

# **131 PRIORY STREET, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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Prepared by: Dyfed Archaeological Trust  
For: Harold Metcalfe Partnership



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## 131 PRIORY STREET, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Gan / By

Philip Poucher

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**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**  
**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL**

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf  
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir  
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF  
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121  
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131  
Ffacs: 01558 823133  
Epost: [info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)  
Gwefan: [www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk](http://www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk)

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited  
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,  
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF  
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121  
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131  
Fax: 01558 823133  
Email: [info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)  
Website: [www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)

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2012**

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## **131 PRIORY STREET, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

### **SUMMARY**

*A planning application was submitted (Planning application number W/23381) for the redevelopment of an existing property at 131 Priory Street, Carmarthen, and the construction of an educational building to the rear (centred on SN 41603 20358).*

*The proposed development lies within the heart of the Roman town of Carmarthen (Moridunum), adjacent to the Scheduled Ancient Monument (Cm234). Previous excavations in the vicinity of 131 Priory Street have demonstrated well preserved Roman remains of high significance.*

*Permission for the development has been granted subject to conditions including the need for an archaeological evaluation to obtain sufficient information about the archaeological potential of the area to inform a detailed design scheme for the building that demonstrates how impacts upon buried archaeological deposits will be avoided. Harold Metcalfe Partnership commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to undertake the archaeological evaluation. This work was undertaken in February 2012.*

*Three trenches were excavated, each 1.3m wide and totalling 31.05m in length. In situ archaeological remains were recorded in all three evaluation trenches, indicating the likely survival of archaeological deposits throughout most of the area of proposed development. Significant archaeological deposits consisted of building debris of a possible Roman date towards the southeastern end of the site, close to the line of Priory Street. To the northwest of this lay several cut archaeological features and layers also likely to be of Roman date. These deposits were overlaid by several layers of silty-clay loam of an indeterminate date that appear to represent a long period of general abandonment and/or agricultural or horticultural use. The upper deposits across much of the site demonstrated late post-medieval and modern development, some of which appears to have removed previous archaeological deposits in an area at the south-western end of the site.*

*Within Trench 1 the highest levels of archaeological significance became apparent at a depth of 0.55m below current ground levels, at 21.83m OD. The first 2.7m at the south-eastern end of this Trench revealed a greater depth of late post-medieval disturbance.*

*Within Trench 2 the highest levels of archaeological significance became apparent at a depth of 0.84m (22.13m OD) below current ground levels.*

*Within Trench 3 the highest levels of archaeological significance became apparent at a depth of 1.31m (21.98m OD) below current ground levels.*

*Trench foundations or piling foundations are likely to impact upon deposits of archaeological significance to some extent, but archaeological recording of any archaeology exposed by these methods may not be very informative. Raft foundations may be able to avoid deposits of archaeological significance at levels above 22.13m OD, if existing deposits are considered suitable to build over. Otherwise appropriate material would need to be imported to create a sufficient thickness of material between the base of the raft foundation and the top of the Roman archaeological deposits.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Commission**

- 1.1.1 This report has been prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in response to a request from Harold Metcalfe Partnership on behalf of their clients to provide an archaeological evaluation of the potential impacts of a proposed development (Planning application number W/23381) at 131 Priory Street, Carmarthen (centred on NGR SN 41603 20358; Figure 1). The application is for the redevelopment of the existing property into an Islamic Cultural Centre and the construction of an educational building to the rear.
- 1.1.2 The proposed development site lies within the heart of the Roman town of Carmarthen (Moridunum), adjacent to the Scheduled Ancient Monument (Cm234). Previous excavations in the vicinity of 131 Priory Street have demonstrated well preserved Roman remains of high significance. Such remains are therefore considered very likely to be present within the development site. Permission for the development has been granted subject to conditions including the need for an archaeological evaluation to obtain sufficient information about the archaeological potential of the area to inform an appropriate decision by the Planning Authority. The main building of 131 Priory Street will be altered internally for its new purpose, but it is understood that no below ground works will be undertaken. The archaeological condition specifically addresses the construction of the new classroom to the rear of 131 Priory Street. This will be a new structure.
- 1.1.3 The first condition, in line with Section 23 of Welsh Office Circular 60/96 - Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology, requires the developer to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.
- 1.1.4 The second condition requires a detailed design scheme for the building foundations that demonstrates how impacts upon buried archaeological deposits will be avoided. This will be informed by the results of the first condition (the evaluation).
- 1.1.5 Harold Metcalfe Partnership commissioned Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services to undertake the archaeological evaluation.

### **1.2 Scope of the Project**

- 1.2.1 The evaluation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area, in order that an assessment of the impact from the development proposals on any remains can be determined.
- 1.2.2 The results of the evaluation will be used to inform a detailed design scheme for the building foundations that demonstrates how impacts upon buried archaeological deposits will be avoided, as well as the scope of any further archaeological works required as mitigation of the development impacts.

### **1.3 Report Outline**

- 1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, summarises the potential impacts of the proposed development before providing a summary and discussion of the archaeological evaluation and its results.

## 1.4 Abbreviations

- 1.4.1 Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record<sup>1</sup> (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR). Levels will be expressed as above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## 1.5 Illustrations

- 1.5.1 Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

## 1.6 Timeline

- 1.6.1 The following table illustrates the approximate dates for the archaeological periods discussed in this report:

PERIOD	APPROXIMATE DATE
PALAEOLITHIC	c.120,000 BC – c.10,000 BC
MESOLITHIC	c.10,000 BC – c.4400 BC
NEOLITHIC	c.4400 BC – c.2300 BC
BRONZE AGE	c.2300 BC – c.700 BC
IRON AGE	c.700 BC – c.43 AD
ROMAN	c.43 AD – c.410 AD
EARLY MEDIEVAL	c.410 AD – c.1066
MEDIEVAL	c.1066 – c.1536
POST MEDIEVAL	c.1536 – c.1750
MODERN	c.1900 onwards

**Table 1:** Archaeological and historical timeline

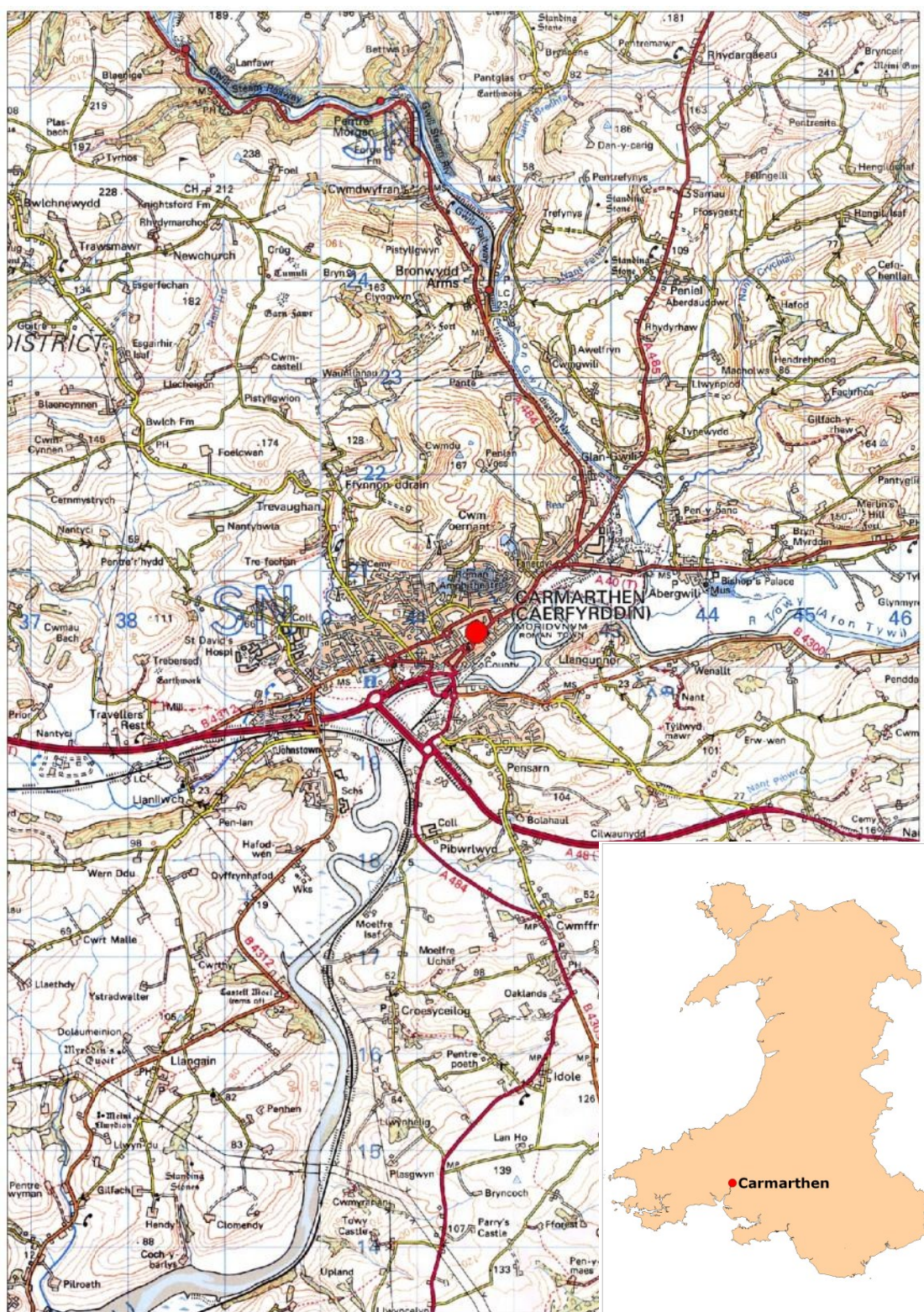
<sup>1</sup> Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

## **2 THE SITE**

### **2.1 Location**

- 2.1.1 The proposed development site is located at NGR SN 41603 20358 within the town of Carmarthen. The site comprises the property (No.131) fronting Priory Street and the plot of land to the rear.
- 2.1.2 131 Priory Street is currently an empty brick-built property fronting Priory Street, formerly used as the club house to Carmarthen Town Football Club, whose ground stands to the rear. An attached building to the rear of the property has been demolished. This has left a plot of land roughly 50m long and c.7m wide to the rear of the property, which slopes gently down from the rear towards the street frontage. The plot is currently rough open ground cleared of vegetation with the occasional area of hardstanding.
- 2.1.3 The Scheduled Ancient Monument (CM234), which comprises a large area of the Roman town, stands immediately to the northwest. The boundary of the Scheduled area runs along the boundary between the rear plot of 131 Priory Street and the football ground to the rear, although this is currently open access.
- 2.1.4 The site is bounded to the northeast by a breezeblock and brick wall with Bethania Chapel beyond. To the southwest the site is bounded partly by a formerly attached property fronting Priory Street with a breezeblock boundary wall behind. This property is currently used by Carmarthen Mind.
- 2.1.5 Underlying geology comprises sedimentary mudstones of the Didymograptus Bifidus Beds, overlaid by glaciofluvial sands and gravels.





**Figure 1:** Location map based on the Ordnance Survey.

Reproduced from the 1987 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Cambria Archaeology, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF. Licence No AL51842A

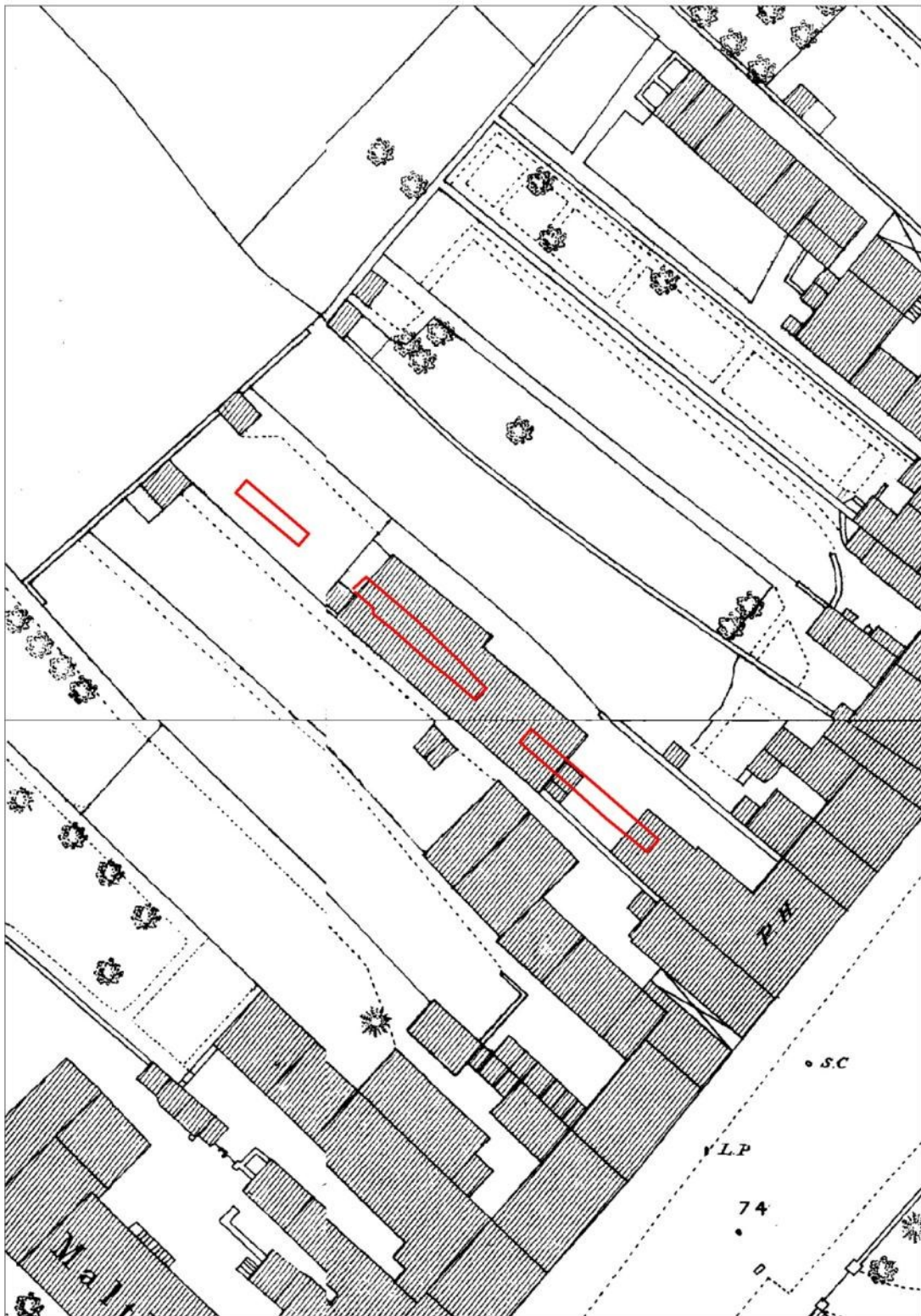
## **2.2 Archaeological Background.**

- 2.2.1 The following sections provide a brief history of Carmarthen, which is described in more detailed elsewhere (e.g. James 1980, James & James 2004, Austin et al 2005).
- 2.2.2 The first settlement in Carmarthen was a Roman fort, established sometime around 75 AD in the King Street/Spilman Street area. A new Roman road linked this fort with another in Llandeilo, The current A40/Priory Street is believed to follow the line of this road. A small settlement, called a vicus, is likely to have built up outside the fort alongside this road. In Carmarthen this early settlement appears to have been concentrated around a temple at the western end of Priory Street, but by the AD150s streets and buildings were being laid out along Priory Street as the Roman town of Moridunum was established. 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.
- 2.2.3 In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century more elaborate stone houses were being constructed. By this time the town defences were well established, and remained a prominent feature of the town throughout the medieval period, even being re-used during the 17<sup>th</sup> century Civil War and still visible in the layout of the current town. The line of Richmond Terrace, Old Oak Lane, The Esplanade and Parade, Parade Road and Little Water Street perpetuates the line of these defences. Excavations at Church Street showed that the defences were substantial — comprising a clay bank fronted by ditches. The bank was later remodelled to take a stone facing.
- 2.2.4 In the early 12<sup>th</sup> century the new Anglo-Norman lords built a castle and laid out a small defended town in front of the castle gates. The castle was established on the site of the present Guildhall, with the early town concentrated around the Guildhall/Notts Square and Quay Street area. The defences were later extended to incorporate development along King Street and Spilman Street with further undefended medieval development along Lamas Street. This town was however known as 'New Carmarthen', as an existing settlement, controlled by the *clas*, was spread out along Priory Street. It is unclear when this settlement was established, It may be one of the few sites in Britain to show a continuity of settlement following the collapse of Roman administration in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The Anglo-Normans attempted to assert their control by establishing a Benedictine Priory at Llandeulyddog but 'Old Carmarthen' remained a separate settlement throughout much of the medieval period, being granted a charter by Henry II and exercising its own market rights. This market is likely to have been located at the junction of Priory Street and Old Oak lane.
- 2.2.5 By the 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the railway across the southern edge of the area. By this time the leadworks had already closed

down (c.1800) and cottages had been established around the former gatehouse.

- 2.2.6 Relatively detailed maps of Carmarthen exist from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. These show almost continual development along the northern side of Priory Street, including No.131. Throughout much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century No.131 was operating as a public house, known, certainly during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the Eagle. On the detailed 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1888 (Figure 2) the public house is shown, fronting Priory Street, but with extensive development in the plot to the rear. Much of this rear development had gone by the time the site was in use as the club house for the adjacent football club in more recent years.
- 2.2.7 There have been a number archaeological excavations, surveys and watching briefs undertaken throughout the area of the Roman town, including 131 Priory Street. The Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record (HER) records 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 8506).
- 2.2.8 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. At 131 Priory street, although groundworks associated with an earlier development proposal were monitored, and the probable upper horizon of Roman archaeological deposits was established to be at a depth of approximately 0.8m near the frontage of Priory Street, the depth of Roman deposits on the rest of the plot has not been established.





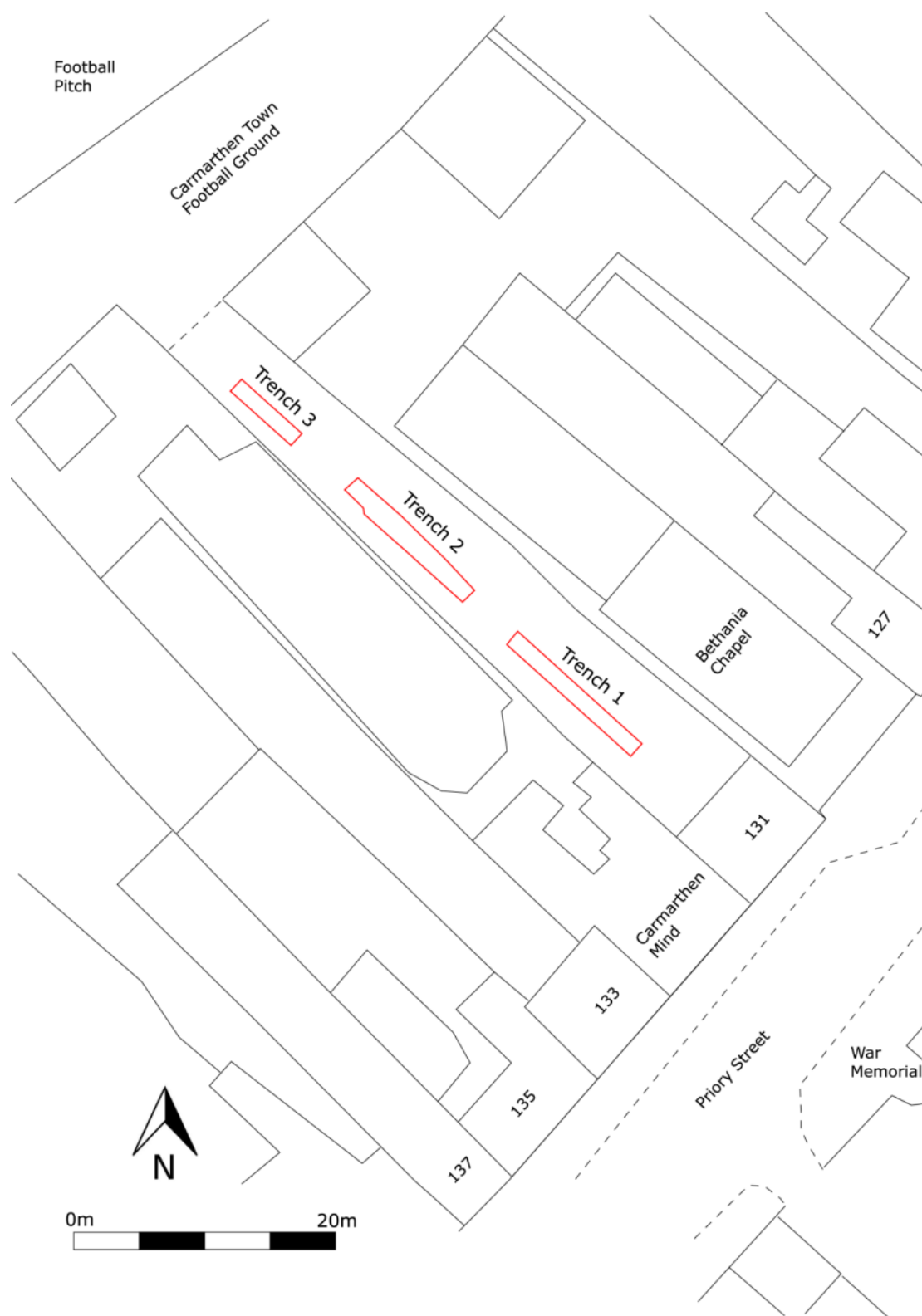
**Figure 2:** An extract from the Ordnance Survey 1;500 map of Carmarthen in 1888. The location of the evaluation trenches are shown in red.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The proposed scheme of evaluation included the preparation of a written scheme of investigation, a desk-based assessment element, carried out prior to and following the evaluation excavation.
- 3.2 Initially three trenches totalling approximately 25m x 2m were proposed within the footprint of the proposed new building to the rear of 131 Priory Street, in order to adequately ascertain the depth at which in situ archaeological deposits occur along the length of the plot.
- 3.3 Due to the presence of an active sewer pipe, an area of hardstanding and concerns about the stability of neighbouring walls the resultant excavation comprised three trenches on a similar alignment along the length of the plot. Trench 1 measured 12.5m long, by 1.3m wide, Trench 2 measured 12.4m long, by 1.3m wide and Trench 3 measured 6.15m long, 1.3m wide.
- 3.4 The trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator (3 ½ ton) fitted with a flat bladed bucket.
- 3.5 All non-archaeologically significant overburden was removed, and the trenches were excavated down onto archaeological levels of significance.
- 3.6 Following machine excavation, the trenches were hand cleaned to an appropriate standard to elucidate the character, distribution and extent of the archaeological remains.
- 3.7 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 Manual<sup>2</sup>. Trench plans and sections were recorded by means of measured sketches and accurate surveying using an EDM. A photographic record was maintained using digital cameras.
- 3.8 Trench locations were accurately surveyed using an EDM, related to Ordnance Datum and existing boundaries.
- 3.9 Archaeological layers were, in the main, left undisturbed once identified but some archaeologically significant artefacts were recovered, consisting of a few fragments of early post-medieval and Roman period pottery and ceramic building materials. These finds will be temporarily stored by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in stable conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.



**Figure 3:** Plan of the evaluation trench locations, related to current known boundaries.

## 4 RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

### 4.1 Trench 1 (Figures 4 & 5)

- 4.1.1 Trench 1 measured 12.5m long, by 1.3m wide. It was aligned SE-NW, the same alignment as the existing plot and slightly off-centre to avoid an existing sewer pipe. It was located 6.8m from the rear of the existing building fronting Priory Street. The ground level sloped from 22.46mOD at the north-western end to 22.03mOD at the south-eastern end.

#### 4.1.2 Late post-medieval and modern deposits.

Throughout the trench the upper 0.35m consisted of a mixed deposit of modern building rubble debris and soil (100). At the south-eastern end of the trench was a further 0.5m thick deposit of mixed modern building rubble. Within this deposit were several individual layers and deposits, but these were all given the same context number (103) given the consistent occurrence of modern material within it. One shallow U-shaped pit within this deposit was individually numbered (cut 102) as an obvious intercutting feature, but this too contained loose stone and mortar building rubble. These thicker modern deposits were still visible at depths up to 0.95m for the first 2.7m of the trench, which appears to coincide with the extent of the former rear block to the building that still stands fronting Priory Street. Therefore it appears likely they infill a deeper area of modern disturbance caused by the construction of the rear section of the building, which was known to be at least partially cellared.

- 4.1.3 Underlying the modern building debris (100) at the northwestern end of the trench is a 0.37m thick layer (111) of dark brown, friable, silty clay loam. This deposit contained the occasional fragment of late post-medieval brick. It was cut by a 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic drainage pipe (cut 110), running east – west across the site. Despite its alignment this drainage pipe is presumably associated with the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century buildings that stood to the rear of or attached to the Priory Street property.
- 4.1.4 At the northwestern end of the trench layer 111 appeared to overlay a deposit of large sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and boulders (120) that appeared to sit within a linear cut (121), aligned roughly WSW-ENE. One section revealed this linear feature to be cut from relatively high in the sequence, although this was not apparent in the recorded section, suggesting layer 111 may thin to the northeast. 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery was also recovered from the stony infill (120).
- 4.1.5 A linear feature (123) was also recorded aligned northwest – southeast, infilled with a silty-clay loam contained late post-medieval pottery.

#### 4.1.6 Soil layers

Context 106 was a series of layers of silty-clay loams appeared consistently within all the trenches, underlying modern layers but overlying presumed Roman activity. 106 was a mid-brown deposit, 0.24m thick, which appeared to drop down towards the south-eastern end of the trench, possibly partly infilling a cut into presumed Roman deposits below. This deposit contained fragments of possible Roman ceramic building material, charcoal flecks and animal bone mixed in throughout. It was sometimes indistinguishable from the overlying late post-medieval loam (111)

- 4.1.7 There was a small charcoal-rich deposit (105), 0.43m wide and 0.06m thick, partially overlying it.

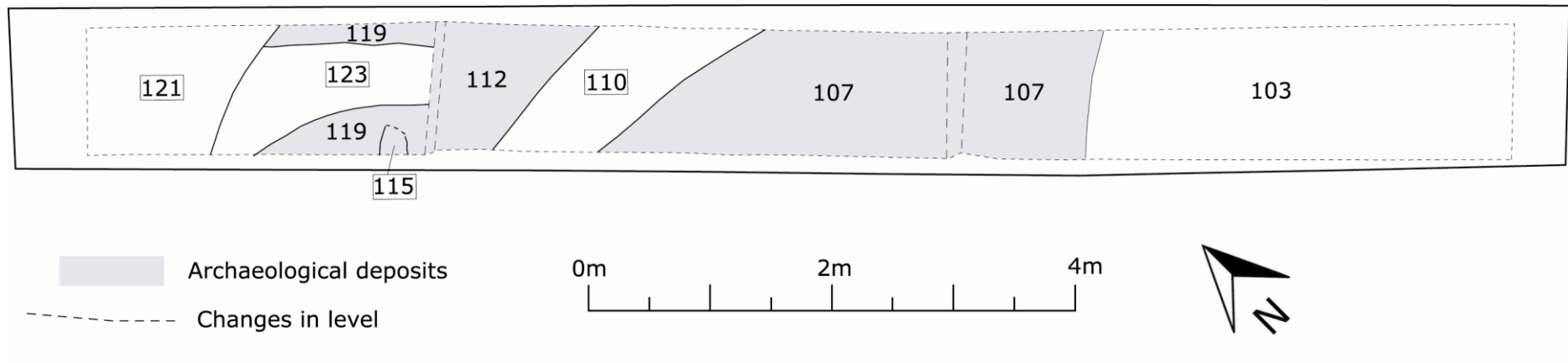
- 4.1.8 These soil deposits appear to represent possible periods of general abandonment. They contained no specific archaeological features.

#### **4.1.9 Possible Roman layers**

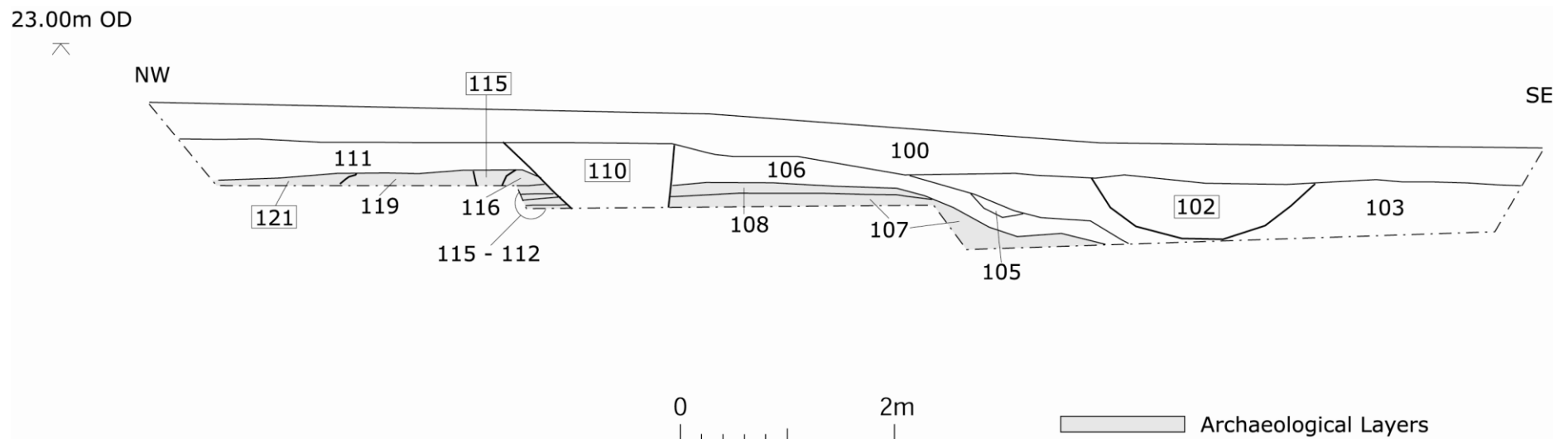
Layer 106 overlay a thin layer of gravel (108), 0.09m thick, within a dark grey-brown silty-sandy matrix. It contained no finds, and was relatively loose but being distinct from the silty-loam layers it is assumed to be an archaeological deposit.

- 4.1.10 Throughout the mid-section of the trench, i.e. between the deep cut for the ceramic pipe (110) and the area of deep building debris 103 at the southeastern end of the trench, this gravel overlay a relatively consistent deposit of firm, light yellow-brown, silty-sand (107). This contained fragments of mortar and ceramic building material, presumably of Roman date. Roman Samian-ware pottery and red-painted plaster were also recovered from this deposit. This would appear to represent a layer of general building rubble from the Roman period.
- 4.1.11 To the northwest of the ceramic pipe trench (110) the sequence of possible Roman layers gets slightly more complex. A layer (116/119) of light yellow-brown silty-sand, very similar to and probably a continuation of layer 107 extends as far as linear 121, 0.14m thick. A small area excavated deeper next to the ceramic pipe trench 110 revealed a sequence of several layers (112, 113, 114 and 115) underlying this possible Roman building debris layer (116). For ease of illustration these layers are not individually numbered on the section drawing (Figure 5), but layer 115 is the uppermost layer, going down in numerical sequence to layer 112 at the bottom. These include alternating layers of light grey-brown spongy sandy-clay containing fragments of Roman ceramic building material and Samian-ware pottery, and thin charcoal rich deposits.
- 4.1.12 These layers are cut by a small feature (118), 0.37m wide with steep straight sides. The feature is too heavily truncated by later post-medieval activity to determine its form. Where revealed it contained a single fill (117) of friable light yellow-brown sandy-silt, with the occasional charcoal fleck and fragment of Roman ceramic material. Within this were patches of darker brown loose material, superficially similar to cess deposits but not examined closely.





**Figure 4:** Plan of Trench 1



**Figure 5:** Section of Trench 1

## **4.2 Trench 2 (Figures 6 & 7)**

- 4.2.1 Trench 2 measured 12.4m long, by 1.3m wide. It was similarly aligned and positioned to avoid the live sewer, a further 4.5m up from Trench 1 and roughly central to the development area. The ground level sloped gently down from 23.19mOD at the north-western end to 22.70mOD at the south-eastern end.

### **4.2.2 Late post-medieval and modern deposits**

Cutting all deposits was a modern service trench (206), 0.5m wide, 1.05m deep and running across the trench in a NW – SW direction.

- 4.2.3 A 0.27m to 0.75m thick deposit of topsoil (200) was visible throughout the trench, containing a variety of modern material. Towards the southeast end of the trench this deposit included a greater quantity of building rubble. The depth of this deposit varied throughout, thickest at both the south-eastern, and north-western ends.
- 4.2.4 Roughly midway along the trench were the remains of a brick-built drain (223) down to a depth of 0.8m below the current ground levels. A 0.44m thick deposit (222) of later post-medieval or modern building rubble infilled the area to the southeast.
- 4.2.5 Several late post-medieval pits or truncated linear features were also visible beneath the topsoil. Feature 230 (not recorded in the illustrated section) was 1.1m wide and 0.45m deep, with relatively straight steep sides and a flat base. This may represent a former wall line, although this does not correspond to known walls recorded on historic map sources. It was in-filled by late post-medieval building debris, and was truncated by the modern service trench 206.
- 4.2.6 Feature 232 was a shallow U-shaped pit, 0.75m across, 0.35m deep, recorded in the upper layers just below the topsoil towards the north-western end of the trench. It was filled with a light yellow-brown clay that contained no finds but its occurrence high in the sequence of deposits suggests a later post-medieval or modern date. Feature 228 is a similarly sized pit, 0.9m across, 0.4m deep, containing mixed soil and rubble deposits. These features would appear to represent a series of pits used to dump rubbish or building material in ground to the rear of the buildings, although map evidence would suggest that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at least this area was within a structure.
- 4.2.7 A post/stake hole (204) was recorded in the base of the trench, at a depth of 1m. It measured 0.07m in diameter, with vertical edges and filled with a loose dark-grey gritty material. The crisp edges and loose nature of the fill suggests this is likely to be a relatively recent feature.

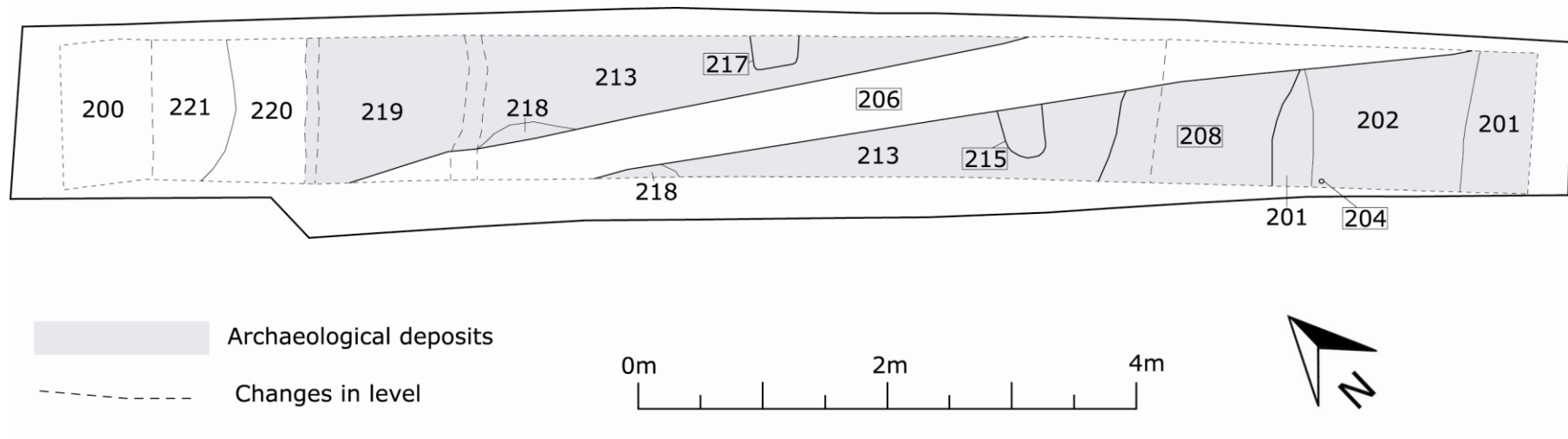
### **4.2.8 Soil layers**

A consistent deposit of friable, dark grey-brown, clayey-silt (220) was recorded throughout the trench. This contained a mix of material, including Roman ceramic material and Samian-ware pottery, along with animal bone and some post-medieval pottery fragments. This appears to be a thick (0.45m) layer of garden soil. The finds suggest that this deposit is made of several indistinguishable layers that have built up over a significant amount of time. A possible separate layer (226) is recorded underneath the brick-built drain, however the texture and compaction of the material is the same, and it is distinguishable only by a slight colour change that may have resulted from the close proximity of the later drain above.

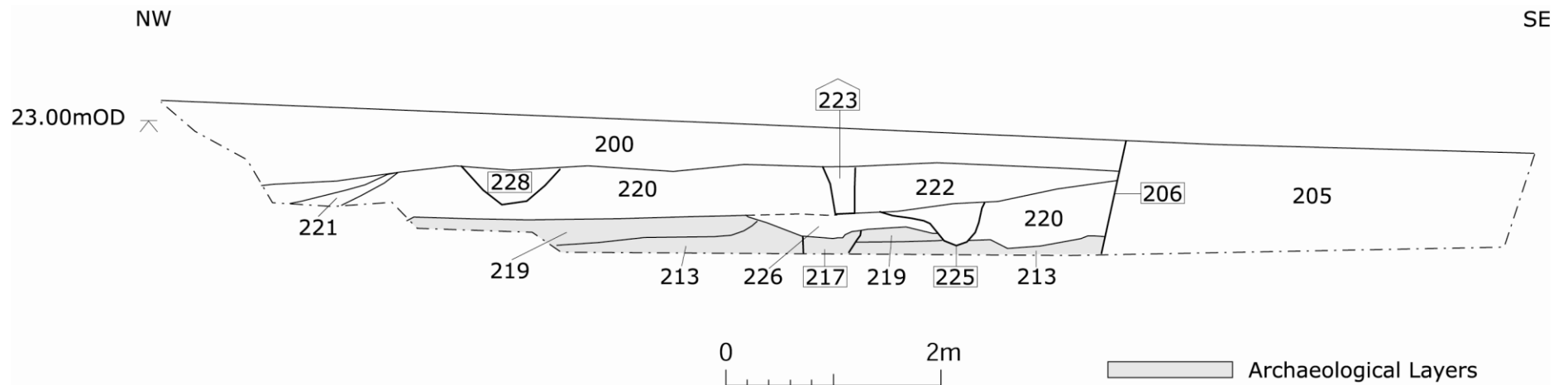
- 4.2.9 As well as the late post-medieval and modern intercutting features mentioned above two further undated features were recorded cutting these soil layers. Underlying the rubble infill (222) is a U-shaped feature (225), with a slightly stepped north-western edge. This feature was only recorded in section so it is unclear if it represents a pit or a linear feature. It contained a dark brown-grey clayey-silt loam, but no dateable finds were recovered.
- 4.2.10 At the north-western limit of the trench a deposit of light –brown silty-sand (221) was recorded. This was initially thought to represent subsoil deposits but on further investigation proved to be a redeposited subsoil infilling a possible pit or hollow. When compared against the 1888 Ordnance Survey map this deposit is roughly in line with the rear wall of a large structure, and may therefore represent later post-medieval construction debris.

#### **4.2.11 Possible Roman layers**

- Towards the southeastern end of the trench layer 220 overlies a thinner layer of mid brown to orange-brown clayey-silt (201), 0.25m thick. It contains the occasional small fragment of Roman ceramic material. This layer is truncated by the modern service trench 206 and therefore does not appear in the recorded section, however, deposit 219 would appear to represent a continuation of this deposit to the northwest. Deposit 219 also contained the occasional fragment of Roman ceramic material along with a couple of sherds of Roman Samian-ware pottery. The finds and silty nature of this deposit may indicate this is a Roman period garden soil.
- 4.2.12 At the southeastern end of the trench this layer is cut by a linear feature 208. This is 1.4m wide, and appears to run in a SW – NE direction, although again truncated by the modern service trench. It contained several fills, the most prominent of which was a stony layer (209) of large to very-large sub-angular stone, which contained some unidentified ceramic material and probable Roman pottery.
- 4.2.13 Layer 219 was also cut by a sub-square feature 217. This feature was 0.37m wide, protruding 0.3m from the section, with slightly rounded corners. It contained a single fill of friable light brown clayey-silt, but no finds were recovered. This feature was located just below modern drain 223, but a collapsing section obscured any relationship between the two.
- 4.2.14 A short linear feature 215 was also recorded in the base of the trench, truncated by modern services to the northeast, but appearing to terminate within the confines of the trench to the southwest. This feature was 0.37m wide, 0.46m long with a rounded end. The single recorded fill was a friable light-brown clayey-silt with large stones at the terminus. Again no dateable material was recovered.
- 4.2.15 Revealed in patches throughout the trench were natural subsoil deposits underlying these presumed Roman layers 201/219. At the south-eastern end of the trench this deposit (202) consisted of a mid orange-brown stony sandy-clay. Further to the northwest the underlying subsoil appeared to be a lighter yellow-orange clayey-sand (213). Roughly midway along the trench there was a patch where the sandy subsoil appeared reddened (218). This was not investigated closely and was truncated by the modern services.



**Figure 6:** Plan of Trench 2



**Figure 7:** Section of Trench 2

### 4.3 Trench 3 (Figure 8)

- 4.3.1 Trench 3 measures 6.15m long, 1.3m wide and was located on the same alignment but at the north-western end of the development area, between the end of the plot and an area of hard-standing. Ground level fell slightly from 23.34mOD at the north-western end to 23.22mOD at the south-eastern end.

#### 4.3.2 Late post-medieval and modern deposits

This trench displayed a relatively simple sequence of deposits. The topsoil (300) was 0.5m thick, and consisted of friable dark-brown clayey-silt with moderate inclusions of medium to large stone and late post-medieval building debris.

- 4.3.3 A single pit (302) was recorded below the topsoil, cut into the underlying soil layer 303. The pit was 0.8m wide, 0.44m deep with steep straight edges and a flat base. It contained a single fill of loose late post-medieval building rubble.

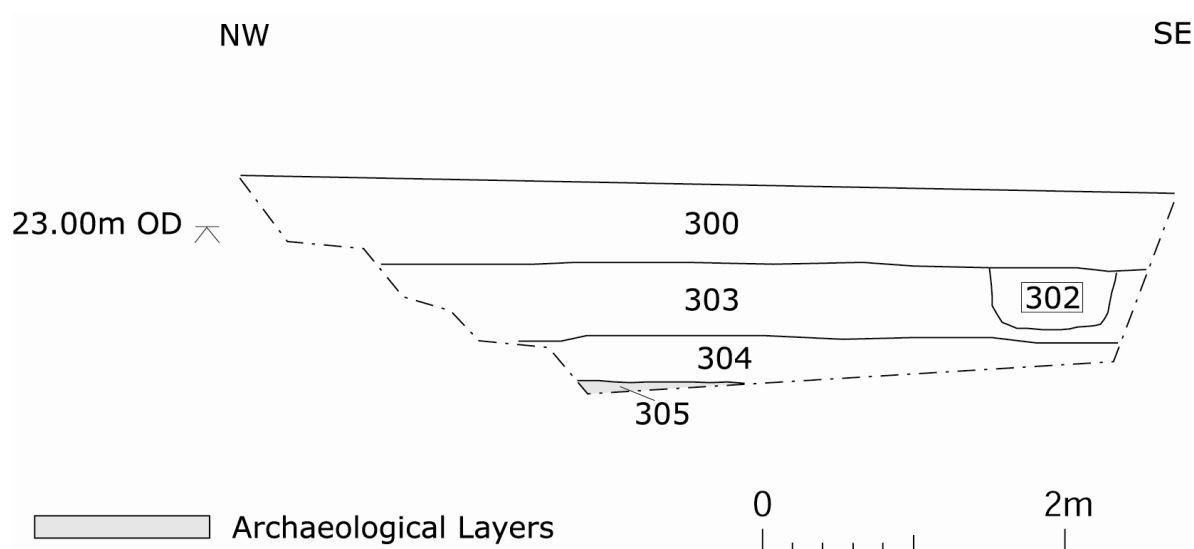
#### 4.3.4 Soil layers

A 0.5m thick consistent deposit (303) of friable dark-brown clayey-sandy-silt was recorded underneath the topsoil. No features were recorded within this and 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery fragments were recovered.

- 4.3.5 Underlying this deposit was a 0.3m thick layer (304) of mid grey-brown clayey-silt, containing the occasional charcoal fleck, fragment of lime mortar and unidentified ceramic material. This would appear to represent a garden soil or fallow area, but could conceivably be relatively early (i.e. Roman) in origin. Nothing of archaeological note was recorded within this deposit.

#### 4.3.6 Possible Roman layers

At a depth of 1.3m, below layer 304, was a layer of firm light yellow-brown silty-clay. Initially thought to represent natural subsoil but on closer inspection it contained occasional charcoal flecks and small fragments of possible Roman ceramic material.



**Figure 8:** Section of Trench 3

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Archaeological Remains**

- 5.1.1 *In situ* archaeological remains were recorded in all three evaluation trenches, indicating the likely survival of archaeological deposits throughout most of the area of proposed development. Even where it is presumed archaeological layers have been removed through late post-medieval cellars immediately to the rear of the existing property fronting Priory Street previous archaeological observations along the street frontage has indicated archaeological remains at a depth of c.0.8m may still exist.
- 5.1.2 It was not possible within the scope of the works undertaken to characterise the true nature of the archaeological remains encountered, the main purpose of the work being to ascertain the levels at which archaeological remains are likely to be encountered. However, a general sequence of events can be suggested from the recorded remains. The *in-situ* archaeological remains of significance appear to comprise levels of Roman activity, most probably domestic settlement. The more frequent occurrence of ceramic building material, mortar and plaster to the southeast would suggest possible building activity concentrated closer to the line of the Roman road, which is believed to follow roughly the same line as the current Priory Street, or possibly slightly to the north under the existing building fronting Priory Street. This building material is less apparent within Trench 2, although various cut features indicate a variety of archaeological features up to roughly halfway up Trench 2. Beyond this, to the northwest there is some suggestion of garden soil and finds become scarce indicating an area that is less developed.
- 5.1.3 There is no clear evidence of post-Roman, Early Medieval or Medieval activity, although this area is likely to have been less intensively developed during that period and archaeological remains may be harder to identify within the scope of an evaluation excavation of this nature.
- 5.1.4 The presumed Roman activity appears to be consistently covered with layers of soil, which would suggest a long period of inactivity across much of the site, possibly as the area was used as gardens or fields to the rear of any activity concentrated on the Priory Street frontage. Where observed these soil layers contained no significant *in-situ* archaeological remains, although finds from a broad date-range were apparent within these soils.
- 5.1.5 Later post-medieval development of the plot appears to have followed much of the same lines as the suggested Roman activity. There was a concentration of building activity at the south-eastern end of Trench 1 that may have included cellars. Possible building remains and building rubble extend roughly mid-way up Trench 2, beyond which are pits and features that may have been dug into rough ground to the rear of any buildings, although map evidence suggests building activity may have extended the full length of Trench 2. Trench 3 demonstrated no structural remains, other than a pit that appears to have been dug to dispose of building materials. This area exhibited a thick deposit of garden soils.

## **6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION**

- 6.1 Within Trench 1 the highest levels of archaeological significance became apparent at a depth of 0.55m below current ground levels, at 21.83m OD. The first 2.7m at the south-eastern end of this Trench revealed a greater depth of late post-medieval disturbance. The section of the trench was excavated to a depth of 0.9m (21.15m OD) and no significant archaeological deposits were encountered.
- 6.2 Within Trench 2 the highest levels of archaeological significance became apparent at a depth of 0.84m (22.13m OD) below current ground levels.
- 6.3 Within Trench 3 the highest levels of archaeological significance became apparent at a depth of 1.31m (21.98m OD) below current ground levels.
- 6.4 Therefore in order to avoid disturbing levels of archaeological significance groundworks should not go lower than 22.13m OD.
- 6.5 Trench foundations or piling foundations are likely to impact upon deposits of archaeological significance to some extent, but since archaeological recording of any archaeology exposed by these methods may not be very informative, and the destruction of archaeological deposits will not be extensive, it is arguable that either option might be acceptable.
- 6.6 A raft foundation would avoid impacting upon deposits of archaeological significance at levels above 22.13m OD. However it would need to be established whether the existing deposits are sufficiently thick to provide an adequate 'buffer' layer between the base of the raft foundation and the top of the Roman archaeological deposits. It would also need to be established whether the existing deposits are suitable material upon which to construct a raft foundation.
- 6.7 If the overlying deposits cannot be built upon, or if the 'buffer' layer is not sufficiently thick to protect the underlying Roman deposits, appropriate material would need to be imported onto the site to create a sufficient thickness of material.
- 6.8 Although minimising impact upon Roman period archaeological deposits, a raft foundation may be difficult and costly to achieve and might require the removal of most of the deposits overlying the Roman layers.
- 6.9 Piling would avoid the necessity of removing post-Roman deposits and would result in a limited impact upon the Roman deposits.
- 6.10 Trench foundations would result in significantly more damage to archaeological deposits, but archaeological mitigation within the foundation trenches would be unlikely to provide a meaningful record or understanding of the archaeology present.
- 6.11 The intended levels of a raft foundation will therefore need to be established and discussed with the archaeological planning advisor, along with the relative merits of other foundation design options. Hopefully this evaluation has provided sufficient information to make this possible.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Database**

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, housed with Dyfed Archaeological Trust in The Shire Hall, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, SA19 6AF

### **Maps**

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Ordnance Survey 1888 *1;500 Carmarthenshire XXXIX.3 & 7*

Ordnance Survey 1890 *1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:2500 Carmarthenshire XXXIX.3 & 7*

Ordnance Survey 1906 *2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1:2500 Carmarthenshire XXXIX.3 & 7*

### **Published**

James, H 1993 *Excavations in Roman Carmarthen 1978 – 1990* The Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society



## PHOTOGRAPHS



**Photo 1:** The site as viewed from the northwest



**Photo 2:** The site as viewed from the northwest



**Photo 3:** Trench 1, viewed from the northwest after excavation. 1m scales.



**Photo 4:** Trench 1, viewed from the southeast after excavation. 1m scales.





**Photo 5:** Section of Trench 1, viewed from the east.



**Photo 6:** Stony-filled linear feature 121 within Trench 1, viewed from the west.  
1m scale.





**Photo 7:** Feature 123 within Trench 1, cutting through Roman layers 116/119. 1m scale.



**Photo 8:** Part of the section of Trench 1, lighter yellowy-brown probable Roman deposits (107) visible at the base, overlaid by soils (106 & 105) and a thick deposit of modern topsoil (100). 1m scales.





**Photo 9:** Part of the section in Trench 1, showing the ceramic drainage pipe (110) with lighter mottled Roman deposits visible towards the base of the section. 1m scales.



**Photo 10:** Trench 2, viewed from the northwest. 1m scales.





**Photo 11:** Trench 2, viewed from the southeast. 1m scales.



**Photo 12:** Section of Trench 2, viewed from the east. The thicker deposit of modern building rubble at the south-western end is clearly visible.





**Photo 13:** Opposing section of Trench 2



**Photo 14:** Northeast facing section of Trench 2, showing the thick modern rubble deposit (200). 1m scales.





**Photo 15:** Typical section of Trench 2, showing a topsoil (100) with large quantities of building rubble, various soil deposits below (220) and presumed Roman deposits (219) at the base



**Photo 16:** Modern/late post-medieval brick-built drain (223) in Trench 2. 1m scales.





**Photo 17:** Late post-medieval feature 230 within Trench 2. 1m & 0.5m scales.



**Photo 18:** Linear feature 208, viewed from the northeast. 1m scales.





**Photo 19:** Sub-square feature 217 emerging from the section. 0.5m scale.



**Photo 20:** Archaeological layer 201, with possible subsoil (202) appearing in the centre. The stake/post hole 204 is also visible at the bottom left. 1m scales.





**Photo 21:** Trench 3, viewed from the northwest. 1m scales.



**Photo 22:** Trench 3, viewed from the southeast. 1m scales.



**Photo 23:** Southwest facing section of Trench 3. 1m scales.

**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS****Trench 1**

<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Measurements</b>
100	Topsoil Mixed silty-loam and modern building rubble	0.35m thick, 12.5m long, 1.3m wide
101	Fill of 102 Loose, mid brown-grey, sandy-silt. Abundant medium-large sub-angular stone Occasional, shell fragment	See 102
102	Pit Shallow U-shape, gradual smooth concave sides, concave base.	1.7m wide, 0.55m deep
103	Layer Friable, dark-grey, silty-clay Abundant, medium-large sub-angular stone 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century pot sherds	0.5m thick, 2.7m long, 1.3m wide
104	Layer Friable, mid grey-brown, silty-clay Moderate, medium, sub-rounded stone. Occasional charcoal fleck Animal bone, CBM, pot sherds (?Roman)	
105	Layer Loose, dark grey, silty-clay Abundant, charcoal flecks	0.43m wide 0.06m thick
106	Layer Friable, mid brown, silty clay loam Moderate, medium, sub-rounded stone Occasional charcoal fleck Animal bone, CBM	
107	Layer Compact, light yellow-brown, sandy loam Moderate, small-medium, mortar fragments Painted plaster (Roman), CBM, Samian ware	
108	Layer Friable, dark brown-grey, gravel (small-medium rounded stone)	0.09m thick

109	Fill of 110 Mixed deposit Modern glazed ceramic drainage/sewer pipe	See 110
110	Cut Smooth, steep, straight sides	
111	Layer Friable, dark-brown, silty clay loam Moderate, medium sub-angular stone Occasional charcoal fleck	0.37m thick,
112	Layer Friable, light grey-brown, sandy-clay Moderate, medium – large sub-rounded stone CBM, Samian ware	
113	Layer Friable, dark grey, silty-clay Abundant, charcoal flecks	0.07m thick
114	Layer Compact, light yellow-brown, sandy loam Moderate, small-medium, mortar fragments CBM	0.04m thick
115	Layer Friable, light grey-brown, sandy-clay Moderate, medium – large sub-rounded stone	0.07m thick
116	Layer Compact, light yellow-brown, sandy loam Moderate, small-medium, mortar fragments	0.14m thick
117	Fill of 118 Friable, light yellow-grey, sandy clay Moderate, small – medium, sub-rounded stone Occasional charcoal fleck Moderate, soft brown silty patches CBM	
118	Cut Steep, straight sides	0.37m wide
119	Layer Compact, light yellow-brown, sandy loam Moderate, small-medium, mortar fragments Moderate, medium, oyster shell	

120	Fill of 121 Friable, dark grey-brown, silty clay loam Abundant, large to very large sub-angular stone Animal bone, 19 <sup>th</sup> century pottery	See 121
121	Cut – linear Moderate to steep slightly concave sides.	At least 1.2m wide
122	Fill of 123 Friable, dark brown-grey, silty clay Moderate, medium-large sub-angular stone	See 123
123	Cut – linear Steep, straight sides, concave base	

## Trench 2

Context Number	Description	Measurements
200	Topsoil Mixed silty-loam and modern building rubble	
201	Layer Friable, mid brown, clayey-silt. Moderate medium-large sub-rounded stone CBM (?Roman), Samian-ware, glass fragment (?Roman)	
202	Layer – Subsoil? Compact, mid brown-orange, sandy-clay Moderate to abundant, medium-large sub-angular stone	
203	Fill of 204 Loose, dark grey, sandy-silt Abundant, small sub-angular stone	
204	Stake/Post Hole Circular. Straight smooth vertical sides.	0.07m diameter
205	Fill of 206 Mixed modern material	
206	Cut – services trench Linear. Steep, straight sides	
207	Fill of 208 Friable, mid grey-brown, clayey-silt Occasional, small-medium, sub-angular stone	

	CBM	
208	Cut - ?ditch Linear	1.4m wide
209	Fill of 208 Friable, mid brown-grey, clayey-silt Abundant, large – very large sub-angular stone CBM (?Roman), pot sherd (?Roman)	
210	Fill of 208 Friable, light yellow-grey, clayey-sand Abundant, small - medium sub-angular stone Crushed CBM	0.09m wide
211	Fill of 208 Friable, mid brown-grey, clayey-silt Occasional, small – medium, sub-rounded stone Occasional charcoal fleck	
212	Not used	
213	Layer – Subsoil? Compact, light yellow-orange, clayey-sand Moderate, small – medium sub-rounded stone	
214	Fill of 215 Friable, light brown, clayey-silt Moderate, large, sub-angular stone Occasional, charcoal fleck	
215	Cut Linear, with a rounded end	0.37m wide, 0.46m long
216	Fill of 217 Friable, light brown, clayey-silt Occasional, small-medium, sub-angular stone CBM	
217	Cut Sub-square, rounded corners	0.37m wide, protrudes 0.3m from section
218	Layer Compact, mid red-yellow, clayey-sand Moderate, small – medium sub-rounded stone	
219	Layer Friable, mid orange-brown, clayey-silt Moderate, medium-large, sub-angular stone	



	CBM, samian-ware	
220	Layer Friable, dark grey-brown, silty clay loam Moderate, small - medium sub-rounded stone Occasional charcoal flecks Animal bone, post medieval pottery, Samian-ware, CBM, ?Roman pottery, bone needle	
221	Fill Friable, light yellow, clayey-sand Moderate, small - medium sub-rounded stone	
222	Layer Mixed modern demolition rubble	
223	Structure Brick-built drain	
224	Fill of 225 Friable, dark brown-grey, clayey-silt Moderate, small - medium sub-rounded stone Occasional charcoal flecks	
225	Cut U-shaped, steep concave sides, stepped to the NW. Concave base.	0.43m wide, 0.35m deep
226	Layer Friable, dark grey-brown, silty clay loam Moderate, small - medium sub-rounded stone Occasional charcoal flecks	
227	Fill of 228 Mixed demolition rubble	
228	Cut - pit Shallow U-shape, moderate concave sides, concave base.	0.9m wide, 0.45m deep
229	Fill of 230 Mixed rubble deposit	
230	Cut Steep straight sides, moderate slope to the southwest. Flat base	
231	Fill of 232 Compact, light grey-yellow, silty-clay Abundant, medium - large sub-rounded stone	
232	Cut - Pit?	

	Shallow U-shape, concave base	
233	Fill of 234 Friable, dark grey, sandy-silt Abundant charcoal	
234	Cut Straight vertical sides, flat base.	

### Trench 3

Context Number	Description	Measurements
300	Topsoil Friable, dark brown, clayey-silt Moderate, medium – large sub-angular stone Moderate modern building debris	0.5m thick
301	Fill of 302 Loose mixed building rubble	
302	Cut - Pit Steep straight sides, slightly concave base	0.8m wide, 0.44m deep
303	Layer Friable, dark brown, clayey-sandy-silt Moderate, small – medium sub-angular stone Occasional coal fragment, lime mortar fragment and shell 19 <sup>th</sup> century pottery	0.5m thick
304	Layer Friable, mid grey-brown, clayey-silt Moderate, small – medium sub-angular stone Occasional charcoal fragment & lime mortar fragment CBM	0.28m thick
305	Layer Compact, light yellow-brown, silty-clay Occasional, small – medium sub-angular stone Occasional charcoal fleck CBM (?Roman)	

## 131 PRIORY STREET, CARMARTHEN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2012

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2012/16

Chwefror 2012  
February 2012

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan /  
This report has been prepared by: **Philip Poucher**

Swydd / Position: **Archaeologist**

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date 7/3/2012

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith /  
This report has been checked and approved by:  
**Duncan Schlee**

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

Swydd / Position: **Project Manager**

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date 7/3/2012

*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*