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# TORCOED QUARRY SOUTHERN EXTENSION

LLANDDAROG  
CARMARTHENSHIRE

01/01/2000

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING SEPTEMBER 1999

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Commissioned by: Tarmac Quarry Products Ltd

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A R C H A E O L O G  
**CAMBRIA**  
A R C H A E O L O G Y

## SUMMARY

*This short report is an account of a single day's archaeological trenching and recording on boundaries and associated remains of an relict field system in a southern extension to Torcoed Quarry, Llanddarog, Carmarthenshire. In an earlier report it was suggested that the field system might be of prehistoric date. It was not possible to demonstrate whether this suggestion was correct or not, but the boundaries were shown to be of considerable antiquity.*

## INTRODUCTION

Following a 1993 archaeological desk-top evaluation (report by K Murphy, Dyed Archaeological Trust, and commissioned by Wimpey Hobbs Ltd - the then owners of the quarry) of a proposed southern extension to Torcoed Quarry, planning permission was granted with an archaeological condition. A statement of archaeological works considered appropriate to the southern quarry extension was set out by Louise Austin, Development Control Officer with Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology. On the basis of this statement, Neil Bromwich, Tarmac Quarry Products Ltd, asked Field Operations of Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology to produce a specification of archaeological works and to carry out those works. Initially it was envisaged that the archaeological works would consist of an intermittent watching brief undertaken during topsoil stripping and removal of superficial geological deposits. However, Terrance Jenkins, the quarry manager offered the services of a mechanical excavator and driver to the archaeologists. As targeting specific boundaries and other features for mechanical excavation and subsequent recording seemed a far more likely method of obtaining useful information that a watching brief this offer was accepted. Trenching and recording was carried out over one day, 14 September 1999.

## SITE LOCATION AND HISTORY

Torcoed Quarry (NGR SN 493137) exploits a west-southwest to east-northeast ridge of Carboniferous Limestone that runs from the Black Mountain in the east of Carmarthenshire to close to the sea at Kidwelly in the west. The band of limestone is generally just a few hundred metres wide. At Torcoed the ridge achieves a height of approximately 225m. To the south the limestone is abutted by the millstone grits of Mynydd Llangydeyrn, which lie at a similar height, but to the north land falls away dramatically to a landscape of small fields and scattered farms. The land-use of the quarry extension is unimproved pasture with scrubby woodland on steeper slopes.

To the south and southwest of the proposed extension, on Mynydd Llangydeyrn, lie a well-known and well-studied group of prehistoric monuments, dating to 3500 BC to 1300 BC (Ward 1976, 1983). In addition to these monuments, Ward (1989) recognised a field system which he considered was laid out in the second- or early first-millennium BC. Part of this system runs across from the unenclosed land on Mynydd Llangydeyrn into the quarry extension. In the quarry extension the field system covers an area approximately 250m x 200m and is composed of low boundary banks (Dyfed Sites and Monuments Primary Record No. 27212). These banks are built from rubble and earth or just earth, but most have lines of earthfast boulders and/or slabs along their crests (Fig. 1). Many of the boundaries run along natural breaks of slope. Some of these are quite dramatic - several boundaries lie on the lips of low limestone cliffs. Other less obvious breaks of slopes seem to have been emphasised by the creation of lynchets. Modern large scale Ordnance Survey maps record some of these boundaries as vegetation changes - but apart from this, low, insubstantial boundaries are not otherwise recorded on any map. This relict system lies within enclosures of a more recent field system which is composed of dry-stone and mortared walls. This extant field system is shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps and is first recorded on an estate map of 1784 (Carmarthen Record Office Cawdor Vaughan 5854). Within the area of the relict field system two small clearance cairns (PRN 7714) of unknown date were recorded by Ward (1976, 11).

## EXCAVATION TRENCHES

Since the archaeological desk-top evaluation was carried out in 1993, the area of the quarry extension has become very overgrown. There is bracken invasion, and scrubby bushes on most slopes. Prior to archaeological recording the eastern part of the area had been quarried and some topsoil stripping had occurred outside this quarrying and along the northern fringes of the extension. Some relict boundaries had also been removed. Due to vegetation growth some boundaries recorded in 1993 were no longer visible.

#### *Trench 1*

This was excavated across a newly discovered clearance cairn. The cairn lay in dense blackthorn scrub and measured 2m - 3m across and 0.5m high. On the surface it seemed to be composed entirely of limestone rubble. The excavation trench confirmed that it was made of stones up to 0.40m long loosely set in a soil matrix of dark brown silty-loam. There was no buried soil beneath the cairn - the stones rested directly onto shattered limestone bedrock.

#### *Trench 2 (Fig. 2)*

This cut across one of the best preserved boundaries of the relict field system. On the surface the boundary was represented by a distinctive lynchet on a gentle south-facing slope. Boulders, some individually located and spaced up to 1m apart and others in clusters of three or four, ran along the crest of the lynchet. Trench 2 revealed a deep and relatively complex sequence to this boundary. Topsoil (1) consisted of a mid-brown silty-loam up to 0.40m thick. Beneath this lay a colluvium deposit (3) of coarse silty-loam (less humic than the topsoil) up to 0.60m thick. It was from this deposit that the lynchet was mainly formed. On the crest of the lynchet, partly bedded in to the colluvium, partly lying in topsoil, and partly protruding through the vegetation, lay a group of boulders (2). On the lower levels of the trench and below the deposit of colluvium lay a deposit of compact and almost stone-free, black silty-loam (4). This layer faded to nothing towards the up-slope end of the trench, but thickened to over 0.5m on the down-slope, southern end. Initially it was considered that this black silty-loam was highly degraded limestone bedrock, but on further examination it seems most likely that it is a palaeosol that had been partially eroded off the more exposed bedrock outcrops prior to the deposition of the colluvium (3).

#### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was excavated across the same boundary as Trench 2, approximately 20m to the east. At this point the natural slope is less steep and the boundary is represented on the surface by slight break on slope with no surface boulders or any other evidence. The results from the excavation trench were very poor. A slight lynchet was detected, but this seemed to be composed entirely of topsoil resting on shattered bedrock. There was no trace of the palaeosol (4) revealed in Trench 2.

#### *Trench 4*

This trench was positioned across what was considered to be the site of one of the clearance cairns (PRN 7714) first recorded by Ward (1976), and described in the 1993 archaeological evaluation. Since 1993, the cairns seem to have been mechanically removed, as there is little surface evidence for them, and the area has become very overgrown. The exact position of the cairns was therefore doubtful. Nevertheless, the trench was located at a position where there seemed to be a slight, stony mound. A thin, stony topsoil was found to directly overlie shattered limestone bedrock, with a slight concentration of stones in the topsoil at the presumed location of the cairn.

#### *Trench 5 (Fig. 3)*

Trench 5 was positioned across a boundary which runs along the crest of a low but steep and craggy north-facing slope. Long sections of this boundary has been recently destroyed by clearance work, but where surviving it consisted of two-to-three courses of roughly laid limestone blocks. The trench was located where the boundary was best preserved. The coursed rubble (2) was found to be located wholly within topsoil (1). This was a dark-brown silty-loam up to 0.25m thick with a scattering of stones. The rubble rested on the crest of a low lynchet formed from a layer of a mid-brown silty-clay-loam colluvium (3). This in turn overlay a similar but more compacted layer of mid-brown silty-clay-loam (4). This filled deep crevasses in the limestone bedrock.

#### *Trench 6 (Fig. 4)*

The boundary through which this trench was excavated ran north to south across a shallow, flat, open valley between two low limestone outcrops. On the surface the valley gave the impression of containing rich deep soils capable of supporting good quality pasture, unlike the surrounding somewhat craggy landscape of thin soils. On the surface the boundary seemed to be constructed of stone and earth, and was about 1m wide and

0.30m high. The excavation demonstrated that the boundary was composed of rubble (2), with no obvious structure, set in a topsoil matrix of very dark-brown silty-clay-loam. The rubble boundary rested on a buried soil of mid-brown silty-loam (3), which contained traces of burning. This in turn merged with lower soil horizons (4) of the buried soil. The soil horizons lay on superficial geological deposits which filled the valley to an unknown depth. These consisted of dark reddish-brown silty-loams with a 40%-50% rounded stone content, interleaved with gritty and coarse sand layers.

#### *Trench 7*

This trench was excavated across the valley (in a similar location to Trench 6) at the foot of a craggy slope in order to examine geological deposits and search for evidence of colluvium. The sequence revealed was as follows:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 0 - 0.25m.     | Topsoil, dark-brown silty-loam with 5% small stones.  |
| 0.25m - 0.75m. | Mid-brown silty-clay-loam with occasional stones. Origin uncertain, but probably colluvium  |
| 0.75m - 1.00m. | Mixed dark greyish-brown and mid-brown silty-clay-loam with numerous pieces of degraded limestone. This seems to be a naturally-formed layer of degraded limestone. |
| Below 1.00m.   | Shattered limestone bedrock   |

#### *Trench 8*

This trench was excavated across a boundary which on the surface was manifest as a slight lynchet. Bedrock was found to be very close to the surface and covered with just 0.05m - 0.10m of topsoil. There was no obvious structural evidence for the boundary, and the lynchet seemed to be formed from a dip in the bedrock. However, on the up-slope side to the west of the presumed boundary topsoil consisted of dark-brown to black silty-loam, while on the slope to the east it was a mid-brown silty-loam.

#### *Trench 9*

This trench was cut across the same boundary as Trench 8, some 20m to the south. As with Trench 8, topsoil was very thin. However, a line of boulders in this trench seemed to mark the line of the boundary. To the west of the boundary a thin dark-brown silty loam topsoil lay directly over bedrock. To the east bedrock fell away rapidly and here a mid-brown silty-loam topsoil overlay a reddish-brown superficial geological deposit similar to layer 5 in Trench 6.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Owing to the lack of artefacts it was not possible to date any of the boundaries and cairns examined in the archaeological trenches. However, the depth of deposits associated with most of the boundaries, in particular that examined in Trench 2, and the colluvial deposits examined in many of the trenches, indicate a considerable period of cultivation and other farming use, perhaps spread over several centuries. According to the cartographic evidence the boundaries and relict field system had gone out of use by the late 18th-century. It is possible therefore that the system originated in the prehistoric period, as Ward suggests, though it could have been laid out in any period from the prehistoric to the medieval.

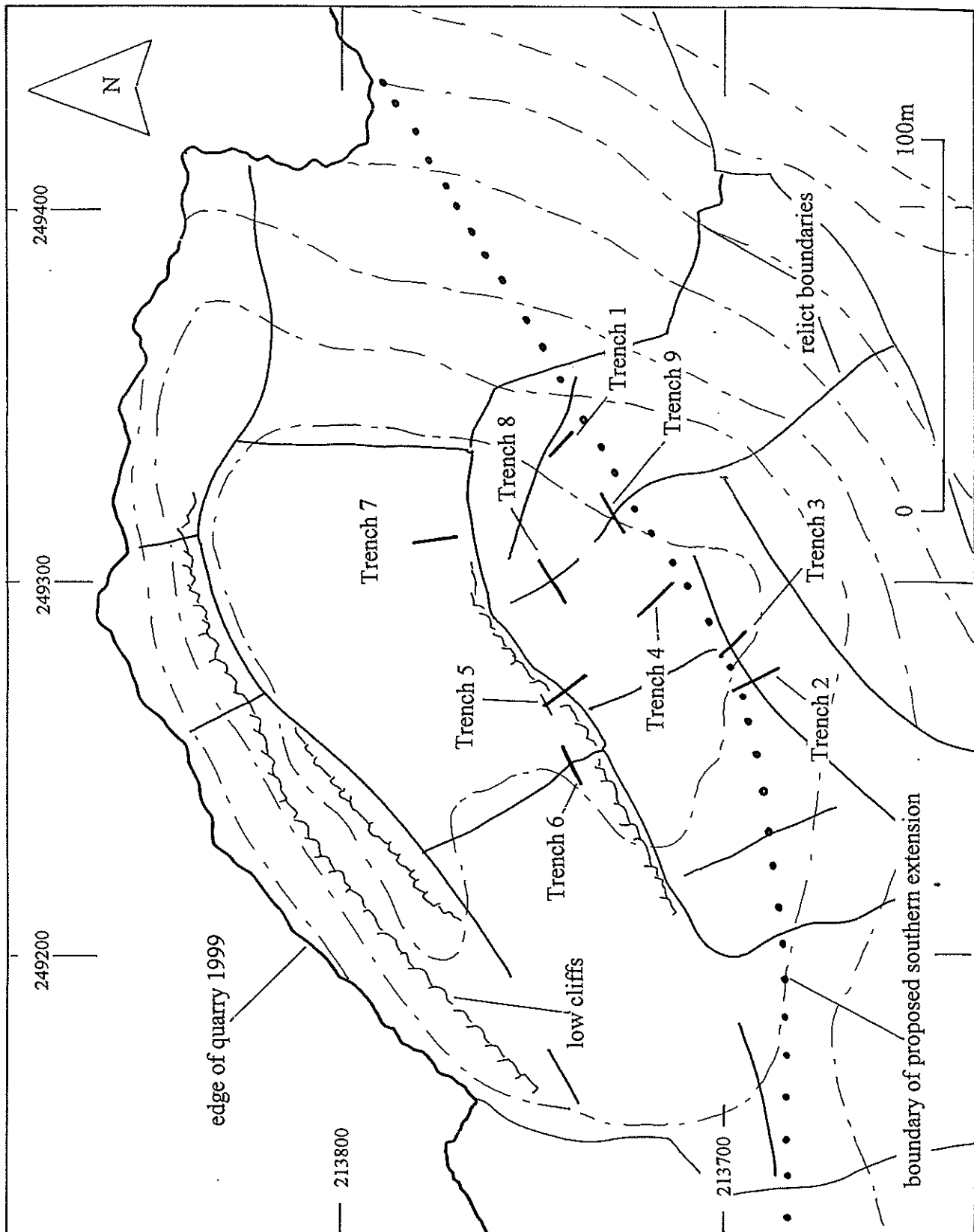


Figure 1. Location of Torcoed southern quarry extension showing relict boundaries and position of excavation trenches.

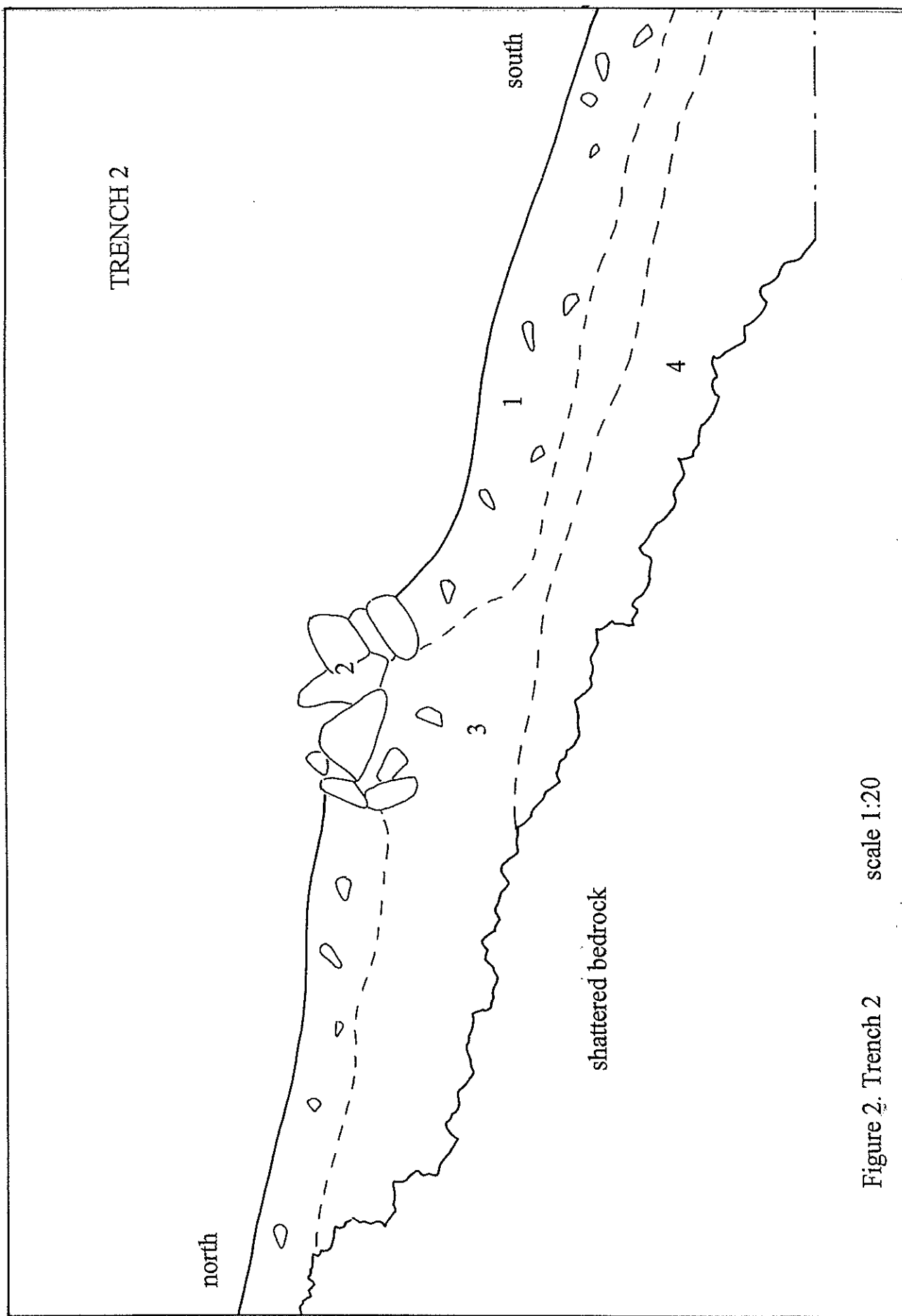


Figure 2. Trench 2 scale 1:20

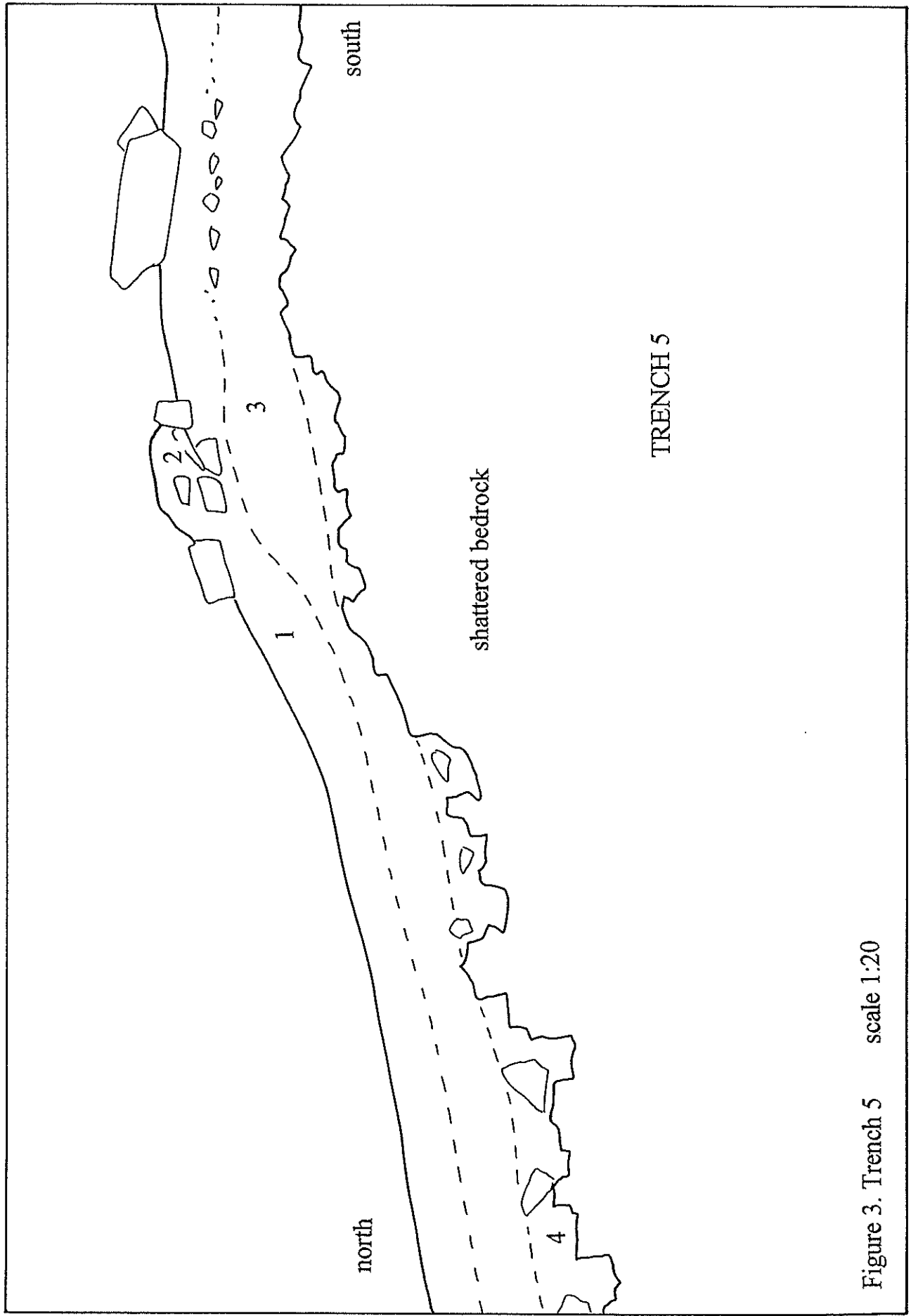


Figure 3. Trench 5 scale 1:20

# TRENCH 6

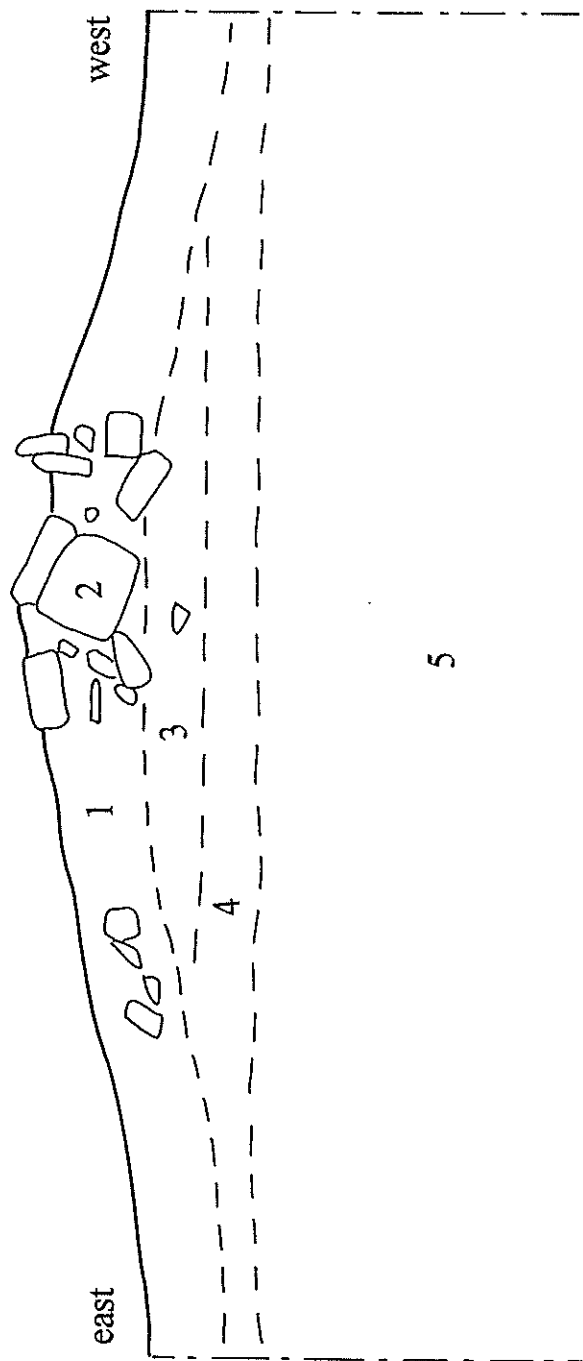


Figure 4. Trench 6. scale 1:20



## REFERENCES

Carmarthen Record Office, Cawdor Vaughan schedule of documents, 5854, map book pages 76-80 - Tor y Coed Ffynnon Gydychog and Carreg Eidon, 1784

Murphy, K., 1993, 'Torcoed Quarry, Llanddarog. Report of Archaeological Evaluation'. Typescript report by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Ordnance Survey, 1972, 1:2500. Sheets SN4813-4913, SN4814-4914

Ward, A H, 1976 'The cairns of Mynydd Llangyndeyrn: a focal point on the early Bronze Age in south east Dyfed', *Carmarthenshire Antiquity*, 12, 3-21

Ward, A H, 1983 'Excavation around two standing stones on Mynydd Llangyndeyrn, Dyfed', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 132, 30-48

Ward, A H, 1989 'Land allotment of possible prehistoric date on Mynydd Llangyndeyrn, south east Dyfed, *Archaeological Cambrensis*, 138, 46-58

## ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The structure of the archive is based on guidelines for a cataloguing/index system for excavation archives as drawn up in 1987 and agreed by the NMR. The archive has been deposited with the NMR housed in RCAHMS, Aberystwyth.

### A. REPORTS

#### A.1 Final report

### B. SITE WRITTEN DATE

#### B.4 Field notes - notebooks

### D. PHOTOGRAPHS

#### D.1 Catalogue of films

#### D.2 Colour slides

#### D.3 Black and white negatives and contacts

#### D.7 Colour print film and CD

### M. CORRESPONDENCE

#### M.1 General correspondence and other material

#### D.1 Catalogue of Films

##### Catalogue of colour slides

1. Cairn prior to excavation of Trench 1
2. Trench 1
3. Trench 2
4. Trench 2
5. Trench 3
6. Trench 6
7. Trench 7
8. Trench 2

##### Catalogue of black and white negatives

1. Cairn prior to excavation of Trench 1
2. Cairn prior to excavation of Trench 1
3. Trench 1
4. Trench 2
5. Trench 2
6. Trench 3
7. Trench 6
8. Trench 7
9. Trench 2
10. Trench 8
11. Trench 9

##### Catalogue of colour prints

1. Cairn prior to excavation of Trench 1
2. Trench 1
3. Trench 2
4. Trench 2
5. Trench 3
6. Trench 6
7. Trench 7

Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology  
Torcoed Quarry Southern Extension  
Archaeological Recording

- 8. Trench 2
- 9. Trench 8
- 10. Trench 9