

# **THE NORTH HERONRY DAM, DINEFWR PARK, LLANDEILO, CARMARTHENSHIRE: EXCAVATION OF A ROMAN SITE 2008 & 2009**



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust

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## **SUMMARY**

*During the summer of 2008 the Dyfed Archaeological Trust undertook a variety of survey work and excavations in Dinefwr Park, Llandeilo, a property in the ownership of the National Trust. This was followed in 2009 by further excavation at one location, the site of a possible Roman building at the North Heronry Dam.*

*Eight trenches were opened in 2008 and three in 2009 to look for evidence of a possible Roman building suggested by surface finds from the area and by a variety of features indicated on a geophysical survey. Evidence of activity in the area ranging from prehistoric flints, to possible Roman structures and later estate features were revealed. Strong evidence for a substantial Roman building was discovered, but its exact location could not be pinpointed. A series of ditches and gullies indicates that this was an intensively used landscape in the Roman Period laid out with fields and tracks. Pottery from the excavation indicates use of the site in the AD 2<sup>nd</sup> century – 4<sup>th</sup> century, therefore demonstrating the building was not associated with the nearby forts at Llandeilo, which had been abandoned by this time. The building, therefore, may have been a temple located close to a spring, or, more likely, a villa.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A strong Roman presence in and around Dinefwr Park has been known since at least the 17th century when a milestone bearing an inscription to the Emperor Tacitus was recorded. Antiquarians also refer to a possible Roman structure below Llandyfeisant Church and to two coin hoards. More recently pottery and coins from fields to the south of Home Farm indicate the possible location of a long suspected Roman fort. The presence of this fort was confirmed by geophysical survey in 2003. A subsequent excavation in the summer of 2005 undertaken by the National Trust and the Dyfed Archaeological Trust, and involving members of the local community and other volunteers, successfully investigated parts of the fort.

In addition, National Trust staff have found sherds of Roman pottery and tegulae (Roman tile) in a streambed running in a narrow, steep-sided valley close to the western boundary of the park. These finds suggest the presence of a substantial Roman building nearby, close to the head of the spring-source of the stream. The stream was dammed during 18th century to form an ornamental pond – the North Heronry Dam. The pond is now dry, but the National Trust has plans to restore the feature. The dam seems to have been partly constructed over an old road.

Outside forts and the town of Moridunum (Carmarthen) stone-built Roman structures are rare in south-west Wales - a villa is known at Llys Brychan close to Llangadog, a few miles up the Tywi valley from Llandeilo and three or four structures have been recorded in west Carmarthenshire/Pembrokeshire.

During the summer of 2008 the Dyfed Archaeological Trust undertook a variety of survey work and excavations in Dinefwr Park, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, a property in the ownership of the National Trust (Figs. 1 & 2). The project was funded by the David and Christopher Lewis Foundation, the National Trust and the Cambrian Archaeological Association. The fieldwork undertaken in 2008 aimed to locate and characterise evidence for the medieval towns of Dinefwr and Newton and to locate a possible Roman building near the North Heronry Dam. In addition to the excavations, several geophysical surveys were undertaken, as was a detailed topographical survey of part of Dinefwr Park. The results of this work were reported on in 2008 (Schlee 2008). In 2009, a further week's excavation was undertaken on the site of the possible Roman building near the Heronry Dam, funded by David and Christopher Lewis Foundation and the National Trust. The results from the 2008 and 2009 excavations are presented here as a single report, including some of the results reported on in 2008.

Weather conditions during the two-week excavation in 2008 (30 June – 12 July) were poor, with wet weather hampering progress. It was worse in 2009 (17 – 27 July), with daily heavy rain halting excavations on several occasions.

Public involvement in the projects was encouraged, with local volunteers, archaeology students and work experience placements undertaking the majority of the excavation and recording work, under supervision from DAT staff.

Several public events were held, providing tours of the excavation on National Trust open days and during National Archaeology Week during both 2008 and 2009.

## **LANDSCAPE HISTORY**

The history of the excavation is intractably linked with the long and complex wider history of the Dinefwr estate (Figs. 1-2).

The course of the Roman road linking Llandeilo fort with the fort at Carmarthen 15 miles west along the Tywi valley has been established through aerial photographic survey, but as the road approaches the Llandeilo forts, its course becomes speculative. However, what was considered

to be a Roman road was recorded beneath a lane during construction of the Milford Haven to Aberdulais LNG pipeline in 2007, confirming a speculative projection of the road. It is therefore possible that the Roman road roughly follows the line of the medieval road, a few hundred meters to the west of the excavation site (see below). During the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (and earlier?) the main road down the Tywi valley ran from Llandeilo to Llandyfeisant Church to Dinefwr Castle/Dinefwr Town and on west towards Carmarthen, passing some distance to the south of the excavation site. As the importance of Dinefwr Castle and Town faded and as the role of the new town of Newton became more significant from about AD 1300 the medieval routeway shifted from its original course. It now ran from Llandeilo to Newton and on to Carmarthen, passing through or close to the site of the excavation. The line of the road can be traced westward through the deer park – as an earthwork terrace and as a holloway, until it runs beneath the deer park wall. To the west of the deer park the line of the road is shown on Ordnance Survey maps as a track and lane. It was beneath this lane that the possible Roman road was discovered during pipeline construction. When the deer park wall was built in 1659 or soon after, the line of the road was moved to the north side of the deer park boundary (Colvin and Moggridge 2003, 13).

Prior to the establishment of the deer park the area around what is now the North Heronry Dam, consisted of an agricultural landscape of fields associated with Newton. Traces of boundaries within the park can still be seen, but whether these represent the remains of a communal open field system or privately held fields is uncertain.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The original proposed methodology was to conduct a geophysical survey followed by a series of hand excavated 1m x 1m test pits. However, the apparently clear results of the geophysical survey allowed for more targeted excavation of potentially significant archaeological features. Therefore in 2008 five machine-excavated trenches were opened, supplemented by several smaller hand-dug trenches. In 2009 four trenches were again machine-excavated. Trench 7 (originally excavated in 2008) was reopened (as Trench 14) and expanded to better understand the deep deposits present, and three more trenches were opened.

## **GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY (Figures 3-4)**

The geophysical survey was carried out using a Bartington Grad 601-2 dual Fluxgate Gradiometer. Readings in the survey were taken along parallel traverses of one axis of a 20m x 20m grid. The traverse interval was 0.5m with readings logged at intervals of 0.25m along each traverse. The data was compiled and processed using ArchaeoSurveyor 2 software.

Most of the geophysical survey was undertaken in May 2008, before bracken growth was too developed to allow an effective survey to be made. A second area was surveyed during the excavation in early July (included in Fig. 4).

The first survey encompassed an area to the east and south of the former pond. The irregularly-shaped area is due to the presence of large trees and fences erected to protect saplings. Complex archaeological remains are visible on the first survey area – most of these were sample-excavated and are described in detail in the relevant trench descriptions. Apart from a boundary ditch, little evidence of buried archaeology is visible on the second survey.

## **EXCAVATION RESULTS**

Trench numbering ran on from the four excavation trenches around Newton House. The first trench described here is therefore no. 5. Because the excavation results are so different in each trench, descriptions are in each case followed by a discussion. A report on the Roman pottery is presented in an Appendix.

### **Trench 5 (Figures 5-6; Photos. 1 - 6)**

Trench 5 was positioned to examine two linear geophysical anomalies. One of these, the most easterly of the two, is visible as an earthwork bank and is most likely a boundary associated with the agricultural landscape erased during the creation of the deer park. The second anomaly runs from north to south, turns a right angle to the east at its southern limit and runs off the edge of the survey area. This feature was initially interpreted as two parallel ditches between which lies a bank. As the more easterly boundary is an earthwork it is considered that this second anomaly is the earlier of the two.

The excavation confirmed that the more easterly of the two boundaries, (earthwork (508)) was the later of the two. The earlier boundary comprised a c.4m wide band of rounded boulders (502). These boulders were at their most dense on the east side where they were retained by a kerb of very large boulders. On the west side they became more patchy and there was no retaining kerb. There were no stray boulders in the topsoil or surrounding deposits to indicate that they had been part of a larger boulder-construction. The boulders were laid on a buried soil (513) that was only present below the boulders. A shallow ditch (505) ran parallel to the boulder spread on its west side, although it was unclear if they were associated. There was no ditch on the east side of the boulders. However, a heat-reddened patch of subsoil was probably the remains of a hearth (511). A deposit of shattered shale and soil (503) had accumulated against the kerb on the east side of the boulders. A similar deposit was present on the west side; the location of this deposit perhaps indicates the former location of a western kerb.

There were no structural remains associated with the later boundary, and on initial excavation it appeared that the earthwork was composed of a thicker topsoil deposit. However, closer examination showed a bank (508) at the east end of the trench. This bank became progressively more clayey to the east, but overall its composition was very similar to adjoining deposits. Indeed, it was virtually impossible to distinguish the bank from an underlying deposit (506). Bank 508 sealed a very shallow ditch (510) running across the trench parallel to the bank and to the boulder spread.

Fourteen small, eroded pieces of Roman tile/brick came from deposits 506/508, a sherd of Roman pottery was found in the fill (509) of ditch 510 and one sherd came from 506. A flint flake was also found in 506.

### ***Discussion***

The remains in Trench 5 are difficult to interpret. Nothing was found to assist in the dating of boulder spread 502. The feature has the appearance of the foundation of a Roman road or track, but the lack of small (gravel) surfacing material and fact that the geophysical survey indicates it turns a sharp right angle south of the trench would seem to preclude this interpretation. Another explanation is that it was the foundation for an earthen bank. If correct, this would have been a substantial bank, larger than what was required for agricultural purposes. It could have been associated with Roman military activities, an estate boundary of the medieval Dinefwr Castle, or an earlier deer park boundary. Following the excavation, further scrutiny of the geophysics survey may suggest that 502 is actually a discrete localised feature (visible as a paler area in Figure 4); this suggestion is supported by the results of



excavations in Trench 15 in 2009 where no evidence for a similar boulder spread was found. The apparently parallel linear ditches may equate with bank 508.

Pottery and tile indicate that bank 508 and ditch 510 are Roman or post-Roman in origin. The bank seems to have accumulated slowly, rather than to have been constructed. It may be a lynchet or headland formed in medieval and early post-medieval fields prior to establishment of the deer park.

Hearth feature 511 may be of prehistoric origin.

### **Trench 6 (Figures 7-8; Photos. 7 and 8)**

Trench 6 was excavated across a low, straight earthwork bank that also shows as a geophysical anomaly. Prior to excavation it was considered that this bank could be the line of a Roman road. However, no such feature was present. Approximately 0.4m – 0.5m of topsoil/upper deposits were removed by machine and the remaining deposits by hand.

Topsoil in this trench gradually became less dark and more clayed with depth, but no definite changes in horizon were apparent and therefore one context number (601) was assigned to the 0.8m thick deposit during excavation. However, following profile cleaning this deposit was sub-divided into 601, 602 and 603, and other features became apparent, though none of them was obvious. The low earthwork bank (612) seemed to consist of a slightly darker material than that surrounding it, and that there was possibly a silted ditch (610) to its north side, and a very shallow ditch (611) to its south. Below topsoil, cut into silty-clay subsoil, was a shallow pit/gully (605) – this had the appearance of a natural feature, although it did contain worked flint.

All finds from this trench were assigned to context 601. They comprised 22 small pieces of eroded tile/brick, 23 Roman pottery sherds, three worked flints, one sherd of Roman green/blue glass (probably part the base of a flagon) and a lead weight.

### ***Discussion***

The earthwork bank that is clearly visible as a surface feature was found to have an associated ditch on its northern side and a possible ditch on its south side. This feature extends beyond the limits of the deer park wall, suggesting it is a remnant of the pre-park agricultural landscape. It is, however, on a different alignment to the banks and ditches excavated in Trench 5, suggesting the features in the two trenches belong to different phases of activity.

The top of natural deposits exposed in the trench indicates that the contours of the stream valley that was dammed to form a lake in the 18th century were, in earlier times, steeper than appears today.

The depth of deposits suggests a considerable build up of colluvium from the slopes of the stream valley. This is presumably a consequence of erosion (possibly as a result of deforestation and agricultural activity) prior to the emparkment of the area. The quantity of abraded Roman period finds from this trench suggests that this material was deposited along with the colluvial silts.

The presence of well preserved worked flint of probable Late Mesolithic date, possibly in association with cut features, may indicate prehistoric activity in this location.

## **Trenches 7 and 14 (Figures 9-11; Photos. 9-12)**

Trench 7 was excavated in 2008 on a slope at the east end of the pond in order to examine an apparently rectilinear geophysical anomaly. Topsoil was removed by machine.

This was a difficult trench to excavate owing to constantly rising ground-water and heavy rain. There was no obvious evidence for the linear geophysical anomaly. Deposits on the lower, northern, end of the trench were deep – the bottom was not reached. Here, below topsoil (701) a silty clay loam (702/708) overlay a silty clay (703). Beneath 703 at a depth of c.1.4m was a lens of charcoal, below which was a clay loam (707) containing a large quantity of Roman tile/brick and occasional large stones. This deposit (707) was only reached on the afternoon of the final day of excavation. It seemed as if these deposits lay within a steep-sided cut running across the approximate centre of the trench, but further excavation showed that the cut (704) may have lain several meters to the south and contained deposit 705. If this is the case then virtually the whole of the trench was filled with archaeological deposits

Deposits 701, 702/708 and 703 contained c.43 small pieces of eroded Roman brick/tile. A sherd of Roman pottery was also found in 702. Nine large, non-eroded pieces of brick and tile were recovered from deposit 707 as well as two sherds of Roman pottery.

To further investigate deposit (707) containing Roman brick and tile, Trench 7 was reopened and expanded in 2009, numbered as Trench 14. To enable a sufficient expanse of the deeply buried deposit to be exposed, an initial area of c.8x x 8m was opened. The sides of this trench were stepped in by 1m for every 1m of depth for health and safety reasons, reducing the area towards the base of the excavation available for investigation. In addition, in 2009, a small stream emptied into this trench, necessitating constant pumping out. It was therefore only possible to examine the west-facing section of this trench.

The west-facing section of Trench 14 showed that the deposits revealed in 2008 did indeed sit within a narrow valley or ravine. Deposit 705 (1406), recorded in 2008 was shown to fill much of the upper part of the valley, but predated the deposition of Roman material and could therefore be quite ancient. In 2009, the small valley containing the deposits was shown to be approximately 2m deep and c.12m wide (Fig. 11). Its fills from top to bottom consisted of: topsoil (1401 – 701 in 2008); a silty clay contained specks of Roman brick (1402 – 702/708 in 2008); a silty clay with numerous stones (1403 – 703 in 2008) – this layer was gleyed (pale grey in colour) indicating that it had been deposited underwater; a silty loam un-gleyed layer (1407); a silty loam containing numerous fragments (43) of broken but un-abraded Roman brick and tile (11.7kg in total) and a few sherds of Roman pottery, including a handle from an amphora from south Spain (1408 – 707 in 2008); and at the base of the valley a silty clay (1409). On the south side of the section a shallow hollow/ditch was filled with two deposits (1404-05). Natural deposits comprised coarse, hard gravels (1411).

### ***Discussion***

As in the previous trenches, it would appear that the geophysical survey has detected differences in soil morphology that are not easily identified by eye or distinguished by excavation.

It would seem that most of this trench is taken up by colluvial deposits (some containing Roman period ceramics) filling a shallow natural valley. The colluvium has a higher proportion of clay than the deposits encountered in Trench 6. Deposit 1408/707 towards the bottom of the valley seems to contain demolition material from a Roman building. This building could not be located in 2008 or 2009. However, the unabraded character of much of the brick and tile

suggests that it has not come far prior to deposition in the valley. It is likely therefore that a Roman building lies close to Trench 7/14, possibly beneath the veteran oak trees immediately to the south.

### **Trench 8 (Figures 12-13; Photos. 16-19)**

Trench 8 was located to examine geophysical anomalies. These delineate a 'grid' or ladder-shaped feature of six cells, each cell c.16m by 13m, and two parallel ditches.

Topsoil was removed by machine. Vertically-pitched shale bedrock lay at the northern end of the trench; this abruptly gave way to a silty-clay that became progressively softer to the south.

The two parallel ditches lay exactly 4m apart. The northern ditch (805) was rock-cut with a sharp V-shaped profile. It was 0.9m wide and 0.6m deep and filled with a homogeneous silty-clay (802) that contained seven pieces of Roman tile/brick and four sherds of Roman pottery including a piece of mortarium and piece of Samian ware. The southern ditch (806) was cut through silty-clay subsoil and had a more open V-shaped profile, 1.6m wide and 0.6m deep. It had a silty-clay fill (803).

A shallow, rock-cut ditch 0.45m wide and 0.3m deep was thought to equate with the northern side of the ladder shaped feature. An attempt was made to trace the southern side of the ladder feature by hand-excavating a 3m x 1m trench (Trench 8a). Here the silty-clay geological deposits were very soft and disturbed by root action and animal burrows and no evidence of a ditch or other feature was discernable.

### ***Discussion***

Although it was not possible to establish a relative chronology between the 'grid' feature and the parallel ditches, Roman pottery and tile from one of the parallel ditches strongly suggests a Roman date. Despite differences in their profiles, these ditches are most likely to have been drainage ditches flanking a Roman road or track, for which all other evidence, such as metalled surfaces, has been lost to plough activity. However, a width of 4m between ditches is narrow for a road of Roman date. It is also uncertain where this road would have led. The eastern end of the feature appears to be sealed beneath colluvium, while its western continuation, especially in relation to the local topography, is unclear.

It is possible that the ladder-shaped feature formed stock-pens, perhaps for deer, dogs or pheasants but this explanation remains speculative. Although it was not possible to demonstrate the stratigraphic relationships between the ditches in Trench 8, the evidence in Trench 9 does offer clarification of the sequence.

### **Trench 9 (Figure 14; Photos. 20 - 22)**

This trench was positioned to investigate the 'grid' feature and the parallel ditches, identified in Trench 8 with the aim of establishing a chronology between the features and a building indicated on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1<sup>st</sup> Edition map (1886). The building is c.7m x 7m, with similar sized open area on its east side and is approached by a track from the east. By the publication of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition map in 1906 the building was roofless. The building was not easily discernable on the geophysical survey but may be represented by a large pale coloured anomaly on Figure 15. On excavation, however, the building remains were found to be so substantial that further excavation (which would have required destruction of parts of the building), was resisted.

The whole of the trench was occupied by building remains which lay close to the surface, less than 0.10m below the vegetation. The building was represented by mortared stone walls (903, 904) demolished to ground level, defined by a well-preserved, good-quality pitched stone floor (905) with a repaired patch (906). To the east (the open area on the 1886 map), lay a rough stone surface (902), while to the south lay a further pitched-stone floor (907), well-preserved, but not quite of the quality of the above, and repaired area (908). This floor was bounded to its east by a continuation of wall 903 and to the south by a shallow drain (909) formed from pitched stones. A very rough stone surface (910) lay to the south of this drain. Finds from this trench came from the loose rubble and soil above the building and consisted of stone roof tiles and a sherd of late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

### ***Discussion***

The building in Trench 9 was agricultural in character, and seems to have been at the end of its life when shown on the 1886 map, as the excavation demonstrated that it was formerly much larger. The excavation suggests that there was an enclosed building to the north with an adjoining structure (possibly originally roofed?) to the south, with an open southern side. It is possible that the large geophysical anomaly to the southeast of the building is a silted pond.

Despite no direct evidence of a relationship, it seems reasonable to assume that the 'grid' or ladder-shaped feature is associated with the building and cobbled surfaces. The absence of cobbling in Trench 8, however, suggests only the cell sampled by Trench 9 was cobbled. The geophysical survey suggests that the cobbled surface almost certainly overlies and post-dates the parallel ditches revealed in Trench 8.

Although it is tempting to interpret the building and 'grid' feature as deer-pens and a deer feeding station established for the deer park, there is no direct evidence for this. Further research into deer management systems would be needed support the theory. It is equally possible that other animals were housed there, and that the complex had a variety of uses throughout its life.

### **Trench 10 (Figures 15-16; Photo. 13 - 15)**

Numerous fragments of apparently Roman period tile and brick were noted during excavation lying amongst stones and gravels at the extreme northeast corner of the partially drained pond. These seemed to be lying in a slight artificial terrace. In order to assess these finds Trench 10 was excavated across what would have been high water mark of the pond and onto the slope above.

It quickly became apparent that the tile and other material within deposits (111, 114, 116) had washed into or been dumped in the pond. There was some evidence of digging into the nearby slope. The deposit overlay a c.0.2m thick band of pale yellow clay (113), which was assumed to be pond lining. At the northern end of the trench, above what would have been the maximum height of the pond lay a foundation of pitched, rounded stones, laid herringbone fashion (112). This could be the foundation for a field bank, or, more likely, a firm edging to the pond.

### ***Discussion***

This trench demonstrates that the deposit containing eroded Roman period material post-dates construction of the pond. The material may, however, have been disturbed by the pond construction or the collapse of deposits surrounding the pond as it went out of use.

## **Trenches 11 and 12**

These two trenches, each 2m x 1m, were excavated to examine slight geophysical anomalies in the second geophysical survey. No archaeological features were detected and no artefacts found. In each trench topsoil overlay a soft silty-clay layer which faded into a similar but more compact layer at 0.5m depth. They may indicate that the cultural material found in Trenches 5, 6 and 7, was not washed in from a building located to the east of Trenches 11 and 12, but more likely to have washed in from the south and north slopes of the stream valley.

## **Trench 13**

This 3m x 1m hand-dug trench was excavated between Trenches 6 & 7 to sample a visible linear bank-like feature. Below topsoil a compact clay loam faded into slightly stony clay-loam subsoil at 0.7m below the ground surface. There was no evidence of archaeological features and no artefacts were present.

## **Trench 15 (Figure 17; Photo. 23 - 24)**

This trench was located to the south of Trench 5 to further investigate some of the features discovered in Trench 5. As noted above, the stone spread investigated in Trench 5 was not present in Trench 15. However, several ditches were, some of which were detected on the geophysical survey and one or more of these may be continuations of those in Trench 5. Several fragments of Roman brick/tile were found in the topsoil of this trench.

Ditch 1505 at the eastern end of the trench was V-shaped, 1.0m wide and 0.65m deep and cut into shale bedrock. Its homogeneous fill (1504) of silty clay contained fragments of Roman brick. These were concentrated in the upper part of the fill. Ditch 1502 was parallel to 1505, some 3m distant from it, but much slighter, being just 0.4m across and 0.35m deep, and with a U-shaped profile.

A line of roughly laid stone slabs and other stones (1506) lay over and filled a shallow gully (1507). The gully terminated close to the southern edge of the trench, and was 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep. The stones and gully were on a different alignment from the two ditches described above. It was unclear whether this feature was a drainage gully or the partially surviving remains of a wall foundation.

Ditch 1508 at the western end of the trench was on a different alignment to the other features. It had a U-shaped profile, 0.85m wide and 0.45m deep, and was filled with clay (1509) with fragments of Roman tile and a perforated stone object. The latter was a roughly shaped circular disc of local shale c.145mm diameter with a 20mm diameter central perforation.

## **Discussion**

The features in this trench are on three different alignments, perhaps indicating three, unrelated, phases of activity. As with the other trenches it is difficult to come to firm conclusions with such a small sample of what are probably long ditches and gullies. However, ditches 1505, 1502 are probably those shown on the geophysical survey and are probably flanking ditches of a large boundary bank, although it is possible they lay either side of a trackway. Little can be said about the other features in this trench, although feature 1506-07 is intriguing as it may indicate the presence of a building in the immediate vicinity.

### **Trench 16 (Figures 18; Photo. 25 - 27)**

This Trench was located to the east of Trench 9 and was located to further investigate the features discovered in Trenches 8 and 9, in particular the possible Roman ditches flanking a road or track. Two periods of activity were present in this trench.

The latter period of activity was associated with the remains of the post-medieval building in Trench 9 – and comprised a single course of a well-built 1m wide stone wall (1605), with a rough cobbled/stone surface to the south (1606) and a spread of loose stones (1607) to the north, which may have originally formed part of a surface. These three contexts lay directly beneath the turf and rested on topsoil deposits. They were cleaned and recorded but not removed. The other, earlier archaeological features described below were not revealed until the removal of the 0.3m - 0.4m thick topsoil.

Two parallel ditches (1604 and 1611) ran across the trench c.5m apart. Both had V-shaped profiles. The southern ditch (1603) was the more substantial at 1.5m wide and 0.65m deep, and contained two sherds of Roman samian pottery. The northern ditch measured 0.9m wide and 0.5m deep. The laminated fills (1603, 1610) of both suggested gradual silting. A sherd of Roman pottery and two fragments of material possibly opus signinum (a type of polished Roman concrete floor) came from ditch fill 1610. Two possible postholes (1602, 1609) lay towards the northern end of the trench. 1602 was 0.55m diameter and 0.25m deep and 1609 0.38m diameter and 0.4m deep. Fill 1608 of posthole 1609 contained two sherds of glassy slag.

### ***Discussion***

As noted above the wall and associated stony surfaces are a continuation of the building revealed in Trench 9, making this complex quite extensive, perhaps consisting of more than one building. The two parallel ditches are a continuation on the ditches revealed in Trench 8, and are almost certainly flanking ditches to the track or road, probably of Roman date. It is unknown if the two postholes formed part of a larger structure, such as a building. Given their location, it is unlikely that they were contemporaneous with the ditched trackway.

### **Trench 17**

Trench 17 was machine excavated across what appeared on the surface to be a low earthwork bank. However, as the bank was composed of topsoil and no archaeological features were noted in the trench, no further investigation took place.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The survey and excavations around the North Heronry Dam have revealed that in earlier times, a surprising range of activities have occurred in what today seems like a remote and secluded corner of Dinefwr Park.

The excavated evidence suggests that the stream valley in which trenches 5, 6, 7 and 10 were located was a possible focus of activity during the Mesolithic period. The presence of a Roman building in the vicinity has been confirmed, although it was not possible to establish its character or exact location. It is possibly located beneath the veteran oak trees that flank the valley. It was not possible to excavate beneath or close to these trees. The Roman pottery assemblage demonstrates that this building was not used at the same time as the nearby Roman forts, but was established after their closure in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century and continued in use into the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. The relatively large quantities of Roman brick and tile and possible fragments of opus signinum indicate a high status building. The building was clearly

not a bathhouse associated with the forts. It could have been a temple situated close to a spring, or, more likely, a villa. The numerous ditches and gullies found in several of the trenches all seem to be of Roman date indicating intensively used landscape laid out with fields and tracks.

Relict field boundaries and veteran trees belonging to the pre-park medieval agricultural landscape account for some of the visible landscape features in the area, but other banks and ditches on different alignments would appear to be vestiges of likely pre-medieval land divisions, of unknown date or purpose.

From the Roman period until the establishment of the park, a substantial quantity of colluvium appears to have accumulated in the stream valley. This may suggest an absence of tree cover and an intensity of agricultural activity resulting in erosion of soil from the surrounding slopes.

Finally, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a dam was built across the stream valley to create a decorative landscape feature. While significant landscaping of the surrounding area may have occurred at this time, it is unlikely that that this was responsible for the depth of deposits that overlie the remains of the Roman building. The substantial stone building discovered in Trenches 9 and 15 may have been constructed at this time.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Schlee, D 2008, Excavation and Survey at Dinefwr Park, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, 2008. Unpublished report by Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

## **ARCHIVE DEPOSITION**

The archive for this project will be stored at Dyfed Archaeological Trust Offices in Llandeilo until alternative arrangements have been made. The archive contains:

- A printed and digital copy of the report
- Site record sheets
- Site plans
- Survey data
- Non publication drawings
- CD of digital site photographs
- CD of the digital archive
- Finds
- Correspondence
- Miscellaneous documents



## **Dinefwr Park 2008 and 2009 Roman Pottery Archive List**

Peter Webster

### **Introduction**

The list below is designed as an archive suitable for interim dating purposes.

- The archive is designed so that it can be adapted for publication purposes. This would consist of the comments on publishable/drawn pieces and a revision of the discussion if necessary.
- Meanwhile, the assessment below is intended to provide information which can be extracted for the purposes of an interim report.

### **Archive Catalogue**

#### ***Trench 5***

Context 503

- Black-burnished jar sherd.

Context 506

- Redware fragment

Context 509

- Two small fragments of jar in Black burnished ware or similar fabric.

#### ***Trench 6***

Context 601

- Samian bowl rim, probably Form 18/31 and Central Gaulish. Probably c.A.D.120-150.
- Abraded samian bowl fragment, Central Gaulish and probably form 31. Probably Antonine.
- Bead rim jar in brown fabric with plentiful filler including quartz and made without use of the potters' wheel. Two joining fragments are part of a Malvern-type jar. The general type is summaries in Manning 1993, 232, no.5.1. 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- Bead rim jar in grey fabric.
- Jar in Black burnished ware burnt light grey to light orange; cf. Gillam 1976, no.9 (mid to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century).
- 9 redware fragments.
- 5 greyware fragments
- Abraded chip probably of Dressel 20 amphora.
- Burnt and abraded mortarium rim fragment, now pink with grey core. The large bead and hooked rim suggests a 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century date. The origin is likely to be Welsh.

## ***Trench 7***

### Context 702

- Flanged and beaded bowl in Black burnished ware; cf. Gillam 1976, nos.45-6 (late 3<sup>rd</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> century).
- Small fragment of Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium in off white fabric with angular dark grey and black trituration grits.

### Context 703

- Large jar in grey with a red surface.
- Small redware jar fragment.

### Context 707

- Large beaker or small jar in Black-burnished ware; cf. Gillam 1976, no.19. (early to mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century).

## ***Trench 8***

### Context 802

- Samian bowl fragment, Central Gaulish, Form 31R. c.A.D.160-200.
- Samian cup fragment, burnt. Probably form 33 and Central Gaulish.
- Mortarium sherd in pink to off-white fabric with rounded quartz grits, probably an Oxfordshire product. The edges are very abraded but this appears to join the mortarium sherd from 803.

### Context 803

- Small greyware fragment.
- Mortarium sherd in pink to off-white fabric with rounded quartz grits, probably an Oxfordshire product.

## ***Trench 10***

### Context 111

- Abraded dish rim in red fabric. Probably very abraded samian of form 18/31. Early to mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- Chip of Central Gaulish samian, probably from a bowl. 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- Jar rim red fabric with a slight grey core. Severn Valley Ware; cf. Webster 1976, no.4 (2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century). Six other sherds are probably from the same vessel.
- Grey flagon or jar fragment with off-white surface.
- Mortarium in granular off-white fabric; broken close to the spout, but probably as Frere 1972, no.550. (c.A.D.110-145; this amended date is given in Frere 1984, 271.)

## ***Trench 14***

### Context 1408

- Handle from a Dressel 20, globular olive oil amphora from South Spain. There are two or more cut grooves on the side of the handle which may be ancient.
- Orange fragment, possibly from a flagon. Local manufacture seems most likely.
- Sherd from a large grey jar with an orange surface.
- Sherds from the wall of a large jar or flagon in orange fabric with a grey core.

## **Trench 16**

### Context 1603

- Samian. Floor fragment from a South Gaulish dish, probably form 18/31 and c.A.D.90-110.
- Samian. A bowl fragment, probably Central Gaulish. C.A.D.120-200.

### Context 1610

- 2 fragments of ?opus signinum.
- 1 burnt sherd of jar in dark grey fabric, possibly Black-burnished ware.

## **General Comments**

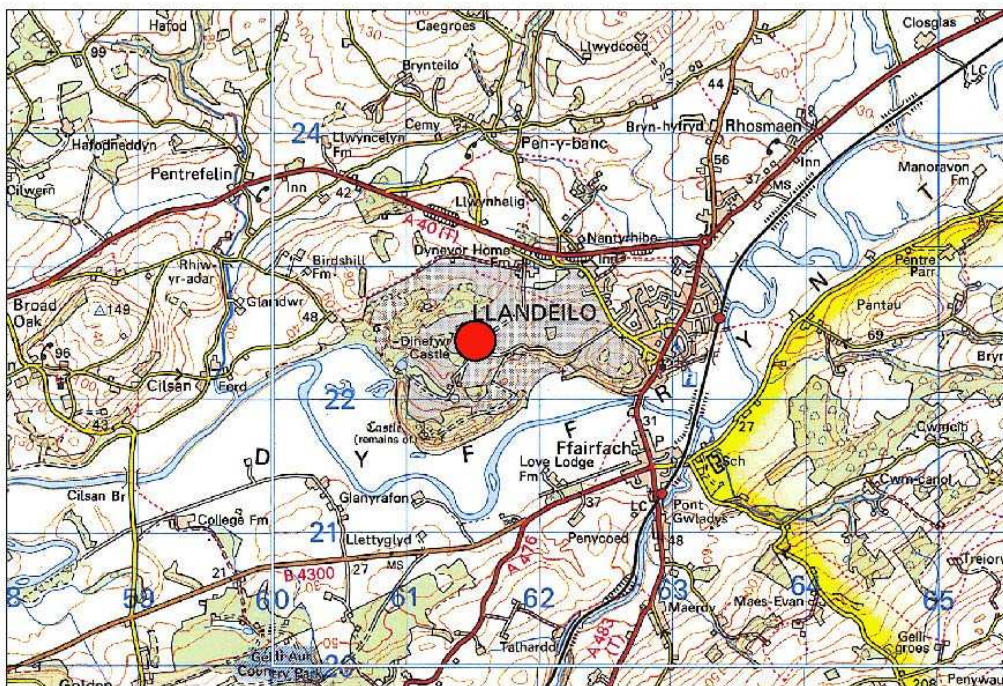
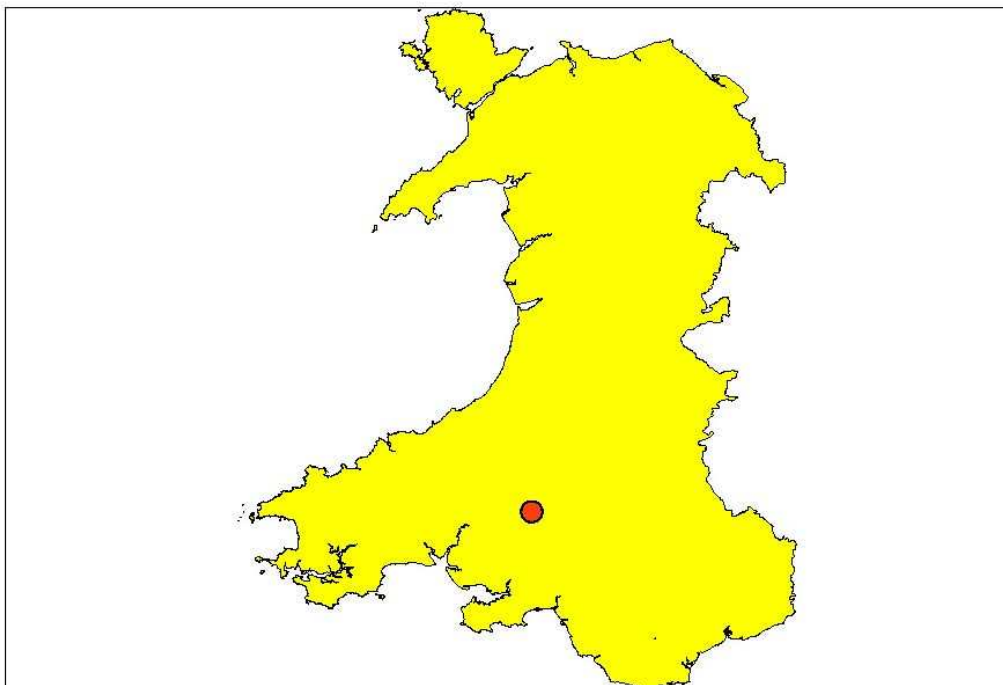
The material from the 2008 and 2009 Dinefwr excavations form an interesting contrast to those from the 2005 evaluation of the Dinefwr forts. The date range is very different, with only one piece definitely of 1<sup>st</sup> century/early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (a sherd of South Gaulish samian). All other samian is Central Gaulish and 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Noticeable were the presence of certainly 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century pieces. It seems likely that this site was not occupied at the same time as the forts but must have been establish soon after their closure and continued in occupation until at least the late 3<sup>rd</sup>/early 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The quantities of pottery recovered are not sufficient to make meaningful comments about sources and status. There appears to be a predominance of kitchen wares and it is noticeable that the samian does not include decorated forms. However, this may simply be a product of the small sample.

It should be noted that soil conditions have not been kind to the Dinefwr pottery. Original surfaces (and some slips) are missing and edges eroded by soil action. There do also appear to be a number of vessels which have been burnt prior to final deposition.

## **Bibliography**

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
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| Gillam, J.P. 1976  | 'Coarse fumed ware in north Britain and beyond', <i>Glasgow Archaeological Journal</i> , 4, 57-80.                               |
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| Webster, P.V. 1976 | 'Severn Valley Ware: a preliminary study', <i>Bristol &amp; Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Transactions</i> , 94, 18-46. |



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Figure 1. Location map

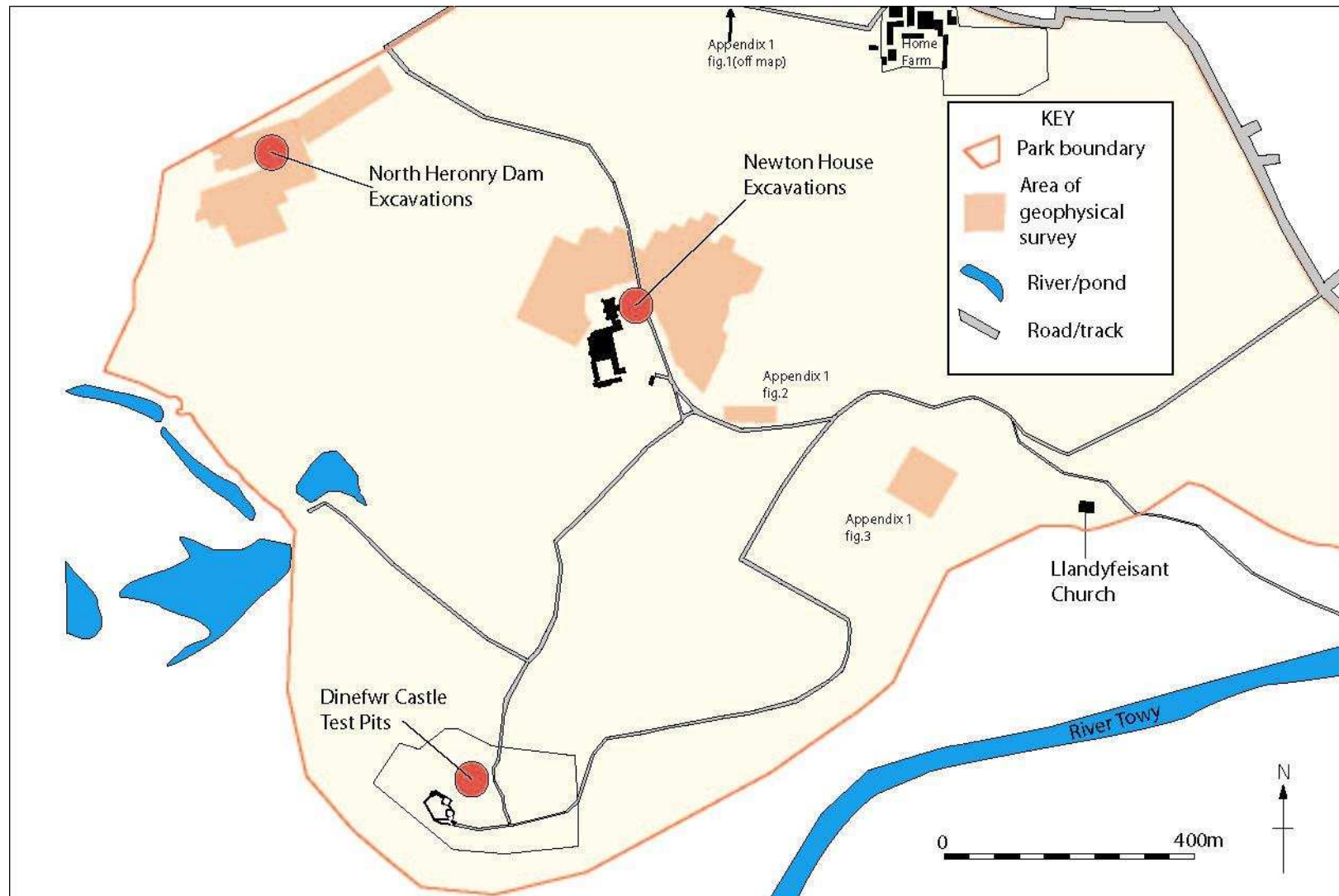


Figure 2. Locations of Excavations and Surveys 2008 and 2009.



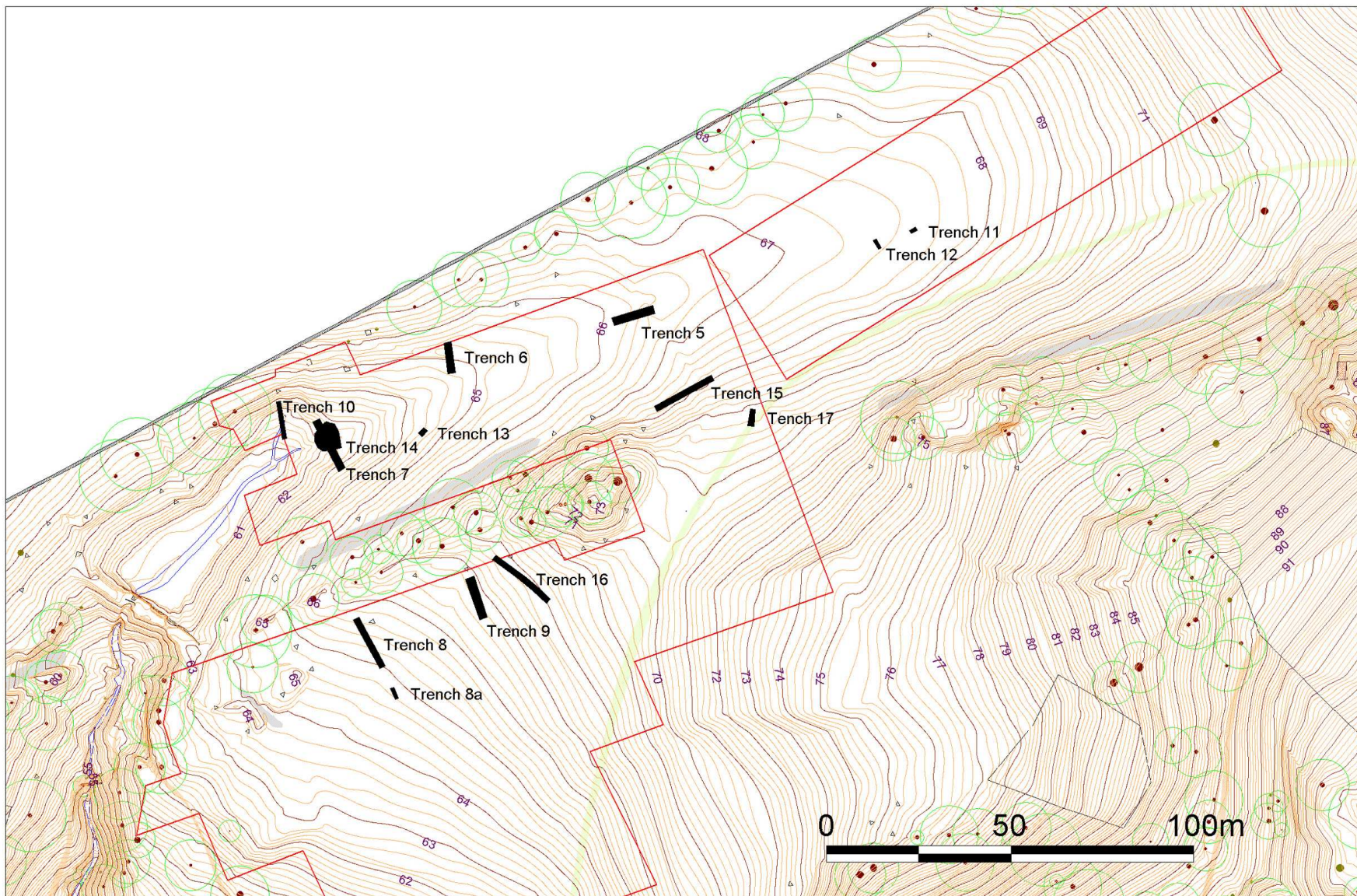


Figure 3. Location of trenches against topographic background. Red = areas of geophysical surveys. North to top.

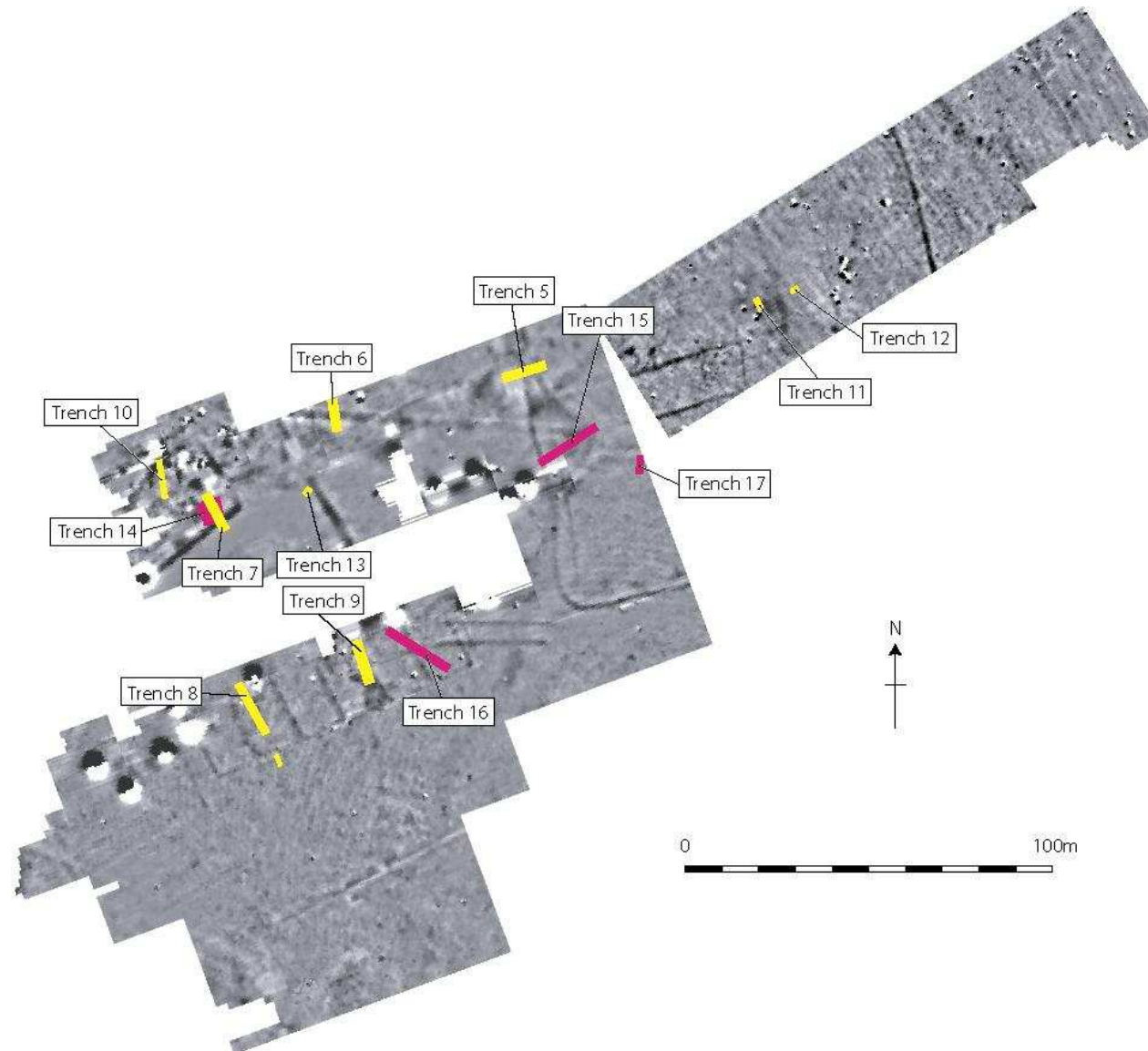


Figure 4. Geophysical survey showing location of excavation trenches. Yellow = 2008 trenches, Red = 2009 trenches.



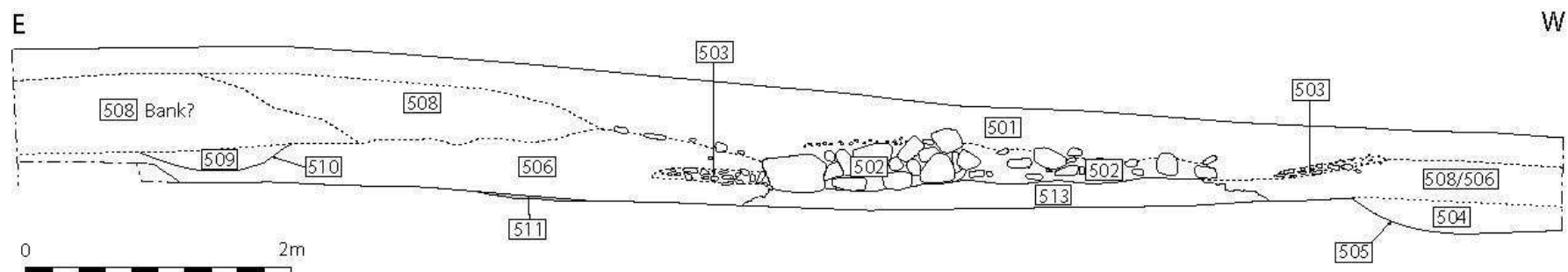


Figure 5. North facing profile of Trench 5

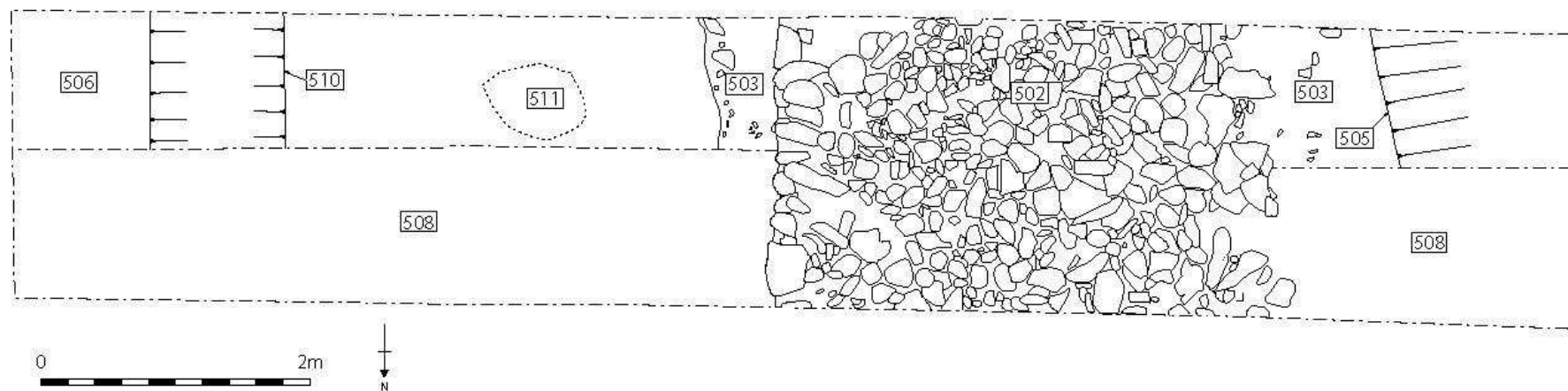


Figure 6. Plan of Trench 5



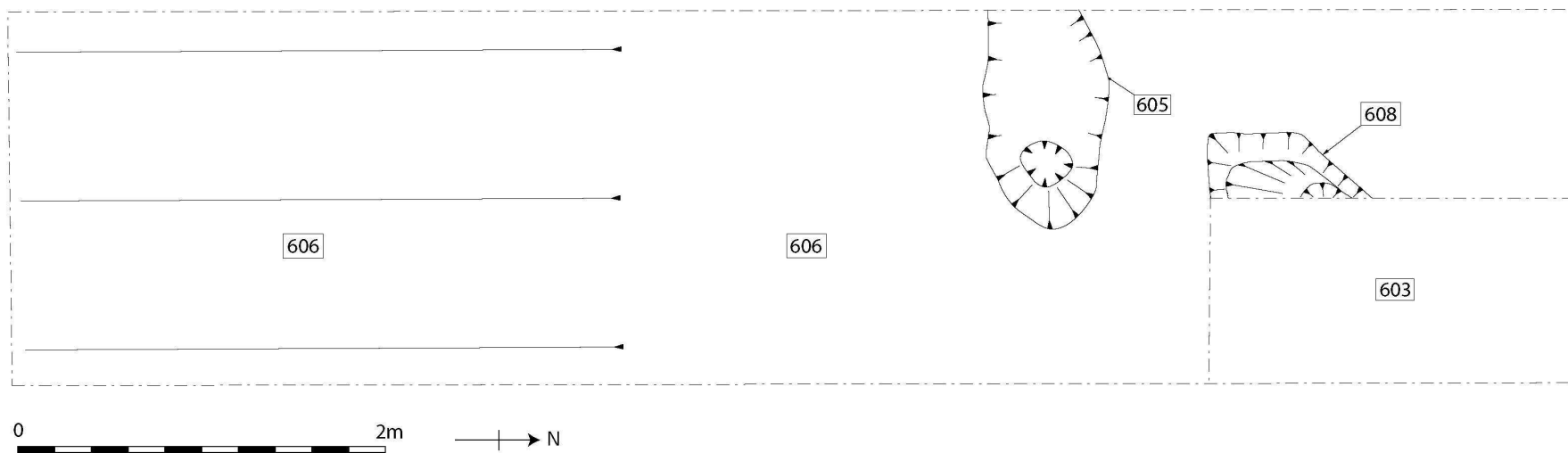


Figure 7. Plan of Trench 6

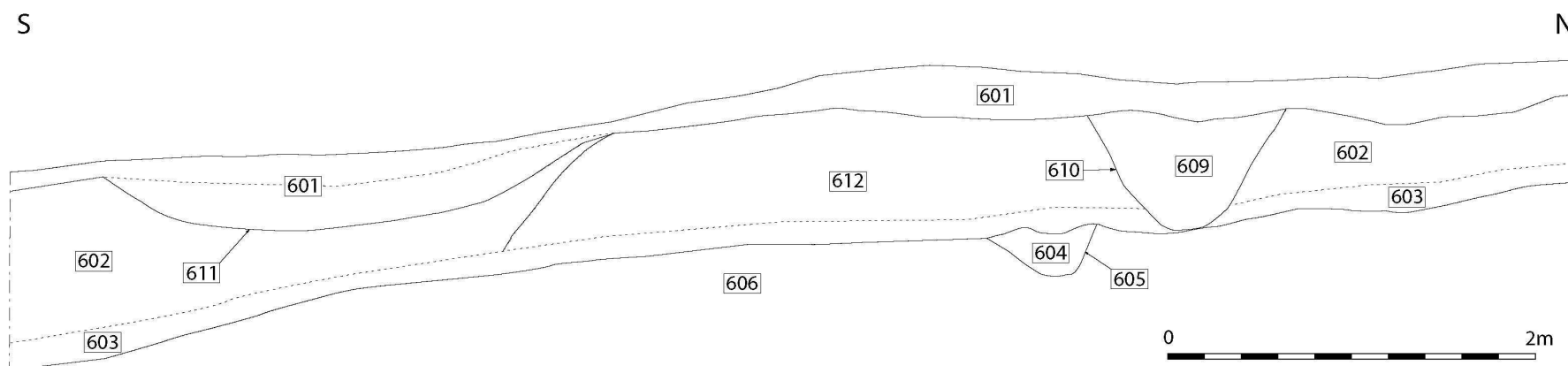


Figure 8. East facing profile of Trench 6

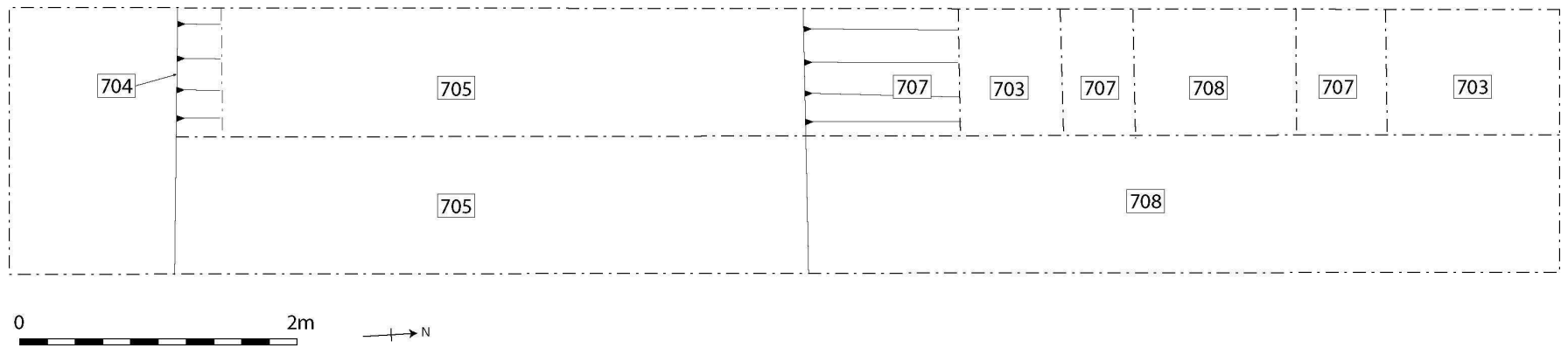


Figure 9. Plan of Trench 7

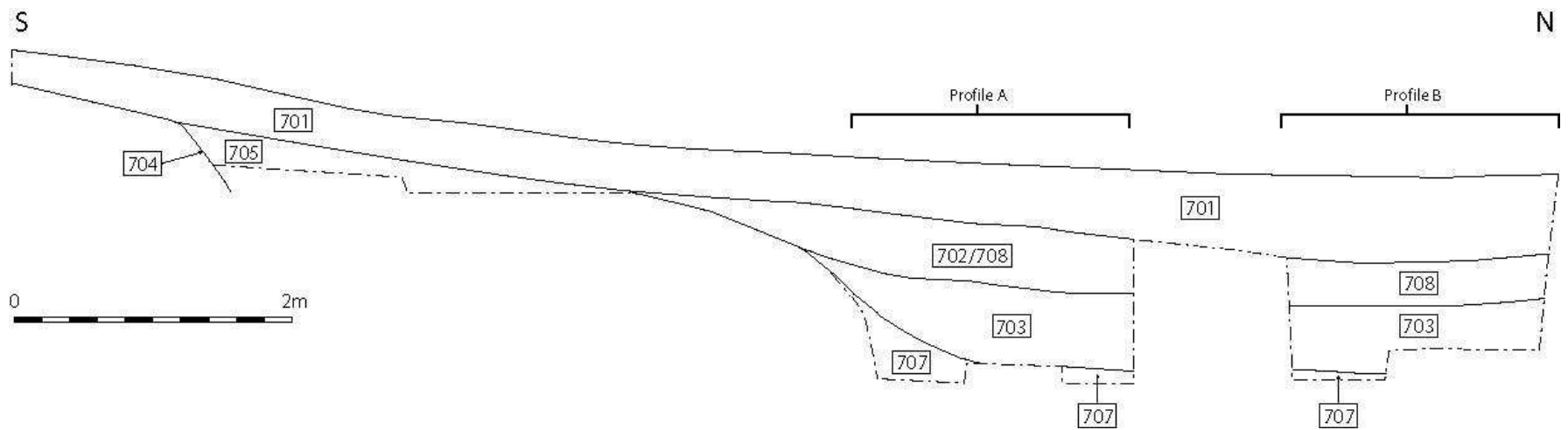


Figure 10. East facing profile of Trench 7

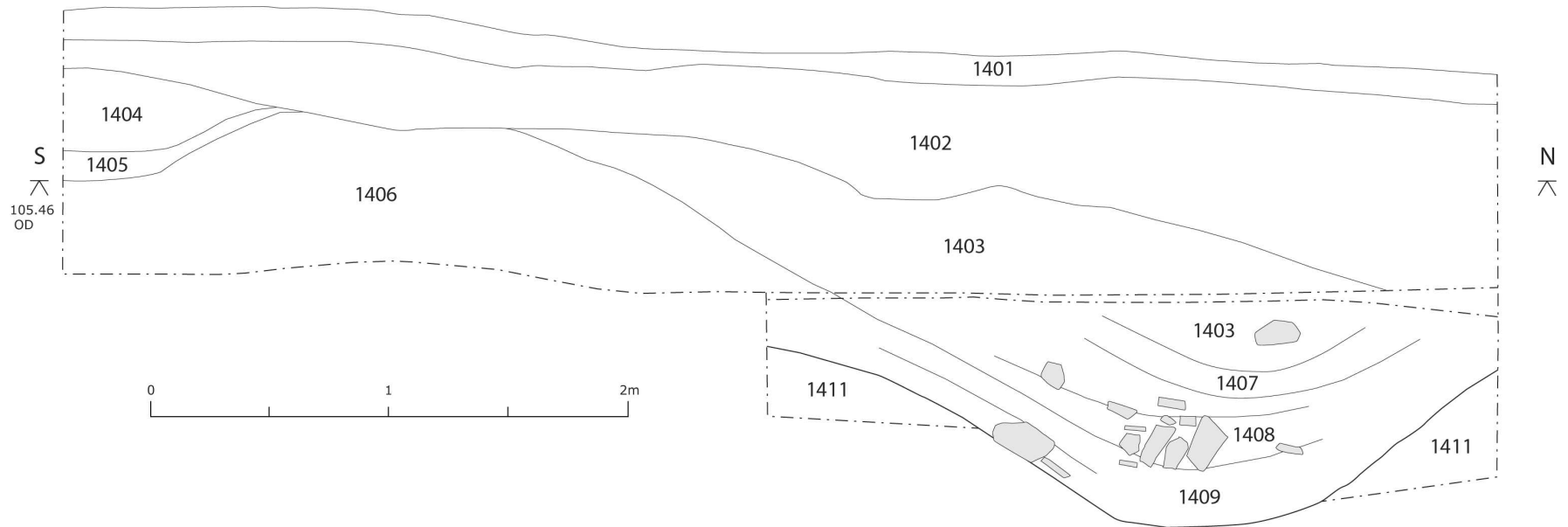


Figure 11. West facing (reversed) profile of Trench 14.

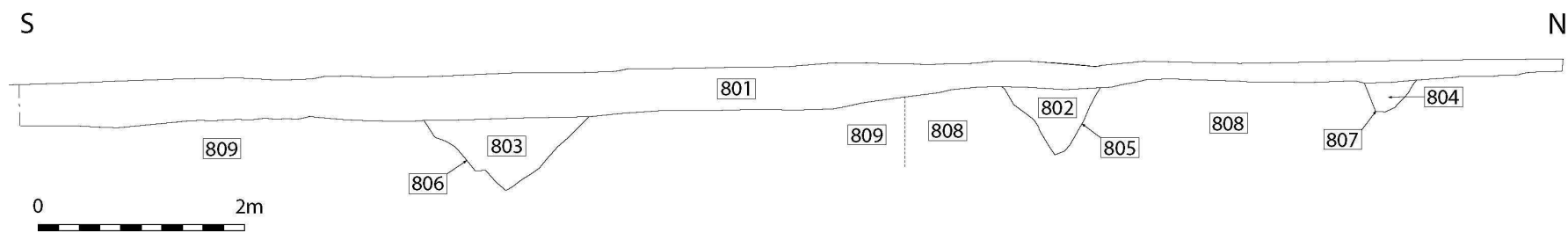


Figure 12. East facing profile of Trench 8

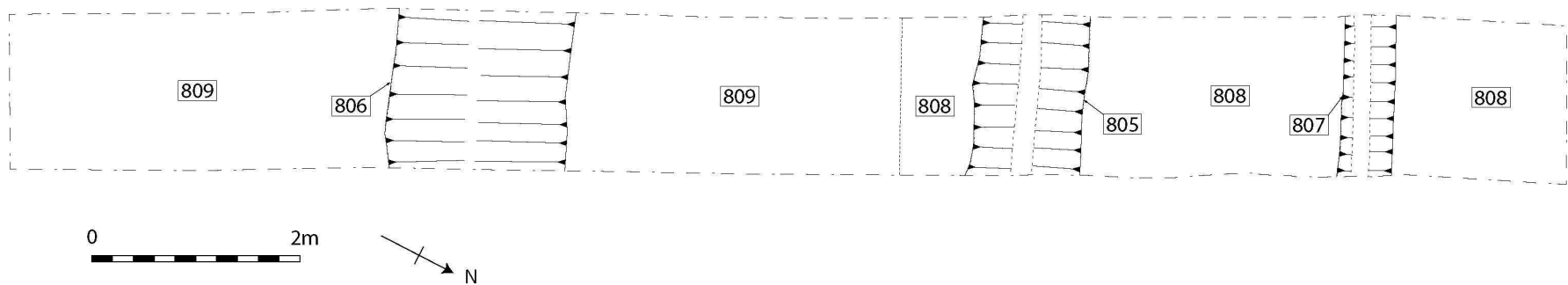


Figure 13. Plan of Trench 8

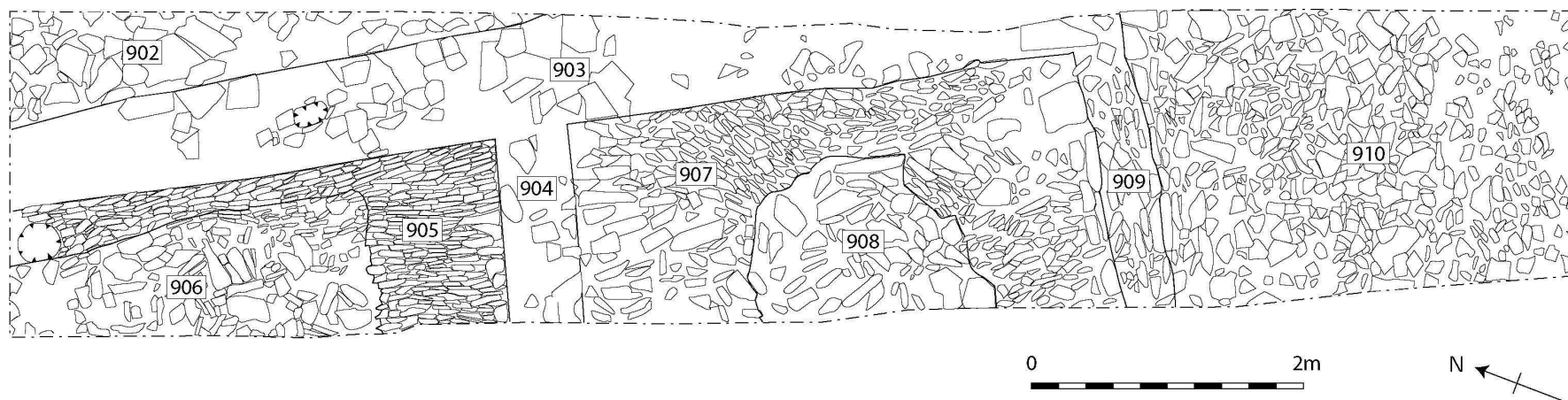


Figure 14. Plan of Trench 9

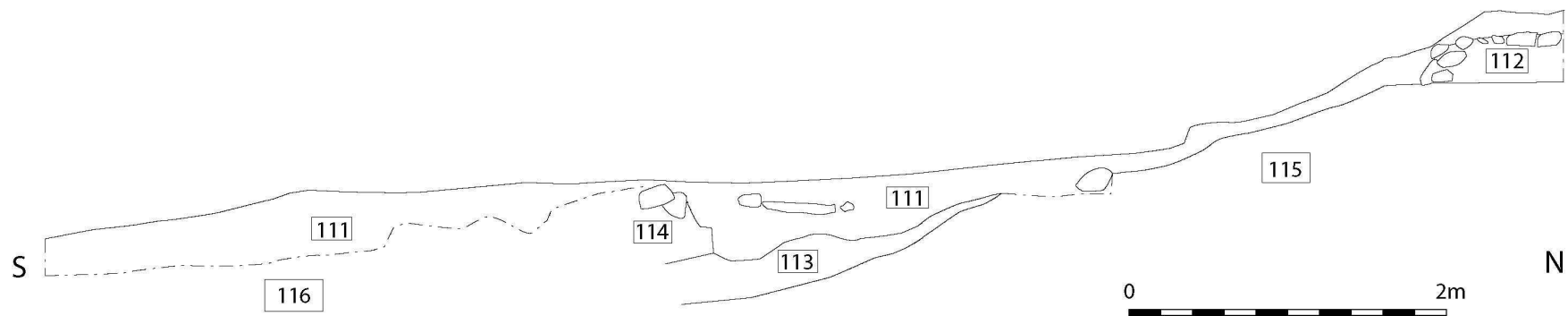


Figure 15. East facing profile of Trench 10

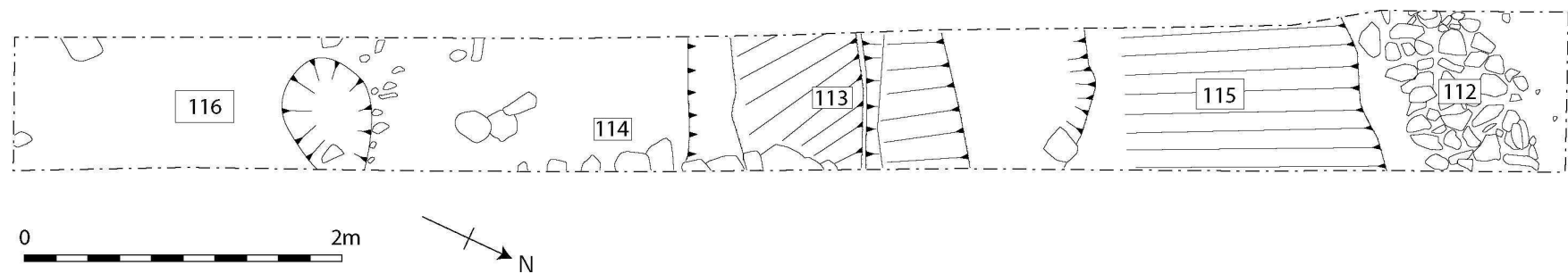


Figure 16. Plan of Trench 10

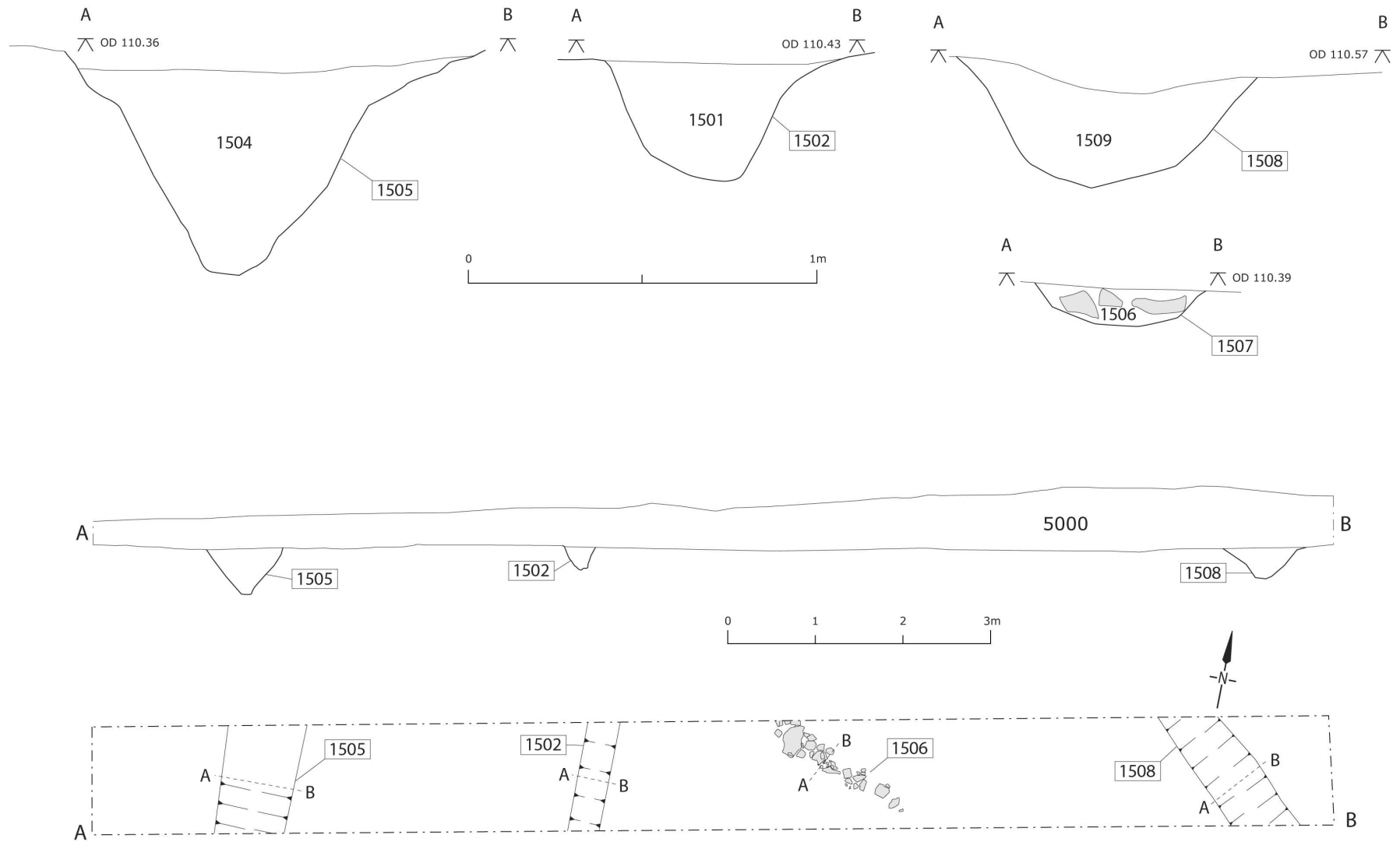


Figure 17. Plan and sections of Trench 15.

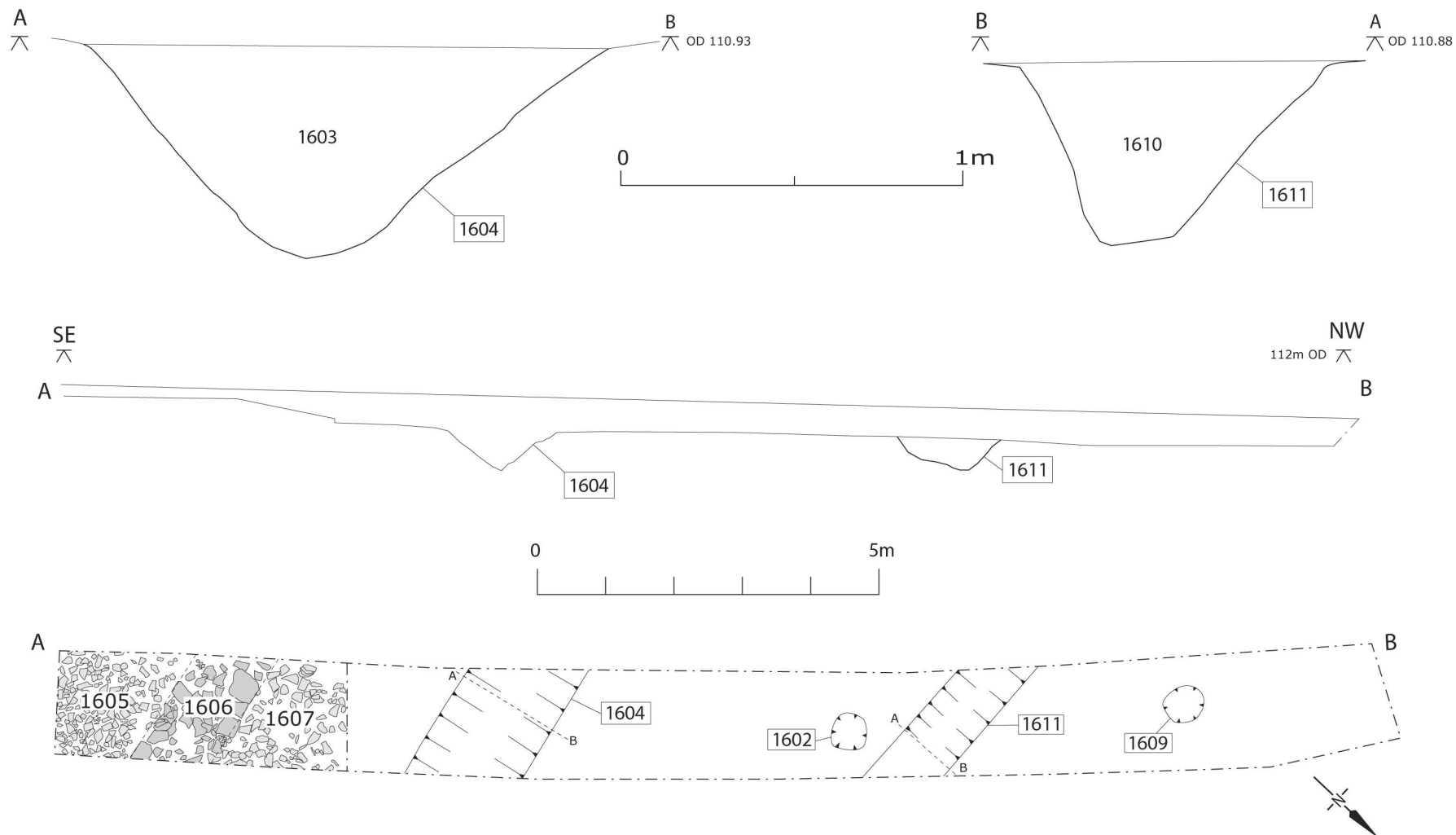


Figure 18. Plan and sections of Trench 16.





**Photo. 1:** Trench 5 looking north showing stone feature 502



**Photo. 2:** Trench 5 looking west showing feature 502



**Photo. 3:** Trench 5 looking west showing detail of facing stones of feature 502





**Photo. 4:** Trench 5 looking south showing section through feature 502



**Photo. 5:** Trench 5 looking south, ditch 510



**Photo. 6:** West end of Trench 5 looking south





**Photo. 7:** Trench 6 looking north



**Photo. 8:** Trench 6 looking north with linear feature 605



**Photo. 9:** Trench 7 looking south



**Photo. 10:** Trench 7 looking southwest. Profile A (fig. 22)





**Photo. 11:** Trench 7 looking west. Profile B (fig. 22)



**Photo. 12.** Trench 14 looking east at the section during recording.



**Photo. 13:** Trench 10 looking south





**Photo. 14:** Trench 10 looking southwest. Feature 114



**Photo. 15:** Trench 10 looking west, showing clay pond lining 113



**Photo. 16:** Trench 8 looking south



**Photo. 17:** Trench 8 looking west. Ditch 805



**Photo. 18:** Trench 8 looking west. Ditch 806





**Photo. 19:** Trench 8 looking west. Ditch 808



**Photo. 20:** Trench 9 looking north





**Photo. 21:** Trench 9 looking east showing 907, 908 and 909



**Photo. 22:** Trench 9 looking west, showing 903, 904, 905 and 906





**Photo. 23.** Trench 15 showing stones 1506. Scale 1m.



**Photo 24.** Trench 15 general view looking east.





**Photo. 25.** General view of Trench 16 showing late wall 1605 and related layers in the foreground. Scale 1. Looking north.





**Photo. 26.** Trench 16 showing wall 1605. Scale 1m.



**Photo. 27.** Trench 16 showing ditch 1604. Looking east. Scale 1m.





**Photo. 28** A site tour during National Archaeology Week 2008.



**Photo. 29.** A site tour during the 2009 excavations.

# **THE NORTH HERONRY DAM, DINEFWR PARK, LLANDEILO, CARMARTHENSHIRE: EXCAVATION OF A ROMAN SITE**

**RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NUMBER 2010/13**

**Tachwedd 2009  
November 2009**

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

Swydd / Position: Trust Director

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith  
This report has been checked and approved by J Meek

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

Swydd / Position: Head of Field Services

Llofnod / Signature ..... Dyddiad / Date

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