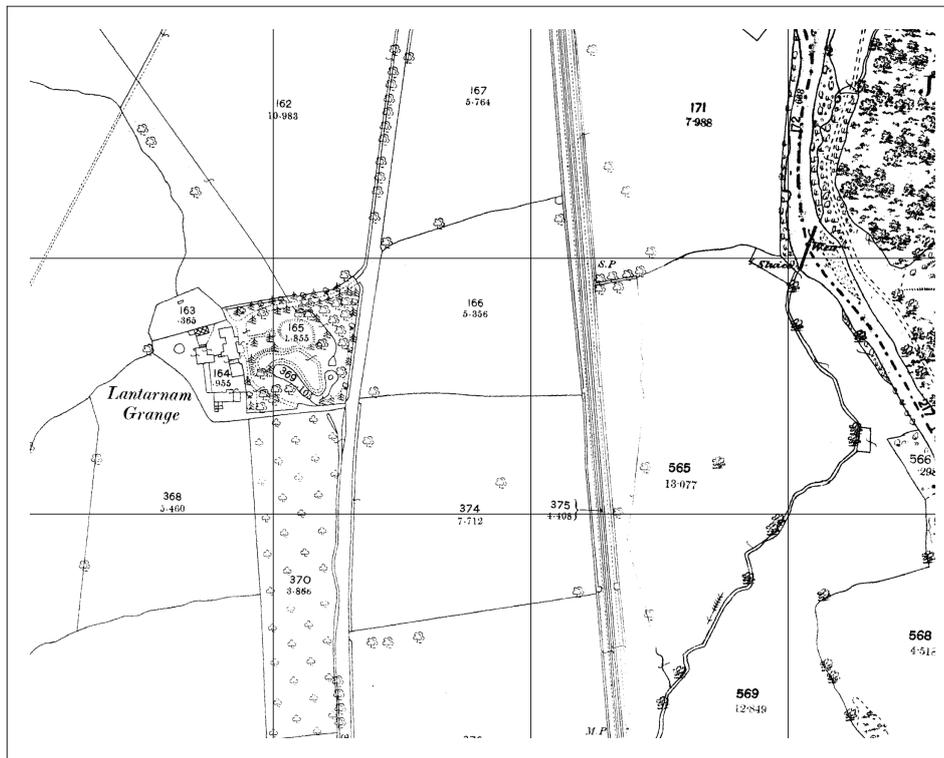




CAMBRIAN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECTS

Grange Road, Cwmbran

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment



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Report No. 638

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects (CAP) on behalf of Peacock and Smith. The work focussed on the site of a proposed supermarket development on Grange Road, Cwmbran, and involved documentary and cartographic research to establish the history of land use on the site. The sources show that the parcel of land was in the possession of the Llantarnam Abbey Estate from the twelfth century until the mid-nineteenth century, and was used exclusively for agriculture until the mid-twentieth century. The land was subsequently developed and the large factory and recreation ground that still occupy the site built.

1. Introduction

This report is an updated version of an initial report carried out by Cambrian Archaeological Projects for DLA Architecture Ltd in June 2009. That report focused on the northern end of the current site only. This study has extended the documentary and cartographic research to incorporate the former factory area that occupies the southern end of the current site (fig. 2).

The proposed development is located on Grange Road, Cwmbran in an area of extensive retail development to the east of the town centre (NGR ST 2977 9567, fig. 1). The development proposal has been submitted by Chris Creighton, Peacock and Smith, 9c Josephs Well, Hanover Walk, Leeds LS3 1AB, acting as agents for WM Morrison Supermarkets Plc. The local planning authority is Torfaen County Borough Council.

The proposed development area measures approximately 10ha (fig. 2). It is bounded to the north by Edlogan Way, to the west by Grange Road, to the east by the Newport to Abergavenny railway line, and to the south by industrial units. The site is currently occupied by a car park, sports facilities and a disused factory.

The site is located close to Llantarnam Grange (fig. 2), a probable medieval monastic grange or farm belonging to Llantarnam Abbey. As a result, Neil Maylan of the Curatorial Section of Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) recommended that a desk-based assessment be carried out for the site prior to the consideration of planning consent. The purpose of the desk-based assessment is to provide Torfaen County Borough Council with information on the archaeological potential of the site prior to granting consent to a proposed planning application. The requirements for the archaeological work are set out in Planning Policy WALES, March 2002, Section 6.5, and Welsh Office Circular 60/96.

2. Aims and Objectives

The primary objective of the archaeological work is to identify any archaeological remains that may be present on the site through a detailed desk based assessment, following guidelines set by the Institute for Archaeologists in its *Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*.

This study provides details of the archaeological potential of the site. This will be used to inform a mitigation strategy to limit the impact of development the on the archaeological resource.

3. Methodology

The desk based assessment involved the examination of all available written, cartographic and pictorial sources about the site held in the Historic Environment Record (HER) at Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) and in the collections at the Gwent Record Office in Cwmbran.

Sources consulted were:

- HER database
- Published literature
- Grey literature, including unpublished reports on previous excavations
- Tithe Enclosure and OS maps for Cwmbran
- Historic maps of Llantarnam Estate
- Sale particulars for Llantarnam Estate

4. Results of Desk Based Assessment

4.1 Historical Background

A building has stood on the site of Llantarnam Grange since the 12th century. The original structure was a farmhouse known as Gelli-Las which is thought to have been a grange, or farm, associated with Llantarnam Abbey (Williams 1990). Llantarnam Abbey is located 4km to the south-east of the proposed development site. It was a Cistercian Abbey founded in 1179 as a daughter house of Strata Florida, one of the few Welsh Cistercian Houses. The Abbey owned several granges in the surrounding countryside, which would have provided food for the monks living at the Abbey. Indeed, in 1317, the Abbey was described as ‘the richest and most enfeoffed abbey of all of Morgannok’ (Bradney 1923). The Abbey was dissolved on the 4th February 1536 as part of Henry VIII's reformation of the Church (Bradney 1923). The Abbey's lands were subsequently let to John Parker for £106 0s 8d per year before being sold to William Morgan in 1554 (Bradney 1923). Morgan extensively redeveloped the Abbey, destroying the majority of the original medieval buildings and replacing them with a large Tudor mansion (Bradney 1923; Cadw 1994).

The Llantarnam Estate remained in the hands of the Morgan family until the 19th century when it began to be sold off in parcels. The farmhouse of Gelli-Las was one of the first parts of the estate to be sold, in 1871 to Alfred Pilliner. The remainder of the estate was sold in lots in 1885.

Alfred Pilliner converted the medieval farmhouse into a small stately home and renamed it Llantarnam Grange. The construction of the Grange is likely to have led to the destruction of the original farmhouse, indeed all the buildings recorded on the site are thought to be 19th century in date (Cadw 1994). In 1932 the Grange was sold to William Jones, the Managing Director of the Avondale Tinplate Works. He subsequently sold it to Cwmbran Development Corporation in 1952 who then let it to the GPO for use as a sorting office. In 1983 the maintenance of the house was taken over by the Trustees of Llantarnam Grange and the site converted to an Arts Centre (Barber 1999).

Sir Joseph Bradney describes the Parish of Llanvrechfa Upper, in which Gelli-Las Farm was located, as being thinly populated until 1855 when Cwmbran started to develop as an industrial town (Bradney 1923). Indeed, he quotes population statistics to emphasise this, noting that in 1801 there were 190 people recorded living in the parish, by 1891 this had increased to 4962 (Bradney 1923). The scattered mountain farms that had made up the parish were turned over to industry and housing, while others, including Gelli-Las were converted into ‘imposing Villas for those who worked in Newport’ (Bradney 1923).

4.2 Map Regression

The earliest map depicting the site is the Tithe Map of 1839 (fig. 3). This records the six fields that make up the proposed development site as belonging to Gelly-Laes (sic) farm, four of which were used for pasture and the others for arable. The landowner is listed as John Morgan, with the farm tenanted by Joseph Kidner. Gelli-Las farmhouse is shown as a long rectangular building with a small garden. Three outbuildings associated with the farmhouse

are arranged around an L-shaped yard. The farmhouse is located at the end of a road or track which branches off the main Cwmbran to Caerleon road. To the south of the farmhouse and yard a narrow strip of woodland is depicted. No outbuildings or structural features are depicted within the proposed development area.

The 1st edition OS map of 1882 (fig. 4) depicts the changes to Gelli-Las Farmhouse brought about by Alfred Pilliner in his creation of Llantarnam Grange. The rectangular farmhouse has been replaced by a large house and numerous outbuildings. The yard and garden to the front of the farmhouse have been converted into stately gardens with walkways, a small lake and woodland planted to hide the property from the road. A drive leads from the road to the front of the house. The road has been extended beyond the Grange, continuing south following the line of the woodland. The fields that make up the proposed development site have been truncated on their eastern side by the construction of the Abergavenny to Newport railway, and their layout has become more regular, with the amalgamation of several of the small fields shown on the tithe map facilitating the creation of large square fields.

The 2nd edition 1901 (fig. 5) OS map shows little change to the Grange, with the exception of the construction of additional outbuildings and the reclamation of part of a adjacent field to extend the garden. By 1901 the road had been renamed Grange Road and more properties had been built along it. No change is depicted to the fields that comprise the proposed development site.

By 1954 the fields of the proposed development site had been amalgamated into the increasingly industrial landscape of Cwmbran (fig. 6). A large factory now occupied the southern end of the site, and the northern end also appears to have been taken out of agricultural use. Housing and development is starting to encroach on Llantarnam Grange from the west, although the Grange and the proposed development site are still largely surrounded by fields.

The 1975 OS map (fig. 7) shows the factory occupying the southern end of the site, while recreation facilities have been constructed at the northern end. Llantarnam Grange has, by this date, become entirely surrounded by houses and development, with little evidence for the gardens, orchards and woodlands that were still present 20 years earlier.

4.3 Previous Archaeological work

In 2007 a watching brief was undertaken by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) during the construction of a new entertainment complex on the site of a former multi-storey car park. This site is located immediately north of Llantarnam Grange in what used to be the adjacent field, on the western side of Grange Road from the proposed development site. No archaeology was identified during the ground works, and the site was shown to have been extensively disturbed during the construction of the multi-storey car park and the re-routing of Glyndwr Road in the 1970s and 1980s (Riddett 2007).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The assessment of documentary and cartographic sources revealed that the proposed development site was used for agriculture from at least the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, until the industrialisation of Cwmbran, Gelli-Las Farm existed as a small isolated farm within a largely unpopulated landscape. The farm was one of several granges that belonged to the Cistercian Monks of Llantarnam Abbey, and despite the farmhouse being converted into a large Victorian house and subsequently offices and an Arts Centre, the associated fields continued in agricultural use until the mid-twentieth century. No evidence has been found to suggest that buildings or structures associated with the medieval

or post-medieval use of the farm existed within the fields of the proposed development site, indicating that the potential for related archaeological remains is small. The twentieth century development of the fields for industrial purposes is likely to have caused significant disturbance to any in situ archaeology, indeed, results from the watching brief undertaken on an adjacent plot suggest that the area has suffered extensive disturbance. In conclusion, no evidence has been revealed to indicate that archaeological remains associated with the use of Gelli-Las farm as a monastic grange survive within the confines of the proposed development site.

6. Acknowledgements

Thanks to GGAT HER and the Torfaen County Records Office for their assistance.

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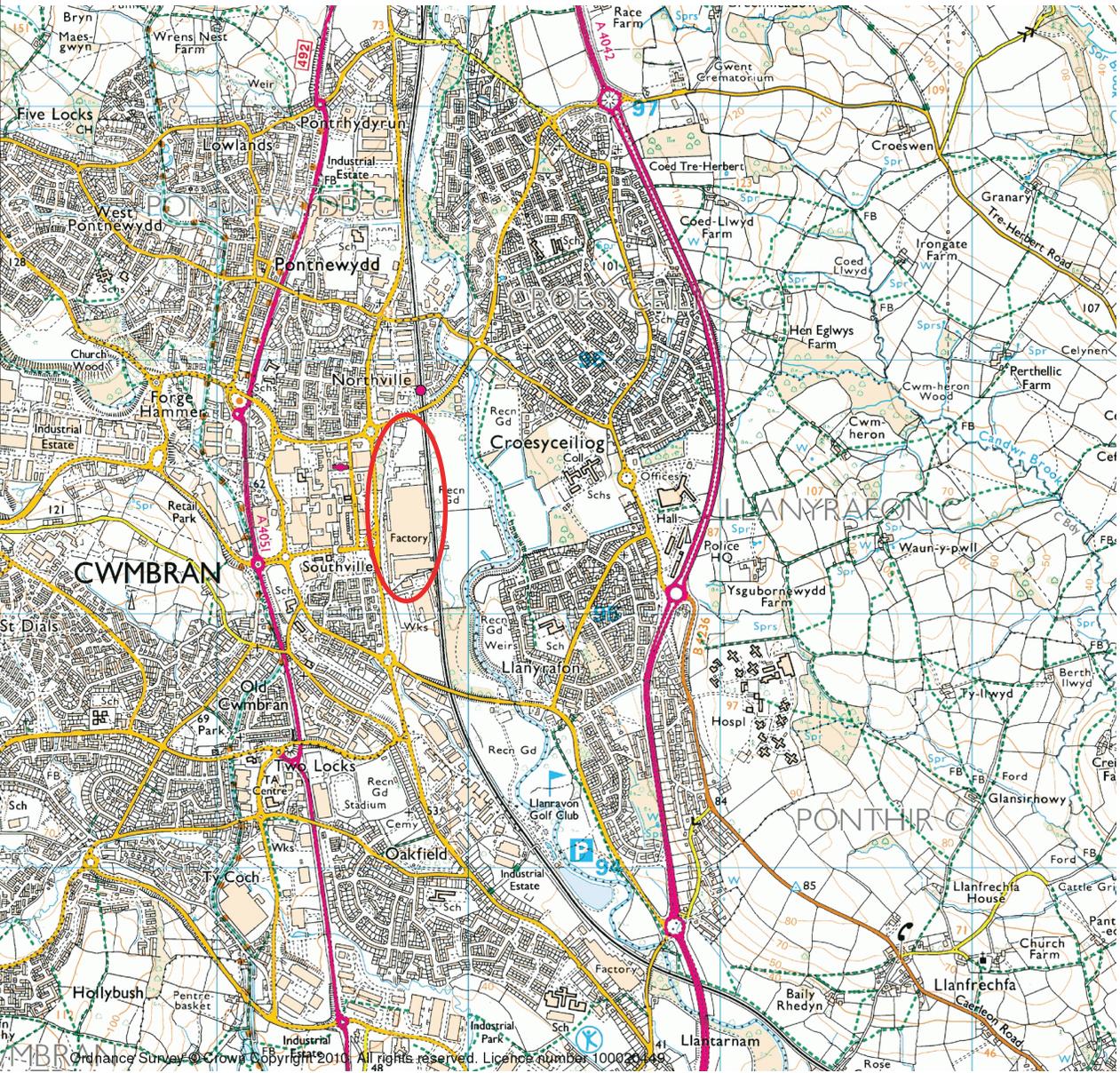
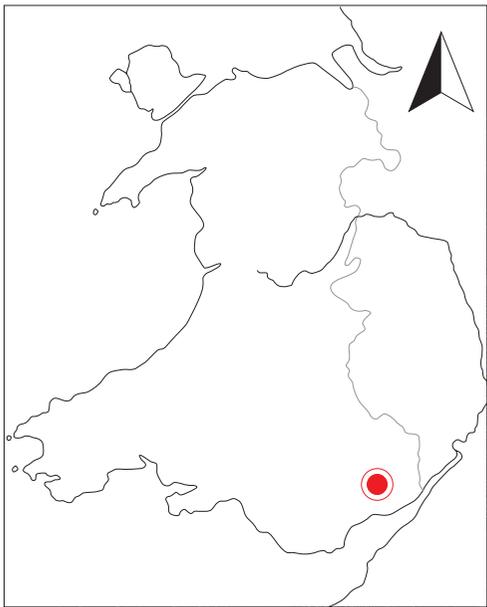


Fig. 1
Location of
proposed
development
site

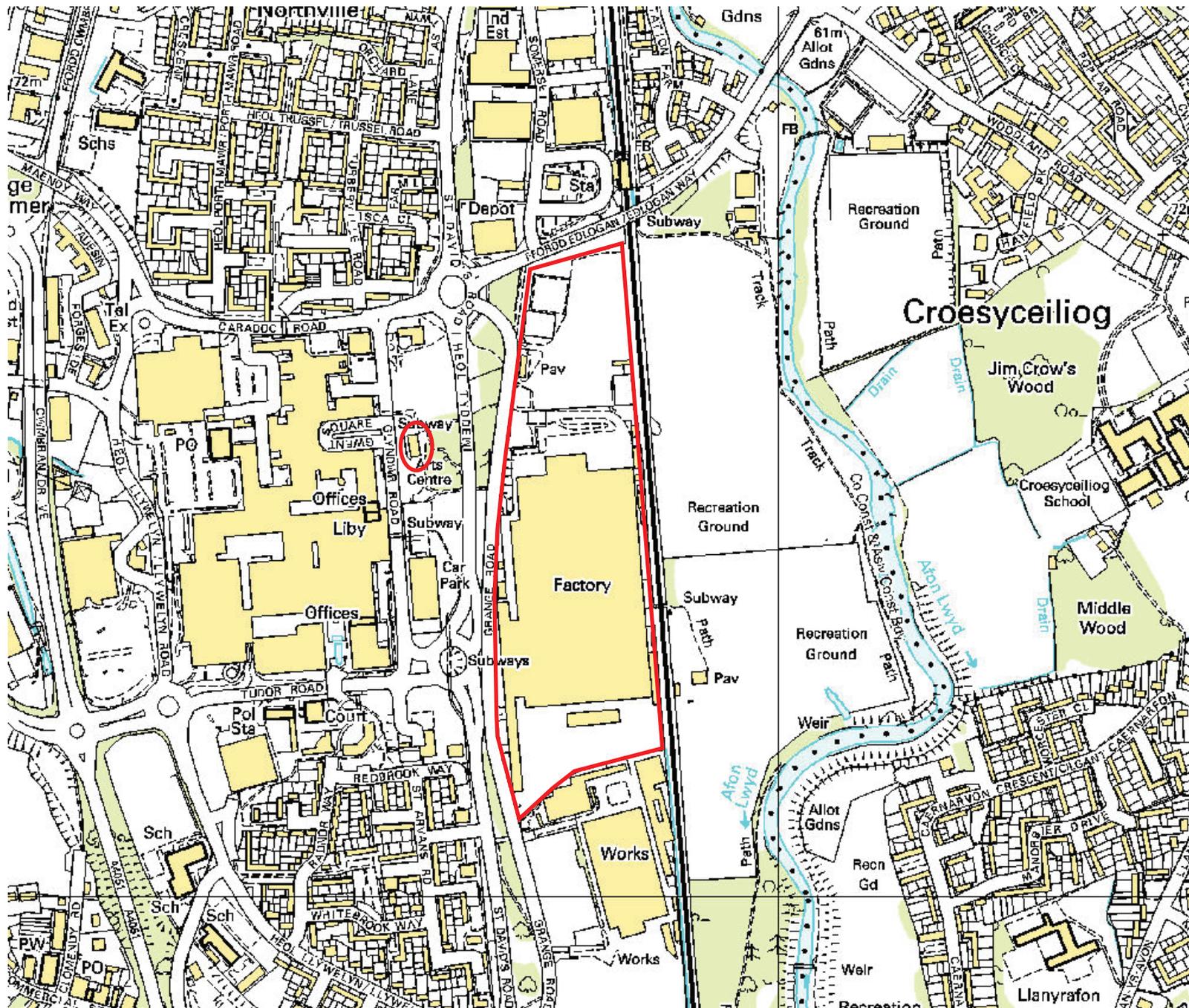


Fig. 2
 Layout of
 proposed
 development
 site in relation to
 Llantarnam
 Grange (circled)

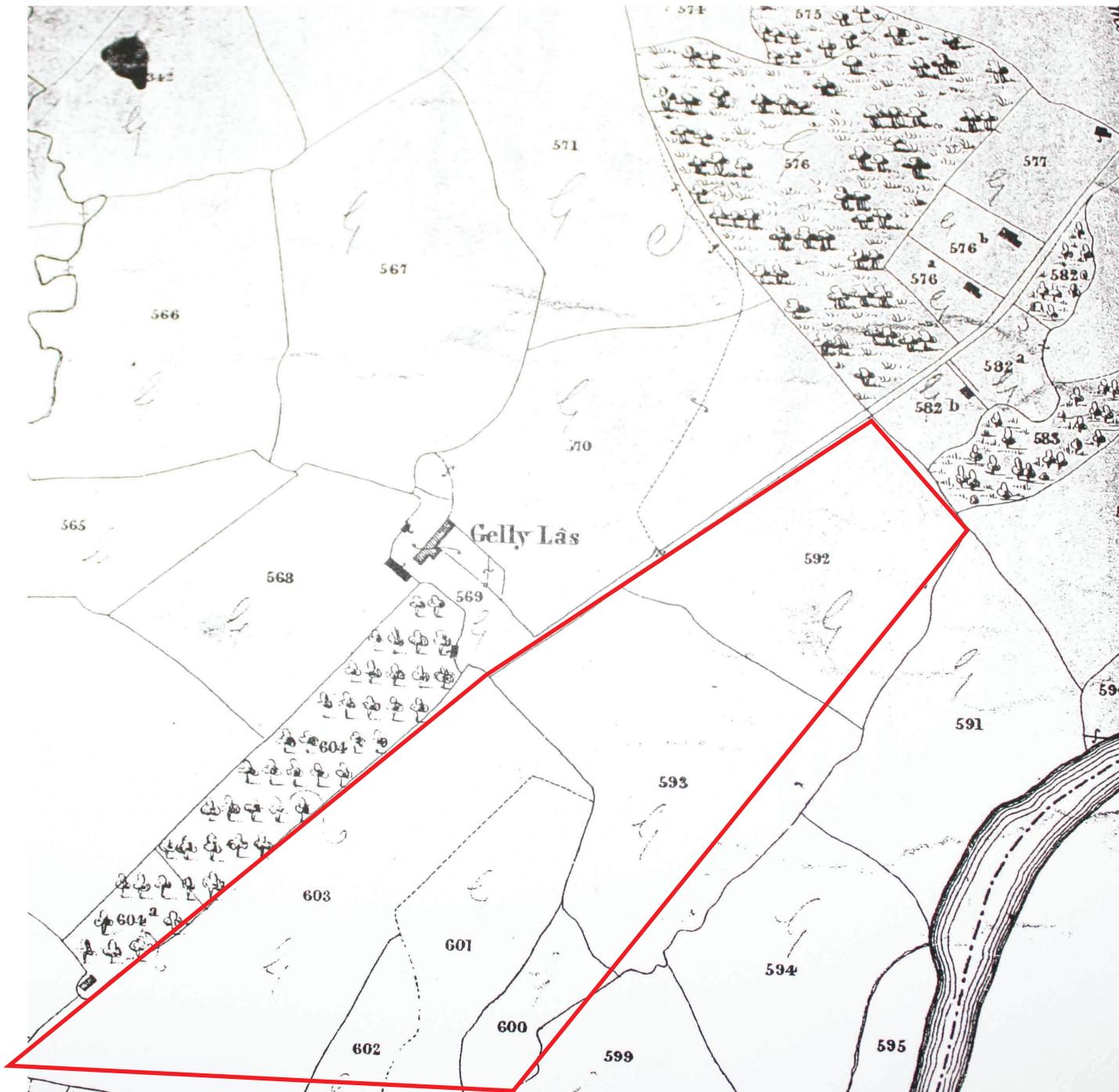


Fig. 3
Tithe Map of 1839
showing Gelly Las
Farmhouse and
the proposed
development
site

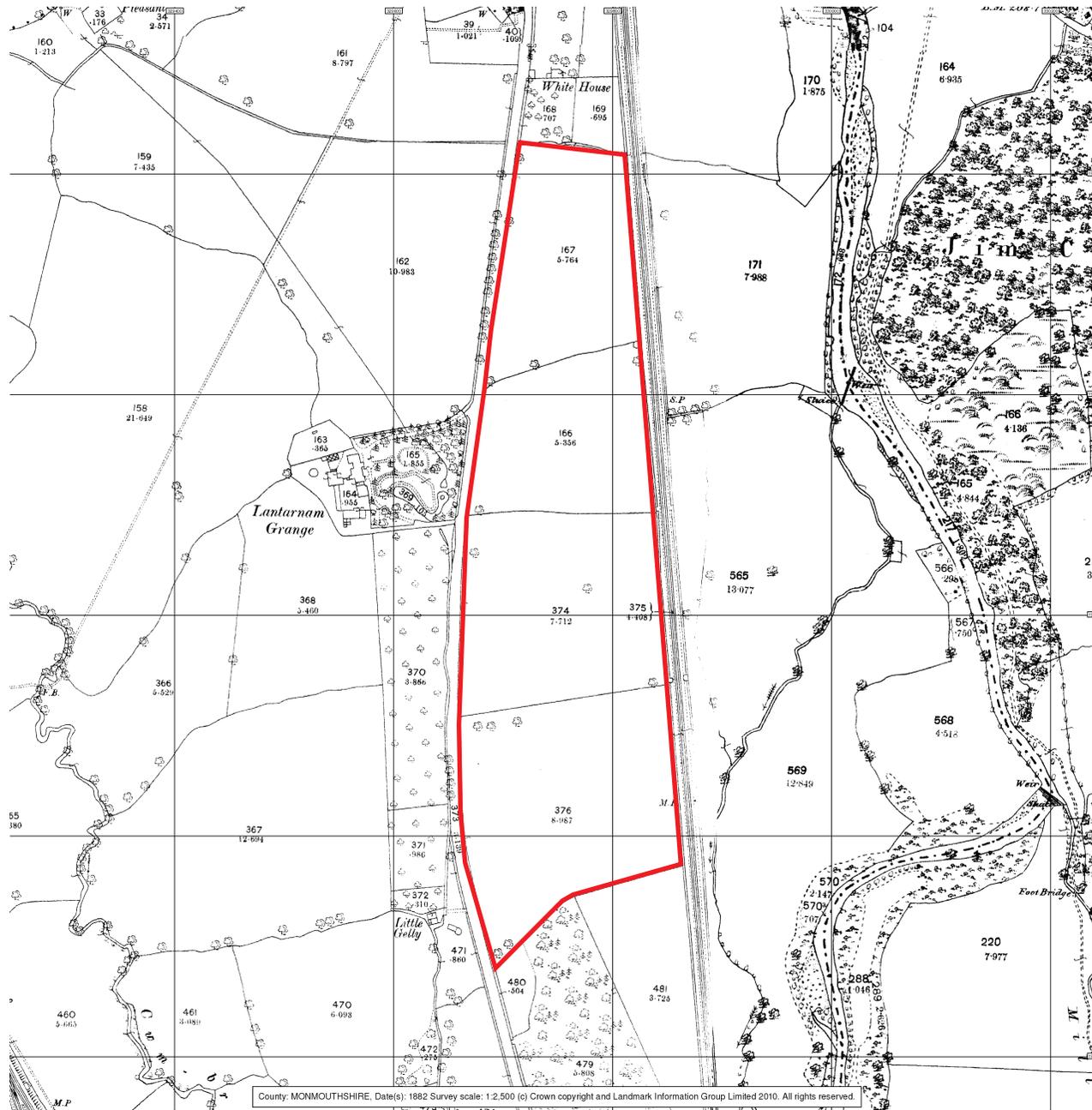


Fig. 4
 1st Edition OS
 Map of 1882
 showing proposed
 development
 site

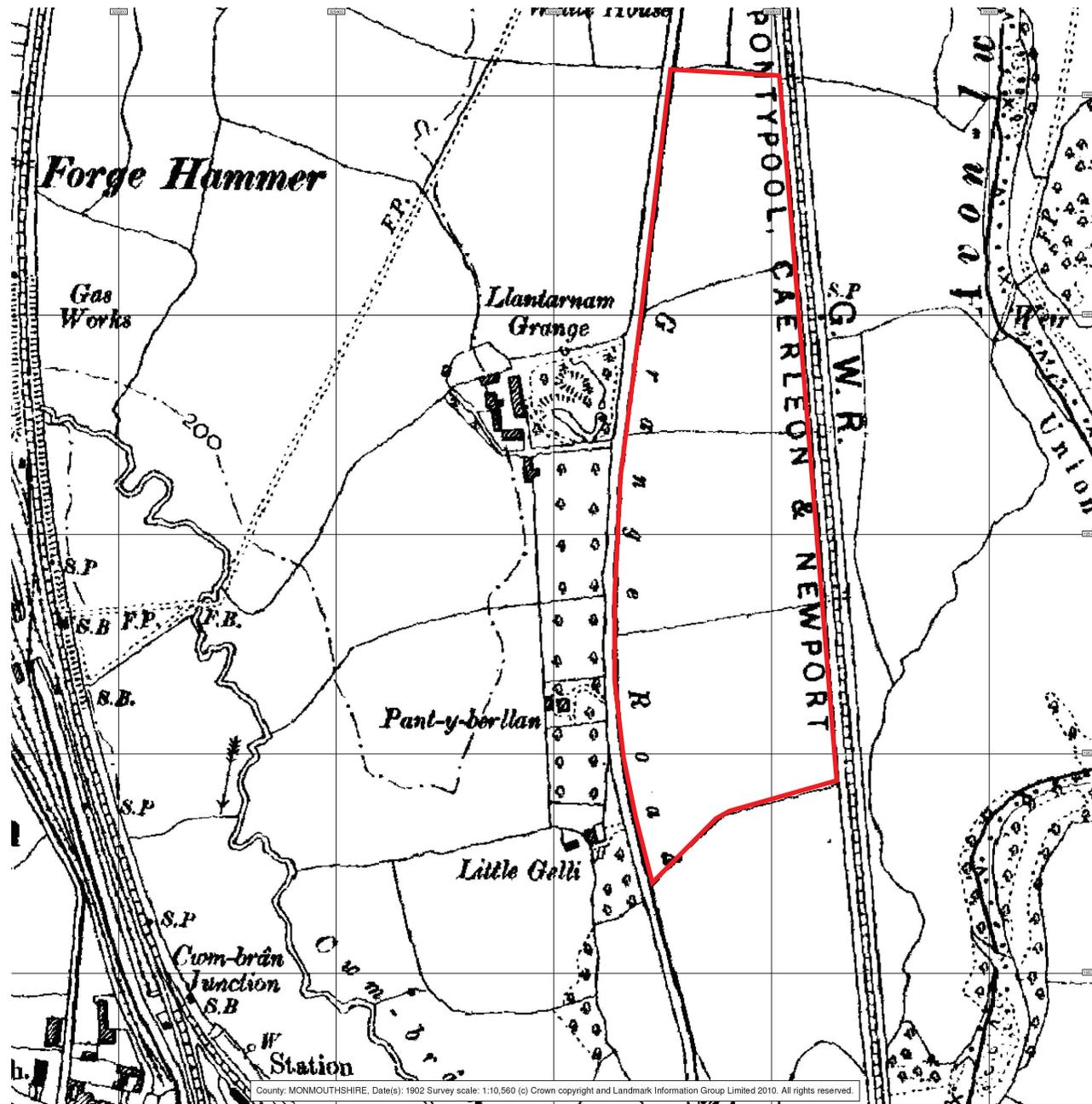


Fig. 5
 2nd Edition OS
 Map of 1901
 showing proposed
 development
 site

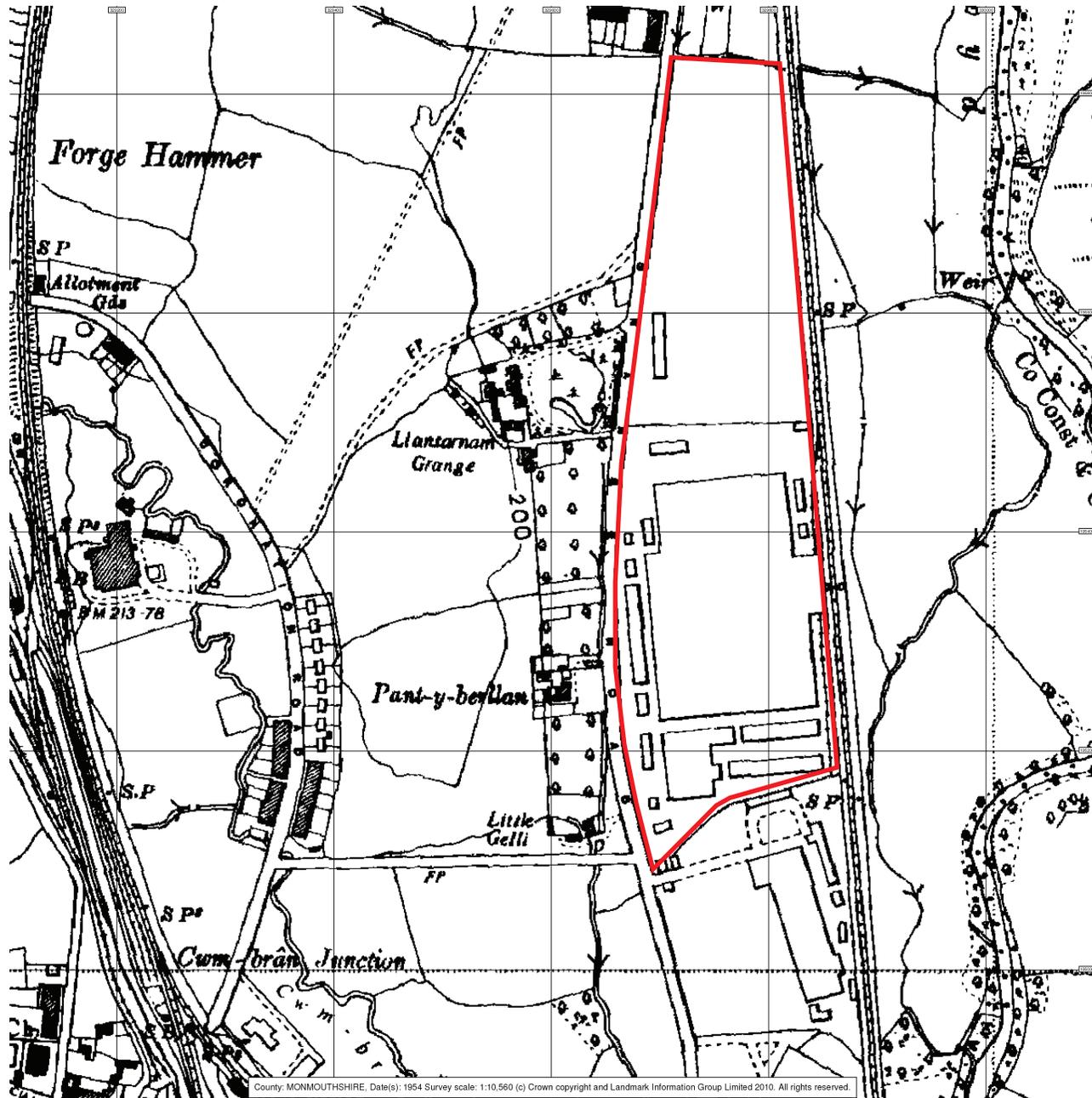


Fig. 6
 OS Map of 1954
 showing proposed
 development
 site with new
 factory
 buildings

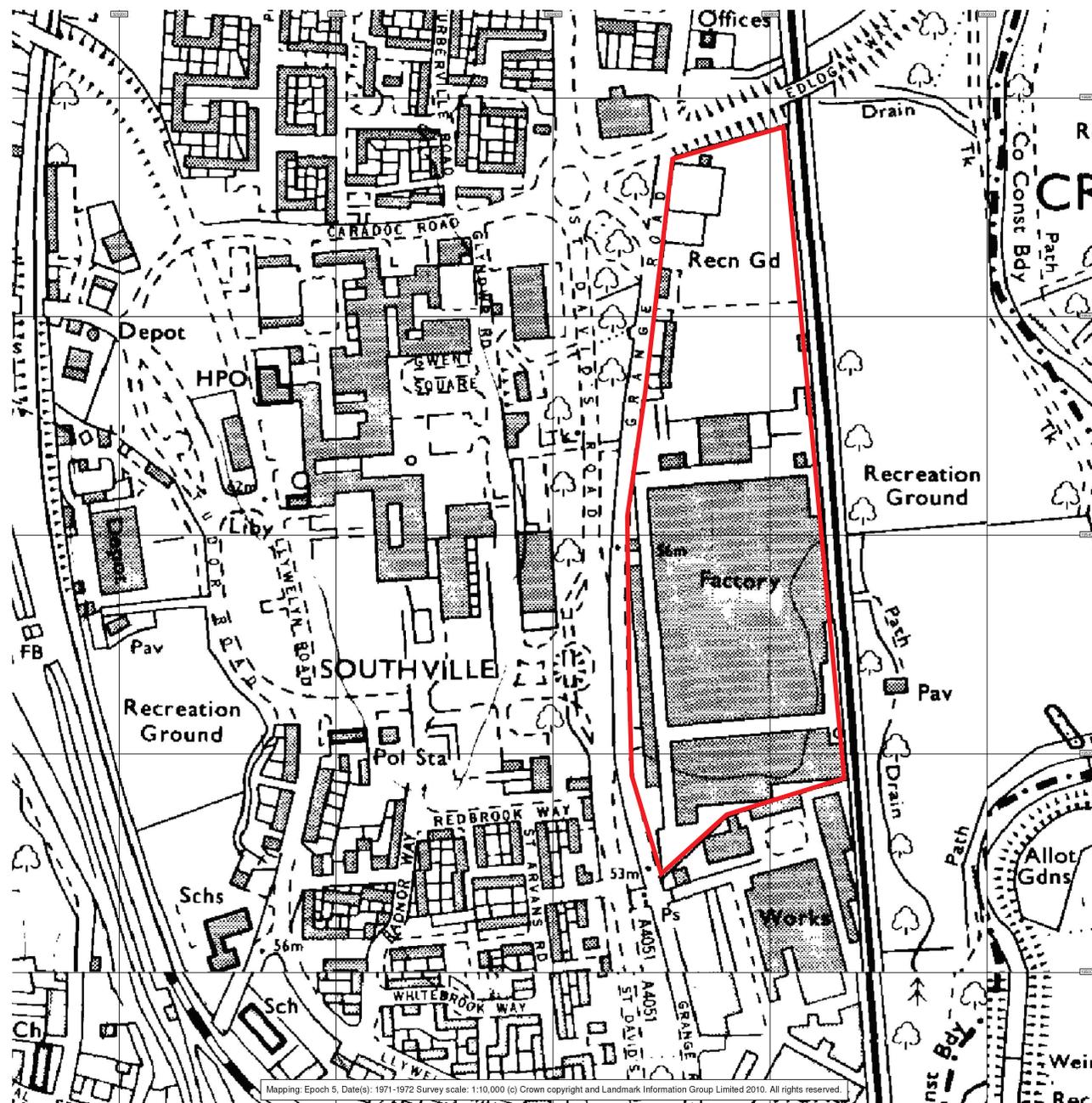


Fig. 7
 OS Map of 1975
 showing proposed
 development
 site surrounded by
 housing and retail
 development



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