

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT LLANEGWAD, CARMARTHENSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION 2006



Prepared by Cambria Archaeology
For Davies Richards



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**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT LLANEGWAD, CARMARTHENSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

CONTENTS	PAGE
Summary	1
Introduction	2
Archaeological background	2
Evaluation methodology	3
Evaluation results	3
Conclusions	14
Illustrations	
Figure 1: location plan	2
Figure 2: Detail of the southeast end of Trench 2 showing ditch 018, small pit 014 and the stone spreads 011 and 012	5
Figure 3: Northeast facing section of ditch 018	5
Figure 4: North-facing profile of pit 014	6
Figure 5: Trench 3 after excavation	8
Figure 6: South-facing section of ditch 025	8
Figure 7: Detail of part of Trench 4 showing ditch 039/042	11
Figure 8: Southwest-facing section of ditch 039/042	11
Photographs	
Plate 1: view northwest along T1	3
Plate 2: Linear feature 018	4
Plate 3: Pit 014 and fill 013	6
Plate 4: Stone spread 011	7
Plate 5: ditch 025	9
Plate 6: linear feature 027	10
Plate 7: The southeast edge of feature 039 and narrow gully 041	12
Plate 8: The northwest edge of feature 042	13
Plate 9: Feature 035 cutting the fill of feature 042	13

**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF PT ENC 8424, LLANEGWAD
CARMARTHENSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION**

SUMMARY

Proposals to construct three new houses on a plot of land adjacent to St. Egwad's Church, Llanegwad, required an archaeological evaluation. The evaluation was necessary because the development site lay in such close proximity to the church, which was thought to have possible early medieval origins, and because it lay between the church and the remains of the nearby medieval motte, Pen y Cnap, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The developers Davies Richards commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Operations to carry out the evaluation in September 2006.

The evaluation revealed archaeological remains across most of the site. Even though the character of these is uncertain, they may represent late prehistoric or Romano-British activity, including boundary ditches, pits and surfaces.

INTRODUCTION

A planning application to construct three new houses on a plot of land in the village of Llanegwad (NGR SN51872139) required an archaeological field evaluation to assess the likely implications of the development on the archaeological resource. The development area (Fig. 1) lies adjacent to St. Egwad's Church and between the church and the remains of a medieval motte, Pen Y Cnap, c.250m to the northwest.

The developers Davies Richards commissioned Cambria Archaeology Field Operations to carry out the evaluation in September 2006.

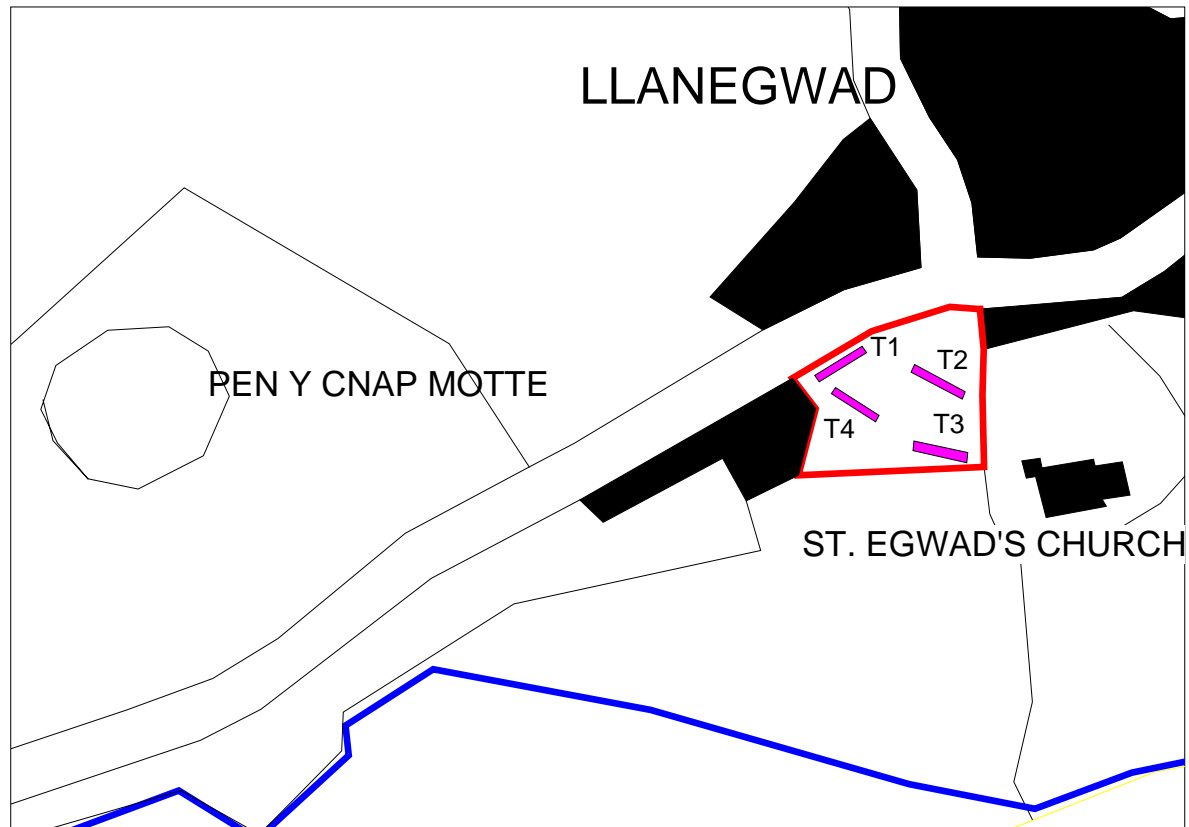


Figure 1: location plan of the proposed development area (red line) showing the positions of the evaluation trenches (purple lines).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The present village of Llanegwad developed around the twin foci of the medieval castle, Pen y Cnap (PRN 695) and church (PRN 7370).

St. Egwad's Church is considered to have early medieval origins and the dedication to a 'Celtic' saint, St. Egwad, suggests a pre-Norman foundation (Yates 1973, 65), although it is thought that the site of the early church was not on the same site as the present church (information from Historic Environment Record site record forms).

The church was appropriated to Talley Abbey in the early 13th century (Ludlow 2000). By 1291 the church was valued at £6 13s 4d, this had risen to £13 6s 8d by 1536, but by 1833 the living had dropped almost to its late 13th century rate at £8 13s 4d (Ludlow 2000). The church was entirely rebuilt on the site of its medieval predecessor in 1849.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Four trial trenches (Trenches 1 – 4), each 15m x 2m, were excavated. The trenches were located to try to provide a good coverage of the site and to investigate areas thought most likely to contain archaeological features.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Trench 1 (Fig. 1)

Trench 1 was positioned in the northwest corner of the site, parallel to the lane along the north of the site in order to try to locate any former roadside buildings. The trench was on average 0.6m deep. The northwest end of the trench was excavated to a depth of c.1m to test the nature of the subsoil and underlying deposits.

No archaeological features were encountered.



Plate 1: view northwest along T1.

Trench 2 (Figs 1 and 2)

Trench 2 was originally intended to be closer to the lane to investigate any roadside buildings. However, in the event the trench was moved south slightly in order to maintain the current access to the field and because of the presence of an active water main across that part of the site. The trench was machine excavated to a depth of c.0.3m.

Linear feature 018 and fills 015, 016 and 017 (Figs 2 and 3; Plate 2)

Part of an east-west linear feature (018) crossed the southeast corner of the trench. The excavated section was 0.82m wide x 0.77m deep. Only the north side was exposed and this was fairly gently sloping, c.35 degrees, except towards the base where it became much steeper.

The lowest fill was a layer of dark grey/brown clayey silt containing c.40% small – medium sub angular stones (017). This layer appeared to be material that had eroded from the sides of the feature when it was open. It was overlain by a layer of light grey clayey silt that contained 40% medium – large sub angular stones (016). The upper fill of linear feature 018 was a layer of light grey brown clayey silt containing 30% medium – large angular stones, small flecks of charcoal, metal working waste, small fragments of animal bone (some of which had been burnt) and a small fragment of brick or tile (015).

A modern field drain cut through 018 and its fills.



Plate 2: Linear feature 018.

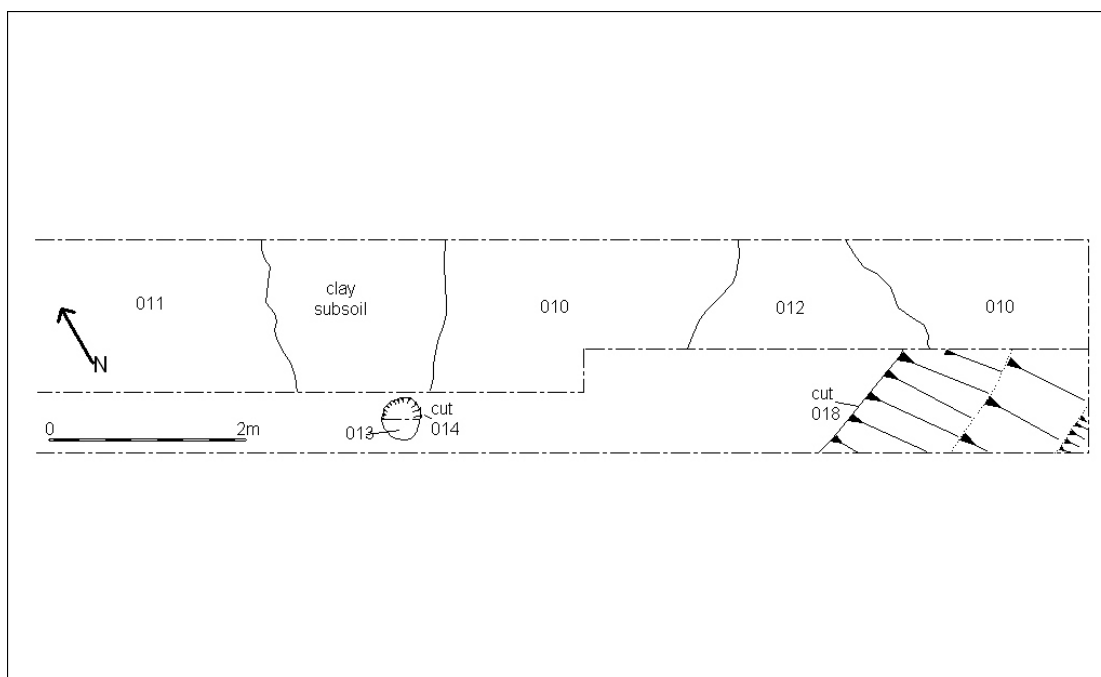


Figure 2: Detail of the southeast end of Trench 2 showing ditch 018, small pit 014 and the stone spreads 011 and 012.

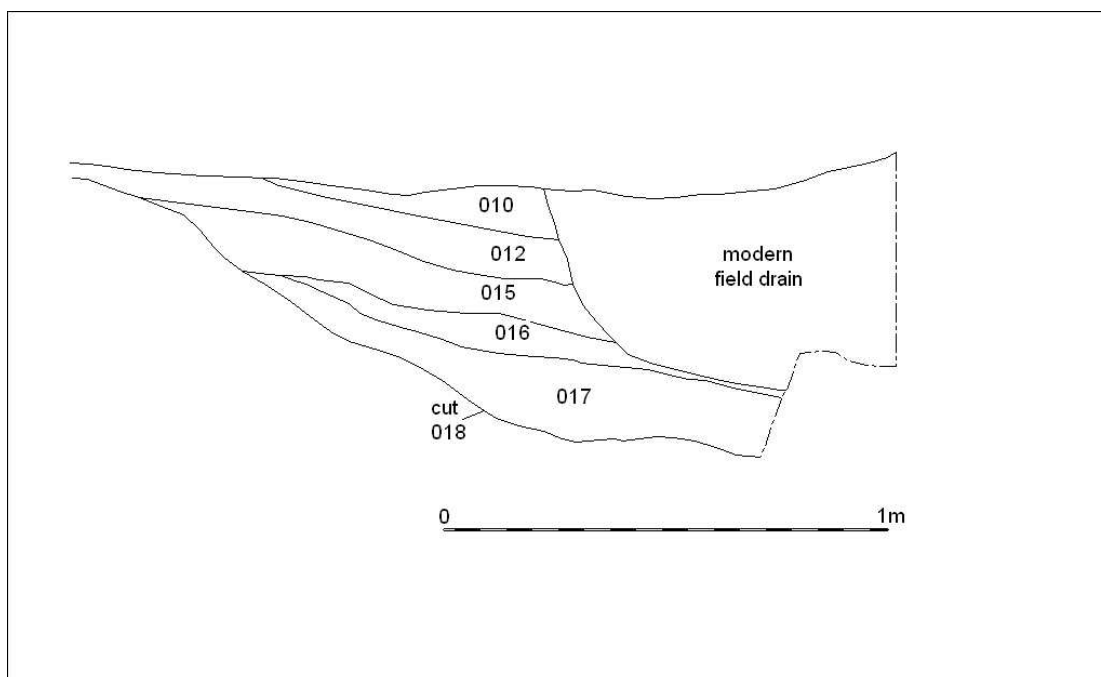


Figure 3: Northeast facing section of ditch 018.

Pit 014 and fill 013 (Figs 2 and 4; Plate 3)

Pit 014 was roughly circular, 0.42m x 0.38m and shallow, 0.14m deep. It had a gently sloping east side, a near vertical west side and a flat base. It contained a fill of grey brown clayey silt containing c.10% medium sub-angular stones and some small charcoal flecks (013).



Plate 3: Pit 014 and fill 013.

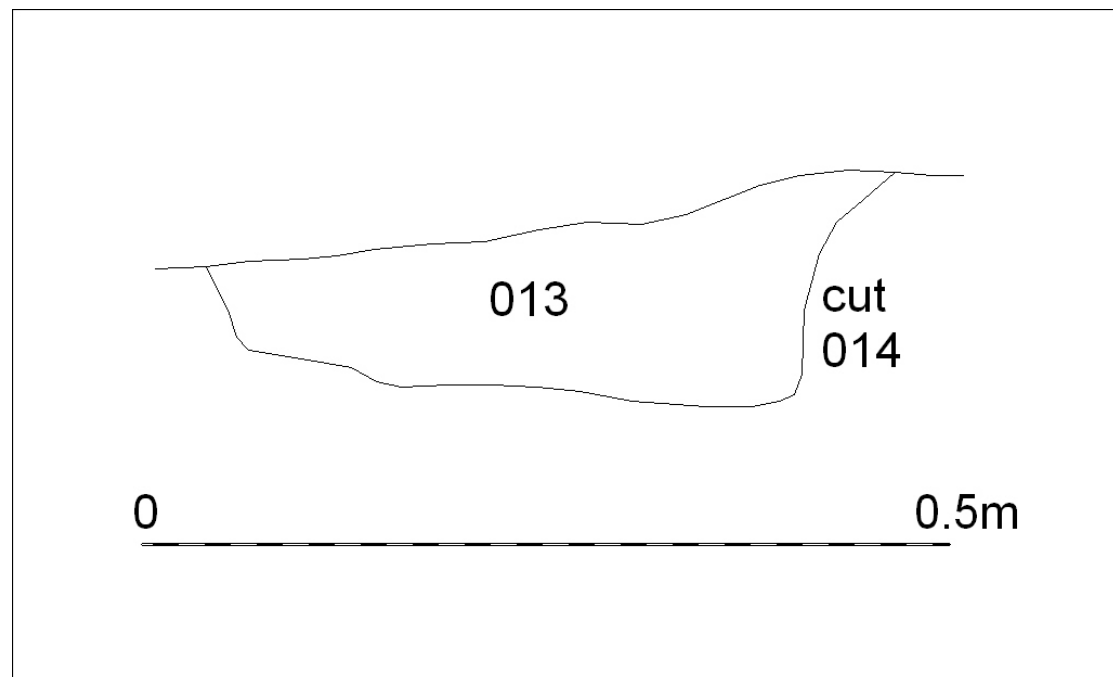


Figure 4: North-facing profile of pit 014.

Stone spreads 011 and 012 (Fig. 2: Plate 4)

Features 014 and 018 were sealed spreads of medium – large sub angular stones 011 and 012, which had been laid onto the surface of the subsoil, presumably to level up the area and to act as a durable surface. Spread 011 contained a sherd

of probable prehistoric or Romano-British pottery. The spread also contained some fragments of metal working waste and heat affected stones.



Plate 4: Stone spread 011.

Deposit 010 (Fig. 2)

The stone spreads and the rest of the trench were covered by a layer of grey/brown clayey silt containing medium – large angular stones and charcoal flecks (010). This layer also contained possible metal working waste, pottery and possibly Roman brick or tile. It appeared that this layer was the base of a former ploughsoil.

Discussion

Linear feature 018 appeared to be either a ditch, or the back edge of a terrace, which seemed to run roughly parallel with the lane along the northern boundary of the site. Although it is not possible to be certain about the original function of 018, it is tempting to suggest that it formed a boundary along the rear of a property to the north. If that is the case pit 014 would probably be associated with the use of the building. Stone spreads 011 and 012 were probably laid to act as a stable surface, presumably a yard or working area.

The finds recovered included a sherd of prehistoric or Romano-British pottery from stone spread 011 and a small fragment of possible Roman brick or tile from the upper fill (015) of linear feature 018. Medieval or early post-medieval pottery was recovered from layer 010, which had accumulated in the uneven surface of stone spreads 011 and 012. This suggests that the stone spreads, along with pit 014 and linear feature 018 that they sealed, are pre-medieval and could potentially be late prehistoric or Roman.

Trench 3 (Fig. 1 and 5)

Trench 3 was aligned east - west and was located at the southeast corner of the plot. It was positioned to investigate a flat, possibly terraced area.

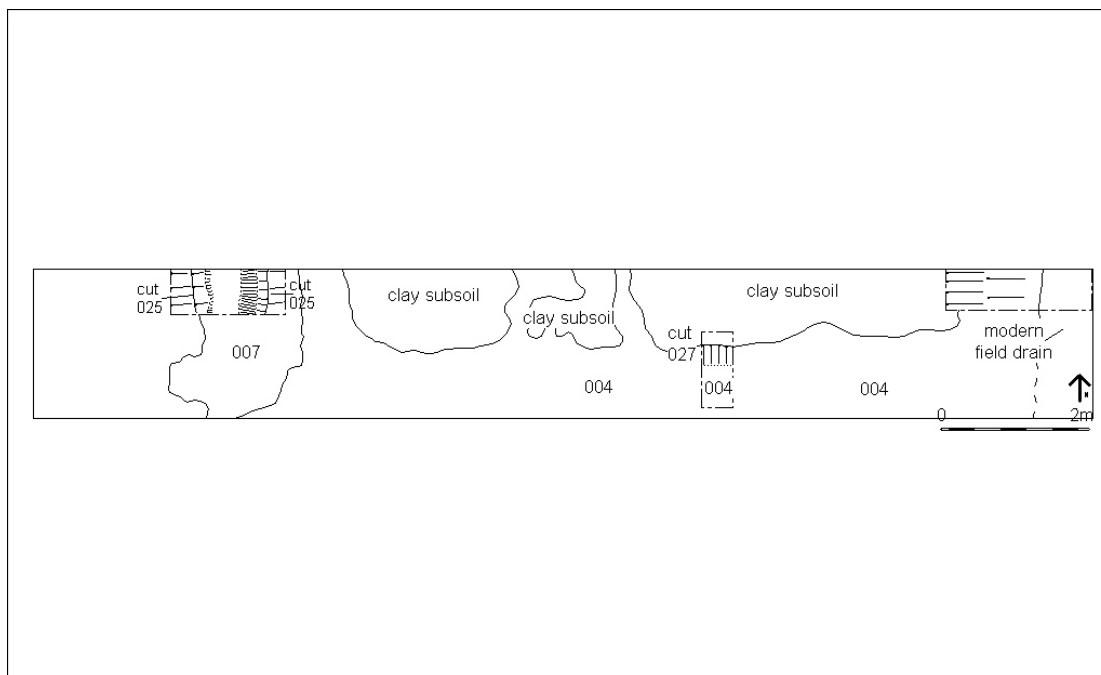


Figure 5: Trench 3 after excavation.

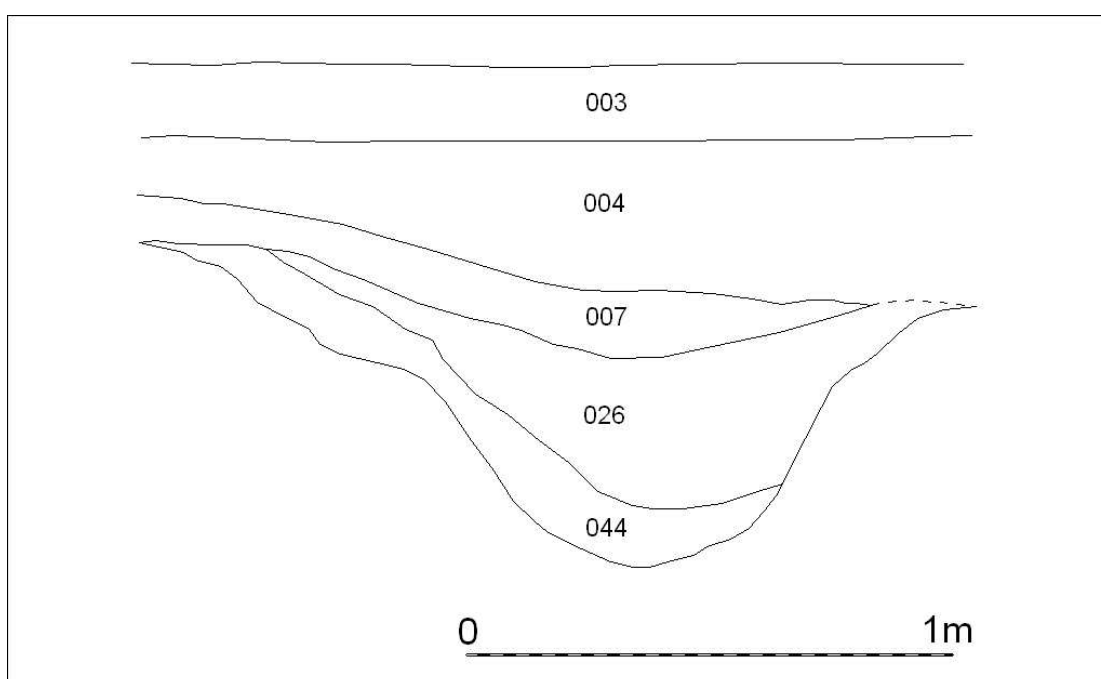


Figure 6: South-facing section of ditch 025

Ditch 025 and fills 026 and 044 (Figs 5 and 6; Plate 5)

Ditch 025 was aligned north – south and cut through the clay subsoil to a depth of 0.46m. It was 1m wide with irregular sloping sides and a concave base. The ditch contained two fills (026 and 044).

The primary fill was a layer of light grey clay that contained a few small flecks of charcoal (044). This layer covered the base and west side of the ditch and appeared to have been washed into the ditch from the west side. This was covered by a layer of dark brown/grey silty clay that contained a few medium angular stones and flecks of charcoal (026). Four small fragments of brick or tile of possible Roman date were recovered from this layer.

The ditch was sealed by a stone spread (007), which was very similar to stone spreads 011 and 012 in Trench 2.



Plate 5: ditch 025.

Linear feature 027 and fill 004 (Fig. 5; Plate 6)

The clay subsoil was also cut by a large east – west linear feature (027). Only a short section of the north side of 027 was investigated, which was straight and gently sloping. It was filled with a layer of light grey brown silty clay with c.30% small-medium angular stones and charcoal flecks (004). Layer 004 was very similar to layer 010 in Trench 2.

With so little investigated it is difficult to make assumptions about this feature, although it appeared to be a ditch or terrace edge.

Other features (Fig. 5)

A modern field drain cut the east end of the trench.



Plate 6: linear feature 027.

Discussion

As with Trench 2 this trench contained features (025 and 027) cut into the clay subsoil that had been subsequently sealed by a stone spread (007). The fragment of possible brick or tile recovered from the fill (026) of ditch 025 could be of Roman date.

Trench 4 (Figs 1 and 7)

Trench 4 was positioned to investigate a small flat area within the slope of the field. It was aligned northwest – southeast. Machine excavation revealed the natural clay subsoil at the southeast end of the trench, which had apparently been cut by a large northeast – southwest linear feature. Excavation revealed this to be a complex series of linear features.

Linear feature 039 and fills 036, 037 and 038 (Figs 7 and 8; Plate 7)

Only the southeast edge of cut feature (039) was revealed. The exposed side sloped gently and it may have been stepped. This feature was truncated by a modern field drain (034) so its original form is uncertain. The lowest fill visible was a layer of mid grey silty clay containing c.15% small charcoal flecks and c.5% small-medium angular stones (038). This fill was identical to a deposit (031) recorded on the northwest side of the field drain, suggesting that they were part of the same layer cut through by the field drain.

Above 038 was a layer of yellow/grey clay containing very occasional medium angular stone and small charcoal flecks (037). This layer is very similar to the natural clay subsoil and may have been redeposited. Overlying this was a layer of quite stony light grey silty clay (036). This layer was the upper fill of feature 039 and may have extended outside its southeast edge.

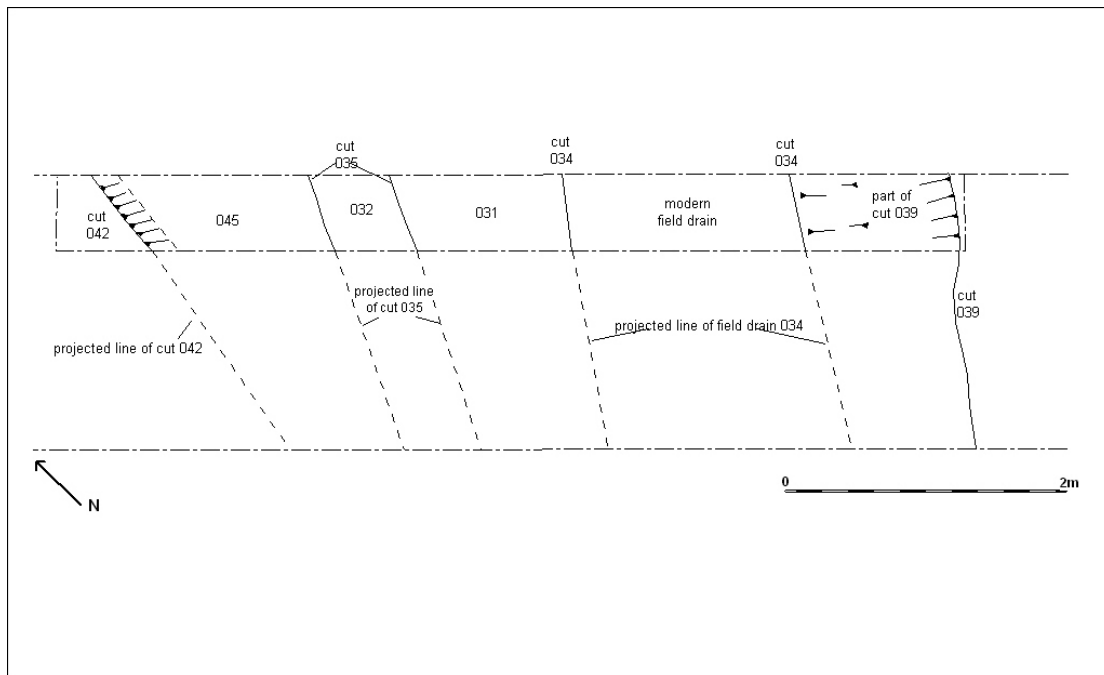


Figure 7: Detail of part of Trench 4 showing ditch 039/042.

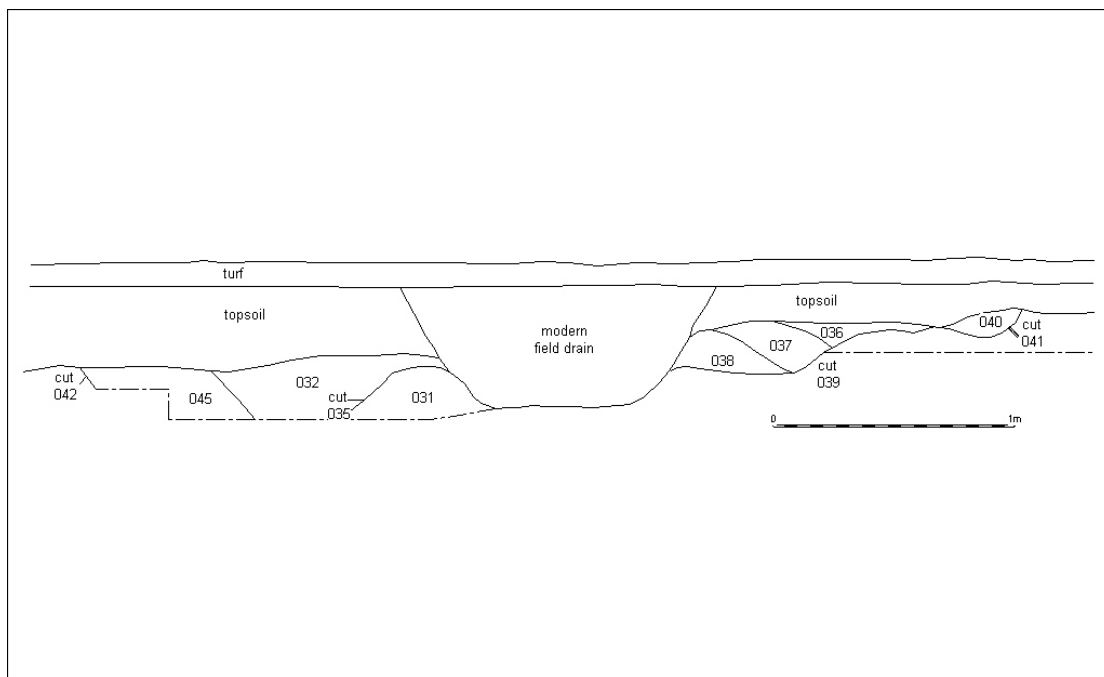


Figure 8: Southwest-facing section of ditch 039/042.

Linear feature 042 and fill 045 (Figs 7 and 8; Plate 8)

The northwest edge of feature 042 was partially exposed and recorded. The exposed section was quite steeply sloping. Only one possible fill (045) was visible in the excavated section. Fill 045 was a stony mid grey/brown silty clay. It was very similar in nature to 031 and 038 and appeared to have been part of a single layer (with 031 and 038) filling a large feature defined by cuts 042 on the northwest and 039 on the southeast.

Feature 035 and fill 032 (Figs 7 and 8; Plate 9)

A round-bottomed feature (035) had been cut through fills 031 and 045. The cut was 1.5m wide x 0.44m deep and filled with a single layer of stony dark brown clayey silt (032). This feature was only recorded in section and so its original form and function are unknown.

Gully 041 and fill 040 (Fig. 8; Plate 8)

A narrow shallow gully (041) ran roughly parallel to the southeast edge of 039. The gully had gently sloping sides and a rounded base and it was filled with a single layer of quite stony grey brown clayey silt (040).



Plate 7: The southeast edge of feature 039 and narrow gully 041.



Plate 8: The northwest edge of feature 042.



Plate 9: Feature 035 cutting the fill of feature 042.

Discussion

Although quite complex the features recorded in Trench 4 appear to represent a large ditch, defined by 042 and 039, of unknown depth that had later been cut through by feature 035 and modern field drain 034. The scale of ditch 039/042 is surprising, but with so little exposed it is not possible to suggest a function, although it would clearly have formed a significant feature in the area.

DISCUSSION

The scale and complexity of the archaeological features exposed during this evaluation is surprising. Other than Trench 1, all the trenches revealed significant archaeological remains, most of which clearly extended beyond the limits of the trenches into other parts of the site.

There are striking similarities between the character of many of the features in the trenches. This is particularly evident in the nature and sequences of features and deposits in Trenches 2 and 3, which are similar enough to suggest that the activity represented in each is contemporary. Initial identification of pottery and fragments of brick and tile from features in these trenches suggests that some of the activity may be as early as the late prehistoric period or the Roman-British period. Formal identification of the pottery is awaited and a revised report may be prepared when the results are available.

The exact nature of the activity in Trenches 2 and 3 is uncertain, but it involved cutting ditches and pits, which were subsequently covered by a stone surface or yard during a reordering of the area. It is possible that the features represent the remains of boundaries and yards at the rear of a property or properties that formerly stood to the north or east of Trenches 2 and 3, depending on the alignments of any former settlement. If the features recorded are as early as suggested they do not have to have been aligned with the present layout of the village, which was probably established during the medieval period.

Feature 039/042 in Trench 4 is different in character to the features recorded in the other trenches. Its full extent, depth and former function are unknown.

LIKELY IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

It is not possible to be unequivocal regarding the potential impacts of the proposed development of this site as the full extent, character, complexity or vulnerability of the buried remains is not yet fully understood.

Distribution of archaeological remains

Archaeological remains were encountered in Trenches 2, 3 and 4, but not in Trench 1. Therefore, development in the northwest corner of the site should have little or no archaeological implications.

Depths of the archaeological remains

The depth of the deposits below the present ground surface varies across the site. In trenches 2 and 3 archaeological deposits were encountered at depths of between 0.25m and 0.4m and between 0.4 and 0.8m in Trench 4.

At present the removal of the topsoil across the eastern and possibly southern sections of the site will expose significant archaeological remains to damage during construction. The cutting of foundation and service trenches will have a direct impact on the buried deposits. Terracing or landscaping across the may also impact on the buried remains.

However, given the slope of the site from north to south and the depth of some of the remains, especially in T4, there may be some scope for preserving some remains *in-situ* when developing the final design plans. This may only be possibly in the southwest section of the site (around Trench 4) where the deposits are sufficiently deep to be protected during earthmoving.

SOURCES

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