

CPAT Report No 1013

Eagles Glen, Four Crosses, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Report for Mr R Shelley

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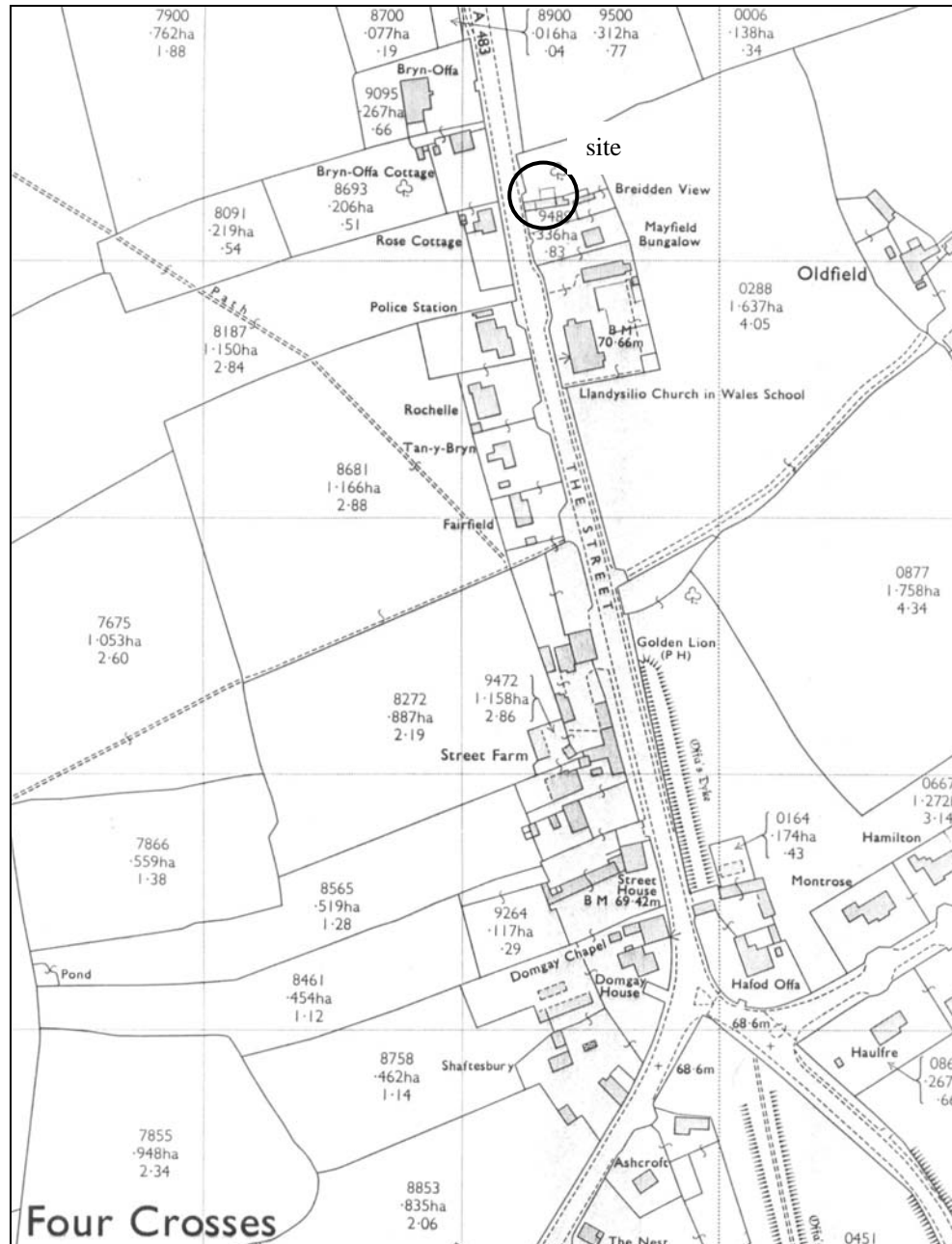
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2009 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforth CPAT) was invited by Mr R Shelley to undertake an archaeological excavation in connection with the rebuilding of a fire-damaged house at Eagles Glen, Four Crosses (Powys County Council planning application P2008/1350).



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Fig. 1 Site location

- 1.2 A pre-planning evaluation had been undertaken by CPAT in April 2009 which revealed a series of shallow ditches and gullies of likely Romano-British date (Grant 2009). Accordingly, the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the local authority, determined that an archaeological excavation should be conducted. The curatorial brief (INV 744) determined that the excavations would be restricted to the layout of the foundations for the new house.

2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The development site is situated at the northern limit of the village of Four Crosses and 500m north of the main crossroads on the A483 (Fig. 1; SJ 26941893).
- 2.2 Four Crosses is situated on an outwash plain between the Rivers Severn and Vyrnwy which is composed of glacial or fluvioglacial deposits that form shallow depressions and low ridges overlying glacio-lacustrine alluvium. The ridges support well-drained brown earths, favourable to arable, dairy farming and beef farming. The soils to the north and south are unsuitable for arable cultivation: to the north there is alluvium on the Vyrnwy floodplain and to the south are poorly drained stagnogleys (Owen and Britnell 1989, 27).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is a significant concentration of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds within the Four Crosses area, together with a series of pit alignments, probably of prehistoric date, all of which were initially recognized as cropmarks.
- 3.2 The line of Offa's Dyke crosses the development plot, although the pre-planning evaluation produced no evidence for any surviving upstanding remains. The 8th-century earthwork, consisting, where it does survive, of a large bank and a ditch to the west of it, is generally accepted to have formed the western boundary to the kingdom of Mercia. The Dyke remains as a substantial earthwork bank to the south of the school, some 200m from the development, and at that point is statutorily protected as a monument of national importance (Scheduled Ancient Monument Mg 033).
- 3.3 Recent excavations on the eastern side of Offa's Dyke, to the south of Eagles Glen, have revealed an extensive Romano-British field system. The pre-planning evaluation also uncovered a series of ditches and gullies which suggest that this activity extends further to the north.

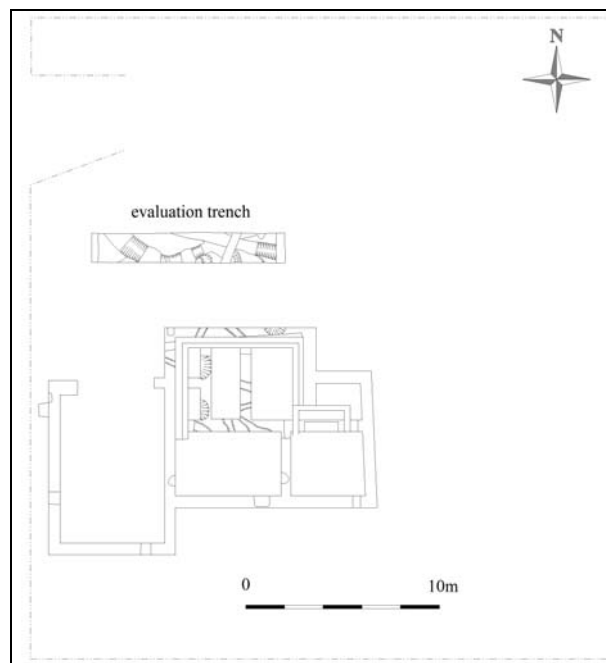


Fig. 2 Location of the foundations and evaluation trench

4 EXCAVATION

- 4.1 Prior to the commencement of the excavation a watching brief was maintained from 28-30 September 2009 during the removal of the concrete slab beneath the previous house. However, no archaeologically significant deposits were revealed.
- 4.2 The excavation was undertaken over a three-day period between 1 October and 5 October 2009. The foundation trenches, which were either 0.6m or 0.5m in width, were laid out by the builders and excavated by machine under archaeological supervision to their full depth (0.9m), onto the top of the natural subsoil, or the first archaeologically significant horizon, whichever was encountered first. A full drawn and written record was maintained throughout. Contexts were recorded on individual record forms and drawn and photographed as appropriate. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context records in the site archive, a summary of which is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 It was evident that a significant depth of soil (3) had been deposited across the site, probably during the later post-medieval period, being at its deepest towards the western boundary where it extended below the base of the foundation trench at a depth of 0.90m. A deposit of yellow-brown clay silt (8), at least 0.4m thick, was identified beneath this layer near the south-west corner of the site. This extended in width for around 3m and appeared to be aligned roughly north/south in a position which would correspond to the projected line of the bank associated with Offa's Dyke. However, no dating evidence was recovered from the layer and it was not possible to determine its likely date or function so that any correlation with the 8th-century earthwork is hypothetical.
- 4.4 Across much of the site a layer of brown, firm, clay silt (44), between 0.2 and 0.4m thick, lay directly above the natural subsoil which varied from river gravels to stoney silts. A single sherd of possible Romano-British pottery was recovered from the deposit, which was largely removed by machine.



Fig. 3 Gullies 51, 53 and 55 viewed from the south. Photo CPAT 2957.020



Fig. 4 Gully 28 with modern features 30 and 34 viewed from the north. Photo CPAT 2957.018

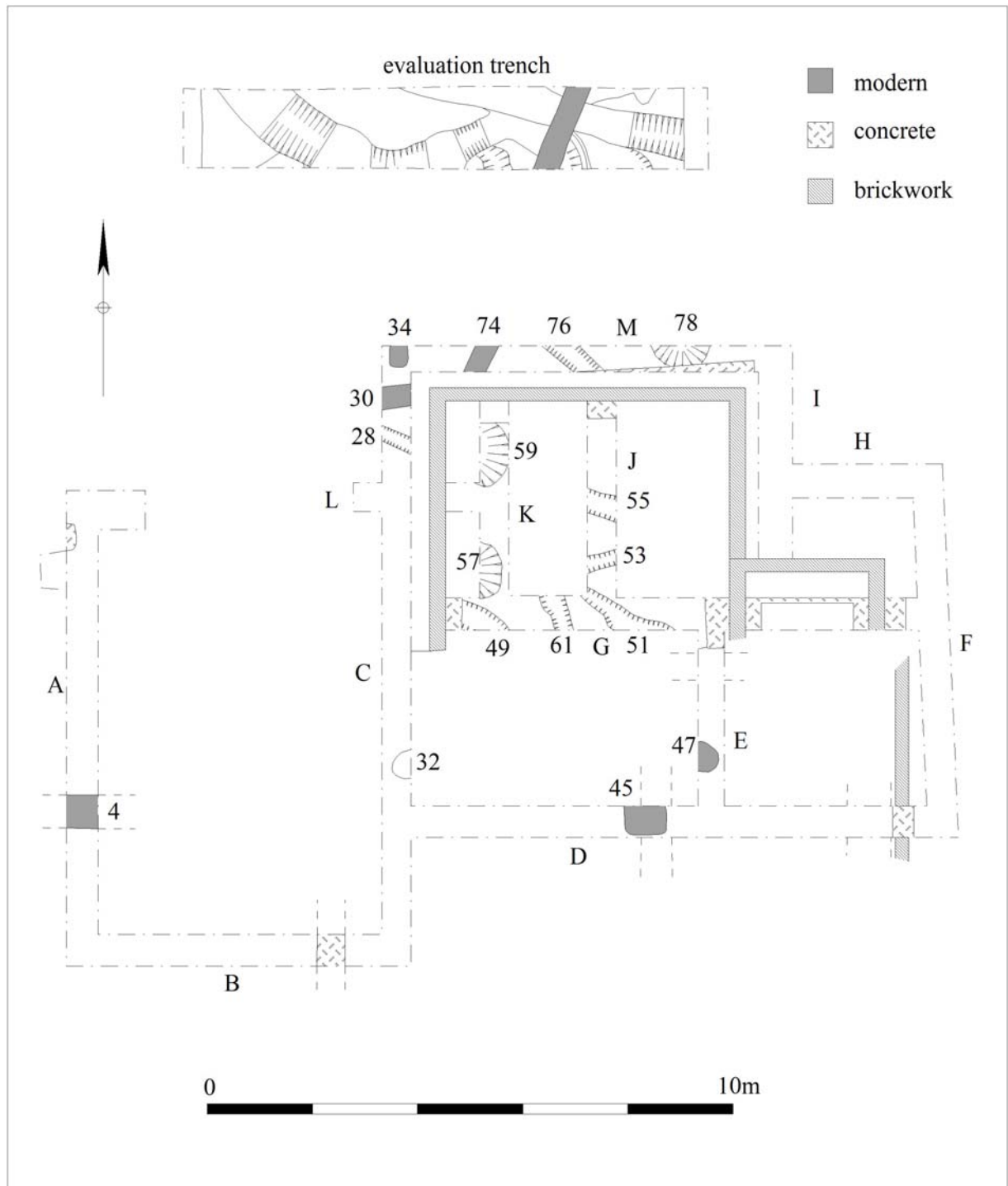


Fig. 5 Plan of excavated features

- 4.5 A series of features, comprising shallow gullies and pits, were identified towards the northern end of the site, most of which yielded no artefactual evidence. The gullies (28, 49, 51, 53, 55, and 76) were 0.25-0.5m wide and 0.12-0.25m deep, aligned variously east/west, north-west/south-east and south-west/north-east. It was not possible to determine any relationship or function as a direct result of to the limited area available for excavation. Two of the gullies (29 and 56) produced small fragments of iron, possibly Roman hobnails, while a small sherd of undiagnostic, although possibly Roman-British pottery was also recovered from gully 56.

- 4.6 Three pits were identified in relatively close proximity to each other. The northernmost foundation trench contained a single pit (78) which was around 1.1m across and 0.6m deep. To the south-west two pits were revealed in the same trench, of which the northern pit (59) measured 1.2m by at least 0.6m and up to 0.35m deep, while the southern pit (57) was 0.95m long, at least 0.45m wide and 0.2m deep. A further pit (32), measuring 0.52m across, was identified around 4m to the south, although it was unclear from which level this had been cut.



Fig. 6 Pit 78 and gully 76 viewed from the east. Photo CPAT 2957.031



Fig. 7 Pits 57 and 59 viewed from the north. Photo CPAT 2957.017

- 4.7 The majority of features and deposits which were identified during the excavation were related to the building which had formerly occupied the plot. The foundation trenches for the new building cut through the original wall foundations in a number of places, revealing that the older walling had been in random stone rubble, with later extensions in brick and block work with concrete foundations.

5 FINDS

- 5.1 A range of post-medieval pottery, and a sherd of medieval pottery, were noted during the excavation of trenches by machine, as well as from the cleaning of sections, although none were from significant contexts and were not retained.
- 5.2 The only potentially significant finds comprised two possible Roman hobnails from gullies 28 and 55, and two sherds of possible Romano-British pottery from gully 55 and soil layer 44.

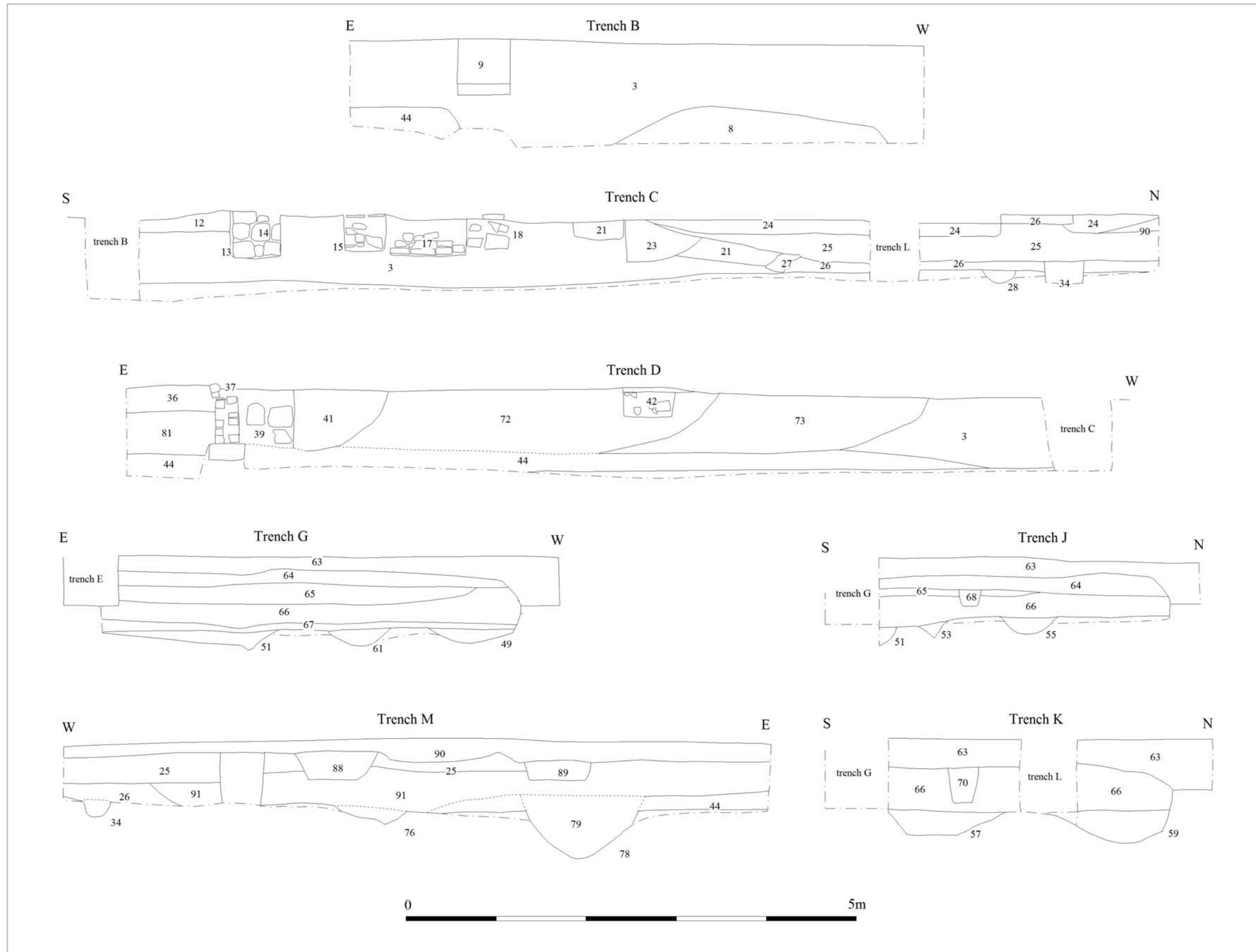


Fig. 8 Selection of trench sections

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The excavations produced further, albeit limited evidence for activity in the area, although unfortunately without any conclusive indication of the date. Apart from a range of post-medieval pottery from later deposits and features the only artefacts recovered from the excavation consisted of two possible hobnails and two small sherds of pottery, all of which could be Romano-British in date, although the pottery fragments were too small to allow a positive identification.
- 6.2 The shallow gullies and pits were of a similar nature to those revealed during the evaluation, which was located 3.5m to the north, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the two sets of features might be related. The evaluation produced evidence to suggest that at least some of the features were likely to be Romano-British in date and associated with a field system which has been identified to the south and east through earlier aerial reconnaissance and excavation.
- 6.3 A soil layer (8) near the south-western corner of the excavation may be of some significance, as its position matches that of the projected line for the bank representing Offa's Dyke. However, no dating evidence was recovered from the layer, which extended below the maximum depth of disturbance for the foundation trench.
- 6.4 A summary of the results from the excavation and evaluation will be published in *Archaeology in Wales* 2009.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The writer would like to thank Richard Hankinson and Wendy Owen of CPAT, for their help and assistance with the excavation, as well as Mr Rob Shelley of Elipta, and the staff of Direct Building Services Ltd.

8 REFERENCES

- Grant, I, 2009. *Eagles Glen, Four Crosses, Powys: Archaeological Evaluation*. CPAT Report No. 990.
- Owen, G, & Britnell, W, 1989. Pit alignments at Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys. *Montgomeryshire Collections* 77, 27-40.

APPENDIX 1**PROJECT ARCHIVE****Site Archive**

91 context record forms

2 A1 site plans: Trench sections at 1:20, overall plan at 1:50

31 Digital images CPAT film 2957

Photographic catalogue

Finds catalogue

Context	Sherds	Comment
29	1	Possible Roman hobnail
44	1	Abraded body sherd of possible Romano-British redware
56	1	Possible Roman hobnail
56	1	Abraded sherd of possible Romano-British redware