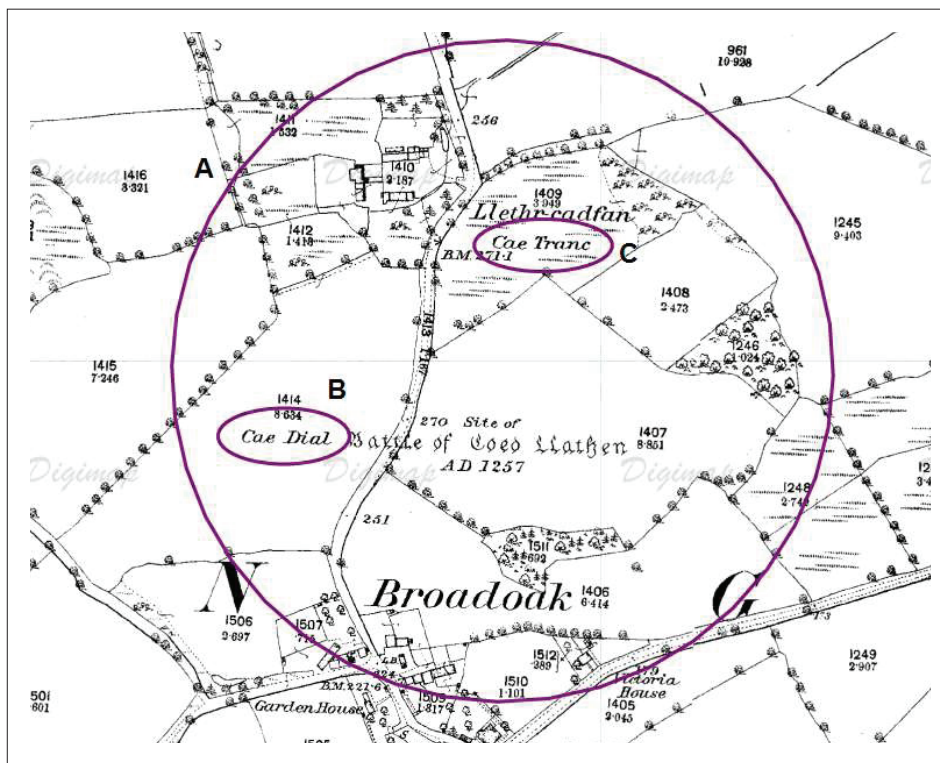


Archaeology Wales

1257 Battle of Coed Llathen & Cymerau Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire

Battlefield Survey



By
Chris E Smith BA (Hons) MA MifA

Report No. 1258

Prepared for:



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Archaeology Wales

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Battlefield Survey

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Date: **July 2014**

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Crynodeb Anhechnegol

Mae'r adroddiad yma, ar gyfer Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru (CBHC), yn crynhoi a chyflwyno canlyniadau'r gwaith arolygu ar faesydd Coed Llathen a Chymerau, Llandeilo, Sir Gaerfyrddin. Y mae'r gwaith yn rhan o ymchwiliad mwy eang i'w gynnwys ar gofrestr Brwydrau Hanesyddol Cymru ar gyfer Llywodraeth Cymru.

Y bwriad gwreiddiol oedd archwilio wrth ddefnyddio arolwg LiDAR a datgelydd metel ond gwrthododd y tirfeddiannwr caniatâd i ddefnyddio datgelyddion metel.

Archwiliwyd y safleoedd yn fanwl wrth gerdded o gwmpas y safleoedd ac astudiwyd arolwg LiDAR o'r meysydd. Mae canlyniadau'r gwaith wedi ei gyfuno gydag ymchwiliad hanesyddol Dr Adam Chapman (2013) yn awgrymu mae o gwmpas Fferm Cadfan, i'r gogledd o Broad Oak, roedd maes brwydr Coed Llathen, ond nid oes sicrwydd ynglŷn â safle tybiedig maes brwydr Cymerau.

Non-Technical Summary

This report draws upon the results gained by archaeological investigations into the site of the 1257 Battles of Coed Llathen and Cymerau, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, for The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW).

The work forms part of a larger investigation, the objectives of which are to gather evidence that will verify and inform the location and extent of Welsh battlefields and to inform the consideration of each site for inclusion on the Welsh Government proposed Register of Historic Battlefields in Wales.

Various survey methods were proposed for the site, including Lidar analysis, site walkover and metal detector surveys.

Landowner permission for metal detector survey was denied. However, the Lidar analysis and the site walker were undertaken. These studies, in combination with the results of an earlier historical study by Dr Adam Chapman (2013), concluded that the most likely area for the Coed Llanthen battlefield is that immediately surrounding Cadfan Farm, north of Broad Oak. The location of the battle of Cymerau, however, remains uncertain.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2014 Archaeology Wales carried out investigations at the purported site of the 1257 battles of Coed Llathen and Cymerau (NGR SN 57863 23149, SN 50033 20259 & SN 64743 30679 - Fig 1). Lidar analysis and a site walkover were carried out.
- 1.1.2 The work was carried out at the request of Louise Barker of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (Henceforth – The Commission) and was funded by the Welsh Government. It formed part of a series of on-going battlefield surveys undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd on behalf of The Commission, the primary objective of which is to inform the consideration of each battlefield site for inclusion on a proposed Battlefields Register for Wales.

2 Objectives

2.1 Outline Requirements

- 2.1.1 The objective of the work at each battlefield is to gather evidence that will help verify and inform the location, extent and archaeological character of each battlefield. The fundamental criterion is that in order for a battlefield to be protected and for change to be managed, its location and extent must be confidently identified. In addition the battlefield must meet at least one of the following three criteria:
- 2.1.2 **Be associated with historical events or figures of national importance** (i.e. military innovations, direct associations with nationally important figures or events and whether the engagement played a key role in a campaign); and/or
- 2.1.3 **Have significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential** (i.e. include natural or constructed physical features at the time of the engagement, evidence from the engagement or other related buried archaeological evidence); and/or
- 2.1.4 **Have a clear landscape context that allows the events of the battle to be understood or interpreted** (i.e. the initial area of deployment and fighting, wider landscape incorporating earthworks, skirmishes, camps, burial, line of advance and retreat, and detached elements such as memorials)

2.2 Aims & Proposals

- 2.2.1 The main aim of the work was to define areas around Coed Llathen and Cymerau which were likely to have been associated with the 1257 battle.
- 2.2.2 Proposals to achieve the above aim included:
 - Analysing Lidar data to identify likely landscape features possibly associated with the battle.

- Assessing the local topography for areas upon which the battle could have taken place by means of a site walkover.
- Undertaking metal detector surveys, along with fieldwalking where possible, in the fields around the chosen areas and anywhere else identified by the Lidar analysis and site walkover.

2.2.3 A site setup meeting with the landowner, Mr Morgan, determined that permission for the metal detecting survey would not be given.

2.3 Geology and topography

2.3.1 The assessment area covers three distinct sites, marked as A, B and C on figs. 2-4. All three of the areas are underlain by the same solid geological horizon composed of Ashgill and Caradoc rock of the Ordovician period.

2.3.2 The battle site of Coed Llathen (area C), around Broad Oak to the west of Llandeilo, is located within an area of slowly permeable, wet, acidic, loamy and clayey soils of low fertility. The possible site of the battle of Cymerau, to the north of Llandeilo (area B) is located on the same soils. The remaining site, a further possibility for the battle of Cymerau, is located on heavy silt floodplain soils to the south of Nantgaredig (area A).

2.3.3 Both areas A and B are similar in topographic terms as they are both located on natural undulating plateaus surrounded by higher ground. area C differs in that it is located on a flat floodplain adjacent to the course of two major rivers. All are located in areas of sparse settlement interspersed with irregularly shaped fields, and with little woodland.

2.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.4.1 A detailed description of the Battle of Coed Llathen and Cymerau is contained in Welsh Battlefields Historical and Documentary Research undertaken by Dr Adam Chapman (2013). The following are extracts from the 2013 research:

“The twin battle of Coed Llathen and Cymerau came in the thirteenth century at an important point in the history of Wales. On 14 February 1254, Lord Edward, eldest son of Henry III, was granted extensive estates in Wales and Ireland. In Wales, these included: the king’s conquests in the north, the four cantrefs between the rivers Dee and Conwy, the honour of Three Castles (Skenfrith, Grosmont and Whitecastle) in the south east, and the castles of Carmarthen, Cardigan, Montgomery and Builth. Following the deaths of Llywelyn ab Iorweth in 1240, and his son Dafydd in 1246, Gwynedd had been divided and greatly weakened. However, this period of division ended in June 1255 with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd’s victory over his brothers, Owain and Dafydd, at Bryn Derwin. Llywelyn became ‘the sole master of Gwynedd’. As such, as the English government soon realised, native Wales had found a leader and the allegiance of Welsh lords and princes began to be transferred from the English crown to Llywelyn. A visit by Lord Edward and his household to north east Wales between July and

August 1256 seems only to have accelerated the process. In November of the same year Llywelyn, accompanied by Rhys Gryg of Deheubarth, swept through Perfeddwlad (the area between the rivers Conwy and Dee) expelling its English rulers and reducing the English presence to the castles of Degannwy, overlooking the Conwy estuary, and Diserth, two miles to the east of Rhuddlan. Following this, members of native elites expanded southwards, sponsored by Llywelyn. In the north west, the commote of Meirionnydd was overrun and its English client ruler was forced to flee. Taking advantage of the opportunity, another of Llywelyn's allies, Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg, was re-established in the Tywi valley in south west Wales stripping his nephew, Rhys Fychan (ap Rhys Mechyll ap Rhys Gryg), of his lands at Dinefwr and parts of Ystrad Twyi. In mid-Wales, Gwrtheyrnion and Builth were reclaimed by the Welsh. In the first half of 1258, southern Powys was overrun and the ruler of northern Powys defected to Llywelyn. The two battles of 2 June 1257 come in the context of the English response to the early incursions of Llywelyn and his allies.

The principal sources are well-known and have been assembled and analysed most recently by Jenkin Beverley Smith in his biography of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales. Understandably, the most significant sources are the Welsh annals: the various versions of the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Brut y Tywysogion* as it survives in NLW Peniarth MS 20 and in the Red Book of Hergest. The scale and significance of the defeat of the English forces is indicated in the frequency with which details appear in English chronicles, notably Mathew Paris's *Chronica Majora* and in a variety of annals maintained in English monasteries, notably Osney and Tewkesbury. The earliest comprehensive historical commentaries of these battles were produced by J.E. Lloyd in his two volume *History of Wales* and in his similarly capacious *History of Carmarthenshire*. Lloyd's are, by far, the most influential accounts, but they have a number of problems, most notably his identification of the site of the battle of Cymerau.

The purported site of the first of the two battles, Coed Llathen, is noted on the first edition OS map of 1888 [grid reference SN579229]. It is in the parish of Llangathen approximately 5km west of Llandeilo, toward the bottom of a south facing slope in a shallow valley along which the road between Carmarthen and Llandeilo (now the A40) runs. More specifically, it is located immediately north of Broad Oak Farm and above the 'Nant Stephanau', which flows from west to east in this area. This site is broadly compatible with both of the sites for the latter battle at 'Cymerau' suggested by Chapman (Fig 1, Area A & Area B, see below). It is supposedly marked by several field names – 'Cae Trange,' [Cae Tranc/Death Field] 'Cae Dial,' [Vengeance/Revenge Field], both shown on the first edition OS map, and 'Cae yr ochain' [The Groaning Field], but there is a reasonable chance that these are the product of memory of a well-known battle and visited upon otherwise undistinguished pasture. While indicative, these names do not

provide proof and the identification they provide should not be accepted without additional evidence.

Lloyd surmised that the second battle, at 'Cymerau', was probably fought at the confluence (W. *cymer*) of the rivers Twyi and Cothi, almost equidistant between Llandeilo and Carmarthen, in the parish of Llanegwad (SN501201 per *Coflein*), near Nantgaredig, somewhere at the base of the broad river valley. This is problematic for several reasons, not least, as Lloyd admitted, because the confluence of the Twyi and Cothi was not known by this name when he was writing, nor, from the evidence he had been able to assemble, had it ever been. Indeed, the researches of Melville Richards suggest that all references to 'Cymerau' referring to this battle and its site are made after Lloyd's identification and usually with explicit reference to Lloyd's work. Had the English army been heading to Cardigan rather than back towards Carmarthen, down a presumably hostile Tywi valley, then the alternative view suggested by Egerton Phillimore in G. Owen's, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, acquires some significance. Phillimore suggests a site at the confluences (W. *Cymerau*) of Afon Ddulais, Afon Ddu and Nant Llwyd, two miles south-east of Talylychau (SN645305), approximately 9km north west of Llandeilo. This would be consistent with a route over the high ground to the north west of Llandeilo towards the river Teifi, and the note in the *Annales Cambriae* that 'de Bauzan's' forces were headed 'versus Kardigaun' (towards Cardigan). Lloyd was naturally aware of the content of the *Annales* but discounted this note as a scribal slip for Carmarthen.

So far as the sites for the battles are concerned, Coed Llathen seems the more secure of the two. It occupies a position which accords with the narrative sources available and bears field names and a location with historical currency. Cymerau is more complicated. Lloyd's suggested site was, by his own admission, based on speculation, and the confluence of the rivers Twyi and Cothi seems only to have been referred as 'Cymerau' with reference to his description. That the suggestion also relies on a scribe confusing Cardigan for Carmarthen is problematic. Linguistically Lloyd's site for the battle of Cymerau creates another problem since it is undoubtedly one confluence rather than many. In this respect, Phillimore's suggested site at the confluences (W. *Cymerau*) of Afon Ddulas, Afon Ddu and Nant Llwyd, two miles south-west of Talylychau (SN645305), approximately 9km north west of Llandeilo merits more serious consideration. The related battles of Coed Llathen and Cymerau took place, according to the few accounts we have, on 2 June 1257, the second day after the English led force left Carmarthen. The first of the two encounters was in the morning at Coed Llathen, where the English army was intercepted by Welsh forces. Having lost their supplies and been put to flight (either towards Cardigan or Carmarthen depending on sources), the English forces were again attacked at Cymerau. They sustained heavy losses, particularly among the predominantly Welsh infantry recruited from the Anglo-Norman lordships of

the March. As a result, both the compiler of the *Cronica de Wallia* and the *Annales Cambriae* were in no doubt that this was a resounding Welsh victory. The sources cannot agree on the number of casualties on the English side, although they were clearly substantial. Estimates range between 1000 and 3000. Regrettably, however, it is not possible to assess the numerical significance of the defeat, since the size of the original force is unknown” (Chapman, 2013).

3 Methodology

3.1 Location of Works

3.1.1 Areas A, B & C, as defined by Chapman (2013), were thus chosen as the areas in which to concentrate fieldwork. Specific areas within A, B & C were assessed by Lidar analysis and site walkover as to their suitability for metal detector survey.

3.2 Lidar Analysis

3.2.1 Lidar data at a resolution of 2m was examined. Both digital shadow and terrain models were analysed for features likely to relate to the assessment areas A, B and C as defined in the historic background (Chapman, 2013) above and shown on figs. 1-4.

3.3 Site Walkover

- 3.3.1 A site walkover, encompassing all of areas B and C was undertaken on 15th April 2014.
- 3.3.2 Photographs were taken using using high resolution (14MP) digital photography and written records were made at the time of the walkover.
- 3.3.3 Permission to access the land of area A was not forthcoming, so this area was not assessed.

3.4 Metal Detector Survey

- 3.4.1 Although suitable for survey, permission was not granted for the metal detector survey to be carried out in area A or C.
- 3.4.2 Although area B was accessible, the hay in the field was too high to make surveying feasible. Again, no survey was carried out.

4 Lidar Analysis Results

4.1 Digital Terrain Model

4.1.1 The Lidar data, at 2m resolution, shows areas A, B and C in good detail (Figs 5-7).

- 4.1.2 The Lidar data for area A shows a large amount of cultivation furrows within the fields to the north of the river Towy and adjacent to the river Cothi. These could be medieval in origin. The features are not visible on the ground.
- 4.1.3 The Lidar data also shows evidence of the former paths of both rivers where they have moved across the valley bottom over time. This is most notable in the course of the river Cothi.
- 4.1.4 No archaeological features evidently related to battlefield activity were noted on the Lidar data for area A
- 4.1.5 The Lidar data for area B shows the area in clear detail though no features of archaeological interest were located, either related to the battle or otherwise.
- 4.1.6 The Lidar data for area C shows the area around the hamlet of Halfway in reasonably clear detail, although again no features of specific archaeological interest were observed.

5 Site Walkover Results

5.1 Conditions

- 5.1.1 The site walkovers were undertaken in bright and sunny conditions after a period of showers.

5.2 Walkover – Area A

- 5.2.1 The walkover of area A was not undertaken, because permission was not granted. However, from a distance it was possible to ascertain a large amount of silt accumulation along the valley floor, especially in the area of the confluence of the rivers. The land is very flat in this area and prone to frequent flooding.

5.3 Walkover – Area B (Plates 1-6)

- 5.3.1 The walkover of area B, the possible site of the battle of Cymerau according to Phillimore, showed that the area is currently characterised by irregularly shaped fields, all in use as rough pasture or for growing hay. Area B, as shown on figure 6, consists of a largely flat plateau measuring roughly 800m by 500m.
- 5.3.2 No archaeological features were identified, either related to the battle of Cymerau or otherwise.

5.4 Walkover – Area C (Plates 7-10)

- 5.4.1 The walkover of area C, purportedly the main site of the 1257 battle of Coed Llathen, encompassed all of the fields around Cadfan farm (Fig 7), including those marked on the first edition ordinance survey map as Vengeance/Revenge Field, Death Field and The Groaning Field (Fig 8).

- 5.4.2 Death Field, to the east of Cadfan Farm, was under a hay crop around 0.25m high. Although not a high crop, it did serve to mask any subtle topographic undulations which may otherwise have been observed. No features of archaeological significance were noted.
- 5.4.3 Vengeance/Revenge Field, to the south of Cadfan Farm, was in use at the time of the site visit for keeping cattle. The surface grass was thus cropped short, though no features of historic or archaeological significance were noted.
- 5.4.4 The Groaning Field, south of Death Field and marked on the 1st edition OS as being the site of the Battle of Coed Llathen, was also being used to keep livestock at the time of the site visit. The surface crop was again short, affording good visibility of the land surface. Again, no features of archaeological or historic significance were noted.
- 5.4.5 Other, unnamed, fields around Cadfan farm were also subject to the site walkover. However, as with the other areas, no features of archaeological or historic significance were noted.

5.5 Site Walkover Summary

- 5.5.1 Area A, although only viewed from a distance because access was not granted, is clearly prone to frequent flooding, being flat and positioned adjacent to the courses of the two rivers.
- 5.5.2 Silt deposits, resulting from frequent inundations, are likely to cover the area.
- 5.5.3 Area B comprises a flat plateau located at the bottom of a shallow valley. The area is unlikely to be covered with flood silts because of the small size of the watercourses located here.
- 5.5.4 Area B was identified by Phillimore (Chapman, 2013) as a more likely location for the cymerau (confluences) after which the battle took its name and it should be noted that there are at least five watercourse confluences within a 2.2km stretch of valley floor in this area. Given that the Abbey at Tally is only located 2km from the site identified by Phillimore (Chapman, 2013), it seems logical that a battle near the Abbey would have been recorded in the historical accounts rather than vague natural geographic features.
- 5.5.5 The site walkover in Area C revealed no features associated with the battle of Coed Llathen. However, it is hard to ignore the evocative battle related field names. As they are clearly marked on the historic OS mapping, the highly suggestive names are likely to be of some antiquity, though whether or not they relate to the actual battle of Coed Llathen remains uncertain.

6 Discussion and Interpretation

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The field investigation was hampered by the failure to obtain landowner permission for metal detector surveys in the postulated area of main battle site, the fields immediately surrounding Cadfan Farm (area C).
- 6.1.2 Investigation into area A was also hampered by a failure to gain access permission.
- 6.1.3 Furthermore, the hay crop in area B was too high for this area to be effectively surveyed.

6.2 Overall interpretation & Evidence for the Battle

- 6.2.1 Unfortunately, because not all the proposed fieldwork could be undertaken, current understanding of the locations of the two battlefield sites is largely unchanged from that put forward by Chapman (2013).

6.3 Conclusions

- 6.3.1 Based solely on the historic accounts and the field name evidence from around Cadfan farm at site C, this is likely to be the site of the 1257 battle of Coed Llathen. However, without any supportive artefact based evidence the site is still speculative, based solely on the early Ordnance Surveyors observation.
- 6.3.2 Lloyds' interpretation of area A, at the confluence of the two rivers, as being the likely battle site of Cymerau, appears somewhat problematic, not least because he attributes scribal error to the historic accounts.
- 6.3.3 Without substantial drainage and formalisation through agriculture, area A may have been wet in the medieval period. Furthermore, the hamlet by the current river crossing and adjacent to the B4310, is called Llandilo yr Ynys, 'ynys' translating as island in Welsh, which represents a further indication that the area included wet or marshy ground.
- 6.3.4 Although marshy ground would not specifically preclude a battle from taking place there (especially as it was in June, a drier month), it does make it less likely. Were the battle to have actually taken place on the marshy floodplain, there is likely to be a substantial depth of subsequent flood deposit sealing any material associated with the battle.
- 6.3.5 The Lidar data for Area A shows evidence of the paths of both rivers, especially the Cothi, having moved over time, which is likely to have substantially changed the make-up of the valley floor from the period of the battle.
- 6.3.6 Area B, that suggested by Phillimore (Chapman, 2013) as the likely site of the battle of Cymerau, appears to be located sufficiently close to Tally Abbey for the Abbey to have been mentioned in the primary historical sources, however no such mention is noted, perhaps casting doubt on the battle being located here.

6.4 Recommendations for further investigations

- 6.4.1 Because land owner permission was not obtained for metal detecting across either area C, the main focal point for the battle, or area A, further work associated with this project cannot be recommended in these areas.
- 6.4.2 Were landowner permission to be forthcoming for those fields bearing battle related names at Cadfan Farm (Area C) then surveys here would likely prove useful in determining the battle of Coed Llathen's true location.
- 6.4.3 The fields around Halfway, adjacent to the B4302, in area B could be subject to metal detector survey after the removal of the hay crop, ideally in the winter months.
- 6.4.4 Area A, although only viewed from a distance, is clearly prone to frequent flooding, being flat and positioned adjacent to the courses of the two rivers. It is felt that survey here, should landowner permission be granted in the future, would not be productive.
- 6.4.5 The deep silt deposits that probably cover area A are likely to limit the usefulness of future metal detecting surveys, since levels contemporary with the battle probably lie at depths beyond the range of standard metal detectors.

6.5 Areas associated with the Battle of Coed Llathen and Cymerau

- 6.5.1 The area bounded by the red line on figure 9 is that now believed to be the most likely location of the battles of Coed Llathen and Cymerau. This interpretation is reasonably secure, although it should be noted that it is based on the field name and documentary evidence only, its legitimacy being still unsupported by fieldwork.

7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 Thanks are due to the landowner, Mr Morgan, for allowing us onto his land and to Louise Barker of the Commission for her help in organising the project.

8 Bibliography and references

British Geological Survey. 2001, 4th Edition. Solid Geology Map, UK South Sheet

Chapman, A. 2013. Welsh Battlefields Historical and Documentary Research – Coed Llathen and Cymerau 2nd June 1257.

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APPENDIX I: Figures

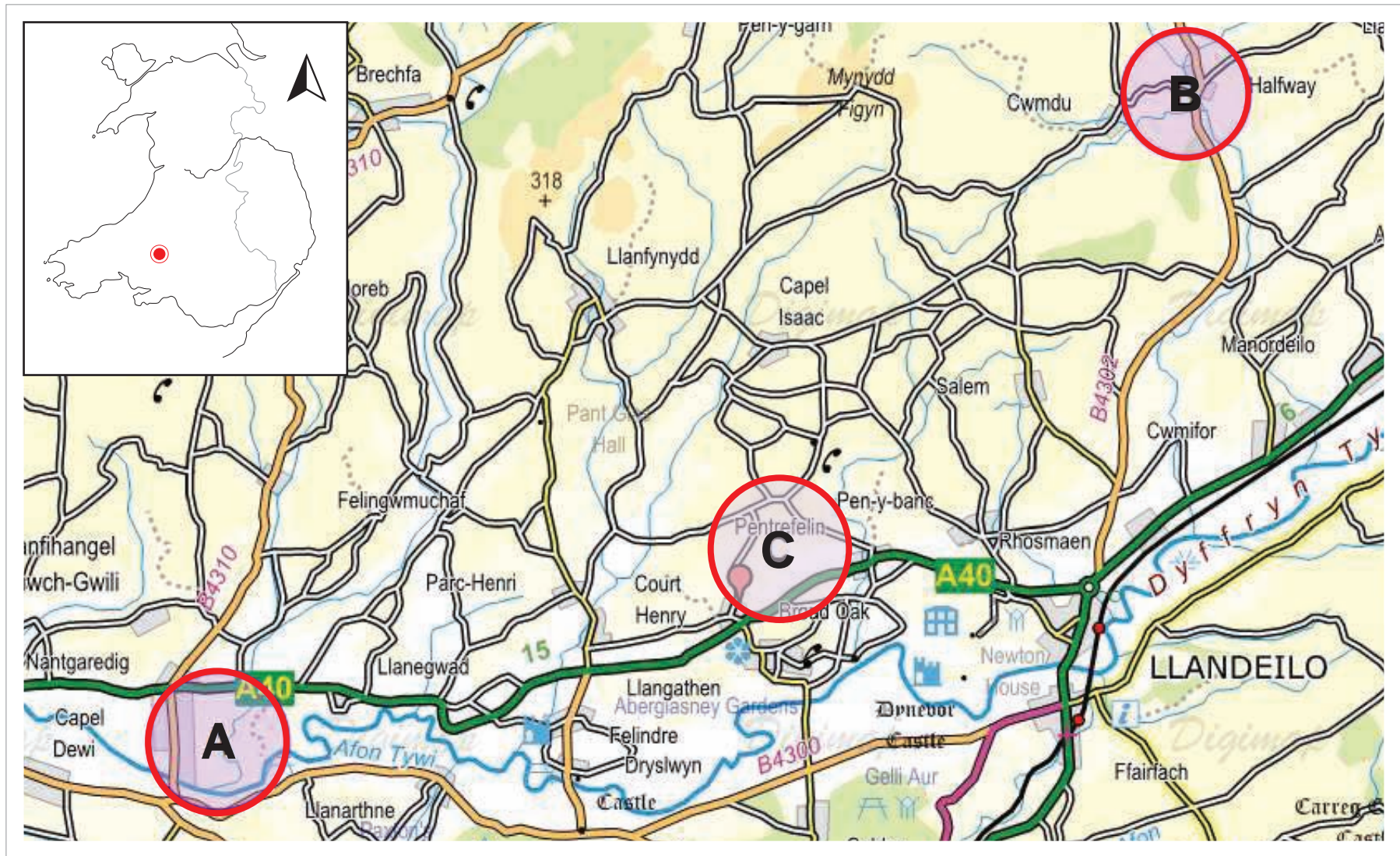


Fig 1: Map showing general location of assessment areas

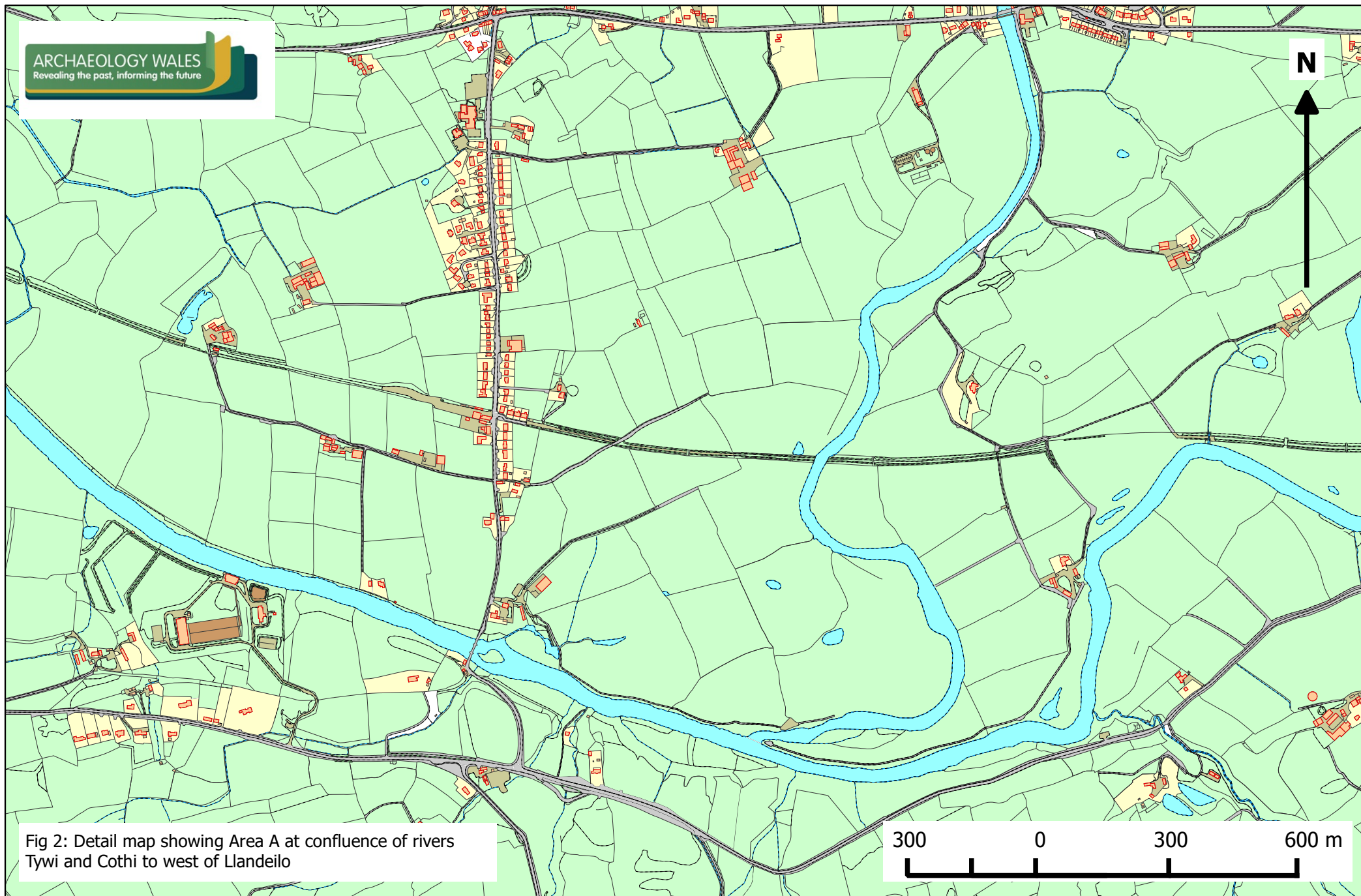


Fig 2: Detail map showing Area A at confluence of rivers Tywi and Cothi to west of Llandeilo

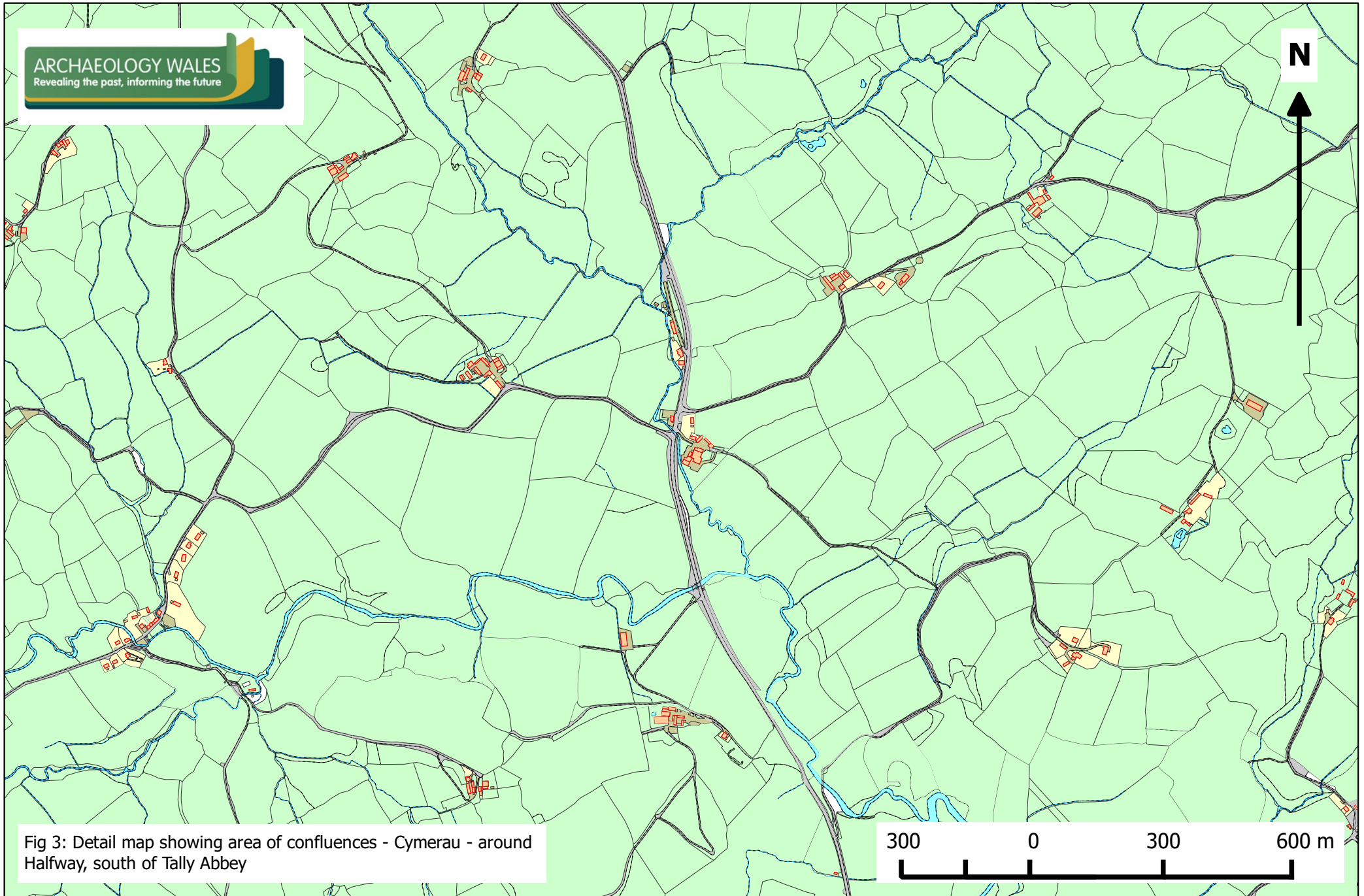


Fig 3: Detail map showing area of confluences - Cymerau - around Halfway, south of Tally Abbey

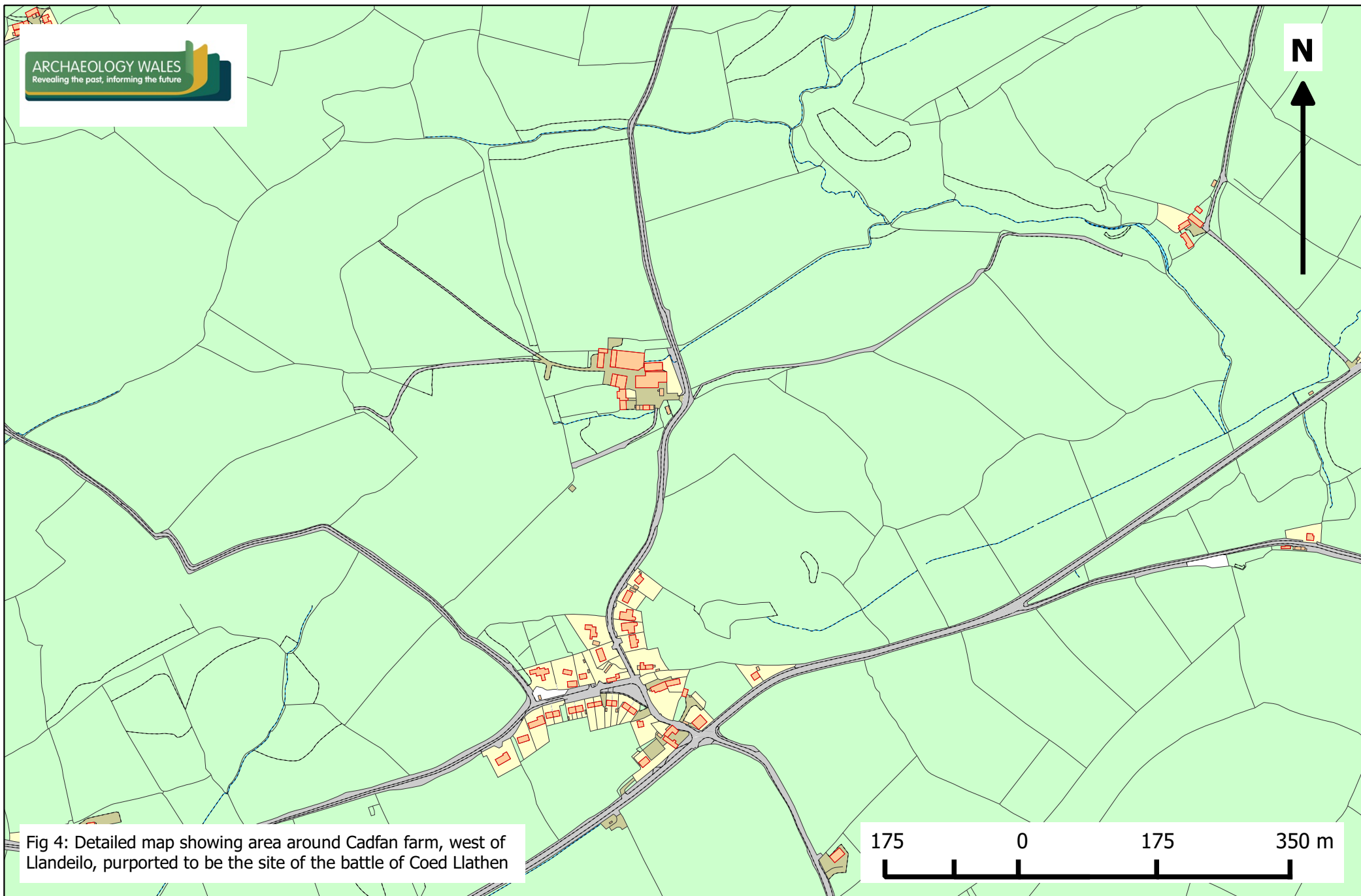


Fig 4: Detailed map showing area around Cadfan farm, west of Llandeilo, purported to be the site of the battle of Coed Llathen



Fig 5: LiDAR data for Area A showing confluence of rivers Tywi and Cothi. Note evidence of previous courses of river Cothi across floodplain area

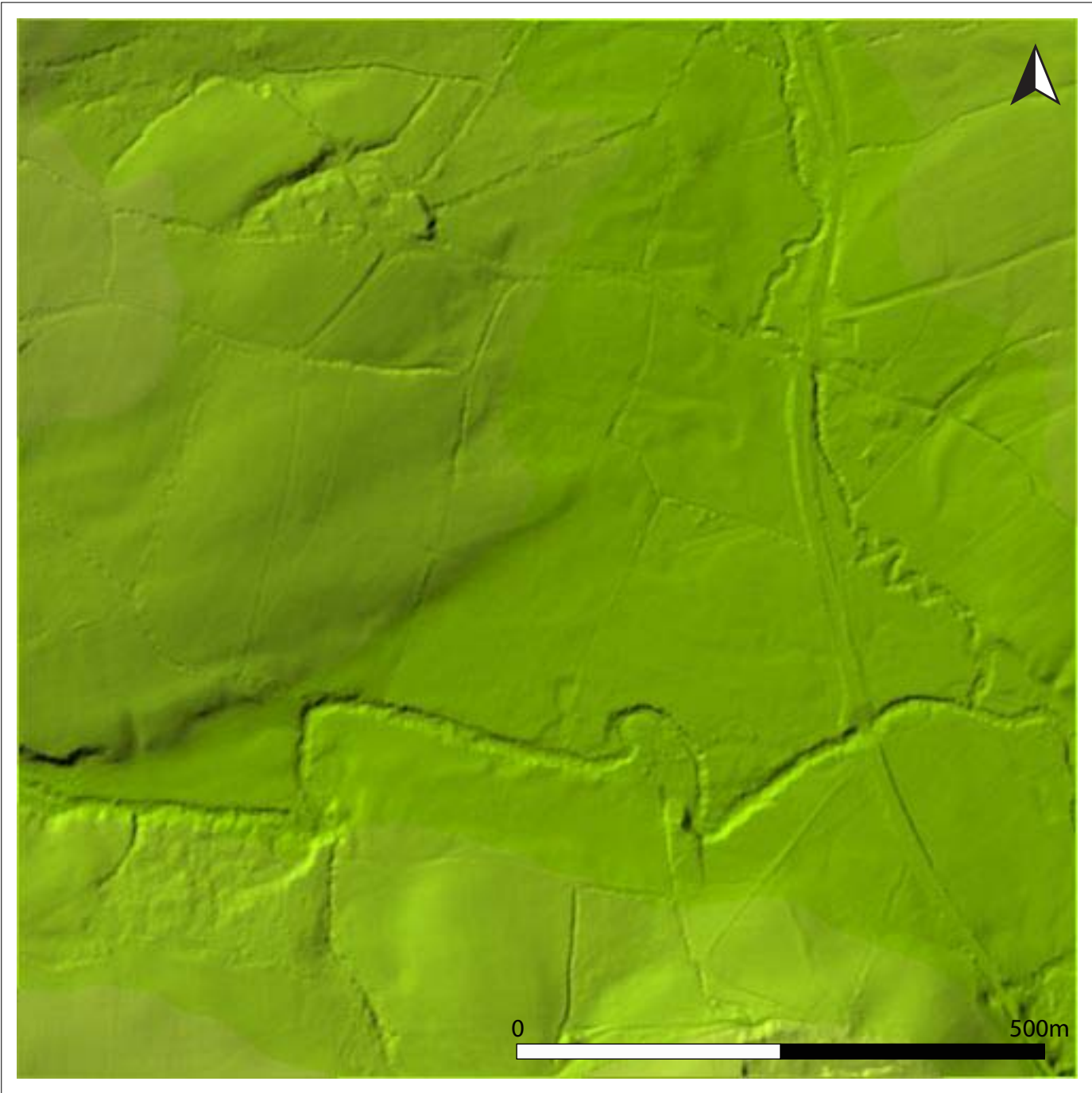


Fig 6: LiDAR data for Area B confluences -
Cymerau - around Halfway, south of Tally Abbey

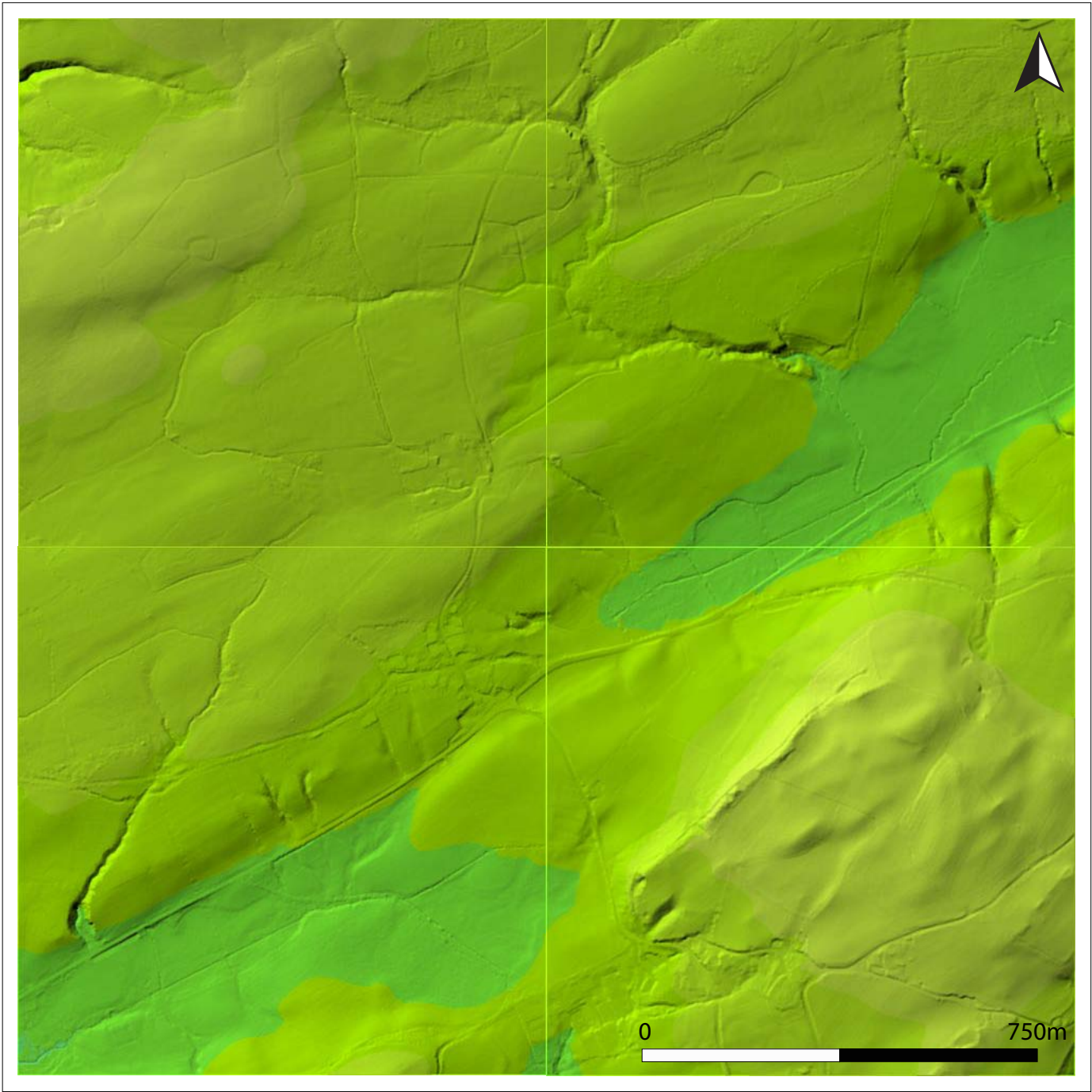


Fig 7: LiDAR data for Area C, around Cadfan farm, west of Llandeilo.

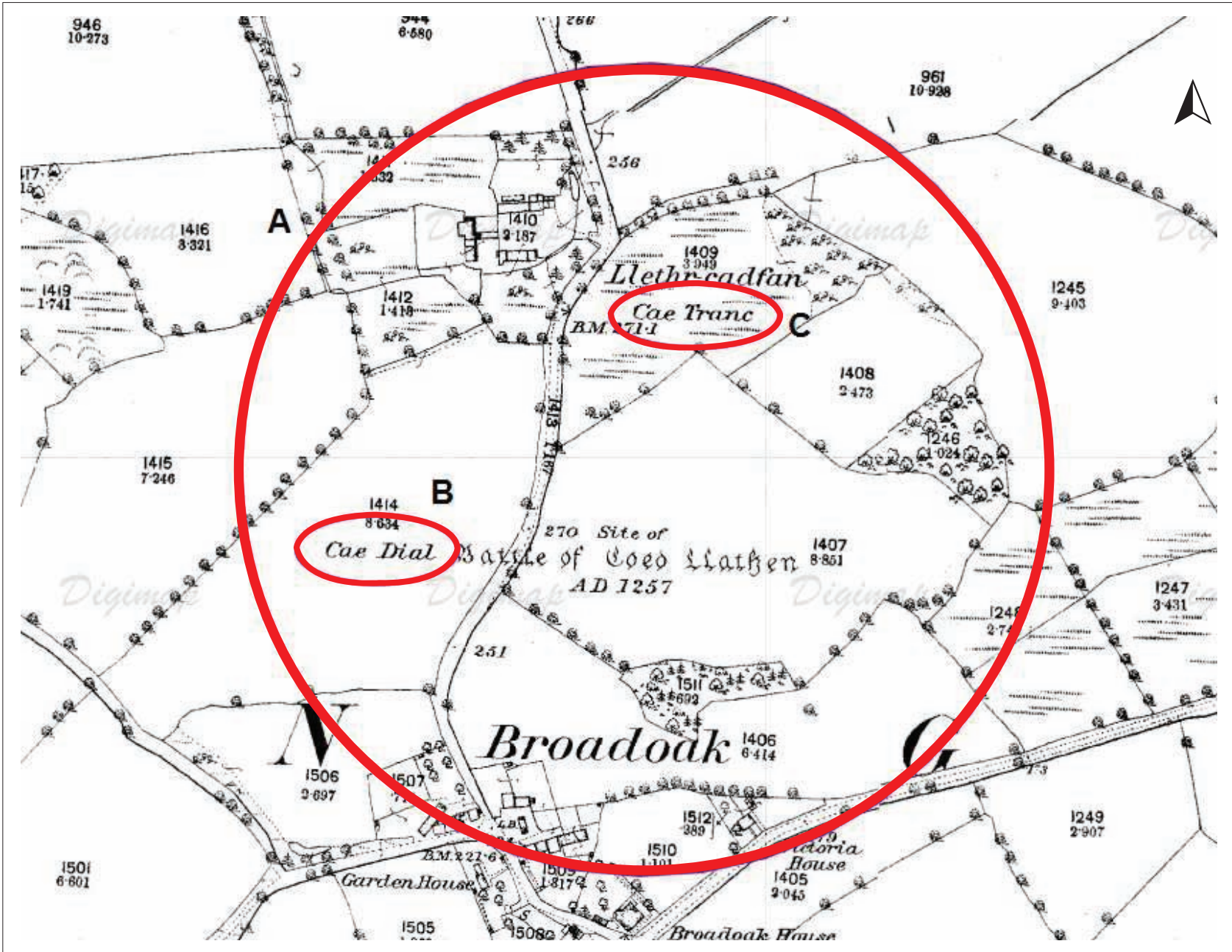


Fig 8: 1st Edition 1:2500 OS map showing Area C with battlefield oriented field names (After Chapman, 2013)

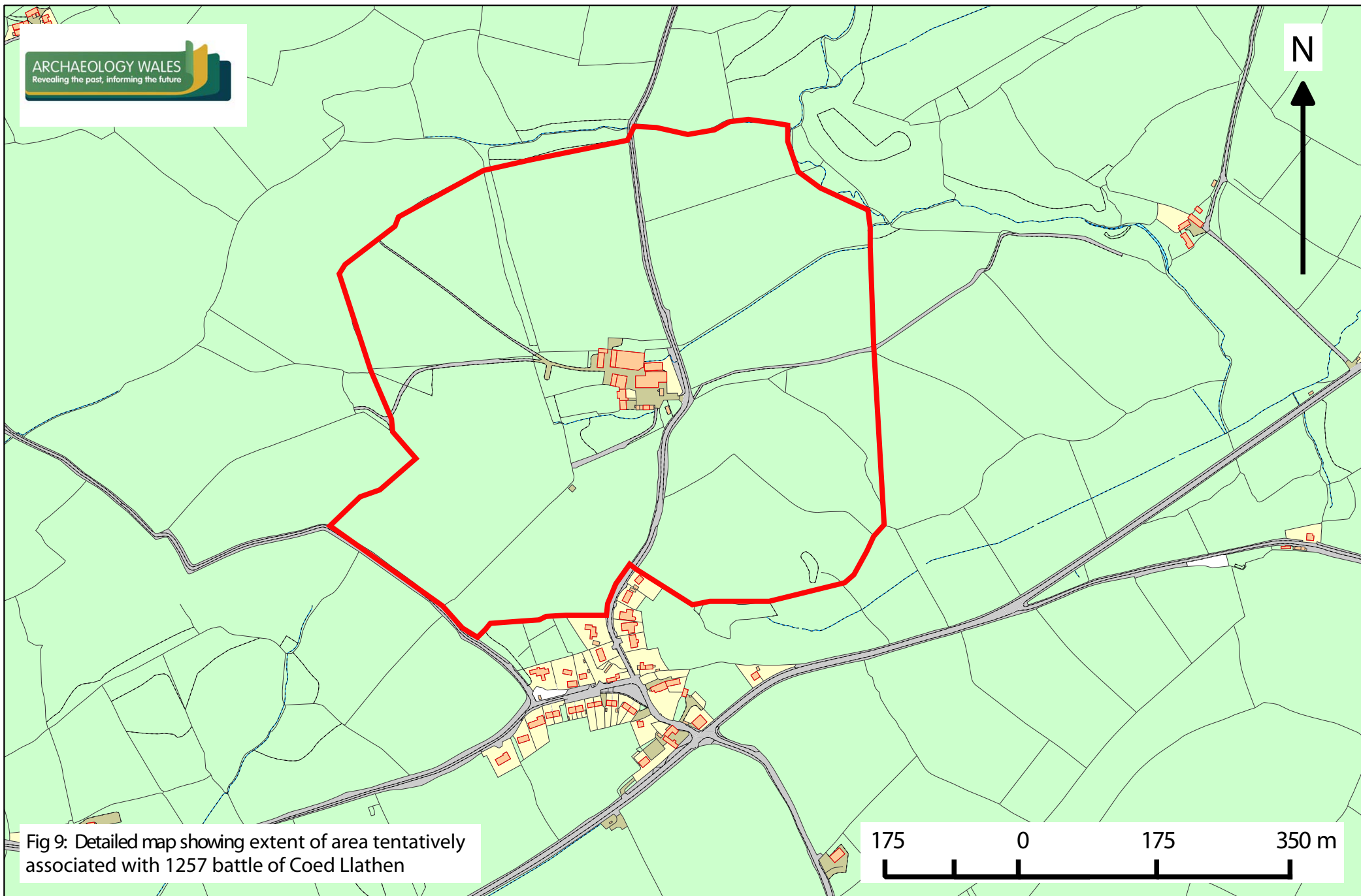


Fig 9: Detailed map showing extent of area tentatively associated with 1257 battle of Coed Llathen

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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1:View from within Cae Tranc/Death Field adjacent to Cadfan Farm
Looking south west



Plate 2:View from within Cae Tranc/Death Field looking north west
towards Cadfan Farm



Plate 3: View east from within Cae Tranc/Death Field, adjacent to Cadfan Farm



Plate 4: View east from within field marked as 1257 Battlefield on 1st Edition OS Map



Plate 5:View north east from within field marked on 1st Edition OS map as being area of 1257 battlefield, adjacent to CadfanFarm



Plate 6:View west across Cae Dial/Vengeance Field, adjacent to Cadfan Farm



Plate 7: View south west across open hay fields in Area B - Cymerau adjacent to Halfway, south of Tally Abbey



Plate 8: View north west across open hay fields in Area B - Cymerau adjacent to Halfway, south of Tally Abbey



Plate 9: View south east across field adjacent to watercourse and confluence adjacent to Halfway, south of Tally Abbey



Plate 10: View north east across field adjacent to watercourse and confluence adjacent to Halfway, south of Tally Abbey

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APPENDIX III: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Coed Llathen & Cymerau, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire

Site Name:	Coed Llathen
Site Code:	WBS3/14/SUR
PRN:	-
NPRN:	403587
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	SN 57863 23149 SN 50033 20259 SN 64743 30679
Site Type:	Battlefield
Project Type:	Survey
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	April 2014
Categories Present:	Medieval - Modern
Location of Original Archive:	AW
Location of duplicate Archives:	-
Number of Finds Boxes:	-
Location of Finds:	-
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	AW
Restrictions to access:	None

Archaeology Wales

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