

**LAND AT HEOL Y PLAS, LLANNON,
CARMARTHENSHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
2018
(NGR SN 54125 08890)**



Prepared by DAT Archaeological Services

For: Asbri Planning Ltd / Coastal
Housing Group



DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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CARMARTHENSHIRE:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
2018**

Gan / By

Charles Enright

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Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Corner House, 6 Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AE
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Epost: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Gwefan: www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
Corner House, 6 Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AE
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Email: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Website: www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

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**LAND AT HEOL Y PLAS, LLANNON, CARMARTHENSHIRE:
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**LAND AT HEOL Y PLAS, LLANNON, CARMARTHENSIRE:
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SUMMARY

Following on from a Historic Environment Appraisal and Geophysical Survey DAT Archaeological Services undertook an archaeological evaluation of Land at Heol Y Plas, Llannon, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 54125 08890). This was undertaken to support a planning application for the development of the site, reference S/36934, for the construction of 48 residential units with associated access and landscaping works.

The proposed development site occupies a gentle slope on the east-facing side of a hill on the northern edge of the village; the area is currently used as an agricultural field. The previous appraisal noted that there was very little known about the early origins or history of Llannon. Evidence of Mesolithic activity is absent and very few Neolithic sites are present. Bronze Age activity exists mainly in the form of funerary monuments and there is very little evidence of Iron Age. It is believed that a Roman road that once ran between Pontarddulais and Carmarthen passed through Llannon, but to date there is no supporting evidence for this. There is very little documented evidence of early medieval settlement in the area. It is noteworthy this apparent absence of archaeology may be due to the absence of investigative work, as opposed to an actual absence of archaeology.

The geophysical survey works identified a series of former field boundaries and tracks which although of some archaeological interest, these are indicated on earlier maps and can thus be interpreted without further evaluation. Two anomalies were identified which do not correspond with features on earlier maps, the remains of a possible rectangular structure on the western side of the site area, and a possible 'ring ditch' or small enclosure on the eastern side. Based on these findings the client had requested DAT Archaeological Services conduct further archaeological works to assess the significance of these possible archaeological remains ahead of submitting a planning application to the Local Planning Authority.

Two trenches were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision. Both trenches provided ambiguous results making it difficult to assess the significance of the remains within the constraints of the evaluation. Trench 1 targeted the possible enclosure but only a subtle feature was identified and tentatively interpreted as a possible 'ditch' terminus.

Trench 2 targeted the possible rectangular structure, but the remains that were observed would suggest much less substantial deposits exist than anticipated from the survey results, with only two ditches and a gully recorded. Whether these remains still reflect a possible rectangular structure as depicted by the geophysics has unfortunately not been established within the constraints of this evaluation. No dating evidence or indications of significant archaeological palaeo-environmental deposits were found within the excavated features. It is possible that further larger scale recording of the features may provide more information on the character and significance of the remains, but this could be done through the use of a watching brief during development.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Commission

1.1.1 DAT Archaeological Services were commissioned by Asbri Planning Ltd on behalf of Coastal Housing Group to undertake an archaeological evaluation in support of planning application S/36934 for the development of the site located at Heol Y Plas, Llannon, Carmarthenshire (NGR SN 54125 08890 ; Figure 1 and 2). The potential development site covers an area approximately 2ha in size and the proposed development is for 48 residential units with associated access and landscaping works.

1.1.2 Prior to this archaeological evaluation DAT Archaeological Services had prepared an Historic Environment Appraisal (Day 2017; DAT Report No. 2017/51). The report summarised the results as follows:

Although there are no known archaeological sites within the development site, there are twenty four known archaeological or historical sites within a 1km buffer zone around the area and eleven listed buildings with 2km. The archaeological potential for hitherto unknown archaeological sites to be present within the proposed development area is considered to be low. There is a possibility that a field name on the tithe map of 1841 referred to a cottage within or near the proposed site boundary. This gives a low potential for buried remains of medieval and post-medieval date. The potential for features and finds originating from any time period before the medieval cannot be discounted, but is considered to be very low based on the dearth of known sites of these periods in the area (Day 2017).

1.1.3 Subsequently this led to DAT Archaeological Services undertaking a geophysical survey (Enright 2017; DAT Report No. 2017-68). The geophysical survey identified a series of former field boundaries and tracks which although of some archaeological interest, these are indicated on earlier maps and can thus be interpreted without further evaluation. Two anomalies were identified which do not correspond with features on earlier maps, the remains of a possible rectangular structure on the western side of the site area, and a possible 'ring ditch' or small enclosure on the eastern side.

1.1.4 Based on the findings of the geophysical survey and discussions with the Development management section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust, in their capacity as archaeological advisors to the planning authority, the client requested DAT Archaeological Services to conduct further archaeological works to assess the significance of these possible archaeological remains.

1.1.5 The purpose of the archaeological evaluation was to specifically provide information on the character, date and significance of the two anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey within the development site.

1.2 Scope of Project

1.2.1 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological evaluation was prepared by DAT Archaeological Services prior to the commencement of works. This was approved by the archaeological advisors to Pembrokeshire County Council, Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Development Management prior to the start of the works. The WSI outlined the following tasks for the project:

- Provision of a written scheme of investigation to outline the methodology for the intrusive trial trench evaluation which DAT Archaeological Services will undertake (this document);

- To establish the state of preservation, character, extent and date range for the targeted archaeological deposits;
 - To use the information to develop a future mitigation strategy at the site which will enable any identified remains to be either preserved *in-situ* or appropriately investigated and recorded where they will be affected by the proposed development;
 - Production of a report and an archive of the results.
- 1.2.2 The overall scheme of works was summarised as: *The implementation of a scheme of archaeological evaluation using trial trenching on land at Heol y Plas, Llannon, Carmarthenshire. Further mitigation is possible where significant remains are identified, the scope of which would be determined following this stage of work. A report shall be prepared on the results of the evaluation and an archive created of all finds, records, photographs and plans created by this mitigation strategy.*

1.3 Report Outline

- 1.3.1 This report provides a summary and discussion of the archaeological evaluation and its results and puts those results within their regional and national context where possible.

1.4 Abbreviations

- 1.4.1 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). DAT Archaeological Services – DAT-AS; Dyfed Archaeological Trust Development Management – DAT-DM; Scheduled Ancient Monument – SAM; Written Scheme of Investigation – WSI; RCAHMW – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

1.5 Illustrations

- 1.5.1 Printed map extracts are not necessarily produced to their original scale.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo SA19 6AF.

1.6 Timeline

1.6.1 The following timeline (Table 1) is used within this report to give date ranges for the various archaeological periods that may be mentioned within the text.

Period	Approximate date	
Palaeolithic –	c.450,000 – 10,000 BC	Prehistoric
Mesolithic –	c. 10,000 – 4400 BC	
Neolithic –	c.4400 – 2300 BC	
Bronze Age –	c.2300 – 700 BC	
Iron Age –	c.700 BC – AD 43	
Roman (Romano-British) Period –	AD 43 – c. AD 410	Historic
Post-Roman / Early Medieval Period –	c. AD 410 – AD 1086	
Medieval Period –	1086 – 1536	
Post-Medieval Period ² –	1536 – 1750	
Industrial Period –	1750 – 1899	
Modern –	20 th century onwards	

Table 1: Archaeological and Historical Timeline for Wales.

² The post-medieval and industrial periods are combined as the post-medieval period on the Regional Historic Environment Record as held by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

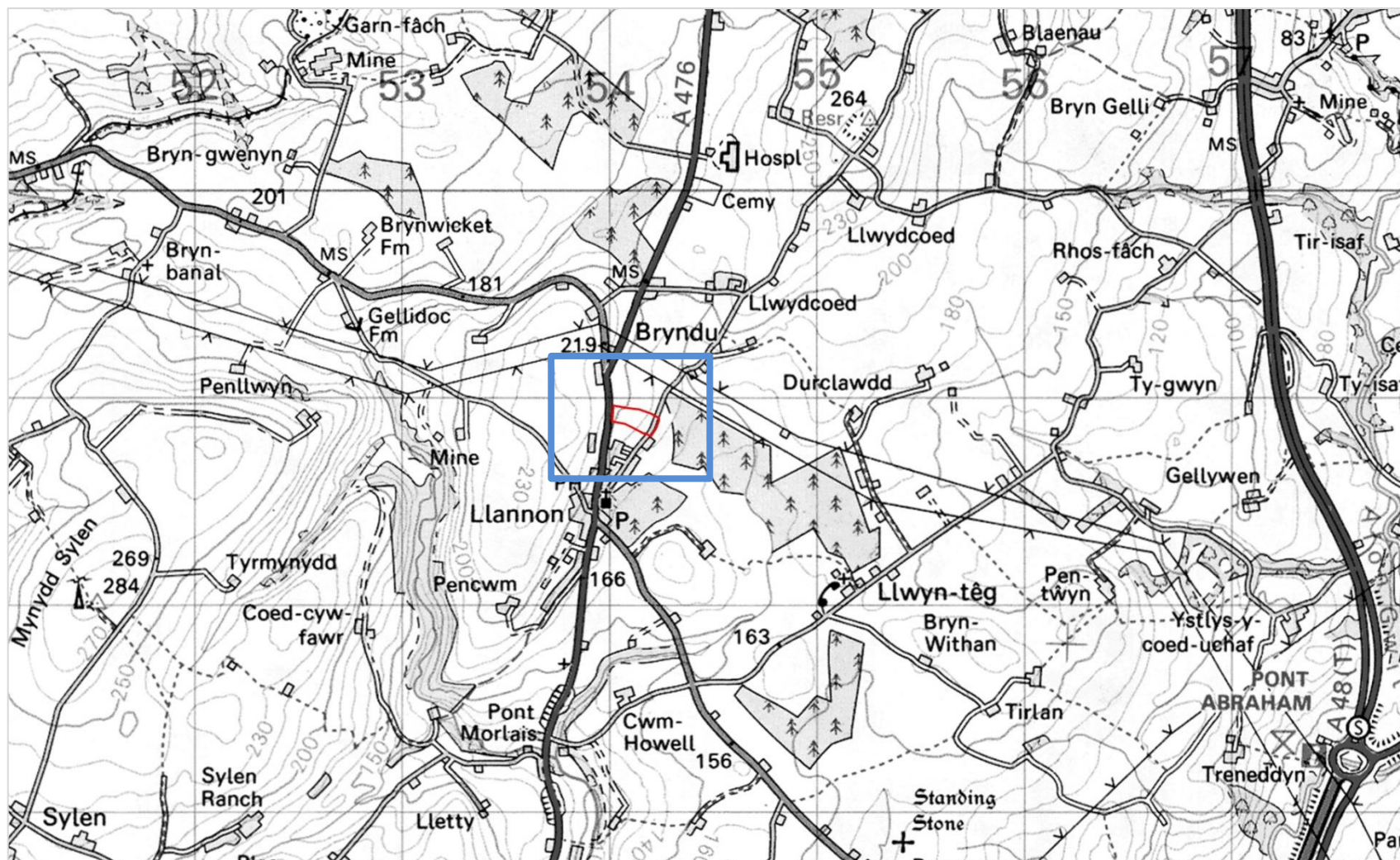


Figure 1: Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey. The development area is outlined in red within the blue box.

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale 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 100020930



Figure 2: Plan of the proposed development area (outlined in red) at land off Heol y Plas, Llannon (plan supplied by client)

2. THE SITE

2.1 Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1.1 The proposed development is situated at land off Heol y Plas, Llannon, Carmarthenshire (roughly centred on SN 54108 08878; Figures 1 and 2). This area is about 7km northwest of Pontarddulais and about 7km north-northeast of Llanelli. Llannon is a growing village with good access to the M4 motorway.
- 2.1.2 The village has a primary school and two pubs but lacks any other amenities such as a shop. Two new small housing estates have been constructed since 1999. The local school recently underwent a large extension programme to cope with the increased demand for schooling from the growing population.
- 2.1.3 The site and its environs occupy a gentle slope on the east-facing side of a hill on the northern edge of the village. The lowest point on the site is at c.185m above OD and the highest at c.208m above OD.
- 2.1.4 The development site lies on the northern side of a modern housing development leading from Clos Rebecca. The proposed development area is currently used as an agricultural field.
- 2.1.5 The underlying solid geology of the site is complex: Green-grey and blue-grey, feldspathic, micaceous lithic arenites ("Pennant sandstone") with thin mudstone/siltstone and seatearth interbeds and mainly thin coals. It is named the 'Llyfni Member' and dates to the Bolsovian substage. The bedrock is overlain by Till (Diamicton) of Devensian Age - superficial deposits formed up to 2 million years ago by glacier deposition. (Source: British Geological Survey).

2.2 Archaeological Potential

- 2.2.1 A detailed archaeological and historical background was included in the Historic Environment Appraisal (Day 2017) produced by DAT Archaeological Services, with some of its findings summarised below.
- 2.2.2 Very little is known about the early origins or history of Llannon. Evidence of Mesolithic activity around Llannon is absent and very few Neolithic sites are present, and those that are present are not typical of those found in most of the rest of Wales (ibid).
- 2.2.3 Bronze Age activity in the area exists mainly in the form of funerary monuments and standing stones, of which there are a particularly large number of the latter just 2km southeast of Llannon. There is very little evidence of Iron Age activity, which is not typical of the county (ibid).
- 2.2.4 It is believed that a Roman Road that once ran between Pontarddulais and Carmarthen passed through Llannon, but to date no supporting evidence has been found (ibid). Very little evidence of early medieval settlement is also available (ibid).
- 2.2.5 Although the Historic Environment Appraisal identified the proposed development area as having a low potential for buried archaeological remains, it also noted that very few previous archaeological investigations had taken place within the general area. Thus, this apparent absence may be due to the absence of investigative work, as opposed to an actual absence of archaeology. With this in mind, the geophysical survey was undertaken to shed more light on the archaeological potential of the site.

- 2.2.6 DAT Archaeological Services conducted the geophysical survey in late 2017 (Enright 2017). The results of this survey identified a number of anomalies that could be attributed to archaeological features (Figures 3 – 5); some of which could be considered to be of local and regional importance.
- 2.2.7 An examination of historic mapping indicated that some of the features identified were former field boundaries (B and C) that traversed the site north to south and east to west, but are no longer visible on the ground. The survey also identified a possible former trackway (A) that runs north-south across the development area that appears to correspond with a visible linear earthwork on the ground.
- 2.2.8 A large anomaly (D) of unknown origin was detected at the intersection of the former field boundaries (B and C). It was believed that its siting in the corner was intentional and probably contemporary with the field boundaries. It is suggested it represents the site of a former cattle feeding trough.
- 2.2.8 Evidence of a second trackway (E) was also identified, which shares a similar alignment to the former field boundary (C) suggesting they may originate from roughly the same period of time, and are both likely to be of post medieval date.
- 2.2.9 Although of some archaeological interest, all of the features above (Features A to E) are indicated on earlier maps and thus can be interpreted without further evaluation.
- 2.2.10 The characterisation of the remaining features identified by the geophysical survey is more uncertain and do not correspond with features on earlier maps (F and G).
- 2.2.11 Feature F may represent the remains of a possible rectangular structure on the western side of the proposed development area. A cottage is alluded to in this area on the Tithe map and accompanying apportionment of 1841.
- 2.2.12 Feature G represents a possible 'ring ditch' or ditched enclosure which could be evidence of human activity of prehistoric date. A potential entrance into the ditched enclosure lies on its northern side.

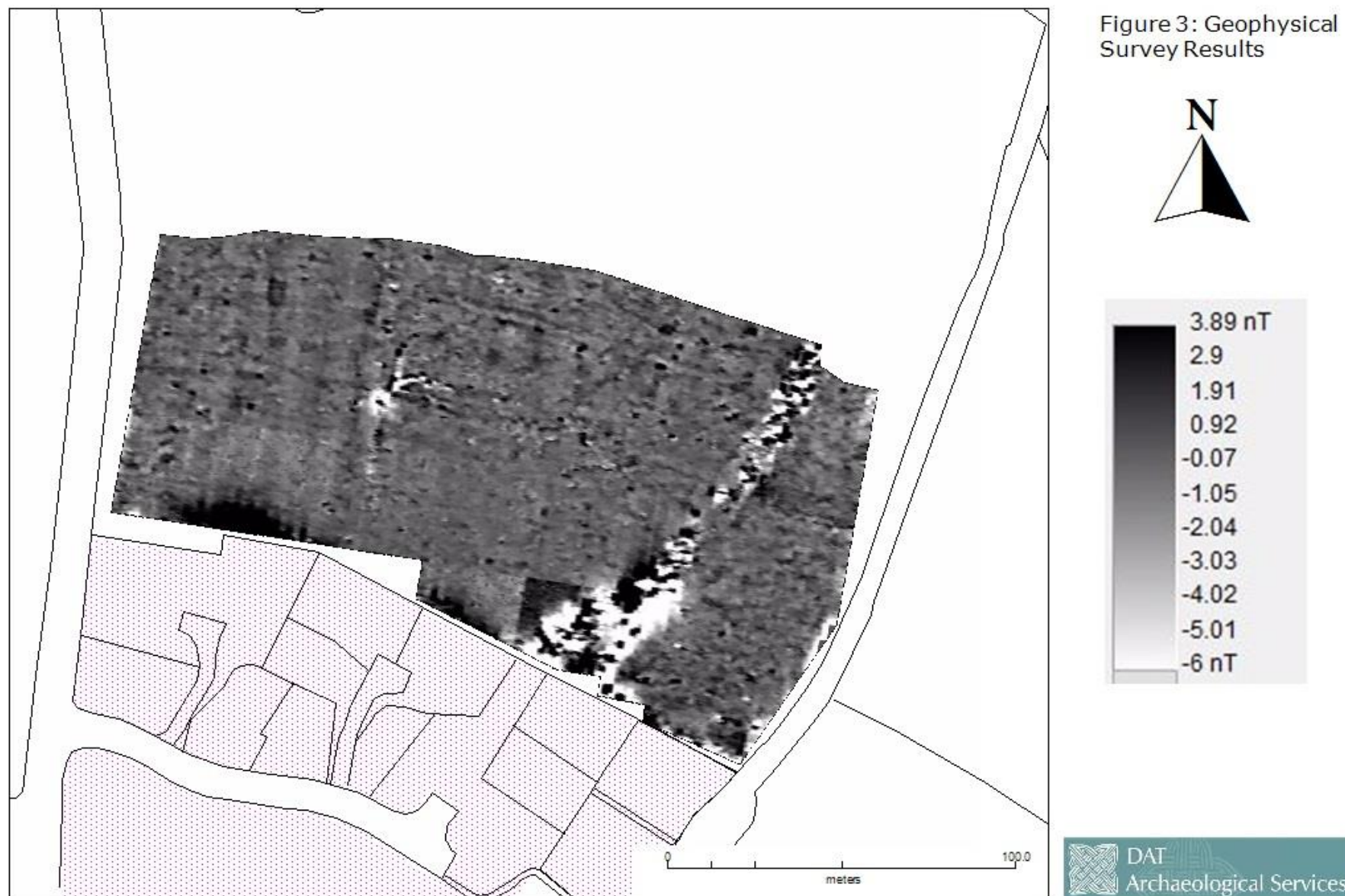
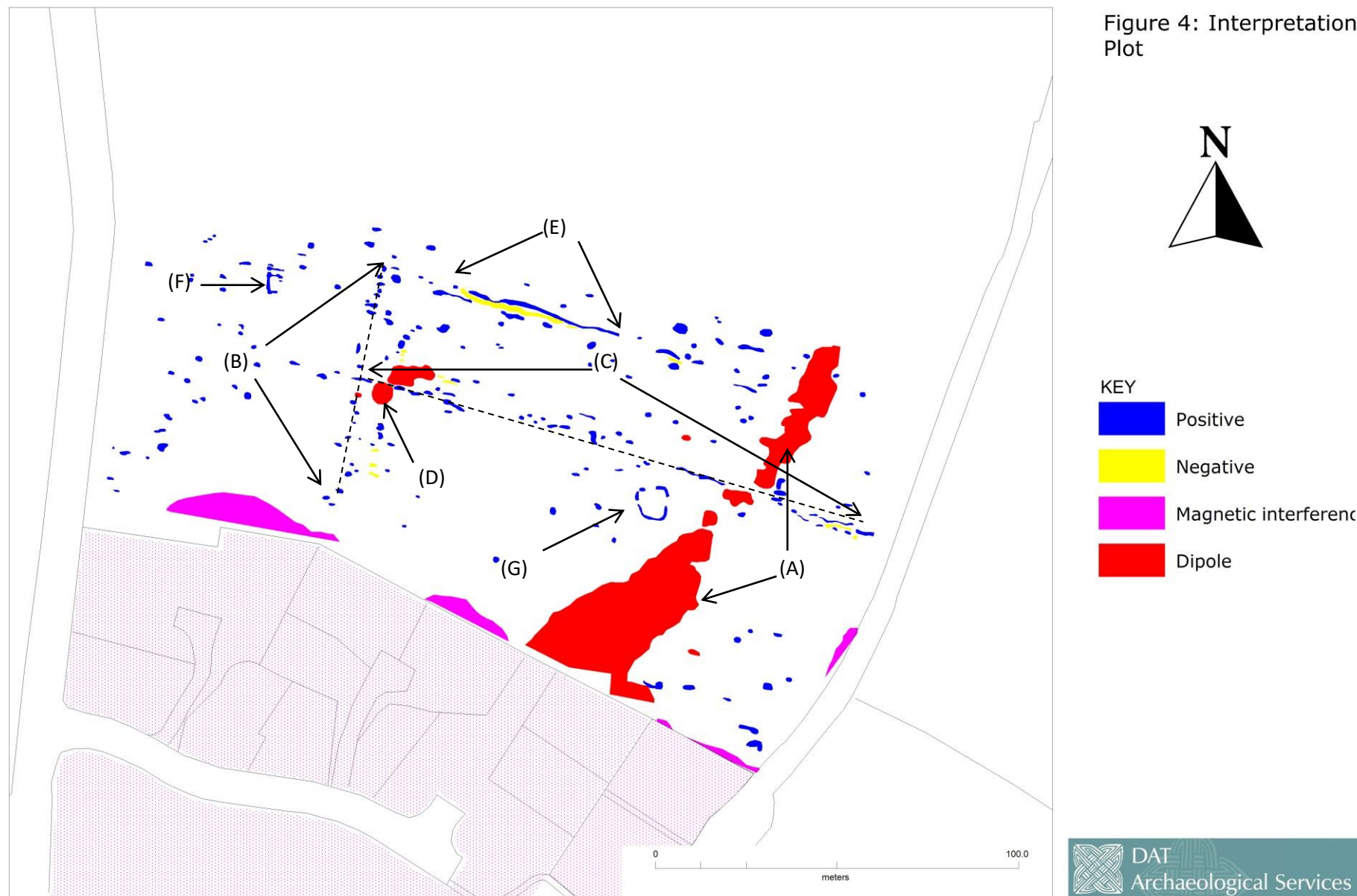


Figure 4: Interpretation
Plot



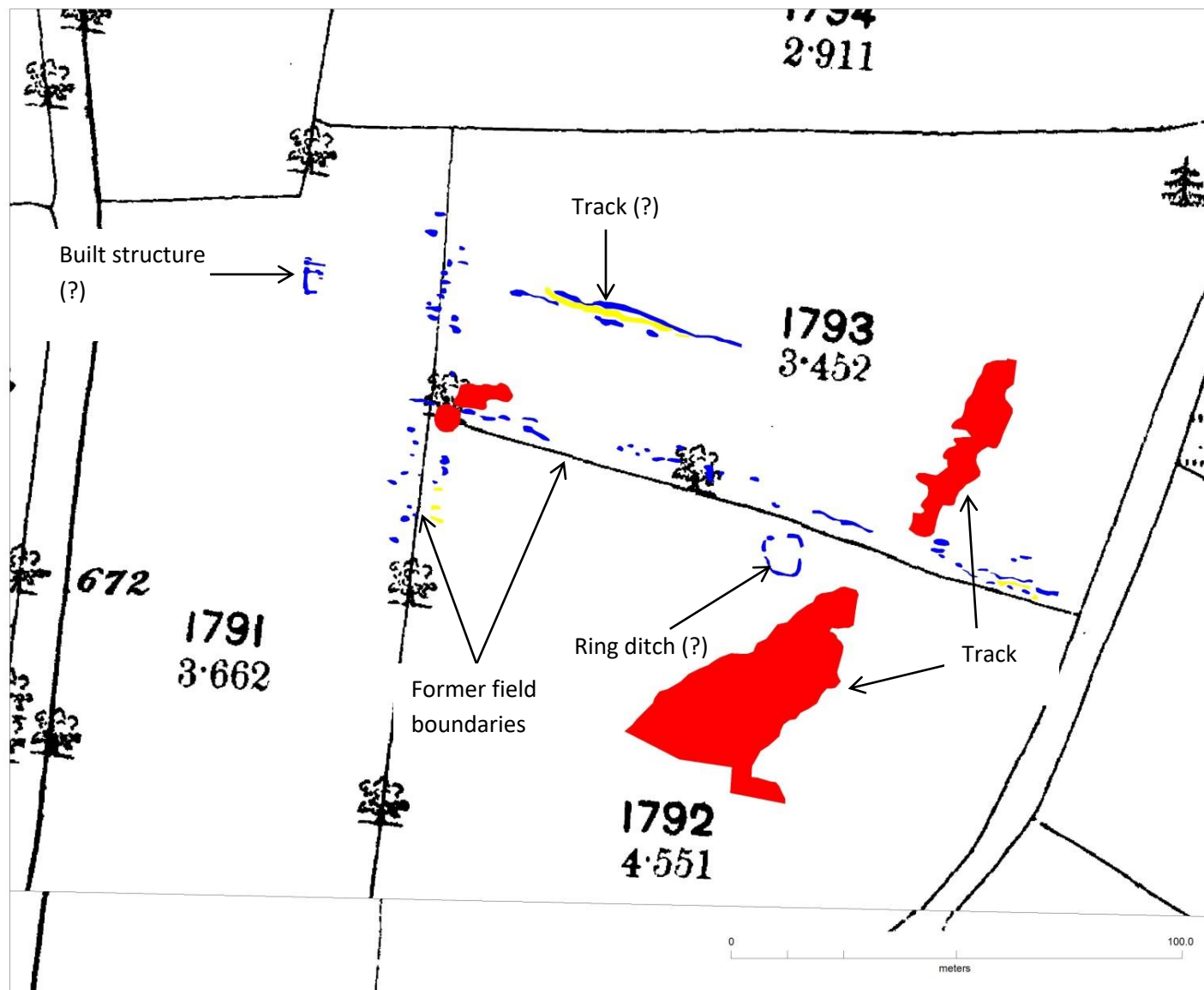


Figure 5: Probable archaeological features overlaid on 1st edition OS map (1879).



KEY

Negatives

Dipoles

Positives

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fieldwork Methodology

- 3.1.1 To ascertain the significance and state of preservation of the two areas of archaeological features within the proposed development area, a phase of trial trench evaluation was implemented. Using a tracked 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a flat bladed bucket two trenches (Figure 6) were excavated under archaeological supervision. All non-archaeologically significant overburden was removed, and the trenches were excavated down onto archaeological levels.
- 3.1.2 **Trench 1** – targeted the ‘ring ditch’ or enclosure and was a ‘T’ shaped trench. The east to west alignment traversed the most northern extent where a possible entrance is shown on the geophysical survey results and measured 10m x 1.60m. Projecting north to south from the middle of this was another 10m x 1.60m extension passing through the centre of the ‘ring ditch’ or enclosure to determine the character of any archaeology within its interior and define its southern extent.
- 3.1.3 **Trench 2** – targeted the possible building on the western side of the proposed development area. The trench was aligned roughly north to south measuring 10m x 1.60m through the centre of the possible structure with two arms projecting east and west to create a cross shape. This allowed for determining the extent of the possible structure in both length and width, as well as exposing a fair amount of its internal area.
- 3.1.4 Following machine excavation, the trenches were hand cleaned using trowels to best determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains. Certain areas were re-trowelled a number of times to improve the definition of features. Sample excavation was undertaken of features identified during the evaluation.
- 3.1.5 All deposits were recorded by archaeological context recording sheet, scale drawing, photography and site note books. All individual deposits were numbered using the open-ended numbering system in accordance with DAT Archaeological Services Recording Manual³. Trench plans and sections were recorded by means of measured drawings and sketches. A photographic record was maintained using digital cameras.
- 3.1.6 The trenches were located in relation to surrounding features and buildings using Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS).
- 3.1.7 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the 16th and 19th of March, 2018.

3.2 Post-Fieldwork Reporting and Archiving

- 3.2.1 All data recovered during the fieldwork will be collated into a site archive structured in accordance with specifications in *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (Brown 2011), and the procedures recommended by the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth.
- 3.2.2 The results of the fieldwork have been assessed in local, regional and wider contexts. The report includes a desk-based research element to ensure that the site is placed within its wider archaeological context.

³ DAT Archaeological Services use the Recording Manual developed by English Heritage Centre for Archaeology. A copy will be available for inspection if required.

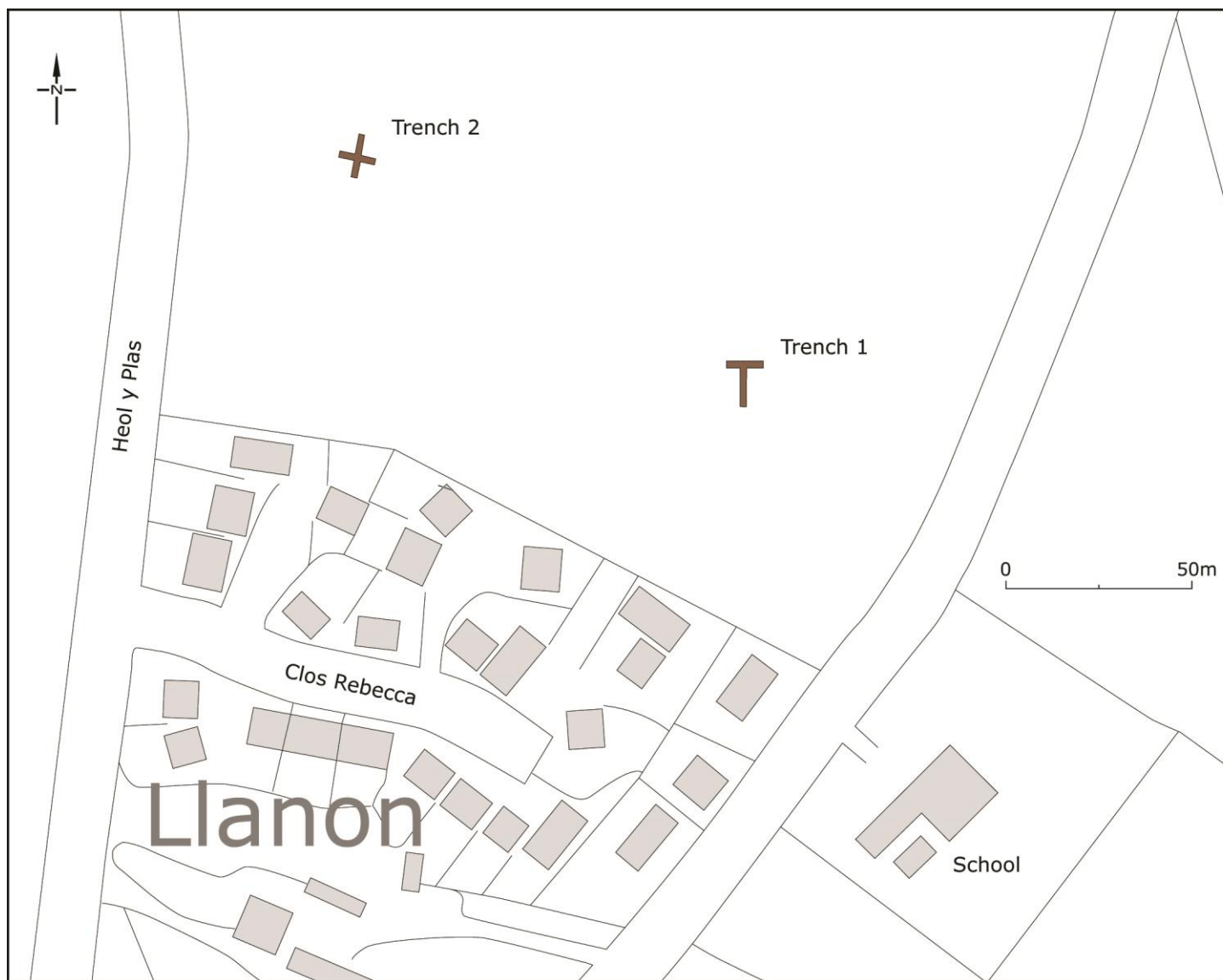


Figure 6: Trench Locations

4. EVALUATION RESULTS

- 4.1 The trenches were recorded with plan and section drawings where appropriate. The results are discussed here in chronological order of events, with the oldest deposit recorded first (typically natural deposits) moving forward to the most recent (present ground surface). Archaeological fills and layers are represented in (), whilst cut numbers are represented in [].
- 4.2 In each trench the earliest deposit observed were the natural subsoils consisting of pale orange/yellow brown silty clay. This undulated across the site as the topography sloped from 201.26mOD in the west to 190.31mOD in the east. Both trenches had an upper most deposit of topsoil which ranged in height from 201.68mOD to 190.54mOD.

4.3 Trench 1 (Figures 7 & 8)

Context Number	Thickness	Description/interpretation
101	0.36m	A friable, medium brown silty clay. Inclusions of occasional small/medium stones, with fragments of charcoal and coal. – Turf and topsoil.
102	Not fully excavated	A firm, pale orange/yellow brown silty clay. – Natural horizon.

Table 2: List of stratigraphic layers in Trench 1

- 4.3.1 Trench 1 was T-shaped and targeted the possible 'ring ditch' or small enclosure on the eastern side of the site area (Photos 1 & 2).
- 4.3.2 The earliest deposit recorded within the trench was (102), a pale orange/yellow brown silty clay, representing the natural geological subsoil, recorded at an upper height of 190.31mOD.
- 4.3.3 Cutting into the natural subsoil was cut [103] (Photo 3). This was located in the western branch of the trench and was tentatively interpreted as a broad shallow terminus of a ditch. The ditch terminus measured approximately 1.30m in length, 1.15m wide and up to 0.10m in depth. The eastern side was steeply sloped but this was more gradual on the northwest side. The fill (104) consisted of a mid-brown, friable silty clay with moderate inclusions of small/medium stones as well as charcoal and coal fragments. No archaeological artefacts or dating evidence was retrieved from (104).
- 4.3.4 Overlying (102) was (101), a 0.36m thick layer of medium brown, friable silty clay topsoil.



Photo 1: View east across the northern part of Trench 1



Photo 2: View north along southern part of Trench 1



Photo 3: Excavated section through 'Ditch' terminus [103].
North facing section. 1m scale.

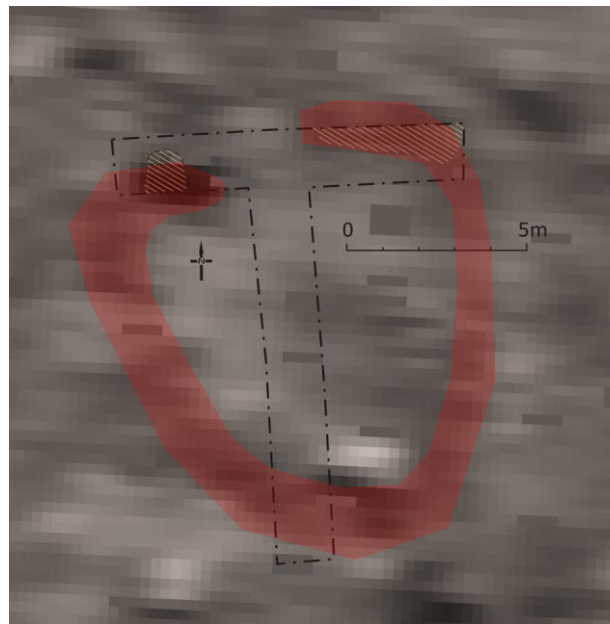


Figure 7: Trench 1 overlaid on the geophysical survey anomaly

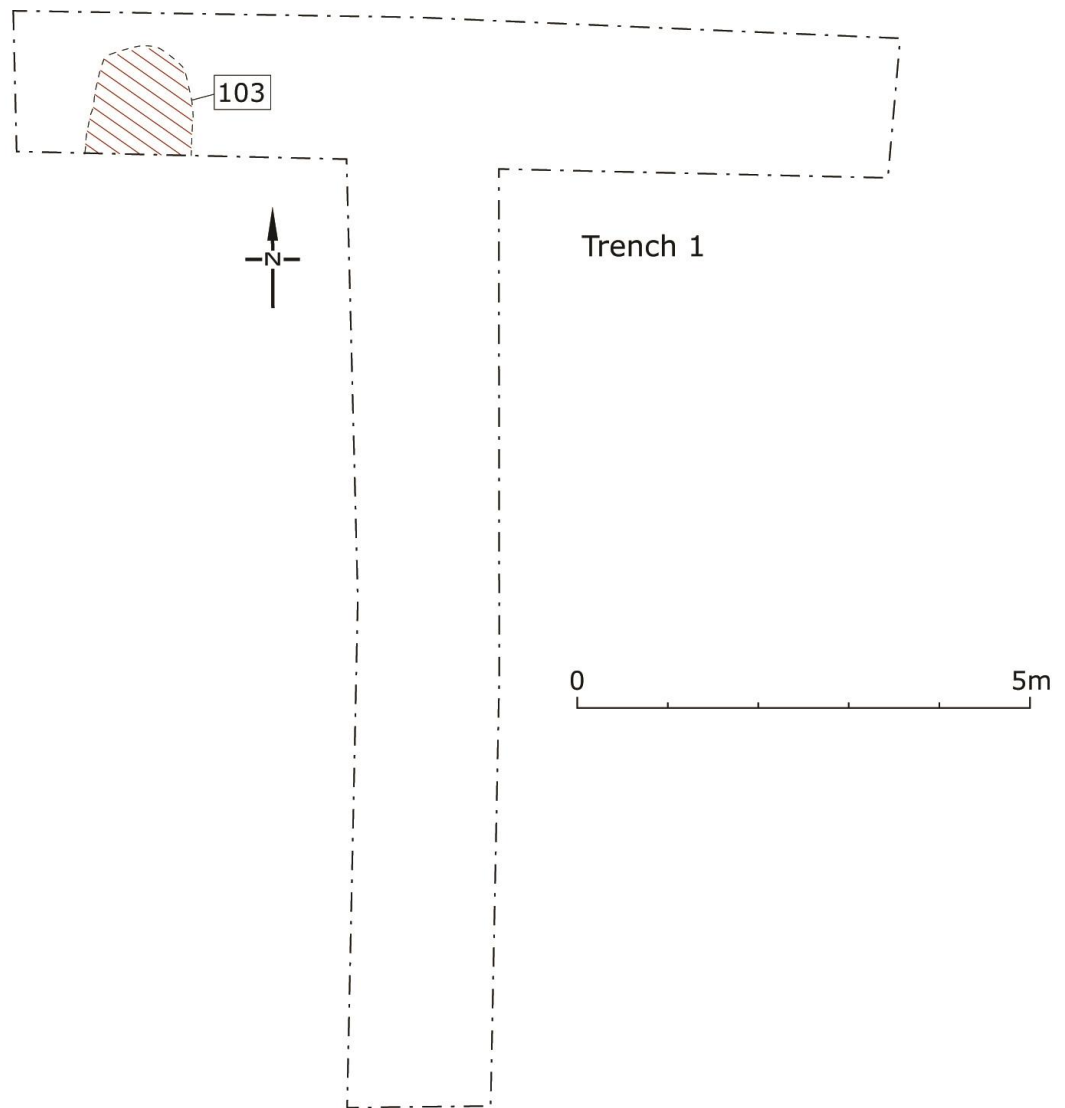


Figure 8: Trench 1 plan and section drawings.

4.4 Trench 2 (Figures 9 & 10)

Context Number	Thickness	Description/interpretation
201	0.40m	A friable, medium brown silty clay. Inclusions of occasional small/medium stones, with fragments of charcoal and coal. – Turf and topsoil.
202	Not fully excavated	A firm, pale orange/yellow brown silty clay. – Natural horizon.

Table 3: List of stratigraphic layers Trench 2

- 4.4.1 Trench 2 was cross shaped (Photos 4 & 5) and targeted the roughly rectangular possible structural remains identified by the geophysical survey on the western side of the development area.
- 4.4.2 The earliest deposited recorded in Trench 2 was (202), the natural geological subsoil, as previously seen in Trench 1. This was recorded at an upper height of 201.26mOD.
- 4.4.3 Cutting into this natural horizon were a number of features. Cut [203] represented a linear ditch located in the western branch of the trench (Photo 6). A 1.60m north to south aligned length of this ditch was exposed within the trench, extending beyond the limits of the excavated trench in each direction. The ditch was 0.90m wide and up to 0.25m deep. It had a sharp break of slope at the top and steep sloping sides to a rounded base. This was filled with loose, medium brown silt with moderate inclusions of medium sub angular stones (204).
- 4.4.4 Another cut feature [205] (Photo 7 and 8), was observed in the northern branch of Trench 2. This appeared to be another ditch orientated east to west across the width of the trench. Ditch [205] was exposed for a 1.60m length and continued in beyond the limits of the excavated trench in either direction. The ditch was approximately 0.60m wide and up to 0.60m deep. It had a sharp break of slope at the top with steep almost vertical edges leading to a flat base. This was filled with firm grey/brown silty clay with small-medium and large sub angular stones and coal fragments (206).
- 4.4.5 The final observed feature within Trench 2 was cut [207] (Photo 9), a possible curvilinear gully recorded in the eastern branch of the trench. The gully was orientated roughly north to south, seemingly curving away from ditches [203] and [205]. It was exposed for a roughly 1.40m length and extended beyond the limits of the trench to the north and south. The gully measured up to 0.20m wide but was very shallow and only a maximum of 0.03m depth. The cut was filled by loose brown silty clay with frequent small angular stone inclusions (208).
- 4.4.6 The entire trench was overlain by the same friable, medium brown silty clay topsoil as previously seen in Trench 1 (202). No archaeological artefacts or dating evidence were retrieved from the features excavated in Trench 2.



Photo 4: Trench 2 viewing east



Photo 5: Trench 2 viewing south



Photo 6: Ditch [203] recorded in the western branch of Trench 2.
South facing section. 1m scale.



Photo 7: Ditch [205] recorded in the northern branch of Trench 2.
View west. 1m scale.



Photo 8: Ditch [205] showing the steep almost vertical sides and flat base. East facing section. 0.5m scale.



Photo 9: Possible gully [207]. View north. 0.5m scale.

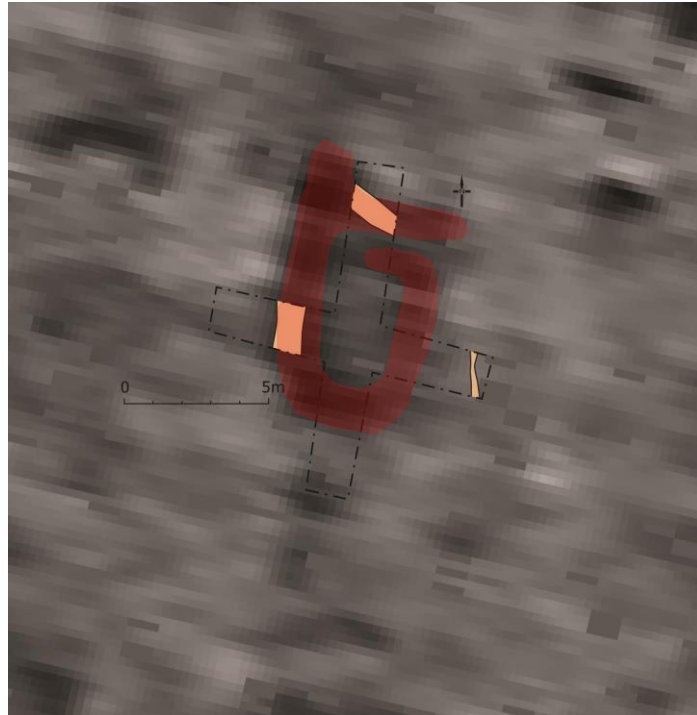


Figure 9: Trench 2 overlaid on geophysical survey anomaly

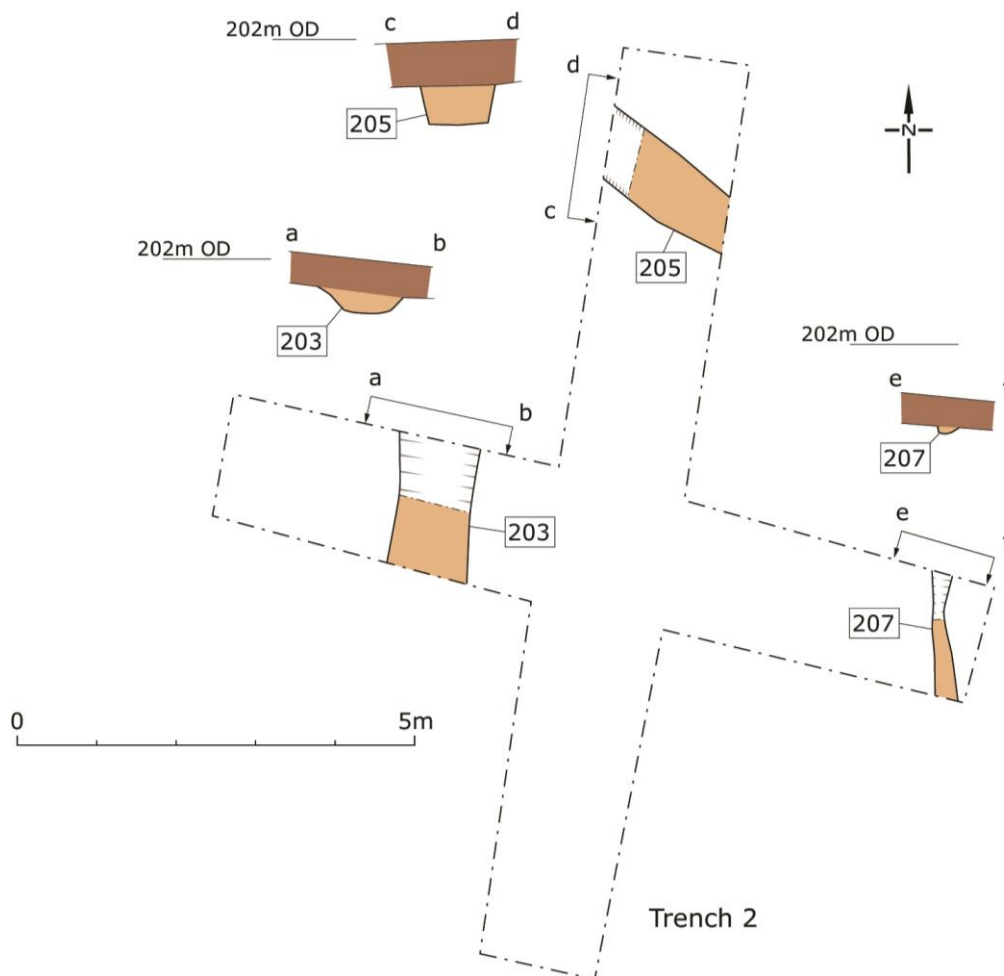


Figure 10: Trench 2 plan and section drawings.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The trial trench evaluation of the Heol Y Plas proposed development site at Llannon targeted two areas of geophysical survey anomalies that had archaeological potential. The evaluation has revealed a sequence of natural deposits and ploughed top soils across the site, as well as cut features in the locations of the identified anomalies.
- 5.2 In Trench 1, what has been tentatively interpreted as the terminus of a ditch was recorded. This does appear to coincide with the position of one of the ditches interpreted as a possible enclosure in the geophysical survey. The possible enclosure or ring ditch was only identified within one arm of the T-shaped trench. No dating material or artefacts were found within the excavated section through the possible ditch terminus. No archaeological features were observed inside of the possible ring ditch or enclosure. The interpretation of the geophysical survey anomaly actually representing archaeology remains ambiguous and it is possible that it is simply a natural phenomenon. Coal was noted within the fill of the feature, but coal is known to be present in the natural geology and so this does not immediately indicate it is of archaeological origin. Assuming the coal has been introduced through archaeological activity, it may be more likely that it is of post-medieval date.
- 5.3 Trench 2 targeted the possible structural feature identified by the geophysical survey on the western side of the proposed development area. However, clearly defined ditches were recorded in the east and north branch of the T-shaped trench which roughly correspond with the findings of the geophysical survey, but the lack of corresponding features within the rest of the trench would suggest much less substantial remains exist than originally suggested by the geophysics. No artefacts or dating evidence were retrieved from the excavated sections of the ditches. The features do not have the appearance of structural remains, such as robber foundation trenches for a stone building, although one of the ditches was quite steep sided and flat bottomed, which could indicate a beam-slot for a timber structure. The lack of similar features in the other trenches makes this interpretation very unlikely. The archaeological remains do not suggest that a structure was present in this location.
- 5.4 The gully recorded in the east of Trench 2 does not appear to correspond with anything visible in the geophysical survey plot and also appears to bow away from the previous ditches discussed. No relationship with the gully and the ditches could be determined during this evaluation, and again no dating material was recovered from its fill.
- 5.5 The lack of archaeological evidence recorded in either trench makes characterising the significance of the remains recorded extremely difficult to interpret within the constraints of the evaluation. An archaeological feature corresponding with the possible enclosure in Trench 1 was visible in only one location. Its absence in the remainder of the trench, and the lack of any internal features would suggest that the anomaly may be of natural origin.
- 5.6 If the anomaly recorded in the area of Trench 2 had been a structure, it would be expected that some stone foundations or indications of mortar would still exist, albeit fragmented and damaged. As noted it is possible that the remains reflect a structure constructed of wood which has rotted away completely leaving only beam slots surviving, although as the features were not present in all the expected locations, this is again unlikely. It is unfortunately not possible to further characterise or date the

remains recorded within Trench 2. They definitely appear to be of archaeological origin, but the significance remains uncertain.

- 5.7 In order to better understand the remains observed in the area of Trench 1 it may be necessary to undertake further investigations of the feature. It is considered that this could be adequately done through the implementation of a targeted watching brief during the development programme, or alternatively it may be possible to amend the development proposals to retain the remains undisturbed *in-situ*. No further work is considered necessary within the area of Trench 1, nor in the areas of the other anomalies identified on the geophysical survey that corresponded to features recorded on earlier cartographic sources.

6. SOURCES

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

Charles Enright

Swydd / Position: Archaeologist DAT Archaeological Services

Llofnod / Signature  Dyddiad / Date 09/04/18

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 DAT Archaeological Services

Llofnod / Signature  Dyddiad / Date 10/04/18

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

