

**CPAT Report No 1081**

# A Potential Cursus at Gerwyn Fechan, near Wrexham

**TRIAL EXCAVATION 2011**



**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

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# A Potential Cursus at Gerwyn Fechan, near Wrexham

**TRIAL EXCAVATION 2011**

**I Grant**  
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Report for Cadw

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Vertical aerial photography taken in May 2006 (COWI VEXCEL) revealed cropmark evidence of two roughly parallel ditches, between 10m and 18m apart, extending for at least 200m (Fig. 1). The site, located in the Sesswick area, to the south of Wrexham (SJ 3688 4583), lies on a broad terrace at the base of a gentle hill-slope which rises to the north, with the land falling gradually onto the floodplains of the river Dee to the south. A field visit revealed no upstanding earthworks and the cropmarks have not been recorded in any other known photograph.
- 1.2 The cropmarks were thought to represent the ditches of a potential cursus monument and a programme of investigation was therefore conducted as part of a Cadw-funded project to investigate similar sites (Jones 2009), undertaken following the completion of the pan-Wales survey of prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments.

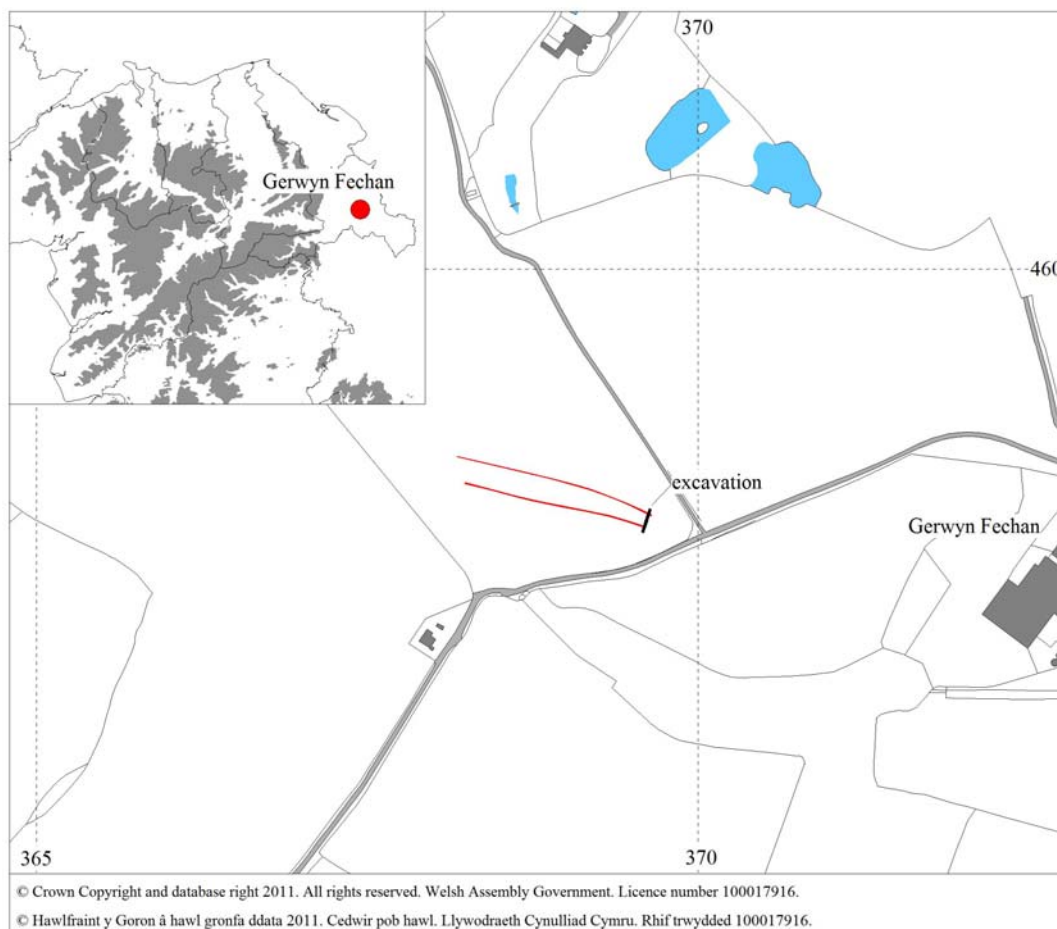


Fig. 1 Plan showing the location of the cropmarks at Gerywn Fechan, together with the position of the excavation trench

## 2 EXCAVATION

- 2.1 The excavation consisted of a single trial trench, measuring 18.7m by 1.9m, and orientated north-east to south-west, which was located towards the eastern end of the cropmarks. The overlying deposits were removed sequentially using a machine excavator, and the process revealed the undisturbed natural deposits at a depth of 0.7m. The natural subsoil (6) was a firm, pale yellow-brown sand with inclusions of pinkish red clay. An additional characteristic of the deposit, evident throughout this and all subsequent overlying deposits, were the lumps of coal flecking typical of naturally occurring coal-measures geology within the vicinity.

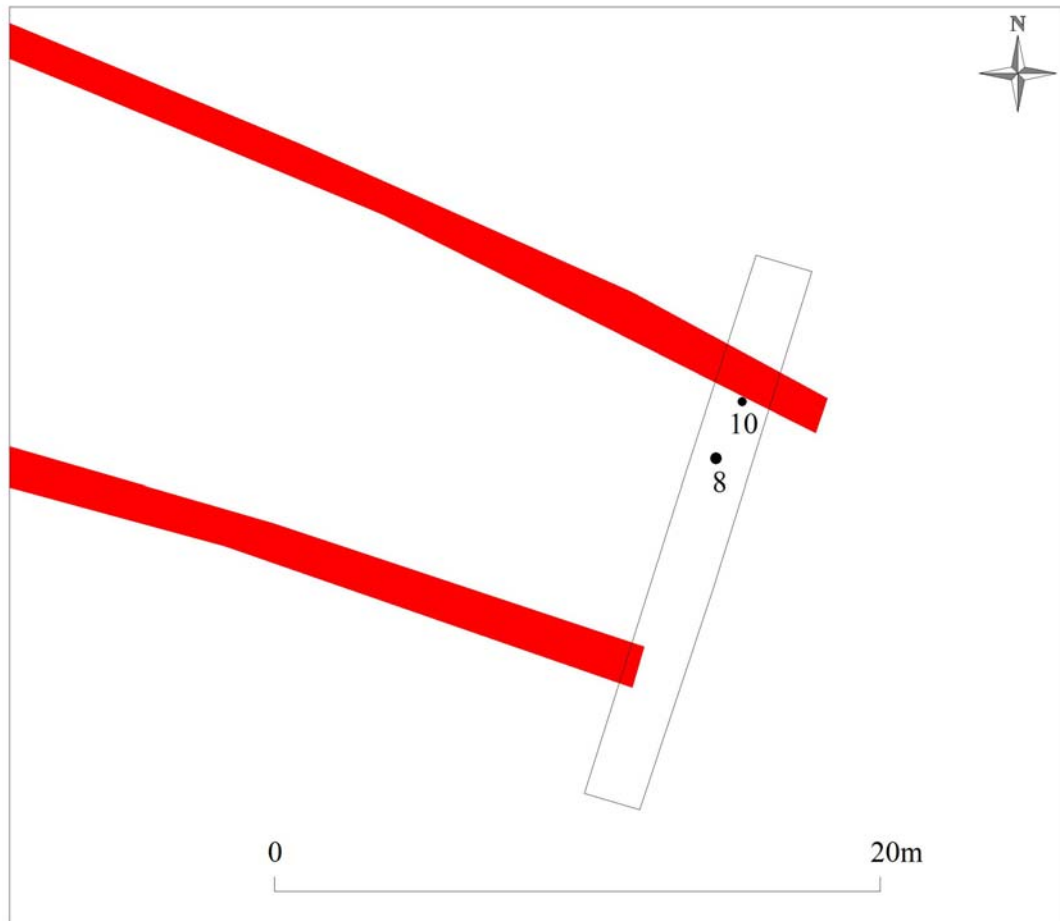


Fig. 2 Plan of the trial excavation showing the eastern end of the cropmarks

- 2.2 Thorough hand-cleaning of the surface of the subsoil, together with the trench sections, revealed no evidence for any ditched features which might account for the cropmarks. The only archaeological features visible were the truncated remains of two small pits or post-holes (8 and 10), which had been cut from a higher level.

- 2.3 The natural subsoil (6) was sealed by a deposit of very soft, pale orange-brown sandy clay (5) up to 0.3m thick which is likely to represent an earlier ploughsoil or hill-wash. At the north-eastern end of the trench the two pits or post-holes (8 and 10) cut through the sandy clay (5). They were both 0.37m in diameter and 0.3m deep and each contained a single fill (7 and 9 respectively) of fine, light brown sand. Neither feature produced any dating evidence, although both were sealed by a deposit of soft, reddish brown sandy clay (4) from which a single sherd of unglazed pottery in an orange, sandy fabric was recovered. The deposit, which was around 0.2m thick, could represent an old ploughsoil of medieval or later date.
- 2.4 The overlying deposits (3, 2 and 1), with a combined thickness of 0.38m, can be viewed as successive ploughsoils from the post-medieval period to the present day. The almost complete lack of ceramic artefacts within these deposits may suggest long periods of continual pasture or unmanured arable.



Fig. 3 Pit or post-hole 8



Fig. 4 Pit or post-hole 10

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The trial excavation produced no evidence to elucidate the origin of the cropmarks and in particular failed to identify any ditched features which could be associated with a possible cursus. The only archaeological features consisted of two small pits or post-holes of medieval or later date.
- 3.2 There is no indication that the cropmarks formed as a result of any archaeological features and their alignment and form might suggest that they were the result of some agricultural process. Careful re-examination of the original aerial photography suggests that the two marks could be converging on the entrance to the field, and this strengthens the case for an agricultural origin.

### 4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 4.1 The writer would like to thank the following: Richard Hankinson for assisting with the excavations; Mr E Jones for undertaking the machining; Mr Stanley Machin for allowing access to the site; and Cadw for funding the excavation.

### 5 REFERENCES

Jones, N. W., 2009. Potential Cursus Monuments in Mid and North-east Wales. Geophysical Survey and Excavation 2008-09. CPAT Report No. 981.