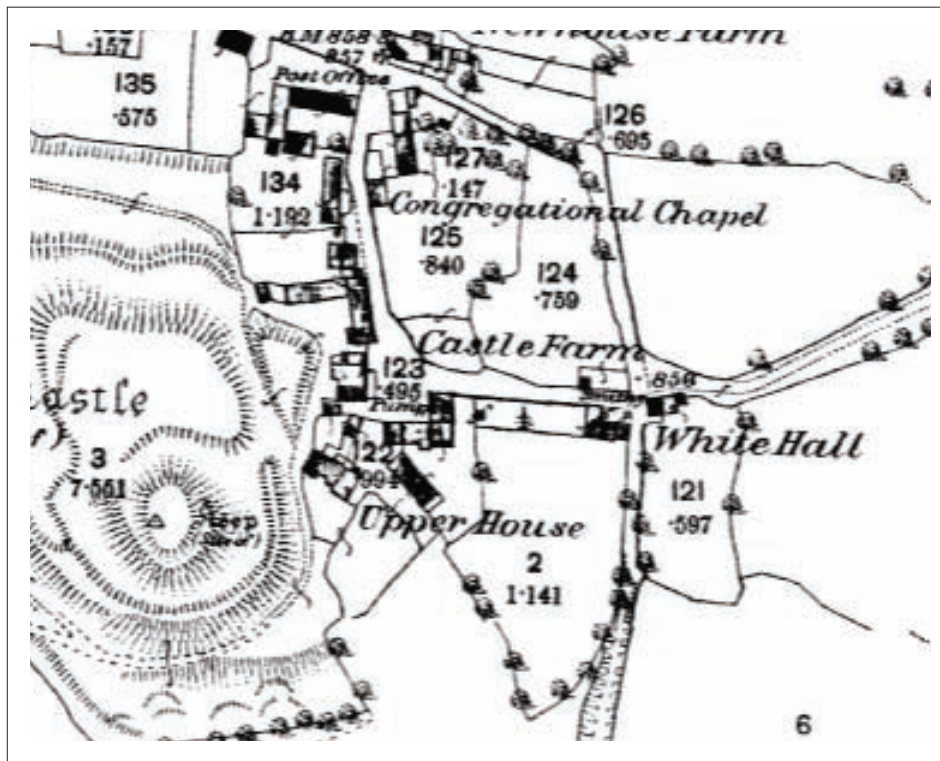


Archaeology Wales

Upper House Farm Painscastle, Powys

Archaeological Field Evaluation



By

Chris E Smith BA (Hons) MA MIFA

Report No. 1092

Archaeology Wales

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Date: **December 2012**

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Non-Technical Summary

This report results from work undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) for Mr Kevin White. It draws upon the results gained by a field evaluation on land at Upper House Farm, Painscastle, Powys, as part of the submission of a planning application for the construction of residential properties with associated access, drainage and landscaping. A single evaluation trench was excavated in the only area to have been left intact after the construction of agricultural buildings on the site in the 20th century. The single trench yielded no finds or features of archaeological significance.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In December 2012 Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) carried out a field evaluation on land at Upper House Farm, Painscastle, Powys. The assessment area is centred on NGR SO 16787 46153 (Figs 1&2). The work was carried out at the request of Kevin White in order to satisfy one of the conditions of the sites planning permission App nos. PR481204 & P2008/0930). Work at Upper House itself, to be undertaken in the future, will discharge the remaining conditions.
- 1.1.2 A brief for the required archaeological work (CPAT INV749) was provided by Mark Walters (CPAT). A specification for the work to be undertaken was drawn up by Chris E Smith (AW) which was subsequently approved by Mark Walters.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 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).
- 1.2.2 The soils in this area consist of the typical brown earths of the DENBIGH 1 series (541j) comprising well-drained fine loamy and silty soils overlying Palaeozoic slaty mudstone and siltstone.
- 1.2.3 The area surrounding the village of Painscastle is dominated by a motte and bailey fortification constructed on the top of a natural ridge. The motte has a clear 360° panorama of the landscape.
- 1.2.4 Painscastle is located on the southern facing slope of a valley, at the bottom of which runs the Bachawy, a small tributary stream of the river Wye. The bottom of the river valley is located approximately at 227m OD as compared to the motte and bailey on the higher ground to the north, located at 274m OD.
- 1.2.5 The wider landscape surrounding the site of Painscastle is characterised by sparsely populated, tree-less upland. The Begwns to the south rise to 415m OD whilst Llanbedr hill to the north rises to 465m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

1.3.1 The following is an extract from Samuel Lewis' (1833) *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* concerning Painscastle:

1.3.2 “LLANBEDR - PAINSCASTLE (LLAN-BEDR-PAIN'S-CASTLE), a parish in the hundred of PAINSCASTLE, county of RADNOR, SOUTH WALES, 6 1/2 miles (N. W. by W.) from Hay, containing 356 inhabitants. This parish derives the distinguishing adjunct to its name from a fortress called Pain's Castle, anciently situated within its limits, and said to have been built by a Norman baron named De Paine, who obtained possession of the hundred of Lower Elvael about the time that Bernard Newmarch wrested the principality of Brycheiniog from Bleddyn ab Maenarch, whom he defeated and slew. It occupied the summit of a steep eminence, on which a strong rampart or military station had previously been constructed by the Welsh, called *Caer yn Elvael*, which name was, on the erection of the castle, changed for Pain's Castle, or Elvael Castle. A village was also built by De Paine at the foot of the eminence on which the castle stood, which was inhabited by the dependants and vassals of the feudal baron, and which subsequently rose into considerable importance, and received the grant of a market. On the death of De Paine, this castle, which, on account of its importance, had given name to the hundred, passed, with the territories belonging to it, to the Mortimers, and from them to William De Breos, or De Bruce. About the end of the twelfth century it was taken from this powerful Norman baron by Rhys ab Gruffydd, soon after his capture of Radnor castle. Of this strong fortress there are now no remains, except the moat which surrounded the site ; and the town of Painscastle, participating in its fate, has dwindled into an insignificant village. The parish, comprising about four thousand acres, is separated from that of Llanddewi-Vach by the small river Bachwy, which falls into the Wye above Boughrood, nearly opposite to the influx of the Clettwr, on the Brecknockshire side. It contains a fine sheet of water, about a mile in circumference, called Boughlyn Pool. The lands are in some parts hilly, in others flat, but no where subject to inundation ; and the soil, though gravelly, is by no means unfertile. Fairs for horses, sheep, and horned cattle, are held annually on May 12th, September 22nd, and December 15th, in the township of Painscastle, the market at which, however, has been for some time discontinued : the petty sessions for the hundred are occasionally held here. This parish, with that of Boughrood, constitutes the prebend of Llanbedr-Painscastle, or Boughrood, in the collegiate church of Brecknock, rated in the king's books at only 13s. 4d., and in the patronage of the Bishop of St. David's. The living is a perpetual curacy, in the archdeaconry of Brecknock, and diocese of St. David's, endowed with £ 600 royal bounty, and in the patronage of the Prebendary : about fifty acres of glebe land belonging to it are situated in the adjacent parish of Llandeilo-Graban. The church, dedicated to St. Peter, from which circumstance the name of the place is derived, is an ancient edifice, consisting of a nave and chancel, but presenting no remarkable architectural features. There is a place of worship for Primitive Methodists. The average annual expenditure for the maintenance of the poor is £ 258. 9.”

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 Field Evaluation

2.1.1 The field evaluation was undertaken to:

- Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within and immediately surrounding the area of proposed development
- Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present
- Establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological features and deposits
- Produce a record of the features.

3 Methodology

3.1 Field Evaluation

3.1.1 Excavation of the single evaluation trench (Fig 2) was undertaken using a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision and by hand.

3.1.2 The trench was 'I' shaped. It measured 18m in length by 1.6m wide. At either end of the trench a 90° return was excavated. Each measured 5m in length by 1.6m wide. The total length was 28m. The maximum depth reached was 0.8m.

3.1.3 The on-site work and the overall management of the project was undertaken by Chris E Smith (MifA). All areas were photographed using high resolution digital photography.

3.1.4 All on-site illustrations were undertaken on drafting film using recognised conventions and scales (1:10, 1:20, 1:50) as appropriate.

3.1.5 All works were undertaken in accordance with the IfA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological evaluation* (2008, revised 2011) and current Health and Safety legislation.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and bagged by context.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the excavation.

4 Evaluation Results

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The topsoil deposit was composed of a mid-brown silt with large amounts of root matter and disturbance. It was between 0.25 and 0.4m deep across the trench.

4.1.2 The ground conditions were dry.

4.2 Description

4.2.1 Trench 1. Trench 1 (Fig 2, Plates 1-4) measured 18x1.6m with two 5x1.6m 90° returns on either end. The main body of the trench was aligned north-south. It was located adjacent to the eastern edge of the assessment area immediately south of the former site of White Hall (Fig 3). Mechanical excavation showed the mid brown silt topsoil (101) to be between 0.25 and 0.4m deep. It contained large amounts of root matter. It overlay a more compact darker brown clay subsoil (102) which had occasional stone inclusions and charcoal flecks, though no finds. This was found to be approximately 0.3m to 0.45m deep. Natural mottled orange brown/beige compact clay deposits (103), with occasional gravel inclusions, were exposed at a depth of around 0.7-0.8m below the current ground surface. No finds or features of archaeological significance were located within this trench. The surface of the natural deposit (103) was found to have large amounts of root disturbance.

4.2.2 A single linear feature cut through the subsoil and natural deposits, exposed in the northern 90° return, was observed. It was running north south, into the copse of trees marking the site of White Hall. Excavation of this cut found it to contain a plastic land drain pipe.

5 Finds

5.1.1 Three sherds of industrially produced developed white ware ceramic were recovered from the fill of the land drain cut. These were not retained.

6 Discussion and Interpretation

6.1 Overall interpretation

6.1.1 The overall interpretation gained from the work carried out is that, whilst past activity relating to the now demolished agricultural sheds on the site is likely to have removed any archaeology in that area, the area of the evaluation trench remained unscathed.

6.1.2 The location of the trench was designed to assess the survival of archaeology in this area related to the site of White Hall (Fig 3). Also, the location of the trench appeared likely to be a medieval street frontage. Excavation of the trench however, showed no signs of any medieval archaeology and no activity related to White Hall.

6.1.3 Within the copse of trees to the north of the trench, masonry remains of White Hall are visible. These do not extend to the area of the trench.

6.1.4 The area of the evaluation trench showed no features of archaeological significance.

7 **Acknowledgements**

7.1.1 Thanks are due to Kevin White for his liaising throughout the project and to Mark Walters of CPAT.

8 Bibliography and References

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

Institute for Archaeologists. 2008, revised 2011. Standards and Guidance for a Field Evaluation.

Lewis. S. 1833. *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*

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APPENDIX I: Figures

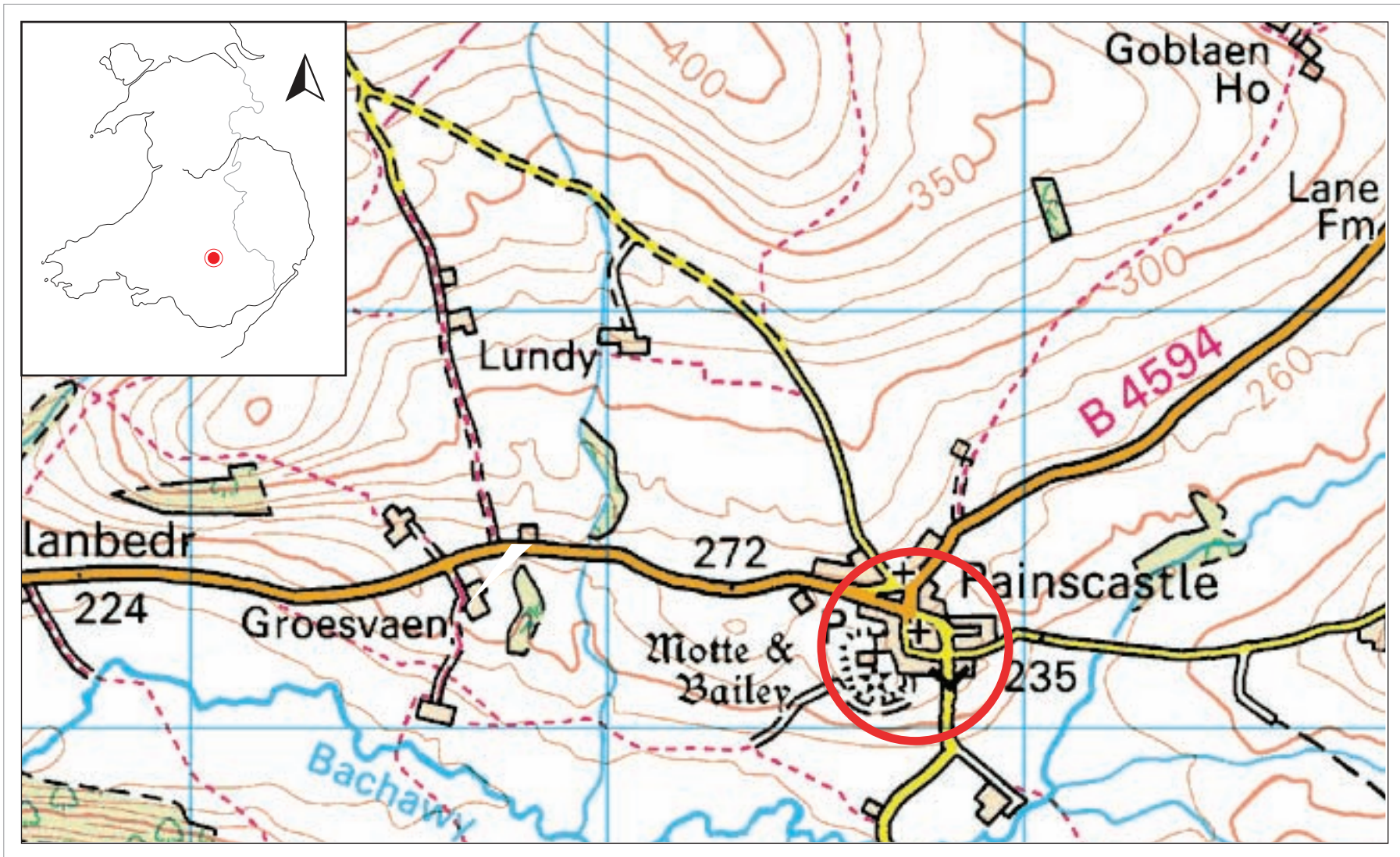


Fig 01: Map showing location of assessment area

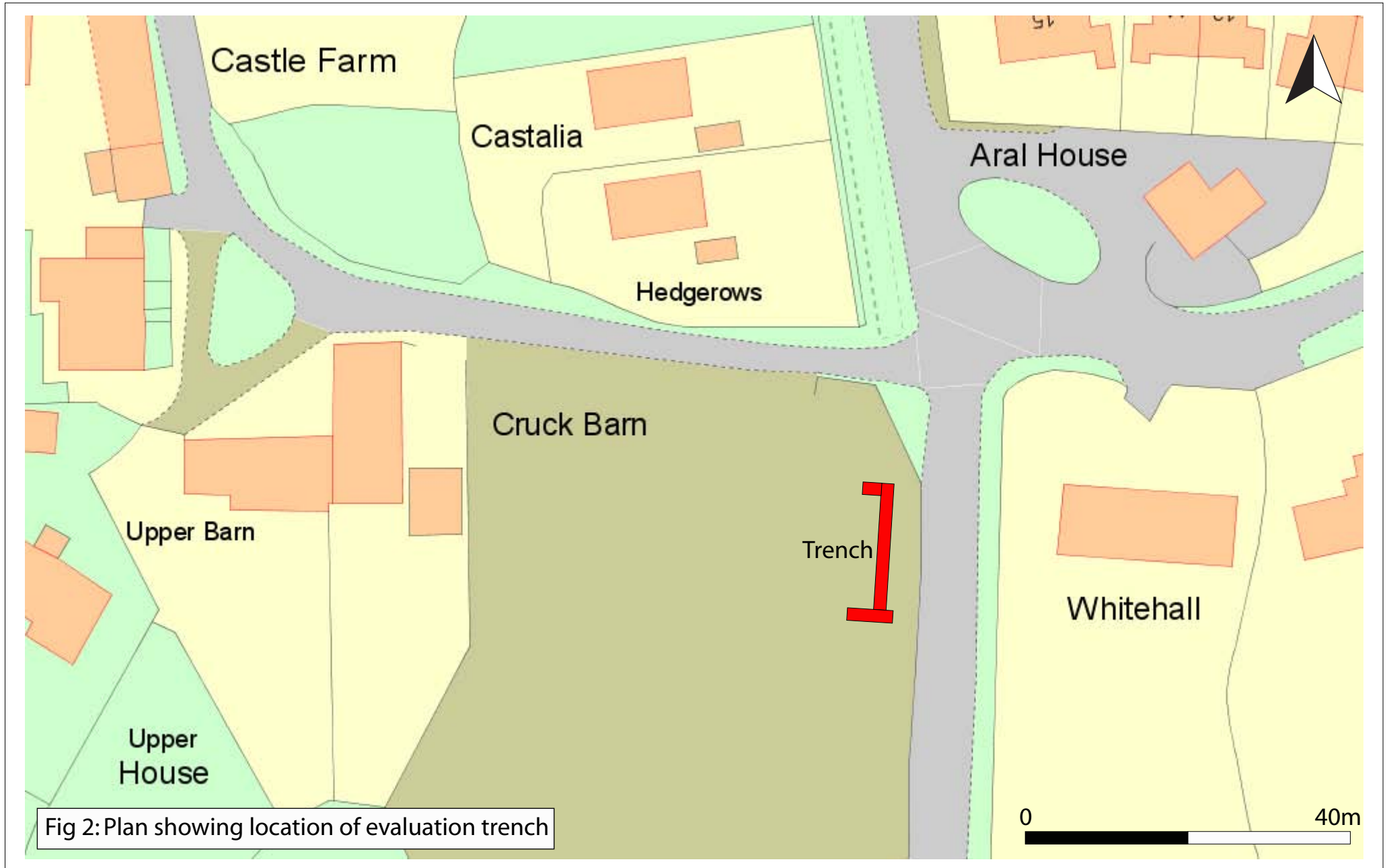
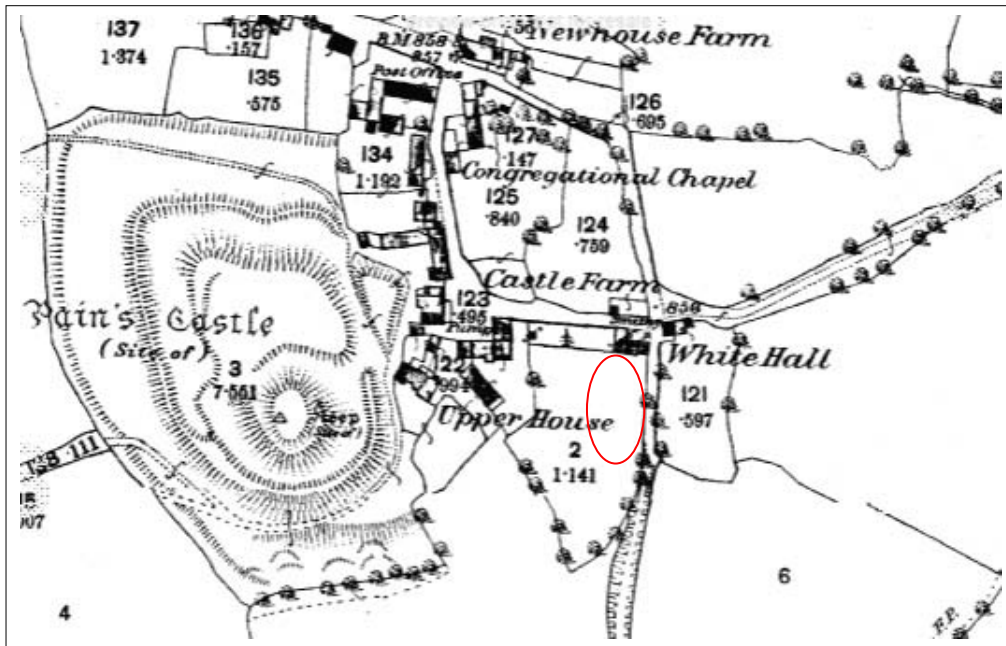
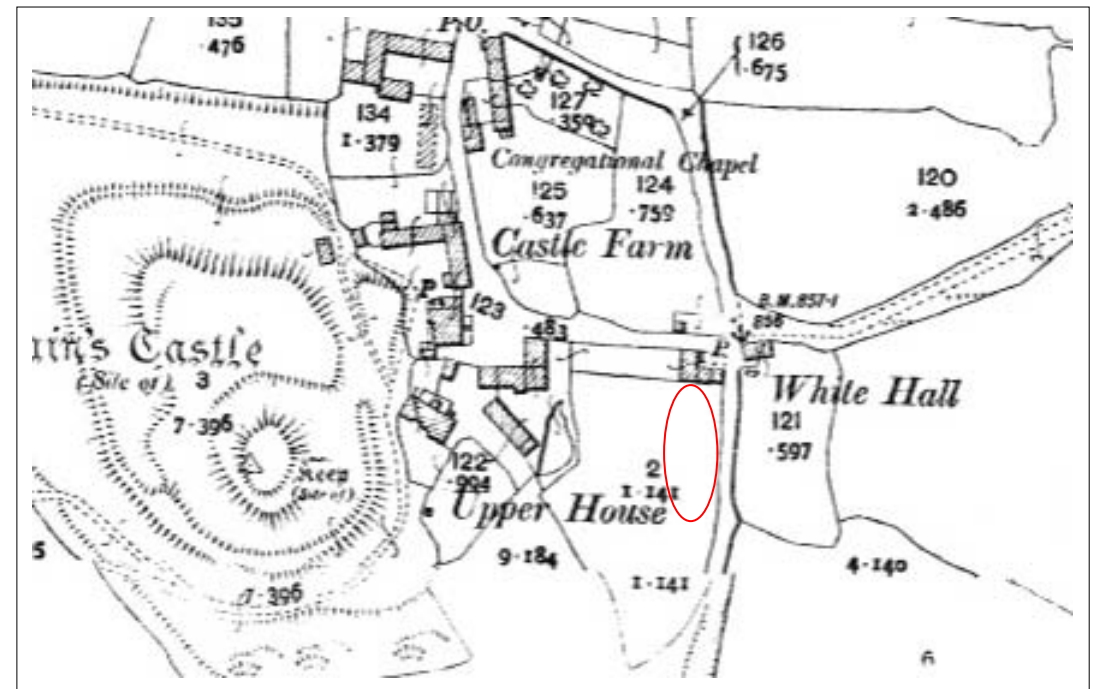


Fig 2: Plan showing location of evaluation trench



1889 1st Edition OS Map



1903 2nd Edition OS Map

Fig 3: 1st and 2nd Edition OS Maps showing assessment area with White Hall located immediately to the north

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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View west along southern end of the trench
Scale 1x1m



Plate 2: View west along northern end of the trench
Scale 1x1m



Plate 3: View north along main body of trench
Scale 1x1m



Plate 4: View south along main body of trench
Scale 1x1m

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APPENDIX III: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Upper House Farm, Painscastle

Site Name:	Painscastle
Site Code:	UHFP/12/EVA
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	NGR SO 16787 46153
Site Type:	Brown Field
Project Type:	Evaluation
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	December 2012
Categories Present:	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

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