

RICHMOND PARK FOOTBALL GROUND, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



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Gan / By

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Summary

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by the Harold Metcalfe Partnership to undertake an archaeological evaluation of part of the Richmond Park Football Ground in Carmarthen (at NGR SN 41585 20372). The site is the proposed location of a new changing rooms building to replace existing sub-standard facilities.

The site area lies within Scheduled Ancient Monument CM234, part of the Roman Town of Carmarthen (Moridunum). The archaeological evaluation was granted Scheduled Monument Consent prior to the work being undertaken.

The evaluation trench revealed Roman deposits at approximately 1.30m below current ground level. However, this may not be representative of the whole proposed development area, since there have been significant episodes of modern dumping and truncation of earlier deposits. It is understood that this modern material is not suitable for building over and will have to be removed.

The evaluation has ascertained that it should be possible to design a raft foundation for the proposed development which will not damage underlying Roman deposits. However, to achieve this, the groundworks may have to be undertaken under archaeological supervision, with the opportunity to record any significant archaeological deposits that may be revealed during the works.

INTRODUCTION

Project commission

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services were commissioned by the Harold Metcalfe Partnership to undertake an archaeological evaluation of part of the Richmond Park Football Ground in Carmarthen (at NGR SN 41585 20372). The site is the proposed location of a new changing rooms building to replace existing sub-standard facilities.

An archaeological evaluation was set as a condition on Planning Application W/25547 in order to obtain sufficient information about the archaeological potential of the area to inform an appropriate decision by the Planning Authority. The site lies within the Scheduled Ancient Monument CM234 – part of the Roman Town of Carmarthen (Moridunum). An application for Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for the development has also been submitted to Cadw, and this Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and the results of the evaluation will be used to provide the additional information needed to support the approval of the SMC. The evaluation itself also required SMC which has been given following discussions with Cadw.

A Brief for the required archaeological work was prepared by Charles Hill of Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Planning Services, (in their capacity as archaeological advisors to Carmarthenshire County Council) to provide further details on the methodology of the proposed works. The WSI was approved prior to the archaeological works commencing.

The archaeological evaluation was carried out between the 6th and 10th January 2012. The work complied with the WSI.

Scope of the project

The evaluation was designed to provide sufficient detail to allow informed decisions on the implications of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource. The information will be used to determine appropriate mitigation strategies for any archaeological remains within the area to be implemented prior to or during any future proposed development. The report will be used to allow a decision to be made on the planning application and the application for Scheduled Monument Consent for the development.

Abbreviations

Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record¹ (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Shire Hall, Llandeilo, SA19 6AF

THE SITE

The football ground is located close to the centre of the northern half of The Roman town of Carmarthen (Moridunum). The evaluation area was located in the southwest corner of the football ground at SN 41560 20363.

The site area is presently covered in crushed stone forming a rough surface, with concrete surrounding the edge of the football pitch. The trench was located within the crushed stone area directly to the southwest of the football pitch. A number of small buildings are present further to the southwest of the proposed trench location (toilet porta-cabins with attached services).

BRIEF HISTORY

The Roman fort of Moridunum (the name meaning 'sea fort') appears to have been established between the line of King Street and the flood plain to the south, and to the west of St Peter's Church. The fort would have been founded AD 74-77 and the military roads would have been first constructed at about the same time. The main connecting roads ran from Llandeilo fort, to the east, and westwards towards Whitland; this road has now been traced as far west as Wiston, Pembrokeshire. Within Carmarthen the Roman road ran roughly along the line of Priory Street and its remains have been observed below the current St Peter's Street. It probably continued on the same alignment to the west before turning along the route of Lammas Street.

The Roman town was established to the east of the fort, and is likely to have been on the site of the vicus (the native civilian settlement which grew up adjacent to such forts), although evidence for this early occupation is scarce. The military road appears to have formed the central east-west route through the town. The dating for the creation of the formal town is uncertain, but is probably between AD120-150. The densest period of occupation appears to have been through the years AD150 – 200, noted in excavations on the site of Richmond Park primary school and St Peter's Car Park, where many of the Roman buildings were of earth and timber construction, including numerous shops and workshops. In the 3rd century more elaborate stone houses were being constructed.

The town was established as a civitas or tribal administrative centre for the Demetae, the local British population, and appears to have been provincial in appearance, with none of the finely constructed buildings, such as seen at Wroxeter or Verulamium. Most of the buildings at Moridunum were built of 'clom' (rammed earth construction and rendered) and many of these appear to have had thatched roofs. The town did have a surrounding defence of earth and timber, constructed in the late 2nd century. These defences comprised a substantial clay bank, revetted with turfs and fronted by a triple ditch system. These defences were subsequently remodelled and enlarged during the 3rd century with the construction of a stone wall, fronted by a new wide ditch. Moreover, the construction of the amphitheatre, points to a town of some status or pretensions.

Moridunum, together with the other Roman towns in Britain, was already in decline in the AD300s, retaining administrative functions, but losing a large amount of urban activity. The evidence immediately after the Roman period (AD 410) for this town is very small; there are suggestions that it may have retained a Christian community, but was no longer functioning as a town.

The town was re-established in the early 12th century when the new Anglo-Norman lords built a castle and laid out a small defended town ('New Carmarthen') in front of the castle gates. The former area of the Roman town

(Old Carmarthen) belonged to the Priory to the east and remained a separate settlement throughout much of the medieval period.

It was not until the later post-medieval period that significant development of the Old Carmarthen area took place. By the 18th century Carmarthen was still the largest town in Wales, although it was soon to be eclipsed by the new industrial boroughs to the east. The medieval mills of the old Priory had a blast furnace established near them in 1747 and tin mills were added in 1761. Many of the former Priory buildings were demolished shortly after 1760 when a leadworks was established on the site, no doubt making use of the availability of water that had originally been provided to the Priory. East Carmarthen thus took on a more industrial character. Demolition of the Priory buildings was completed during the 19th century with the arrival of the railway across the southern edge of the area.

Much of the area within the old Roman town remains undeveloped to this day. A large part of the northern Roman town was Scheduled in 1988 (CM 234), including the remaining garden areas (CM 235). The defences on the southeast side of the Roman town were scheduled in 1990 (CM 243).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

There have been a number of archaeological excavations, surveys and watching briefs undertaken throughout the area of the Roman town, with a few in close proximity to the Richmond Park football ground site. The Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) details that in 1871 a north – south aligned wall and part of a mosaic pavement were found during excavation of a well to the rear of 136 Priory Street (Primary Record Number (PRN) 8506). This recorded site lies around 26m to the southeast of the proposed new changing rooms.

The main excavations of the Roman Town in Carmarthen have both been carried out to the north of Priory Street, in St Peters Car Park some 130m to the northwest of the proposed development area and to the rear of 111-115 Priory Street around 170m to the northwest (James 2003). Both excavations revealed floor plans of Roman buildings, indicating several phases of activity and rebuilding. The state of preservation of Roman remains was very good, and led to the area being designated as a scheduled ancient monument.

Most of the other archaeological work has been very small scale, and has usually stopped at the top of the Roman period deposits. As a result, it remains the case that little is known about the layout of the Roman town. The most relevant sources are listed in the sources section, but are not otherwise referred to in this report.

CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Historic and more recent maps of this part of Carmarthen were consulted, but little or no evidence was identified that might help to clarify the land use history of the evaluation area. Figure 2, parts a, b and c show the evaluation trench in relation to earlier Ordnance Survey mapping. These indicate that at the turn of the 19th century the site area was divided into various plot boundaries associated with properties fronting Priory Street to the south and Richmond Terrace to the north. These were utilised as garden areas to the rear of the properties. This layout of the land could suggest the property boundaries have medieval origins.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used was as laid out in the WSI.

A single L-shaped trench measuring approximately 20m x 2m in total size was excavated within the proposed footprint of the development (see Figure 1) using a JCB. The eventual size and location of the trench was limited by the presence of unrecorded electrical and water services and by the presence of substantial concrete and metal debris resulting in potentially unstable trench edges.

The trench was excavated to remove all non-archaeologically significant overburden, down onto to archaeological levels of significance or to a maximum safe depth of trench (not exceeding 1.5m in total).

Following machine excavation, the entire trench was hand cleaned to prove the presence, or absence, of archaeological features and to determine their significance. The trench was accurately surveyed and the data has been related to Ordnance Survey grids and Ordnance Datum level.

All deposits were recorded by archaeological context record sheet, scale drawing, photography and site notebooks. All individual deposits were numbered using the open-ended numbering system in accordance with Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services' Recording Manual². Significant deposits were recorded by scale drawing. A photographic record was maintained using digital formats.

A report has been prepared on the results of the evaluation which appropriately details and illustrates the work (this report). An archive of the results will also be prepared and submitted to Carmarthenshire Museum for storage.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), 1994, revised 2001).

² Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services use the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available for inspection if required.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

Although the evaluation was envisaged as a single trench, because of the presence of live water and electricity services, and the presence of large quantities of buried concrete posts, the trench was divided into two areas (see Figure 3).

Because of the complicated sequence of later cuts and dumps of modern date, the deposits revealed in the sides of the trenches (sections) do not necessarily represent the sequence of deposits across the whole of the proposed development area.

Trench 1 (see Figures 3-6)

Trench 1 ran in an approximately east - west alignment. Over the majority of the trench it appears that there have been several episodes of modern excavation, rubbish disposal and ground level raising (contexts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13 and 22). Much of this material contains very recent debris including metal, plastic and wood (see Photos 2-8).

Beneath these modern dump deposits an older deposit of dark grey homogenous material (contexts 8 and 10) was revealed (see Photo 8). Apart from where it was truncated by modern features (Photo 8), this deposit covered much of the area of the trench and sealed what have been interpreted as Roman deposits. Similar deposits are found in many urban environments sealing Roman layers. Where these can be shown to be pre-medieval these deposits are traditionally referred to as 'dark earth'. The dark soil at this site contains 19th or 20th century ceramics and is probably the result of a build-up of domestic refuse, gardening and agriculture which has probably developed over a considerable time.

At the western end, and in the middle of the trench two modern rubbish pits (Cuts 11 and 12) have cut through the dark soil deposit and the underlying Roman deposits (see Photos 6, 7 and 8). As a result, in situ Roman deposits were only encountered in the eastern half of the trench at a depth of 1.3m below the present ground surface (see Photos 1-7). It was not possible to ascertain the dimensions or extent of either of these large and deep pits within the excavated area. A number of modern concrete posts were present in the fill of the larger feature (cut 12) (see Photos 6, 7 and 8).

The Roman deposits and features revealed in the base of the trench (contexts 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29 and 30) appear to represent parts of several buildings, consisting of post holes and beam slots or drainage gullies (see Photos 1 and 4). Due to the limited areas exposed of the Roman remains, it is difficult to interpret the features with any certainty. On balance, it is possible that the Roman deposits in Trench 1 represent the interior of a building or buildings.

A modern blue plastic water pipe serving the nearby temporary toilets runs through the eastern half of the trench at between 1.20m and 1.30m below the present ground surface.

Trench 2 (see Figures 3-6 and Photos 9 and 10)

In Trench 2 there was a depth of modern overburden (contexts 2 and 23) from 0.60m to 0.90m thick. Directly beneath the overburden was a thin mortar deposit (24) and a layer of possible 'garden soil' (25) between 0.40m and 0.20m thick. Deposits 26 and 27 appear to be occupation or demolition debris overlying a cobbled yard surface (31), all of which are considered to be of Roman date. Against the southern edge of the trench, part of what could be a beam slot wall

foundation was exposed (31), again probably indicating a Roman structure (see Photos 9 and 10).

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS (see Figures 3 and 4)

Context	Period	Trench 1
1	Modern	Chippings, scalpings and hardcore surface
2	Modern	Very dark grey mixed layer with grit, gravel and other debris
3	Modern	Layer similar to 2 but more compact
4	Modern	Redeposited beige clay with modern metal, wood and plastics
5	Modern	Grey brown clay silt with grit, stones and brick fragments
6	Modern	Pipe trench fill. Loose, dark grey soil with modern debris.
7	Modern	Pit fill loose dark grey soil with wood, concrete and plastics
8	19/20 th C?	Homogenous 'garden soil with, gravel, stone, oyster shell and white glazed ceramics
9	Modern	Pit fill similar to 7
10	19/20 th C?	Similar 'garden soil' deposit to 8
11	Modern	Pit cut
12	Modern	Pit cut
13	Modern	Dark grey silty clay with occ. Brick fragments. Similar to 5
14		19/20 th C? deposit of stone, slate and white glazed ceramics
15	Roman?	Mixed sized river gravels, grit and silt. Disturbed surface?
16	Roman	Mid beige clay with crushed tile/brick, shale and occ. stones
17	Roman	Mid grey brown clay silt no inclusions
18	Roman	Similar to 17 but with brick/tile frags/burnt clay
19	Roman	Mottled deposit of mixed burnt and not burnt clay.
20	Roman	Mid grey brown silty clay with occasional pebbles
21	Roman	Pale yellow silty clay. Relatively clean but probably not natural
28	Roman	Charcoal deposit. Hearth?/pit fill?
29	Roman	Group of post holes some with stone packing. Represents part of a building?
30	Roman	Group of linear features some with stone packing. Represents part of a building?
Context	Period	Trench 2
22	Modern	Very dark brown silt with coal, mortar and plastics
23	Modern	Very sandy light brown mortar rich soil with mortar and concrete fragments, modern brick and wood
24	19/20 th C?	Thin layer of very dark brown clay silt. Fibrous matter and pea grit. Surface/buried turf?
25	19/20 th C?	Dark brown clay silt, coal frags, mortar, small stones. Garden soil?
26	Roman?	Brown silty clay virtually no grit. Occ stone and mortar lumps.
27	Roman?	Light brown silty clay, no stones, mortar lump.
31	Roman	Exterior cobbled surface set in brown clay, patched with sandstone slabs and overlain by mortar fragments
32	Roman	Possible beam slot or other linear feature

DISCUSSION

Archaeological Remains

In both trenches there was a considerable depth of very recently deposited material indicating 20th century disturbance and ground levelling. This could be associated with the construction of the football ground. Over most of the area revealed in the trenches, this material either lay on top of earlier deposits of dark homogenous soil of variable thickness (depending how much the upper parts of the dark soil was truncated by later activity). The dark soil overlay the Roman deposits (see Figures 5 and 6). This dark soil material could represent post-Roman abandonment of the main area of the Roman town and its reuse as agricultural land. Based on the known information that the medieval town (New Town) of Carmarthen was located to the west near the castle and that this part of Carmarthen (Old Town) was no longer the main urban focus, then the use of this land for agricultural purposes may have continued throughout the medieval period. The land divisions marked on the earlier editions of the Ordnance Survey maps show long linear property boundaries leading from Priory Street and Richmond Terrace, which may be a fossilisation of medieval boundaries. It is suggested that the main street frontages were occupied with buildings, but that urban expansion did not occur in the yards and gardens behind, as this land did not lie in the centre of the medieval town. It may have been left undeveloped until the construction of Richmond Park in the 20th century.

In some places, the modern deposits/pits either lay directly over Roman deposits, or cut into the Roman deposits. Due to the depth of the trench and health and safety considerations, it was not possible to ascertain how deep the cuts containing modern material were (specifically cuts 11 and 12). Nor was it possible to ascertain the depth of Roman period stratigraphy in this area. As a result we do not know whether the base of these cuts will have completely removed the Roman stratigraphy, or whether Roman stratigraphy would survive beneath the modern cuts. From work undertaken in the vicinity of the site, it is most likely that Roman deposits are of a considerable depth, representing different phases of occupation and buildings within the heart of the Roman town. If the site area had been left as undeveloped until the 20th century, excluding the modern disturbances, it is very possible that a very well preserved stratigraphic sequence of Roman deposits will be present.

Consideration of Development Proposals

The recently deposited material contains quantities of concrete, metal rods and decomposing wood (see photos 4-8). These deposits are very loose and contain many voids. This is unsuitable material over which to build a raft foundation, and as a result the modern material will have to be removed and replaced with a more compact material.

Tests undertaken in advance of the construction of the new stands directly to the north of this site ascertained that the dark earth was a stable enough deposit to be built over. In areas where the dark earth that lies on top of the Roman deposits has survived to a thickness of about 0.40m, there will be a sufficient 'cushion' between the Roman archaeology and the proposed raft foundation, to prevent damage to the underlying Roman deposits.

In areas where the dark earth has been partly or totally removed, levels will need to be raised with imported material to provide a sufficient depth of 'cushioning' material to protect the Roman deposits.

From the results of previous archaeological work in the football ground, it is apparent that the upper horizon of Roman deposits survives at varying depths.

This may be due to later events that have removed Roman deposits, but may also be because the area had a different topography in the Roman period.

Since no systematic excavation has yet taken place in this location, the thickness of the Roman deposits is not known. As discussed above, with a possible 400 year period of occupation, there may be a considerable depth of Roman stratigraphy.

In areas where modern cuts have cut into or through the Roman deposits, the modern pit fills will need to be removed and replaced with a sufficient depth of suitable materials to provide a sufficient depth of 'cushioning' material to protect the Roman deposits.

Potential impacts upon Roman period archaeological deposits

In removing the modern deposits within the footprint of the building care will need to be taken to identify to avoid damaging Roman period deposits.

Following an on-site meeting with Cadw, the Archaeological Advisor to Carmarthenshire County Council and the project engineer and architect, it was established that following the production of this report, the engineers and architects would need to produce a method statement presenting a methodology for mitigating the impacts of the proposals on the archaeological deposits, for approval by Cadw and the Archaeological Advisor to Carmarthenshire County Council. This would be used in support of the application for Scheduled Monument Consent for the development.

In situ Roman deposits were encountered between 1.50m and 1.10m below the present ground surface.

'Dark earth' deposits were found between 0.50m and 0.80m below the present ground surface.

Modern deposits were present to varying depths from 0.50m to more than 1.70m below the present ground surface.

From the evidence recorded within the trial trenches, it seems reasonable that up to 0.80m of overburden could be removed from the entire footprint of the building without revealing or damaging Roman deposits. This would leave a minimum of 0.40m of dark earth and other layers above the Roman deposits. This approximate level is indicated with a dotted horizontal line on Figure 5. Below this level, where deposits of loose material need to be removed, the resulting voids are likely to expose Roman period archaeology in the cut edges, and possibly even in plan, in the likely event that the depth of Roman deposits is substantial. Where this occurs, following archaeological recording, the voids will need to be backfilled up to the general foundation base level with imported materials.

Where significant archaeology is exposed it will probably need to be covered with a geotextile and a layer of sand before a layer of compacted hardcore is laid down as a stable base for the slab foundation for the proposed changing room block. The details of this mitigation (including the appropriate thicknesses of *in situ* and imported materials will need to be discussed and agreed with Cadw and the Archaeological Advisor to the Planning Department are not presented in this report.

Further archaeological work

Owing to the potential for the removal of the modern deposits to damage the scheduled archaeological deposits, it is likely that there will need to be an archaeologist present to advise on what deposits should and should not be removed, and to record any archaeological features that may be revealed by the groundworks.

Owing to the depth of the modern pit cuts, it will only be possible to record any archaeological deposits that are exposed by the removal of the loose concrete laden fills, when the ground levels are reduced across the whole area of the footprint of the building down to the level from which the 'cushioning substrate' and hardcore will be laid.

It is not intended that the archaeological work will be limited to observation, cleaning and recording. The aim is to avoid the need for any time consuming and costly excavation or post excavation specialist analysis, although the need for such work may yet be required.

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Cartographic

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- John Wood 1834 map of Carnmarthen
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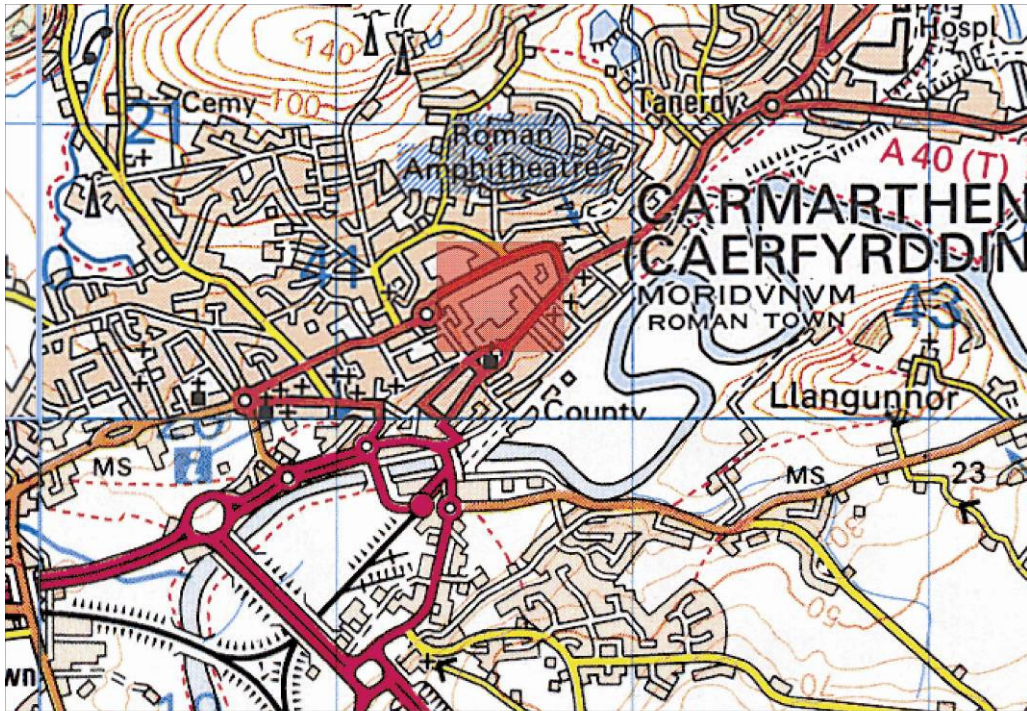
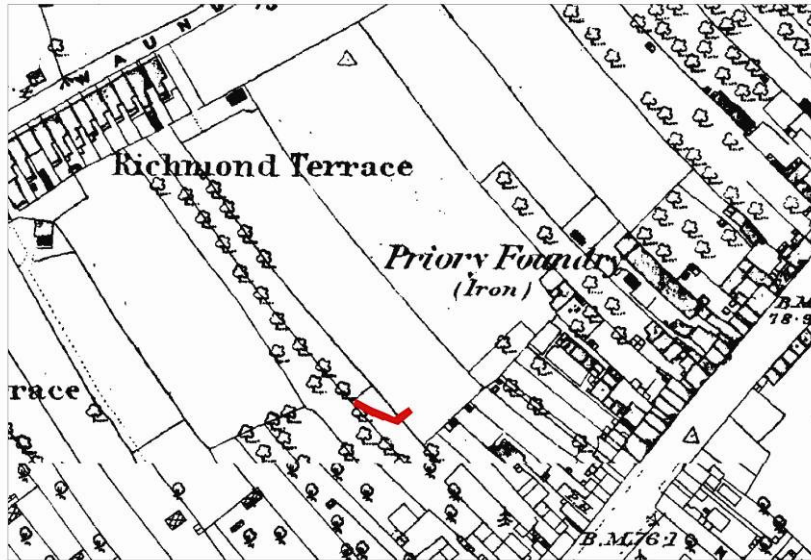
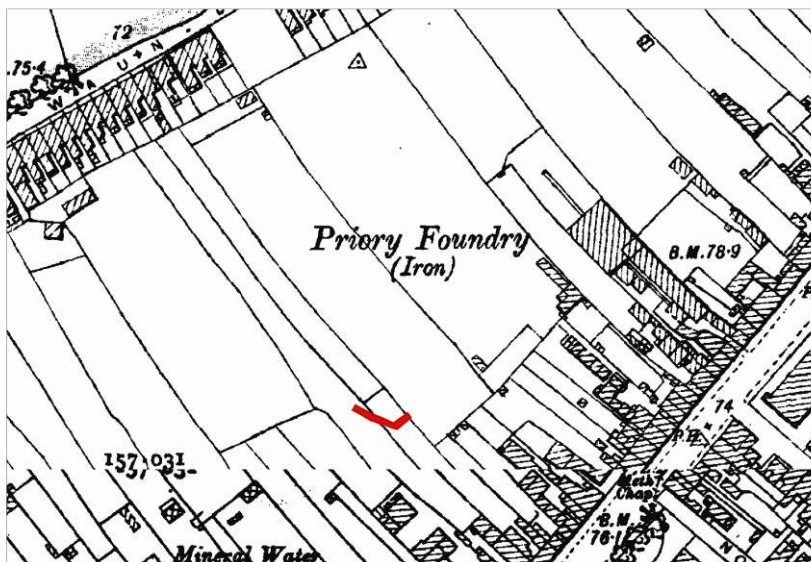


Figure 1: Site and trench location maps, based on the Ordnance Survey. The site is marked by the red square.

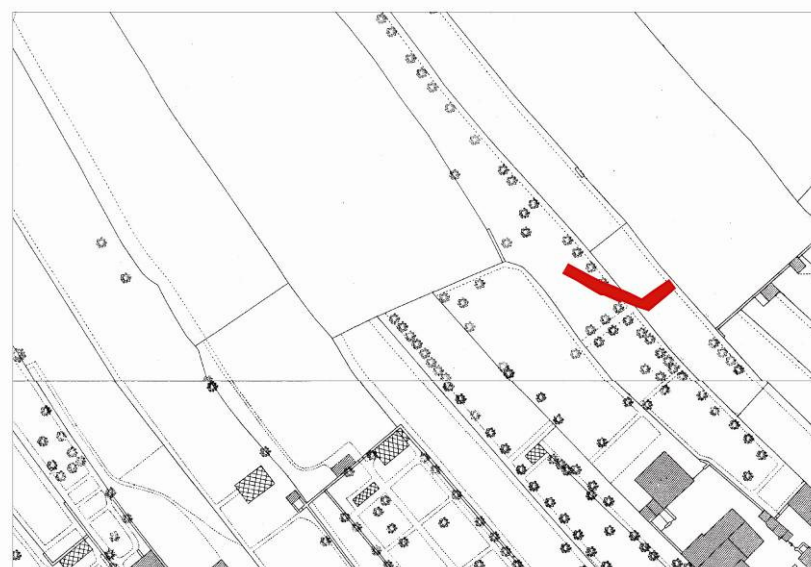
Reproduced from the 1995 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd., The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A



A) 1st Edition Ordnance Survey
1890. 1:2,500



B) 2nd Edition Ordnance
Survey 1906. 1:2,500



C) 1:500 1888 Edition
Ordnance Survey
Carmarthen Town Plan

Figure 2: The evaluation trench in relation to historic mapping

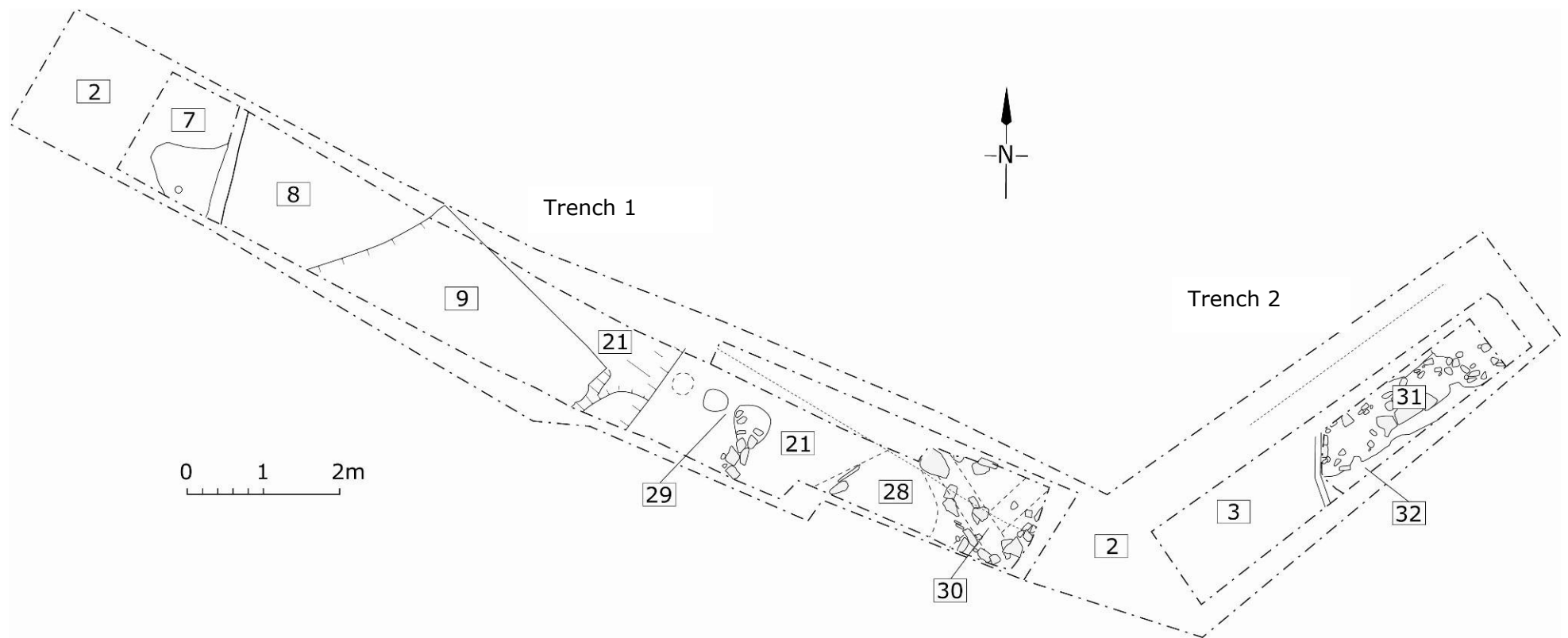


Figure 3: Trench Plan

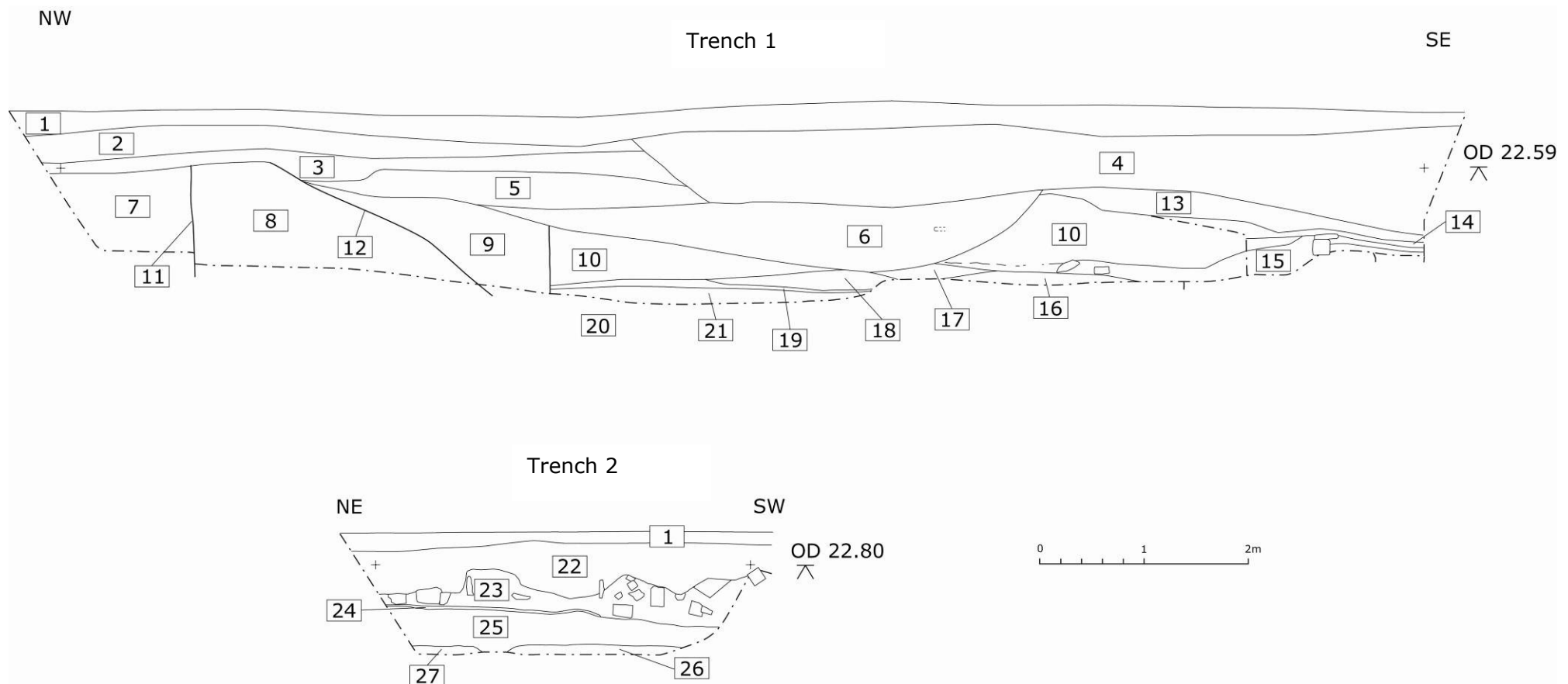


Figure 4: Trench sections

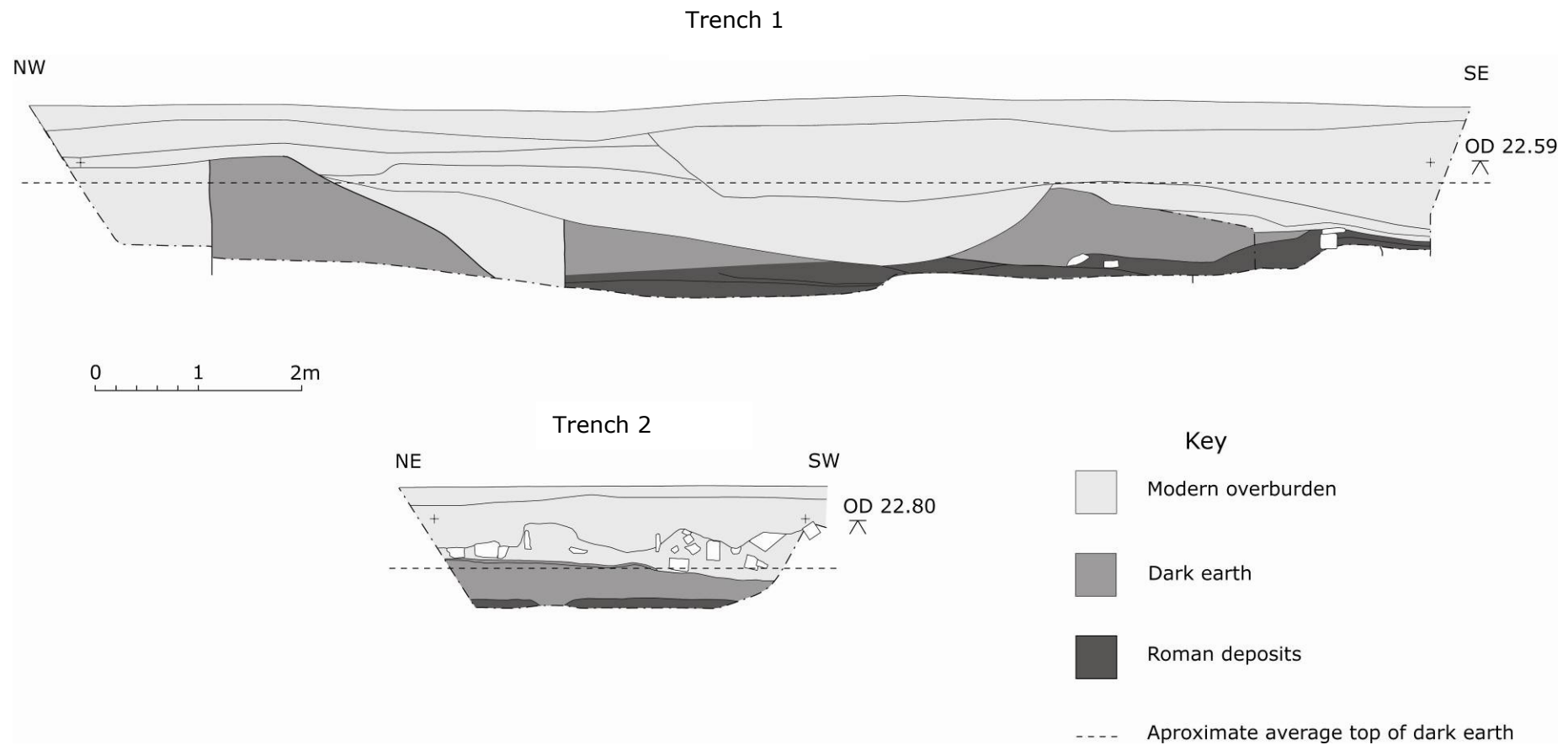


Figure 5: Trench sections showing archaeological phases

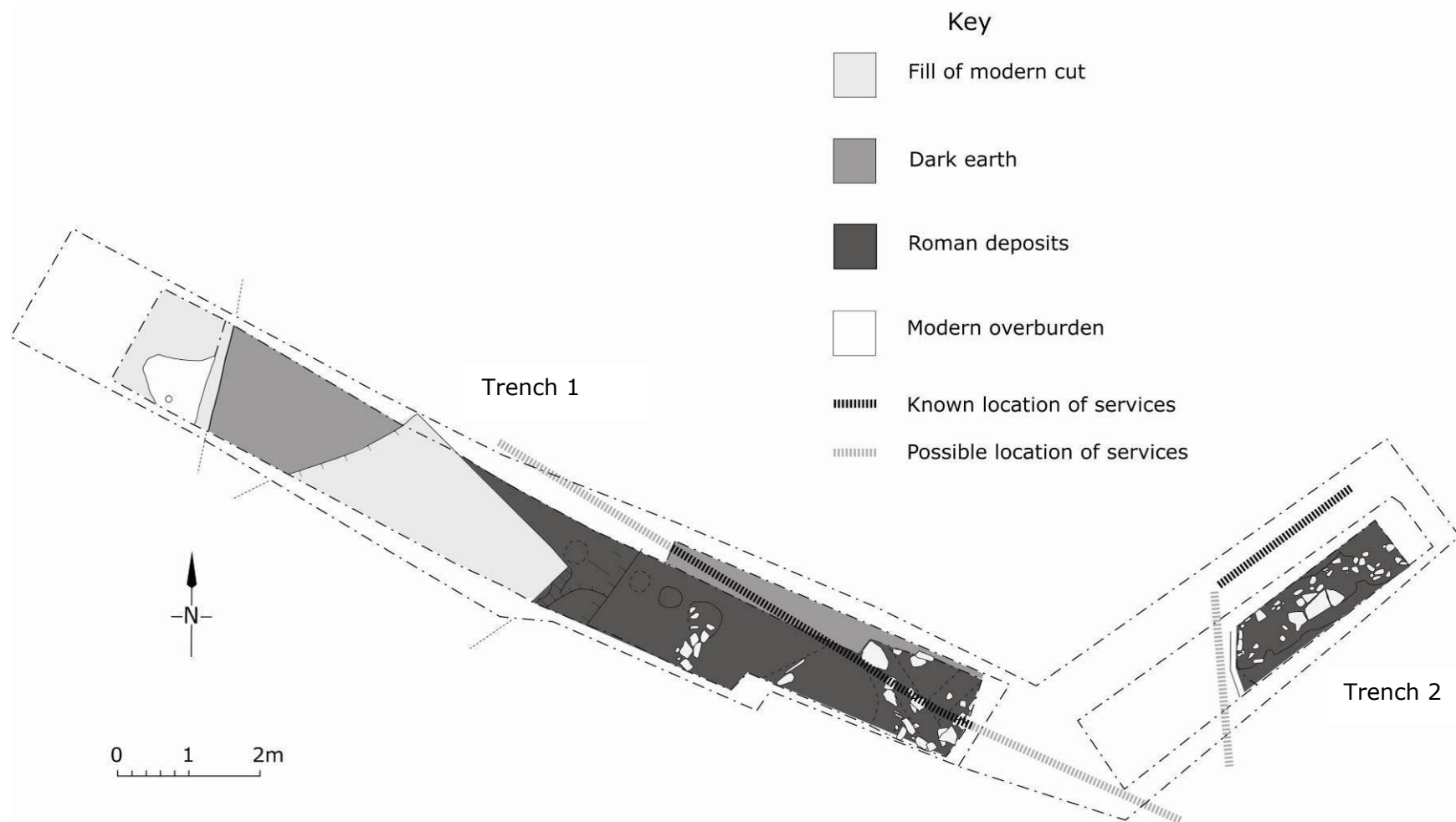


Figure 6: Trench Plan showing archaeological phases



Photo 1: Trench 1. East end, looking south showing roman building remains



Photo 2: Trench 1. East end, trench section looking south



Photo 3: Trench 1. East end, trench section looking north



Photo 4: Trench 1. Mid way, looking south, showing modern overburden directly above Roman deposits



Photo 5: Trench 1. Mid way, looking north, showing modern fill of pipe trench directly above Roman deposits



Photo 6: Trench 1. Mid way, looking north, showing fill of modern rubbish pit cut into Roman deposits



Photo 7: Trench 1. Mid way, looking north, showing fill of modern rubbish pit cut into Roman deposits



Photo 8: Trench 1. West end, looking east, showing fill of modern rubbish pit cut into Roman deposits (foreground), with dark earth (beneath scales)



Photo 9: Trench 2 looking southwest showing Roman yard surface



Photo 10: Trench 2 looking southeast

RICHMOND PARK FOOTBALL GROUND, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2012/15
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 102642

Chwefror 2012
February 2012

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by:
Duncan Schlee

Swydd / Position: **Field Services Project Manager**

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith

This report has been checked and approved by:
James Meek

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: **Head of Field Services**

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date

*Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn*

*As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any
comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report*