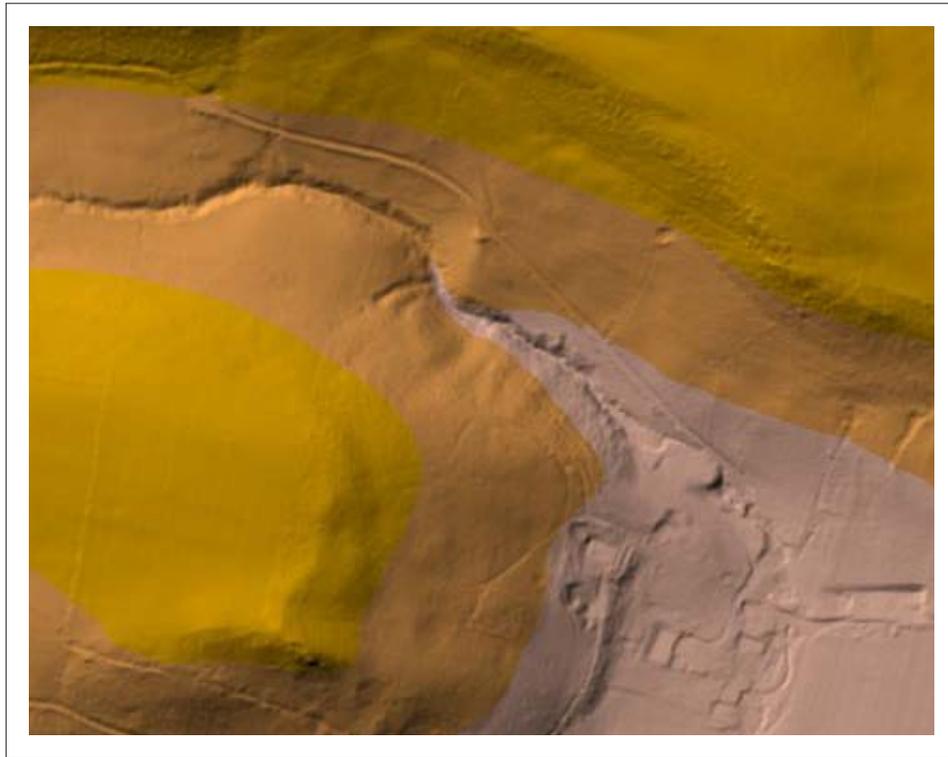


Archaeology Wales

1402 Battle of Pilleth Monaughty, Powys

Battlefield Survey



By
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Report No. 1209

Prepared for:



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Archaeology Wales

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Prepared For: The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

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Crynodeb Anhechnegol

Mae'r adroddiad yma, ar gyfer Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru (CBHC), yn crynhoi a chyflwyno canlyniadau'r drydedd arolwg ar faes brwydr dybiedig Pilleth, Bryn Glas, ger Mynachdy, Powys. Y mae'r astudiaeth yn rhan o ymchwiliad mwy eang sy'n hel tystiolaeth ar gyfer Cofrestr o Feysydd Brwydrau Cymru.

Roedd y drydedd arolwg yma yn adeiladu ar waith 2012 a 2013 ac yn cynnwys arolwg LiDAR, mwy o arolygon dategelyddion metel a chrwydro Graig Hill a Black Hill i'r gogledd o Fryn Glas.

Ni wnaeth y gwaith LiDAR na chrwydro'r ardal ddod o hyd i unrhyw dystiolaeth yn gysylltiedig a'r frwydr er bod pedol ceffyl canol oesol, tebyg i'r darnau o 2012 a 2013, wedi ei ddarganfod fel rhan o'r arolwg datgelydd metel.

Non-Technical Summary

This report draws upon the results gained by a third phase of survey work undertaken at the reputed site of the 1402 Battle of Pilleth at Bryn Glas, Pilleth, near Monaughty, Powys, for The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. 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.

The third phase, building on work undertaken in 2012 and 2013, comprised Lidar analysis, a site walkover, a further metal detector survey and fieldwalking, on Graig Hill and Black Hill to the north of the previously surveyed Bryn Glas.

Lidar analysis, the site walkover and the fieldwalking produced no evidence of finds or features associated with the 1402 battle. The metal detector survey revealed only a single find of likely contemporary date, an iron horseshoe fragment similar to those located in both 2012 and 2013.

Based on the results of this phase of work, combined with those undertaken in 2012 and 2013, the size of the area possibly associated with the 1402 battle now includes the hillslope of Bryn Glas, above St Mary's church, and, very tentatively, the field east of Pilleth Court and Graig Hill.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In February and March 2014 Archaeology Wales carried out a series of archaeological investigations around Black Hill and Graig Hill, Pilleth, Powys, NGR SO 25187 69033 (Fig 1). Lidar analysis, a site walkover, metal detector surveys and a fieldwalking exercise were undertaken.
- 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.
- 1.1.3 The investigations formed a third phase of research at the site of the 1402 battle of Pilleth. The previous phases of work, undertaken in 2012 and 2013, comprised Lidar analysis, site walkovers, fieldwalking, a geophysical survey, test pitting and metal detector surveys, concentrated on the slope of Bryn Glas above St Mary’s church as well as in the valley bottom to the south of the B4356. Based on the dateable finds recovered, and their distribution, it was tentatively concluded that the area of the battle included the slope of Bryn Glas hill, above St Mary’s church (Smith 2012).
- 1.1.4 The third phase of work was intended to further define the areas likely to have formed part of the 1402 battle site. The work targeted Black Hill and Graig Hill, to the north of the supposed site.

2 Aims & Objectives

2.1 Outline Requirements

- 2.1.1 The objective of the work 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 2014 Phase of Work

2.2.1 The main aim of the third phase of work was to further define those areas around Pilleth potentially associated with the 1402 battle, notably Black Hill and Graig Hill to the north.

2.2.2 This was to be achieved by:

- Analysis of Lidar data
- A site walkover, encompassing all of the assessment area
- Undertaking further metal detector surveys, along with fieldwalking wherever possible, on Black Hill & Graig Hill

2.3 Geology and topography

2.3.1 The underlying solid geology of the Pilleth area is primarily made up of the undifferentiated Ludlow Rocks series, composed of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone deposits (British Geological Survey, 2001).

2.3.2 The battle site of Pilleth occupies two distinct soil zones. The upper slopes consist of the typical brown earths of the 541j DENBIGH 1 series, consisting of well drained fine loamy or silty soils overlying Palaeozoic slaty mudstone and siltstone.

2.3.3 Within the lower-lying section of the site (the valley floor of the Upper Lugg), the predominant soil type consists of the typical alluvial gley soils of the 811b CONWAY series, comprising deep stone-less fine silty and clayey soils variably affected by seasonal groundwater flooding.

2.3.4 Graig Hill is a long, flat topped, ridge aligned roughly north-west to south-east. It is approximately 1.4km long by 0.5km wide and rises to 366m above OD at its highest point. Black Hill measures approximately 1km in diameter and adjoins to the north-west end of Graig Hill. Black Hill rises to 404m above OD.

2.3.5 Both hills are divided up into pasture fields though the eastern slope of Graig Hill is also used to grow mangolds.

2.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.4.1 A complete description of the Battle of Pilleth is contained in the pilot study undertaken by Border Archaeology (2009). The main events, however, can be summarised as follows:

2.4.2 The battle of Pilleth should be viewed against the backdrop of the intensification of Owain Glyndwr's rebellion during the years 1401-2 and the failure of the English Crown (Henry IV) and the Marcher lords to deal effectively with the revolt. At some point during the summer of 1401, Glyndwr's forces appear to have inflicted a defeat on a sizeable English force, mustered from Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, at Hyddgen to the north of Plynlimon. It appears that this success heralded a significant broadening

and intensification of the revolt; Glyndwr subsequently appears to have mounted a substantial raid into Radnorshire, storming the castle at New Radnor and massacring the garrison. This was followed by attacks on the Marcher strongholds of Montgomery and Welshpool in the autumn, while the important royal castles of Aberystwyth and Harlech were placed under siege at about the same time.

- 2.4.3 Following attacks on the lordships of Ruthin and Dyffryn in Clwyd during April 1402, Glyndwr's attention appears to have turned once again to Radnorshire, which was dominated by the extensive estates of the Mortimer family. At this time, during the minority of Edmund, son of the late Roger Mortimer, fourth earl of March (d.1398), the estates were in the possession of the Crown. At the time of Glyndwr's attack, in June 1402, there appears to have been an absence of leadership among the gentry and nobility of the central Marches. This is reflected in the fact that responsibility for countering the Welsh attack was given (possibly in haste) to the late earl of March's younger brother, Edmund Mortimer. Edmund held a fairly sizeable estate in Herefordshire and Shropshire, but up to this point is not known as a political or military heavyweight who appears to have been a relative non-entity up to this point.
- 2.4.4 The most detailed contemporary account is that contained in the continuation of the *Vita Ricardi Secundi*, compiled by a monk of Evesham in or shortly after 1402. The author of the *Vita* states that Edmund Mortimer, 'at that time present in the town of Ludlow, received news that the said Owain Glyndwr had come down from the Welsh mountains with a small force and that he was upon a mountain next to Pilleth, not far from the town of Ludlow. Edmund therefore hastily sent for his men and tenants of Maelienydd 'that they should not fail to come to his aid in this hard necessity'.
- 2.4.5 The events of the battle itself are described in several contemporary and near-contemporary chronicle sources, which differ somewhat in their content and level of detail, although appear to agree broadly on the principal details of the engagement and its aftermath. Probably the most informative account, given in the continuation of the *Vita Ricardi Secundi*, compiled at Evesham Abbey either in or shortly after 1402, states that 'when they (Mortimer's men and the tenants of Maelienydd) came to him (Mortimer), with them and many others in great strength he boldly ascended the hill'. From this account, it appears that Mortimer gathered his forces as he marched from Ludlow toward Glyndwr's position, meeting the contingent from Maelienydd somewhere close to Pilleth (possibly, as Hodges suggests, at nearby Whitton to the north of the River Lugg) before advancing on Glyndwr's forces, which are explicitly stated as occupying a hilltop position.
- 2.4.6 Significantly, two other contemporary or near-contemporary accounts, which otherwise provide little detail as to the course of the engagement, corroborate the statement in the *Vita* that the battle took place on a hill. Of particular importance is the account given in the Mortimer family chronicle, which was compiled at Wigmore Abbey, only 9 miles due E from Pilleth and therefore in a good position to receive reliable information concerning the battle. This explicitly states that the battle took place 'on a mountain called Bryn Glas within Maelienydd, close to Knighton'. The account contained in a prose version of the English *Brut*, probably compiled in about 1437, and including interpolations by someone who clearly had a knowledge of Welsh affairs and

particularly the Glyndwr revolt, states that ‘this battle was in the Blak Hill beside Pymaren’.

- 2.4.7 The account of the battle in the *Vita Ricardi* then relates how ‘having come together with great impetus, the said Welshmen of Maelienydd, not of the tribe of Judah, but born to be similar traitors, traitorously turned their faces and weapons against their own lord’. It would appear from this passage that the battle commenced with Mortimer advancing with the bulk of his army against Glyndwr’s position, presumably intending to overwhelm the Welsh by sheer force of numbers, but in the midst of battle, the contingent of troops from Maelienydd suddenly defected to Glyndwr’s side, which turned the tide of the battle.
- 2.4.8 The *Vita* further describes how ‘ill fortune therefore befell our men, the Lord Edmund was captured immediately and many others with him. Then there came on Owain’s part a certain Welshman named Rees a Gytch, who was harsher than the others, he either killed, mutilated or captured all who resisted him’. Following an account of the casualties suffered by the English during the battle (giving the relatively small estimate of 200 dead), the chronicler provides a remarkably vivid description of the carnage of the battlefield, stating that ‘the corpses were left lying under the horses hooves, weltering in their own blood, as burial was forbidden for a long time afterwards’.
- 2.4.9 It is difficult to establish the respective size of the English and Welsh armies at Pilleth based on the available documentary evidence. The author of the *Vita Ricardi Secundi* described Glyndwr as having come down from the Welsh mountains with a small force (*cum paucis*). Thomas Walsingham, in his *Annales Henrici Quarti*, describes Glyndwr’s force as a horde or rabble (*turba*) of Welshmen, which might imply a large number of troops, although in the *Historia Anglicana* he uses the more non-committal term of ‘*comitiva*’, denoting a band or company.
- 2.4.10 The size and composition of Edmund Mortimer’s army is similarly difficult to establish, however the chronicle sources appear generally to agree that it was a substantial force. The author of the *Vita Ricardi* states that Mortimer ‘sent for his men and tenants of Maelienydd’, suggesting that the bulk of Mortimer’s force consisted of two distinct elements, his own household retainers and the tenants.

3 Methodology

3.1 Lidar Analysis

- 3.1.1 Lidar data, at a resolution of 2m, was purchased for analysis from Geomatics Ltd. Both digital shadow and terrain models were analysed for features likely to relate to the battle.

3.2 Site Walkover

- 3.2.1 A site walkover, encompassing all of the purported battle site and its surroundings, was undertaken on 30th January 2014 (Fig 2).

3.2.2 All areas were photographed using high resolution (14MP) digital photography.

3.3 Metal Detector Survey

3.3.1 A detailed metal detector survey was undertaken by Chris E Smith, local volunteers, and volunteers from metal detecting clubs. Areas subject to survey are shown on figures 5-7.

3.3.2 All areas surveyed were divided into transects of equal width and marked with canes to ensure coverage. Each individual transect was assigned to a metal detectorist who would scan the area twice, once going up the field and again on the return.

3.3.3 All metal detectors were set to 'All Metal' mode so as to include responses from ferrous and non-ferrous objects.

3.3.4 When a find was located it was placed *in situ* within a finds bag with a marker flag placed next to it. A waterproof label was placed in the bag with the depth of the find marked on it in indelible ink. Subsequently, the finds were collected by the supervising archaeologist. Each find was labelled with an individual find number and each numbered findspot was located using a Topcon GTS 725 total station.

3.3.5 The grid coordinates from each findspot were entered into an excel spreadsheet detailing all the finds, their descriptions, dates and locations. The total station survey was overlaid onto a map to show the distribution of the finds across each assessment area.

3.3.6 Finds which were clearly identifiable in the field as being of 20th – 21st century date (agricultural/machinery/litter) were not retained to form part of the project archive. These were removed from site and discarded away from the survey area.

3.4 Fieldwalking

3.4.1 Areas subject to fieldwalking (Figs 2&4) had individual corridors marked out across them using bamboo canes.

3.4.2 When a find was located it was placed *in situ* within a finds bag with a marker flag placed next to it. Subsequently, the finds were collected by the supervising archaeologist. Each find was labelled with an individual find number and each numbered findspot was located using a Topcon GTS 725 total station.

3.4.3 All works were undertaken in accordance current Health and Safety legislation.

4 Lidar Analysis Results

4.1 Digital Terrain Model

4.1.1 The Lidar data, at 2m resolution, shows the assessment area in good detail (Fig 3).

- 4.1.2 Whilst removed field boundaries are noted on the east-facing slope of Graig Hill, no features readily identifiable as associated with the 1402 battle were observed.

5 Site Walkover Results

5.1 Conditions

- 5.1.1 The site walkover was undertaken on an overcast, grey and misty day, after periods of very heavy rainfall. Ground conditions were very wet underfoot and treacherous on the hill slopes.

5.2 Walkover (Plates 1-12)

- 5.2.1 Figure 2 shows the area covered by the walkover. All areas were accessible despite the poor ground conditions
- 5.2.2 No features evidently associated with the battle were located by the walkover. However, it was noted that the eastern slope of Graig Hill is much wider, and less steep, than the eastern slope of Bryn Glas. This means Graig Hill would have been significantly less defensible than Bryn Glas.

6 Fieldwalking Results

6.1 Ground and weather conditions

- 6.1.1 The fieldwalking was undertaken in wet and cold conditions. Ground conditions were poor.

6.2 Fieldwalking Area & Constraints

- 6.2.1 The only field within the assessment area suitable for fieldwalking was located on the eastern slope of Graig Hill, to the south of a rough access track (Figs 2&4).
- 6.2.2 The field was in use for growing mangolds as food for sheep. The furrows between lines of crops were scanned for finds quite easily.

6.3 Results

- 6.3.1 The fieldwalking exercise recovered no finds other than evidently modern debris: ceramic building material, land drain fragments, modern pottery, glass, nails & wire.
- 6.3.2 None of the finds located during the fieldwalking were retained.

7 Metal Detector Survey Results

7.1 Ground and weather conditions

- 7.1.1 The metal detector survey was undertaken after a period of record rainfall. The ground was thus very wet in places.
- 7.1.2 Extreme wind and snow forced the abandonment of the original metal detector surveys, resulting in rescheduling.

7.2 Survey Areas

- 7.2.1 Survey areas for the 2014 phase of work were spread across the eastern slope of Graig Hill, the summit of the eastern slope, areas on the hill's flat top and areas on Black Hill (Figs 2 & 5-6).

7.3 Finds

- 7.3.1 Despite the large areas subject to metal detector survey, only a small number of finds, 19, were recovered. Large areas of the survey returned no finds at all, not even modern material. The full finds catalogue, including find locations, is presented in Appendix 3.
- 7.3.2 Of the 19 finds recovered, only one object is likely to be contemporary with the 1402 battle. This is an iron horseshoe fragment (Plate 13).
- 7.3.3 The horseshoe, whilst differing slightly in appearance from those found on Bryn Glas during the 2012 phase of work (Smith 2012), is still of the same type, a Type 4 horseshoe as classified by Clark (1995). This shape of horseshoe is typically associated with use between 1400 & 1450.

8 Fieldwork Summaries

8.1 Site Walkover

- 8.1.1 Whilst the site walkover revealed no landscape features evidently associated with the 1402 battle, it was noted that the summit of Bryn Glas is more defensible for a smaller, mobile army, such as Glyndwr's than Graig Hill or Black Hill.
- 8.1.2 Furthermore, as the Graig Hill and Black Hill areas are considerably larger than the summit of Bryn Glas, a much larger army would have been required to make them viable defensive positions.
- 8.1.3 Similarly, as the eastern approach up Bryn Glas is narrower than that of Graig Hill, this would serve to channel an opposing force into a smaller area, thus reducing its fighting capability.

8.2 Fieldwalking

8.2.1 The fieldwalking exercise produced no finds other than modern material.

8.3 Metal Detecting Surveys

8.3.1 The metal detecting surveys, though covering a large area, produced only a very small finds assemblage, from which only a single item is likely to be contemporary with the 1402 battle.

8.3.2 The single iron horseshoe fragment is from a later Type 4 medieval horseshoe, typically associated with a 1400-1450 date range (Clark, 1995).

9 Discussion and Interpretation

9.1 Reliability of field investigation

9.1.1 The initial field investigation was hampered by poor weather and bad ground conditions. This resulted in the abandonment and subsequent rescheduling of the metal detector survey.

9.1.2 Despite these problems, both the site walkover survey and the metal detecting survey were completed as planned.

9.2 Overall interpretation & Evidence for the Battle

9.2.1 Based on the results of the recent surveys, none of the areas investigated can be definitively linked to the 1402 battle.

9.2.2 The finds assemblage is very small, and only one of the items recovered, an iron horseshoe fragment, is potentially contemporary with the 1402 battle.

9.2.3 It is noteworthy that similar horseshoes, also with a potential to be contemporary with the 1402 battle, were located at the top of Bryn Glas in 2012 and in the field to the east of Pilleth court in 2013.

9.3 Conclusions

9.3.1 The lack of finds from the fieldwalking and the metal detector surveys is indicative of an absence of identifiable human activity across the Graig and Black Hill areas, rather than evidence that such activity didn't take place.

9.3.2 Whilst the iron horseshoe fragment recovered from the flat top of Graig Hill might be contemporary with the battle, it could still represent a chance loss that had nothing to do with the battle. It is worth noting that a post-medieval and a modern horseshoe were recovered from the same area.

9.3.3 Historical accounts of the battle (Border Archaeology, 2009) focus predominantly on Bryn Glas as the site of the main conflict, and the find of a single horseshoe on Graig Hill should not be taken as evidence to suggest this was not the case.

9.3.4 As the town of Pilleth was a medieval settlement, it is entirely possible that all the horseshoes recovered from Bryn Glas, Pilleth Court and Graig Hill during the 2012, 2013 and 2014 surveys represent the chance losses of local inhabitants.

9.3.5 The map presented in figure 7 defines the area that can be linked, albeit very tentatively, with the 1402 battle, based on the evidence of the 2012, 2013 and 2014 surveys.

9.4 Recommendations for further investigations

9.4.1 Given the amount of fieldwork which has now taken place at and around the site of the battlefield, including earlier works by Walters (Pers comm) and Frost (2003), with very little in the way of positive results, it is difficult to justify further recommendations for future phases of investigative work.

10 Acknowledgements

10.1.1 Thanks are due to the landowners of the assessment areas for allowing us onto their land and to Louise Barker of the Commission for her help in organising the project. Special thanks are reserved to the local volunteers and members of the metal detecting clubs who gave up their own free time in very cold and difficult conditions.

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APPENDIX I: Figures

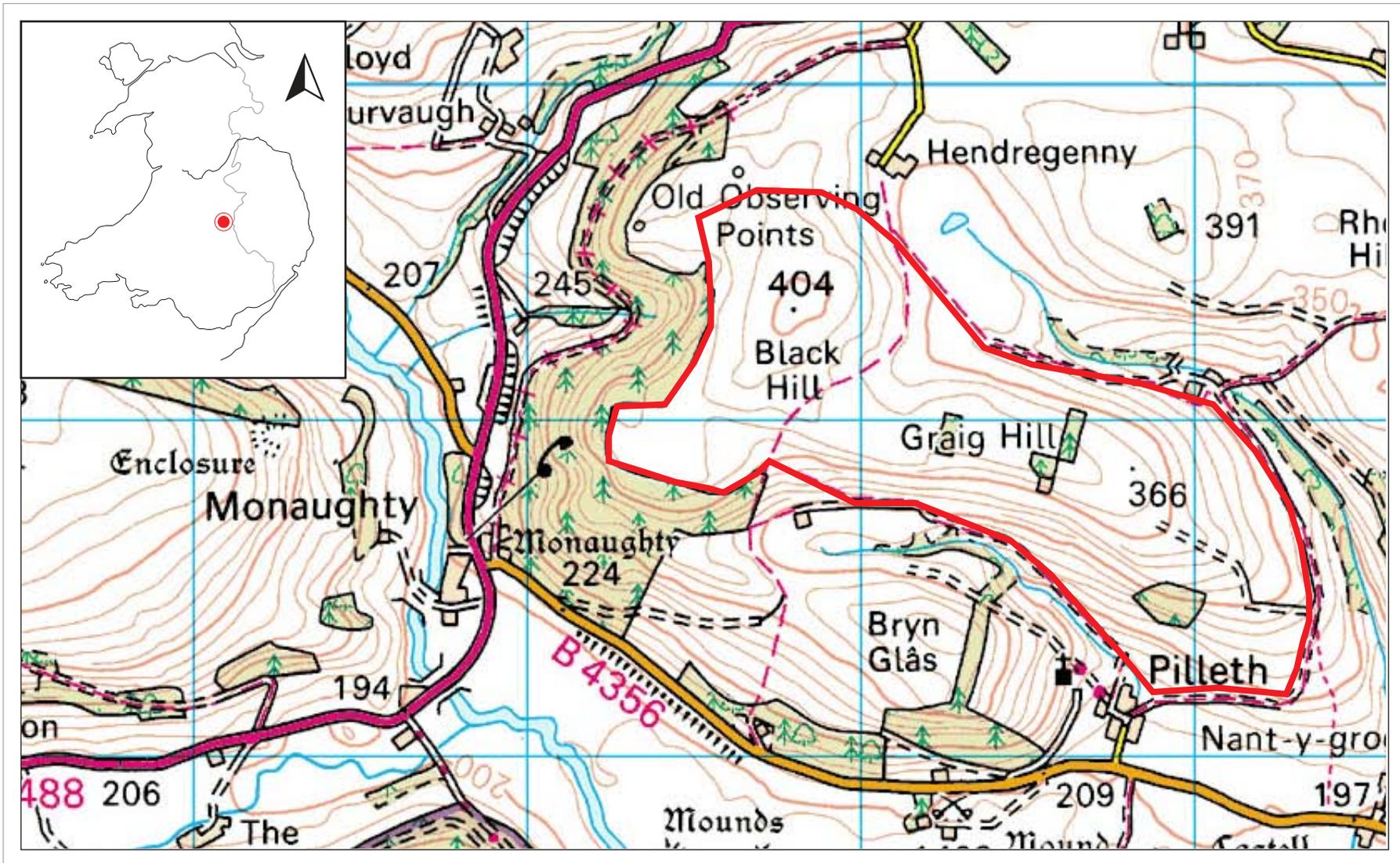


Fig 01: Map showing general location of assessment area

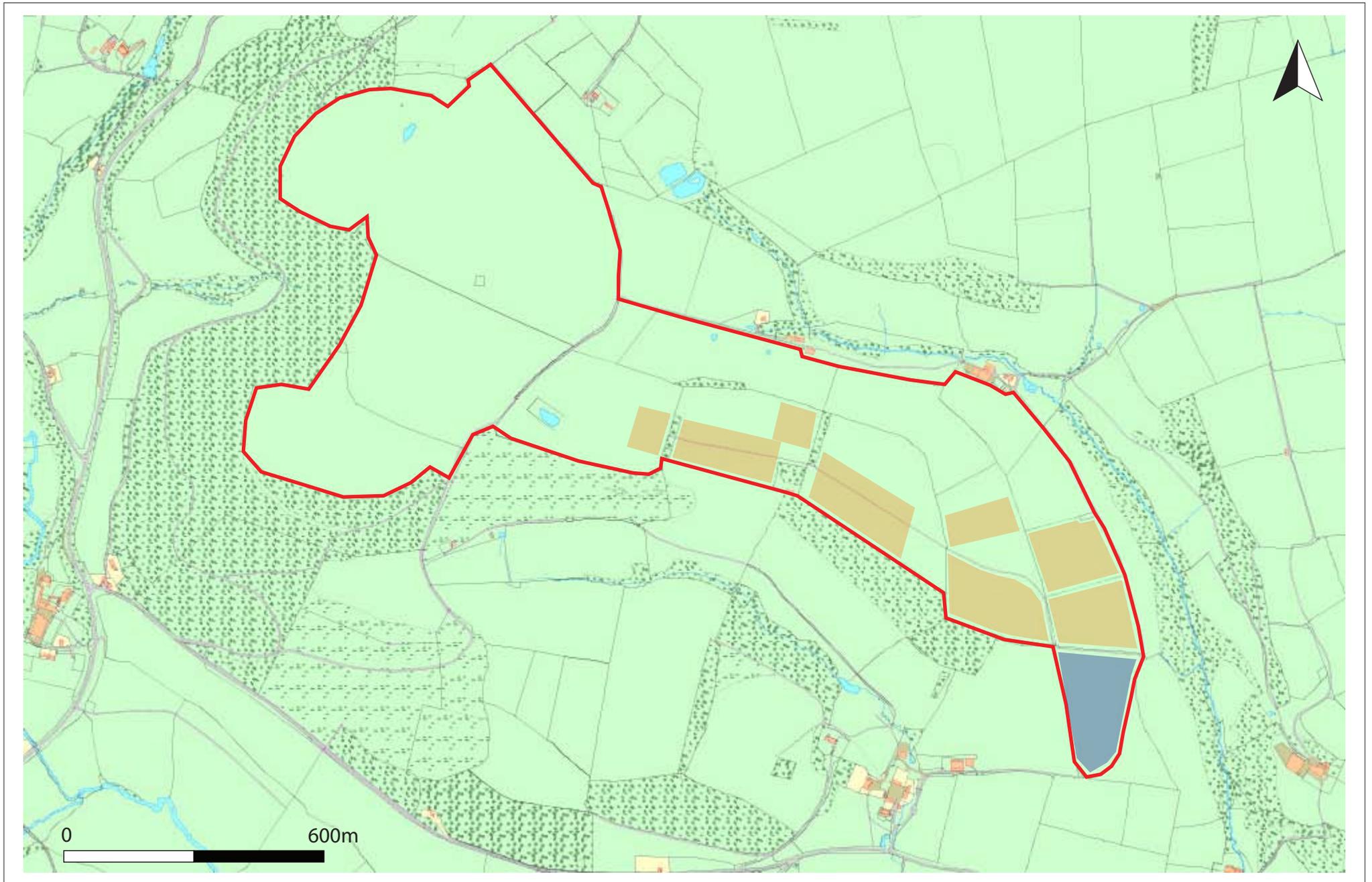


Fig 2: Plan showing area covered by site walkover (red boundary), fieldwalking area (blue) and metal detector survey areas (orange)

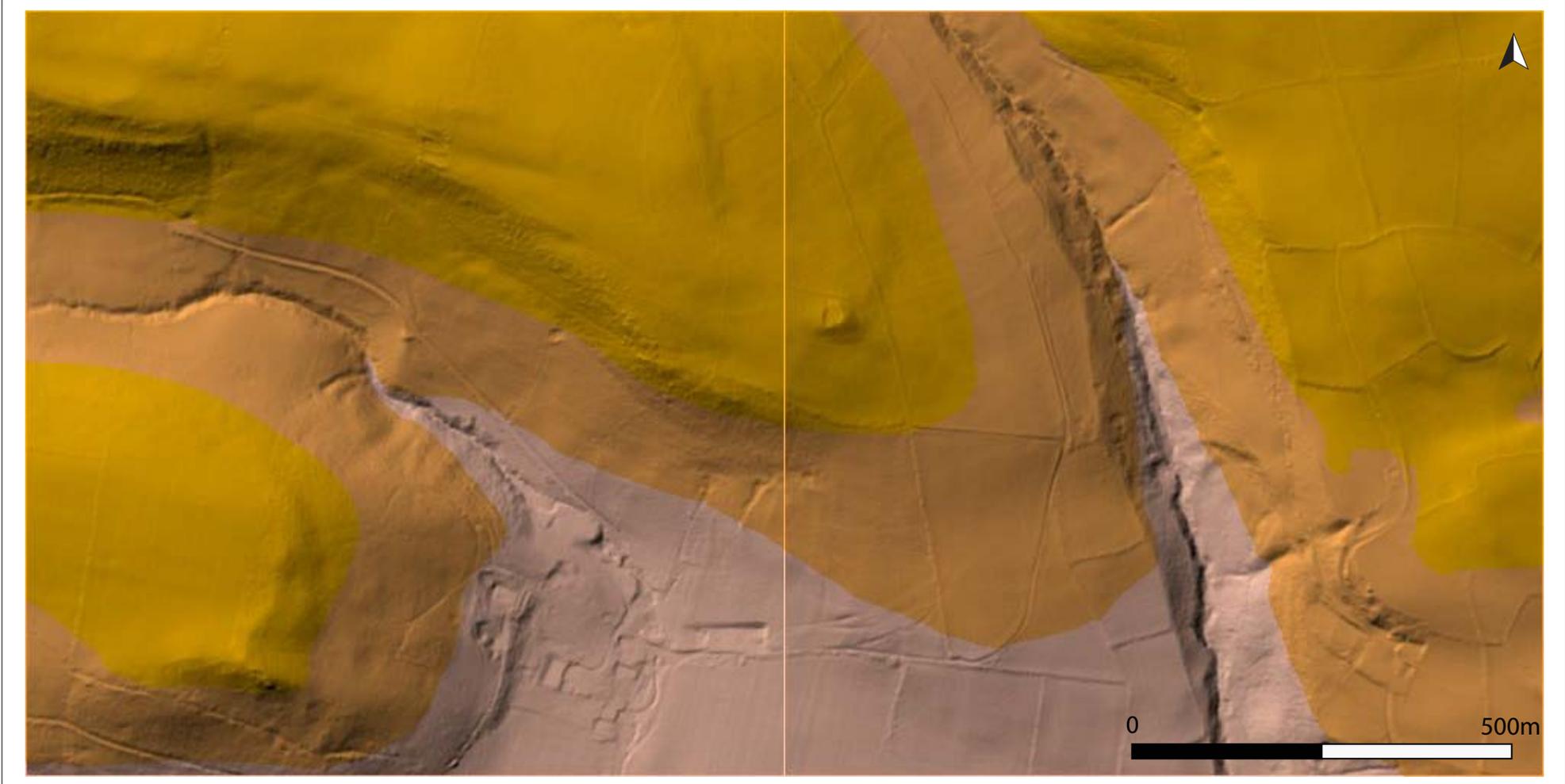


Fig 3: Lidar digital terrain model showing assessment area at Pilleth



Fig 4: Plan showing location of field subject to fieldwalking exercise

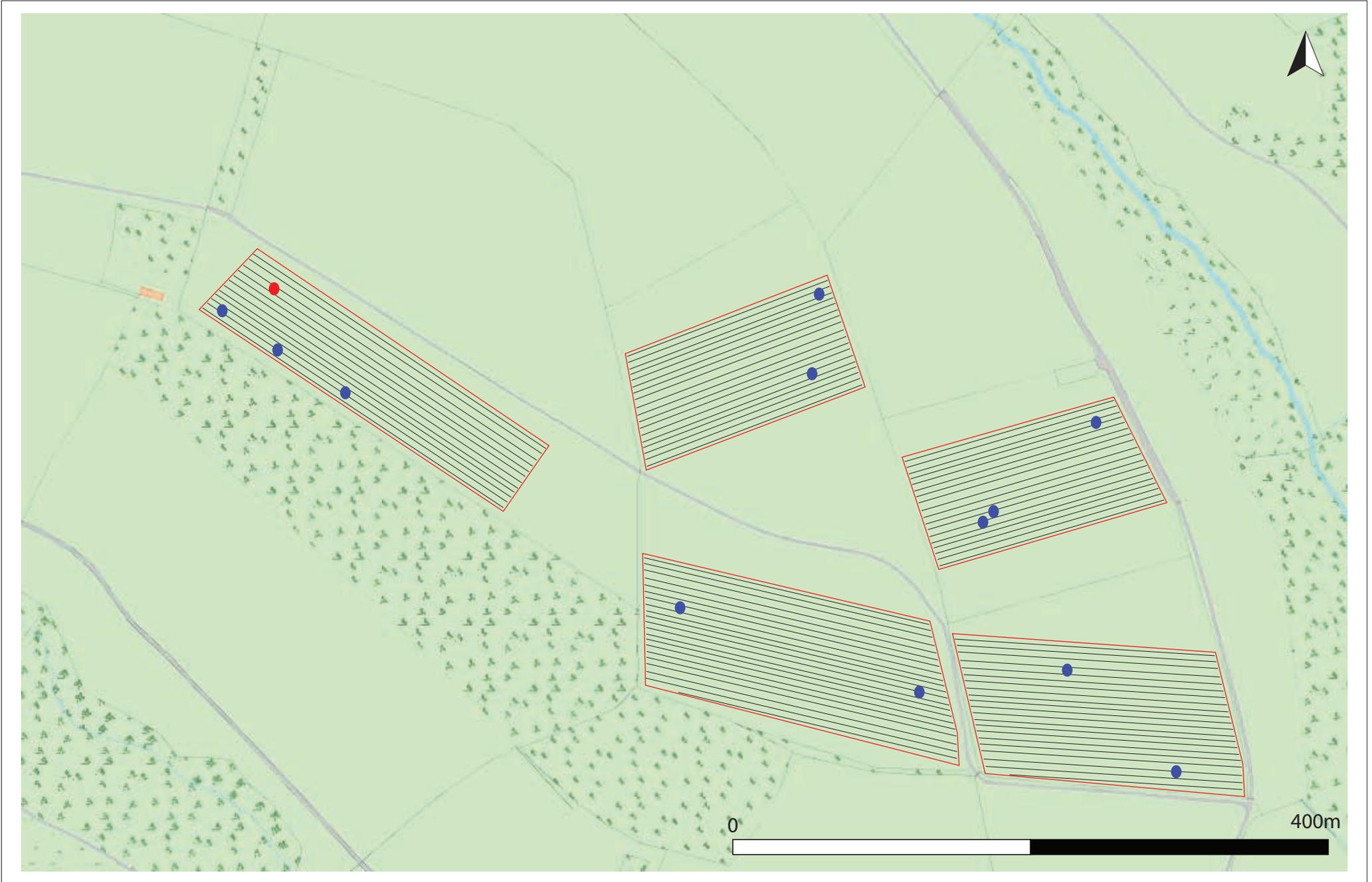


Fig 5: Plan showing location of survey areas, traverses and finds



Fig 6: Plan showing location of survey areas, traverses and finds

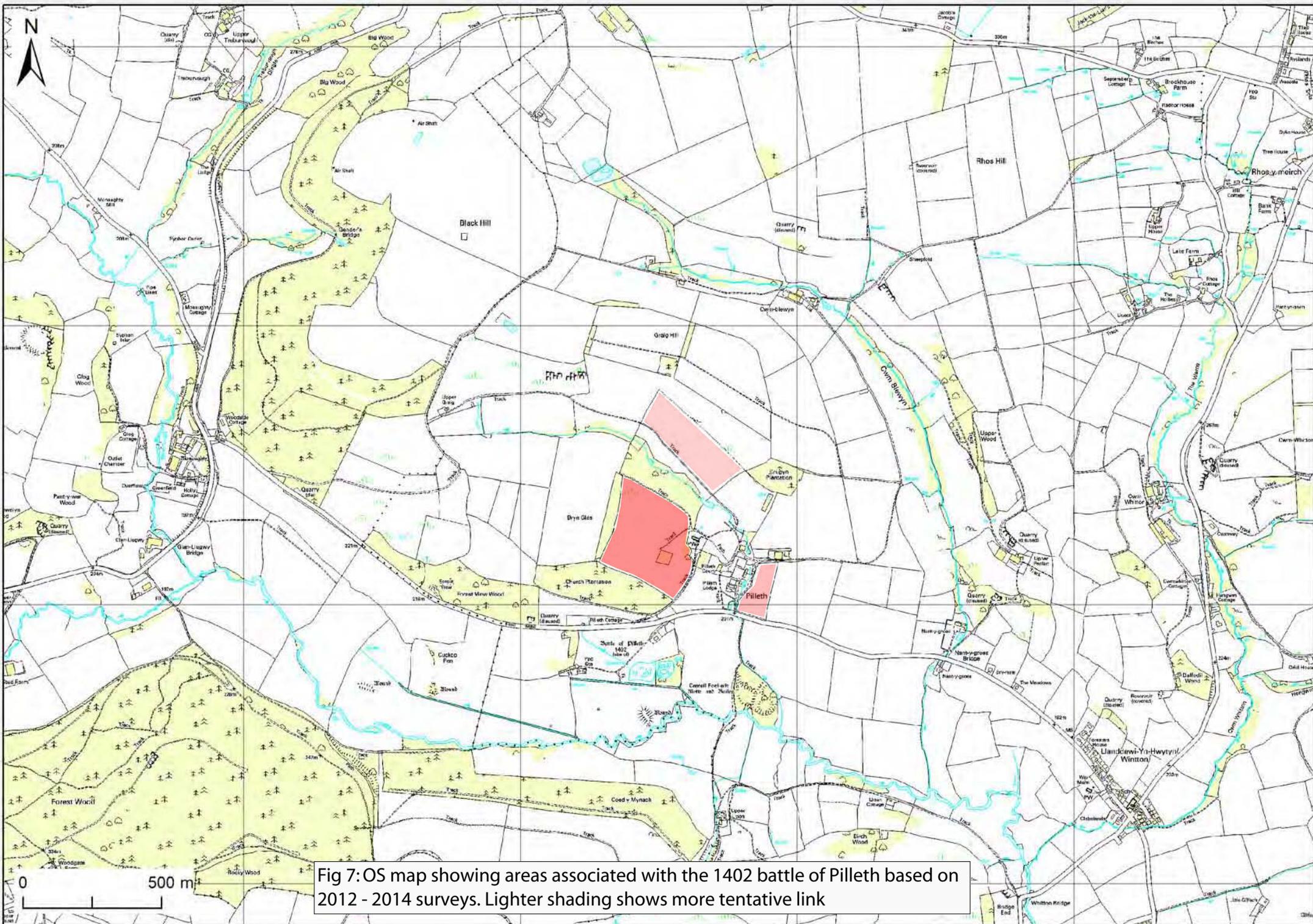


Fig 7: OS map showing areas associated with the 1402 battle of Pilleth based on 2012 - 2014 surveys. Lighter shading shows more tentative link

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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View from top of eastern slope of Graig Hill, Looking north east



Plate 2: View from top of eastern slope of Graig Hill, Looking east



Plate 3: View south east from top of eastern slope of Graig Hill



Plate 4: View south across to eastern slope of Bryn Glas from southern face of Graig Hill



Plate 5: View west across flat top of Graig Hill



Plate 6: View north across flat top of Graig Hill



Plate 7: View north west across flat top of Graig Hill



Plate 8: View south across to Eastern slope of Bryn Glas from southern edge of Graig Hill
View emphasises strategic importance of location by showing true gradient



Plate 9:View east south east from Black Hill onto Graig Hill



Plate 10:View east from Black Hill across to flat top of Graig Hill



Plate 11: View from Black Hill across to stands of trees on Graig Hill, Looking east



Plate 12: View along end of ridge at top of Graig Hill, Looking east



Plate 13:View of Type 4 horseshoe (1400-1450) located on Graig Hill

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APPENDIX III: Finds Catalogue

Find No.	Description	Date	Easting	Northing	Depth
1	Fe object	Unknown	326,319.93	268,456.37	0.1m
2	Pb object	Unknown	326,231.44	268,549.07	0.1m
3	Fe object	Unknown	326,183.88	268,649.00	0.1m
4	Fe object	Unknown	326,189.90	268,657.43	0.1m
5	Fe object	Unknown	326,250.70	268,736.29	0.2m
6	Pb object	Unknown	326,133.31	268,518.37	0.15m
7	Small Cu Alloy button	PM	325,938.88	268,582.18	0.1m
8	Small Cu Alloy button	Modern	326,050.24	268,820.57	0.15m
9	Fe object	Unknown	326,047.23	268,762.78	0.2m
10	Worn blank Cu coin	PM	325,592.14	268,807.32	0.18m
11	Worn blank Cu coin	PM	325,655.35	268,760.97	0.1m
12	Fe object	Unknown	325,693.27	268,733.28	0.1m
13	Fe horseshoe	Med	325,633.07	268,833.81	0.25m
14	Fe horseshoe	Modern	325,599.96	269,004.77	0.15m
15	Worn blank Cu coin	PM	325,592.74	268,994.54	0.1m
16	Fe horseshoe	PM	325,526.52	268,914.47	0.14m
17	Small Cu Alloy button	PM	325,476.56	268,892.80	0.15m
18	Worn blank Cu coin	PM	325,480.17	268,870.53	0.25m
19	Fe object	Unknown	325,462.11	268,852.47	0.1m

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APPENDIX IV: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Graig Hill & Black Hill, Pilleth, Monaughty, Powys

Site Name:	Pilleth
Site Code:	WBS3/14/SUR
PRN:	-
NPRN:	306352
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	SO 25187 69033
Site Type:	Battlefield
Project Type:	Survey
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	Jan-March 2014
Categories Present:	Medieval to 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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