north-west and south-west gates of the fort to give a total of ninety-five whole or partial grids. The three areas were surveyed separately, and the results were then combined to provide the greyscale plot (Fig 6), which provides an overview of the results in relation to the fort. The area outside the south-east gate of the fort was not examined as the ground there appears to be too steep to permit the development of a *vicus*. Fig 7 provides an interpretation of the results, with the various features and anomalies being given numbers on the plan, which are then referred to in brackets in the following text.

2.3.15 At the north-east end of the fort, the survey covered a part of the defences where the main bank is still readily visible, though partially truncated by erosion, and it revealed that the associated ditch (1) has a width of approximately 5m. The second ditch (2), mentioned in the previous paragraph, was found at a distance of approximately 20m beyond ditch 1, and appeared to be in the order of 4m to 5m in width. Surface traces of this second ditch could also just be traced in one field. Interestingly, faint traces of a possible third ditch (3), some 3m wide, were also evident in the results. This was approximately 13m distant from the second ditch in the central part of the north-east defences, narrowing to 6m distant as it approached the north corner of the fort.

2.3.16 In the interior of the fort on its north-east side, there seemed to be a positive linear anomaly (4) running for a distance of 50m on the internal face of the surviving bank. This probably represents activity which has led to thermo-remnant magnetism in the soils, perhaps ovens or hearths which were cut into its inner face, although other explanations are possible. A narrow linear anomaly (5), some 15m long, lay parallel to anomaly 4, which might represent an internal road or drain, but the character of the feature remains uncertain. Finally, part of what may be a rounded positive anomaly (6), perhaps representing an oven or hearth some 11m in diameter, was revealed.

2.3.17 No reliably authentic features were revealed in the area corresponding with the north-west gate of the fort. This could be due to a number of factors, which include the degree of land improvement that has taken place in the field, the nature of the soils, and the degree of slope leading away from the fort.

2.3.18 The land on the south-west side of the fort was, by comparison, quite level and suitable for settlement. Despite this, no evidence of any form of settlement was revealed. The only features apparent in this locality were related to the fort defences and comprised the main ditch (8), here about 4m in width, with a second ditch (7), of similar width, lying approximately 30m outside the main ditch in the central part of the defences, narrowing to 20m distant as the west corner of the fort was approached.

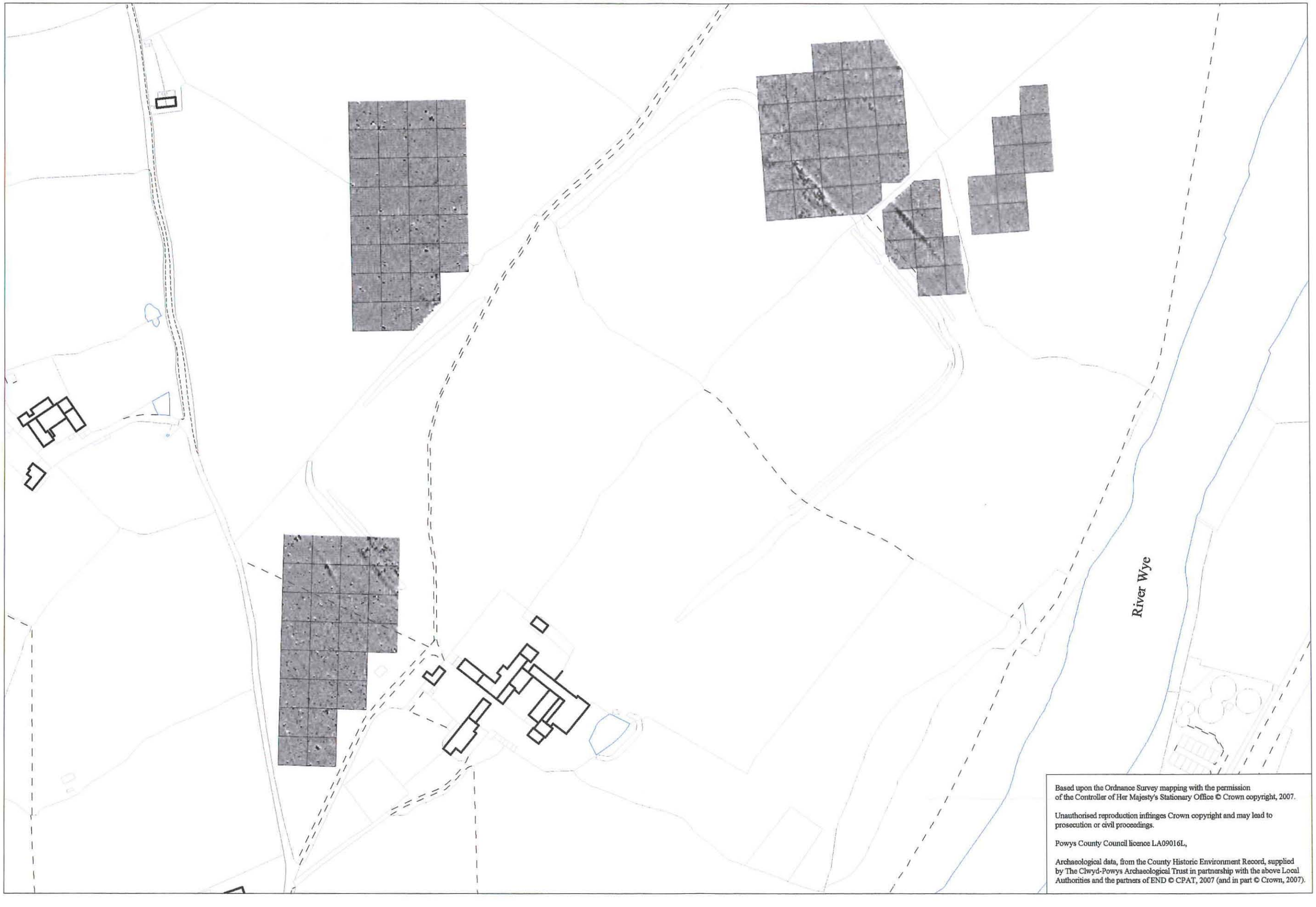

Fig 6 Greyscale plot of geophysics results at Clyro fort Scale 1:2,500

Fig 7 Interpretation of the geophysics results at Clyro fort Scale 1:2,500

2.4 CONCLUSIONS

2.4.1 A total of some 9.4ha has been examined by geophysical survey in the environs of the three forts, comprising two hundred and twenty-nine whole or partial 20m square grids.

2.4.2 The results overall demonstrate an absence of traces of any extra-mural settlement or activity at any of the forts. In that the primary aim of the project was to identify such settlement, this is something of a disappointment. Perhaps, however, this is not so surprising. Dolau Bridge, because of its small size was always an outside candidate for a *vicus*, while both Caersws I and Clyro have been suggested as campaign forts of the pre-Flavian era. The short-lived occupation and the unsettled nature of the relevant areas at this time would have been unfavourable for the development of civilian settlement in close proximity to the defences of a fort.

2.4.3 Some useful information has nevertheless been gained for each fort. In the case of Caersws I, geophysics confirmed what could be inferred from aerial photography on the layout of the defences, and has located them precisely in the local landscape. In addition, traces of activity were observed in the interior of the fort which demonstrate that the soil conditions are favourable for the geophysics methodology adopted here.

2.4.4 The results at Dolau Bridge appear to confirm the hypothesis that this is either a fairly short-lived fort or a marching camp, as the levels of response were fairly low in comparison to the other sites, a view supported by only a single thermo-remnant magnetic anomaly in the interior. Significantly, however, the survey was able to locate the south corner of the site, thereby providing maximum dimensions for the enclosure for the first time.

2.4.5 Despite the overall size of the fort and the examination of all of the suitable areas around it, no evidence of a *vicus* was forthcoming at Clyro. In itself, this negative evidence is illuminating and, combined with the new evidence of extra defensive ditches on the north-east and south-west sides of the fort, suggests that its attribution as a campaign fort is correct. Again, as at Caersws I, the results have revealed evidence of features within the fort defences, demonstrating that the methods employed were suitable for the soils present should any further investigation be planned in the future.

2.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2.5.1 The writer would like to thank Mr D Hopewell of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust for his help and advice regarding the interpretation of the results. Much of the background information provided in this report follows his work on previous geophysical surveys in this pan-Wales study.

2.5.2 The writer would also like to thank his colleagues at CPAT; Mr I Grant, who shared the survey work; and Mr B Silvester. Also the landowners who gave their permission for the work to be carried out, namely Mr Davies, Red House Farm, Caersws; Mr Whittle, Caeffynnon, Talach-ddu, Brecon; and Mr Gibson-Watt, Boatside Farm, Clyro.

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3 POSSIBLE ROMAN FORTS IN MID AND NORTH-EAST WALES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The earlier scoping study that was conducted of Roman military forts and kindred installations in mid and north-east Wales (Silvester 2004b for which see section 1.6, above) revealed that there were thirteen irrefutable forts in the region, confirmed by a range of techniques including fieldwork, aerial photography and excavation. There were, additionally, a number of potential forts that were recorded as such in the Historic Environment Record (HER), which over the previous decades, had been claimed by various authorities and other writers, for some only a few lines of text supporting the Roman military claim, while for others a more sizable literature had accumulated.

3.1.2 It was felt to be a worthwhile exercise to review the existing information on a carefully selected set of proposed forts, the candidates being those where there seemed to be at least some potential for a Roman military origin, or at least appeared in the HER under that heading, in contrast to those which seemed to be due to some commentators flight of fancy. There was no anticipation that startling discoveries would be made, but the programme enabled the existing information to be pulled together from often disparate sources to produce what is hopefully a more objective assessment of the likely authenticity of a number of sites and in doing so enhance the HER.

3.1.3 An original list of nine sites was proposed in the project specification and all of these have been examined. Of a further five sites which were subsequently added to the list, one, a 'new' site (PRN 83734) identified from the air in the early summer of 2006, was included on the suggestion of those attending a quarterly project liaison meeting, even though this was too small to be a proper fort candidate.

3.1.4 The approach has been to collect together original references to the various sites and examine relevant aerial photography before collating the evidence and providing a commentary regarding the nature and possible authenticity of each site. Field visits have been undertaken only where they were thought to be potentially useful in understanding a site.

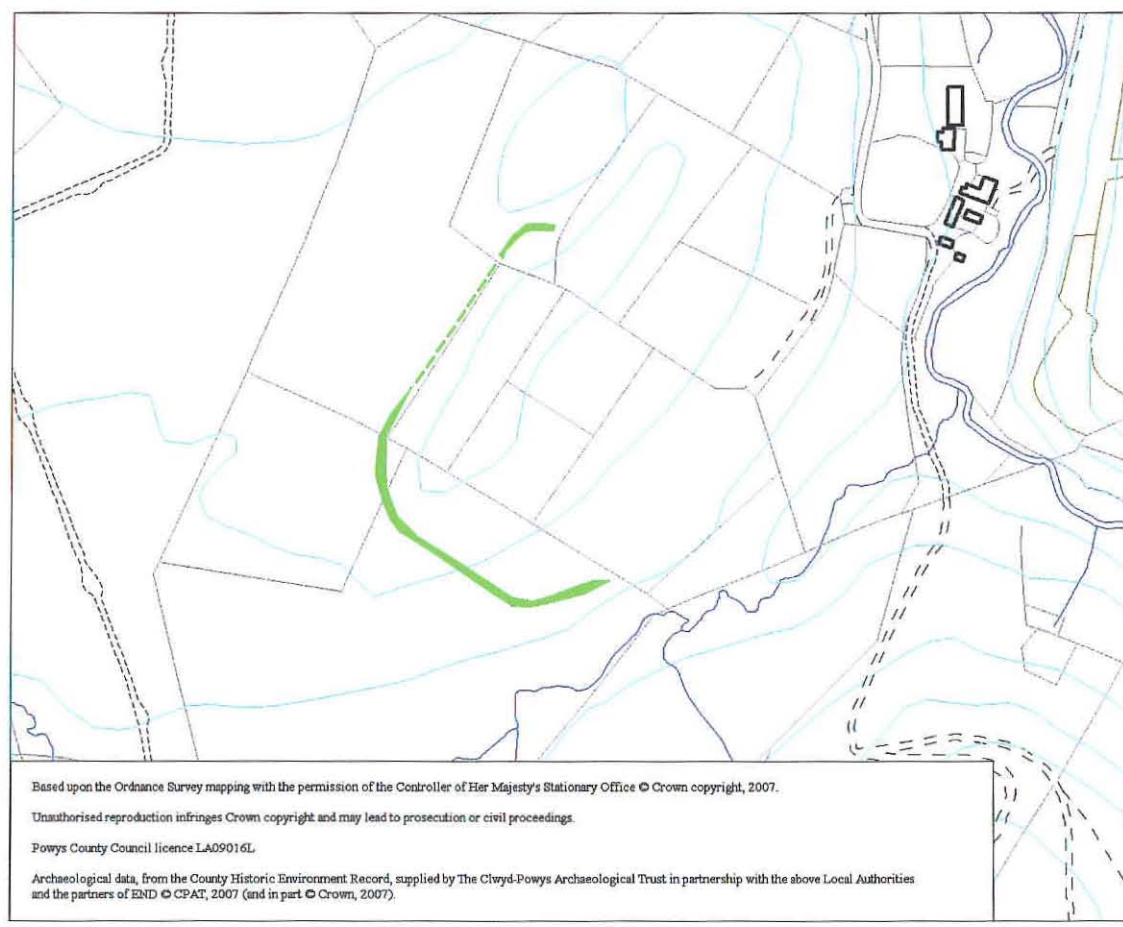
3.1.5 The list of sites considered is given below, in order of their primary record number (PRN) in the Historic Environment Record held by CPAT:

PRN 804 – Caerau, Tirabad, Llangammarch Wells (Breconshire/Powys)
PRN 855 – Llwyn Cadwgan, Beulah (Breconshire/Powys)
PRN 1051 – Glanmiheli, near Kerry (Breconshire/Powys)
PRN 2278 – Ysgwd Ffordd, near Llanbister (Radnorshire/Powys)
PRN 5136 – Hendidley, Newtown (Breconshire/Powys)
PRN 5241 – Knighton (Radnorshire/Powys)
PRN 5271 – Howey Hall, near Llandrindod Wells (Radnorshire/Powys)
PRN 5275 – Cwrt y Gollen, Crickhowell (Breconshire/Powys)
PRN 17317 – Ruthin (Denbighshire)
PRN 72001 – Caer Crwyn, near Corwen (Denbighshire)
PRN 83585 – Ffrith (Flintshire/Wrexham)
PRN 83734 – Hafan, Llanerfyl (Breconshire/Powys)
PRN 101392 – Rhuallt, near St Asaph (Denbighshire)
PRN 101416 – Prestatyn (Denbighshire)

3.2 PRN 804 Caerau, Tirabad, near Llangammarch Wells, Powys (SN 877404)

3.2.1 This record originated with a report in the *Carmarthenshire Antiquary* of 1961 of an alleged Roman fort seen by J F Jones on aerial photographs. The site lies on a ridge confined by an area of boggy ground and a stream course, located around one kilometre to the south of the hamlet of Tirabad on the north-west side of Mynydd Epynt. It was subsequently visited by W E Griffiths of the Welsh Royal Commission, who identified evidence of a Roman fort covering an area of approximately 6ha. The site was said to consist of a rectangular earthwork, some 253m by 238m, with three of its four sides visible, and the intermittent presence of at least one or perhaps two ditches. An origin as a pre-Flavian fort was suggested, not least because of its size and its siting well away from the later road system. This information was subsequently placed in the addenda of the second edition of Nash-Williams' *The Roman Frontier in Wales* (Jarrett and Nash-Williams 1969, 201), and thus appears to have been accepted by Michael Jarrett.

3.2.2 The site was subsequently rejected as a Roman fort by a field survey team from the Ordnance Survey in 1976, who concluded that the evidence was a fortuitous combination of natural features and redundant field boundaries. This impression was largely confirmed by a joint visit to the site at a later date by staff of the Royal Commission and Dr J Davies of the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth, who concluded that the evidence from aerial photographs, though quite convincing, related not to a man-made military installation but to a combination of natural features and an earlier field system.



Plot of PRN 804 from RAF aerial photograph 106G/UK/1471 No 4173 of 4/5/1946

3.2.3 A re-examination of the 1946 aerial photograph which was the origin of the record (RAF 106G/UK/1471 No 4173 from 4 May 1946) shows an interesting soilmark covering the south-west portion of the supposed fort defences. It is apparent that the fields in which it was visible had just been ploughed and the evidence points to the marks representing the remains of a substantial bank with an associated (external) ditch. The south-west side forms a straight alignment, running north-west/south-east, at either end of which are gently curving corners which end where they meet a modern fence, and where the alignment of the defences seems to have continued in a north-easterly direction. The suggestion from past fieldwork, and hints on the aerial photograph, are that there is a north-west side which meets an obtuse angled north corner in the next field to the north-east. No trace of a north-east side is apparent, while a scarp or former hedge bank which has been suggested as forming the south-east side does not meet up with the marks at the south corner.

3.2.4 The examination of a later RAF aerial photograph (RAF 58/3916 No 190 from 7 November 1960) shows only drainage and boundary features, and it was these that were mostly used by the OS to dispute the authenticity of the site. There is no visible trace of the soilmarks showing on the earlier photograph and this absence, perhaps as a result of land improvement, may explain why the authenticity of the site has been questioned.

3.2.5 The origin of this site remains uncertain, but to write it off as a feature of archaeological interest would be premature. It is perhaps as likely to be more of an authentic enclosure than has been suggested by the more recent sources. The soilmarks visible on the RAF aerial photograph of 1946 seem to be fairly regular, although the curves which define the west and south corners are notably more gradual than would be expected of a Roman fort. It may be that its peculiarities of shape are a result of the restricted local topography, but more likely that they represent an enclosure of a different period. The clarity of the marks is such that they seem unlikely to be of natural origin.

3.2.6 *Written Sources*

Jarrett, M G, & Nash-Williams, V E, 1969. *The Roman Frontier in Wales* (Second edition), Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Jones, J F, 1961. Roman Carmarthenshire, *Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 3, 125-37.

NMR archive files, Aberystwyth

OS record card (SN84SE No 2)

Aerial photographs

RAF 106G/UK/1471 No 4173 of 4/5/1946

RAF 58/3916 No 190 of 7/11/1960

3.3 PRN 855 Llwyn Cadwgan, near Beulah, Powys (SN 920499)

3.3.1 The Llwyn Cadwgan enclosure is located just over one kilometre to the south of the village of Beulah in the north-western part of the old county of Brecknock. The site was first recorded from an aerial photographic source by Professor J K S St Joseph in 1958, and the photograph (RAF 106G/UK/1471 No 1112 of 4 May 1946) shows a square, univallate soilmark, with rounded corners. It measures about 75m north-south by 75m east-west, with entrances on the north and possibly also on the east. A subsequent visit to the site by the Ordnance Survey in 1973 indicated that there were no intelligible remains and that the field was under arable cultivation.

Plot of PRN 855 from RAF aerial photograph 106G/UK/1471 No 1112 of 4/5/1946

3.3.2 Given the relatively small size of the site, its location adjacent to and approximately co-axial with Roman road RR623, and also that it lies only some 300m to the south-west of the Roman fort (PRN 866) at Caerau, this probably indicates a Roman origin as a fortlet or, more likely, a practice camp.

3.3.3 *Written Sources*

OS record card (SN94NW No 2)
St Joseph, J K S, 1958, Air Reconnaissance in Britain 1955-7, *Journal of Roman Studies* 48, 96

Aerial photographs

RAF 106G/UK/1471 No 1112 of 4/5/1946
RAF 58/3916 Nos 123 and 169 of 7/11/1960

3.4 PRN 1051 Glanmiheli, near Kerry, Powys (SO 157901)

3.4.1 An alleged Roman camp was identified from aerial photographs at Glanmilheli, in the Vale of Kerry, some one kilometre east of the village, by Professor St Joseph in 1973. Part of the site was said by St Joseph to be visible on the ground as a slight ridge, running north to south through the centre of the field, although which of the two adjoining fields at this location is uncertain. Partial excavation, presumably also by St Joseph, apparently revealed a `V-shaped' ditch some 1.07m wide by 0.76m deep on the east side. An overall area of approximately 220m east-west by up to 240m north-south was suggested for the site, which seems to have been subsequently noted as a possible fort in the Historic Environment Record.

3.4.2 The area was examined on the ground by RCAHMW in 1985 (on 9 August and 15 October). Nothing was visible except several long, linear depressions running north-south across the western field, which had just been resown. A few sherds of post-medieval pottery were found but nothing of significance.

3.4.3 Two aerial photographs have been examined covering the area of the site, neither of which provided conclusive proof of a Roman fort. Evidence was seen of a linear ditch running east-west across the western of the two adjacent fields on CUCAP BUG 082, and there are a series of vehicle tracks in the eastern field, none of which seem to define a fort or camp.

3.4.4 It is difficult to reconcile the initial record with the marks visible on the aerial photographs and the evidence of subsequent fieldwork. The excavated ditch is of sufficiently small dimensions to evince an old field boundary or drain, particularly as the appearance of the fields suggests that the present layout is of relatively modern origin. The poor visibility of the alleged features undermines the current interpretation, even more so as a large ring ditch is plainly visible in the western field on CUCAP BUG 082. Furthermore, the absence of Roman material found in the ploughsoil during the RCAHMW visit does nothing to strengthen the argument in favour of a Roman camp or fort, though it is hardly conclusive proof against such an interpretation.

3.4.5 On the basis of the evidence that has been examined this site can possibly be ruled out as a Roman military installation. However, the absence of evidence relating to the cropmark seen by St Joseph may suggest that he had access to an as yet unidentified aerial photograph, so it would be premature to conclusively refute his attribution of the site.

3.4.6 *Written Sources*

NMR archive files
OS record card (SO19SE No 7)
St Joseph, J K, 1973. Air Reconnaissance in Britain, *Journal of Roman Studies* 63, 235.

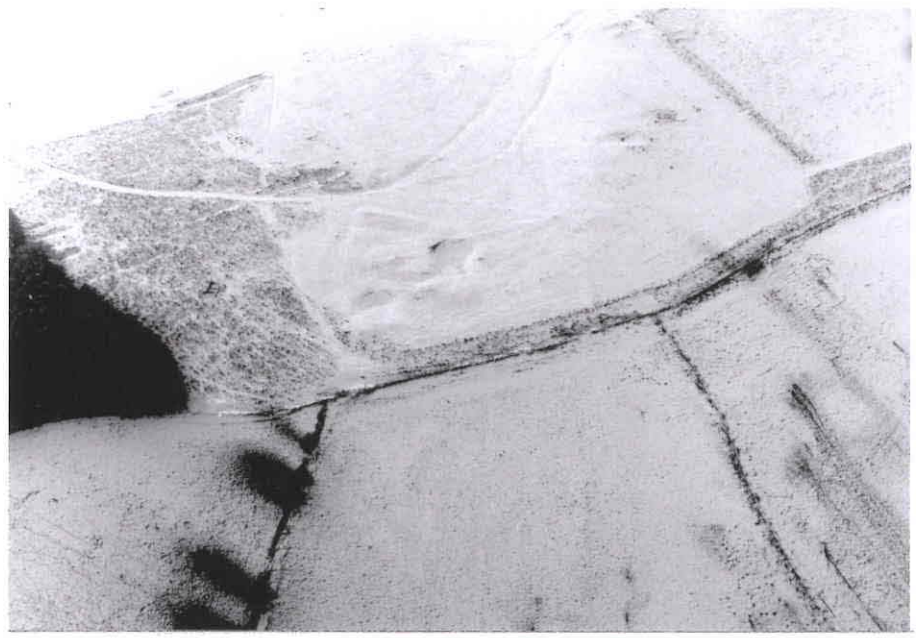
Aerial photographs

CUCAP BUG082 taken in January 1975
RAF 541/40 No 4443 of 22/5/1948

3.5 PRN 2278 Ysgwd Ffordd, near Llanbister, Powys (SO 092725)

3.5.1 This site was first noted as a possible Roman fort with annexe, from an aerial photograph taken in 1967 (CUCAP ARN47), where it was identified on the western slope of the valley of the River Ithon near Llanbister. The site was visited on 14 October 1985 by the RCAHMW, who recorded an embankment of a large enclosure running parallel to and down the hillslope, a series of hollows running downslope with associated upcast mounds, an area of hollows and banks possibly a stead or quarrying, a possible lynchet and further vague terraces or hollows. Dense bracken had masked some features, however.

3.5.2 Examination of the Cambridge aerial photograph, and an RAF aerial photograph, CPE/UK/1873 No 4163 of 4 December 1946, shows that the site falls within an abandoned encroachment on the edge of common land. However, the true nature of the site only becomes readily apparent on referring to a CPAT oblique aerial photograph, taken under snow in 1992.



CPAT aerial photograph 92-MB-0109, showing the earthwork viewed from the east

3.5.3 The photograph clearly shows a roughly square earthwork enclosure, which is presumably the feature seen in the original record, and the decisive factor in understanding the nature of the site is the obvious earthwork house platform which forms its northern side; a second platform is also visible, to its east. The combination of the features visible on the above photograph and nature of the local topography, which has a significant east-facing slope at this point, strongly suggests that the features represent a dwelling with an attached enclosure, which is almost certainly of medieval origin. Indeed, the site was visited by CPAT for the Deserted Rural Settlements project (PRNs 33990, 70003 and 70004), when the presence of medieval settlement was confirmed, although this has yet to be corrected in the HER. The site can be dismissed as a Roman fort.

3.5.4 *Written Sources*
NMR archive files
OS record card (SO07SE No 8)

Aerial photographs
CPAT 92-MB-0109, taken on 01/10/1992
CUCAP ARN47, taken on 09/06/1967
RAF CPE/UK/1873 No 4163 taken on 4/12/1946

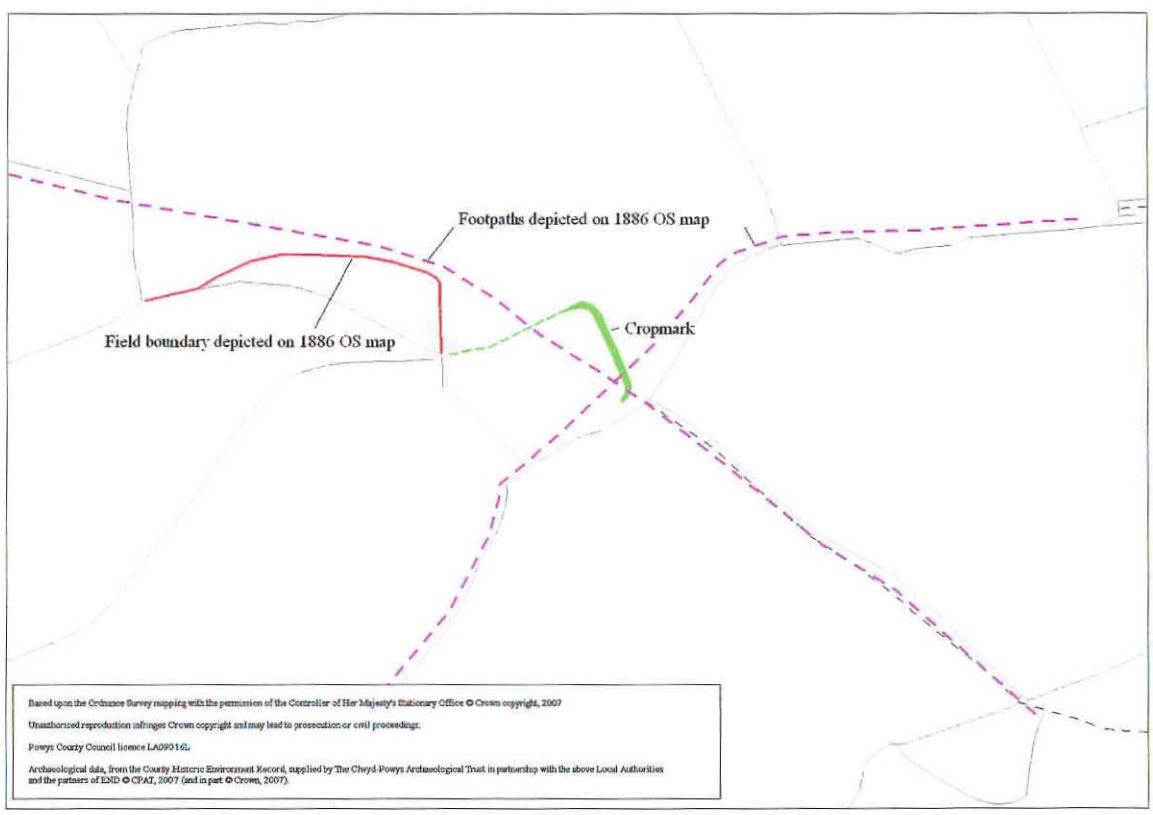
3.6 PRN 5136 Hendidley, Newtown, Powys (SO 097920)

3.6.1 The site was recognised as a cropmark on a Cambridge aerial photograph in 1976, which seems to show the eastern end of the defences of a rectangular, univallate enclosure aligned east-north-east/west-south-west, situated on the crest of the valley slope overlooking Newtown from the west. A Roman road has been recorded passing along the valley floor through Newtown, linking the forts at Forden and Caersws, but there is no direct link and the valley floor is not readily visible from the centre of the alleged enclosure.

3.6.2 The cropmark has rounded corners on the north and east, but little definite trace of the remaining parts of the alleged enclosure can be seen on the photograph, except very slight evidence of a possible north-north-west side. It may be that the south-south-east side has been fossilised by the adjoining field boundary, but the same cannot be true for the west-south-west end, where the field boundary follows an irregular line.

3.6.3 A plot of the evidence, which shows all sides bar the west-south-west, was compiled by J Collen in a 1988 thesis, but this seems rather over-optimistic when the photograph is consulted. No evidence of the cropmark is visible on RAF aerial photograph CPE/UK/2474 No 4008, of 9 March 1948.

3.6.4 As may be gathered, there is some doubt regarding the nature of this site, and the commentary on the OS record card implies that the marks largely relate to former footpaths. This seems unlikely, however, as the alignment of the main part of the cropmark does not correspond with the relevant footpath on the first edition Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1886 (Monts 36.14).



Plot of PRN 5136 derived from aerial photograph CUCAP CAZ41, including evidence from the 1886 Ordnance Survey map

3.6.5 The site was visited, in an attempt to clarify the position, and it seemed that slight evidence of a linear hollow corresponding with the main part of the cropmark was still visible. The siting of the cropmark was also assessed, but it seemed to be inappropriate for a site of Roman military origin. It also lies slightly back from the top of the valley slope, which restricts the view of the valley floor. Neither of the nearby forts, at Caersws and Forden, was visible from the site.

3.6.6 One new possibility for the origin of the site was identified during the visit, namely, that it might be a continuation to the east of a former field boundary (following the green dotted line on the above plot, which is the approximate position of the slight marks visible on the aerial photograph). In possible corroboration, the field pattern depicted on the 1886 OS map has been subsequently modified such that the southern part of the field in which the cropmark lies was extended to the detriment of one of the adjoining fields. This former boundary is also visible on the aerial photograph, and its removal could have been part of a continuing process.

3.6.7 The question of the origin of the cropmark remains unresolved, but it seems unlikely to be of Roman military origin given the present state of knowledge. Of the various possibilities which may have given rise to the cropmark, the most likely are that it either represents a former field boundary which was grubbed-up when a field was enlarged in the 19th century, or that it represents part of an enclosure which is not of Roman military origin.

3.6.8 *Written and cartographic Sources*

Collen, G, 1988. (AP plot) *Iron Age and Romano-British Settlement in the Upper Severn Valley* (Unpublished doctoral thesis in 3 volumes held in CPAT Library).
OS record card (SO09SE No 15)
OS 1st edition 1:2,500 map (Montgomeryshire 36.14), of 1886

Aerial photographs

CUCAP CAZ41, taken in 1976
RAF CPE/UK/2474 No 4008

3.7 PRN 5241 Knighton, Powys (SO 2872)

3.7.1 The origin of the record emanates from a talk, presumably in 1979, prior to a field meeting of the Radnorshire Society field section on 'The Romans in Radnorshire' (Pye 1979). The possibility of other forts at Rhayader and Presteigne was mentioned as well as this one at Knighton.

3.7.2 This suggestion of a Roman fort at Knighton seems to have been an entirely hypothetical conjecture and not based on the discovery of any concrete evidence – either in the field or from aerial photographic sources. The only known evidence of Roman activity from the area around Knighton concerns the discoveries of a Roman jug handle (PRN 1134) at Paradise Meadow (SO 28877238), off Station Road in 1926 (Silvester, 1994, 71) and of Romano-British pottery and charcoal at Gwernaffel Dingle (SO 264704) (information from the NMR).

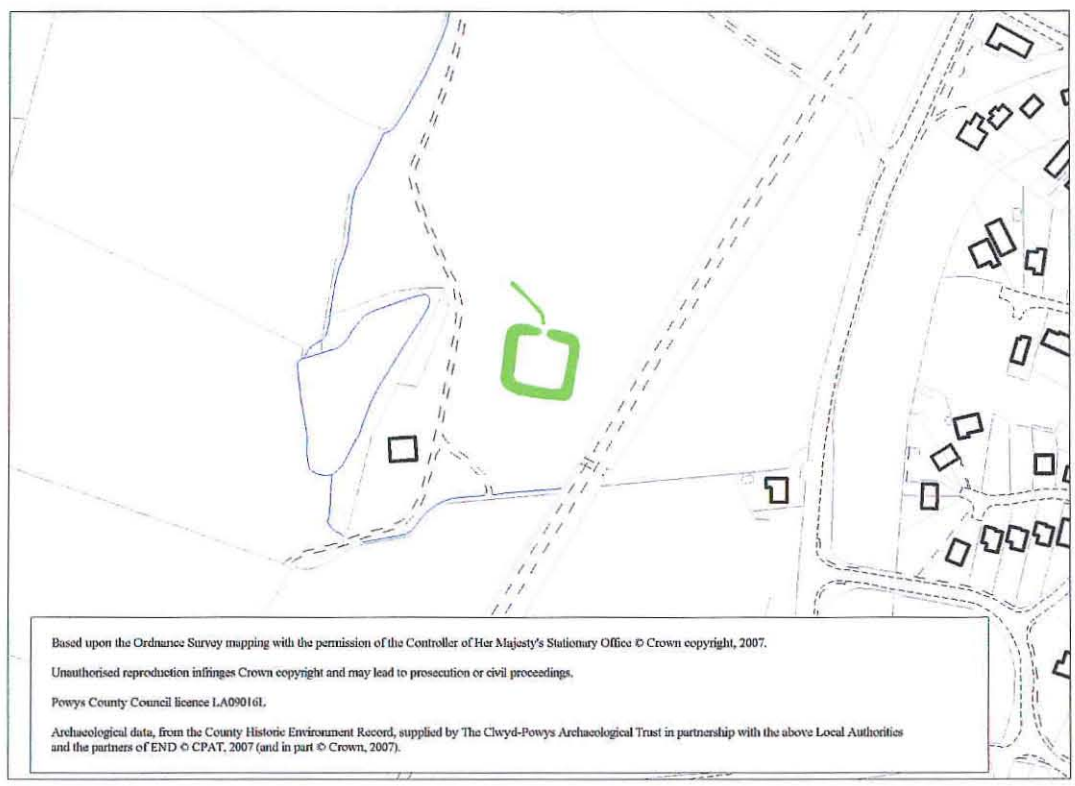
3.7.3 *Written Sources*

NMR archive files
OS record card 1980 (SO27SE No 32)
Pye, W R, 1979. The Romans in Radnorshire, *Radnorshire Society Field Research Section Newsletter* 10 (May 1979), 2.
Silvester, R J 1994. *Radnorshire Historic Settlements*, CPAT Report No 92, 71.

3.8 PRN 5271 Howey Hall, near Llandrindod Wells, Powys (SO 049585)

3.8.1 The site near Howey Hall was first recorded as a possible fortlet or practice camp on the basis of a Cambridge aerial photograph (CUCAP CET 76) taken in January 1977. A practice camp (PRN 50006) is located only 700m to the north-north-east and there are many more on the route north to the major fort at Castell Collen. Also, the alleged line of the Castell Collen to Cardiff Roman road (RR621) passes *c.*250m to the west of this site and a possible Roman blockhouse (PRN 1083) has been recorded 250m to the north-west.

3.8.2 The aerial photograph was taken in very low light and it seems possible that the earthworks are actually quite faint. However, they quite plainly show an approximately square embanked enclosure, measuring some 60m across, with an entrance on the north. A possible sunken trackway seems to run northwards from the entrance.



Plot of PRN 5271 from aerial photograph CUCAP CET76

3.8.3 The appearance of the earthworks on the aerial photograph, and their proximity to a Roman road, suggest strongly that this is a site of Roman origin. The possible track which heads north-westwards from the entrance may provide a link to other features of Roman military origin in the locality. Although this could be a fortlet, the slight nature of the surviving earthworks suggests that the more likely interpretation of the site is that they represent a practice camp, in keeping with the others on the route northwards to Castell Collen.

3.8.4 *Written Sources*

Birley, E, 1936, 'Roman Camps on Llandrindod Common', *Archaeologia Cambrensis,* 91 (Part 1), 69-73

Silvester, R J, 1994, *Radnorshire Historic Settlements*, CPAT Report No 92, 67

Aerial photographs

CUCAP CET76, taken in January 1977

RAF CPE/UK/1873 Nos 4281 and 4282 of 4/12/1946

3.9 PRN 5275 Cwrt y Gollen, Crickhowell, Powys (SO 237171)

3.9.1 The site has been noted as a cropmark which may represent a rounded right-angled ditch defining the north-west corner of a Roman fort, visible on an RAF aerial photograph, although which photograph was used is uncertain. A record in the HER that might have provided some corroboration, in fact relates to a possible Roman cremation burial (PRN 12334) at SO 2417. That account of 1909 by Edward Anwyl concentrated on the recovery of an urn containing burnt bones within another vessel on the grounds of Mr George Moore, about 300yds from the Grwyne River Upper Paper Mills, Llangenny. However, additional information in the NMR confirms that this was a collared urn, and so its interpretation as a Roman burial is incorrect.

3.9.2 To resolve the origin of the record, the available RAF aerial photographs were examined. Nothing is evident on RAF 541/116 No 4003 of 29/7/1948, but traces of a trackway describing a right-angle can be seen on RAF 106G/UK/1652 No 1084 of 11/7/1946, and this may have given rise to the record. The section of trackway in question runs north-west from SO 23721695 for 140m to SO 23641706, where it turns to the north-east and runs for a further 210m to its apparent end at SO 23811718. No definite evidence of a cropmark was found.

3.9.3 There is no evidence of a Roman fort at this location, the marks visible on the RAF aerial photograph are seemingly the result of a trackway ascending the lower valley slopes at this point.

3.9.4 *Written Sources*
CPAT HER
NMR archive files

Aerial photographs
RAF 541/116 No 4003 of 29/7/1948
RAF 106G/UK/1652 No 1084 of 11/7/1946

3.10 PRN 17317 Ruthin, Denbighshire (SJ 130582)

3.10.1 The plateau to the east of the River Clwyd and central Ruthin appears to have been the scene of considerable activity in the past, dating from at least the Neolithic period. Interest was first stimulated in this locality by the discovery of Roman cremations in two different places, in 1981 when a Flavian/Trajanic cremation urn was discovered on the site of the hospital, and in 1989 when several cremations and perhaps a mausoleum came to light. A Roman fort was argued at this site by Prof G D B Jones and Messrs E and A C Waddelove.

3.10.2 Excavations were carried out at Brynhyfryd Park, in the early part of 1989, by and Prof G D B Jones and Mr E Waddelove revealing features of allegedly Roman military origin, which were cursorily recorded. Almost immediately afterward, CPAT undertook detailed excavations on the same site but found that there was no evidence of any overtly military features of the period. Indeed, some of the linear features contained material of post-medieval origin and were re-interpreted as field boundaries (Jones 1989, 51).

3.10.3 Subsequent investigations by Prof G D B Jones and Mr E Waddelove, in the autumn of 1989, revealed traces of a multiple ditch system on a north-south alignment. These were interpreted as the defences of a Roman fort and reportedly comprised a timber box-rampart of pink clay to the east of close-set ditches. The scale of the ditches was, however, small, and the inconsistencies evident in the various descriptions and drawings published by Jones and Waddelove do nothing to convince the reader of the features' authenticity. According to Waddelove (1991), the innermost ditch was 0.9m wide and 0.6m deep, the central 1.1m wide and 0.75m deep, and the outer 0.75m wide and 0.75m deep. However, in Waddelove *et al* (1990b) the ditches are described, respectively from inner to outer, as 1.1m wide, 1.15m wide, and 0.9m wide. Even more confusion is engendered when the plan and section in the second publication is consulted, as this gives respective dimensions of 1.6m wide by 0.45m deep, 1.15m wide and 0.45m deep, and 1.3m wide and 0.55m deep. Regardless of the descriptive inconsistencies, these ditches are remarkably small for an established Roman fort.

3.10.4 The material found on the site in all of the 1989 excavations confirmed that there was Roman occupation on the site, from the late 1st century to the 4th century. However, the CPAT assessment diverged from that of Jones and Waddelove in attributing this to a civil settlement. An early medieval inhumation cemetery was also recorded in the CPAT excavations, demonstrating that activity continued into post-Roman times. Other more recent works, primarily evaluation and watching briefs, in the same general area on the plateau have produced nothing of military significance, but Roman features and material were recorded in a recent evaluation at Record St, near the town centre of Ruthin, some 700m to the west.

3.10.5 It is fair to say that Roman occupation has been conclusively proven in Ruthin, both in the centre of the modern town and on the plateau to its east. However, despite the strong assertions of the late Professor Barri Jones and Mr Edmund Waddelove, there is, as yet, no conclusive proof of Roman military activity on the plateau to the east of the Clwyd, although it would be reasonable to assume that some may well exist in the locality, perhaps somewhere near the centre of the modern town, where it overlooks a potential river crossing. Indeed, it may be significant that a recent evaluation along Record Street produced evidence of Roman metalworking of likely 1st or 2nd century date (Grant 2006).

3.10.6 *Written Sources*

Frere, S S, 1992. Roman Britain in 1991, *Britannia* 23, 256.

Gaimster, D R M, Margeson, S, & Hurley, M, 1990. Medieval Britain and Ireland in 1989, *Medieval Archaeology* 34, 248.

Grant, I, 2006. *Land off Record Street, Ruthin, Denbighshire: archaeological evaluation.* CPAT Report No. 798.

Jones, N W, 1989. Brynhyfryd Park, Ruthin, *Archaeology in Wales* 29, 51.

Waddelove, E, 1991. *Roman Dyffryn Clwyd*, Coelion Press: Ruthin, 21-30.

Waddelove, E, Waddelove, A C, & Jones G D B, 1990a. The Roman Fort at Ruthin, Clwyd, *Britannia* 21, 267-302.

Waddelove, E, Waddelove, A C, & Jones G D B, 1990b. The Roman Forts at Ruthin: rescue excavation during housing estate development, *The Manchester Archaeological Bulletin* 4, 32-38.

3.11 PRN 72001 Rhuallt, near St Asaph, Denbighshire (SJ 078752)

3.11.1 The HER record refers to an alleged fort very close to the line of the Chester-St Asaph Roman road. The HER appears to indicate that it was first recorded by Archdeacon Thomas in his magisterial *History of the Diocese of St Asaph* at the beginning of the 20th century, but this appears to be incorrect, the earliest report being by the Rev Ellis Davies in *The Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Flintshire* of 1949. He noted that the site was 70 paces in circumference, but in addition to this the HER notes that the site is now cut by the banking of the A55 expressway. There is absolutely no evidence that Davies thought that this was a Roman earthwork or that it should be classed as a fort. These classifications appear to have originated as recently as the time that the HER entry was created in 1999, as does the attribution to D R Thomas.

3.11.2 The Davies reference actually describes the artificial mound at Rhuallt in the following terms: 'The mound is situated just to the north of the old road from Rhuallt in the direction of Bryngwyn Mawr, some 350 paces east from its junction with the (*former*) main road from St Asaph to Holywell, and 100 paces higher up than the house of Arfryn. The mound, which is circular, is evidently artificial measuring about 70 paces in circumference and from 12 to 20 feet in height. It has been somewhat tampered with and is covered with thick vegetation and a few trees. Its position on a sharp slope and its steep sides with a flat top seem to preclude it being a barrow. If a motte its size is very small. Possibly it was made to guard the entrance into this narrow pass.'

3.11.3 Nothing is visible on the RAF aerial photographs, but it is readily apparent that the reference is to a circular mound which, if it relates to a defensive site at all, is probably a small motte. Other possibilities can be postulated, such as a spoil mound relating to mining activity, but it is surely not a Roman fort.

3.11.4 *Written Sources*

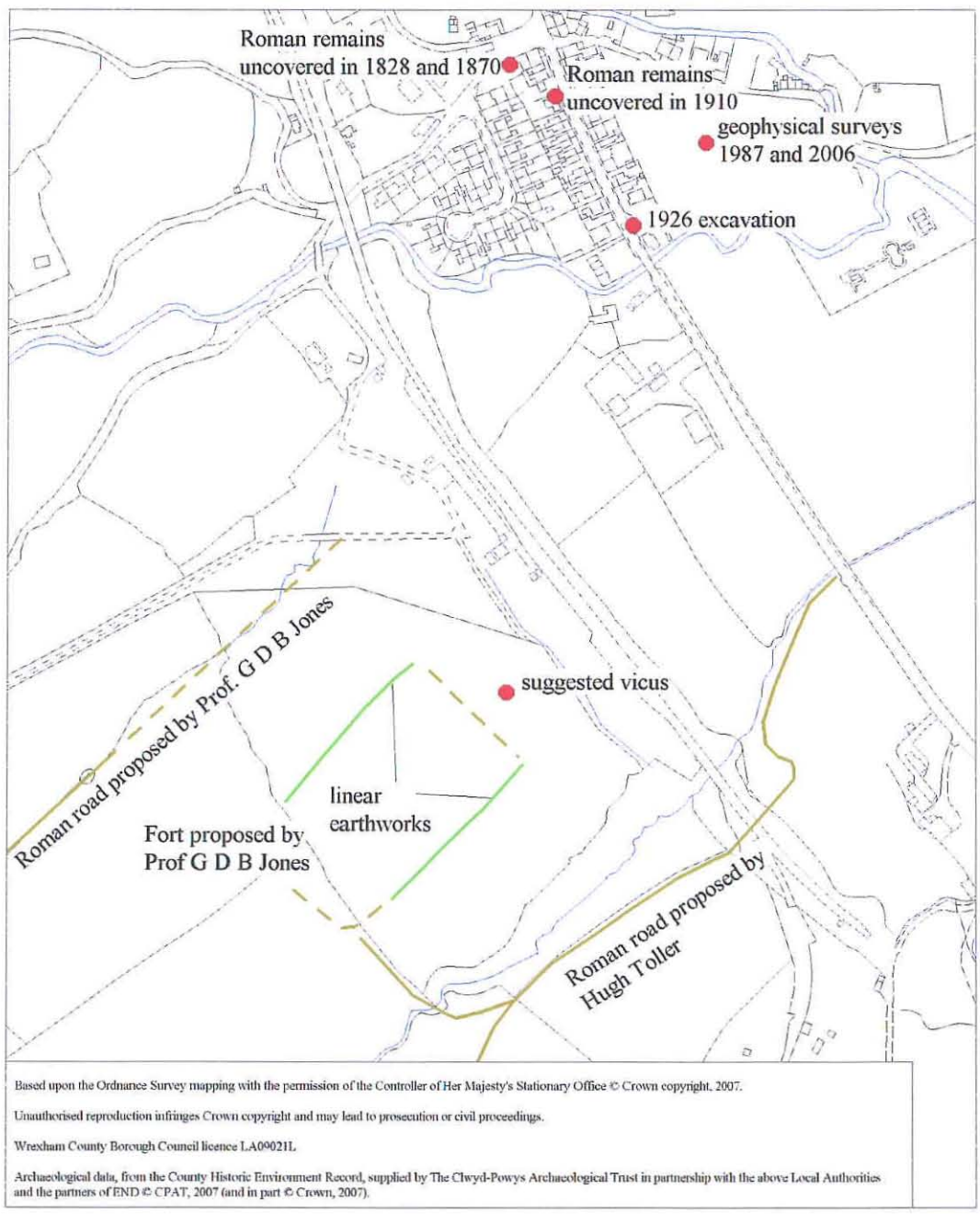
CPAT HER
Davies, E, 1949. *The Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Flintshire*, Cardiff: W Lewis, 348.

Aerial photographs

RAF AP 541/119 No 3150 of 30/7/1948
RAF CPE/UK/1996 No 4131 of 13/4/1947

3.12 PRN 100020 Ffrith, Flintshire and Wrexham (SJ 28375490)

3.12.1 Over the last four centuries, a significant quantity of Roman artefacts and structural evidence has come from in and around the modern village of Ffrith. The earliest reference dates from around 1585 when William Camden recorded structural remains which he, probably correctly, interpreted as a Roman hypocaust. Later writers recorded further discoveries, although unfortunately many were wrongly attributed to Hope or Caergwrle, including Thomas Pennant in the 1770s, who suggested that this might be an 'outpost to *Deva*'. This interpretation was reiterated by Bingley in 1804, who proposed the site as a 'Roman Station' (Davies 1949, 226-238).



Roman discoveries in Ffrith and location of the Roman fort and road proposed by Prof. G D B Jones, and the road proposed by Hugh Toller

3.12.2 Chance discoveries were reported in 1709, 1828, 1870, 1874 and 1933, and more organised excavations were undertaken in 1893, 1910, 1926 and 1967-69. The 1926 excavations were carried out by Sir Cyril Fox, who cut a section through Offa's Dyke which recovered Roman finds and a post hole from beneath the bank. The excavations in the late 1960s, carried out in advance of a housing development, recorded a complex stratigraphy with masonry buildings superseding timber predecessors, including what the excavators determined to be a bath house. Recent investigations by the Time Team have, however, demonstrated that what had been interpreted as the apsidal wall of a bath house was actually a curving boundary wall of much later date.

3.12.3 A geophysical survey was undertaken by the University of Manchester in 1987 on the site of the playing fields (SJ 285553), which suggested the presence of a row of structures aligned east to west (Frere 1988, 416). Recent geophysical survey by the Time Team on the same site appeared to confirm the results, although subsequent excavation found no evidence for buildings and concluded that the anomalies were probably of natural origin.

3.12.4 There can be little doubt that there was a significant Roman settlement at Ffrith, which is now generally presumed to have been a civil one, although the quantity of XX Legion tiles that have been found suggests that there was a military connection.

3.12.5 The possibility of military activity at Ffrith was explored in some detail by Prof. G D B Jones, and a note was published in *Britannia* identifying the line of the Roman road from Chester to Caer Gai, along with the platform of a fort, measuring 108m by perhaps 130m, with a possible *vicus* in woodland to the east (Frere 1989, 258-9). The evidence for the fort was based on two roughly parallel linear earthworks, aligned north-east to south-west and about 100m apart, which appear to have been identified through aerial reconnaissance. The earthworks show on a number of oblique aerial photographs taken by Prof. Jones, as well as one taken by RCAHMW in August 1995 (955192-44), which has been used to plot the features. This clearly shows that they are slightly curving and, although it was not possible to undertake a field visit as part of this project, ground photographs in the NMR archive of Professor G D B Jones' material show both to be substantial lynchets. Comparison with the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map of 1874 shows that the north-western earthwork coincides exactly with the edge of woodland and it therefore seems most likely that both features represent relict field boundaries. The same is probably also true for the proposed Roman road, the line of which follows an extant boundary. It has not been possible to investigate the suggested *vicus* earthworks, although it now seems unlikely that they are associated with Roman activity.

3.12.6 The potential coarse of the Roman road was investigated by Hugh Toller in 2006 (Toller pers comm.), who identified a series of earthwork terraces, cuttings, and sections of possible agger, which were used to propose a route running from the east, past Cymmau Hall (SJ 29045505), crossing the line of Offa's Dyke (SJ 28645503), and turning south-west towards Lower Glascoed (SJ 28215438). At SJ 28435476 he identified a fork in the road, with a spur running north-west to a possible bridge site across a stream and then following a field boundary towards the site of Prof. Jones' suggested fort. However, comparison with the 1874 Ordnance Survey shows much of this road line as tracks which were evidently extant at that time and must cast doubt on a Roman interpretation.

3.12.7 *Written Sources*

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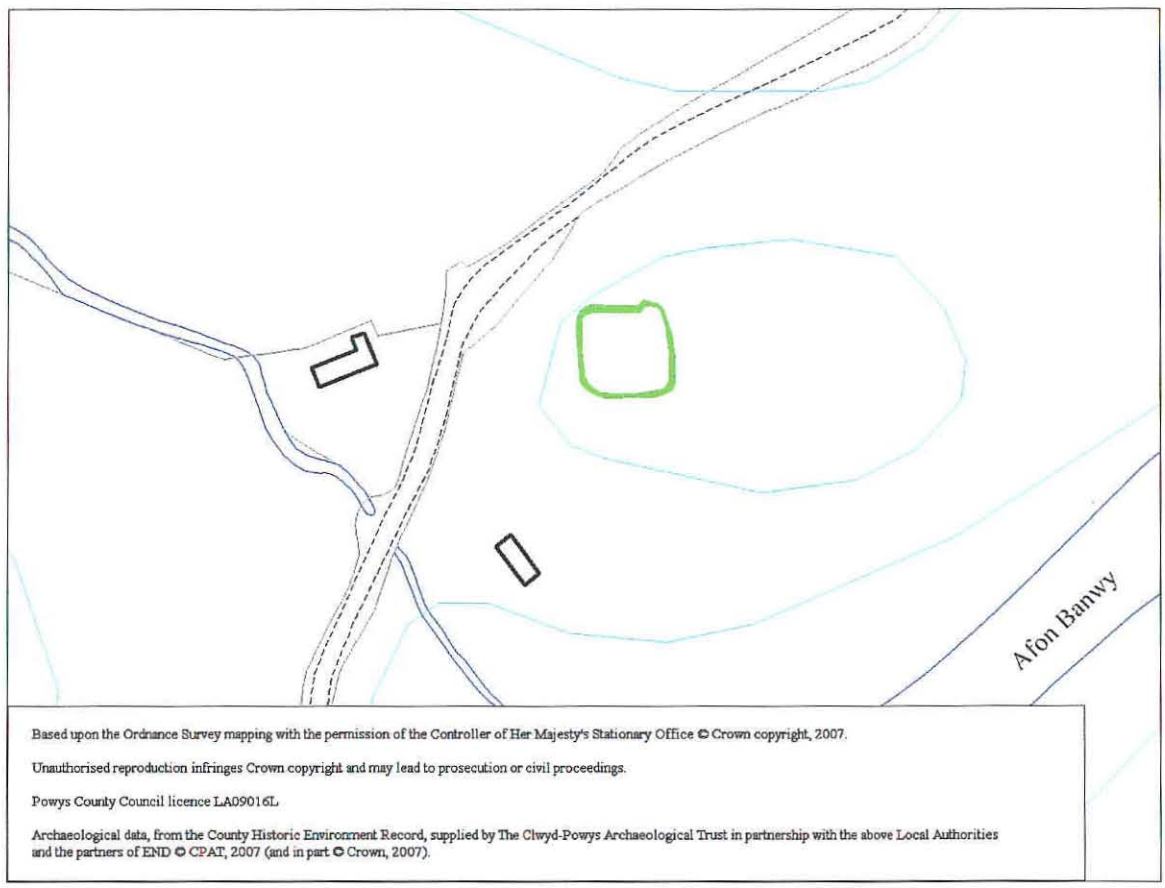
Frere, S S, 1988. Roman Britain in 1987, *Britannia* 19, 416.
Frere, S S, 1989. Roman Britain in 1988, *Britannia* 20, 258-9.
Frere, S S, 1991. Roman Britain in 1990, *Britannia* 22, 222.
RCAHMW, 1912. *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire, II – County of Flint*. London: HMSO.
Archive of Professor G D B Jones' material held by NMR

Photography
RCAHMW oblique aerial photograph 955192-44, 1995
Aerial and ground photographs in the NMR archive of Professor G D B Jones' material

3.13 PRN 83734 Hafan, Llanerfyl, Powys (SJ 042108)

3.13.1 A Roman 'fortlet' (NPRN 404653) at Hafan, Llanerfyl, has been recorded during recent aerial reconnaissance carried out by Mr T Driver of the RCAHMW in 2006, who has noted that it was originally observed by Prof G D B Jones and Mr H Toller. It should be reported, however, that the site was first photographed by Professor J K S St Joseph and is readily visible on a Cambridge aerial photograph (CUCAP BYR 51), taken in January 1976. The site lies in close proximity to the predicted line of the Roman road between Caer Gai and Caersws, the nearest proven section of which lies just over one kilometre to the north-north-east.



Plot of PRN 83734 from aerial photograph CUCAP BYR 51

3.13.2 The site is located on the north-west side of the Afon Banwy, near Llanerfyl. It lies on a small knoll on the terrace above the flood plain of the river, with steep slopes on the west and south, leading down to the Banwy and a small tributary stream.

3.13.3 At first glance, the cropmark seems to show a reasonably clear sub-square ditched enclosure with rounded corners, typical of a fortlet, but closer examination and measurement of the plot taken from the RCAHMW photograph raises some doubts. Firstly, the site only measures some 22m north to south by 22m east to west, and secondly, both the recent RCAHMW photograph and CUCAP BYR 51 seem to show a slight protrusion on the north side of the north-east corner. This could suggest the possibility that the site is some type of pastoral enclosure, but it is difficult to be too certain given the nature of the sources.

3.13.4 The site was visited in an attempt to resolve some of the questions regarding its potential. No visible trace of any earthworks was found, but an examination of its siting demonstrated that there were deficiencies in its position, from a purely Roman military standpoint. This was most

apparent on its north and east sides, where there are blind spots within 200m. The knoll on which the enclosure sits is also dominated by higher ground on the opposite side of the small stream to the west. It seems most likely that the site represents an enclosure of domestic or pastoral origin, which is potentially of Roman date, given its proximity to the Roman road network

3.13.5 *Written Sources*
RCAHMW report on aerial photography (2006)

Aerial photography
CUCAP BYR 51 taken in January 1976
RAF 106G/UK/1468 No 1080 of 4/5/1946

3.14 PRN 101392 Caer Crwyn, near Corwen, Denbighshire (SJ 0643)

3.14.1 This site is recorded in the HER as an apparently confused reference to an area of burnt clay and stones on a site adjacent to the Rhug to Corwen road.

3.14.2 The origin of the record is a note in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* of 1863 which reads as follows: 'Note 78 – VITRIFIED FORT – On the right of the road from Rhug to Corwen is Caer-Crwyn, which in some portions has been subject to intense heat. The clay and small stones have been completely baked, but the general appearance does not correspond to the walls of undoubted vitrified forts, such as exist in Scotland. The work, however, should be carefully examined; for, if it should be found to belong to the class, it would be, I believe, the only known instance in the Principality.' The author is not specified.

3.14.3 The record is analysed on the Ordnance Survey record card which refers to 'Caer-Crwyn, a fort on the right of the road from Rhug (SJ 056440) to Corwen (SJ 078434)', but suggests that the area indicated is a river plain and there is no trace of an earthwork there or at SJ 063414, near Cynwyd, where there is a building called 'Cae-crwn'. Nothing is apparent on the RAF aerial photography, 106G/UK/1454 Nos 4394-8, of 2/5/1946.

3.14.4 The original record is inconsistent with the known archaeology of the area and it is very unlikely that a fort exists at the position suggested. Even if it were so, there is no implication in the original source that it was of Roman origin. This attribution probably originated at the time the record was incorporated into the HER. A more plausible explanation for the record might be that Caer-Crwyn is a mis-spelling of Caer Drewyn, the hillfort overlooking Corwen, and that the description of its siting was incorrect. Although this record seems to be unlikely to refer to a Roman fort, one has been suggested to the west of Corwen, where two Roman roads were said to converge to cross the River Alwen (Blockley 1989, 6). This hypothesis remains to proven, as the only confirmed section of Roman road in the area lies near Rhug, approximately 600m to the west-north-west, where it adopts a north-east/south-west alignment.

3.14.5 *Written Sources*

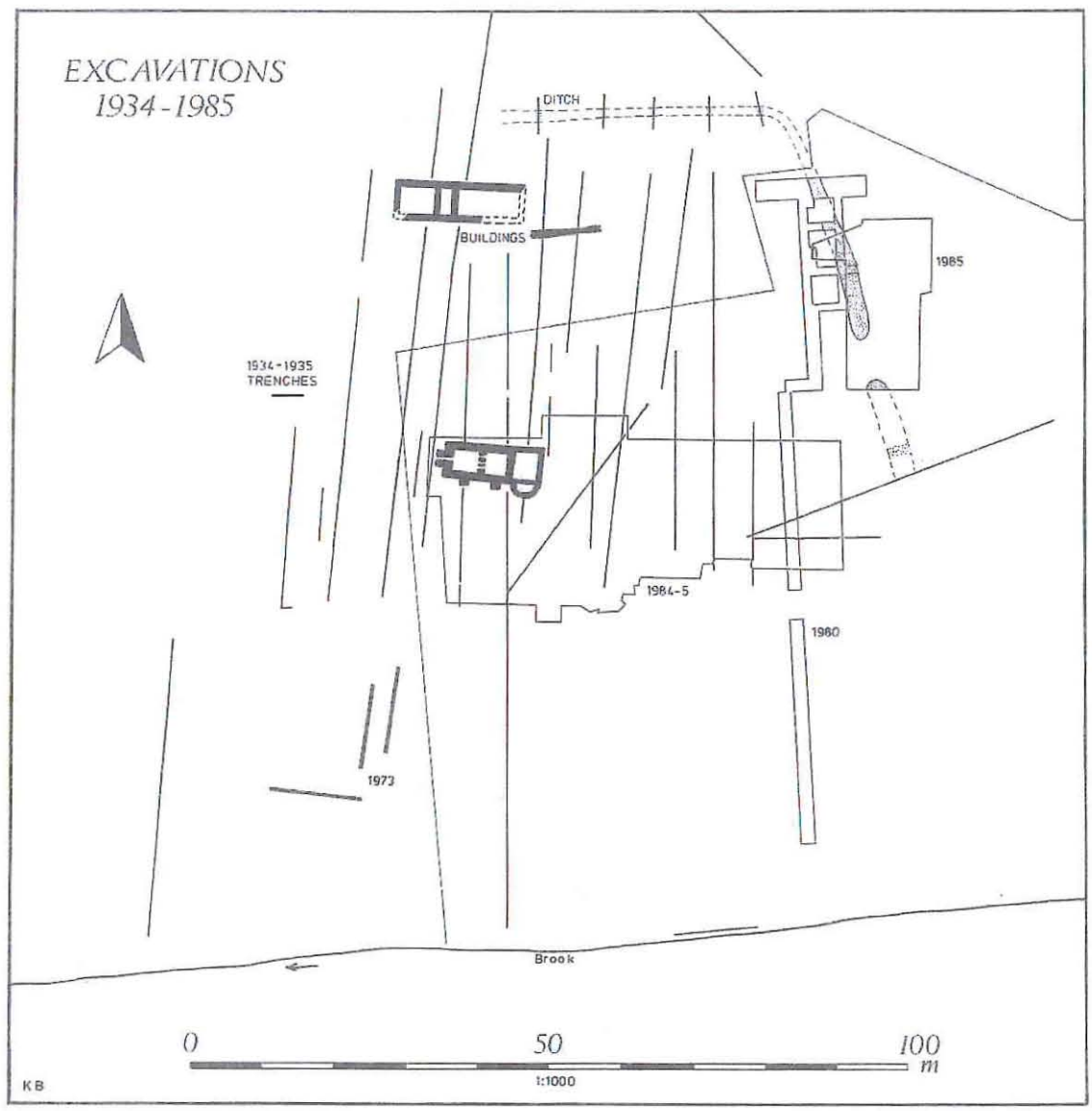
Anon, 1863. Archaeological Notes and Queries, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 3rd series 9, 335.
Blockley, K, 1989. *Prestatyn 1984-5*, Oxford: British Archaeological Report.

Aerial photography

106G/UK/1454 Nos 4394-8, of 2/5/1946

3.15 PRN 101416 Prestatyn, Denbighshire (SJ 059821)

3.15.1 Two forts have been postulated in Prestatyn. The first excavations were carried out by Mr F G Smith in 1933, and it was he who apparently discovered the line of defences for a first-century 'station' or fort. A report in a local newspaper, the 'Prestatyn Weekly' from 7th November 1936, written by Professor R Newstead of Chester, who was also involved in excavations at Prestatyn from 1934, and who took over the work at the site from Smith, suggests that the fort was located immediately to the north of Melyd Avenue, and refers to the defensive ditch, which he considered to have been cut somewhere between AD 70 and 80. He notes that 'on the southern slope, immediately in advance of the early camp, the structural remains of three buildings were laid bare'. One of these buildings was the Roman bath-house which was investigated as part of the 1984-5 CPAT excavations at Melyd Avenue. The only evidence for a fort on the land to the north of Melyd Avenue is a single excavation by Smith near a field boundary which forms the eastern extent of the lands belonging to the house now known as 'Claremont'. This was noted by Newstead in 1937 but was apparently never published.

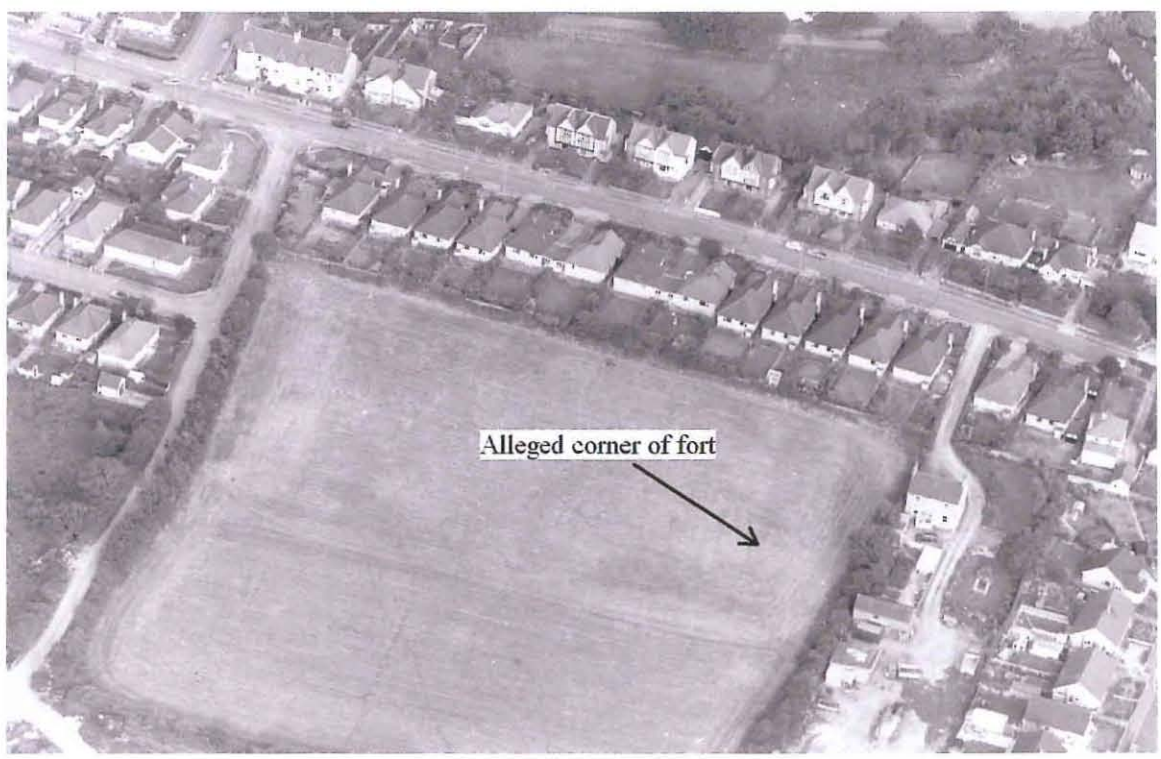


Plan of the excavations at Melyd Avenue from 1934-85 (reproduced from Blockley 1989, Fig 3)

3.15.2 The 1934 included several sections through a ditch (that which reputedly represented the defences of the first-century fort) running along the 15m OD contour, as well as an investigation

of the lower-lying ground to the south; numerous tiles bearing the official stamp of the 20th Legion were recovered. The 1935-6 excavations consisted of further trenching and the investigation of the three masonry buildings mentioned above. The interim report on the excavations (Newstead 1937) also mentions a trial trench (Cut 1935 A) excavated for approximately 50m on a line north-west from the 'south-east angle of the Roman ditch' and therefore entirely within the alleged fort formed by that ditch. However, the report confirms that 'no trace of Roman occupation was found' (Newstead 1937, 221).

3.15.3 Further excavations are known to have been carried out in the locality by Dr Graham Webster in 1951 and a Mr Tobias in 1955 (Webster 1952, 11; Anon 1956, ix; Blockley 1989, 3), but unfortunately neither of these excavations which seem to have consisted of single trenches was published and the results are not known. Messrs Barrett, Kenworthy and Stevenson, recorded building rubble 'not later than *c.* AD150' in excavations near the south-east corner of the Meadows Estate in 1973 (Barrett *et al* 1973, 39; Blockley 1989, 3). In 1976, Professor G D B Jones identified a second fort, some 400m to the north-west of Melyd Avenue, from aerial photographic evidence. A subsequent small-scale excavation recorded 'one outer and two inner ditches . . . fronting a substantial clay rampart' in a trench to the north-west of Fforddisa in 1976 (Frere *et al* 1977). However, examination of the section drawing for the excavation contained in the NMR archive of Professor G D B Jones' material revealed that the ditches in question were no more than 0.7m in depth, or rather slight for earthworks which were supposed to act as defences for a permanent Roman military installation.



Aerial photograph taken by Prof G D B Jones on 16th July 1976 (from the G D B Jones archive, NMR)

3.15.4 The area of the 1930s excavations was re-assessed in a trial excavation by CPAT in 1980 (see plan reproduced from Blockley 1989, Fig 3, above). The northern section of the trench encountered the Roman ditch recorded in the 1930s at the north end of the Melyd Avenue site, although this area was otherwise lacking in Roman material. It was noted, however, that Roman deposits were better-preserved further downslope to the south (Brassil 1989, 11). The excavation also revealed that the Roman ditch ran in a south-south-east direction from its eastern end (see Blockley 1989, Fig 3) and it therefore appears probable that it forms an integral part of an

enclosure which encompasses the area of the bath-house, rather than an element of the putative Roman fort on the plateau to the north.

Plan of the excavations relating to the alleged Roman forts at Prestatyn (information from Frere *et al* 1985 and Blockley 1989)

3.15.5 A more detailed examination of the area of the 1930s excavations on the Melyd Avenue site was carried out by CPAT in 1984-5 (Blockley 1989). This revealed Iron Age occupation, succeeded by extensive Roman occupation dating from AD 70 to the early 4th century, including industrial structures as well as the bath-house already mentioned (Blockley 1989, 13).

3.15.6 Attempts were also made to determine the authenticity of the postulated Roman forts and a research excavation extending over 108m^2 was carried out by CPAT between 1984 and 1986 in the grounds of Ysgol y Llys, between Meadows Lane and Fforddisa (Weetman 1986; Blockley 1989, 4). When no evidence of either fort or any other traces of Roman occupation were revealed, a resistivity survey was carried out by Bradford University over most of the playing fields of the school, but this failed to find any conclusive evidence of Roman occupation.

3.15.7 Two further trial excavations have been carried out since 1989, both as evaluations in advance of developments. In 2001 some 33m of trenches were excavated in the grounds of 'Claremont', a house to the north of the Melyd Avenue site, and in 2003, over 105m of trenches were excavated

on the site of a proposed new school hall for Ysgol y Llys. Neither of these excavations revealed any trace of Roman occupation.

3.15.8 The authenticity of the two alleged forts at Prestatyn seems more than a little doubtful, particularly as their recognition relied on small-scale investigations. The hypothesis of the north-western fort relies on a single small excavation in 1976, which recorded ditches seemingly too shallow to be of Roman military origin. no subsequent work in the area has provided any evidence of Roman occupation. The south-eastern fort was first proposed in the 1930s, and has been designated as a scheduled ancient monument by Cadw, but subsequent excavation in the 1980s suggested that the ditch which was alleged to form the fort in fact related to an enclosure surrounding the bath-house and industrial complex at Melyd Avenue, immediately to the south. Even in the 1930s, a trench excavated in the interior of the alleged fort revealed no trace of Roman occupation. All subsequent work in the interior of the south-eastern fort, comprising both geophysical survey and extensive excavation, has failed to provide any evidence of Roman occupation and it now seems extremely unlikely that one exists in this area.

3.15.9 *Written Sources*

Anon, 1956. *Flintshire Historical Society Proceedings*, ix

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Grant, I, 2003. *Ysgol y Llys, Prestatyn, Denbighshire*, CPAT Report No 504.

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Newstead, R, 1937. The Roman Station, Prestatyn: first interim report, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 92, 208-232.

NMR archive of material from Professor G D B Jones .

Reprint of the 'Prestatyn Weekly' from 7th November 1936, held by the NMR.

Webster, G, 1952-3, The lead-mining industry in north Wales in Roman times, *Flintshire Historical Society Proceedings* 13, 5-17.

Weetman, M, 1986, 'Ysgol y Llys, Prestatyn, *Archaeology in Wales* 26, 44.

3.16 CONCLUSIONS

3.16.1 It is regrettable but perhaps unsurprising that this analysis has not confirmed the existence of any of the postulated. The descent of Prestatyn from scheduled Roman fort to discounted chimera has been recognised for some time, but this is probably the first time that the descent has been chronicled. The fort at Ruthin remains elusive, although most professional archaeologists working in the region do believe that it exists, and that only further excavation will bring it to light. It also becomes clear from a detailed study of the evidence that in the past a rather casual attitude to determining the significant site type pervaded the then Sites and Monuments Record. There is, for instance, no other plausible explanation for the attribution of the apparently circular mound at Rhuallt (PRN 72001), for Archdeacon Thomas and Ellis Davies' reports are as one would expect from him, perfectly explicit. A somewhat similar explanation can be adduced for the Caer Crwyn site near Corwen (PRN 101392). A different issue is raised by the Howey Hall (PRN 5271) and Llwyn Cadwgan (PRN 855) cropmarks which both appear to be practice camps. These have presumably been given the term 'fort' albeit with a question mark appended, through ignorance. On a positive note, however, the incorporation of the new data into the Historic Environment Record should ensure that future researchers will be able to have an appropriate level of base information to continue their analyses.

Table of proposed revisions to the type and period fields of the assessed site

PRN	Location	HER type 1	Suggested revised type	Suggested revised period
804	Caerau	Fort ?	Defended enclosure ?	Unknown
855	Llwyn Cadwgan, Beulah	Fort ?	Practice camp	Roman
1051	Glanmiheli, near Kerry	Fort ?	Field system ?	Medieval ?
2278	Ysgwd Ffordd, near Llanbister	Fort ?	Deserted rural settlement	Medieval
5136	Hendidley, Newtown	Fort ?	Field boundary	Medieval ?
5241	Knighton	Fort ?	Non antiquity	Undated
5271	Howey Hall, near Llandrindod Wells	Fort ?	Practice camp	Roman
5275	Cwrt y Gollen, Crickhowell	Fort ?	Trackway	Post-medieval ?
17317	Ruthin	Fort ?	Civil settlement	Romano-British
72001	Caer Crwyn, near Corwen	Fort ?	Motte ?	Medieval ?
83585	Ffrith	Fort ?	Field boundary	Post Medieval ?
83734	Hafan, Llanerfyl	Fort ?	Enclosure	Roman ?
10139	Rhuallt, near St Asaph	Fort ?	Non antiquity ?	Undated
10141	Prestatyn	Fort ?	Non antiquity	Undated