

Archaeology Wales

Dinas Road, Baglan

Archaeological Field Evaluation



By
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Report No. 1117



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Archaeology Wales

Dinas Road, Baglan

Archaeological Field Evaluation

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Non-Technical Summary

In March 2013 Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) carried out a trenched evaluation on a site adjacent to Dinas Baglan Road, Baglan, Neath Port Talbot, hereafter referred to as 'the site'. The investigation was commissioned by Barton Willmore on behalf of Ryehill Properties, on the recommendation of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, prior to the determination of an outline planning application of the residential development of the site (ref: P2012/0352). The submitted planning application proposes developing the site for housing.

The evaluation of the proposed development site comprised the excavation of seven trenches to determine the potential of the archaeological resource. Within the Project Design the possibility of Romano-British occupation at the site was noted, although nothing of this date was found within the excavated trenches. The main focus of the evaluation was a group of post-medieval deposits associated with Sarn Fan farmstead that stood towards the centre of the site. Also of note was a trackway that ran from the edge of the marshland to the west, through the site, and up towards the road to the east.

Of the seven trenches excavated, six contained archaeological deposits relating to past use of the site; two of these revealed an area of post-medieval activity relating to Sarn Fan farmstead. The majority of the features recorded relate to the recent history of the site, with the farmstead and its outbuildings being reused and a number of infilling events having taken place, all dating to within the last century.

The infilling events have, in places, substantially altered the topography of the site. Within each trench the natural soil horizon was reached, allowing this previously unknown deposit to be recorded. This also allowed the natural slope of the hill to be recorded.

1. Introduction

The site is located on land adjacent to Dinas Baglan Road and Sarnfan Baglan Road; NGR SS 75500 91230, see figure 1. An outline planning application has been submitted to develop the site and construct 78 houses, with an access point along the eastern boundary, connecting the site to Sarnfan Baglan Road; planning reference P2012/0352.

The proposed development site is located along a small strip between the M4, Sarnfan Baglan Road, and Dinas Baglan Road (the A48). The site is bounded to the south and west by a slip road onto the M4 and to the north and east by housing developments. Sarnfan and Dinas Baglan Road lie to the east of the site. The site is situated at the bottom of the western slopes of Mynydd Dinas, at approximately 20 metres AOD. It is currently wasteland at the rear of the houses fronting on to the A48, and is largely covered in a thick growth of brambles and gorse bushes, interspersed with a number of young trees and a few small areas of relatively open grassland.

Prior to the determination of the planning application, the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT), has advised that an archaeological evaluation should take place in order to

assess the potential for the archaeological resource at the site. The excavations took place between 18th and 22nd February 2013, with an additional two days of work between 5th and 6th March 2013. The work was carried out under the supervision of Siân Thomas and Hywel Keen, under the management of Dr Amelia Pannett. The excavation was monitored by GGAT, with a site visit by Neil Maylan conducted during the first week of the works, which formed part of a report submitted to the council and GGAT.

2. Historical Background

A brief historical assessment was carried out prior to the commencement of works. This assessment suggested that a number of features dating from the Romano-British to modern periods could be present within the area proposed for development.

The site is located approximately 50m to the south west of the proposed Roman road, which connected Neath and Cardiff. The road would have attracted settlement along its course, with a possibility that there was settlement in proximity to the site. The cartographic evidence for the site shows the presence of a small farmstead, Sarn Fan, and arable fields within the bounds of the site, see figure 2. The tithe maps show the presence of a trackway, which linked Sarnfan and Dinas Baglan Road to the east, with fields located to the west. By the 1930s housing had begun to encroach on the site and by the 1960s housing stretched along the eastern edge of the site. Sarn Fan farmstead stood until the 1980s, and the fields associated with the farm remained unaltered within the bounds of the site until the 1930s when the field boundaries in the southern half of the site were removed. The boundaries to the north remained in use until the 1980s. The trackway from the marshland to the west is still in partial use and runs through the middle of the site, providing access to the site from Sarnfan and Dinas Baglan Road.

The assessment suggested that a number of features could survive as buried remains within the site. It is possible that features relating to activity from the Romano-British period may survive on the site. The remains of Sarn Fan farmstead and its related out-buildings and field boundaries are likely to be preserved within the site. It is possible that the modern removal of these features badly disturbed any below ground remains, although it is likely that foundation cuts for the walls of the buildings and field boundaries remain *in situ*. The trackway is still in partial use and it is possible that the western extent through the site survives below ground relatively undisturbed.

3. Aims and Objectives

The objective of the evaluation was primarily to identify any archaeological remains at the site by the excavation of a series of strategically placed trial trenches. The placement of the trenches had been agreed with GGAT based on the documentary and cartographic evidence for the site, see figure 3. Each trench was located to assess the archaeological potential of a specific resource.

Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were located to assess the field boundaries shown on the cartographic sources. Trench 4 was located to sample a section of the remains of Sarn Fan farmstead building, collecting dating evidence for the construction, use and destruction of the building. Trench 5 was located to sample any remains of a building associated with the farmstead and to investigate the trackway which connected the marshlands to the west of the site with

Sarnfan Baglan Road to the east. Lastly, trench 6 was located to further investigate this trackway and to collect any evidence of Roman activity within this area of the site.

This report provides details of the results of the excavations to support the planning application.

4. Methodology

A total of six evaluation trenches were to be excavated across the site, with the locations of each agreed between Dr Amelia Pannett and Neil Maylan of GGAT prior to the commencement of works. Once work began, however, it became clear that the locations of two of the trenches, numbers 5 and 6, would need to be altered, see figure 4.

The building to be sampled by the excavation of trench 5 was still partially extant. Added to this, the ground to the south, where the trackway is located, was very marshy due to the presence of a stream. It was decided that the primary focus should be on the remains of the building, so the position of the trench was altered accordingly. This meant that the partially extant south wall was left *in situ*.

The presence of the stream also meant that position of trench 6 had to be altered. It was moved to a location south of the stream. To ensure that a thorough investigation of the trackway and the possible Roman remains was completed, a seventh trench was excavated on the north side of the stream.

Four of the trenches were excavated using a JCB, whilst the remaining three were excavated using a tracked mechanical excavator. Each was equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were excavated to the archaeological horizon or the natural soil horizon, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were all between 15 and 20 metres in length and varied in width from 1.6 – 1.2 metres, depending on the machine being used.

The land forming the southern half of the site is in the ownership of Neath Port Talbot Council.

5. Results

Seven trenches were excavated across the site to evaluate the buried archaeology. Each trench was excavated to the archaeological horizon, which in each case was within the subsoil deposit. This deposit extended across the site and was formed of a sandy clay matrix, varying in depth from 0.05 – 0.50 metres. Where possible the natural horizon was exposed within each trench. This proved to have a sandy clay matrix and varied in colour from a mid brown orange to a mid brown yellow.

5.1 Trench 1 (Figs 5, Plates 1 & 2)

Trench 1 was located in the north east of the site, along the eastern boundary. It was orientated north – south and measured 17.5m in length by 1.6m in width. Along the majority of the trench the maximum excavated depth was 0.70m. A sondage was excavated at the north end of the trench to prove the deposit encountered below the subsoil (101) was the natural horizon (102 elsewhere). The sondage was excavated to a depth of 1.2m. The natural deposit was a mid brown orange, sandy clay.

Overlying this was a subsoil deposit of mid grey brown, sandy clay that varied in depth from 0.10 – 0.05m. Towards the north end of the trench a wall (105) was located, the construction cut for which [103] had been cut through the subsoil, see figure 5. The wall was constructed using local sandstone with two facing courses either side of a soil and rubble core. Two courses survived on each face of the wall to a depth of approximately 0.12m. The wall is thought to be a boundary wall, which is present on the mapping of the site, although it looks to have been rebuilt within the last century.

5.2 Trench 2 (Figs 6, Plate 3)

Trench 2 was located towards the south east end of the site, approximately 150m from the access road and stream in the centre of the site. The trench measured 16.5m in length by 1.2m in width; with an average depth of 0.45m. The trench was orientated north – south.

Only two archaeological features were present within the area of the trench, both located towards the north western end. The latest feature was a modern pit [205], which had been cut through the topsoil. The purpose of the pit is unclear; however, the fill (206) did contain a moderate amount of large stone and so may have been dug to bury building waste. The last feature was a land drain [203], which had been cut through subsoil (201), see figure 6. The drain was constructed from ceramic pipes, most likely at some time within the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. The natural horizon (202) was reached across the length of the trench and again proved to be the same sandy clay matrix as present elsewhere across the site.

A very thin layer of topsoil (200) was noted across the area of the trench. It is suggested that the topsoil has recently been truncated, leaving only approximately 0.05m thickness within this area of the site. A similar thickness was noted in trench seven.

5.3 Trench 3 (Figs 7, Plate 4)

Trench 3 was located close to the centre of the site, approximately 40m north of the bottom of the access road from Sarnfan Baglan Road. It was orientated north west – south east across the site and was 16m long by 1.6m wide. The archaeological deposits were encountered in the eastern half of the trench. A large pit [309] was recorded. This pit had cut through the topsoil (300) indicating that the pit had been cut recently. The fill (310) contained a large amount of building rubble. This pit cut through another cut feature [311], which had a sandy, gravel, fill (302) and may have been used as a path. Again, a very modern date is likely. A layer (303) formed from redeposited natural had been lain down beneath this.

Beneath these features, layers of buried topsoil (304) and subsoil (305) were recorded. These do not represent the original ground level as a further layer of buried soil was recorded below, (307). There was no distinction within this deposit between top- and subsoil, which suggests that it has been buried for some time. Separating this from the more recent subsoil accumulation (305) was a deposit with a dark, pinkish, purple colour. This looks to have been heat affected and is possibly building waste. Beneath (307) was a further layer of redeposited natural (312). These buried soils (304, 305 and 307) show two phases of

dumping have occurred within this area of the site, which have raised the ground level by 0.50m, see figure 7.

In the western half of the trench no features of archaeological value were present. Across the trench the natural soil horizon was reached. This deposit (308) was the same sandy clay present in the other trenches. Subsoil deposit (301) was present above this in the western end of the trench.

5.4 Trench 4 (Figs 8, Plate 5)

Trench 4 was located approximately 30m to the north of the bottom of the access road. The trench was orientated east – west and measured 18m by 1.6m. The south western half of the trench contained no deposits of archaeological value, although the natural horizon (402) was reached. This area of the trench was located at the base of the hill, upon which the site is situated. It became clear that this area was below the level of the water table, as it flooded shortly after the trench had been opened.

Towards the eastern end of the trench the ground level rose sharply before levelling off to a flat terrace, which had been cut into the slope of the hill. The terrace is likely to be associated with Sarn Fan farmstead, which stood in this area of the site. A small area of cobbles (411) was preserved *in situ* along the northern edge of the trench. These small, compacted, stones were covered with a thin layer of burnt material (424). This appears to relate to a burning event, which occurred towards the end of the life of the cobbled surface. At the end of this terrace a wall (406) was recorded. The wall appeared to be modern in date, possibly twentieth century. The construction cut [404] had been dug through subsoil (401), which overlay an area of redeposited natural (410). This deposit had been formed by the cutting of the terrace, and appears to have been placed at the edge of the terrace to create a level platform. Artefactual material recovered indicates that the terrace was backfilled during the twentieth century.

A further terrace was evident at the far eastern end of the trench. This terrace had been cut higher up the slope and appears to have been used as a building platform. The remains of a modern garage building were still *in situ* on this terrace. A floor (416) of concrete slabs and a brick wall (417) were recorded. The garage had been demolished and backfilled with a rubble deposit (419), which contained a large number of stone blocks that appeared to have been the primary building material for the walls of the garage. The western wall of the garage (415) still stood to a height of 0.90m and was formed of similar stone blocks. This wall appears to have reused an earlier wall for its foundations. A wall (414) stood to a height of 0.40m and was of different construction to the western garage wall. Although no dating evidence was recovered, it is thought to relate to Sarn Fan farmstead.

The backfilling of the lower terrace most likely relates to the construction of the garage. A land drain was recorded in the northern section, which may have been constructed to drain the garage foundations. This had been buried by the dumping of deposits over the top, which were used to backfill the terrace. These deposits consisted of a layer of redeposited subsoil (409), which was overlain by a layer of redeposited natural (422). This in turn was overlain by a deposit containing mortar and charcoal (413), which was overlain by a spread

of mortar (423) dumped up against the garage wall. The last of the dumped deposits was a further layer of redeposited natural (403), see figure 8.

5.5 Trench 5 (Figs 9, Plates 6 & 7)

Trench 5 measured 20m by 1.6m and was located along the western boundary of the site, to the north of the stream, across a section of a building still partially extant. A number of features were recorded within the trench, the majority of which relate to the use of the building. An area of internal brick floor (516) was cleaned; the bricks had been laid out in a herringbone pattern. A section of the northern wall was also cleaned to reveal large sandstone blocks, cemented in place (517). A section of the cleared floor was lifted in order to gather dating evidence and investigate the possibility of a medieval origin for the building.

It became clear that the floor related to twentieth century reuse of the building. A number of pottery sherds from the build-up layer below the bricks (522) provided a date for the laying of the floor. Under this build up deposit a subsoil (521) was revealed. The cut [518] for wall (517) was recorded beneath the floor. The fill (519) contained a large amount of smithing slag and calcified limestone, most likely from the lining of a furnace. The slag suggests a nineteenth century date for the wall, whilst also indicating the presence of a smith nearby.

To the north of the building a number of courtyard surfaces were revealed. The latest surface was a poured concrete floor (509). This had been poured directly over an earlier cobbled surface, which had been constructed from two layers of cobbles. The upper layer, (512) had been constructed from small, tightly packed cobbles, whilst the bottom layer (513) was made from larger, more angular stones and provided a hard base upon which to create the yard surface. Running east – west along the north wall (517) and the cobbles a small, shallow, culvert had been created (515) to help drain the cobbles. It is likely that the cobbled yard was contemporary with the earliest use of the building in the nineteenth century.

The later concrete yard had been bounded by walls; the eastern wall (507) and the southern wall (506) were recorded within the trench. The concrete had been poured up against these walls and had seeped into the cores of both. A metal water pipe had been laid within the concrete yard surface (509). The concrete had been cut through at a later stage in order to block the pipe [510]. To the north of wall (506) only one feature was recorded, a land drain (504). This feature had been constructed using small stones and is thought to pre-date the later yard, likely being contemporary with the cobbled surface. The land drain had been cut through a subsoil deposit (501), which overlay the natural horizon (520), see figure 9.

5.6 Trench 6 (Figs 5, Plates 8 & 9)

Trench 6 was located immediately to the south of the stream that runs down the access lane from Sarnfan Baglan Road, west across the site. The trench was aligned north – south and was positioned close to the bottom of the bank that lines the southern side of the access road.

The trench was excavated to a length of 15.5m, with the width being 1.2m. No deposits of archaeological value were located. The only deposits encountered were topsoil (600), a subsoil of mid grey brown, sandy clay with a depth of 0.15m (601) and the natural horizon (602). This consisted of a mid brown orange sandy clay. The topsoil appeared to have been recently truncated as it only measured 0.05m in depth. The vegetation within this area of the site is also markedly different to the rest of the site, with short grass, rather than the dense gorse and bramble bushes, which are interspersed with young trees.

5.7 Trench 7 (Figs 10, Plate 10)

Trench 7 (Fig 10) was located on the opposite bank of the stream, to the north west of trench 6. The trench was 6.5m in length and 1.2m in width. A number of features were encountered within the trench, although all were modern in date. Under the topsoil (700) an area of disturbance (702) was recorded along the side of the stream. This consisted of dark grey black, silty clay, with frequent sand lenses and stone inclusions. To the north of this was an area of redeposited natural clay (703) and the cut [704] for the electricity cables, which ran down the access road from Sarnfan Baglan Road, across the site to the west.

Running through the middle of the trench, aligned east – west, a land drain was recorded (706), constructed from fragments of ceramic material. This ran over the southern edge of a large pit [711], which had been cut through the natural horizon (708) and was filled with redeposited subsoil with stone inclusions (709). This had then been sealed with a layer of redeposited natural (707), see figure 12. The pit appears to date to the nineteenth century or later, from the pottery evidence recovered. The purpose of the pit is, however, unclear.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The evaluation trenches confirmed that the overall archaeological potential of the site is low and it is unlikely that anything of archaeological value exists with the northern and southern areas of the site. However, the central area of the site, where Sarn fan farmstead once stood, and the western edge, where the building still partially survives, have a moderate archaeological potential.

The identification of the foundations of Sarn Fan farmstead (414) beneath the modern garage remains suggests that more of the building may survive elsewhere. The recent dumping activity and construction of the garage, although damaging the post-medieval remains, have aided the preservation of the farmstead's foundations. It is also possible that more survives of the lower terrace and the associated cobbled surface (411). The out-building on the western edge of the site survives mainly as extant remains, with the western gable end standing to full height. To the east, the walls survive to a low height above ground. The evaluation showed that the later floor (516) was still largely intact, as were the outer yard surfaces, with the earlier cobbled surface (512 and 513) preserved along the outside edge of the north wall. Investigation failed to find any medieval origin for this building. It is likely that this out-building was newly constructed in the nineteenth century, with no medieval precursor.

No artefacts of medieval date were recovered anywhere on site and it is likely that Sarn Fan farmstead was also constructed during the nineteenth century. The presence of the marshland may have meant that this area of the landscape was not in use until reclamation

of the marsh began in the post-medieval period, with settlement concentrating further up the slope, away from the marsh and coastline. However, no investigation was carried out under the foundations of wall (414) and it is possible, although unlikely, that the farmstead building itself may have had medieval origins.

It is concluded from both the historical assessment and the evaluation results that overall the archaeological potential of the site is low and that there is no constraint in archaeological / cultural heritage terms to the proposed development of the site.

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APPENDIX I: Figures

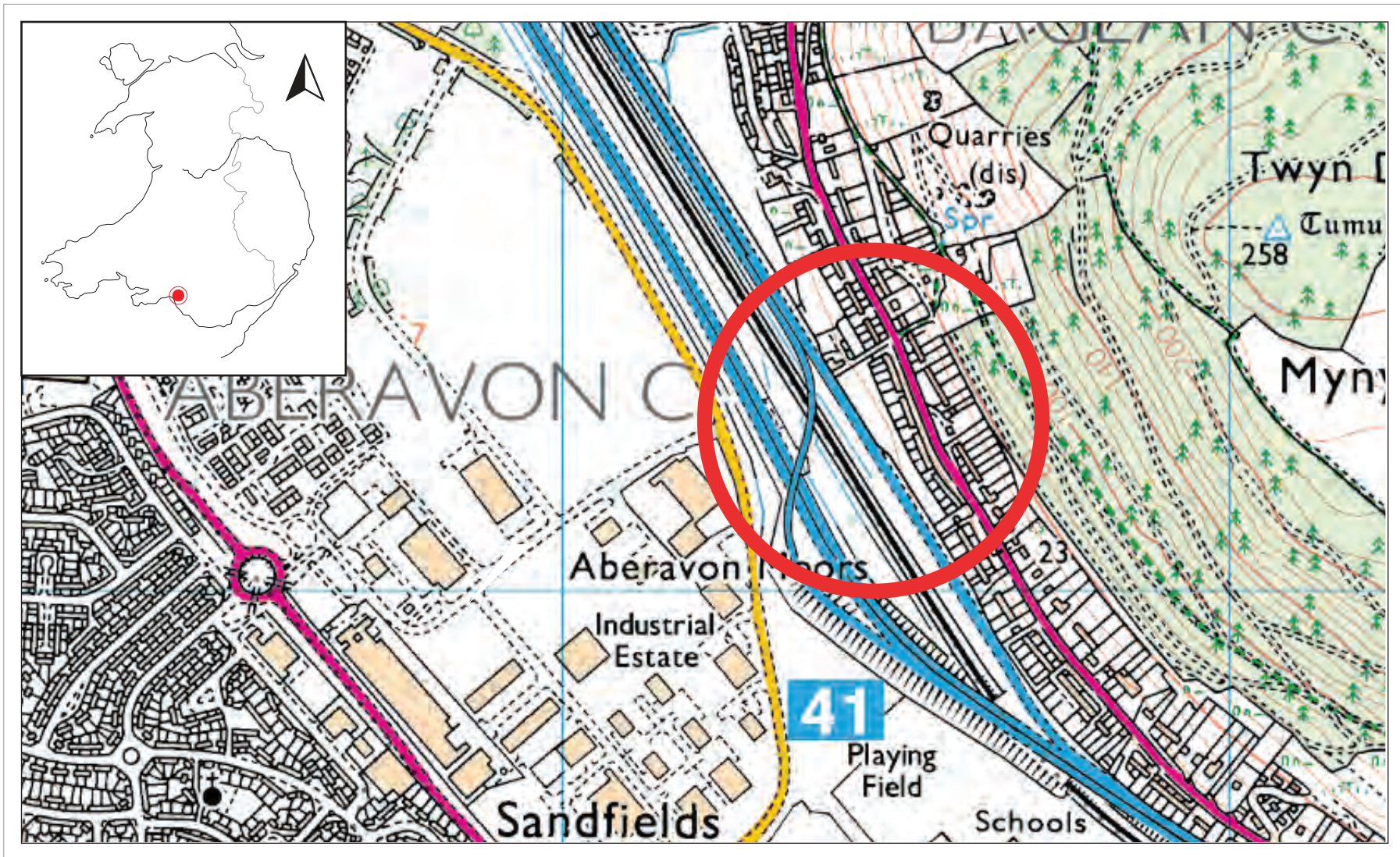


Fig 1: Map showing general location of assessment area

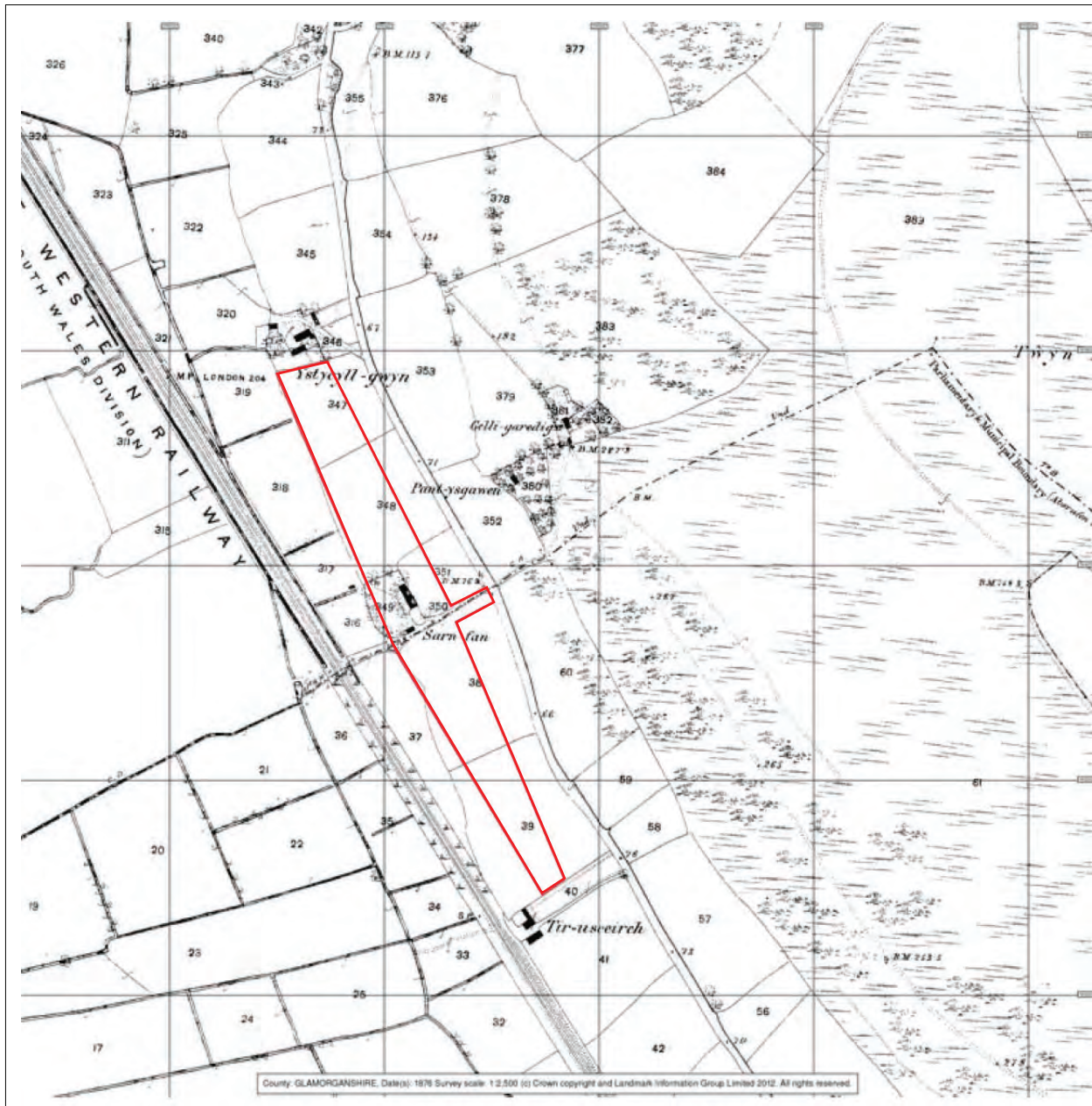


Figure 2: 1876 OS map, the area of the site is outlined in red.

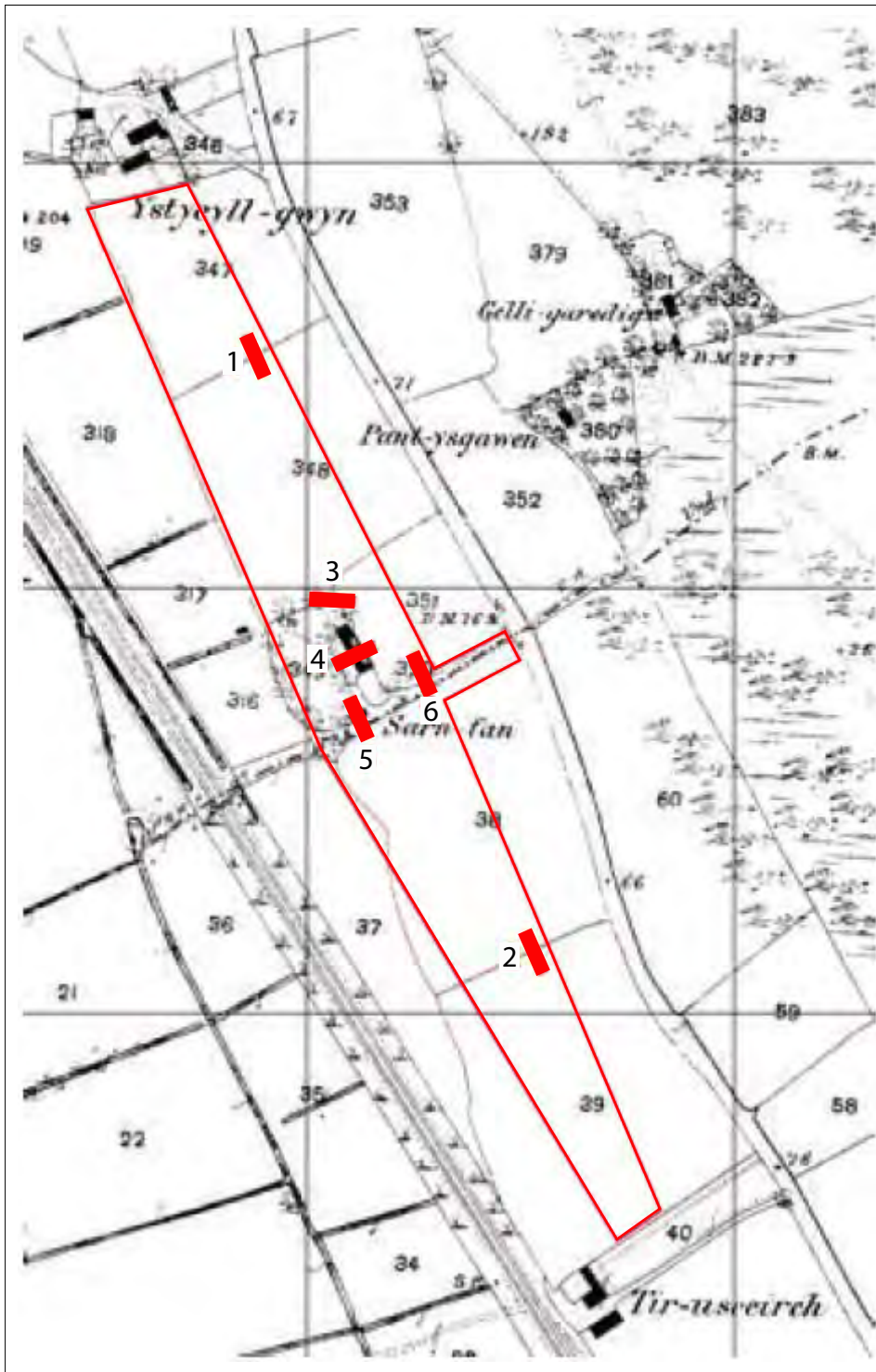


Figure 3: The original trenching plan, showing the proposed locations for Trenches 1 to 6.

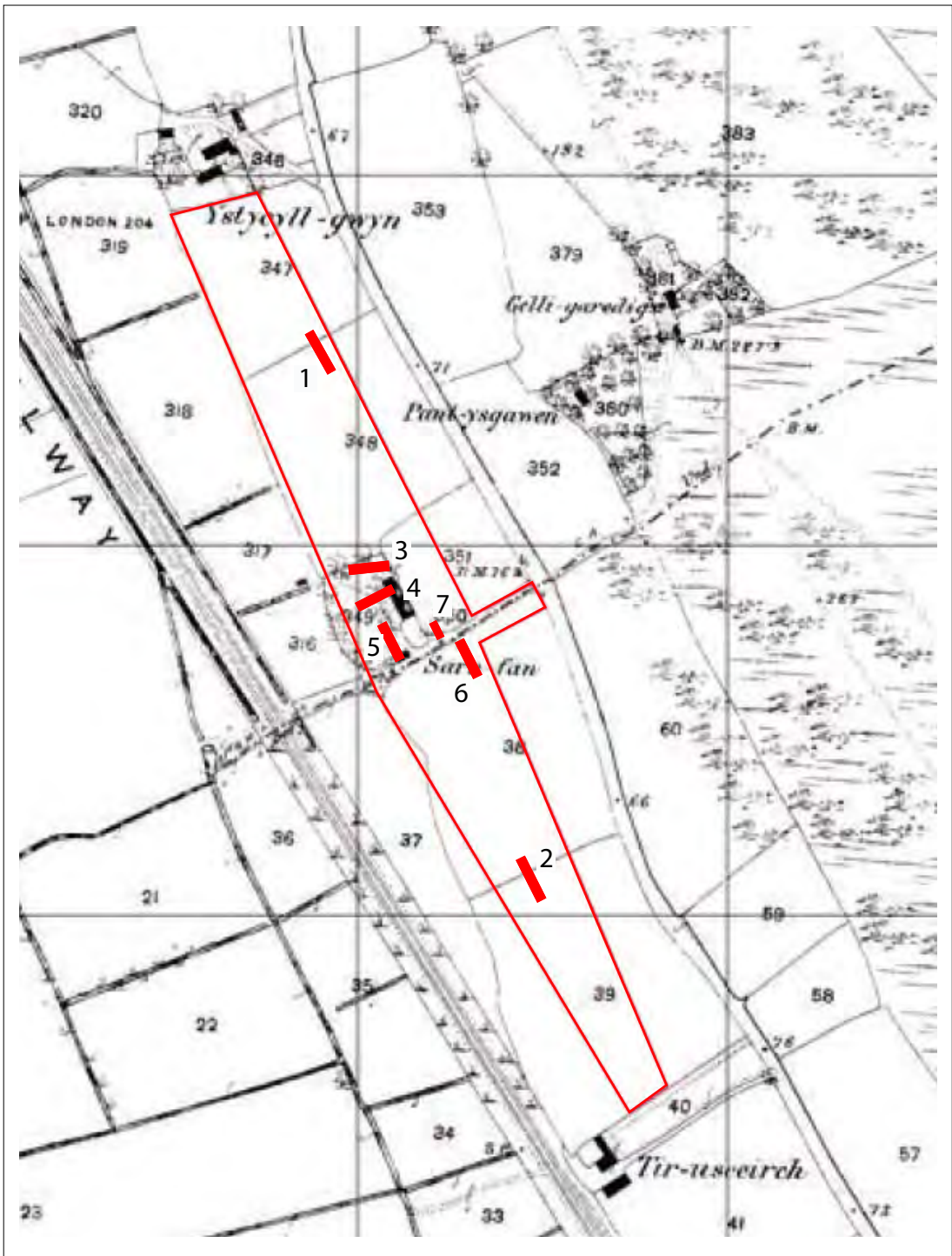
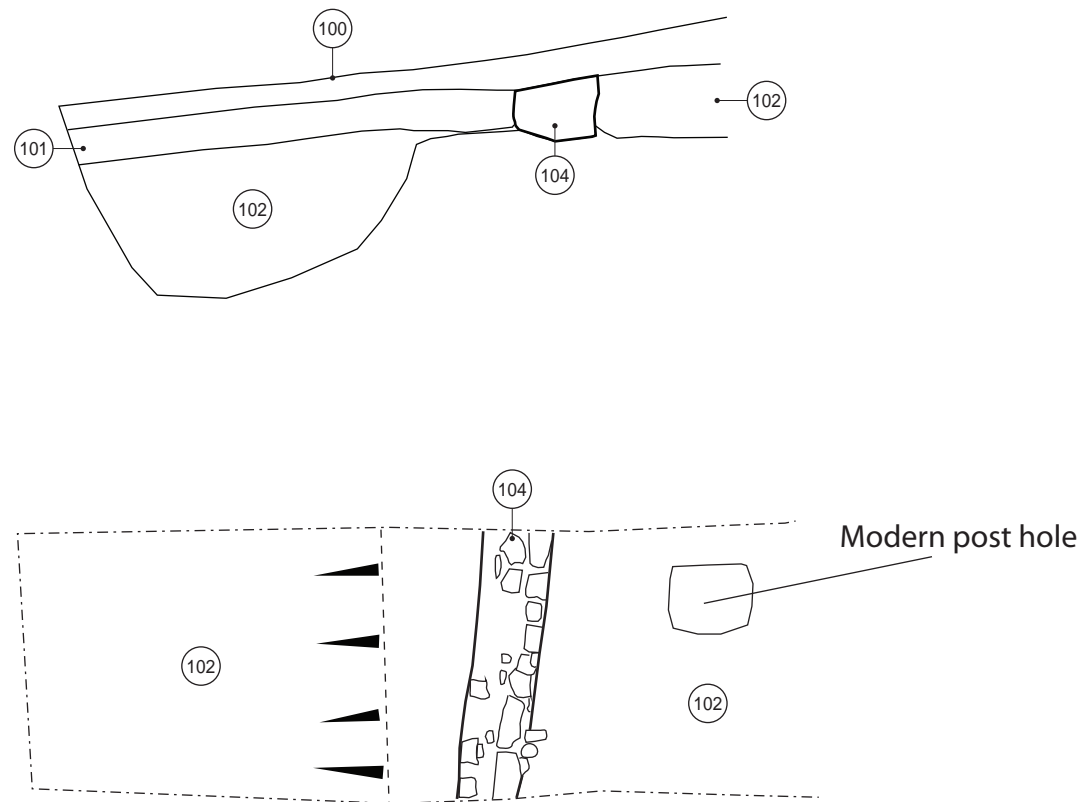


Figure 4: Locations of Trenches 1 to 7



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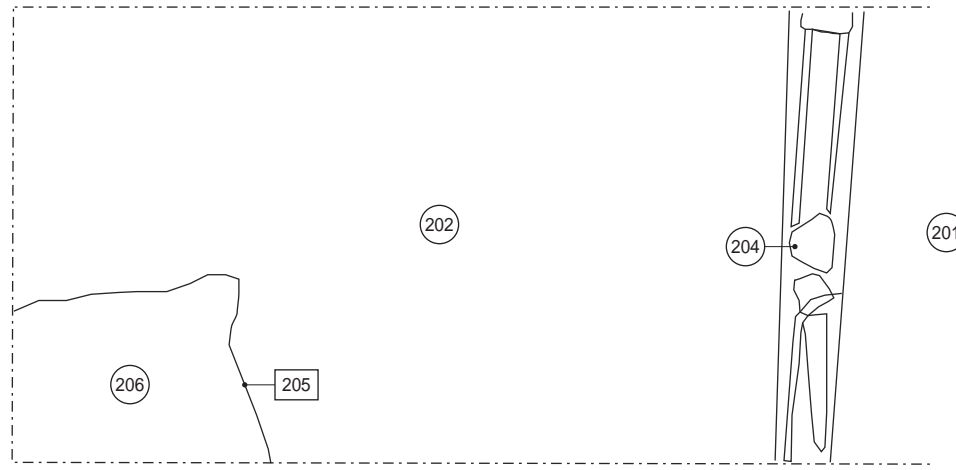
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Scale: 1:50

Figure 5



Job Title: Dinas Rd, Baglan

Drawing Title: Trench 2

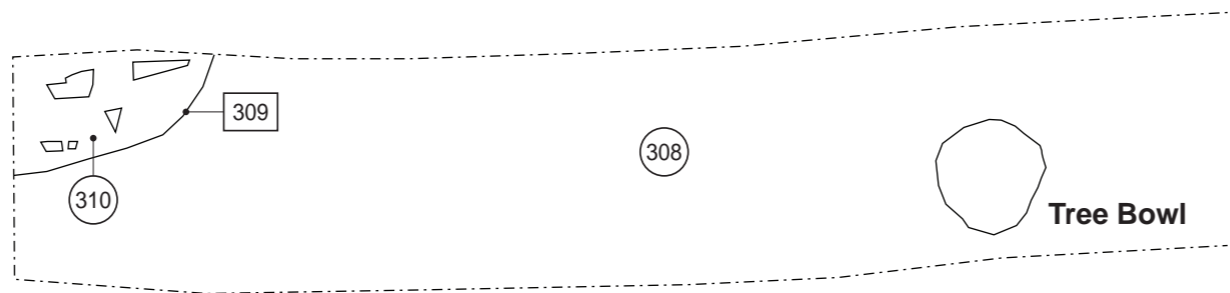
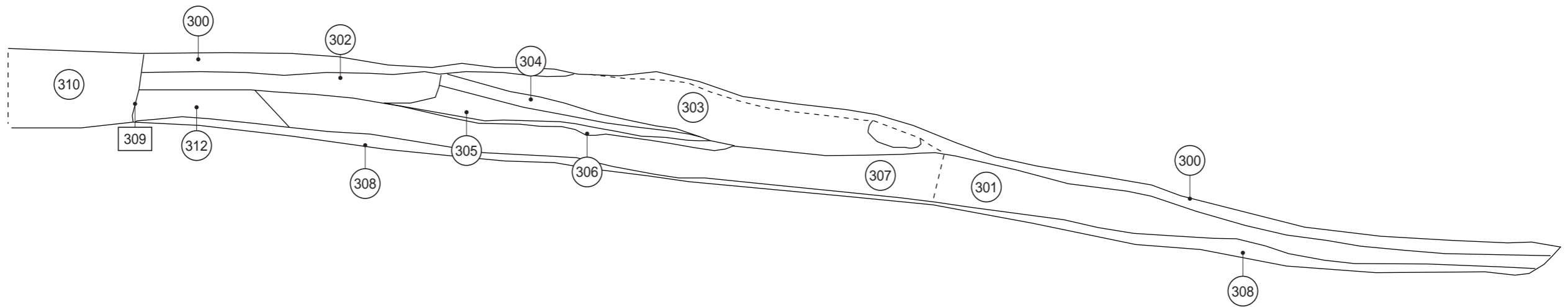
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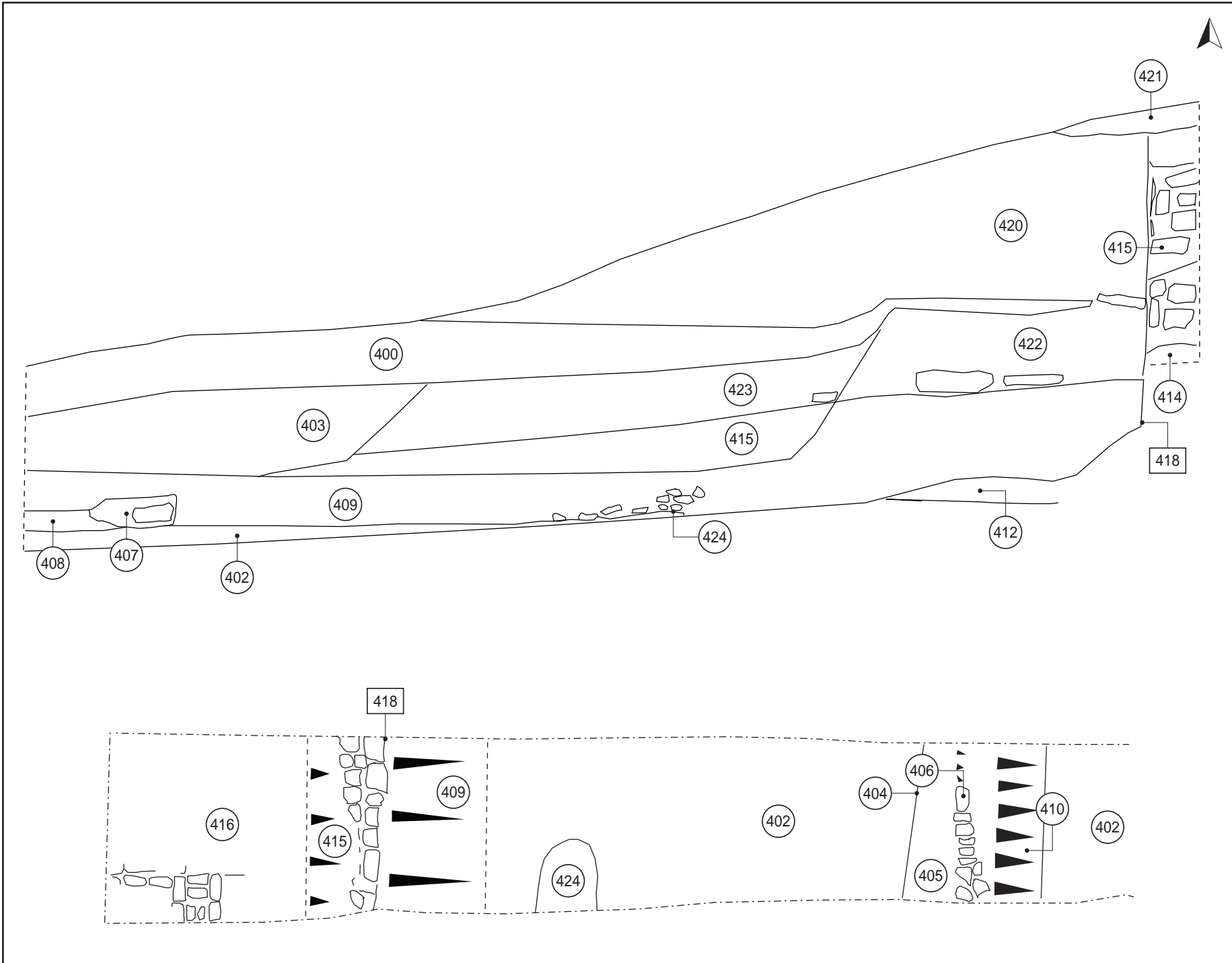
Figure 6



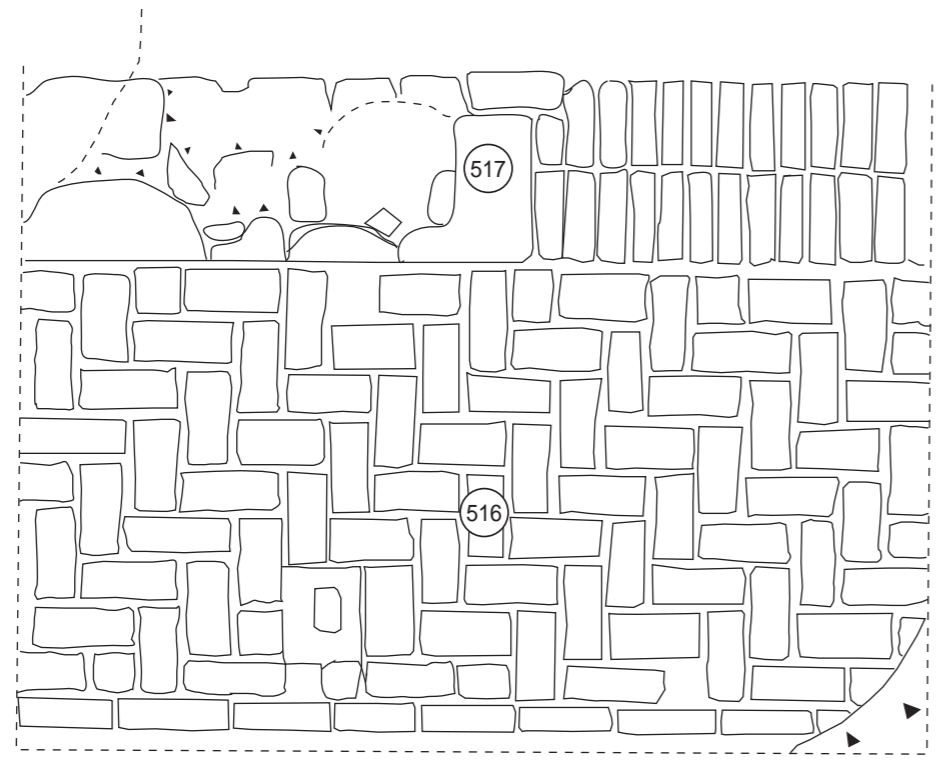
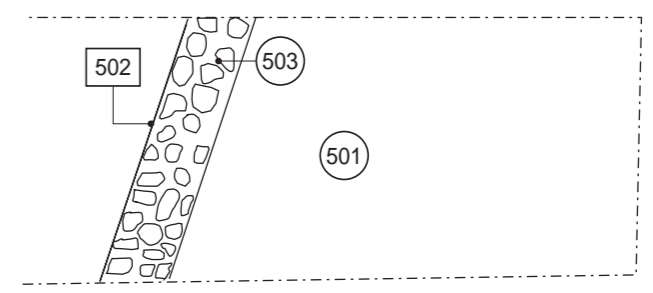
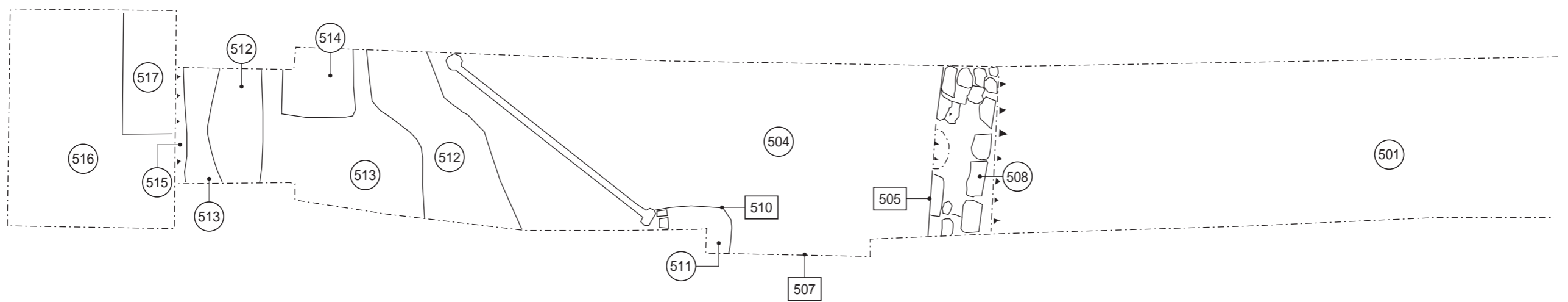


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Figure 7	



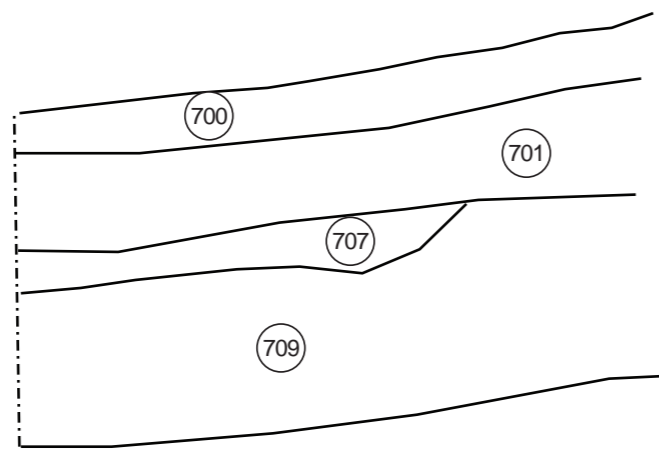
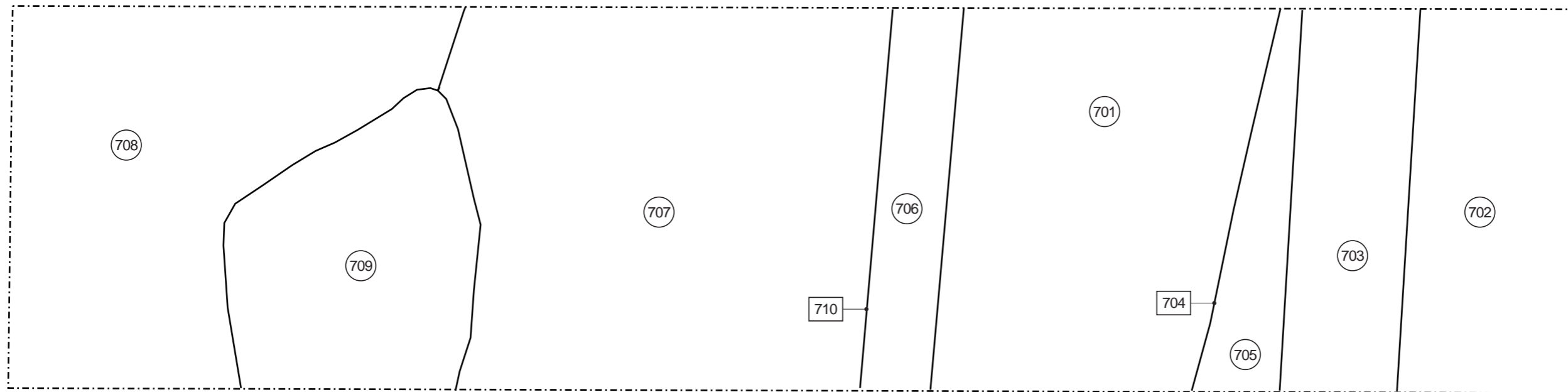


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Figure 8	



Job Title:	Dinas Rd, Baglan
Drawing Title:	Trench 5
Date:	2/4/13
Drawn By:	CES
Scale:	1:50
Figure 9:	





Job Title:	Dinas Rd, Baglan
Drawing Title:	Trench 7
Date:	2/4/13
Drawn By:	CES
Scale:	1:20
Figure 10:	



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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View north along trench 1
Scales 2x2m & 1x1m



Plate 2: View of wall (104) at northern
end of trench 1
Scale 1x1m



Plate 3: View south along trench 2
Scales 2x2m & 1x1m



Plate 4: View along trench 3
Scales 2x1 m



Plate 5: View along trench 4, Scales 1x2m & 2x1m



Plate 6:View along trench 5
Scales 1x2m & 1x1m



Plate 7:View of brick surface within trench 5
Scale 1x2m



Plate 8: View along trench 6
Scales 2x2m



Plate 9: Sample section of trench 6
Scale 1x1m



Plate 10: View along trench
7, Scale 1x2m

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APPENDIX III: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Dinas Road, Baglan

Site Name:	Dinas Rd
Site Code:	DBR/13/DBA
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	SS 75500 91230
Site Type:	Brownfield Site
Project Type:	Evaluation
Project Manager:	Amelia Pannett
Project Dates:	March 2013
Categories Present:	Post-medieval
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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