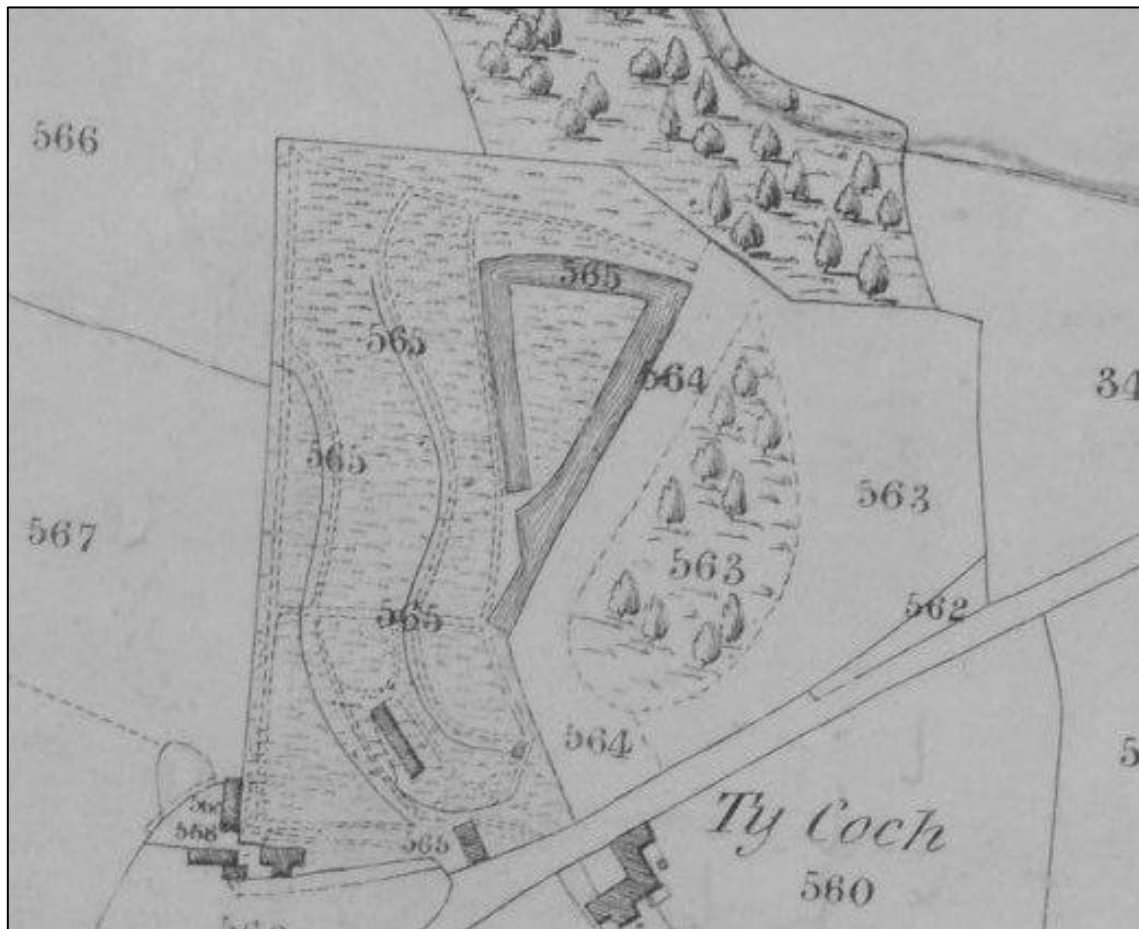


CPAT Report No. 1619

Whitehurst Gardens, Chirk, Wrexham




Topographic survey



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name: The Friends of Whitehurst Gardens
 CPAT Project No: 2318
 Project Name: Whitehurst Gardens survey
 Grid Reference: SJ 28833 39972
 County/LPA: Wrexham
 Planning Application: N/A
 CPAT Report No: 1619
 HER Enquiry No: N/A
 Event PRN: 140262
 Report status: Final
 Confidential until: October 2019

Prepared by:	Checked by:	Approved by:
		
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29/10/2018	30/10/2018	31/10/2018

Bibliographic reference: Hankinson, R., 2018. *Whitehurst Gardens, Chirk, Wrexham: topographic survey*. Unpublished Report. CPAT Report No 1619.

Cover image: Extract from the Chirk tithe map showing Whitehurst Gardens



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Summary

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) conducted a topographic survey on behalf of the Friends of Whitehurst Gardens as part of the Whitehurst Gardens Project, which aims to restore a rare example of a 17th-century ornamental fruit garden. The gardens are situated about two kilometres north of Chirk Castle and were originally part of the associated estate.

An evaluation was carried out on the site of the former canal at Whitehurst by CPAT in 2016. The present survey was designed to provide additional information relating to the garden features and it was these that were recorded, though only in those areas that are not occupied by domestic houses and their associated gardens. Further details of the terracing and the viewing mound – thought to be original features of the garden – were recorded; the presence of industrial residues in the structure of the mound confirms a post-medieval date. Other features, relating to the use of the garden after c.1800, were also recorded. Access was restricted by vegetation, and further features may survive unrecorded.

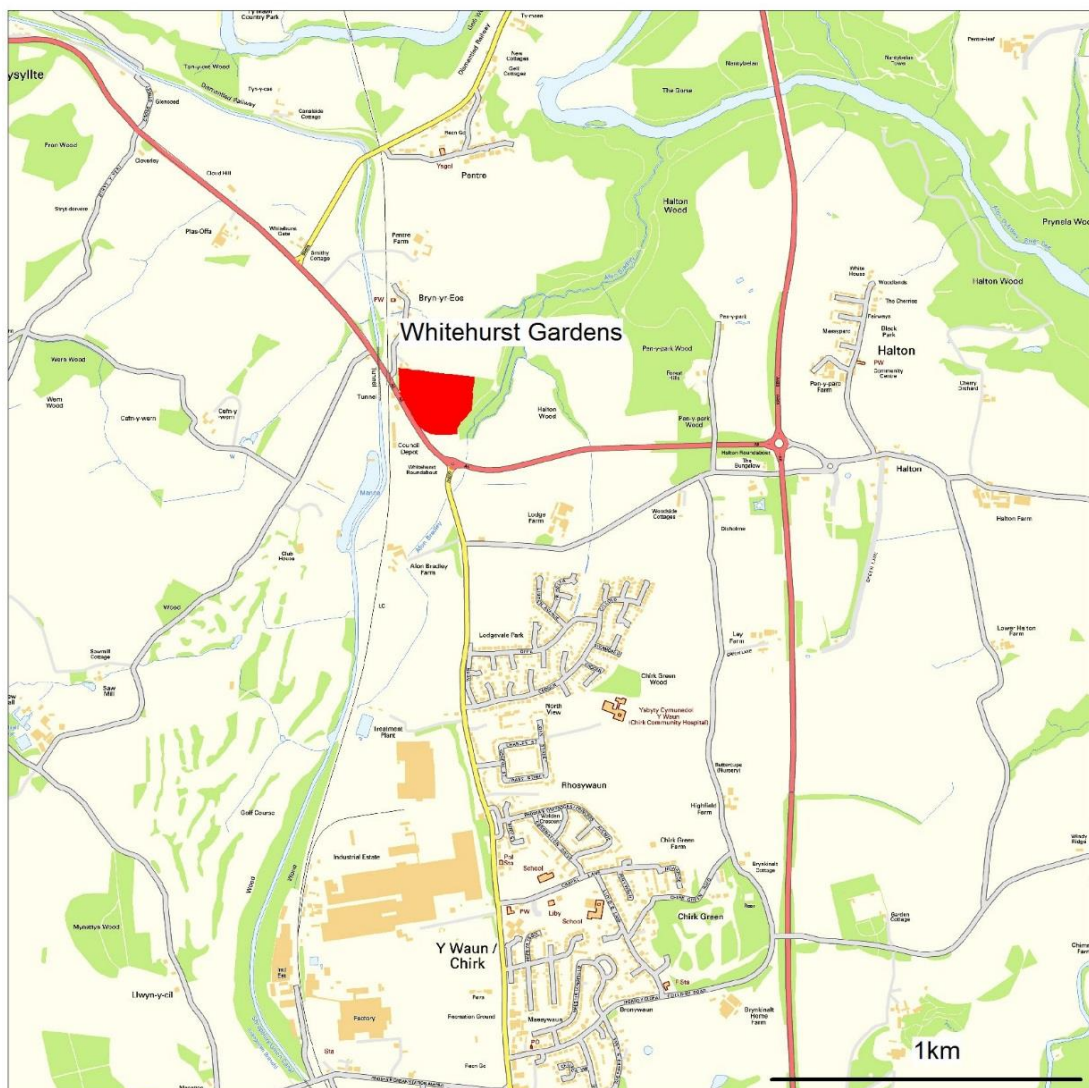
Crynodeb

Fe gynhaliodd Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys (CPAT) arolwg topograffig ar ran Cyfeillion Gerddi Whitehurst fel rhan o Brosiect Gerddi Whitehurst. Nod y prosiect yw adfer enghraifft brin o ardd ffrwythau addurnol o'r 17^{eg} ganrif. Mae'r gerddi rhyw ddau gilomedr i'r gogledd o Gastell y Waun ac roeddent yn rhan o'r stad gysylltiedig yn wreiddiol.

Roedd CPAT wedi gwneud gwerthusiad ar safle'r hen gamlas yn Whitehurst yn 2016. Bwriad yr arolwg presennol oedd darparu gwybodaeth ychwanegol ynglŷn â nodweddion yr ardd ac fe gofnodwyd y rhain, heblaw yn yr ardaloedd hynny lle ceir tai domestig a'u gerddi cysylltiedig. Cofnodwyd manylion pellach am y teras a thwmpath yr olygfan – y gred yw bod y rhain yn nodweddion gwreiddiol o'r ardd; mae'r ffaith bod yna waddodion diwydiannol yn strwythur y twmpath yn cadarnhau dyddiad ôl-ganoloesol. Cofnodwyd nodweddion eraill hefyd, yn ymwneud â'r ffordd o ddefnyddio'r ardd ar ôl rhyw 1800. Roedd llystyfiant yn gwneud mynediad yn anodd mewn mannau, ac mae'n bosibl bod yna nodweddion eraill wedi goroesi sydd heb eu cofnodi.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by the Friends of Whitehurst Gardens to undertake a topographical survey as part of the Whitehurst Gardens Project, which aims to restore a rare example of a 17th-century ornamental fruit garden. The gardens are listed Grade II* on the Cadw Register (PGW (C) 11), making them of national and potentially international significance. The gardens are situated about two kilometres north of Chirk Castle, and lie adjacent to the A5 (Fig. 1). The objectives of the survey were to identify garden features which survived and to add to the partial survey done at the time of an evaluation carried out by CPAT (Logan 2016), which investigated the location and preservation of a triangular canal that had survived in the centre of the garden until the mid-19th century.



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

Fig. 1: Location of Whitehurst Gardens

2 Background

- 2.1. The following text has been drawn from Logan (2016). The gardens lie on sloping ground facing south. A roughly rectangular area is enclosed by stone walls on the south, west and most of the east sides, and by brick ones on the north and rest of the east sides, the north wall having an outer skin of stone. In the north wall is an oak studded door (a recent replacement for a similar door which was burnt) over which is a keystone carved with the initials 'R M' (Richard Myddleton) and the date '1765'.
- 2.2. The north half of the interior is laid out in a series of terraces divided by four curving brick walls which were originally used for fruit growing. The walls survive, except part of the second wall going up the slope, only the west end of which is extant. Subsequent to their building a gateway and steps were inserted in the wall between the first and second terraces. The wall over the gateway was rebuilt and a keystone carved with the initials 'T M' (Thomas Myddleton) and the date '1651' was added. It would appear that this is not in situ and has been moved from elsewhere in the garden. A banqueting house is built into the lowest wall on the west end. This is a late 17th-century or early 18th-century square brick building with a pyramidal slate roof. The entrance is directly on to the first floor. Against the top wall is the frame of a lean-to glasshouse in poor condition. The 1905 Ordnance Survey map shows a number of glasshouses at the west end of the terraces, but this one was not then in existence. Next to it are nineteenth-century lean-to brick buildings, probably built as potting sheds and for general storage.
- 2.3. The centre of the garden is a level area, part of which is overgrown and part of which is taken up by a playground. A slight depression may indicate the presence at one time of a pond, but there is no direct evidence for this. Near the boundary on the south side of the garden is a conical, flat-topped mount, the banks of which are planted with hazel coppice. It is surmounted by a yew tree.
- 2.4. Twelve semi-detached cottages are situated on the east boundary of the walled garden. They were built in the early 20th century by the local authority, and although most of the houses are now in private ownership, a large part of the gardens is owned by Wrexham County Borough Council.
- 2.5. The garden was built by the 2nd Sir Thomas Myddleton in the middle of the 17th century, confirmed by the 'T M 1651' keystone. It was both productive and ornamental. A note in the Chirk Castle Accounts (I, Note 117, p.36) describes it as a place where Sir Thomas Myddleton could entertain his friends, as it was convenient to those travelling north and south through the village, and thus they were saved nearly two miles journey to the castle. The accounts record purchases of plants for the garden, and the building of banqueting houses. The garden was described by Thomas Dineley in *The Beaufort Progress* (1684) as being an 'Admirable Walled GARDEN of Trees Plants Flowers and Herbs of the greatest rarity as well forreigne as of Great Britain, Orrenge and Lemon Trees the Sensitive Plant & c', where Sir Richard Myddleton entertained the 1st Duke of Beaufort to a collation of 'choice fruits and wines' in a banqueting house. The main evidence for its early appearance lies in the 1735 engraving by Thomas Badeslade of 'The West Prospect of Chirk Castle' (not reproduced for copyright reasons). This shows the layout of the garden in some detail, including the curving terraces and the mount. The southern and eastern parts of the garden are shown as plantations, with rows of conifers along the west and north

boundaries and across the centre. The mount is shown with radiating rides cut through plantations on its slopes, and a spiral ride up to the top, which is planted with a single conifer. The drawing shows a building, no longer extant, in the same wall as the present banqueting house but further to the east. Another building is shown above it on the second terrace. These are probably the banqueting houses mentioned in the accounts.

- 2.6. Immediately to the east of the walled garden and directly outside the boundary wall is the Black Park, the largest of the three parks belonging to the Chirk Castle estate. It was estimated that the park was 'in Circuyt ywo myles, in length half a myle and in breadth a quart of a myle'.

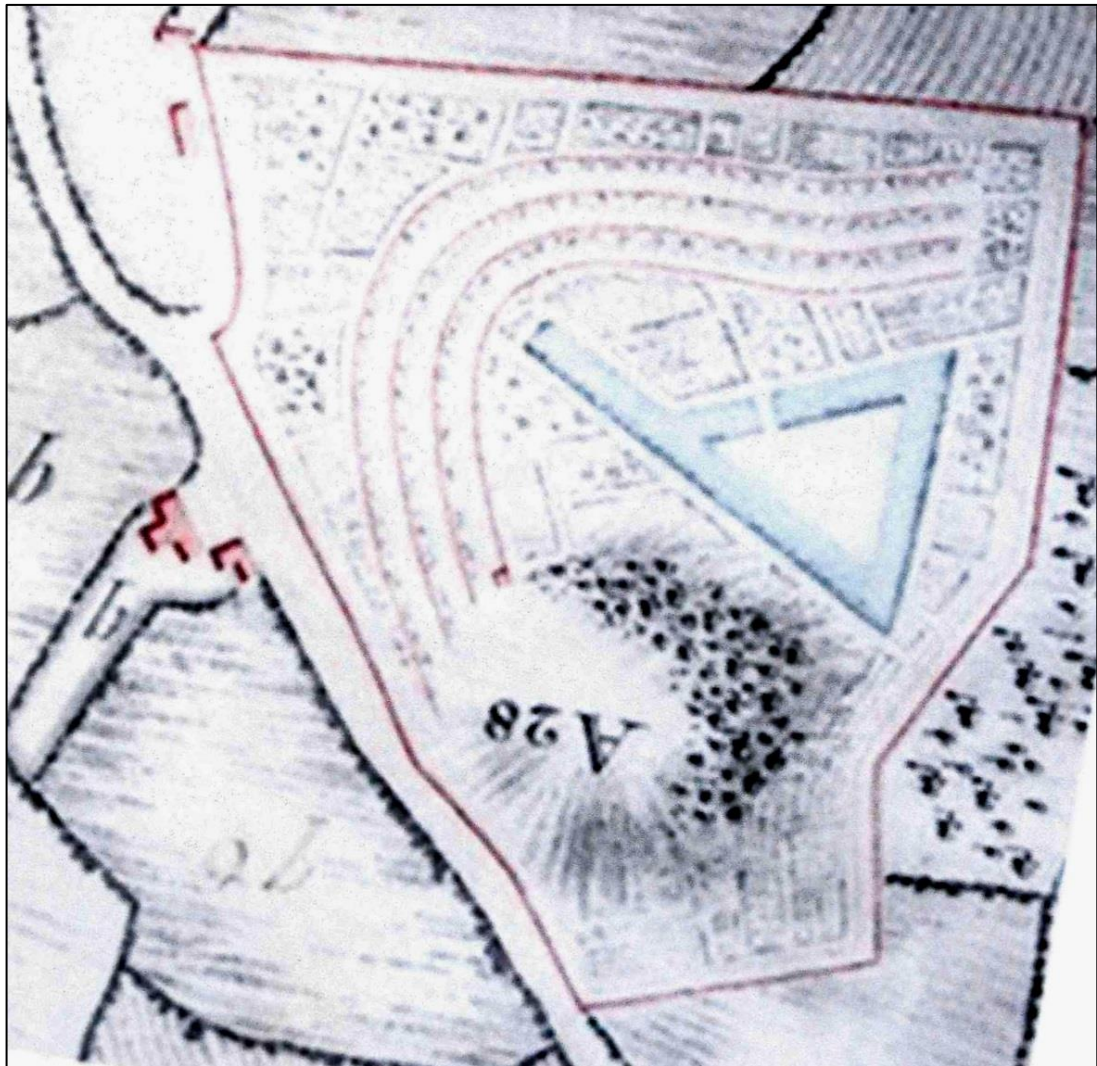


Fig. 2: Extract from a 1775 survey of Chirk Castle

- 2.7. Although the earliest known depiction is Badeslade's drawing of 1735, this shows a perspective view, rather than depicting the gardens in plan. The earliest plan showing the layout of the gardens dates from 1775 (Fig. 2) and depicts curving terraces and formal borders surrounding three sides of a triangular canal. This appears to be still in place on the 1819 Ordnance Surveyors drawing, though the map is not sufficiently detailed to make out any individual structures.

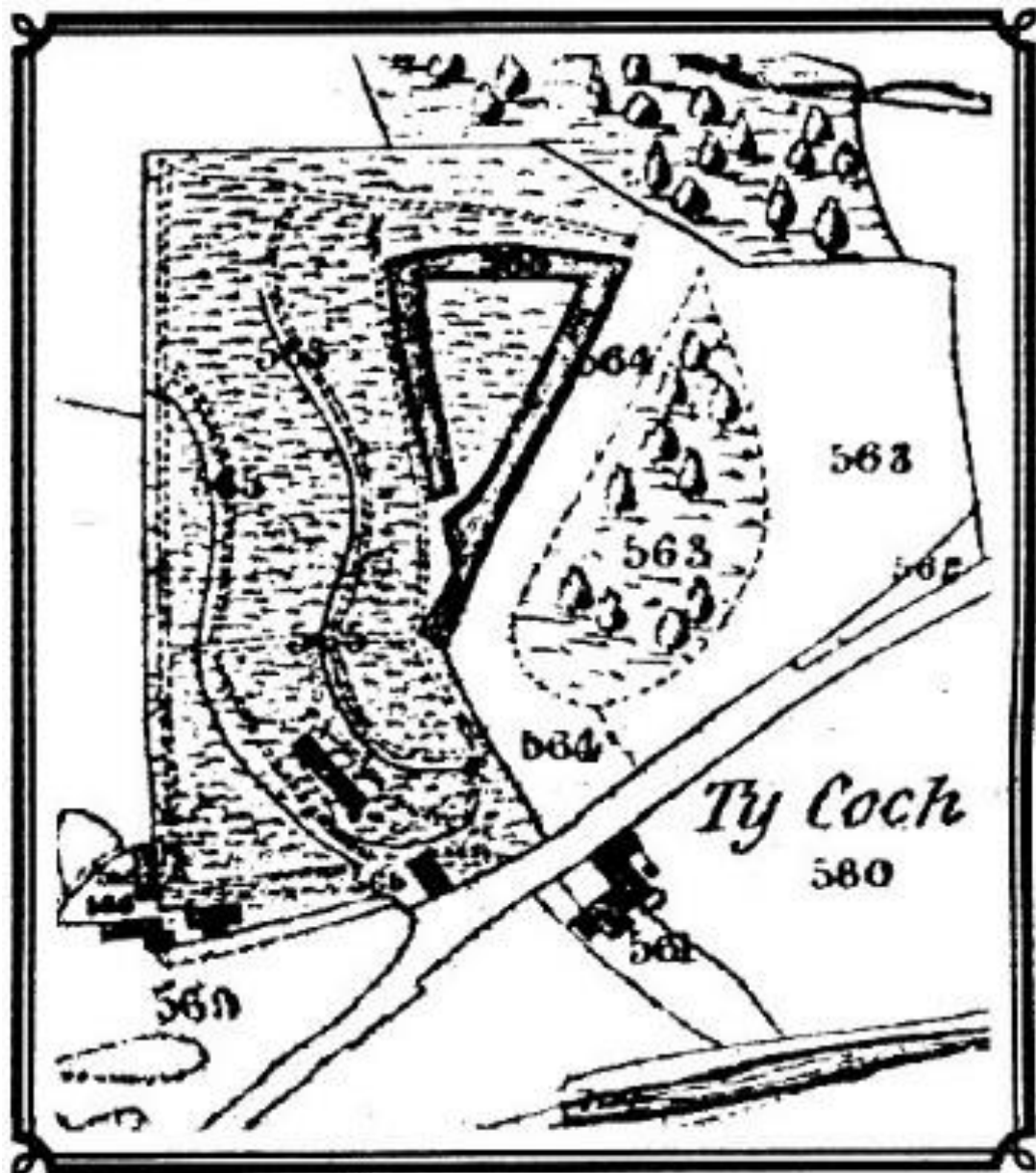


Fig. 3: Whitehurst Gardens in 1839, as depicted on the tithe survey
(north is to the left)

- 2.8. The canal survived until the mid-19th century and was depicted on the tithe survey of 1839 (Fig. 3), although by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1874 (Fig. 4) the water feature was no longer extant. Nevertheless its existence had clearly influenced the layout of the paths and planting which to some extent fossilised its outline.

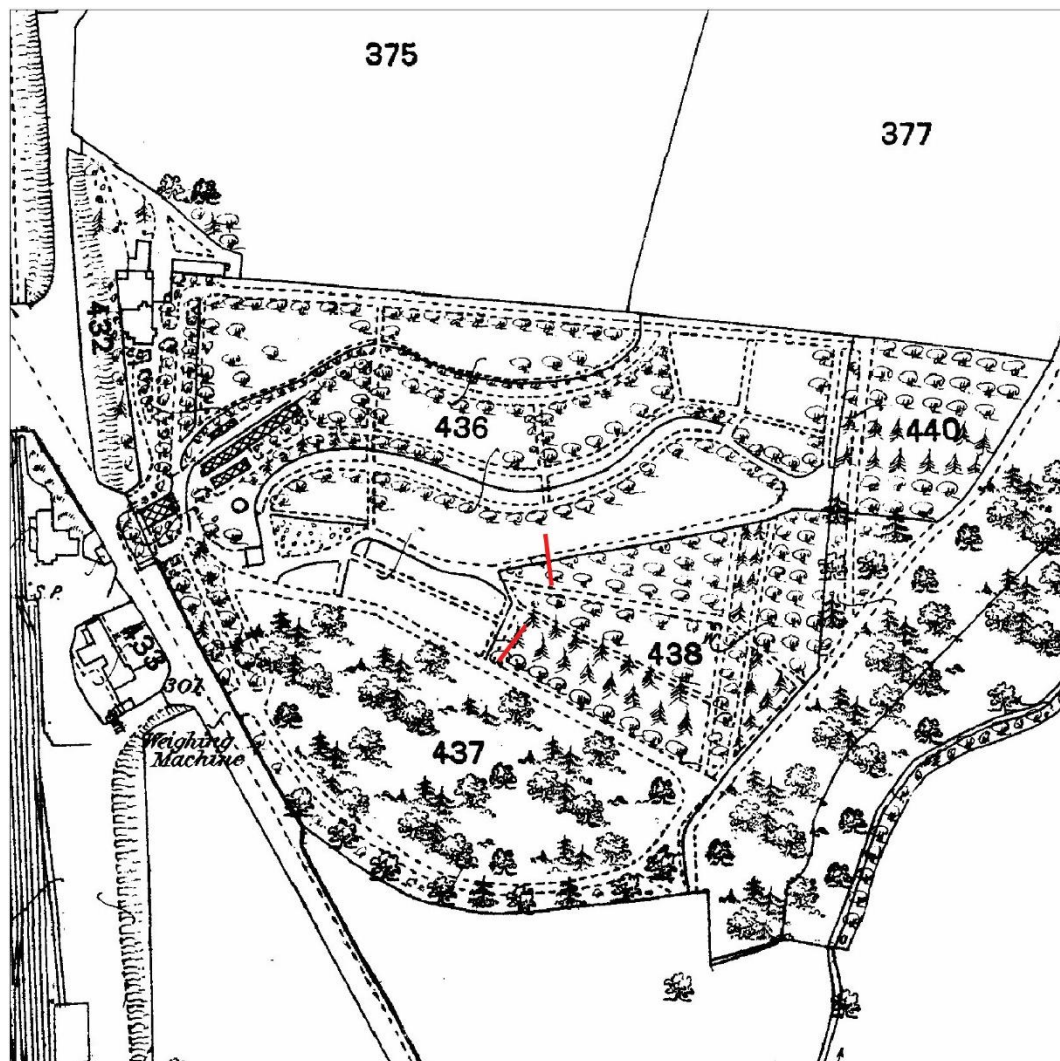
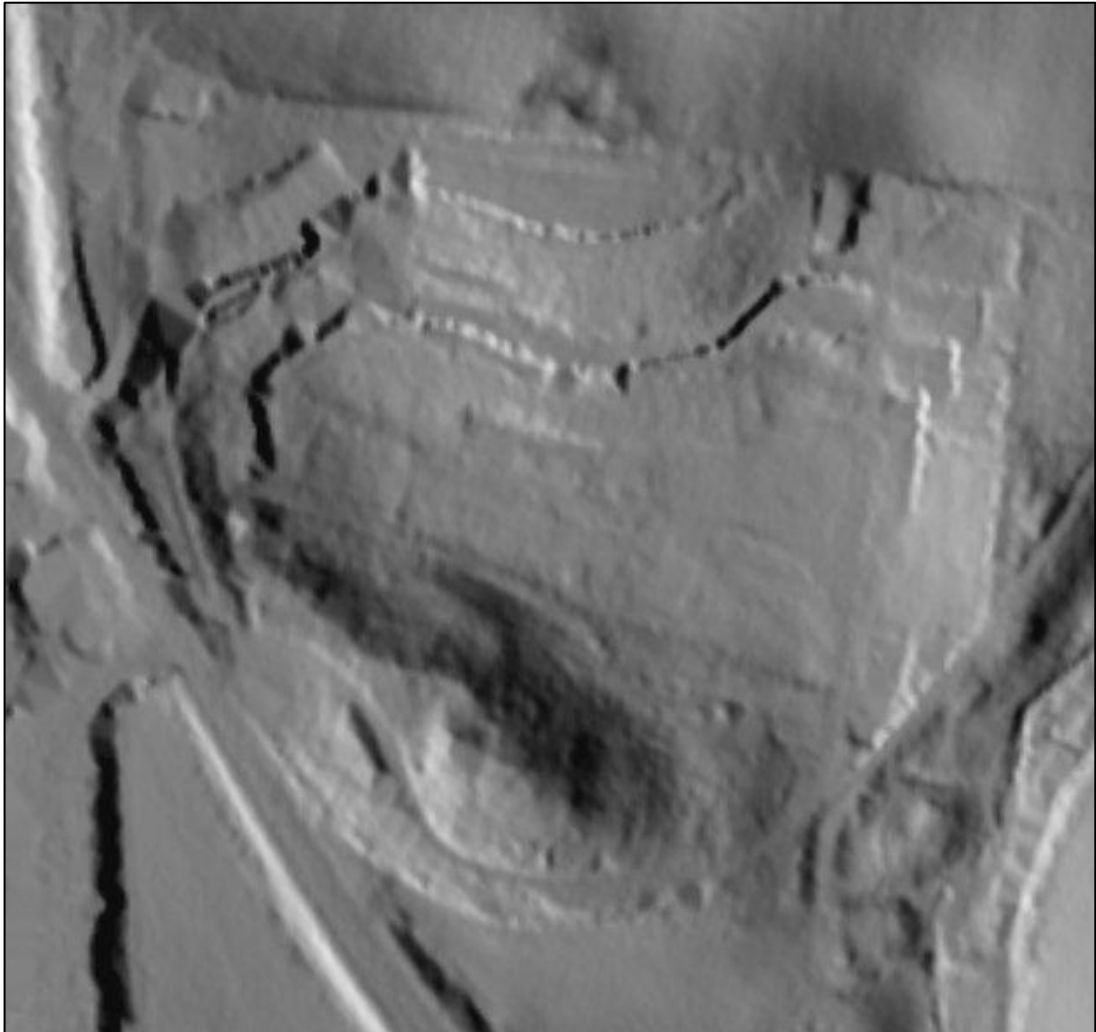


Fig. 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25'' 1st edition map of 1874 showing the position of the evaluation trenches in red

- 2.9. The topography of the gardens, and in particular the layout of the south-facing terraces, is amply illustrated by the 1m-resolution LiDAR data, which has been manipulated to produce Fig. 5. This also shows clearly the elongated shape of the viewing mound, and a flattish area between the mound and the terraces may be the remains of the infilled canal. Some of the paths shown on the 1874 Ordnance Survey map may also be identified as faint lines – although it should be noted that 20th-century installation of drains and other features will have disturbed the ground in this area; these have not been recorded by the topographic survey.
- 2.10. The evaluation trenches excavated in 2016 were targeted on the 17th-century canal and successfully identified its location, though indications were that it was relatively shallow, with gently-sloping sides. Its original form and dimensions could not be accurately determined.



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Fig. 5: Image of the gardens derived from the 1m-resolution LiDAR data.

3 Topographic Survey (see Fig. 7)

- 3.1. The survey was compiled by means of total station surveying, with relevant features mapped against a background of the main boundaries and structures within the overall outline of the gardens. The Natural Resources Wales LiDAR data (Fig. 5) has been used to provide 1m contours of the area, which show the general topography against which the detailed information from the survey can be compared.
- 3.2. Some survey had been carried out in 2016, during the excavation of the evaluation trenches, and this was utilised in the northern part of the gardens, where a levelled terrace was identified. Only part of this had been seen in 2016, and the 2018 survey showed that it extended further to the east, to some 25m long by 5m wide. Corrugated sheeting and metal poles used to define its south-east corner may denote a later effort at stabilisation of an earlier feature, but this could not be confirmed. Further to the east, a scarp slope mirroring the line of the lower of the two extant curving garden walls was recorded, at the top of which there was a pathway which appears to have been used to access the terrace, though its western end was damaged

by later activity and the link thereby cut. At the eastern end of the path, a platformed area, 11m long by 3.5m wide, could indicate the site of a small structure.

- 3.3. In the grassed amenity area lying to the west of the north/south aligned section of access road a raised linear earthwork, approximately 37m long and 4m in overall width, was identified. This displays a curve towards its west end and clearly represents the line of a former trackway, though it does not appear to match those depicted on the cartographic sources and its date is therefore uncertain. Its position and alignment within the triangular canal would seem to suggest that it was created after the canal went out of use in the middle of the 19th century.
- 3.4. Immediately to the north of the southernmost section of access road, a small hollow was recorded, measuring about 4m north/south by 3m wide, which had been cut into the slope above the road. In the lack of any corroboration it seems most likely that this was a small quarry hollow used to provide material which aided in the construction of the access road.

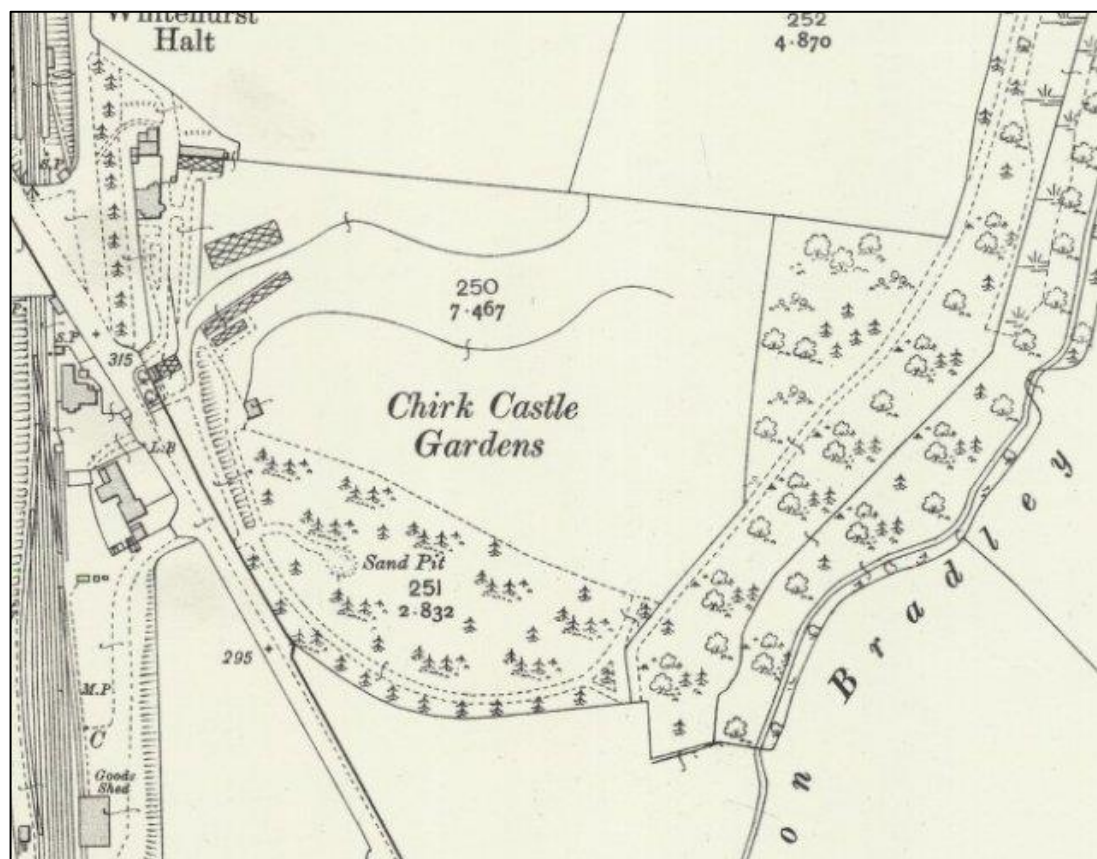


Fig. 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25" 3rd edition map of 1912

- 3.5. The most significant area that was surveyed comprised a series of rather random earthworks, noted as 'mount' on Fig. 7. Vegetation conditions in this area were difficult for survey, but it was clear that this represented a raised mound of approximately 30m north-west/south-east by 20m. However, its height could not be determined as it appeared to merge with the surrounding topography. The appearance of the mount on Badeslade's engraving implies that it was rather more regular than the earthworks as they currently appear, and this suggests that it was

deliberately constructed as a garden viewing mound. A range of waste material, such as ironworking slag, was visible in places where the mound had eroded or been damaged; this would confirm a post-medieval date for its construction.

- 3.6. The mound had evidently suffered damage after its construction. This damage is characterised by excavations which have left a series of hollows on its top and sides, as well as some spoil mounds that are no doubt contemporary (see Fig. 7). One possibility for the source of this activity is evidenced by the identification of a 'sand pit' on the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (Fig. 6); the hollows are likely to have been caused by related digging, though whether this suggests that some of the body of the mound consists of glacial sands or gravels is open to question.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1. The topographical survey has successfully recorded greater detail relating to the artificial features that survive at Whitehurst Gardens, though it is difficult to determine which, if any, of those recorded belong to the earliest phase of activity.
- 4.2. Additional information relating to two main areas was recorded, specifically the 'mount' and the area between the two sinuous walls in the northern part of the site. The former is probably a garden viewing mound, while in the latter area, evidence of terracing, perhaps for previously unknown structures, was identified.
- 4.3. It is possible that there may be other features within the area surveyed, currently masked by vegetation, that relate to the gardens. If any clearance work is undertaken in the future, this might provide an opportunity to identify and record any such remains.

5 Sources

Published sources

Dineley, T., 1684. *The Beaufort Progress*

Unpublished sources

Logan, W., 2016. *Whitehurst Gardens, Chirk: Archaeological evaluation*, CPAT report 1427.

Cartographic

1735 Thomas Badeslade's engraving of the 'West Prospect of Chirk Castle',
National Library of Wales

1819 Ordnance Surveyors Drawing No 316

1839 Tithe Survey for Chirk Parish

1874 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map, Denbighshire 40.2

1912 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 25" map, Denbighshire 40.2

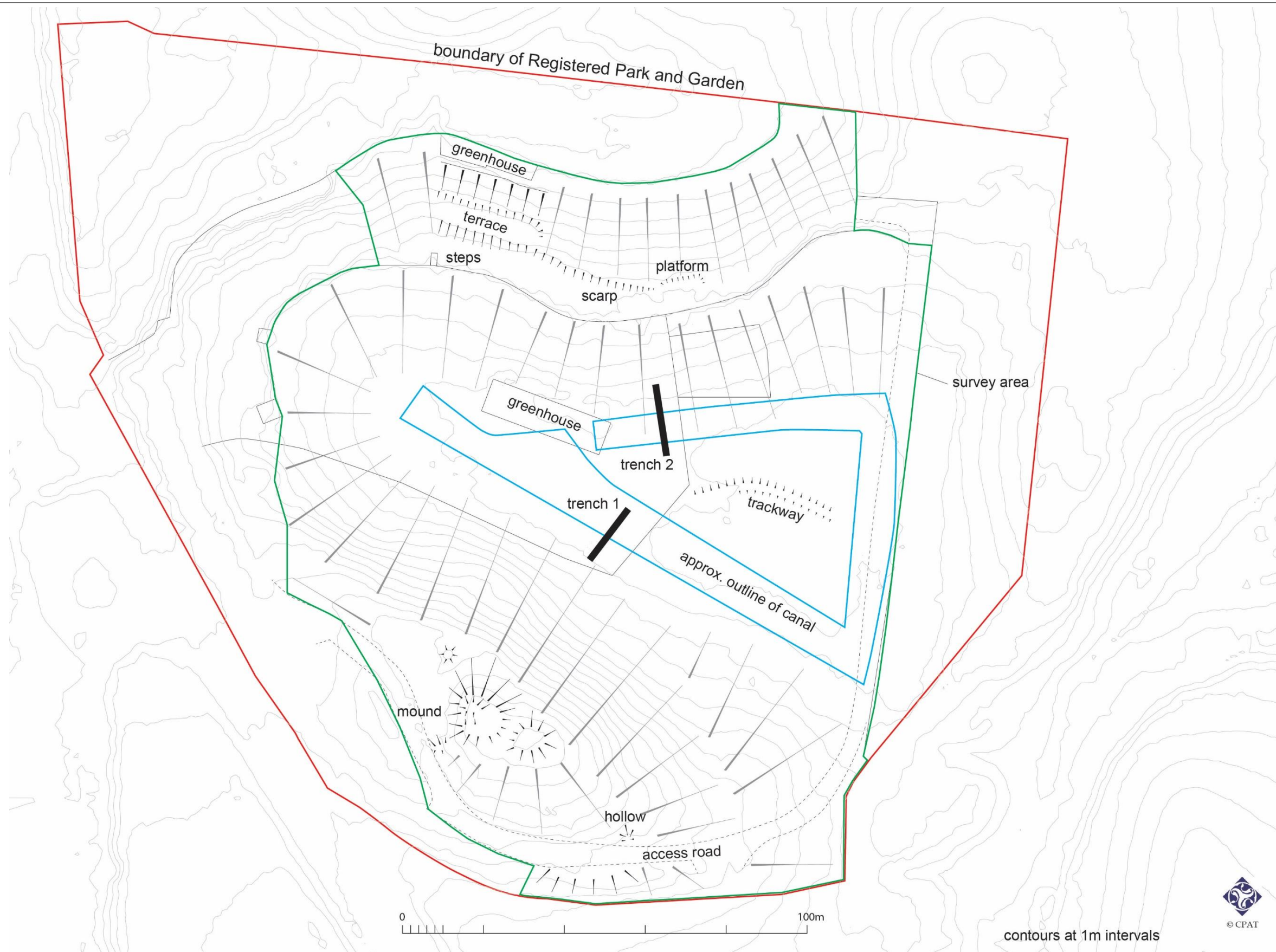
6 Archive deposition Statement

- 6.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the ClfA *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives guidance* (2014). The archive is entirely digital and will be deposited jointly with the Historic Environment Record, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the National Monuments Record (RCAHMW).

Archive summary

CPAT Event PRN: 140262

Digital survey drawing: Whitehurst18.pts (Penmap); whitehurst18.dxf



Based on 1m resolution LiDAR digital terrain model. Contains Natural Resources Wales information © Natural Resources Wales and database right

Fig. 7: Topographic survey results (black hachures are surveyed features, grey hachures show the general topography)