

CPAT Report No. 1713

# Former Cwrt-y-Gollen Army Camp, Crickhowell, Powys

Heritage Assessment



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS  
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## Summary

An assessment has been conducted by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, on behalf of Jehu Group, to determine the significance of buildings associated with the former army camp at Cwrt-y-Gollen, near Crickhowell in Powys. The camp opened in 1939, originally housing troops under canvas until a hatted camp was constructed from 1942 to house American troops. The layout changed little after the war until 1958 when the construction of permanent buildings was initiated to create a new training facility for three regiments of Welsh infantry. The Depot closed in October 1998.

There has already been a significant programme of demolition at Cwrt-y-Gollen and the assessment has identified 17 surviving buildings within the development site, none of which date from the Second World War. Most of the buildings date from 1958-63, with others being added during the 1970s.

The development site contains one scheduled monument, a Bronze Age standing stone, close to the main entrance, although no significant groundworks are proposed in the immediate vicinity. In addition, the projected line of a Roman road lies beneath the A40, along the south-western side of the development site, although there is currently no evidence for any Roman activity within the site.

## Crynodeb

Bu Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd-Powys yn cynnal asesiad, ar ran Grŵp Jehu, i gadarnhau arwyddocâd adeiladau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r cyn wersyll byddin yng Nghwrt-y-Gollen, ger Crughywel ym Mhowys. Agorwyd y gweryll ym 1939, yn wreiddiol â phebyll ar gyfer milwyr nes adeiladwyd gweryll cytiau o 1942 ar gyfer milwyr Americanaidd. Prin y newidiwyd y cynllun ar ôl y rhyfel tan 1958, pan ddechreuwyd codi adeiladau parhaol i greu cyfleuster hyfforddi newydd ar gyfer tair catrawd o droedfilwyr Cymru. Caewyd y Depo ym mis Hydref 1998.

Mae rhaglen ddyrchwyl sylweddol eisoes wedi mynd rhagddi yng Nghwrt-y-Gollen a nododd yr asesiad 17 o adeiladau a oedd wedi goroesi o fewn y safle datblygu, ond nid oedd unrhyw un o'r rhain yn dyddio o'r Ail Ryfel Byd. Roedd mwyafrif yr adeiladau'n dyddio o 1958-63, gyda rhai eraill wedi'u hychwanegu yn ystod y 1970au.

Mae'r safle datblygu'n cynnwys un heneb gofrestredig, sef maen hir o'r Oes Efydd, yn agos at y brif fynedfa, er na chynigir gwneud unrhyw waith paratoi tir sylweddol yn y cyffiniau agos. Hefyd, mae llinell ragamcanol ffordd Rufeinig yn gorwedd o dan yr A40, ar hyd ochr dde-orllewinol y safle datblygu, er nad oes unrhyw dystiolaeth ar hyn o bryd o unrhyw weithgarwch Rhufeinig o fewn y safle.



20 The setting and the future protection of the scheduled ancient monument. Standing Stone (Br 113), should be considered within the written scheme of investigation and proposals which may affect, enhance or investigate the area around the monument or its setting should be discussed and agreed with Cadw before any development takes place within the application area.

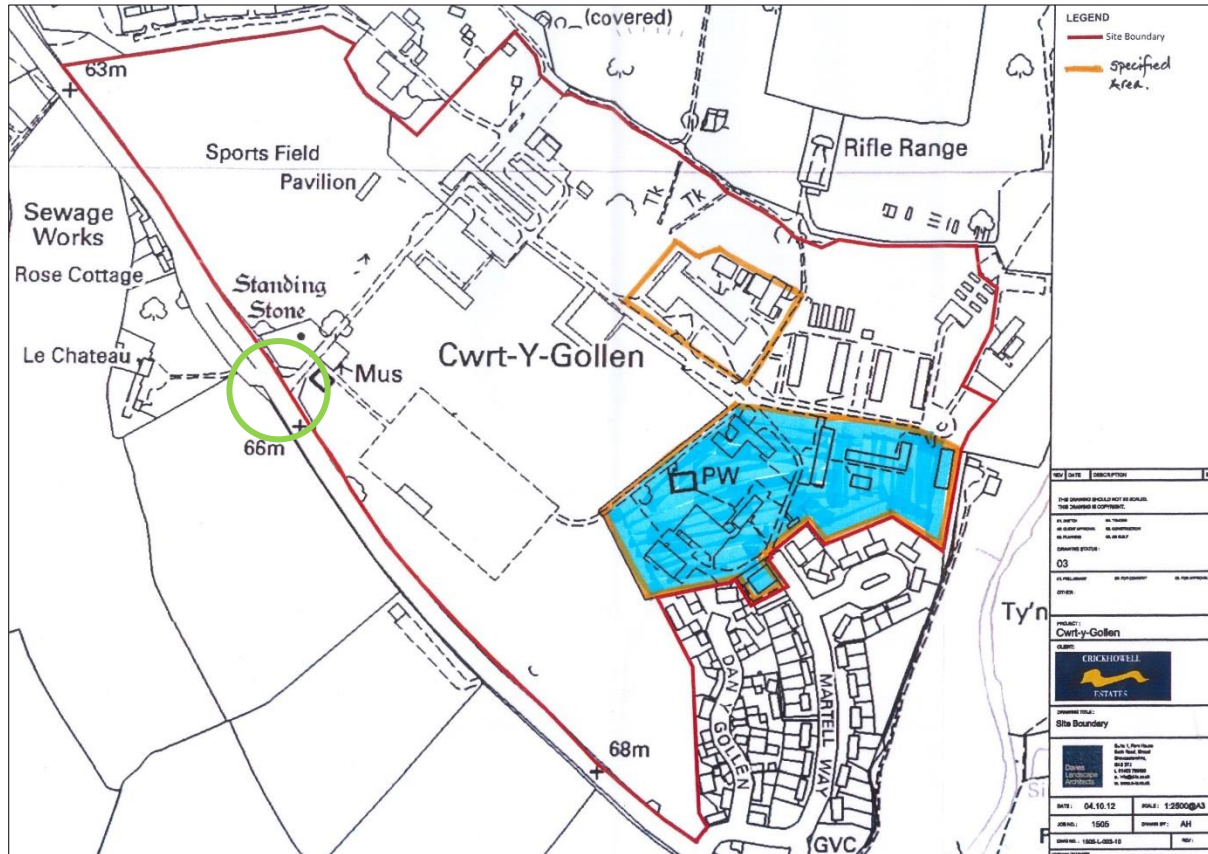


Fig. 2 The overall development site (outlined in red), showing the area of the current development in blue and the access improvement works circled in green

### Topography

- 1.4. The development site lies in the floor of the Usk Valley, above the confluence of the Usk with its tributary the Grwyne-Fawr. The River Usk is situated approximately 150 m west of the study site, heading south away from it; the Grwyne-Fawr is situated 50 m to the east of the study site (at its closest point) and drains south into the Usk. The development site as a whole is irregular in shape and is c. 26 hectares in extent. It is bounded to the southwest by the A40 Abergavenny to Crickhowell road and by a sinuous boundary to adjacent properties to the north, east and south. Much of the study site lies just above the flood plain of the River Usk at approximately 70 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), rising to the north end of the site to around 80 m AOD. To the north beyond the site, the land rises steeply through Rheld Wood on to a spur between the Usk and Grwyne Fawr Valleys.

### Geology

- 1.5. The drift geology of Cwrt-y-Gollen has been identified as alluvial fan, where the Grwyne-Fawr joins the River Usk, with glacial moraine deposits at the west end of the study site. The solid geology comprises of Senni Beds (green and purple grey sandstones with red mudstone interbeds) which underlie the drift deposits (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 232).

## 2 Methodology

- 2.1. The assessment was conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment* (2017), *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2014) and Cadw's *Caring for Military Sites of the Twentieth Century* (2009).
- 2.2. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (CPAT WSI 2143-1) was prepared detailing the methodology for the assessment and later phases of mitigation, which was reviewed and subsequently approved by the Heritage Officer for BBNPA.

### Desk-based study

- 2.3. A desk-based study was conducted accessing resources at the following repositories:
  - Regional HER, Welshpool
  - NMR, Aberystwyth, for aerial photography and other relevant sources
  - NLW, Aberystwyth, for historic mapping

### Field survey

- 2.4. A field visit was undertaken on 16 December 2019 to assess the whole development site in respect of surviving buildings, evidence for former buildings and the history and development of the army camp.
- 2.5. A basic photographic record was made of all surviving buildings as part of an assessment of their date, function and significance.

## 3 Historical Background

- 3.1. This section provides a brief summary of the archaeology and history of the study area and its immediate surrounds, to enable the findings of the assessment to be placed in a wider context.
- 3.2. The regional HER contained no useful information regarding the former army camp, which has not formed part of a thematic study of 20<sup>th</sup>-century military remains, funded by Cadw.



Fig. 3 Cwrt-y-Gollen standing stone BR 113

### ***Prehistoric Era***

- 3.3. At the former main entrance to Cwrt-y-Gollen is a large Bronze Age standing stone, 4.15m high, 1.05m wide and 0.7m thick (Fig. 3). There is a crescent-shaped notch 1m from top of the east edge. The standing stone, and a small area around it, have been afforded statutory protection as a scheduled monument (BR113).

### ***Roman Period***

- 3.4. The Roman road between Brecon Gaer to Usk (RR62a) is assumed to have been adopted by the modern A40, running along the south-west side of the development site, although this has not been confirmed. There is, however, no evidence for any known Roman activity within the site boundary and any suggestion of potential roadside settlement is entirely speculative (CgMs 2005). There is scant evidence for Roman civilian settlement in Powys as a whole and where this has been confirmed, such as the villa at Llanfrynach and a number of sites within the Walton Basin, the settlement appears to be independent of the Roman road network.

### ***Medieval Period***

- 3.5. There is no evidence for medieval activity within the study area.

### ***Post-Medieval and Modern Periods***

- 3.6. The Llangenny Tithe Map of 1840 shows the site as being agricultural or parkland, with Cwrt-y-Gollen house located just to the north of the study site. The house was built in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century for Lewis Morgan, Attorney-General of South Wales under Charles II. It was partly rebuilt in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century for Reverend R Davies. The house and grounds are depicted on the Ordnance Survey 25" 2<sup>nd</sup> edition map of 1904 (Fig. 4), although the house was destroyed by fire seven years later and was subsequently demolished.

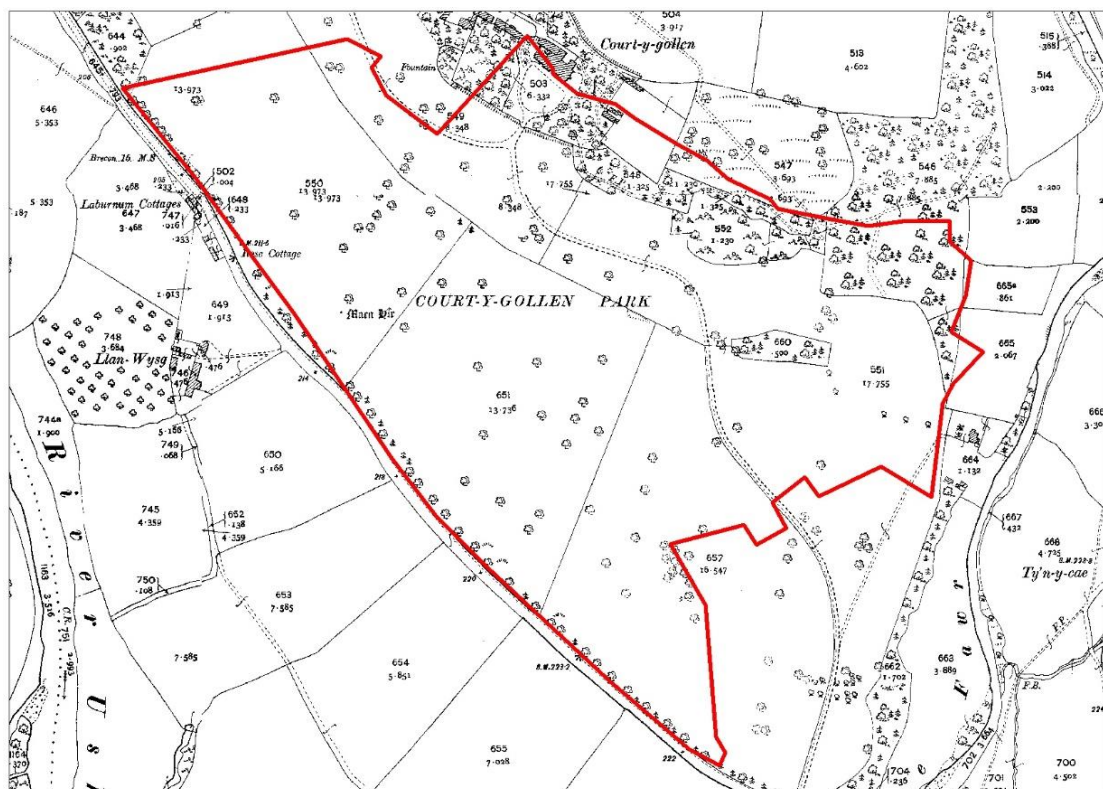


Fig. 4 1904 Ordnance Survey 25" 2<sup>nd</sup> edition map with the development boundary in red



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### ***Cwrt-y-Gollen Army Camp***

- 3.7. At the outbreak of the Second World War the site was requisitioned and developed as an army camp, initially housing troops under canvas. From 1942 a hatted camp was developed to house American troops. After the war the camp was handed over to the War Department and was used by the Minor Tactics Wing of the School of Infantry (1946-47). At this time the eastern part of the site was occupied by a Resettlement Battalion of the Polish Army.
- 3.8. In 1958 work commenced on the erection of permanent buildings, forming training facility and a Depot for three Regiments of Welsh Infantry, the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the South Wales Borderers and the Welch Regiment, grouped together and known as the Welsh Brigade, who were stationed at the Depot until 1974.
- 3.9. In 1969 the South Wales Borderers and the Welch Regiment were amalgamated to form the Royal Regiment of Wales, later known as the Prince of Wales's Division, who were stationed at the Depot from 1975 to 1986. From 1986 the Depot provided a base for a number of small Regular Army and Territorial Army Detachments. The Depot closed in October 1998.

## **4 Assessment**

- 4.1. The development of the camp has been traced from vertical aerial photographs dating from the 1940s, Ordnance Survey mapping (Figs 5-7) and a detailed plan of the camp dated 1958 (Fig. 8). It should be noted that the Ordnance Survey mapping, while providing useful information regarding the layout of the camp, does not provide an accurate depiction of the camp at the date the maps were published. This is particular true for the 1964 mapping (Fig. 5), which depicts a layout predating the construction of permanent buildings which commenced in 1958.
- 4.2. A detailed topographical survey has been undertaken in connection with the proposed development which records the location of all standing buildings, as well as the bases for former buildings and other structures.
- 4.3. For the purposes of this assessment the development of the camp has been divided into four broad phases (Figs 9-12), based on information gathered during the desk-based study:
  - Phase 1, 1940s (Fig. 9) – hatted camp constructed during the Second World War
  - Phase 2, early-mid 1950s (Fig. 10) – addition of married quarters and ancillary buildings
  - Phase 3, late 1950s, early 1960s (Fig. 11) – replacement of the hatted camp with permanent buildings
  - Phase 4, 1970s (Fig. 12) – additional permanent buildings and portacabins
- 4.4. The present day layout of the camp is shown in Fig. 13. The assessment has determined that within the development site there are no surviving buildings dating from Phase 1, while the only surviving building from Phase 2 is the review shelter (Building 2), although even this may be later.
- 4.5. Field survey has confirmed that there are 17 standing buildings within the development site, which are summarised below.
- 4.6. The current development includes Section 278 access improvement works to amend the former main access to the camp, in the area of the presumed Roman road and in close proximity to the scheduled area of the standing stone BR 113 (Fig. 32). Although the detailed

arrangements are not currently available it is understood that work will be limited to replacing kerbs, reducing the height of a stone wall to the north-west of the entrance and replacing existing road markings with a new layout and signage. This will not involve any significant groundworks and the potential for impacts to any buried archaeological deposits is considered to be negligible. The proposals are also considered to have no more than a negligible visual impact on the scheduled standing stone and its setting, although Cadw should be consulted once the proposed changes have been finalised in order to elicit their views on the scheme.

### ***Building 1 – Museum, Phase 3***

- 4.7. Purpose-built military Museum (Fig. 15) dating from 1958-63, sited at the main entrance to the site. Built in a modernist style in concrete, stone, steel and glass. The walls were faced with dressed stone, while the roof had a central raised section in glass and steel, presenting a striking profile and provides light to the interior.

### ***Building 2 – Review Shelter, Phase 2?***

- 4.8. The Review Shelter (Fig. 16) was located alongside the parade ground and provided shelter for dignitaries. The structure was certainly in place by 1958 and may date from the earlier 1950s. It was an open-fronted shed with steel frame, planked and glassed sides and a sheet metal roof.

### ***Building 3 – Gymnasium, Phase 3***

- 4.9. The Gymnasium (Fig. 17), sited along the south-east side of the main access road, dates from 1958-63. The single-storey building had a pitched sheet metal roof and dressed stone walls at each corner, with vertical timber planking and glassing above elsewhere.

### ***Building 4 – Guard Room, Phase 4***

- 4.10. The guard room lay at the north-east end of the main access road, adjacent to the security fence. It was single-storey and built from red brick, with a pitched slated roof which extends over a veranda on two sides. A flat-roofed wing extends beneath the Headquarters Building, which it post-dates.

### ***Building 5 – Headquarters, Phase 3***

- 4.11. The Headquarters Building (Fig. 19) had two storeys and was built in concrete and glass with a flat roof. The building was divided into 14 sections, of which four at the north-west end and two at the south-east end were open on the ground floor.

### ***Building 6 – Boiler House, Phase 3***

- 4.12. The Boiler House (Fig. 20) lay east of the Headquarters Building and dates from 1958-63. It was built of red brick with a flat roof. The main building had two storeys, with single-storey additions to the south-east side.

### ***Buildings 7 and 8 – Accommodation Blocks, Phase 3***

- 4.13. Four identical accommodation blocks were built in 1958-63 in the eastern part of the site, of which only the eastern pair survives (Figs 21-22). They were built in red brick and had three storeys. The central section housed the entrance and stairwell and had floor to ceiling glazing. To either side the main elevation had exposed red brick with three windows on each floor. The end sections were rendered, with four windows on each floor. There was an external brick

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staircase at the southern end of each building and a central single-storey wing on one side of each building. The central section of building, above the stairwell, had a fourth floor, presumably housing a water tank.

#### ***Building 9 – Stores, Phase 4***

- 4.14. The Stores (Fig. 23) was an L-shaped building dating from the 1970s, located at the south-eastern corner of the site. It is built in pale brick with a flat roof. The main section has two storeys, with a single-storey section to either side.

#### ***Building 10 – Joint Services Hang Gliding and Paragliding Centre, Phase 4***

- 4.15. The building (Fig. 24) appears to have two phases, both probably dating from the 1970s. The original building comprised a two-storey block in dark brickwork, with a single-storey block adjoining to the south-west, built in the same brick, but with a dressed stone end wall. Both sections had a flat roof. The building was extended to the south-east by the addition of two single-storey, flat-roofed structures built in a pre-fabricated style.

#### ***Building 11 – ‘Gas Chamber’, Phase 4***

- 4.16. The small building (Fig. 25), dating from the 1970s, was of brick and render construction with a flat roof which extended beyond the walling to provide a covered area on all sides. It was built to train troops in the use of gas masks and is usually referred to as the ‘gas chamber’.

#### ***Building 12 – Unknown, Phase 3***

- 4.17. A small, brick-built structure with a sloping roof (Fig. 26), lying between two demolished accommodation blocks. Its function is not known.

#### ***Building 13 – Main Intake Switch Room, Phase 3 (Fig. 27)***

- 4.18. The Switch Room (Fig. 27) lay east of the Boiler House and dates from 1958-63. It was built of red brick with a flat roof.

#### ***Building 14 – Squash Court, Phase 4***

- 4.19. The Squash Court (Fig. 28) lay to the north-east of the Headquarters Building and dates from the 1970s. It was built of pale brick with a flat roof. The south-eastern end had an entrance door with a window above on the first floor viewing gallery.

#### ***Building 15 – Store, Phase 3***

- 4.20. The store block lay north-east of the Headquarters Building and dates from 1958-63. It comprised three adjoining concrete structures with flat roofs (Fig. 29). The taller building had a floor to ceiling door on the north-west side.

#### ***Building 16 – Ammo Store, Phase 3***

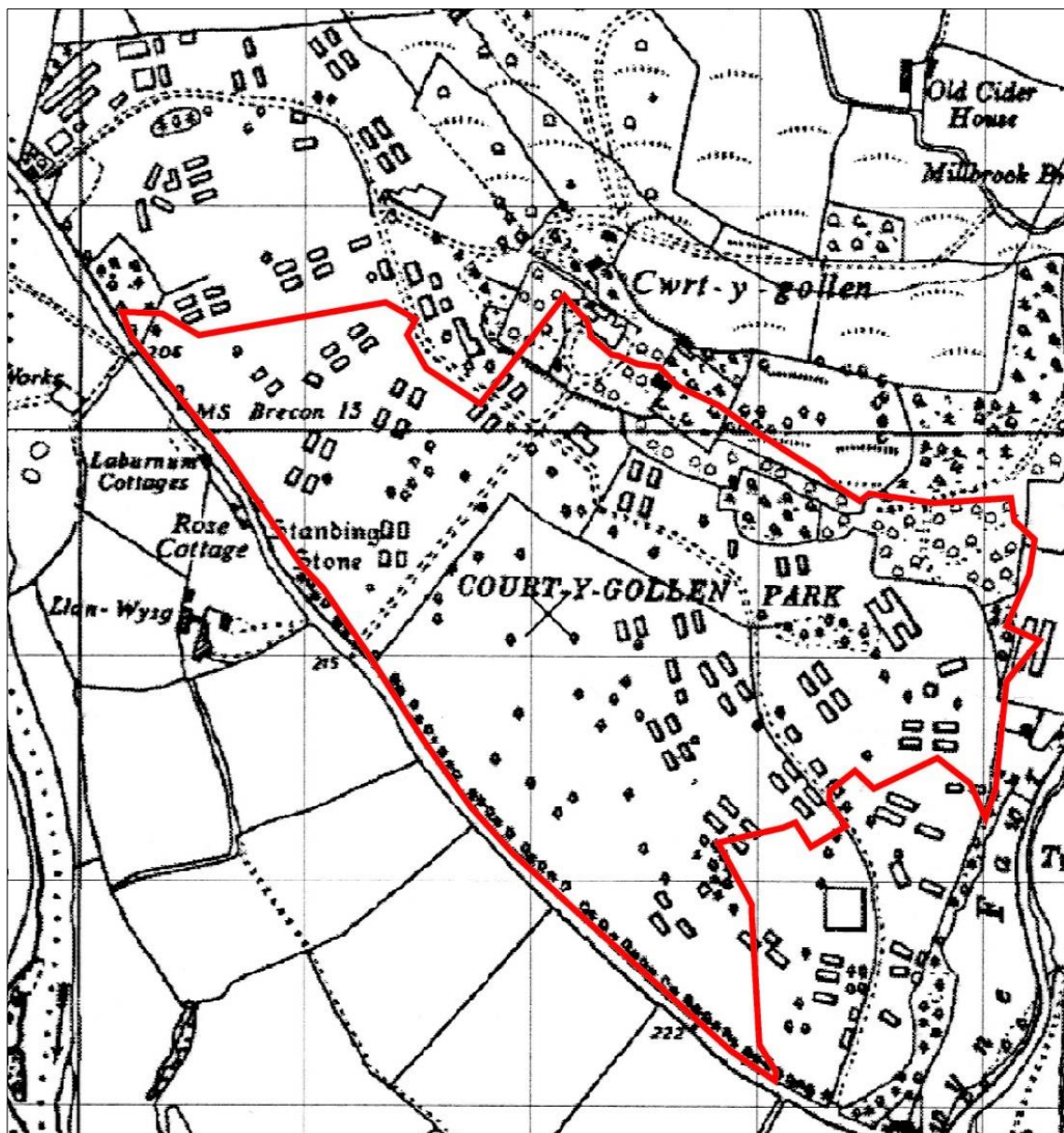
- 4.21. The Ammo Store (Fig. 30) lay to the north of the Headquarters Building and was one of six which date from 1958-63. Of these only two lay within the development site, one of which has been demolished. The store was built in concrete with a single door and flat roof. The stores were used a temporarily store ammunition brought in by troops during training and exercises at Cwrt-y-Gollen.

### ***Building 17 – Pavilion, Phase 4***

- 4.22. The pavilion lay to the north-west of the main access road, on the south-east side of what is now a cricket pitch, being the ground of Glangrwyne Cricket Club. The building was of rendered block or brick, with timber and glassing facing the cricket pitch, and a flat roof.

### ***Concrete bases***

- 4.23. A number of concrete bases were noted to the south of Building 9, adjacent to the development boundary, which are not associated with any of the buildings recorded on historic mapping or vertical aerial photographs. Their absence from these sources suggests that they are likely to belong to a later phase of development, probably during the 1970s or 1980s and may have been associated with portacabins or other temporary structures.



*Fig. 5 Ordnance Survey mapping published in 1964 with the development boundary in red. Ordnance Survey Licence No. 100025855.*

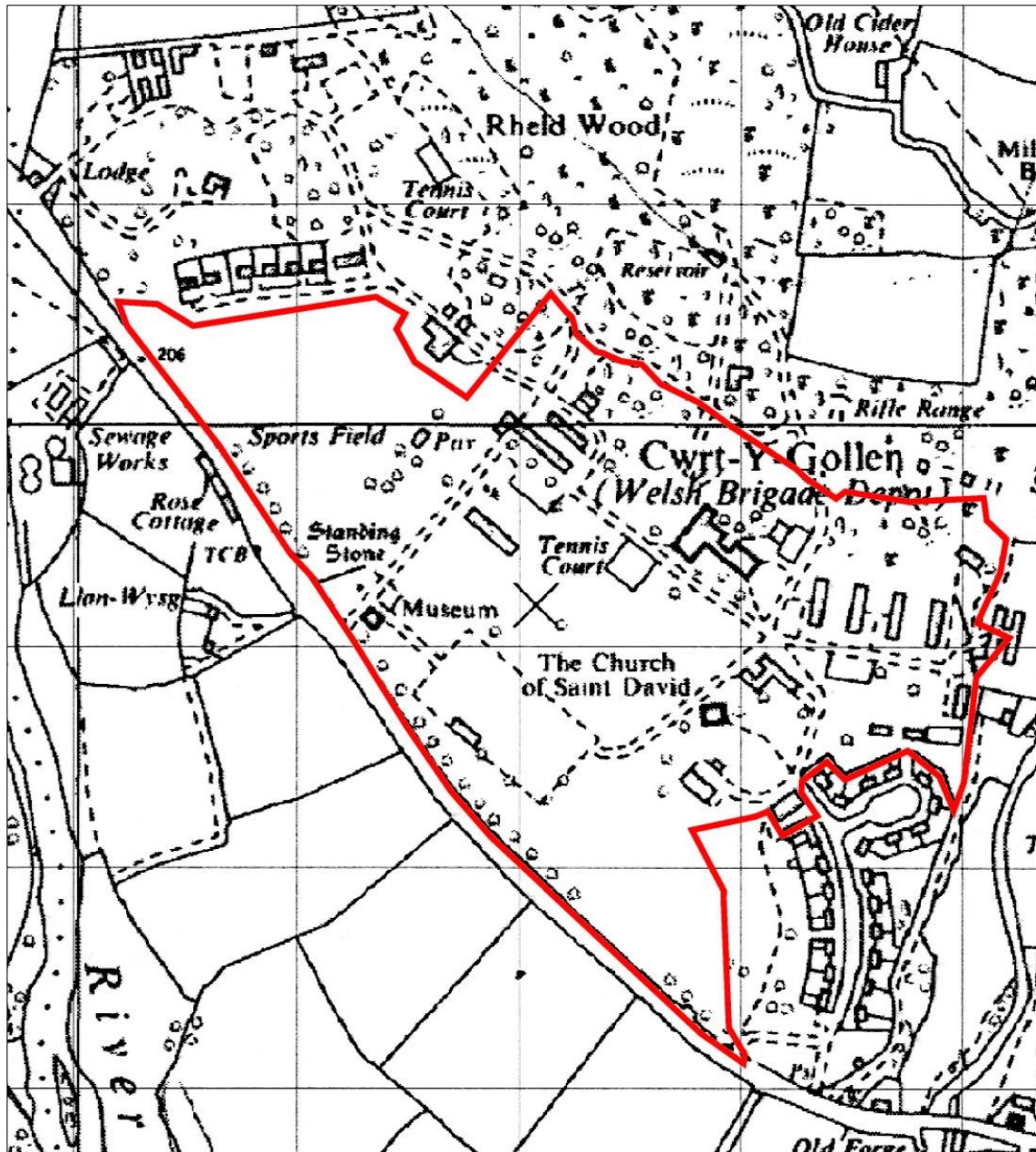


Fig. 6 Ordnance Survey mapping published in 1970 with the development boundary in red. Ordnance Survey Licence No. 100025855.



*Fig. 7 Ordnance Survey mapping published in 2000 with the development boundary in red. Ordnance Survey Licence No. 100025855.*

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The assessment has outlined the development of Cwrt-y-Gollen army camp from the outbreak of war in 1939 to the present day. The camp originally housed troops under canvas until a hutted camp was constructed from 1942 to house American troops. The layout changed little after the war until 1958 when the construction of permanent buildings was initiated to create a new training facility for three regiments of Welsh infantry, known as the Welsh Brigade Depot, which was established in 1960. At the time it was the most modern Depot in the British Army. The Depot was formally opening by Her Majesty the Queen on 10 May 1963.
- 5.2. In 1974 the Depot became one of two training facilities for the Prince of Wales's Division, who were stationed at the Depot until 1986. From 1986 the Depot provided a base for a number of small Regular Army and Territorial Army Detachments. The Depot closed in October 1998.

- 5.3. There has already been a significant programme of demolition at Cwrt-y-Gollen and the assessment has identified 17 surviving buildings within the development site, none of which date from the Second World War. Most of the buildings date from 1958-63, with others being added during the 1970s. A basic external photographic record has been made of each building.
- 5.4. The development site contains one scheduled monument, a Bronze Age standing stone, close to the main entrance, although no significant groundworks are proposed in the immediate vicinity.
- 5.5. The projected line of a Roman road lies beneath the A40, along the south-western side of the development site, although there is currently no evidence for any Roman activity within the site.
- 5.6. While the assessment has found no evidence for any other archaeological remains within the development site there remains the potential for previously unrecorded, buried deposits of any period to be present. The construction and decommissioning of the army camp are likely to have resulted in disturbance to the surface deposits across most of the area, such that prospection through geophysical survey may not be productive.

## 6 Sources

### Unpublished sources

CgMs Consulting, 2005. *Cwrt-y-Gollen, near Crickhowell, Brecon Beacons National Park: Archaeological Desk Based Assessment.*

Rubicon Heritage, 2017. *Former Cwrt-y-Gollen Army Camp, near Crickhowell: Buildings Assessment.*

### Documentary sources

David Sinnett Archive at NMR, Catalogue No. - C627379; Accession No. : NA/GEN/2016/009e

1958 Site Plan

Booklet: Depot The Prince of Wales Division, Cwrt-y-Gollen, Crickhowell

Booklet by A. Raymond Hawkins – The History of Cwrt-y-Gollen

Article by Major Bob Smith on The History of Cwrt-y-Gollen

1970 Letter by S. Gordon Reed

1986 Document (by Pencadlys Cymru on the Allocation of accommodation at Cwrt-y-Gollen, Crickhowell)

Anon, A Brief History of Cwrt-y-Gollen

### Cartographic sources

1840 Tithe apportionment for Llangenny Parish

1904 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1<sup>st</sup> edition Brecknock 41.08, 42.05, 42.08 and 42.09

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1964 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map

1970 Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map

2000 Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map

#### **Vertical Aerial Photography**

1946 RAF 106G/UK/652/1084

1948 RAF 541/116/4003

## **7 Archive deposition Statement**

- 7.1. The project archive has been prepared according to the CPAT Archive Policy and in line with the CIfA *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: 140325

47 digital photographs, CPAT film no 4720



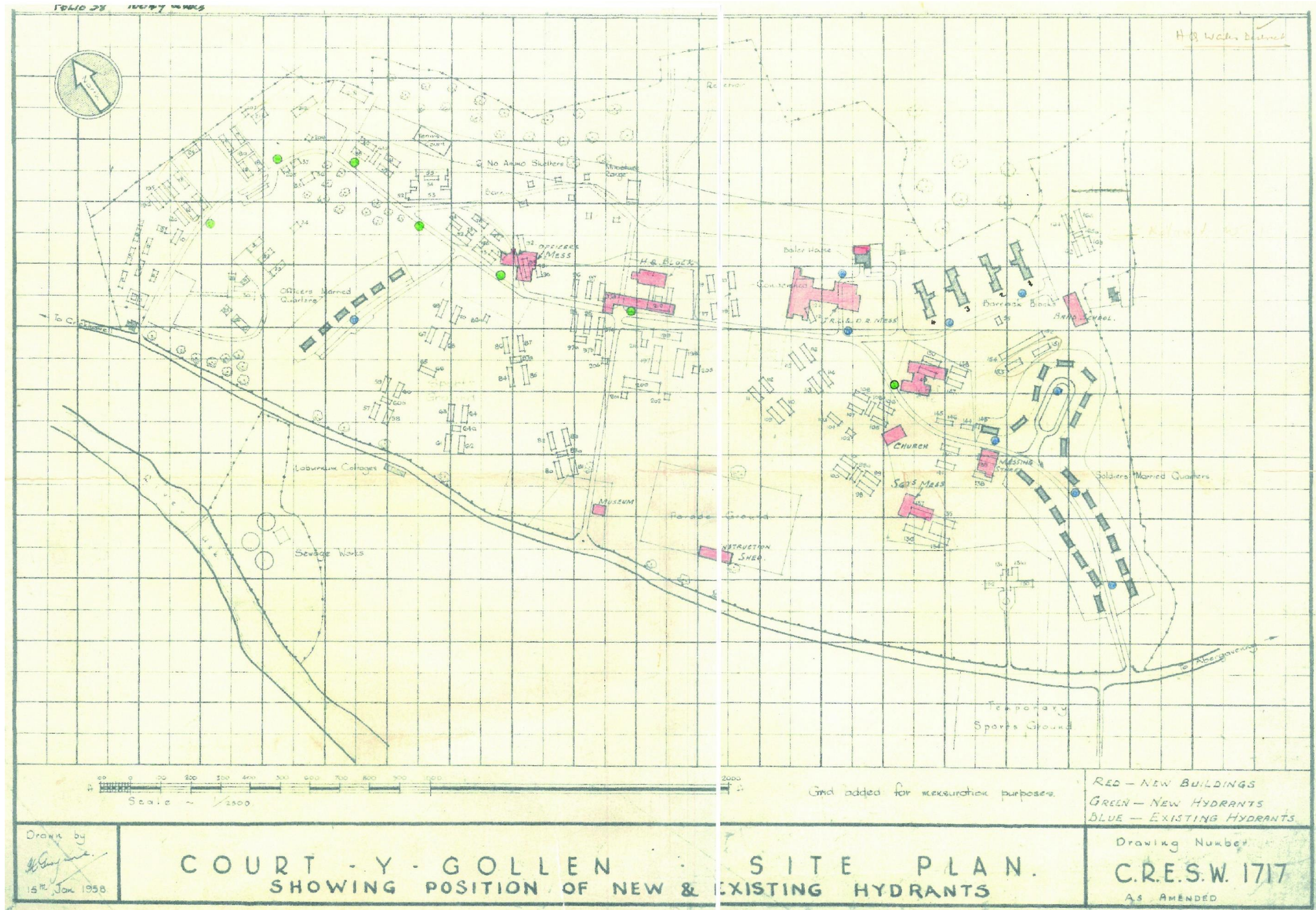


Fig. 8 Plan of Cwrt-y-Gollen in 1958 showing the layout of the new, permanent buildings



Fig. 9 Cwrt-y-Gollen Phase 1, 1940s



Fig. 10 Cwrt-y-Gollen Phase 2, early-mid 1950s

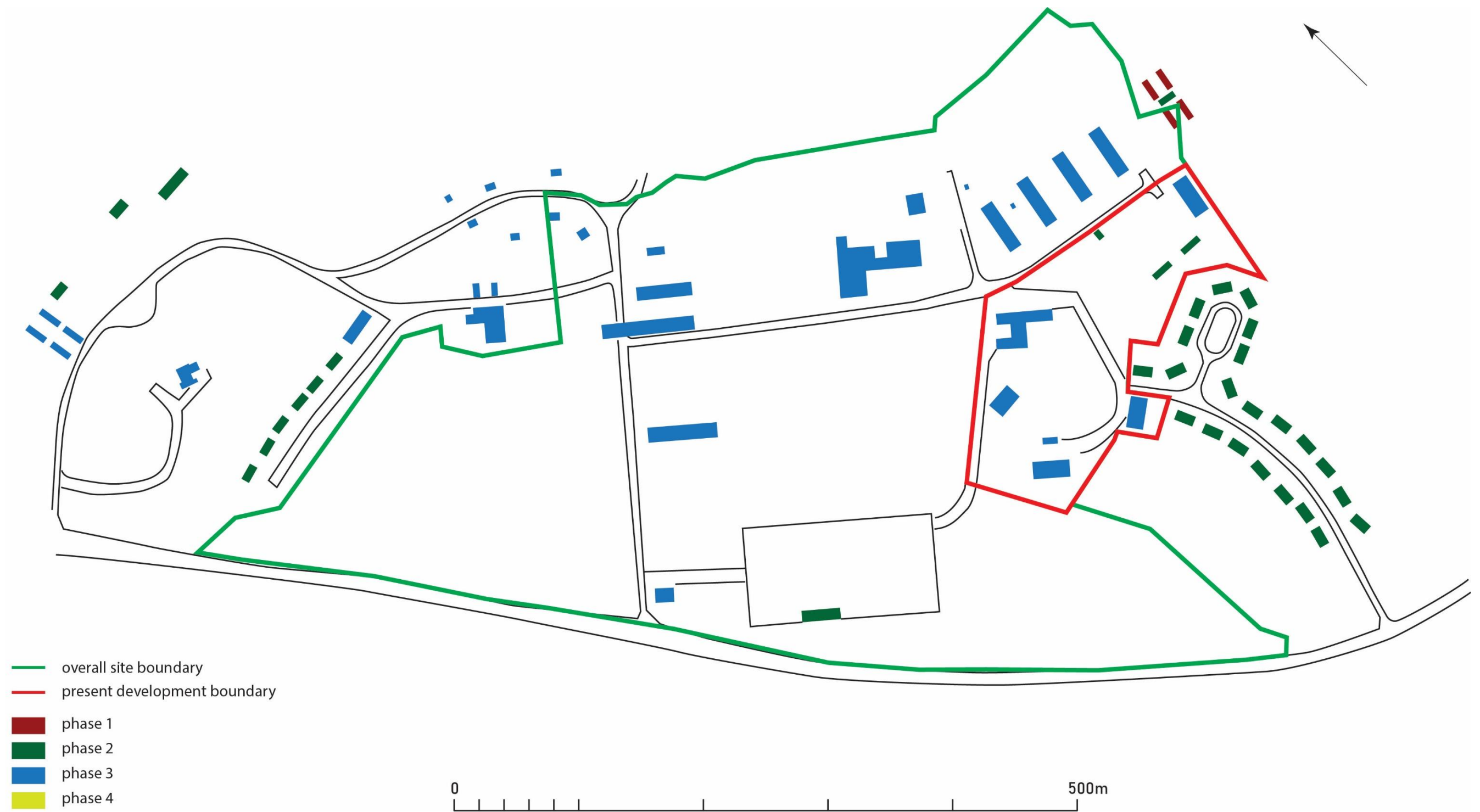


Fig. 11 Cwrt-y-Gollen Phase 3, late 1950s - 1960s



Fig. 12 Cwrt-y-Gollen Phase 4, 1970s

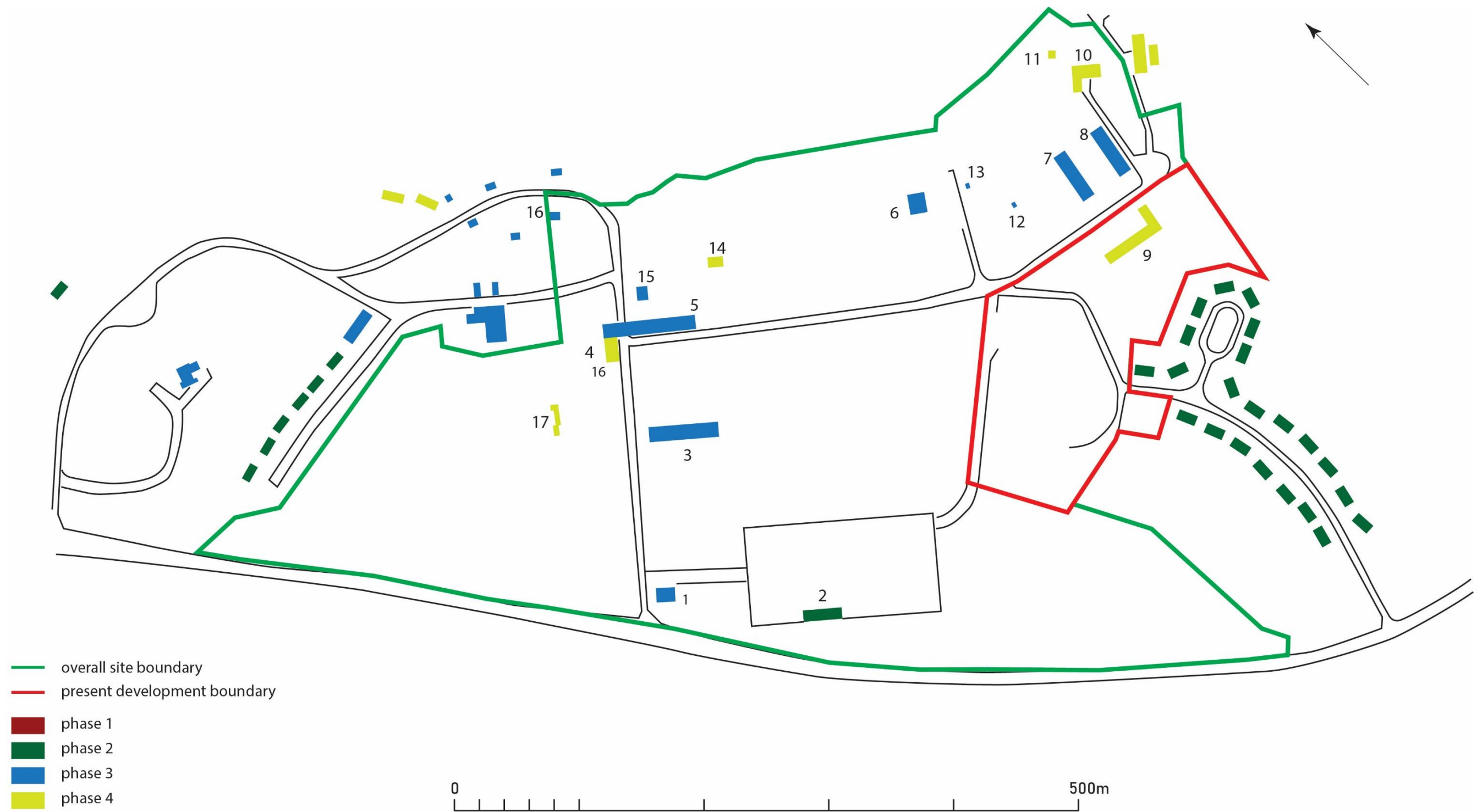


Fig. 13 Cwrt-y-Gollen present day showing surviving buildings within the development site (1-17)

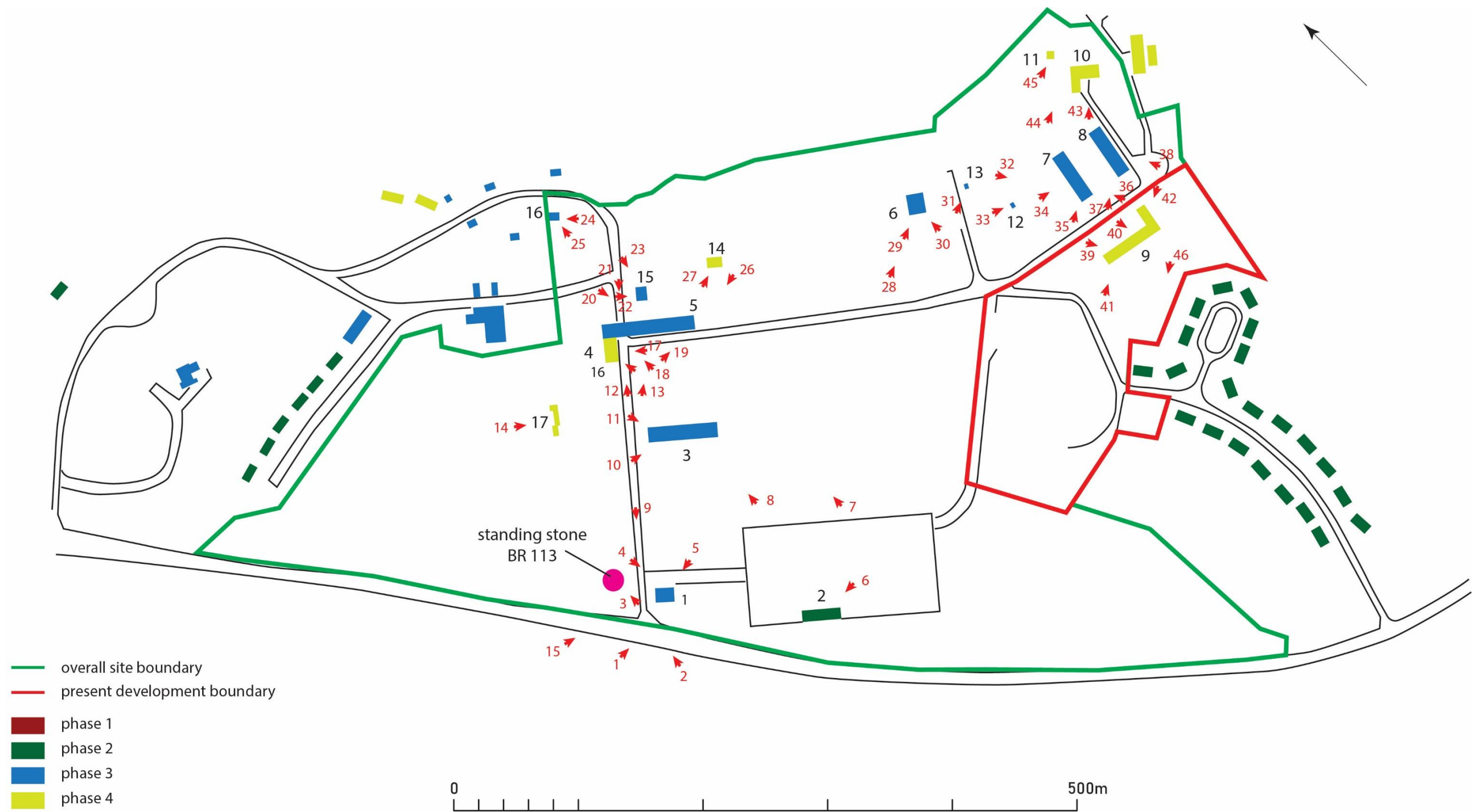


Fig. 14 Cwrt-y-Gollen present day showing location of photos in red



Fig. 15 Building 1 – Museum, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0004



Fig. 16 Building 2 – Review Shelter, Phase 2? Photo CPAT 4720-0006



Fig. 17 Building 3 – Gymnasium, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0010



Fig. 18 Building 4 – Guard Room, Phase 4. Photo CPAT 4720-0017



Fig. 19 Building 5 – Headquarters, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0020



Fig. 20 Building 6 – Boiler House, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0029





Fig. 21 Building 7 – Accommodation Block, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-036



Fig. 22 Building 8 – Accommodation Block, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0038



Fig. 23 Building 9 – Stores, Phase 4. Photo CPAT 4720-0039



Fig. 24 Building 10 – Hang Gliding Centre, Phase 4. Photo CPAT 4720-0043



Fig. 25 Building 11 – ‘Gas Chamber’, Phase 4. Photo CPAT 4720-0045



Fig. 26 Building 12 – Unknown, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0033



Fig. 27 Building 13 –Intake Switch Room, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0031



Fig. 28 Building 14 – Squash Court, Phase 4. Photo CPAT 4720-0027



Fig. 29 Building 15 – Store, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0023



Fig. 30 Building 16 – Ammo Store, Phase 3. Photo CPAT 4720-0025



Fig. 31 Building 17 – Pavilion, Phase 4. Photo CPAT 4720-0014



Fig. 32 Location of the Section 278 works showing standing stone BR 113 arrowed