

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

A483 Trunk road, Moors Straight, Welshpool

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT



CPAT Report No 710

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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Report for Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency

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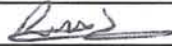


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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (henceforward CPAT) was asked by the Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency in March 2005 to provide a quotation for an archaeological assessment of proposed flood alleviation works on the A483 trunk road at the Moors Straight, near Welshpool in Powys. The assessment was required by Mr M Walters of the Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, who provides archaeological advice to the agency and had prepared a design brief (CPAT ASB 576) for the work.
- 1.2 The CPAT quotation was accepted by the Mid-Wales trunk Road Agency in early April 2005. The desk-top and field survey elements of the assessment were carried out during April 2005 and this report was written immediately thereafter.

2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The proposed flood alleviation works concern an area (see Fig. 1) aligned with the A483, measuring approximately 850m north-north-east/south-south-west by 200m, and centred at NGR SJ 24600970.
- 2.2 The majority of the survey area lies on the flood plain of the River Severn at an altitude of approximately 65m OD. Only at the north-western edge of the area does the land rise slightly to a maximum of almost 70m OD, where a borrow pit/flood compensation area is proposed.
- 2.3 With the exception of the road itself, the entire survey area is used as permanent pasture for stock. The only variations relate to the condition of the grazing, with the section to the east of the A483 being improved grassland and that to the west being of poorer quality.
- 2.4 The underlying geology of the survey area probably consists entirely of mudstones and siltstones belonging to the Caradoc series of the Ordovician period. However, at the western edge of the area, there is a fault which has thrown down the overlying Silurian period rocks. These are also likely to be mudstones and siltstones and belong to either the Ludlow or Wenlock series (1994 British Geological Survey map). It is worth noting that there are deep deposits of glacial and river alluvium occupying the flood plain of the Severn, and these have masked the underlying geology described above.
- 2.5 The soils throughout most of the survey area are deep silts derived from river alluvium belonging to the Terme Soil Association. In contrast, at the extreme north-western edge of the area, where the ground rises, loamy and silty soils belonging to the Denbigh 1 Association are found (1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend).

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The initial phase of the assessment consisted of a desk-based study of the readily available primary and secondary sources relating to the pipeline route. The repositories consulted include: the Regional Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), held by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in Welshpool; the National Monuments Record (NMR), at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW), in Aberystwyth; the National Library of Wales (NLW), also in Aberystwyth; and the Powys County Archives, in Llandrindod Wells. The Central Register of Aerial Photography at the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff provided vertical aerial photography for study at the NMR.
- 3.2 Following the desk-based study, the area of the proposal was examined by walk-over survey. This entailed the systematic examination of the defined corridor at transect intervals of 50m, a spacing which was acceptable owing to the open nature of the ground in question. Where necessary, any sites that were encountered during the field survey were recorded on standard CPAT site visit forms, the data including: an accurate location using a hand-held global positioning system (GPS) receiver; a written description of

character, function, condition, vulnerability, dating etc; and a sketch survey, where appropriate. Digital photography, to an appropriate resolution, has been taken of selected archaeological sites and locations, although most of the archaeological features in the survey area are no longer evident on the ground. In the following sections the term *PRN* precedes the primary record number of a site in the regional Sites and Monuments Record, while the term *SAM* precedes the scheduled ancient monument number of a site statutorily designated by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. Site numbers specific to this assessment are given to sites not previously recorded in the SMR.

- 3.3 Archaeological sites and features revealed during the desk-based and walk-over surveys are depicted on Fig 1 and listed in the gazetteer (Appendix 1). Some of the sites consist of larger areas of cultivation or drainage activity and these are also depicted on Fig 1, to demonstrate their extent.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The earliest evidence for archaeological features in the vicinity belongs to the prehistoric period. Finds belonging to the Mesolithic period have been recovered during excavations at the later hillfort (PRN 1254; SAM Mg021) on the Breiddin, some 6km to the north-east, a site which shows continuing activity through the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and even into the Roman period. Nearer to hand, evidence of Neolithic activity is demonstrated by a flint blade (PRN 81845), found within one kilometre to the north-east of the survey area. A Bronze Age hoard of artefacts (PRN 96) was also recovered within two kilometres to the north.
- 4.2 The area was certainly fairly intensively occupied in the Iron Age and the Breiddin is just one of the sites in the locality that was in use at the time. At least three phases of activity have been identified during excavations at the hillfort. A further defended enclosure, that at Crowthers Coppice (PRN 95; SAM Mg143), lies just over 1km to the north of the survey area.
- 4.3 As mentioned above, Roman activity has been proven at the Breiddin. Further evidence is widespread in the area, with the more important sites including the Roman fort and *vicus*, or civilian settlement, at Forden, on the east bank of the Severn 10km upstream of the survey area. Romano-British occupation is thought to have been present at Four Crosses, 8km to the north, a village which was formerly known as 'The Street', normally signifying the presence of a Roman road.
- 4.4 This part of the Severn valley is notable for being the route taken by Offa's Dyke, the linear earthwork generally believed to have been constructed by Offa, ruler of Mercia in the late 8th century. In this locality, the dyke probably represented an agreed boundary between Mercia and the Welsh *gwlad* of Powys. There is no direct evidence of the dyke in the immediate vicinity of the proposal, the nearest section of surviving earthwork being at Buttington, one kilometre to the south-east of the survey area, on the opposite bank of the river. Interestingly, this is in the vicinity of the alleged location of a battle fought between the Welsh, Saxons and Danes at the end of 9th century.
- 4.5 In the medieval period, the survey area was probably within the commote of Ystrad Marchell (Richards 1969, 227 & 264), the name signifying the dominance of the Cistercian abbey of Strata Marcella (PRN 1253; SAM Mg120), located less than 500m to the north-east of the survey area. The nearby planned town of Welshpool was also founded in this period.
- 4.6 The monastic holdings of the Cistercian order were appropriated by the Crown at the beginning of the following, post-medieval period, and then generally sold to private individuals. Despite this, it is improbable that there would have been much change in the overall pattern of land-use, which is likely to have been primarily pastoral, with some arable agriculture in suitable locations. The Moors farm, which adjoins the survey area, could have had its origins in the medieval period, but the existing buildings seem to be of this, later, period. The route of the modern A483 follows that of an earlier turnpike road,

signified by the milestones along its route, that was probably first constructed in the 18th century.

- 4.7 The most noticeable artificial feature in the modern landscape near the survey area is the Montgomeryshire Canal, constructed in the first half of the 19th century. This part of the canal was built with the aim of providing a transport link for the woollen industry in the upper Severn valley, specifically the centres of Newtown and Welshpool, but also provided cheaper access to coal, from the district around Oswestry, and limestone from the quarries at Llanymynech. A bank of limekilns (PRN 5033), for processing stone to provide agricultural fertiliser, survives at Buttington Cross, 500m to the south of the survey area.

5 RESULTS OF THE DESK-BASED STUDY

- 5.1 The information from the regional Sites and Monuments Record yielded eight sites in the survey area. These included a milestone (PRN 64529) alongside the A483, again confirming its past as a turnpike road; a series of drains (PRNs 4916 and 64654) which may be part of the field systems associated with Strata Marcella abbey; and a possible fishpond (PRN 64694) next to The Moors farm. A drain (PRN 64530), running from a sluice on the canal towards the Severn has been recorded from the Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 map of the late 19th century. Although it lies outside the area of the survey, a sub-triangular single-ditched enclosure (PRN 7974), of potential prehistoric date, has been recorded at NGR SJ 24420908, from aerial photographic sources.
- 5.2 In the immediate area of the proposal, the earliest documentary source is a grant of land (Site No 1) in 1170, by Owain Cyfeiliog to Strata Marcella, contained in the foundation charter of the abbey (RCAHMW 1911, 184). The land in question was on the west bank of the Severn, and approximately bounded by the two bends in the river to the east; its western extent is not known.
- 5.3 The earliest cartographic source for the survey area is a map of the manor of Street Marshall (NLW Powis Castle M141), dated 1618, but this is fragmentary. The only relevant information from the map is negative, in that the road was not present at that time.
- 5.4 The next cartographic source is the Teirtref Inclosure map of 1811, which shows Moor Farm and land to the north of it, called 'The Moor Common'. A pond (see paragraph 5.6) lay immediately to the north-east of the farm, but no details were shown on the east side of the road. This map seems to define the point at which most of the survey area was enclosed, having previously been common land.
- 5.5 The Ordnance Surveyors' drawing (No 199 of 1816) only shows Moors farm and the turnpike road (Site No 4), mainly as it relates to land on the east side of the road. The Ordnance Surveyors' drawing (No 328, surveyed in 1829-30; Fig 2) for the land to the west of the road has little further information, only depicting the farm, the road and the canal. The existence of this section of the waterway in 1816 can, however, be inferred from its depiction at Welshpool on the earlier map.
- 5.6 A more detailed picture of the area is provided by the 1840 Tithe Survey (Fig 3) of Gungrog township in Welshpool parish, which also specifies the field names then current. In the north-western part of the survey area, a large group of fields are described in the apportionment as 'sawpit rushy pieces and Stockholms and Poyelett Meadow', suggesting that a sawpit (Site No 2) was present in this area, centred at SJ 24671003. Another useful name provided by the survey concerns the field immediately to the north of the Moors farm, which is called 'Fishpool Leasow', implying a function for the pond (PRN 64694) marked on the map. Both the turnpike road and canal are depicted and named on the map.

- 5.7 Most of the sites recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Montgomeryshire 23NE of 1891; Fig 4) have already been recorded in the SMR, including a well (PRN 64535) situated at NGR SJ 24530989. The only exceptions are the argae, or flood defence, bank (Site No 3), which is aligned generally north/south on the western side of the Severn, and the meandering course of the canal drain (PRN 64530), which is also depicted on the map. Subsequent to 1840, there had obviously been some amalgamation of the fields on the west side of the turnpike road.
- 5.8 The only additional information regarding archaeological sites that was forthcoming from an examination of the second edition Ordnance Survey map (Montgomeryshire 23NE of 1903; Fig 5), concerned the fishpond mentioned in paragraph 5.6, which had increased in size by a factor of three, from approximately 20m in diameter to 60m north/south by 25m east/west. It was also apparent that the amalgamation of fields had continued, to encompass the area to the east of the road. The provisional edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1953 is an almost exact copy of the second edition map, in regard to this locality.
- 5.9 The aerial photographic sources for the locality allowed detailed mapping of some of the features already recorded in the SMR, particularly the drainage/field systems in the survey area (see Fig 1). The only significant additional information from these sources was revealed on a run of photographs taken by Meridian Airmaps Ltd on 23 September 1970 (Nos 75 70 043-047), on which traces of ridge and furrow (Site No 5) were evident, together with a possible extension of the drainage system (PRN 64654) into the area east of the A483. These features are mapped on Fig 1 along with the other known archaeological sites.

6 RESULTS OF THE FIELD SURVEY

- 6.1 The basic methodology of the field survey is briefly described in paragraph 3.2, above. No sites were revealed by the field survey that had not already been recognised from desk-based sources. Accordingly, the field survey focussed on the present condition of the identified sites and the assessment of their nature, function and potential importance.
- 6.2 A brief assessment of the field boundaries reveals that only a single historic boundary survives in the study area, in the form of a hedgerow running from near the river at SJ 24700959, to its western end, near the A483, at SJ 24580963. The arrangement of the boundaries on the old maps of the area suggests that this hedge probably follows the line of a boundary first laid out in response to the early 19th-century Enclosure Act, even though it is not specifically depicted on the relevant map.
- 6.3 On the western side of the A483, only the two sets of drainage features (PRNs 4916 and 64654) survive to any degree, both being represented by gullies up to 4m wide and 1m deep. A concrete cover was noted in the base of the main gully forming the rectilinear drainage system (PRN 64654), and it may be that some modification to the system has taken place. No direct evidence of either the fishpond (PRN 64694) or the well (PRN 64535) was found, although some surface wetness was noted in both localities. The possible sawpit (Site No 2) was not found and the canal drain (PRN 64530) had either been levelled during land improvements or was culverted and not visible on the surface.
- 6.4 Two sites occupying the line of the A483 had been revealed in the desk-top study, a milestone and the former turnpike road. No trace was found of the milestone, which may well have been removed during previous road improvement work, but the present condition of the road is rather more difficult to categorise. Some structural evidence may still survive, beneath the modern road. A boundary marker (PRN 19267) defining Pool Quay parish was not found and may have suffered the same fate as the milestone.



Plate 1 Drainage features to the west of the A483, site of well in foreground

- 6.5 A number of sites had been revealed on the east side of the A483 during the desk-top study, but some had been affected by land improvement work in the past. Indeed, the ridge and furrow (Site No 5), which was still in evidence as recently as 1970, could not be discerned. The argae bank (Site No 3), which formerly acted as a flood defence work to protect the area crossed by the A483, was largely intact and found to be 3m wide and 0.7m high. However, the effects of erosion, due to both water and stock, were showing and had produced a number of gaps in the bank. No evidence of the extension to drainage system (PRN 64654) was found.



Plate 2 Northern end of the argae (flood defence) bank as it nears the A483

- 6.6 The location of the cropmark enclosure (PRN 7974) lay outside the area of the survey and was not examined. Its extent is depicted on Fig 1, to demonstrate its location in relation to the proposed works.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 7.1 Each site of archaeological interest, identified during the assessment, has been classified according to its perceived significance. The categories, with the exception of Category E, are based on those given in the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions' *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11 Section 3 Part 2 (1993)*. Category E is taken from the draft *Archaeology and the Trunk Road Programme in Wales: a Manual of Best Practice* prepared by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments (n.d.) which in other respects follows the DMRB volume.

Category A sites are those believed by CPAT to be of primary significance, either potentially of national importance or already designated by CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments as scheduled ancient monuments or listed buildings. It is presumed that sites in this category will be preserved and protected *in situ*.

Category B sites are sites of regional importance. These sites are not of sufficient importance to justify scheduling, but are nevertheless important in aiding the understanding and interpretation of the archaeology of the region. Preservation *in situ* is the preferred option for these sites, but if loss or damage is unavoidable, appropriate detailed recording should be undertaken.

Category C sites are sites of local importance. These sites are of lesser importance, but are nevertheless useful in aiding the understanding and interpretation of the archaeology of the local area. They are not normally of sufficient importance to justify preservation if threatened, but merit adequate recording in advance of loss or damage, or if portable they should be moved.

Category D sites are either sites of minor importance or those which are so badly damaged that too little now remains to justify their inclusion in a higher grade. Rapid recording should be sufficient, but as with Category C sites they should be moved if this is an appropriate strategy.

Category E sites are sites which have been identified, but whose importance cannot be assessed from fieldwork and desk-based study alone. An archaeological evaluation might be required to categorise such a site more accurately if the proposal was likely to affect it in any way.

- 7.2 The locations of the individual archaeological sites are shown on Figure 1. Tables summarising the archaeology of the study area according to its perceived importance are provided below.

7.2.1 Category A sites

There are no sites belonging to this category in the survey area.

7.2.2 Category B sites

Site No	Name	Type	Period	Condition	NGR
PRN 4916	Allt Wood field system	Field system	Medieval ?	Near intact	SJ 24640992

7.2.3 Category C sites

Site No	Name	Type	Period	Condition	NGR
PRN 64654	The Moors earthworks	Drain	Post Medieval ?	Damaged	SJ 24390947 to SJ 24640981
Site 3	The Moors argae bank	Flood defence bank	19th century	Damaged	SJ 24570921 to SJ 24781001

7.2.4 Category D sites

Site No	Name	Type	Period	Condition	NGR
PRN 19267	Pool Quay boundary marker III	Boundary stone ?	19th century	Unknown	SJ248101
PRN 64529	The Moors milestone	Milestone	18th century ?	Destroyed	SJ 24600970
PRN 64530	The Moors canal drain	Drain	19th century	Unknown	SJ 24721011 to SJ 24741002
PRN 64535	Abbey Footbridge well	Well	Unknown	Unknown	SJ 24530989
PRN 64694	Fishpool leasow pond	Fishpond	Unknown	Near destroyed	SJ 24380938
Site 1	Strata Marcella grant land	Monastic land	Medieval	Unknown	SJ 24800955
Site 2	The Moors sawpit placename	Sawpit	19th century ?	Unknown	SJ 24671003 (centre)
Site 5	The Moors ridge and furrow	Ridge and furrow	Medieval ?	Destroyed	SJ 24600948 (centre)

7.2.5 Category E sites

Site No	Name	Type	Period	Condition	NGR
Site 4	The Moors turnpike road	Turnpike road	18th century ?	Unknown	SJ 24230892 past SJ 25071053

8 IMPACTS

8.1 Impacts

The potential impacts of the proposal on the archaeological resource of the corridor are considered in the table below.

Site No	Name	Type	Condition	Impact	Category
PRN 4916	Allt Wood field system	Field system	Near intact	Partial loss possible	B
PRN 19267	Pool Quay boundary marker III	Boundary stone ?	Unknown	None likely as site was not found and probably already destroyed	D
PRN 64529	The Moors milestone	Milestone	Destroyed	None, site destroyed	D
PRN 64530	The Moors canal drain	Drain	Unknown	Partial loss if there are any surviving remains	D
PRN 64535	Abbey Footbridge well	Well	Unknown	Loss if there are any surviving remains	D
PRN 64654	The Moors earthworks	Drain	Damaged	Unlikely to be any direct impact	C
PRN 64694	Fishpool leasow pond	Fishpond	Near destroyed	No proposed impact	D
Site 1	Strata Marcella grant land	Monastic land	Unknown	No physical remains so no impact	D
Site 2	The Moors sawpit placename	Sawpit	Unknown	Site not located so potential impact uncertain	D
Site 3	The Moors argae bank	Flood defence bank	Damaged	Partial loss possible at northern end	C
Site 4	The Moors turnpike road	Turnpike road	Unknown	Survival uncertain, but potential for major impact on any surviving features	E
Site 5	The Moors ridge and furrow	Ridge and furrow	Destroyed	Site seems to have been destroyed so should be no impact	D

- 8.2 In addition to the sites recorded in the preceding table, there is the potential for further unrecorded sites that may be impacted upon by the proposed pipeline. These sites consist of those which have not been previously recorded and only remain as sub-surface features, having no extant visible traces.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 Only one site which is considered to be of regional importance is situated within the archaeological assessment corridor, namely the drainage/field system (PRN 4916), thought to be associated with the medieval abbey of Strata Marcella and so classified because of this presumed association. There is a possibility that some evidence relating to this site may be lost, depending on the final details of the proposal.
- 9.2 Three further sites may be subject to either total or partial loss as a result of work on the proposal. A flood defence bank (Site 3), probably constructed in the 19th century, may be damaged at its northern end, but only a small portion of the site falls within the survey area. The condition of the other two sites, a canal drain (PRN 64530) and a well (PRN 64535), remains unknown. The location of the well and part of the drain fall within the area of planned flood compensation works.
- 9.3 The potential effect of the proposal on the turnpike road, whose line was subsequently followed by the A483 is uncertain. At present it is difficult to determine whether any traces of this earlier road survive beneath the modern road, or if they have been entirely removed by previous road improvement works.
- 9.4 The remaining archaeological sites in the survey area either fall outside the groundworks areas on the plan presented to CPAT (Drawing No 1065/L01/001 Revision P2) or have been largely destroyed by previous activity. These should not be materially affected by the proposal, but if any major changes are planned, then further consideration of the potential effects will be needed.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 The writer would like to thank his colleague Mr R Silvester, for his help with the desk-based study, and the following for their assistance and co-operation: Dr D Williams, Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency for facilitating the work; Mr and Mrs Slack of the Moors Farm, for their permission to visit the route of the pipeline; Jeff Spencer, Sites and Monuments Record Officer, CPAT; the staff of the National Monument Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth; the staff of the Powys County Archives, Llandrindod Wells; and the staff of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

11 REFERENCES

11.1 Published and Printed Sources

Pocock, R W, and Whitehead, T H, 1935, *British Regional Geology - The Welsh Borderland*, London, HMSO

RCAHMW, 1911, *Montgomeryshire*, London, HMSO

Richards, M, 1969, *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units*, Cardiff, UWP

11.2 Cartographic Sources

- 1618 Map of the Manor of Street Marshall (NLW Powis Castle M141)
- 1811 Teirtref Inclosure Act (NLW Powis Castle M259)
- 1816 Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing No 199
- 1829-30 Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing No 328
- 1840 Tithe survey: Welshpool, Montgomeryshire (Gungrog Fawr township)
- 1891 First edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Montgomeryshire 23NE)
- 1903 Second edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Montgomeryshire 23NE)
- 1953 Provisional edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map (Montgomeryshire 23NE)
- 1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales map and legend (Sheet 2 - Wales, at 1:250,000 scale)
- 1994 British Geological Survey map of Wales (Solid edition, at 1:250,000 scale)

12.3 Aerial Photographic Sources

Vertical APs:

RAF 106G/UK 1468 Nos 1111-1112, dated 4-5-1946

Meridian Airmaps Ltd 75 70 Nos 043-047, dated 23-9-1970

Ordnance Survey 72 324 Nos 376-377, dated 21-8-1972

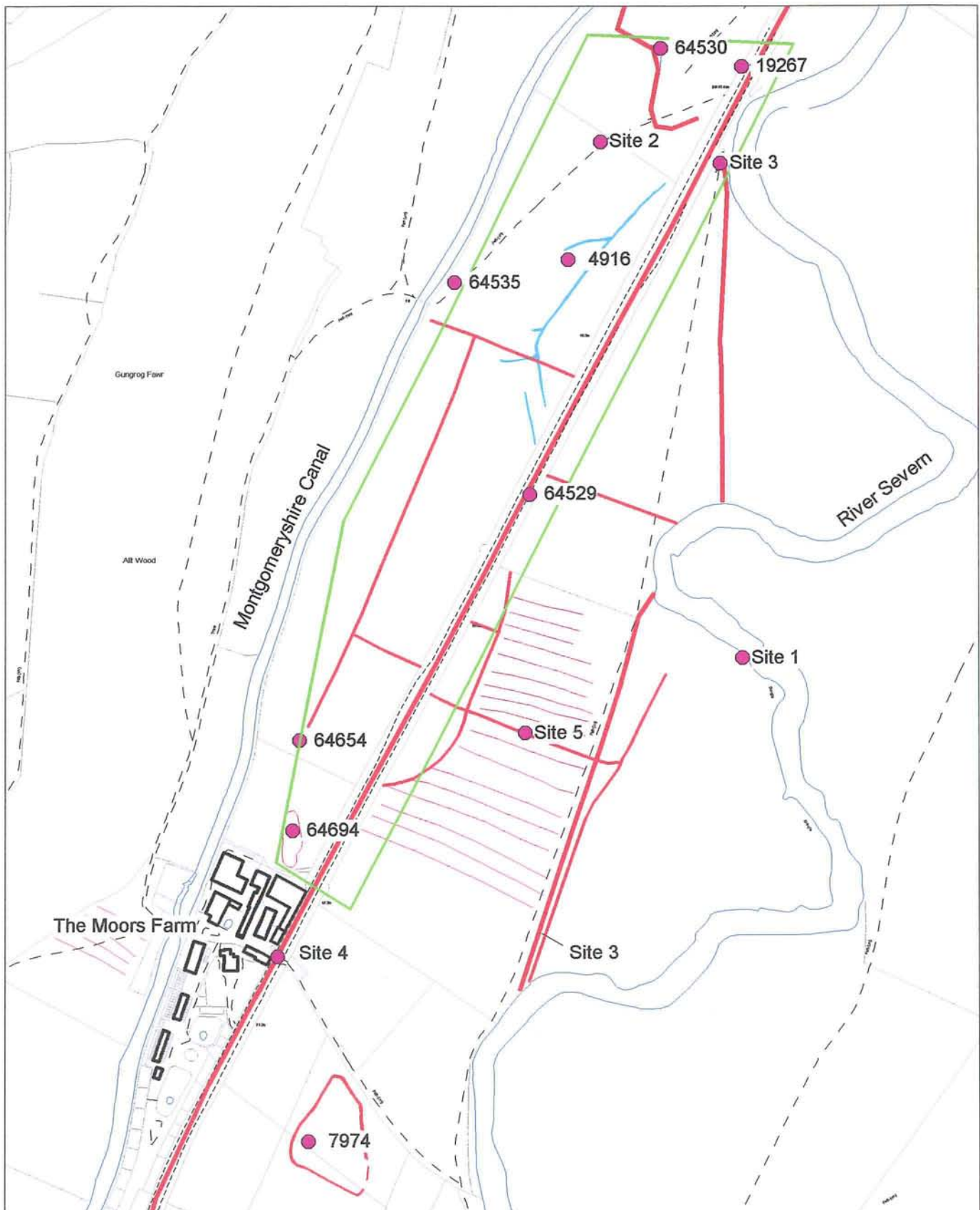
J A Storey and Partners 09 84 Nos 084-085, dated 24-4-1984

Ordnance Survey 94 364 Nos 64-65, dated 18-10-1994

Oblique Aps:

CPAT 99-CS-1866

RCAHMW 995088-46



Atgynhychwyd o fapiau'r Arolwg Ordnans gyda chaniatad rheolwr Llyfrfa Ei Mawrhydi © Hawlfraint y Goron.

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Archaeological data, from the County Sites and Monuments Record,

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Fig.1 Archaeological sites, scale 1:5,000



Fig. 2 Ordnance Surveyors drawing No 328 of 1829-30

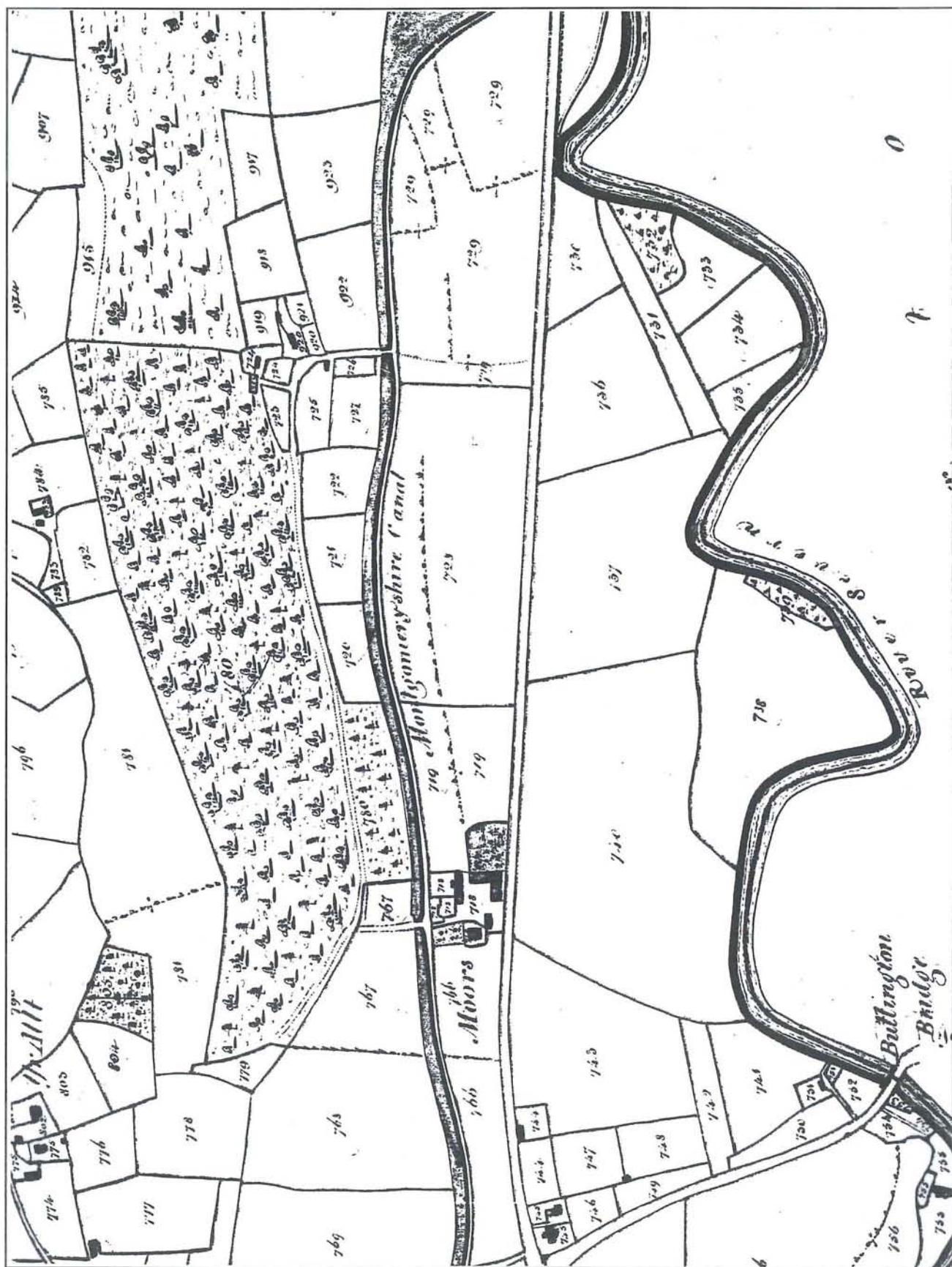


Fig. 3 Welshpool (Gungrog Fawr) Tithe map of 1840

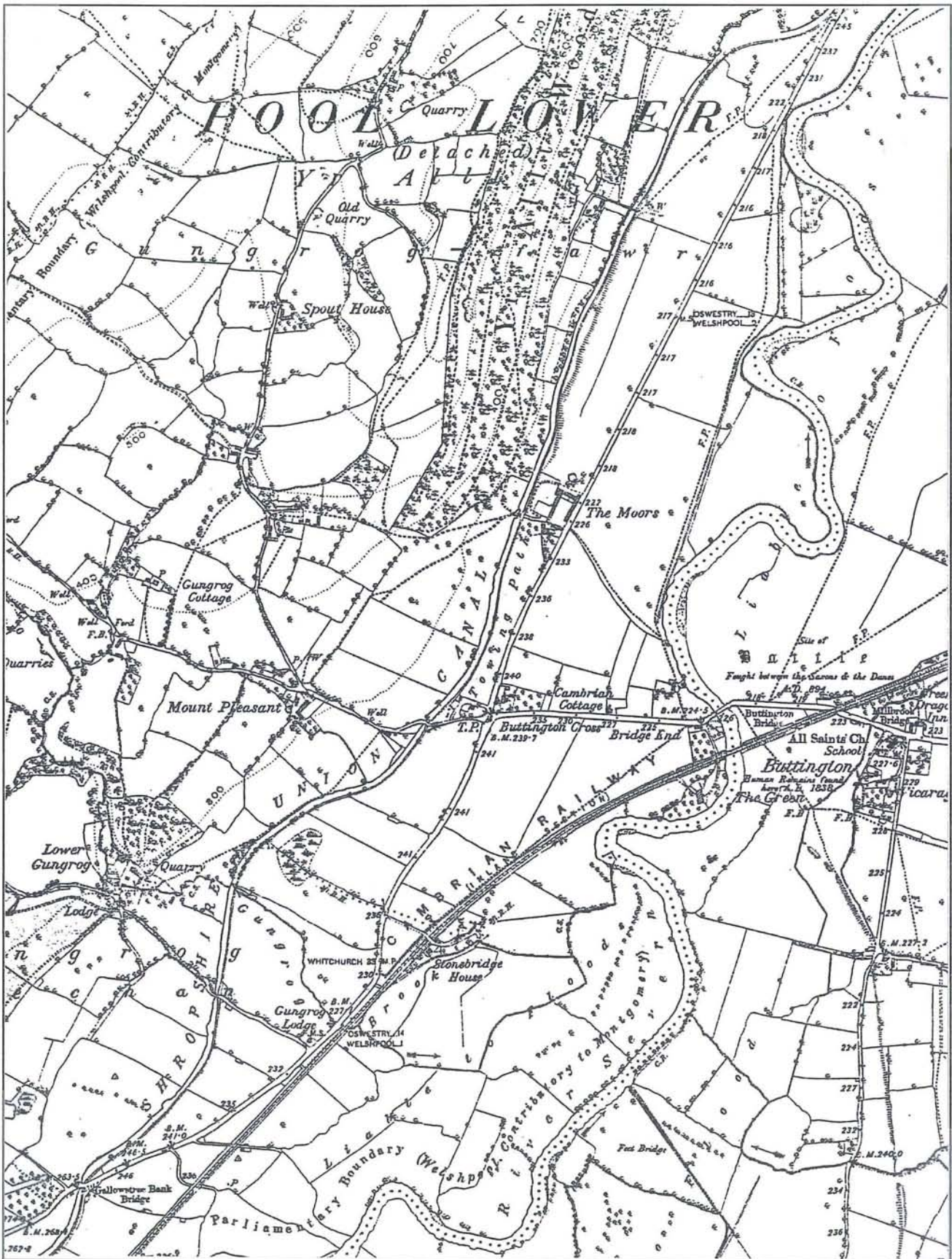


Fig. 4 First edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1891 (Montgomeryshire 23NE)

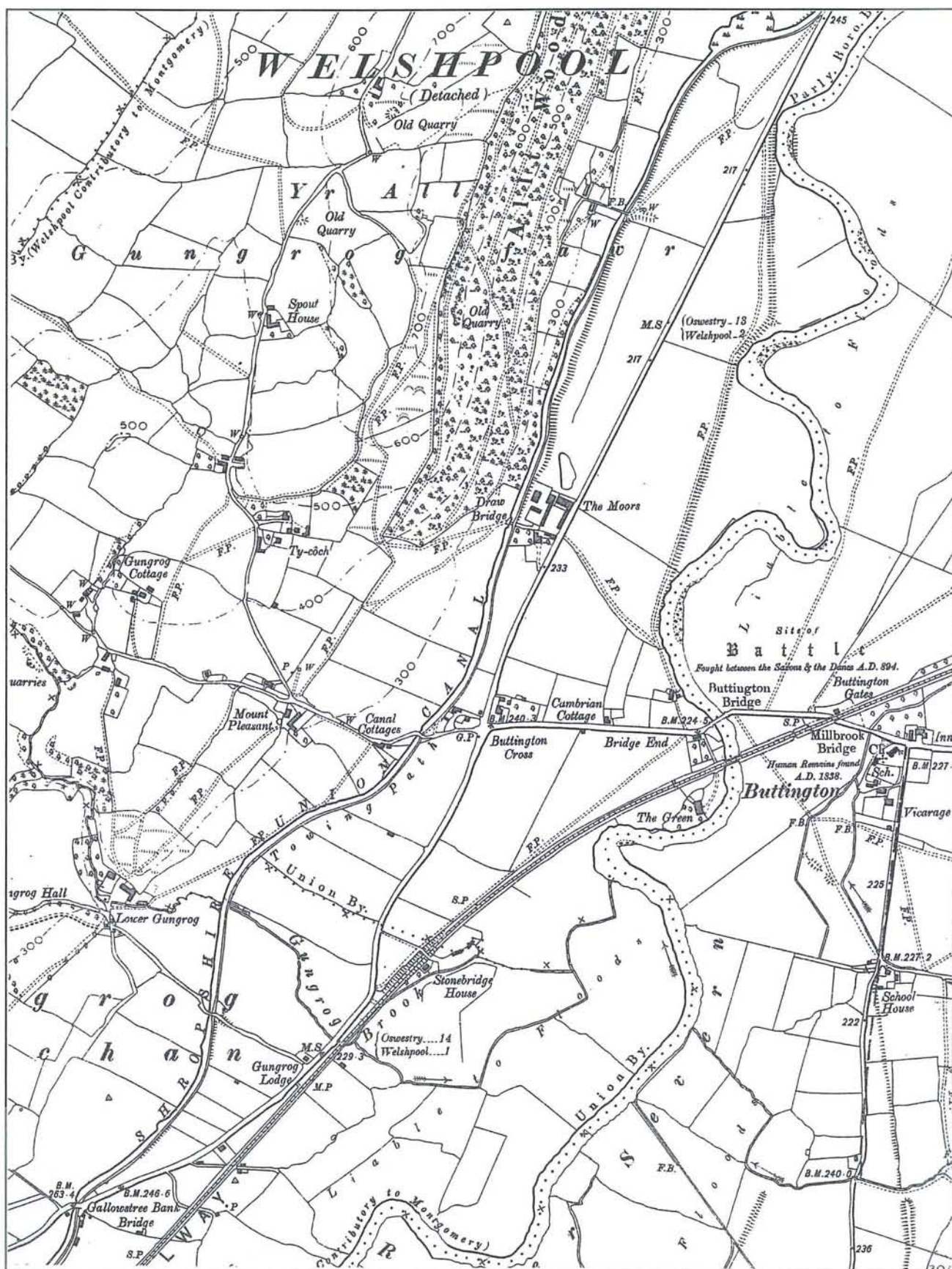


Fig. 5 Second edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1903 (Montgomeryshire 23NE)