

BROWNSLADE BARROW CASTLEMARTIN PEMBROKESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

Phase 1: May 2006



Paratowyd gan: Archaeoleg Cambria
Ar gyfer: Defence Estates
Prepared by: Cambria Archaeology
For: Defence Estates



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**BROWNSLADE BARROW
CASTLEMARTIN, PEMBROKESHIRE
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PHASE 1: May 2006**

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
OBJECTIVES	2
METHODOLOGY	2
RESULTS	2
INTERIM ASSESSMENT OF THE POTTERY	4
DISCUSSION	4
CONCLUSIONS	5
REFERENCES	6
FIGURES	
PLATES	

Front cover: Site near the end of topsoil stripping

SUMMARY

The first phase of an archaeological excavation at Brownslade Barrow, on the Castlemartin Army Training Estate in southwest Pembrokeshire, was undertaken in May 2006. The work is being undertaken in response to severe badger disturbance being caused to an early medieval cemetery on the southern side of the barrow. The objective of the first phase of the work was to determine whether or not the cemetery extended into the area on the north side of the barrow. Two 1m wide trenches were excavated.

Although no evidence for any early medieval burials was identified in the trenches, there was evidence for features, associated with several sherds of medieval pottery, suggesting later activity. It was not possible to determine whether this activity was associated with domestic or funerary activity. The trenches also demonstrated that a significant quantity of sandy material, up to 1m deep, had accumulated over the archaeological deposits.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report details the results of the first phase of an archaeological excavation at Brownslade Barrow, Castlemartin Range, Pembrokeshire (NGR SR 9052 9722). The overall project follows a brief prepared by Defence Estates (Defence Estates 2006) and an archaeological project design prepared by Cambria Archaeology (Cambria Archaeology 2006). The work was undertaken by Cambria Archaeology during May 2006 and was funded by MoD Defence Estates through Landmarc Support Services Ltd.

Brownslade Barrow is one of a number of archaeological features on the Castlemartin Estate that are thought to be of Bronze Age date. It is a scheduled ancient monument (PE 315) and it is presumed to have been a burial mound dating to the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. However, antiquarian investigation during the late 19th century identified a central burial that has been subsequently suggested to date to the Romano-British period. Further extended, inhumation burials were identified in and around the barrow and some of these were in stone lined cists. These suggested that the barrow mound had become a focus for an early medieval, Christian cemetery.

Considerable badger disturbance to the barrow and its environs was observed during a site visit in 2001. This disturbance had brought a significant number of human bones to the surface and concern was raised about the potential damage that was being caused to a significant archaeological site. In order to assist with the formulation of future management options, an archaeological topographic and geophysical survey was commissioned in 2002 (Ludlow 2002) and a small-scale archaeological evaluation in 2003 (Ludlow 2003). As part of the evaluation, an examination was undertaken of the collection of human remains that had been recovered from the site. A total of 104 bone fragments representing at least six individuals were examined (Coard 2003). Three radiocarbon dates obtained for this bone material indicates a date range of between AD 450 and AD 960 which supports the early medieval date that had previously been suggested for the cemetery.

The results of the survey and evaluation have demonstrated the archaeological potential and significance of Brownslade Barrow. However, it is clear that the site faces a significant threat from ongoing badger activity. A decision has now been taken by Defence Estates, in consultation with the National Park Archaeologist, the Heritage Management Section of Cambria Archaeology and Cadw, to relocate

the badger sett, erect badger-proof fencing around the undisturbed areas and to undertake the full excavation of those areas that have been most severely affected by the badger action.

A decision was taken to undertake the excavation in two stages, each Phase coinciding with the temporary suspension of firing activities on the range. Phase 1 was undertaken while firing was temporarily halted to allow local farmers to move livestock off the range onto summer grazing; the so-called 'Sheep Week'.

OBJECTIVES

The overall project has important management and research objectives and these are described in detail in the Archaeological Project Design (Cambria Archaeology 2006, 2). In summary, the principal management objectives are to provide an assessment of the extent and character of the badger damage on the archaeological deposits and the protection of the surviving remains within the scheduled area. The principal research objective is to examine the changes in funerary and ritual practice at the site over time.

The principal objective of Phase 1 of the work is to determine whether the inhumation cemetery is present in the area to the north of the barrow and, if so, to determine its extent. This work will also provide an opportunity to examine the relationship between the barrow and linear bank to the north.

METHODOLOGY

Phase 1 involved the excavation of two hand-excavated trenches (Fig. 2).

Trench 1 (3m x 1m) - Trench 1 was located 7m to the north of the barrow and 8.5m south of a modern fence line. It examined part of the interior of a small enclosure formed by the barrow to the south and low linear banks to the north and west. This trench was fully excavated to the natural subsoil.

Trench 2 (10m x 1m) - The southern end of Trench 2 was located 1.8m to the north of the modern fence line. It examined the area between a low linear bank and an area of minor quarrying to the north.

A rapid survey was undertaken to locate the Trenches, the position of the badger holes to the south of the barrow and the proposed line of badger proof fencing. Further human skeletal material had been brought to the surface in the vicinity of the badger holes and this was collected for future examination.

RESULTS

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

The natural subsoil (110) was a compact light brown clay and was located at a depth of 1.1m. In the southwest corner of the trench it was cut by an irregularly-shaped feature (Photo 1, 109) with grey brown silty fill containing a single fleck of charcoal and a possible heat-affected stone (108). This feature may have been created by root or animal disturbances.

The subsoil was overlain by an extensive spread of dark grey brown, sandy silt (107) up to 0.25m thick. This could be a buried soil horizon, possibly early

medieval or prehistoric. Towards the northern end of the trench it was cut by a shallow, U-shaped and flat-bottomed ditch (106) orientated east-west (Photos. 2 and 3). This ditch was 0.9m wide and 0.3m deep and had a yellow brown sandy fill mixed with more grey silty deposits (105). It contained only one find; a fragment of iron slag, suggesting a Roman or later date.

Across much of the southern end of the trench the sandy silt (107) was overlain by a yellow sandy deposit up to 0.3m thick (104) with some darker soil patches (Photo 3). A similar, less extensive deposit was located to the north of the ditch cut (106). The relationship between the ditch and this sandy deposit was not clear.

Both the yellow sand and the cut of the ditch were overlain by a substantial deposit of yellow brown silty sand up to 0.6m thick (102). This deposit also contained occasional angular stones, fragments of animal bone and several sherds of medieval pottery. The upper part of the deposit was slightly lighter in colour. In the northern part of the trench, the lower part of the deposit contained lenses of dark brown sandy loam (103) with shells (mostly mussel and limpet).

The uppermost deposit was a layer of dark brown sandy loam topsoil (101) with turf up to 0.2m thick.

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

The lowest layer, encountered at a depth of 1m but not excavated, consisted of a reddish brown clay (117/120). This was similar to the 'buried soil' (107) recorded in Trench 1. Within the southern half of the trench, this was overlain by a 'bank' of yellow silty sand (113) up to 0.8m thick. The line of this bank is also visible in the surface (Fig. 2), running at an angle below the modern fence. The northern face of this bank was lined by three large angular stones (121) together with several smaller stones, probably forming part of a retaining wall (Photo. 4). Several sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from this structure including a fragment from a 12th century AD rouletted jug.

To the north of the retaining wall the reddish brown clay (117/120) was cut by a shallow pit (118) containing an "L" shaped stone structure (122) (Photo. 5). This structure contained charcoal-rich lenses (123), possibly indicating that it may have been an oven or corn drier. However, there were no significantly heat-affected stones, indicating that a high-temperature use was unlikely. A soil sample was collected but this has not yet been analysed. Stone-packing to the south of the structure (124) contained a number of animal bones.

At the far north end of the trench, the reddish brown clay was overlain by another shallow deposit of yellow sand (119). This was cut by a shallow pit (116) with a very stony fill (115). It is likely that this pit (116) was later than that of the oven to the south. However, there was no direct stratigraphic relationship between the two features.

Both pits were overlain by a thick layer of brown sandy material (114) with occasional stones (possibly equivalent to (102) in Trench 1). This was partly overlain by a very stony layer (112), with some separate lime mortar lumps, which produced a small post-medieval sherd. These stones were possibly spread from a capping on the sandy bank (113).

Above this and covering the entire trench was a layer of topsoil and turf (111) up to 0.3m thick. This produced two pottery sherds and the only ordnance, a spent rifle cartage.

INTERIM ASSESSMENT OF THE POTTERY by P Courtney

Fabrics

DGTU Dyfed Gravel-tempered, unglazed. Sherds from hand-made cooking pots/jars, some with sooting. 7 sherds. Medieval (? Late 12th century- ?15th century)

DGTG Dyfed Gravel Tempered, glazed. Two jug sherds. Medieval (? Late 12th century- ?15th century)

HGJA Ham Green Jug, Type A. 1 sherd (rouletted). Hand-made jug from Ham Green kilns near Bristol c. 1120-?c.1160. (See Ponsford 1991 for dating)

NDGT North Devon Gravel tempered. 1 sherd, internally glazed vessel. Late 16th-19th century.

UGRW Unglazed Redware. Fine textured, wheel-thrown, orange-red earthenware with worn, dark-red external surface. Fine mica inclusions may suggest a source in the Gwent /Herefordshire region. Probably Roman.

Unfortunately this small amount of medieval material is not very dateable apart from the 12th century Ham Green jug sherd. The NDGT sherd from context 112 indicates a post-medieval date.

Context 102 - DGTU 3 shs 39 g. Includes on bell-shaped rim
DGTG 1 sh 3g. Splashes of glaze, ? jug

Context 103 - DGTU 1 sh 6g

Context 111 - DGTU 1 sh 11g
UGRW 1sh 3g

Context 112 - NDGT 1 sh 4 g. Internally glazed.

Context 121 - DGTU 2 shs 17 g
DGTG 1 sh 7g, glazed jug
HGJA 1 sh 11g. rouletted jug

DISCUSSION

The earliest feature on the site was the pit (109) in the southern corner of Trench 1. This is probably prehistoric, but maybe a natural feature. Only further excavation of the area would be likely to resolve this. The earliest find was a single sherd of red ware that appears to be Roman in date. This was in a residual context (the topsoil (111) in Trench 2) and so is not particularly helpful in dating the observed sequence. The sherd may have derived from nearby Roman-British activity suggested by the excavations in the 19th century (Ludlow 2002; Laws 1882, 51-58; Laws 1888, 57-59).

The overlying grey brown sandy silt in Trench 1 (107) and reddish brown clay in Trench 2 (117/120) may represent a buried soil. These deposits were cut by a shallow ditch/gully (106) in Trench 1 and the pit (118) containing the L-shaped stone structure (122) in Trench 2. It is possible that the L-shaped structure may be part of an oven/hearth or corn dryer. The features may have been contemporary with the associated sandy material (104 in Trench 1 and 119 in Trench 2). In Trench 2 it seems that some of this sandy material had been banked up (113) to form an enclosure or field boundary fronted by a stone revetment (121). The pottery associated with the overlying sandy deposits and the stone fronted bank strongly suggested that this phase of activity was medieval in date although it is not possible to determine whether it was associated with domestic or funerary activity.

The overlying sandy material (102 in Trench 1 and 114 in Trench 2) clearly accumulated after the earlier, medieval features went out of use. It is not clear if this sand developed as a result of natural processes (eg wind blown) or whether they were artificial dumps. Sand intrusion of this kind was first recorded in the medieval period such as the 1188 reference to the winter storms of 1171-2 when the beaches of South Wales were denuded of sand (Gerald of Wales 1976, 157). However, in Trench 1 the sandy material it did contain lenses of shell and animal bone (103) suggesting dumps of midden-type material from possible domestic activity.

Three deposits produced fragments of slag (102, 105, 114). The sample from the ditch fill (105) appears to be iron smelting slag and possibly medieval, whereas the others could be from smithing and are likely to be post-medieval. However this slag could be residual from early medieval activity; such early metalworking has been identified at South Hook on the north bank of the Haven (Crane forthcoming).

Apart from a single sherd of post-medieval pottery there was no clear evidence for later activity. This is in contrast to the previous evaluation on the "Chapel site" (Ludlow 2003), when most of the pottery was post-medieval.

CONCLUSION

Although this phase of the excavation indicated activity of medieval date to the north of the barrow there was no evidence for any human skeletal material or any signs of graves. This suggests that the cemetery does not extend into this area.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The fieldwork for Phase 1 of the excavation was undertaken by the authors with the assistance of Polly Groom and Hubert Wilson. Hubert also undertook the surveying and produced the report illustrations.

Many thanks to Polly Groom (Park Archaeologist), Colonel Rogers (Estate Commandant), Nicky Rogers and Lisa Payne (MoD defence Estates) and Roger Woods and John Prior (Landmarc Support Services Ltd) for their assistance in setting up the project.

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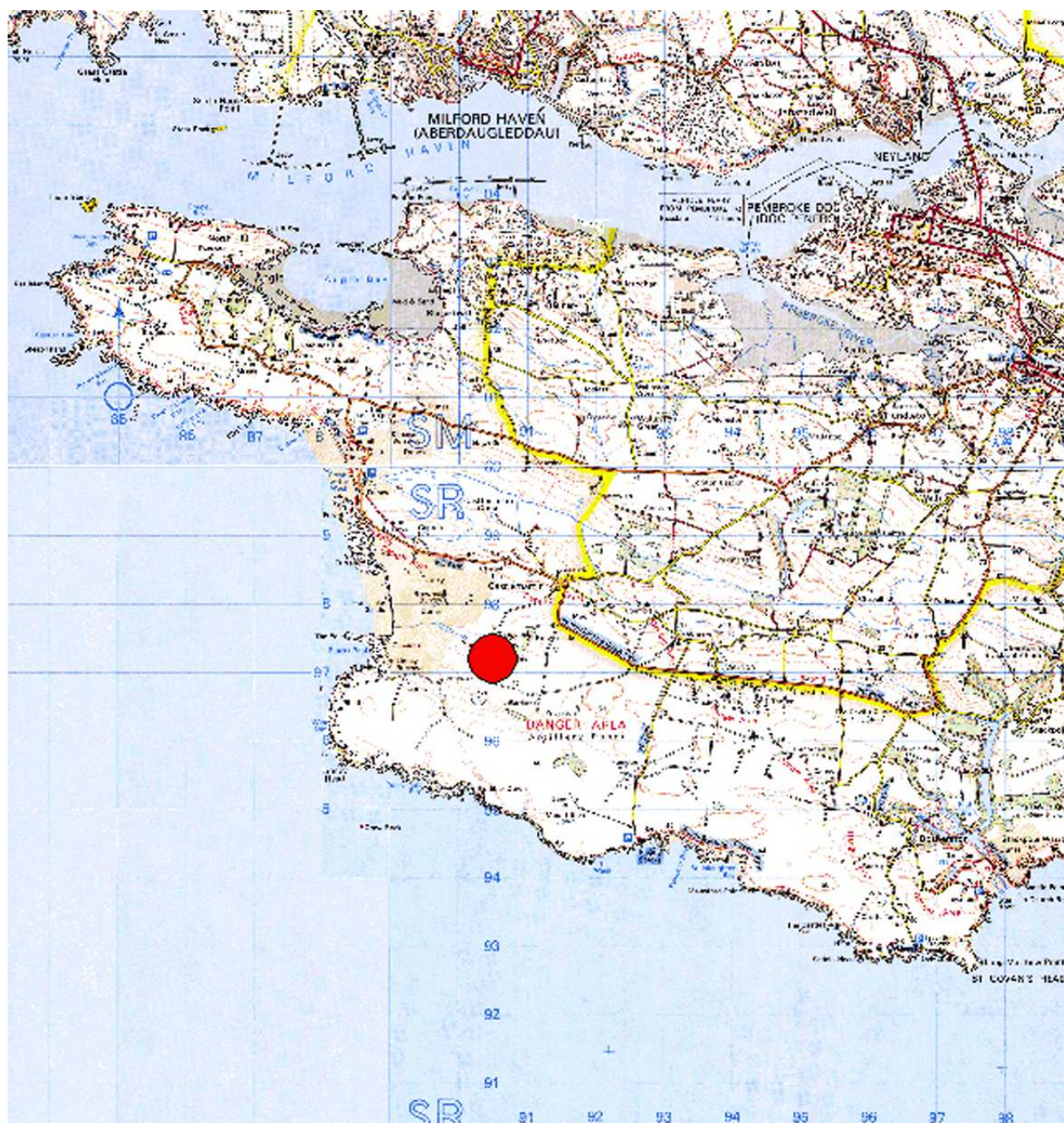


Figure 1. Location map, based on the Ordnance Survey.

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

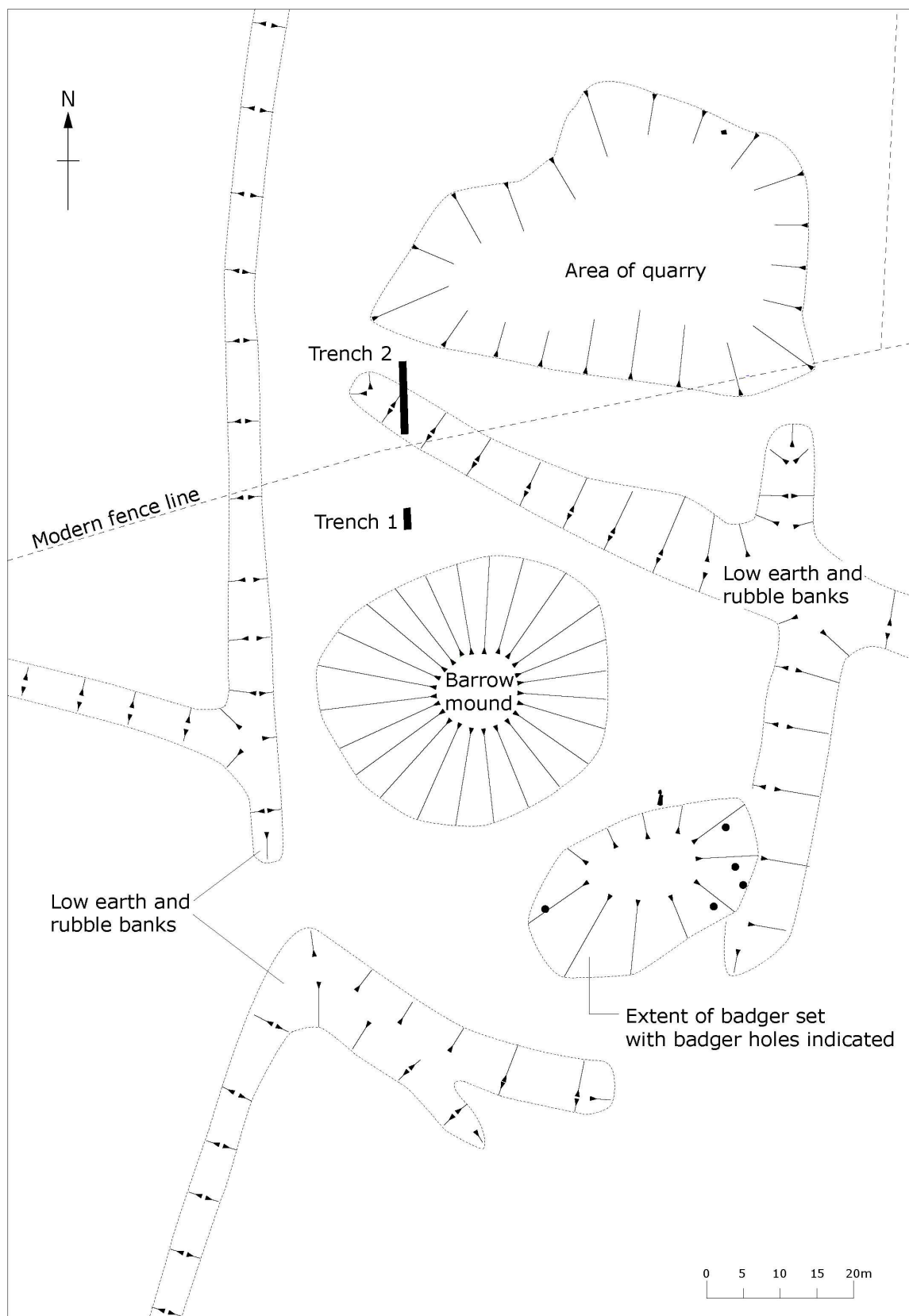


Figure 2: Site plan with location of trenches and surface features. Dots are badger holes. Proposed fence-line shown around barrow.

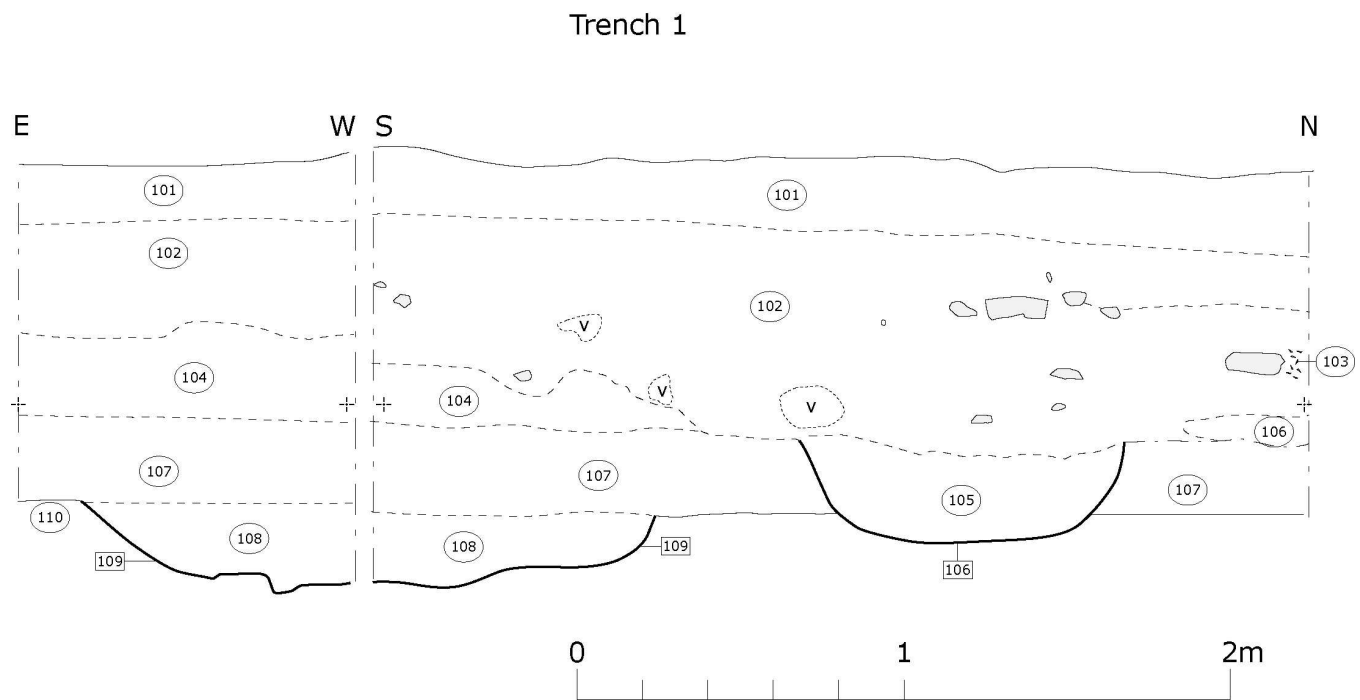


Figure 3: Trench 1 south and west sections

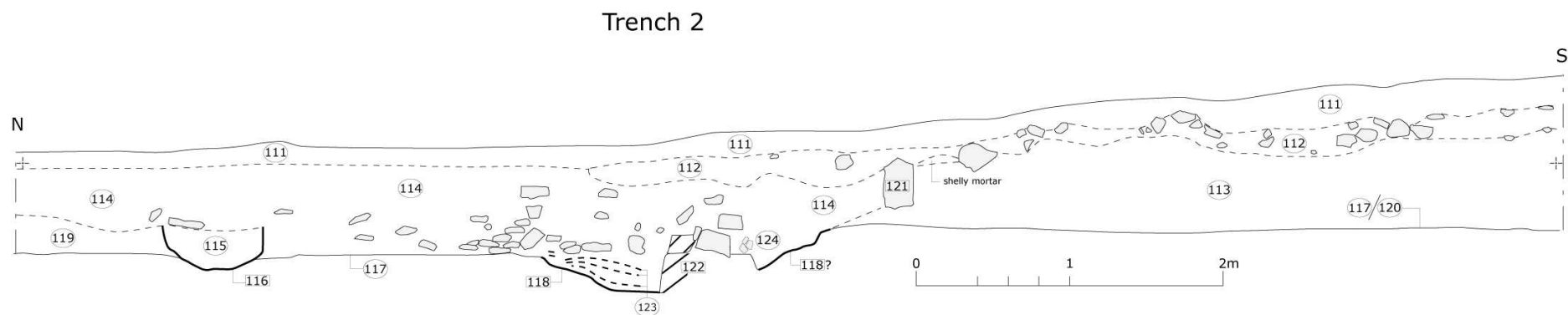


Figure4: Trench 2 east section

Photo. 1: Trench 1 as fully excavated with feature (109) in far corner. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View S

Photo. 2: Trench 1 excavated down to buried soil 107 and ditch 106 emptied. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View W

Photo. 3: Trench 1 excavated down to buried soil 107 and ditch 106 emptied. Note yellow sand (104) in the bottom right of section. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View E

Photo. 4: rear of retaining wall (121) with most of sand bank (113) removed. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View N

Photo. 5: Oven structure 122, with dark fill 123, and stone infill 124 to left. Scale 0.5m. View W

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
2006**

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**Medi 2006
September 2006**

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Pete Crane BA Hons MIFA and Gwilym Hughes
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Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by

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ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw
sylwadausydd 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



Photo. 1: Trench 1 as fully excavated with feature (109) in far corner. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View S



Photo. 2: Trench 1 excavated down to buried soil 107 and ditch 106 emptied. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View W



Photo. 3: Trench 1 excavated down to buried soil 107 and ditch 106 emptied. Note yellow sand (104) in the bottom right of section. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View E



Photo. 4: rear of retaining wall (121) with most of sand bank (113) removed. Scales 0.5 and 1m. View N



Photo. 5: Oven structure 122, with dark fill 123, and stone infill 124 to left. Scale 0.5m. View W