THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Proposed Development Site, Carreghofa Lane, Llanymynech, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT



CPAT Report No 796

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Proposed Development Site, Carreghofa Lane, Llanymynech, Powys

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Report for Galliers Homes

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CPAT Report Record

Report and status

CPAT Report Title	Proposed Development Site Assessment	e, Carreghofa Lane, Llanymynech, Powys: Archaeological
CPAT Project Name	Carreghofa Lane	
CPAT Project No	1373	CPAT Report No 796
Confidential (yes/no)	Yes	draft/final Final

Internal control

	name	signature	date
prepared by	N.W. Jones	Domes	08/06/06
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checked by	R.J. Silvester	2.2.5 -	08/06/06
approved by	R.J. Silvester	R.G. 51	08/06/06

Revisions

no	date	made by	checked by	approved by

Internal memo

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The potential development plot at Carreghofa Lane, Llanymynech has been the subject of a three-stage archaeological evaluation, comprising desk-based study, geophysical survey and strategic trial trenching, the results from which have provided an indication of the archaeological potential of the site.

The desk-based study revealed a number of sites which had been identified as cropmarks visible on aerial photographs, including the ploughed out remains of a Bronze Age burial mound along the eastern boundary of the plot. This had been partially excavated in 1991 in connection with the adjacent housing development. Other cropmarks were confirmed by the geophysical survey which also identified several other potentially significant features, all of which were investigated by trial trenching.

In addition to the burial mound the excavations revealed the presence of further significant buried archaeological deposits within the proposed development plot including two probable cremations and several ditches and pits of likely prehistoric date. The main focus of activity appeared to have centred around the burial mound, although the evaluation does suggest that archaeological remains may be present sporadically across much of the plot.

We would contend that the prehistoric burial features are of regional significance but are not of sufficient importance to warrant preservation in situ.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust was invited to prepare a specification of works for undertaking an archaeological assessment in connection with proposals to construct a new residential development on land off Carreghofa Lane, Llanymynech, Powys. The Curatorial Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, acting as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, had determined that an archaeological assessment should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource.
- 1.2 The assessment was undertaken in three stages, consisting of a desk-based study, a geophysical survey of the whole area, and finally a programme of trial excavation based on the results from the geophysical survey. The trial excavation, also known as an evaluation, was designed to test the nature and significance of features identified during the first two stages of the assessment. By definition, evaluations are restricted in their scale to answer specific questions about the archaeology and involve minimal intrusion compared with full excavation.

2 LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 The site in question is located to the south of Carreghofa Lane on the western fringes of Llanymynech (SJ 26382077; Fig. 1), occupying the eastern part of a pasture field and measuring approximately 80m east to west by up to 140m north to south.
- 2.2 The site occupies the edge of a river terrace overlooking the valley of the River Vyrnwy, with the subsoil consisting of river gravels.

3 DESK-BASED STUDY

- 3.1 The desk-based study involved the examination of readily available primary and secondary documentary, cartographic, pictorial, and photographic sources for the immediate area. Repositories consulted included the following: the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by CPAT at Welshpool; the National Monuments Record, maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) in Aberystwyth; the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; the Denbighshire Record Office in Ruthin; and the Shropshire Records and Research Centre, in Shrewsbury. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to the Primary Record Number (PRN) of individual archaeological sites recorded in the HER.
- 3.2 The desk-top assessment leans heavily on the available aerial photography, virtually all of which is in the archive of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust¹.
- 3.3 A number of sites have been identified as cropmarks visible on a variety of aerial photographs (plate 1). A ring ditch (PRN 3641), representing the ploughed-out remains of a Bronze Age burial mound, was partially investigated in 1992 in association with the adjacent residential development. This revealed a ring ditch 12m in internal diameter (14m overall), with a ditch 0.7-1m deep. The site had clearly been truncated by medieval ploughing and the excavations produced no artefacts (Gibson 1992, 15-17). A rectangular enclosure (PRN 38028) had also been identified, together with a possible second rectangular enclosure (PRN 4602). All of these features were also identified by the geophysical survey and are described in section 4.
- 3.4 The line of Offa's Dyke, the 8th-century earthwork which is assumed to have formed the western boundary of the kingdom of Mercia, runs through Llanymynech and is thought to follow the western ramparts of the hillfort on Llanymynech Hill. Its course through the village is unknown, although the projected line does not run through the assessment area.

3.5 As far as we can establish there are no early maps of this block of land. The earliest map is an estate sale map of 1828². This reveals that the land under consideration here and to the south of the road was then organised as sub-divided fields, one block running north to south but sandwiched by others running on at right angles to east and west. The accompanying schedule of sale lots confirm that these were then residual elements of the medieval open fields associated with Llanymynech for they are recorded as being 'In the Maes', a typical Welsh term for open fields. The Tithe map³ (Fig. 2) adds nothing more for it appears to have been based on this sale map, although it does expand the description to '*Maes* or town field', and describes the strips immediately to the west as quillets, confirming that even in the 19th century, the land was still individually cultivated in strips, typical of the situation that would have existed centuries earlier in the Middle Ages. By the time of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey plan in 1887 these strips had been enclosed to form larger fields (Fig. 3).

4 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY (Figs 4 and 5)

- 4.1 A detailed magnetometer survey was undertaken by Stratascan Ltd, based on 30m grids, with readings taken at 0.25m centres in traverses 1m apart. The survey was located using total station surveying, tied-in to modern field boundaries. A full report on the results of the survey are presented under separate cover (Heard 2006).
- 4.2 The survey identified all three features which were previously recognised from cropmark evidence, together with a number of previously unknown anomalies which might be of archaeological significance.
- 4.3 The western part of the ring ditch (PRN 3641) was clearly identified, together with a possible second curving ditch slightly to the west (Fig. 5, a and g2). The rectangular feature (PRN 38028), which may be an enclosure, was identified as a positive anomaly partially surrounded by large positive linear anomalies, with slight negative linear anomalies along the east and west sides (Fig. 5, b, c and d). This might represent a feature which was originally defined by banks and ditches, occupying an area of around 22 x 16m. To the south-west of the enclosure is a positive anomaly (Fig. 5, f) which may be of archaeological significance.
- 4.4 Two roughly parallel linear anomalies (Fig. 5, i) up to 20m long and 15m apart had previously been interpreted as a possible enclosure although the survey results did not indicate any further anomalies which could represent the ends of such a feature. Further anomalies in the same area (Fig. 5, j and k) might be related features.
- 4.5 Elsewhere within the area there were two, possibly associated, linear anomalies (Fig. 5, e) which may be ditches, possibly agricultural, or boundary features, and across the whole area were numerous linear features which might represent the remnants of past ploughing activity. A distinct linear anomaly running east to west was a former field boundary depicted on recent aerial photographs. The area also had numerous discrete positive anomalies which might be pits, although they could be of pedological or geological origin.

5 TRIAL EXCAVATION

5.1 The excavations consisted of seven trenches (Fig. 5) which were located to examine the more significant anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. In each trench the overburden was removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, with all cleaning and subsequent excavation being undertaken by hand. A full drawn, written and photographic record was maintained throughout, details of which are provided in Appendix 1. Numbers in brackets in the following text refer to individual context records in the site archive. It should be noted that no

trenches were positioned to assess the archaeological significance of areas that appeared to be negative from the geophysics.

Trench 1 (Fig. 6; plate 2)

- 5.2 Trench 1 measured 9.5 x 1.5m and was sited towards the northern end of the site to investigate a linear feature identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5, e).
- 5.3 The overburden consisted of up to 0.27m of topsoil (01) above a 0.18m-thick layer of dark brown silty sand (02), which overlay an orange-brown sandy clay (03) up to 0.32m thick. Beneath this was a layer of light grey-brown clayey silt (04), possibly an old ground surface, through which a number of features had been cut. At the western end of the trench this layer, which was 0.18m thick, was removed by machine to reveal the surface of the natural river gravels (05).
- 5.4 An oval pit or the butt end of a ditch (07) was identified extending beyond the limits of excavation to the south and in a position which corresponded to the linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey. The feature was up to 1.06m wide, 0.3m deep and at least 1.17m long, filled by an orange brown sandy clay (06) from which a single sherd of prehistoric pottery was recovered.
- 5.5 A small oval pit (09) was identified at the eastern end of the trench, measuring 1.47m long, 0.85m wide and 0.41m deep. The basal fill (10) consisted of a light brown clayey silt 0.2m thick, sealed beneath a layer of dark brown clayey silt (08) which contained burnt clay and charcoal and a sherd of prehistoric pottery. To the north of the pit was a small pit or posthole (42) which extended beyond the limits of excavation. The fill (41) consisted of a firm silty clay from which no artifacts were recovered. This feature had not been identified from the geophysical investigation.

Trench 2 (Fig. 7)

- 5.6 Trench 2 measured 40.8m x 1.5m and was positioned towards the centre of the site in order to investigate the large rectangular feature and a possible ring ditch identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5, b-d and g2).
- 5.7 The overburden consisted of up to 0.28m of topsoil (18) above a thin layer of brown silty sand (102) representing a former cultivation soil apparent only at the eastern end of the trench.
- 5.8 The large rectangular feature (21) identified by the geophysical survey was revealed as a large pit cut into the natural gravels, presumably for gravel extraction (plate 3). The western edge had a nearly vertical profile, while the eastern edge was more sloping. The pit was 16.25m wide and up to 1.2m deep, filled with a dark brown silty loam (20) which contained 18th-century pottery and clay pipe. The feature was clearly visible as an earthwork, showing as a large sunken area.
- 5.9 At the eastern end of the trench a curving ditch (49) was identified which was assumed to be part of the ring ditch identified by the geophysical survey and partly excavated during the 1990s. The ditch (plate 4) was 0.5m deep and over 1m wide with a lower fill (99) consisting of brownish grey silty clay with around 50% pebbles, above which was a greyish brown silt with less than 10% pebbles (48).
- 5.10 Almost 8m to the east of this ditch was a 1.4m diameter pit (69) containing two identified fills. The earlier fill (68) consisted of a 0.20m-thick greyish brown, gritty sand, overlain by a stony material (52) which appeared to incorporate a small mound of heaped stones (25). This stony material spread beyond the limits of the pit cut itself where it was recorded as layer (53). A 0.12m-thick, sealing deposit of mid brown silty clay (70) containing few stones was recorded in the section.

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- 5.11 The eastern extent of deposit (70) had been cut through by the insertion of a small oval pit (24) which extended beyond the limits of excavation to the south. The pit had a number of edge-set stones (22) deliberately placed within it, forming what appeared to be a cist 0.3m wide internally, filled by a brown clay silt (23) (plate 5). The removal of the upper part of the fill revealed several sherds of prehistoric pottery, at which point it was decided to leave the remainder of the fill in situ, as required by the terms of the evaluation agreement.
- 5.12 To the west of pit (69) a second cist was identified, comprising edge-set stones (66) placed within a pit (67) measuring c.1m across. Cut for the construction of the cist, this pit had been inserted into a larger pit (108) containing an orange brown silty clay (107) with up to 60% pebbles and small stones. The larger pit had also cut through the western extent of deposit (70). The edge-set stones defined a cist 0.32m across internally, extending beyond the limits of excavation to the south (plate 6). The cist was filled by a dark greyish brown silty sand (65) which had been cut by a shallow pit (55) containing post-medieval artefacts. Removal of the upper part of the fill within the cist revealed what appeared to be an in-situ cremation at which point it was decided to leave the remainder of the fill in place.
- 5.13 Two ditches were identified to the east and west of the two cists. The eastern ditch (51) was filled by a brownish grey silty sand (101) containing up to 80% rounded and sub-angular pebbles. The upper fill was a yellowish-brown sand (50) which was sealed by the cultivation layer (102). The western ditch (98) was only partially excavated in order simply to confirm its nature. It appeared to be cut through a stony deposit (56) which may represent the natural subsoil in this area albeit possibly redeposited as mound material, and contained at least two fills. The earliest identified was a light yellowish brown silty clay (57) overlain by a greyish brown gritty sand (97) with occasional pebbles.

Trench 3 (Fig 8)

- 5.14 Trench 3 measured 15.5 x 1.5m and was sited towards the centre of the site to investigate a irregular feature identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5, f).
- 5.15 The overburden consisted of up to 0.3m of topsoil (31) overlying a layer of orange brown silty clay with up to 60% sub-angular and rounded stones of 20-50mm diameter, which was present in the central and eastern areas of the trench only. At the western end of the trench a 3m wide, 0.70m deep ditch with concave sides and base, cut into the natural gravels (32). The ditch contained several fills, the earliest of which was a dark greyish brown, soft, sand (81). This was overlain by a grayish brown silty clay (80) containing up to 90% sub-angular and rounded pebbles, particularly in its western extent. This material appeared to have slumped into the ditch from the west and may represent upcast from the original digging of the feature. Above this was a band of grayish brown silty sand (78), with an upper fill (77) of grayish brown silty clay containing up to 40% rounded pebbles. Cutting into this material was an angled posthole (76) with straight sides to a slightly concave base and containing a light brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks and a number of packing stones (43) (plate 7).
- 5.16 In the central area of the trench an oval pit or the butt end of a ditch (46) was identified continuing beyond the limits of the excavation to the south. The feature measured 0.90m wide by 0.42m deep. Two fills were identified, a primary fill (75) of grayish brown clay silt with c.40% pebbles, and an upper fill (45) of light brown, firm, silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks.
- 5.17 At the eastern end of the trench an irregular negative feature (35) containing a stony and gravelrich fill (34) was interpreted as a natural fluvial channel.

Trench 4 (Fig. 9; plates 8)

5.18 Trench 4 measured 9.5 x 1.5m and was sited towards the south-west corner of the site to investigate an irregular feature identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5).

- 5.19 The overburden consisted of up to 0.35m of topsoil (11) and a 0.25m-thick layer of former cultivation soil (17), the removal of which exposed the natural river gravels (36) at the eastern end of the trench.
- 5.20 In the central area of the trench a sub-circular pit (12), 1.8m in diameter, had cut through a layer of light reddish-brown silty clay (30). The pit contained two fills, the earliest of which was a mid brown compact silty clay (13). This was overlain by a brown silty clay (26) containing up to 70% small pebbles.
- 5.21 Immediately to the west of the pit a linear ditch (14) was identified, aligned north-east to southwest, and with a width of 1.40m and a depth of 0.60m. Possible upcast (29) from the ditch was dumped on its west side, atop a silty clay material (40) which was identical to deposit (30), and through which the ditch was cut. This upcast material appeared to have slumped into the ditch along this western side, forming the primary fill in this area. It is possible that this material had been recut, as a secondary fill (28) was identified along the eastern extent of the ditch, comprising a reddish brown, firm, silty clay with c.1% pebbles.
- 5.22 A shallow scoop feature (16) was identified at the western end of the trench, filled by a reddish brown silty clay (27). This was interpreted as a probable natural feature.
- 5.23 Further investigation of the deposits at the eastern end of the trench revealed a sequence of natural sands and gravels (15), (47) and (37).

Trench 5 (Fig. 10)

- 5.24 Trench 5 measured 10 x 1.5m and was sited towards the south-east corner of the site to investigate an irregular feature identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 6, k).
- 5.25 The overburden consisted of up to 0.35m of topsoil (71) and a layer of former cultivation soil (93) up to 0.6m thick, which were removed to expose the natural river gravels (72). At the western end of the trench a linear ditch (104) ran almost north to south across the trench and cut into the gravels (plate 9). The ditch measured 2m wide and 0.70m deep, and contained a dark grey, compact, stony fill (103), which appeared to have been truncated by the insertion of a secondary pit or recut butt-ended ditch (74). The single fill (73) of this later event was a firm light orange clay silt. No dating evidence was retrieved from these features, but they were sealed by the cultivation deposit (93).

Trench 6 (Fig 11)

- 5.26 Trench 6 measured 24.6 x 1.5m and was sited towards the south-eastern corner of the site to investigate two linear features identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5, i).
- 5.27 The overburden consisted of up to 0.35m of topsoil (58) and a layer of former cultivation soil (59) up to 0.18m thick, which were removed directly onto the natural river gravels (60). Two ditches cut into the gravel, the westernmost (64) being most clearly defined. This was up to 2m wide and 0.30m deep with a rounded base (plate 10). The basal fill consisted of a greyish brown silty clay (106) with frequent small stones beneath a layer of light brown silty clay (105).
- 5.28 Towards the eastern end of trench, investigation of the second ditch revealed a smaller gully (94) joining the main ditch (62) (plate 11). The main ditch contained similar fills to the western ditch, a primary fill of stony greyish brown silty clay (96) beneath a light brown silty clay (61). The smaller gully, being only 0.62m wide, contained a single fill of light brown silty clay (95) with frequent stones.

Trench 7 (Fig 12; plate 12)

- 5.29 Trench 7 measured 14.5 x 1.5m and was sited towards the south-eastern corner of the site to investigate an irregular anomaly identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 5, j).
- 5.30 The overburden consisted of up to 0.32m of topsoil (82) and a layer of former cultivation soil (84) up to 0.15m thick which was only present in the northern end of the trench. Both layers were removed to reveal the natural river gravels (83). Towards the northern end of the trench the gravel was overlain by a layer of grayish orange clay silt (85) which both sealed and in part filled three features.
- 5.31 A curving gully (89) was identified cutting into the gravel at the southern limit of layer (85). The feature was up to 0.6m wide and 0.22m deep, extending beyond the limits of excavation to the east and west and filled by a silty gravel (88).
- 5.32 To the north of the gully was a possible pit (90) which was mostly filled by layer (85), but with a thin layer of loose, grey sand (91) in the base. Further to the west a second possible pit (92) was also filled by layer (85). The nature of these features suggests that they may be natural in origin.

6 FINDS

- 6.1 A small collection of prehistoric pottery was recovered from the trial excavations, the majority of which was recovered from the upper fill (23) of one of the cists (22) in Trench 2. This consisted of sherds from one or possibly two vessels which have been identified by Dr Alex Gibson as of Hiberno-Scottish Food Vessel type. The rim sherds have fairly elaborate decoration in the form of complex incised lines, while the stab decoration on several body sherds suggest that these may be from a separate vessel (plate 13). Further, undiagnostic sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from the upper fill of pit (09), and from the fill of feature (07), both in Trench 1.
- 6.2 Other finds included a fragment of flint from the fill of a pit (12) in Trench 4, as well as a small collection of post-medieval pottery and clay pipe, mostly from the topsoil and the fill of the presumed gravel pit (21) in Trench 2.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The evaluation has revealed the presence of buried archaeological deposits within the proposed development plot the most significant of which comprise a series of prehistoric burial features. The ploughed out remains of a Bronze Age burial mound, known as a ring ditch, were already known and part of the site had been excavated in 1991 in advance of the adjacent housing development. The ring ditch was 15m in diameter with a ditch around 1.0m deep. This ring ditch is bisected by the eastern boundary of the site.
- 7.2 The present excavations have revealed further evidence for prehistoric burial close to the ring ditch in the form of two cists, both of which appear to be undisturbed and may contain intact cremations. This group of monuments is located on a slight natural rise which, before modern development, would have been a relatively prominent location close to the edge of the river terrace overlooking the floodplain of the River Vyrnwy. During the Bronze Age such positions often formed a focus for burial and ritual activity and further, as yet unrecorded features, may well be present in the immediate area.

- 7.3 The evaluation revealed further prehistoric activity in the northern part of the site, consisting of a butt-ended ditch or pit and an oval pit each containing a single sherd of prehistoric pottery. The probable ditch was signalled by the geophysical survey as a possible boundary feature.
- 7.4 Elsewhere across the site further undated, but possibly prehistoric features were identified comprising ditches and pits, including the two long parallel ditches identified in Trench 6 towards the southern end of the site.
- 7.5 The large rectangular feature which had been recorded as a cropmark and by the geophysical survey was investigated during the excavations and found to be a probable gravel pit of likely 18th-century date.
- 7.6 The location of the evaluation trenches and the more significant archaeological features is shown in Fig. 13 in relation to the proposed development layout as indicated to us by the developer.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1 The writers would like to thank the following for their assistance during the project: Ian Grant, Richard Hankinson, Wendy Owen, Chris Lane, Brian Williams, Macsen Flook, and Martyn Jenks, CPAT; Hannah Heard, Stratascan, for reporting on the geophysical survey; the staff of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; the staff of the National Monuments Record at RCAHMW in Aberystwyth; and the staff of the Shrewsbury Records and Research Centre.

9 NOTES

- 1. The oblique aerial photograph collection of the National Monument Record in Aberystwyth was examined but no additional photographs of any significance were identified. In view of the wide range of oblique photographs that are available of this field, it was considered highly unlikely that any vertical photographs, invariably taken at smaller scales and not specifically for archaeological purposes, would reveal additional information, and consequently no examination of these sources was conducted.
- 2. In the Shropshire County Record Office in Shrewsbury: *Tyrwhitt-Jones Colln 840/box 116*. It is entitled a sales map from 1828 of an estate in the townships of Carreghofa in Llanymynech and Llwyntidman in the counties of Salop and Denbigh.
- 3. The Tithe Map carries the date 1828, which caused some confusion in the past because Tithe maps and schedules were generally produced only after the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. Clearly the Tithe Map was a copy of the estate sale map and the latter's date was also copied. The Tithe Map is likely to be of 1837 or 1838, for the accompanying apportionment was prepared in the dormer year.

10 REFERENCES

Published sources

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Unpublished sources

Heard, H, 2006. Geophysical Survey Report: Carreghofa, Llanymynech, Powys. Stratascan.

Maps

1828 Sales map of an estate in the townships of Carreghofa in Llanymynech an Llwyntidman in the counties of Salop and Denbigh: *Tyrwhitt-Jones Colln 840/box 116*1828/1838 Tithe Map: Llanymynech
1887 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map: Montgomeryshire 11.5/Shropshire 26.5
1901 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map: Montgomeryshire 11.5/Shropshire 26.5

Oblique aerial photographs

CPAT Photographs: 75-A-16 84-27-5 95-009-0010 and 11 79-cm-0035

CUCAP photographs CHI 012

APPENDIX 1

SITE ARCHIVE

108 context records
8 A1 drawings
context register
levels register
drawings register
3 black and white negative films
3 colour print films
3 colour slide films

Finds catalogue

Context	Material	No.	Weight (g)
01	Post-medieval pottery	6	24
06	Prehistoric pottery	1	2
08	Prehistoric pottery	1	22
08	? pottery	1	3
11	Post-medieval pottery	3	7
13	Post-medieval pottery	1	1
13	Flint	1	1
20	Clay pipe	10	19
20	Post-medieval pottery	4	26
23	Prehistoric pottery	19	136



Fig. 1 Site location

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Fig. 2 Tithe Survey for Llanymynech parish, 1837 or 1838



Fig. 3 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2,500, published 1901



Fig. 4 Geophysical Survey: greyscale plot, scale 1:1,000



Fig. 5 Geophysical Survey: interprative plot, scale 1:1,000

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Fig. 6 Trench 1 plan and section







Fig. 9 Trench 4 plan and section

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Fig. 10 Trench 5 plan and section



Fig. 11 Trench 6 plan and section



Fig. 12 Trench 7 plan and section

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Fig. 13 Proposed development layout showing trench locations and areas of archaeological significance

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Plate 1 Aerial photograph showing cropmarks. (Photo CPAT 79-cm-0035)



Plate 2 Trench 1 showing features 07 and 09

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Plate 3 Trench 2, pit 21



Plate 4 Trench 2, ring ditch 49



Plate 5 Trench 2, cist 22



Plate 6 Trench 2, cist 67



Plate 7 Trench 3, showing packing stones 43



Plate 8 Trench 4, showing features 16, 14 and 12



Plate 9 Trench 5, feature 74



Plate 10 Trench 6, ditch 64



Plate 11 Trench 6, ditch 62



Plate 12 Trench 7, showing gully 89 and feature 90



Plate 13 Hiberno-Scottish Food Vessel recovered from cist 22