

# *Archaeology Wales*

## **Old Station Yard, Ffordd Croesawdy Newtown, Powys**

Archaeological Watching Brief



By

Chris E Smith BA (Hons) MA MIfA

Report No. 1058

# *Archaeology Wales*

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Prepared For: Mid wales Housing Association

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Report No: **1058**

Date: **March 2012**

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# Non-Technical Summary

*This report results from work undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) for Mid Wales Housing Association, Newtown, Powys. This report draws upon the results gained by a watching brief on the excavation of foundation trenches at Old Station Yard, Ffordd Croesawdy, Newtown, Powys. Previous evaluation work in the area, undertaken by CPAT in 2007, revealed the line of the Roman Road from Caersws to Forden Gaer immediately to the north of the assessment area, with associated features located at depths of over a metre beneath the ground surface. Owing to the presence of the line of the Roman road, a watching brief was undertaken on all ground works associated with the development. No archaeological finds or features were located with all the trenches being cut into made ground.*

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

In February 2012 Archaeology Wales Ltd (AW) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Old Station Yard, Ffordd Croesawdy, Newtown, Powys, NGR SO 10898 91228 (Fig 1).

A watching brief was carried out as part of the planning process at the request of Mark Walters (Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust). A Brief was provided by CPAT against which a works Specification was drawn up by Mark Houlston (Archaeology Wales Ltd).

### 1.2 Geology and topography

The assessment area lies on the boundary between two distinct solid geological formations. The formation beneath the majority of the Newtown area is undifferentiated Wenlock rocks comprised of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. The formation to the south of this is undifferentiated Ludlow rocks, again comprising mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (British Geological Survey 2001).

The assessment area is located within the built up urban landscape of Newtown. The site lies adjacent to the route of the A489 through the town, and to the north of the railway lines. The site itself is located at approximately 115m OD though the land to the south west, beyond the confines of the town, rises to some 299m OD.

### 1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

Lewis (1833) states that:

“Newtown, a newly created borough, market town, and parish, in the upper division of the hundred of NEWTOWN, county of Montgomery, North Wales, 8 miles (S. W. by W.) from Montgomery, and 179 (W. N. W.) from London, on the road from Welshpool to Aberystwyth, containing 4550 inhabitants, and with

Penyglodva, nearly 6000. Very little is known either of the origin or of the early history of this place, which since the beginning of the present century has, from the celebrity of its flannel manufacture, risen into importance and obtained a distinguished rank among the manufacturing and commercial towns in this part of the principality. The name, which is synonymous with Trenewydd, that given to it by the Welsh, is evidently in allusion to a somewhat recent date, but whether with reference to its origin, or to any more ancient town which previously existed near the site, has not been ascertained. On the banks of the Severn, at the distance of about a mile, on the left of the road to Welshpool, are some remains of a British encampment, but no historical event is recorded which in any way connects it with the town ; and on the right of the same road are traces of the Roman way from Caer-Sws to the Gaer near Montgomery. At the former of these places coins, bricks, and other relics of Roman antiquity, have been discovered ; and there are some remains of the castle of Dolvorwyn, near the town. During the civil war of the seventeenth century, Charles I., on his way to Chester, was hospitably entertained for two days and two nights by Sir John Pryce, at Newtown Hall, the residence of that family since the time of Henry VI., on his departure from which he narrowly escaped being made prisoner by Sir Thomas Myddelton. The town is situated in a beautiful valley on the banks of the river Severn, and consists of one principal street, intersected by several smaller streets ; the old houses are in general of timber and brick, but those of modern erection are of handsome appearance. A substantial bridge of stone over the Severn was completed in 1827, in lieu of an ancient bridge of wood which stood near the site : this new structure, which is called the Long Bridge, consists of three arches of more than sixty feet span, and connects the parish of Newtown with Pen-y-gloddva, Frankwell, and the Basin, which are in the parish of Llanllwchaiarn, having been erected within the last seven years on the opposite side of the river, and now form part of the town : the arches and the parapets are of grey freestone, and the piers and spandrils of blue stone found in the neighbourhood : this bridge was erected by the county, at an expense of more than £4000. A stone bridge of one arch was built, in 1823, over the town brook, on the road to Welshpool, which, by way of distinction, is called the Short Bridge. The town, which appears to be more flourishing, and to be rising into greater importance than any in North Wales, is indifferently paved, partially lighted with gas, and amply supplied with water.

Considerable improvements have taken place within the last few years, among which is the construction of a new road leading through the heart of the county of Radnor to Builth, and forming the most direct road from Chester, and the northern parts of Wales, to the south-western part of England. A book society was established in 1830, which is liberally supported by subscription among the inhabitants of the town and the immediate vicinity. The environs abound with pleasing and romantic scenery, and a fine view of the town is obtained from the summits of the hills on the north and south sides. At the distance of about a mile and a half on the road to Builth there is a picturesque and strikingly beautiful spot, which is much resorted to by the inhabitants: from the summit of a shelving mass of rock, eighty feet high, a stream of water rushes with

impetuosity, forming in its descent a fine cascade, and winds at the base through a glen which is richly planted with shrubs and trees of various kinds.

The staple trade of this place and its neighbour-hood is the manufacture of flannel, which was first introduced about forty years since, and for several years conducted upon a small scale, the average number of pieces not exceeding ten per week. The superior fineness of the Welsh wool, and the peculiar softness of the water of the Severn, afforded every facility for conducting this manufacture to advantage; and the skill and care bestowed by the masters on the finishing of the goods have distinguished the flannels of Newtown for unrivalled excellence of quality. The manufacture is now carried on to a very considerable extent, affording employment to more than three thousand persons in the town and neighbourhood, in which not less than fifty factories have been established, working fifty thousand spindles, one thousand two hundred looms, and fifty carding engines, which are propelled by water and steam. The average number of pieces, each containing one hundred and sixty yards, at present manufactured is two hundred and fifty per week, which are of the finest quality, and obtain a ready sale in the market, which is henceforward to be held for that purpose, every alternate Thursday, in a spacious building recently erected, and opened on September 6th, 1832, the proprietors of which are shareholders of £25 each. Hitherto the market for the sale of flannels has been held at Welshpool, but the manufacturers and other inhabitants of this place have erected the above-named building, with the view of withdrawing it entirely from that town, and establishing it permanently here. Connected with these factories there are not less than twenty fulling-mills and several extensive bleaching-grounds. Machinery of every description is also made in the town, as well for general purposes as for the improvement of the manufacture, into which it has been introduced with complete success. A foundry upon an extensive scale has been erected, in which castings of every kind connected with the works, and articles of every description, are made: there are also potteries for the coarser kinds of earthenware, and several tanneries and malt-kilns, a considerable trade being carried on in malt ; and it is in contemplation to erect a carpet-manufactory in the town. An act of parliament was obtained, in 1814, for extending the Montgomeryshire canal from Garthmill to this town, a distance of eight miles, which has been carried into effect with great benefit to the trade of the place : this new line of inland navigation, which is called the Western branch of the Montgomeryshire canal, was opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1819, and, in the course of the following year, the basin, which is three hundred feet in length and one hundred feet wide, was completed. Several convenient wharfs and yards have been erected for storing coal, bricks, slates, timber, and other articles of merchandise, and numerous lime-kilns have been built along the banks of this canal, which has contributed to facilitate the conveyance of the heavier articles of manufacture, and to supply the neighbourhood with commodities of every kind. The markets, which are abundantly supplied and numerously attended, are on Tuesday, for corn and provisions, and on Saturday for provisions only. The market-hall is a plain brick building, situated in the centre of the principal street: the lower part is appropriated to the use of the corn

market, and the upper to the sale of wool, of which considerable quantities are purchased every market day. It is in contemplation to take down this building, which obstructs the principal thoroughfare, leaving room only for a single waggon to pass with difficulty on each side, and to erect another in a more convenient situation. The tolls of the market belong to Viscount Clive, as lord of the manor of Cedewen, in which the town is included. The fairs are on the first Tuesday in February, the last Tuesday in March, the first Tuesday in May, June 24th, the last Tuesday in August, October 24th, and December 16th: of these the May, June, and October fairs are very large, and amply supplied with horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, and all kinds of wares; at the October fair, of which the first day is always for sheep and pigs, more than eighteen thousand sheep are generally sold.

By the late act for amending the representation of the people Newtown has been constituted a contributory borough, uniting with the other boroughs in the county in the return of a member to parliament : the right of election is vested in every male person of full age occupying, either as owner or as tenant under the same landlord, a house or other premises of the annual value of not less than ten pounds, provided he be capable of registering as the act directs : the present number of such tenements within the limits of the borough, which are described in the Appendix to this work, is two hundred and sixty two. The town is within the jurisdiction of the county magistrates, who hold a petty session for the division on the first Monday in every month; and constables and other officers are appointed at the court leet of the lord of the manor, which is held annually at Easter. It is supposed that the county gaol was formerly in this town, and near the marketplace is an ancient building, now converted into a public house, which is still called the "Old Gaol," but will probably be taken down with a view to the improvement of this part of the town.

The living is a rectory, locally in the archdeaconry, and in the diocese, of St. Asaph, rated in the king's books at £ 8. 15., and in the patronage of the Bishop of St. Asaph. The church, dedicated to St. Mary, is an ancient structure, in the early style of English architecture, with a low square tower surmounted by a belfry of wood : the interior consists of two aisles, separated by a central range of pillars and pointed arches of wood, which support the roof, and a chancel, separated from the body of the church by an elaborately carved and richly gilt and painted screen, which was removed hither from Abbey Cwm-Hir, in the county of Radnor : there are some marble monuments, chiefly to the family of Pryce of Newtown Hall ; and numerous texts of scripture in frames are hung round the walls. His Majesty's commissioners proposed a grant of £4000, for the erection of an additional church, and land for a burial-ground adjoining the site, on condition that the inhabitants would raise among themselves £1500 by subscription; but from some cause the proposition has not been yet carried into effect. There are places of worship for Baptists, Independents, and Welsh Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists. An academy for the education of young men for the ministry among the Independents was removed to this town from Llanvyllin, in 1821, which, together with a grammar school attached to it, is



supported chiefly by the congregational fund under the superintendence of the Board in London. There are Sunday schools in connexion with the established church and the several dissenting congregations, in which about one thousand four hundred children are instructed. A dispensary was instituted in 1825, by William Pugh, Esq., of Bryn Llywarch, who, during the first year, defrayed the whole expense of its establishment, amounting to more than £200 : it is now supported by general subscription among the inhabitants, and is productive of great benefit to the numerous families employed in the manufactures of the place. In a fine park adjacent to the town, on the west, stands Newtown Hall, the seat of the Rev. G. A. Evors ; and the surrounding country is enlivened by numerous other gentlemen's residences, among which may be mentioned Black Hall, the seat of Charles Jones, Esq.; Bryn Llywarch, that of W. Pugh, Esq.; Dolerw, that of W. Lutener, Esq. ; Dolvorgan, that of John Edwards, Esq. ; Dolvorwyn Hall, that of the Rev. J. Price; Glan Havren, that of Mrs. Herbert ; and Cregynog, that of C. H. Tracey, Esq. The poor are maintained by an average annual expenditure amounting to £ 1013.”

The National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland (Hinson, 1868), written some 35 years later, states:

"Newtown, (or Tre' Newydd), a parish, market town and newly created borough, in the hundred of Newtown, county Montgomery, 9½ miles from Welshpool, 7 from Montgomery, and 29½ from Oswestry, by the Cambrian railway, on which it is a station. It is situated in a fertile vale on the banks of the river Severn, by which it is nearly surrounded, and which is here crossed by a bridge of three arches. The direct road from Welshpool to Aberystwith passes through the town, and the Montgomery canal is within a short distance. It was formerly called Llanfair Ynghedrevain, or St. Mary's, in the cantref of Cydwain, and was then only a small village. It is now a modern manufacturing town, consisting of several streets, and containing about 6,000 inhabitants. The houses are mostly timber, framed with lath and plaster facings, like the buildings of Llanidloes. It has been considerably extended during late years, and contains upwards of fifty factories, chiefly for fine flannels, but its prosperity is not considered proportionate to its advantages of position, owing chiefly, as is said, to the popular objections to machinery in lieu of hand-weaving in this part of Wales. It contains a new flannel hall, erected at a cost of £4,000, in 1832, when the market was removed from Welshpool, also a post-office, and a plain brick townhall, but has no corporation.

The National Provincial bank of England, and the North and South Wales bank, have branch offices in the town. Machinery of every description is made, and there are foundries, potteries, malt-kilns, tanneries, wharfs, and lime-kilns. Petty sessions for the hundred, and the winter assizes, are held at Newtown, which has been made a contributory borough with Montgomery, in the return of a member to parliament. The Newtown and Llanidloes Poor-law Union comprises seventeen parishes.

The living is a rectory in the diocese of St. Asaph, value £406, in the patronage of the bishop. The old church, situated nearly in the centre of the town, is a venerable structure, dedicated to St. Idloes. It consists of a nave and chancel, with an aisle of equal breadth on the south side, divided from the main body by a wooden arcade of eight bays, but is now fast falling to decay. Pugh says, the walls in his time were covered with small cards in lackered frames, containing portions of Scripture, and from the roof were suspended several old knights' mantles upon poles. It formerly possessed an altar-piece of the Last Supper, painted and presented by the poet Dyer; also a remarkable rood-screen, enriched with carving, gold, and colour. The antique font and screen are of most curious workmanship, said to have been brought from the Abbey of Cwmhir, in Radnorshire, and have been recently removed to the new church, which was built in 1847. There are places of worship for the Independents, Baptists, and Wesleyan Methodists, also National and other schools. The charities produce about £25 per annum. A little distance from the town is Newtown Hall, formerly the seat of the Pryses, surrounded by a park. Sir John Pryse, the last of this family, married three wives. The first two embalmed and placed them in his chamber, one on either side of his bed. The third, however, admitting no rivalry either by the living or dead, refused to supply their vacated places till their remains were interred. Sir John also survived his third wife, whom he so affectionately regarded, that, on her decease, he engaged a woman named Bridget Bostock to restore her to life, but she exerted her mysterious powers without any desirable effect. Market days are Tuesday and Saturday. Fairs are held on the first Tuesdays in February and May, the last Tuesdays in March and August, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 24<sup>th</sup> October, and 16<sup>th</sup> December.”

Previous archaeological work in the area includes an archaeological evaluation undertaken by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust in 2007. Two trenches excavated in the area found tentative evidence for features of Roman date, possibly associated with the line of the Roman road, at depths greater than one metre below the ground surface.

## **2 Aims and Objectives**

### **2.1 Watching Brief**

The watching brief was undertaken:

- To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

- The main objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on a site.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Watching Brief**

The watching brief was carried out during the reduction in ground levels and excavation of foundation trenches for dwellings on plots 1-4, Old Station Yard, Ffordd Croesawdy (Fig 2). Excavation was carried out by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision.

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

All works were undertaken in accordance with the IfA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

#### **3.2 Finds**

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

#### **3.3 Palaeo-environmental evidence**

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

### **4 Watching Brief Results**

#### **4.1 Soils and ground conditions**

Generally the ground conditions were damp as heavy rain showers persisted throughout the watching brief.

#### **4.2 Distribution of deposits**

The topsoil was of a reasonably uniform distribution in all the service trenches, varying little in depth, between 0.2 & 0.3m. It was mainly composed of a thin, moderately compacted, mid brown silt.

#### **4.3 Description (Plates 1-3)**

##### **4.3.1 Reduction of Ground Levels**

Prior to the excavation of foundation trenches the assessment area was subject to levelling by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. Removal of modern overburden, including tarmac and gravel, revealed a mixed mid orange brown clay beneath. This clay horizon included a large amount of modern material and was at

least 0.7m deep. No archaeological finds or features were encountered during the reduction of the ground level.

#### **4.3.2 Foundation Trenches**

Foundation trenches for the new dwellings were cut by mechanical excavator under close archaeological supervision. All of the trenches were cut into the mixed, mid orange-brown, clay horizon described above. The layer was clearly of modern date and no material other than 20<sup>th</sup> century debris was recovered. No stratigraphic layers other than the clay horizon were exposed. The clay horizon was thus a minimum of 0.7m deep. No archaeological finds or features were encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches.

## **5 Discussion and Interpretation**

### **5.1 Reliability of field investigation**

The overall findings of the excavation were consistent with the trenches being cut into an area of 20<sup>th</sup> century made ground, as described in the earlier CPAT report (Grant, 2007).

### **5.2 Overall interpretation**

The overall interpretation gained from the watching brief is that, whilst the line of the Roman road is likely to be located to the north of the assessment area, any associated features located adjacent to this appear to have either been truncated and removed in the past or are sealed beneath a deep layer of made up ground.

### **5.3 Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due to Pete Brown (AW) for his on-site assistance.

## 6 Bibliography and references

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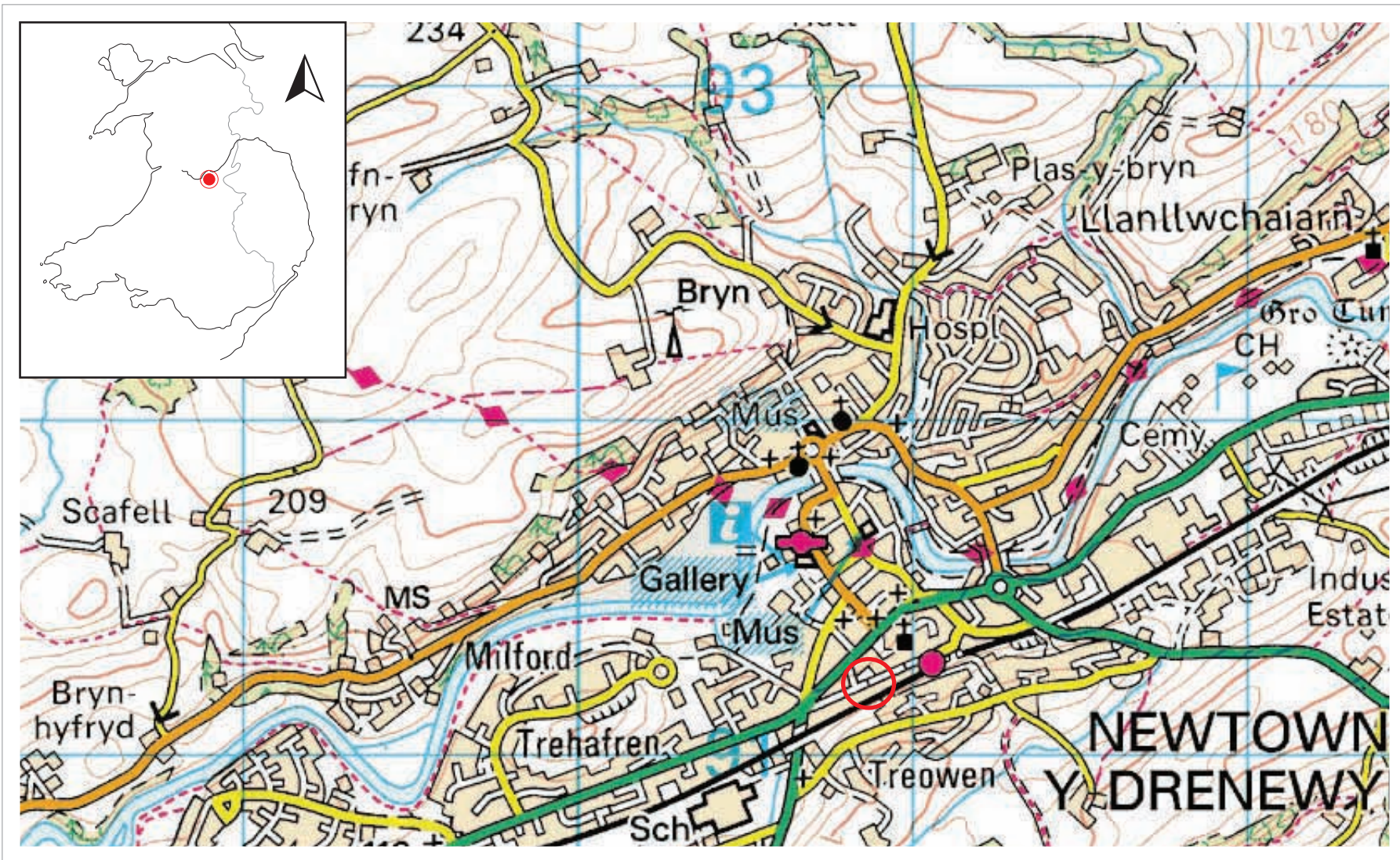
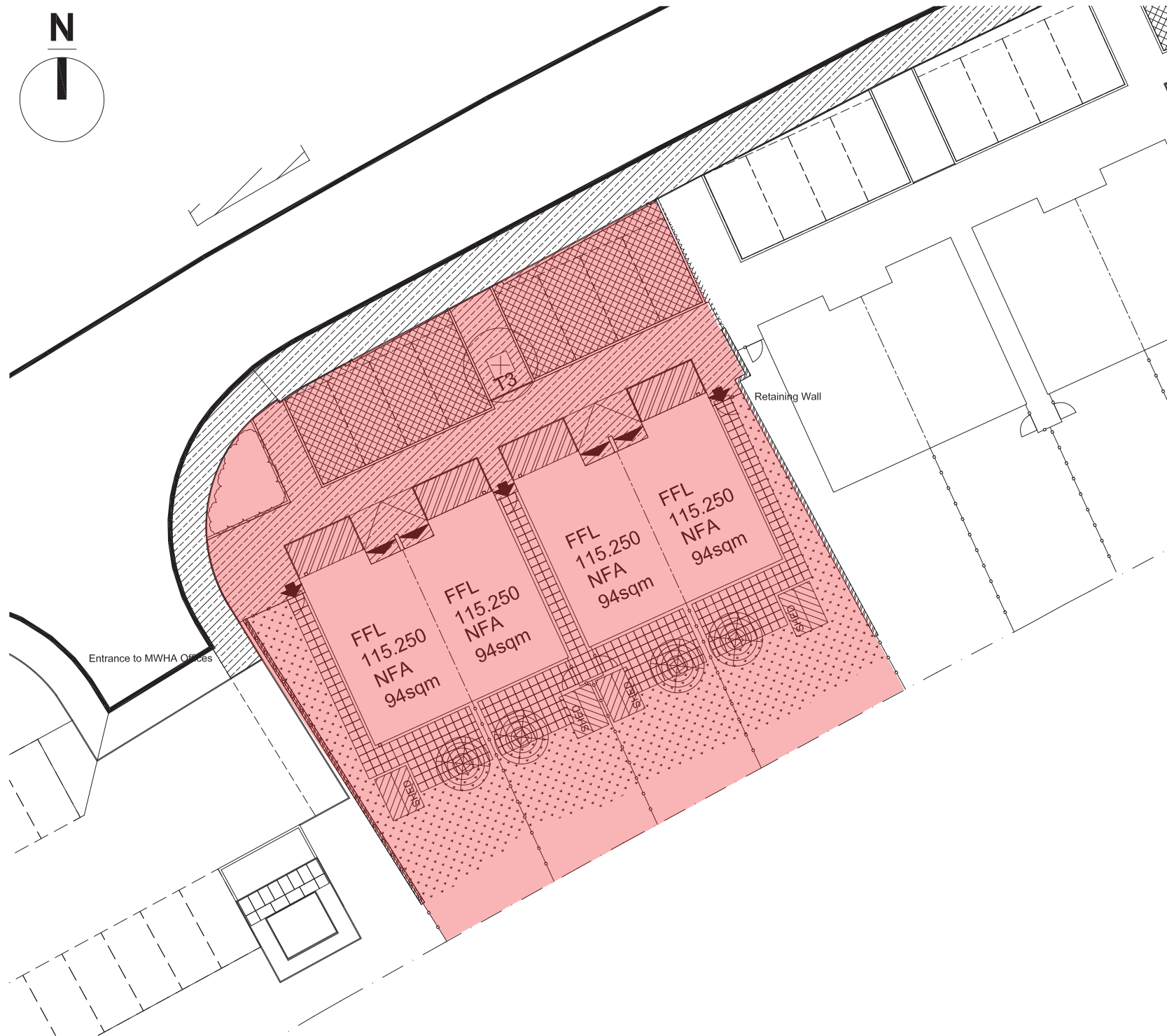


Fig 1: Map showing general location of assessment area





Drawings not to be scaled  
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**SITE LEGEND :-**

- Main Entrance
- Garden Access
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Vehicular Parking
- County Highway
- Area of Archaeological watching brief

Rev.	Description	Date	Rev by



8 Broad Street, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2LU.      38 Broad Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7FR.  
 t : 01686 610311      t : 01938 553436  
 f : 01686 610331      f : 01938 553562  
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**Project**  
 Residential Development,  
 Cynhyfn Plac,  
 Ffordd Gressawdy,  
 Newtown, Powys.

**Title**  
 Proposed Site Layout including  
 proposed landscaping

Scale :-	Date :- 12/11
Drawn :- SG	Checked :-
	Rev.

Figure 2



Plate 1:View of assessment area prior to reduction in ground levels looking west



Plate 2:View of ground levelling and overburden removal underway Looking west





Plate 3: View of modern overburden deposit - Mid orange brown clay  
Looking north east

# *Archaeology Wales*

## **APPENDIX I:** Archive Cover Sheet

# ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

## Ffordd Croesawdy, Newtown, Powys

Site Name:	Old Station yard, Ffordd Croesawdy
Site Code:	FCN/12/WB
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	NGR SO 10898 91288
Site Type:	Roman
Project Type:	Watching Brief
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	February 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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