

# **47 CASTLE STREET LOUGHOR SWANSEA**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2008**



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust  
For: Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners



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## 47 Castle Street, Loughor, Swansea

### Archaeological Evaluation

Gan / By

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological evaluation of land at 47 Castle Street was undertaken by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust on behalf of Nathaniel Litchfield and partners. In response to a brief set by Glamorgan Gwent Curatorial Division, four trenches were cut. Only the trench at the northern end of the site contained archaeological features. These features included a possible yard surface, a boundary ditch and a large pit from which Roman Pottery was recovered. These finds suggest that there are likely to be increasingly significant archaeological deposits with increased proximity to the Castle Street road frontage. It was not, however possible to ascertain the extent to which archaeological deposits may or may not survive beneath the existing house remains.



## **INTRODUCTION**

In response to a request from Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (on behalf of Aringdale Developments), the Dyfed Archaeological Trust (Field Services) undertook an archaeological evaluation on a plot of land at 47 Castle Street Loughor (centred at NGR SS 5656 9805). The proposed development site (planning application number 2007/2295) is located to the east of the defences of the Roman fort of Leucarum, an area included in a locally designated Archaeologically Sensitive Area in the Swansea Unitary Development Plan.

As a consequence of the archaeological potential of the site and its designated status, the curatorial division of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust in their role as advisors to the City and County of Swansea Council recommended that a condition was placed upon the application to provide sufficient evidence to fully inform the Members of the City and County of Swansea LPA of the effect of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource.

## **SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION**

The Roman Auxiliary fort of Leucarum is situated at SS56369799 at the west end of a gravel spur on the east bank of the River Loughor, where it joins the lower reaches of the River Lliw. This strategic location (and possibly the earthwork remains of the Roman fort) was recognised and utilised by the Normans who later built a motte in the southeast corner of the fort.

The property that is the subject of this evaluation is located approximately 130m to the east of the fort defences and has frontage onto Castle Street, which follows the line of the Roman road leading to the fort (see Figure 1). Such a location might be expected to contain evidence of Roman period buildings associated with settlement that often developed outside the main entrance to a Roman fort and/or cemetery features including human burials. The fact that a large proportion of the site appears to have been a garden for some time suggested that there might be limited disturbance to any underlying deposits that might be present.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The location of the fort was first established through excavations between 1969 -71 (Ling and Ling 1973;1979). The excavations established that occupation at the Roman Auxilliary fort of Leucarum started in c.75 AD. A second phase of activity began c.110 AD and abandonment is suggested by cremations cut into the fort ramparts dated to c. 120-130 AD. A third phase of activity occurred in the late 3rd century AD (Marvell and Owen, p.12). Two further excavation projects were undertaken by GGAT from 1982-4 and 1987-8. These excavations investigated the fortifications and the interior of the fort in a number of locations (Marvell and Owen, p14).

The location of the fort suggests that any *vicus* (extra-mural settlement) associated with the fort, was most likely to be located to the east along the line of the Roman road RR60d, leading west towards another assumed, but yet to be located fort at Kidwelly.

Prior to this evaluation, no archaeological excavations have taken place to the east of Loughor fort within the likely area of the *vicus*. The regional Historic Environment Record (HER), however, includes records of chance finds in the area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The brief for the archaeological evaluation produced by GGAT Curatorial division, called for four trenches of 10m x 2m to be located at suggested locations within the proposed development area. In the event, restrictions to access, space and manoeuvrability (in the form of mature trees, saplings, established ornamental shrubberies and a variety of other garden features), all conspired to limit the practical locations for the trenches. A three tonne tracked excavator was used to cut four trenches, each 1.2m wide in the locations indicated in Figure 2.

Trenches were excavated to the top of natural deposits or to the top of archaeological features or horizons in all cases. In trenches that were apparently devoid of archaeological features the end of each trench was reduced to confirm that natural deposits had indeed been reached (see Figure 3).

Standard methods were used to excavate and record the trench profiles and any archaeological features present. It was not possible to obtain a reliable OD height with which to calculate absolute heights above sea level. All levels have, however, been measured in relation to a fixed point located on the pavement in Castle street. Once a datum value for this point can be obtained, absolute levels from the excavation can be calculated. Due to the enclosed nature of the site, trenches were located in relation to the existing house and property boundaries using 30m tapes.

## RESULTS

### Trenches 1, 2 and 3

Trenches 1, 2 and three were devoid of archaeological features. In each trench the soil profiles were the same. Figure 3 presents the soil profiles for each trench. The sequence of soils encountered was:

#### Layer 011

Dark grey sandy (30%) silt (30%) clay (40%) Garden soil with frequent small stones and occasional modern pottery.

#### Layer 012

Mottled homogenous mid grey brown clay (70%) silt (30%).

#### Layer 013

Mid yellow brown subsoil clay (70%) silt (30%) becoming paler with depth.

#### Layer 014

Mid yellow brown silty (40%) clay (60%) with frequent pebbles and occasional cobbles.

### Trench 4

Trench 4 was located at the northern end of the plot, nearest to the existing house. The trench exhibited significantly different stratigraphy and soil characteristics. It was initially cut to a length of 10m, but at the request of the GGAT development control officer the trench was enlarged to obtain more information about a large feature that was apparent at its south end.

Figure 4 illustrates the soil profiles and plan of features within Trench 4. The sequence of deposits encountered was:

Layer 001: Dark grey-black sandy (30%) silty (30%) clay (40%) garden soil with frequent small stones and occasional modern pottery.

Layer 002: Soft mid grey-brown silty (90%) clay (10%) with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks.

Layer 003: Dark grey-brown silty (80%) clay (20%) with frequent pebbles and small stones.

Layer 004: Light grey-brown silty (50%) clay (50%) with occasional large stones and charcoal flecks.

Layer 005: Cobbles and smaller stones in a sandy (10%) silty (40%) clay (40%) matrix. A possible surface.

Layer 006: Light yellow-brown silty (80%) clay (20%) with iron staining and manganese flecks. Becoming stiff light orange red clay (80%) silt (20%) with moderate clay grit with increasing depth. Natural sediment.

Layer 007: Soft mid-grey clay(90%) silt(10%) with occasional cobbles and charcoal flecks.

Layer 008: Ditch cut. 1.0m wide, 0.45m deep. Sides at roughly 45 degree angle, with shallow concave base.

Layer 009: Pit fill. Soft mid grey-brown silty (60%) clay (40%), with occasional large cobbles, smaller stones, charcoal flecks and fragments. Finds included pottery fragments, brick and tile fragments, ferrous slag and burnt clay furnace lining fragments.

Layer 010: Cut of probable pit. A large, roughly circular pit, up to 2.30m in diameter. Edges appear vertical, but it was not possible to ascertain the depth of the feature.

Layer 015: Cut of linear feature. A shallow linear feature 0.40m wide and up to 0.05m deep. Possibly the base of a ditch, or a trampled path leading up to the pit edge.

Layer 016: Fill of linear feature. Soft mid grey-brown silty (60%) clay (40%), with occasional charcoal flecks.

On consultation with the GGAT development Control Archaeologist, it was not considered necessary to ascertain whether archaeological features were present in the area between Trenches 3 and 4.

## **Finds**

## DISCUSSION

Archaeologically significant features and deposits were only present in Trench 4. The soil profile suggests that there has been a build-up of roughly 1.0m of deposits from the top of natural to the present day ground surface.

At the base of the sequence, there are remnants of what may have been a cobbled surface (005) laid upon the natural soil horizon. A single sherd of pottery was recovered from this deposit. Ditch 008 is cut from the same level as the cobbled surface and appears to define its southern extent. Together, these features may represent a cobbled yard surface defined by a ditch which may originally have contained fence posts. The full extent of the surface and ditch are unknown.

At the southern end of the trench was a large circular pit (010) up to 2.30m in diameter. Although most likely a rubbish pit, it was not possible to excavate enough of this feature to fully characterize it. Being located to the south of ditch 008, the pit may be associated with a different property plot. The pit fill (009) contained a variety of pottery fragments and ceramic brick and tile fragments, all of Roman date. In addition, fragments of ferrous slag adhering to lumps of fired clay, are probably the remnants of iron smelting, suggesting there was industrial activity in the area.

Above the cobbled surface, a layer of silty clay and apparently random cobbles (layer 004) may represent an accumulation of material throughout the period of Roman activity in this area. Although no dating evidence was recovered to confirm this, it seems likely that layer 003 marks the end of Roman activity.

Overlying layer 003 is a darker deposit (002) up to 0.30m thick, which is itself overlain by the cultivated garden soil 001. From the available evidence it is uncertain how this depth of soil accumulated and over what length of time, since no dating evidence was recovered from the deposit. There is no apparent evidence of flooding events, or other processes of periodic deposition within the soil profile. This could suggest either a massive single deposition event or perhaps a process of gradual accumulation of soil over centuries, coupled with homogenisation by continuous agricultural activity.

Since there is no archaeological or cartographic evidence to suggest medieval or post-medieval occupation or other activity on the site, these processes or events could have happened at any point, or throughout these periods. The depth and quality of the garden soil however, suggests it may have been cultivated for some time, it therefore seems possible that layer 002 may be of medieval or later origin.

Although archaeological features were found in Trench 4, but none were found in trench 3, it was not possible to ascertain whether there may be additional features located between these two trenches.

## CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has demonstrated that Roman period features survive at the northern end of the proposed development site. The exact southern limit of these features remains uncertain. The northern extent of significant archaeological deposits is also unknown, but the likelihood of their presence increases with proximity to the frontage of Castle Street. The soil horizons within Trench 4 suggest that the Roman ground surface rises up to the north of the site. This higher ground is the most likely location of substantial buildings along the Roman road. The extent to which any significant Roman period deposits in this area have survived both the construction of No. 47 (which appears to be partially terraced into the slope) and service trenching along the street frontage is at present unknown.

Significant archaeological deposits and cut features were encountered at approximately 1.0m below the present ground surface. While this appears to be the main level of archaeological significance, it is also possible that layer 003 (0.60m below present ground level) represents a later ground surface from which later features (medieval or later) might be cut. However, no evidence of such features was found within the excavated trenches.

The Roman period features are suggestive of a back yard and property boundary associated with probable building or other activity along the Roman road to the east of Leucarum Fort. This area is assumed to have been the location of the *vicus*, (a civilian settlement that often developed outside Roman fort defences).

The large pit may also be associated with the roadside activity, or with other, possibly industrial activity occurring on more marginal land to the south of the Roman road and *vicus* settlement.

The remains identified in this evaluation undoubtedly have considerable potential to provide evidence of buildings and domestic, economic and industrial activity. Such information would add to understanding of the extent and development of the *vicus* settlement and the history of Loughor generally. The remains would also provide valuable evidence of the extent of archaeological remains and their likely implications for future developments in the area.

The extent to which mitigation of potential impacts upon the archaeological resource from development will be required as a planning condition, will depend on the finalized details of the development proposal.

In relation to the latest design proposal, it would appear that only building numbers 1 and 2 are likely to have a potential impact upon buried archaeological deposits currently buried 1.0m below ground level.

The extent to which either of these buildings will have an impact upon archaeological features will depend upon the finalized architectural scheme and the extent (primarily the depth) of associated groundworks. If, prior to construction, present ground levels are to be significantly reduced over a large area, then the likelihood of a significant impact upon archaeological deposits (and the need to mitigate this impact) is increased.

If, however, the proposed buildings can be designed in such a way as to minimize ground disturbance, or can be located in areas proven to be archaeologically sterile, then the need for mitigation will be reduced.

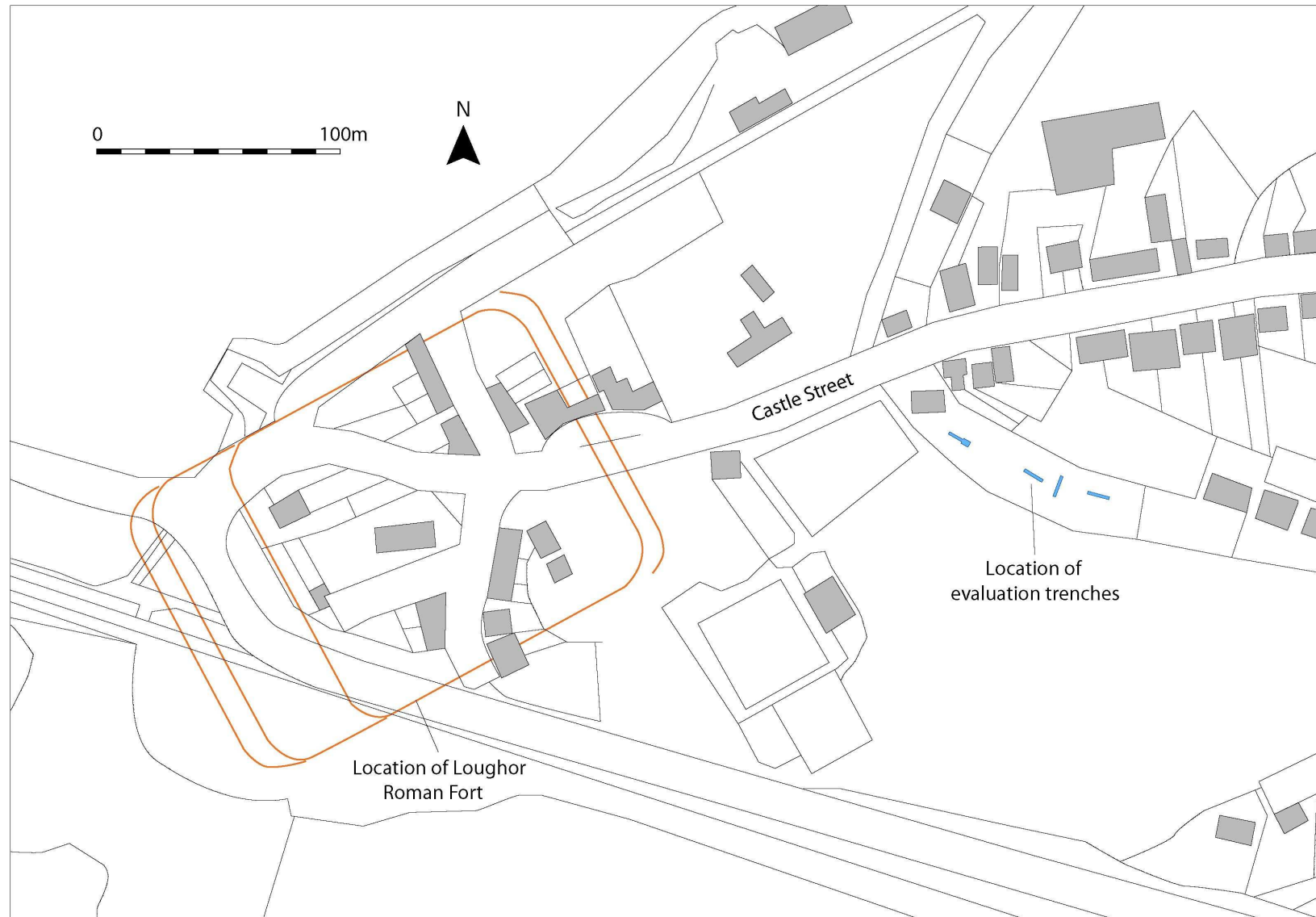
Building 1 is located on the street frontage of Castle Street. Development in this location is most likely to have a significant impact upon buried deposits, which are likely to be less deeply buried than those encountered in the evaluation trenches. On the other hand, this is also the location where there is likely to have been previous disturbance or destruction of archaeological deposits.



Damage to significant archaeological deposits in the vicinity of proposed Building 1, could be reduced by restricting the redevelopment to the footprint of the existing building. Otherwise, additional archaeological mitigation is likely to be required.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

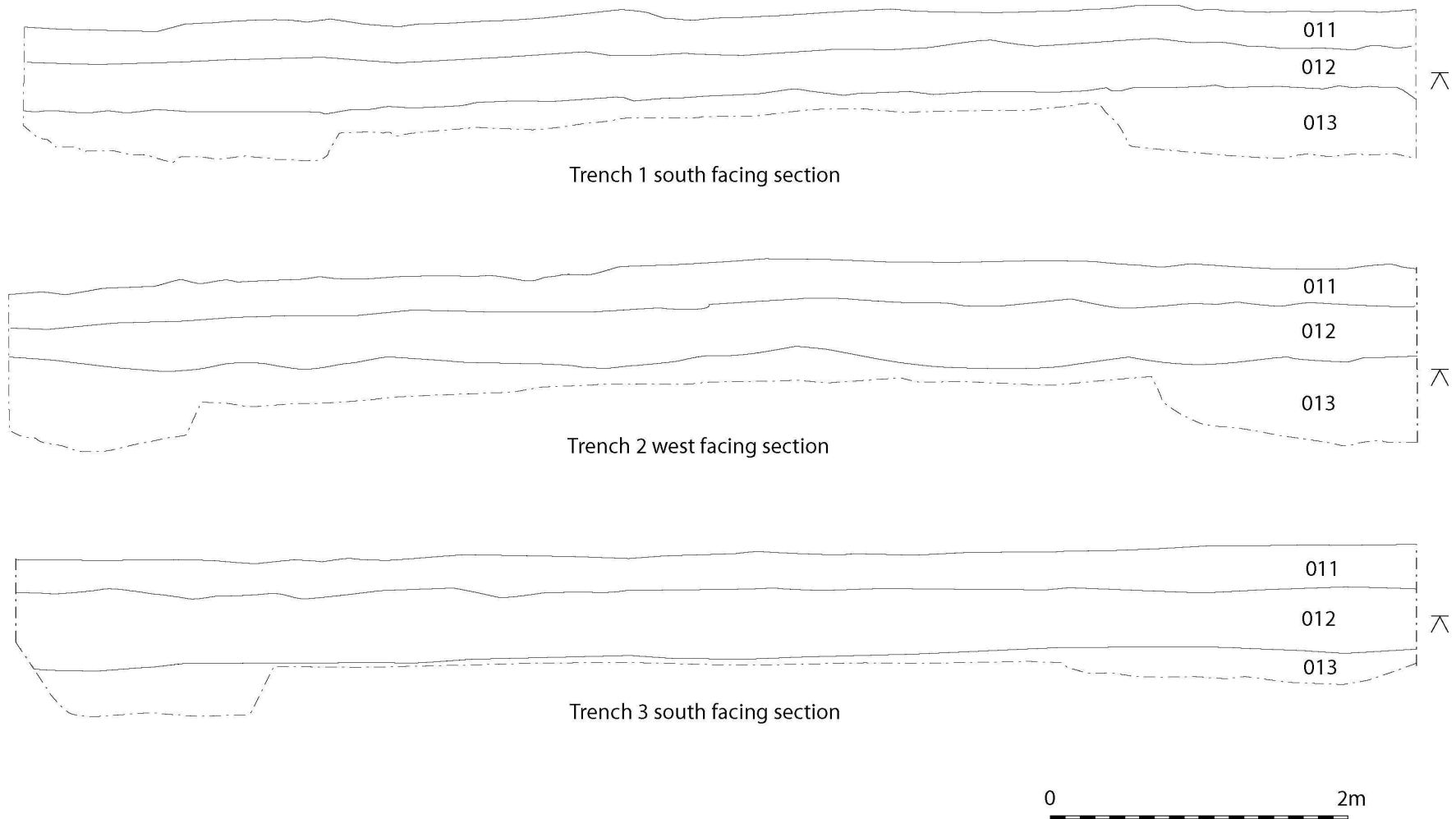
It is recommended that there is further discussion between the GGAT Development Control Officer, and the architects of the proposed development scheme, to discuss the pros and cons of the various options for mitigating the potential effects of the development upon the archaeological resource, while minimizing the need for further, potentially costly, archaeological intervention..



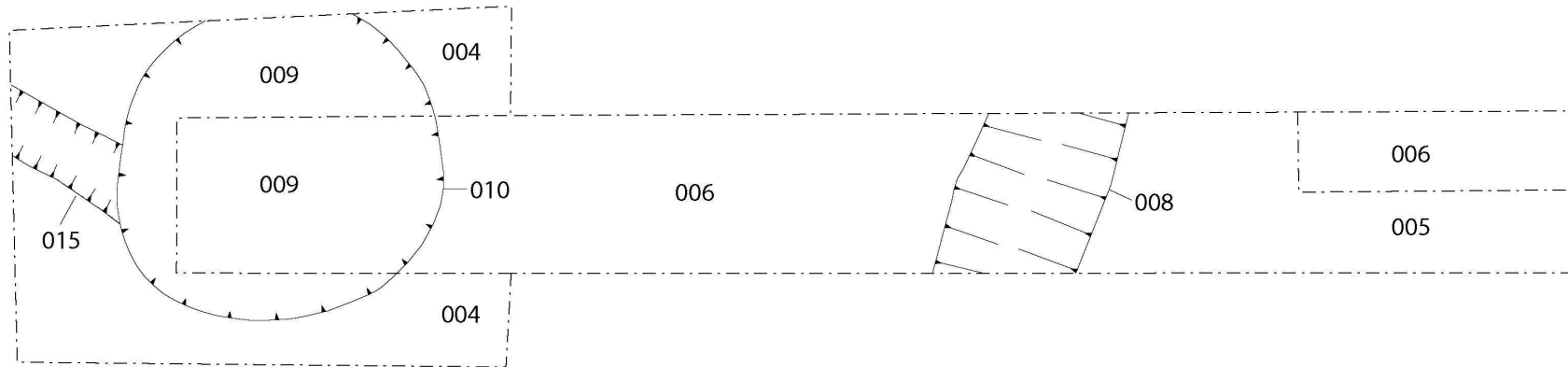
**Figure 1:** Site location plan



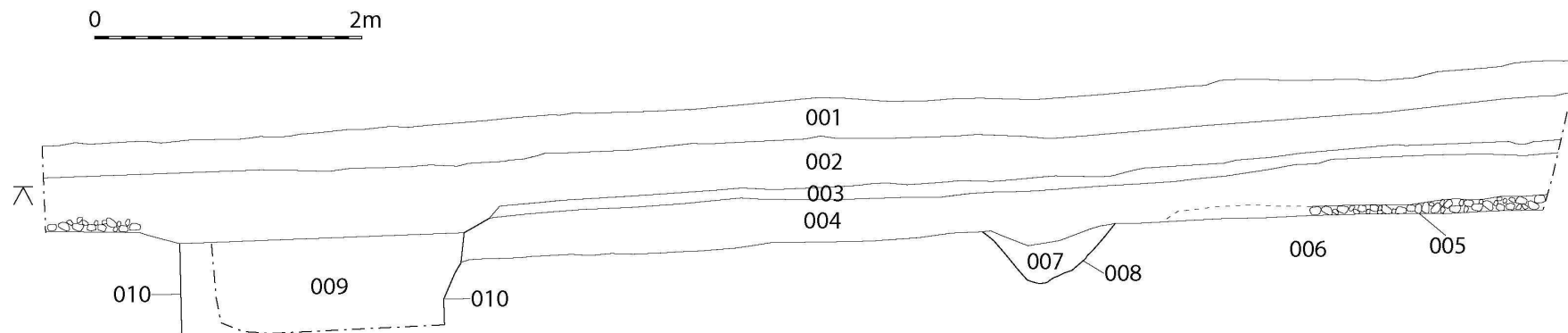
**Figure 2:** Trench location plan



**Figure 3:** Sections of Trenches 1, 2 and 3



Trench 4: Plan of features



Trench 4: northeast facing section

**Figure 4:** Plan and section of Trench 4





**Photo 1:** Trench 4 before enlargement to reveal pit



**Photo 2:** Trench 4. Section through north end deposits





**Photo 3:** Trench 4. Possible boundary ditch



**Photo 4:** Trench 4. Section through boundary ditch





**Photo 5:** Trench 4. Probable rubbish pit.



**Photo 6:** Trench 4. Shallow linear feature (cut by Pit)





**Photo 7:** Trench 3



**Photo 8:** Soil profile in Trench 3 (also representative of profiles in Trenches 1 and 2)





**Photo 9:** Trench 2



**Photo 10:** Trench 1

# 47 Castle Street, Loughor, Swansea

## Archaeological Evaluation

### **RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER**

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This report has been checked and approved by

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

Swydd / Position:

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date 29/05/2008

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

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