

# 15 CASTLE STREET, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SEPTEMBER 2009



**Prepared by:**  
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.  
**For:**  
Mr and Mrs Mackie



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# DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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## 15 CASTLE STREET, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Gan / By

JAMES MEEK

*Paratowyd yr adroddiad yma at ddefnydd y cwsmer yn unig. Ni dderbynnir cyfrifoldeb gan Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf am ei ddefnyddio gan unrhyw berson na phersonau eraill a fydd yn ei ddarllen neu ddibynnu ar y gwybodaeth y mae'n ei gynnwys*

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**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**  
**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL**

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf  
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandeilo, Sir  
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF  
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121  
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131  
Ffacs: 01558 823133  
Ebost: [info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)  
Gwefan: [www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk](http://www.archaeolegdyfed.org.uk)

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited  
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo,  
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF  
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121  
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131  
Fax: 01558 823133  
Email: [info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](mailto:info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)  
Website: [www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)



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## **15 CASTLE STREET, KIDWELLY, CARMARTHENSHIRE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

### **SUMMARY**

*This report has been prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in response to a request from Mr and Mrs Mackie to undertake a pre-determination archaeological evaluation of the potential impacts of a proposed new extension to the dwelling at 15, Castle Street, Kidwelly (Planning application number S/20217; centred at NGR SN 4082 0697).*

*The proposed development site is located to the south-west of Kidwelly Castle within the area of the medieval castle bailey. A number of other medieval sites are known in the vicinity of the development area and due to the potential damaging impacts from the proposed development on underlying archaeological remains, the requirement for a pre-determination evaluation was placed on the planning application, in order to ascertain the presence, date, extent, state of preservation and archaeological significance of any such remains. The results of the evaluation would inform the scope of any further archaeological mitigation that might be required at the site.*

*The proposed extension lay within the garden directly to the east of the property. The site area was small, and there were restrictions to the size of the evaluation. In the end two trenches were excavated, one measuring 2.3m x 1m and the second 1.4m x 1m. An electricity cable was present between the two trenches further restricting the evaluation area.*

*Despite the restrictions both trenches provided positive archaeological results, the first trench included a possible circular rubbish pit of medieval date and a modern linear feature, the second trench containing two possible medieval rubbish pits. The pits contained large quantities of cockleshells, as well as fragments of animal bone and medieval pottery. Such features indicate occupation during the medieval period of the bailey area around Kidwelly Castle. No structural evidence was recovered, perhaps suggesting that the rubbish pits were associated with a property that would have been located on the Castle Street frontage. The site is shown as being unoccupied on the first edition ordnance survey map of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The existing building on the site was constructed in the 1920s.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Commission**

1.1.1 This report has been prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Field Services in response to a request from Mr and Mrs Mackie to provide an archaeological evaluation of the potential impacts of a proposed extension (Planning application number S/20217) at 15 Castle Street, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire (centred at NGR SN 4082 0697; Figure 1 and 4). The outline application is for the construction of a two storey extension on the eastern side of the existing building.

1.1.2 The proposed development site is located to the south-west of Kidwelly Castle, within the area of the medieval walled town. The requirement for a pre-determination evaluation was placed on the application by Dyfed Archaeological Trust Heritage Management in their role as archaeological advisors to Carmarthenshire County Council, to provide more information of the potential effect of the proposed development upon the archaeological resource.

1.1.3 This report was produced as part of the requirement for a pre-determination archaeological evaluation of the site to support the planning application.

### **1.2 Scope of the Project**

1.2.1 The evaluation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the site area, in order that an assessment of the impact from the development proposals on any remains can be determined.

1.2.2 The results of the evaluation will be used to inform the scope of any further archaeological works required as mitigation of the development impacts.

### **1.3 Report Outline**

1.3.1 This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background, summarises the potential impacts of the proposed development before providing a summary and discussion of the archaeological evaluation and its results.

### **1.4 Abbreviations**

1.4.1 Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record<sup>1</sup> (HER) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

### **1.5 Illustrations**

1.5.1 Photographic images are to be found at the back of the report. Printed map extracts are not necessarily reproduced to their original scale.

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<sup>1</sup> Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, The Shire Hall, Llandeilo.



## 2 THE SITE

### 2.1 Location

2.1.1 The proposed development site is located at NGR SN 4082 0697 on the south-eastern side of Castle Street, immediately adjacent to the property of No. 15 Castle Street, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire (Figure 1 and 4).

2.1.2 The development area occupies a broadly rectangular level plot on the north-eastern side of the house, currently used as a garden (lawned and shrub borders). A paved pathway lies along the north-eastern side of the house, a gravel car port lies to the north-west bounded by shrubs, a property boundary wall runs along the north-eastern edge (again bounded by shrubs) and the lawned area to the south-east (Figure 4).

2.1.3 The proposed development is for the construction of a two storey extension to the house. The size of the proposed development area and the constraints around the site were such that only a small amount of archaeological trenching was possible.

### 2.2 Archaeological Background.

2.2.1 The Historic Environment Record records 16 known archaeological sites within a 1km radius of the proposed extension area. These are listed in **Table 1** below.

2.2.2 No archaeological features are known to exist within the proposed development site. However, the site lies within close proximity of Kidwelly Castle (PRN 12832 and 1622; Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) CM002) and a number of other known archaeological sites of importance. The castle is the most easterly of the three major coastal castles of Carmarthenshire (along with Llanstephan and Laugharne) and is sited at the mouth of the Gwendreath river (Avent 1991, p167-188).

2.2.3 The original castle was constructed following the colonisation of the area by Henry I in 1106. It comprised a large earthwork motte (PRN 1621) with timber structures. The castle was later granted to Roger Bishop of Salisbury by Henry I. The reconstruction of the castle in stone commenced in 1275 (Hughes, 1999, 23-24).

2.2.4 The early town (PRN5329) was established close to the castle on its south-western side, but it expanded further to the south-west over time. The growth of the town can be attributed to Flemish settlers who were renowned for their expertise in the cloth trade, the town benefitting from the trade opportunities given by the navigable river and port. Records provide some evidence for an emerging merchant and ship owning industry trading with England and France (Hughes, 1999; p13). The town defences (PRN 1623; SAM CM183B), comprising town walls and town gates on the major roads had been established by the 14<sup>th</sup> century (although an exact date for their construction is not known). The proposed development area lies on Castle Street, which was one of the two main thoroughfares leading from Kidwelly Castle. Castle Street led to the South Gate of the town (PRN7555, SAM CM183A). The site of the medieval fulling mill 'Caldecot Mill' lay to the south of the town on the river floodplain.

2.2.5 In 1403 the Welsh forces of Owain Glyndwr overran the town's defences and set fire to the town. Although Glyndwr's forces destroyed the town they did not manage to breach the castle walls. The town was left in a decayed state after this attack and in 1444 is described as being 'waste and desolate'. Later development appears to have happened in the new town on the south side of the river, whereas the old town failed to be rebuilt (Soulsby, 1983, 152-154). The evaluation site is situated in the old town. Other than the castle, and gatehouse,

the only other medieval building surviving in the town is a dwelling on Bailey street (PRN 8872; SAM CM209A).

2.2.6 A number of post-medieval buildings are present along Castle Street (mostly located on the northern side) including The Old Moat House Restaurant (PRN 61045), Nos. 6-10 (PRN 61047, PRN8188), Castle School and Schoolhouse (PRN 20467, PRN 61046) and Castle Crafts (PRN 8189). These structures represent later development in the old town (most of which are Grade II Listed Buildings). Later chapel sites are also recorded on the HER, which would be of later 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date, including a chapel at the northern end of Bailey Street (PRN 17169) and a chapel located at the northern end of Castle Street which was demolished in the 1960s (PRN 17729).

HER PRN	Site name	Period	Grid Reference
12832	Kidwelly Castle	Medieval	SN 409 070
12943	Caldecot, Castle Mill (Fulling Mill)	Medieval	SN 408 069
1621	Kidwelly Motte	Medieval	SN 4089 0704
1622	Kidwelly Castle, SAM CM002, Grade I Listed Building	Medieval	SN 40897 07049
1623	Kidwelly Town Defences, SAM CM183B	Medieval	SN 4085 0701
17169	Chapel, Bailey Street	Post-medieval	SN 4080 0705
17729	Bethesda Chapel (demolished)	Post-medieval	SN 4085 0700
20467	Castle School	Post-medieval	SN 4076 0697
5329	Kidwelly Medieval Town	Medieval	SN 408 070
61045	The Old Moat House, Grade II Listed Restaurant	Post-medieval	SN 40826 07004
61046	Castle School and School House, Grade II Listed	Post-medieval	SN 40759 06969
61047	No 6, Grade II Listed Shop	Post-medieval	SN 40784 06975
7555	Castle Street Town Gate, SAM CM183A	Medieval	SN 4075 0693
8188	Castle Street nos.6-10, dwellings	Post-medieval	SN 4080 0698
8189	Castle Crafts, building	Post-medieval	SN 4084 0701
8872	Bailey Street, Dwelling, SAM CM209A	Medieval	SN 408 070

**Table 1:** Historic Environment Record data recorded within a 1km radius of the proposed development site

2.2.4 Map evidence demonstrates that in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century the southern side of Castle Street was sparsely occupied, with few structures shown, although plot boundaries are still indicated (from Ordnance Survey 1880s first edition map, Figure 2). It is possible that the plot boundaries relate to earlier property divisions, fossilised following abandonment, presumably remaining in different ownerships and perhaps used as allotments or gardens. 15 Castle Street is indicated as occupying two house plots although no structures are shown in either. The second edition Ordnance Survey map of around 1905 shows no change in the layout of the site area (Figure 3). The existing buildings at the site dates from the 1920s.

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

#### 3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 The original archaeological evaluation strategy was for the excavation of a 2m x 6m long trench across the proposed footprint of the extension. Due to the constraints of the site (as discussed above: boundary walls, paved footpath, proximity of building etc) this was not possible.

3.1.2 An attempt was made to excavate an approximately 3m x 2m trench across the area, but following the discovery of an electricity cable this had to be altered. The archaeological planning advisor from DAT-HM visited the site during the evaluation and confirmed that the constraints justified a significant reduction in the scope of the original trenching scheme. It was also confirmed that the results from the two small evaluation trenches provided enough information regarding the archaeology within the site area to determine the scope of any further archaeological requirements that they make.

3.1.3 The trenches were opened using a mini-excavator fitted with a flat bladed bucket of 1m width. The first trench was excavated in the northern part of the site area and measured 2.3m x 1m (Trench 1) and the second located in the central part of the proposed extension area measuring 1.4m x 1m (Trench 2) (Figures 4 and 5).

3.1.4 All features are shown on the trench plan Figure 5. Layers and fills are demarcated in round brackets (100) and cuts for features are represented with square brackets [103]. A full context and description list is included in Table 4 at the end of the report.

#### 3.2 Results of the Evaluation

##### *Trench 1*

<b>Trench Dimensions:</b> 2.3m x 1m	<b>Area of trench:</b> 2.3 sq m
<b>Ground Level:</b> 11.55m OD (approx)	<b>Machined Level:</b> 10.83m OD (approx)
<b>Figures:</b> 4, 5 and 6	<b>Photos:</b> 1, 2 and 2B
<b>Contexts:</b> (100), (101), (102), [103], (104), [105], (106), [107]	
Aligned north-west to south-east	

**Table 2:** Trench 1 information

3.2.1 Trench 1 was placed on the eastern side of the footprint of the proposed extension. An electricity cable crossed the central part of the site area, forming the south-eastern end of the trench (102), [103] which was covered by electricity warning tape at a depth of approximately 0.50m below ground level. No further investigation of this area of the trench was undertaken.

3.2.2 Topsoil (100) was removed to a depth of around 0.40 – 0.45m depth. A number of sherds of modern pottery, plastic and metal objects were noted within the soil. Earlier finds recovered from the subsoil included fragments of clay pipe stem, bone and a single sherd of green glazed North Devon gravel tempered ware (dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century).

3.2.3 Beneath the topsoil was a compact subsoil containing a large number of cockleshell fragments, of a depth between 0.27 – 0.30m depth (102). No securely located dateable finds were recovered from this layer.

3.2.4 Machining stopped at the base of the subsoil, at the point when a natural clay was exposed along the northern side of the trench. Two archaeological features were visible in the base of the trench, the latest being a probable linear feature, filled with loose soil, very similar to the topsoil (104), [105]. This feature

was considered most likely to be of modern date (tentatively identified as another service trench) and was not investigated further.

3.2.5 The probable linear feature truncated an earlier pit [107], the fill of which (106) contained an abundance of cockleshells. The feature was partially excavated to a depth of 0.33m, which indicated it had very steep edges and slightly curved indicating a possible sub-circular shape for the overall feature, although it extended beyond the edges of the trench. A number of animal bone fragments were recovered from the pit, as were two sherds of green glazed 'Ham Green ware' pottery, dated between the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Trench 2**

<b>Trench Dimensions:</b> 1.4m x 1m	<b>Area of trench:</b> 1.4 sq m
<b>Ground Level:</b> 11.43m OD (approx)	<b>Machined Level:</b> 10.93m OD (approx)
<b>Figures:</b> 4, 5 and 6	<b>Photos:</b> 3, 4, 5 and 5B
<b>Contexts:</b> (100), (101), (108), [109], (110), [111], (112)	
Aligned roughly north to south	

**Table 3:** Trench 2 information

3.3.1 Trench 2 was located in the south-eastern part of the proposed extension area, machined to the route of the electricity cable as revealed in the first Trench 1. The cable was partially revealed and ran along the north-western end of the trench, at which point machining was stopped.

3.3.2 The trenches were immediately adjacent to each other (on opposite sides of the electricity cable) and as such the topsoil and subsoil were given the same numbers as in Trench 1 (100) and (101). The soil description and depth for the topsoil was identical to that within Trench 1 (100). Although the soil descriptions were identical for the subsoil (102), the depth was considerable less within this trench (between 0.06 and 0.10m in depth). No finds were recovered from the topsoil or subsoil of this trench, although modern pottery and other artefacts were again noted in the topsoil. The subsoil again contained numerous fragments of cockle shells.

3.3.3 Machining was stopped at the base of the subsoil, at the point when natural clay was exposed with two features cutting through it.

3.3.4 At the southern end of the trench was a second feature [111], again with a very similar fill to that of [109], containing an abundance of cockle shells. In plan the feature appeared to be part of a sub-circular pit extending beyond the edges of the trench. It was partially excavated to a depth of 0.53m, which revealed it to have very steep sides and a flattish base. The fill contained a large amount of angular stones (which were more frequent at the base). Animal bone was again recovered from the feature as were several sherds of Dyfed Gravel Tempered ware (dated to between the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century, but most commonly 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century). All of the sherds may possibly be from the same large vessel. Two fragments of slate roof tile were also recovered, one of which was a nearly complete but small tile, complete with nail or peg hole. A lower fill containing a more plastic clay fill was present at the base of the feature, although no finds were recovered from this fill.

3.3.5 At the northern end of the trench was a slightly curving feature [109] extending beyond the edges of the trench. The fill of the feature (108) was very similar to (106) within Trench 1 and (110) within Trench 2. Although not excavated, the fill of the feature was notable for containing a considerable quantity of cockle shells.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The archaeological evaluation undertaken within the footprint of the proposed extension at 15 Castle Street, Kidwelly identified a number of archaeological features and deposits.

4.2 The depth of subsoil was greater within Trench 1 than Trench 2, although the topsoil was of similar depth. This may indicate an original slight slope to the north, which over time has levelled out with cultivation activity and soil accumulation.

4.3 The number of cockleshells noted within the subsoil are most likely to represent an accumulation of scattered rubbish (midden material) over the years which have been mixed through the soil with cultivation activity.

4.4 The linear feature noted in Trench 1 contained a loose and friable fill, similar to the topsoil and may represent a service trench. The feature was not excavated further.

4.5 The pit features recorded in the trenches may represent three features, one extending across the northern end of Trench 1 (106) [107]; a pit at the northern end of Trench 2 (108) [109]; and the third pit seen within Trench 2 (110) (112) [111] would appear to be more circular. The two excavated pits both contained similar fills, containing an abundance of cockleshells, fragments of animal bone and medieval pottery. Pit [107] contained 'Ham Green Ware' pottery (from the Bristol area) dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century. The pottery from pit [111] contained a number of large sherds of 'Dyfed Gravel Tempered Ware', considered to most likely date from the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both pits are considered to be rubbish pits. Rubbish pits are typical features found in the rear yards of medieval properties, and the location of these two pits set back from the Castle Street frontage may indicate that a building was present in the medieval period, located on the street front.

4.6 The old town of Kidwelly which lies within the town defences including Castle Street, was attacked by the Welsh forces of Owain Glyndwr in 1403. The old town does not seem to have been rebuilt after this date. The dates of the pottery recovered from the pits suggests that they are associated with a medieval building predating this attack and thus probably of 13<sup>th</sup> century date. No structural evidence was recovered from the evaluation other than a small slate roof tile recovered from pit [111].

4.6 Given the limited nature of the evaluation trench it is considered possible that further archaeological features and deposits are present within the proposed development area, although these are most likely to represent further rubbish pits. The medieval rubbish pits revealed are considered to be of moderate archaeological importance, providing further evidence for occupation of the town during the medieval period. The cockleshells highlight the importance of a readily available food source within the vicinity.

4.7 The lack of evidence for post-medieval activity at the site (excluding the fragment of green glazed 'North Devon Gravel Tempered Ware', would seem to correspond with our understanding of the development of Kidwelly, and abandonment of the original walled town in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Cartographic evidence indicates that the proposed development area was an undeveloped plot until the 1920s when the existing property was constructed.

## **5 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **5.1 Database**

Dyfed Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record.

### **5.2 Map**

Ordnance Survey 1880 1:2500 Carmarthenshire

Ordnance Survey 1905 1:2500 Carmarthenshire

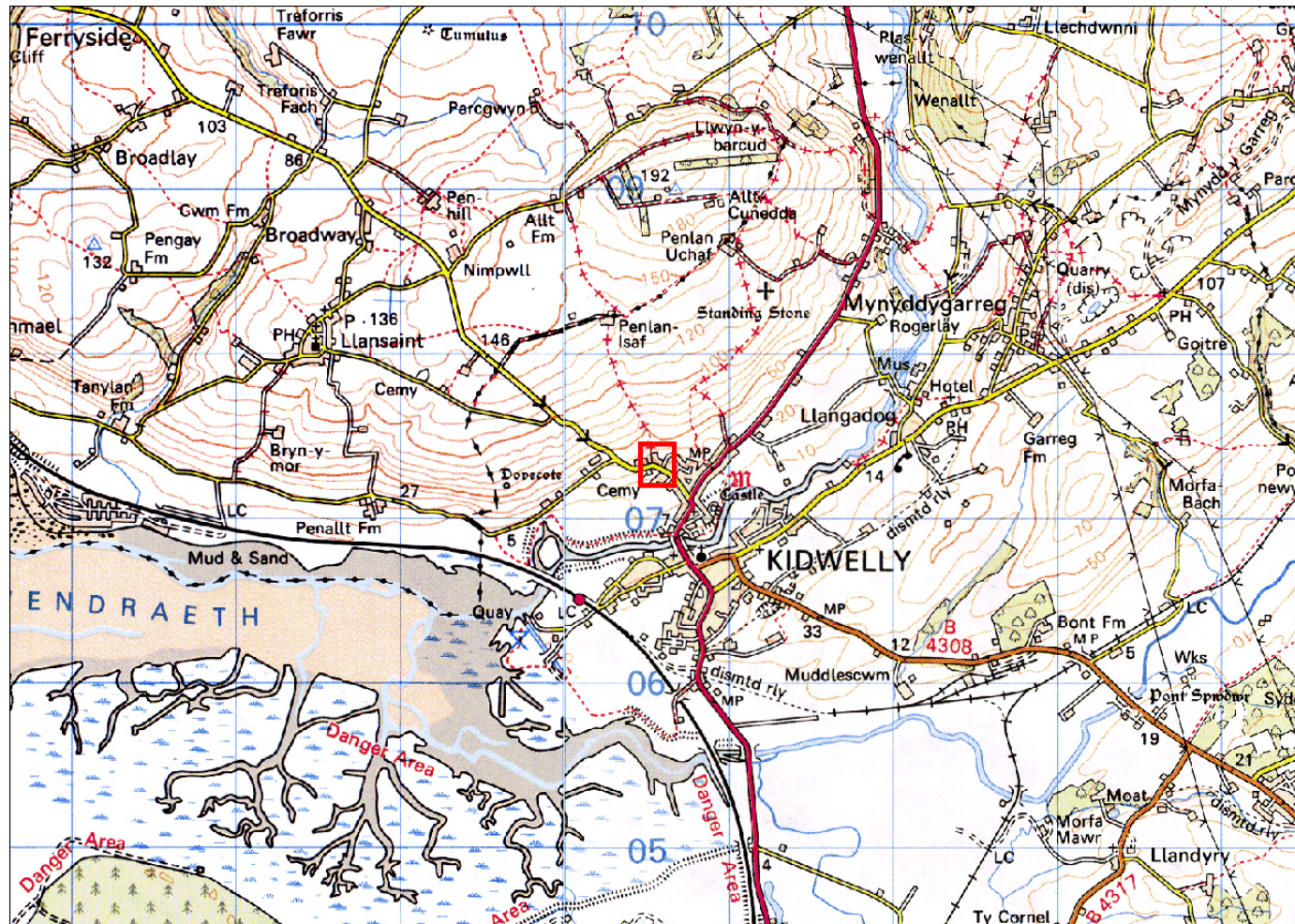
### **5.3 Published**

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**Figure 1:** Location map based on the Ordnance Survey.  
Red boundary centred on 15 Castle Street

Reproduced from the 1987 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: Extract of 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map 1880, showing site area.



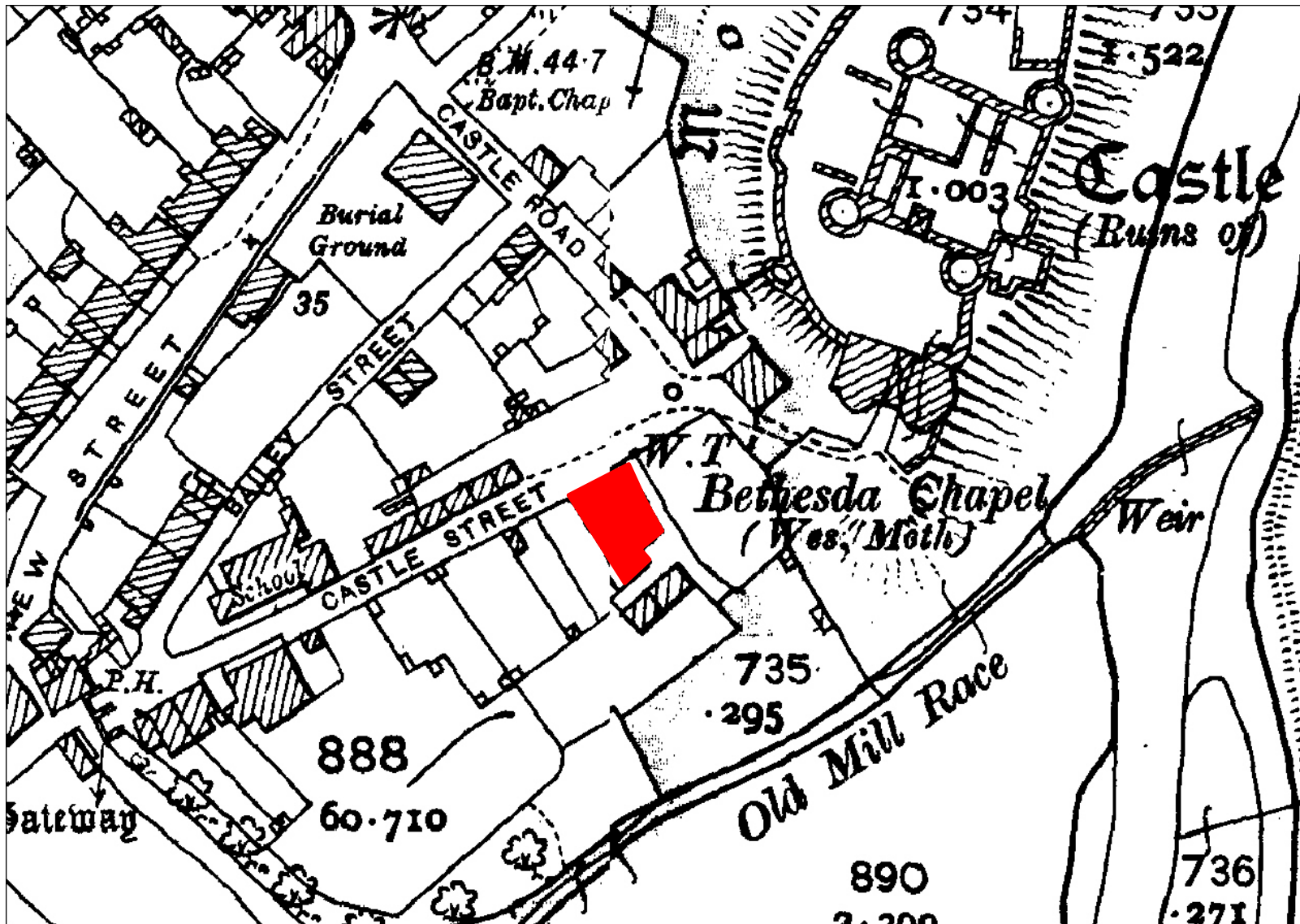
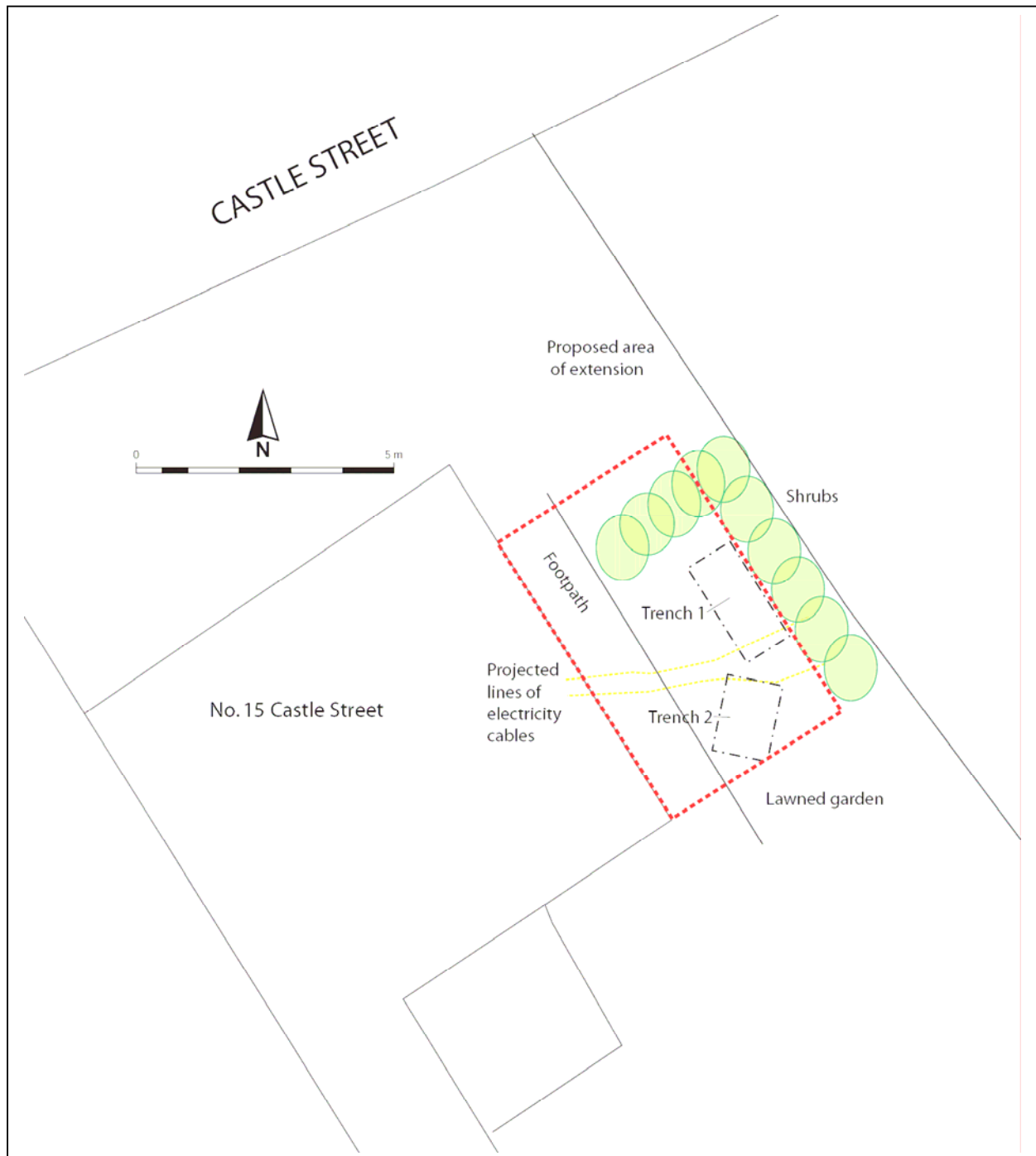
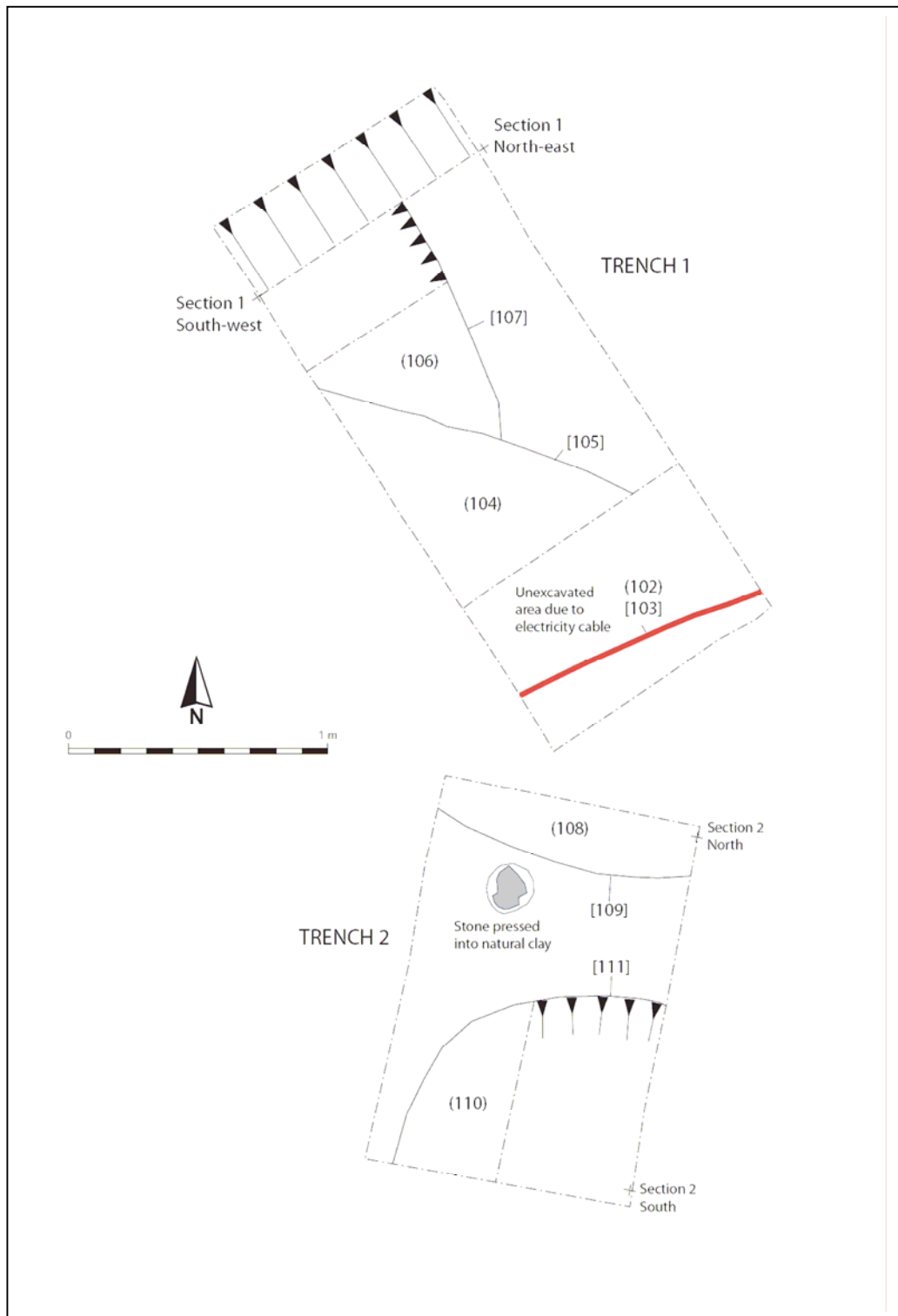


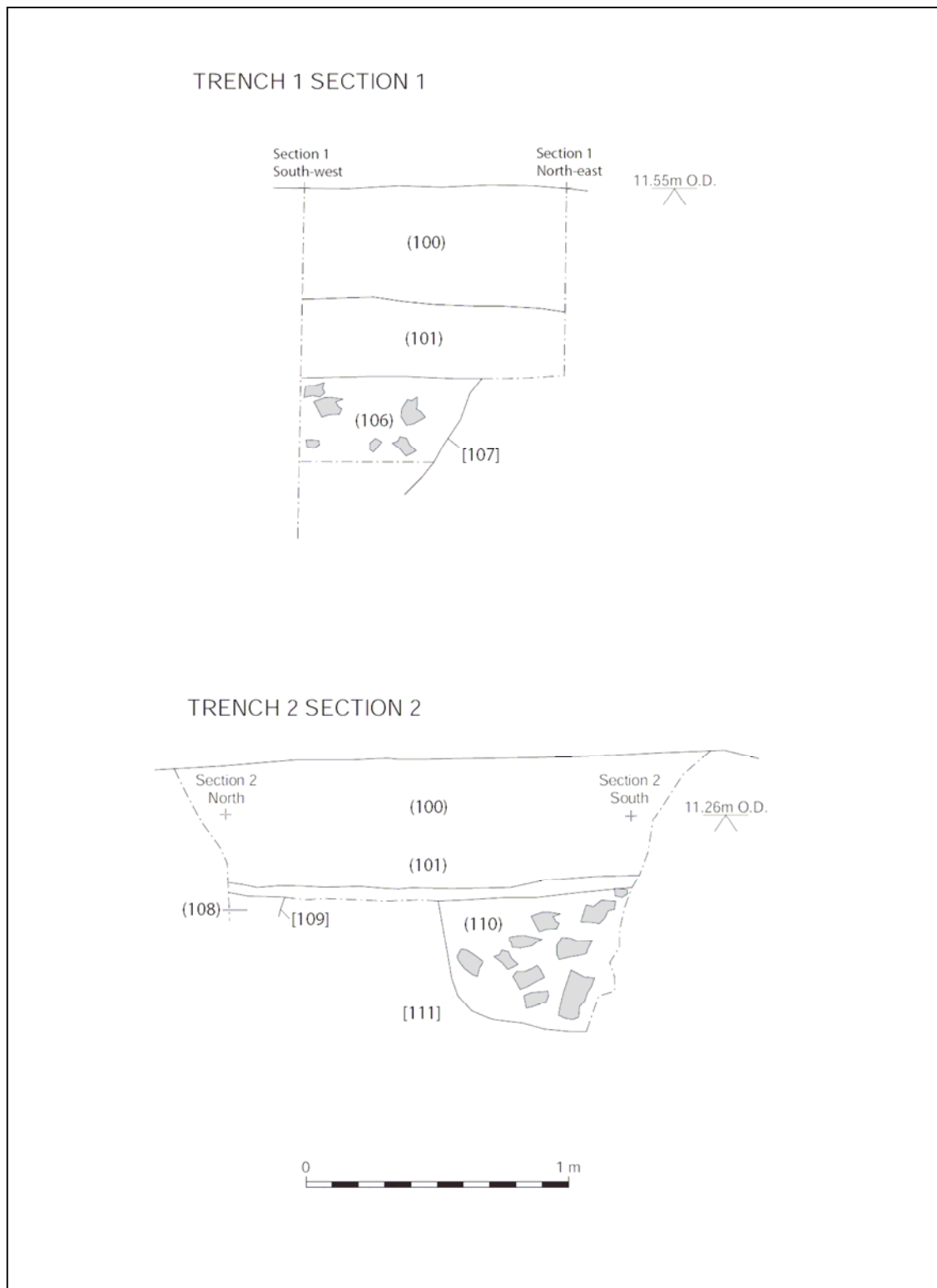
Figure 3: Extract of 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Map 1905, showing site area.



**Figure 4:** Location plan of evaluation trenches.



**Figure 5: Plan of Trenches**



**Figure 6:** Section 1 - Trench 2 and Section 2 - Trench 2



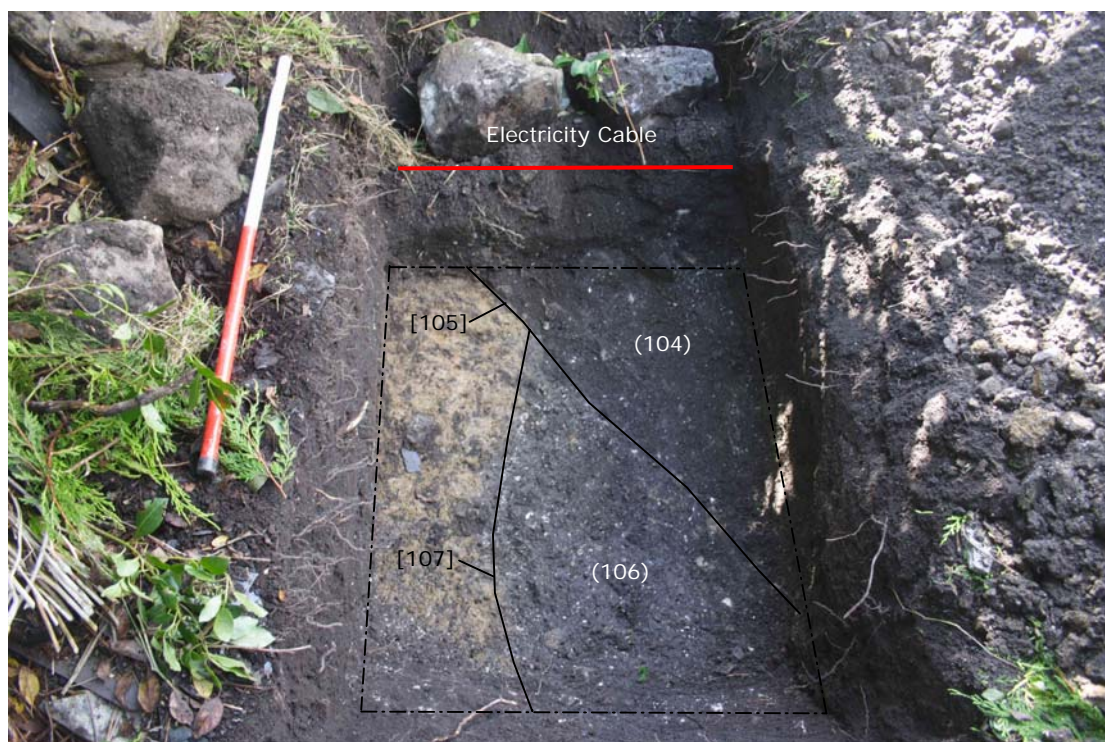


**Photo 1:** Machining of Trench 1, viewing north



**Photo 2:** Base of Trench 1, viewing south-east.  
Electricity cable [103] beneath stones in end section, linear feature [105] crossing trench at an angle, and pit [107] along right hand side of photograph





**Photo 2B:** Interpretative plan: Base of Trench 1, viewing south-east. Electricity cable [103] beneath stones in end section, linear feature [105] crossing trench at an angle, and pit [107] along right hand side of photograph



**Photo 3** Machine excavation of Trench 2, showing castle in background.



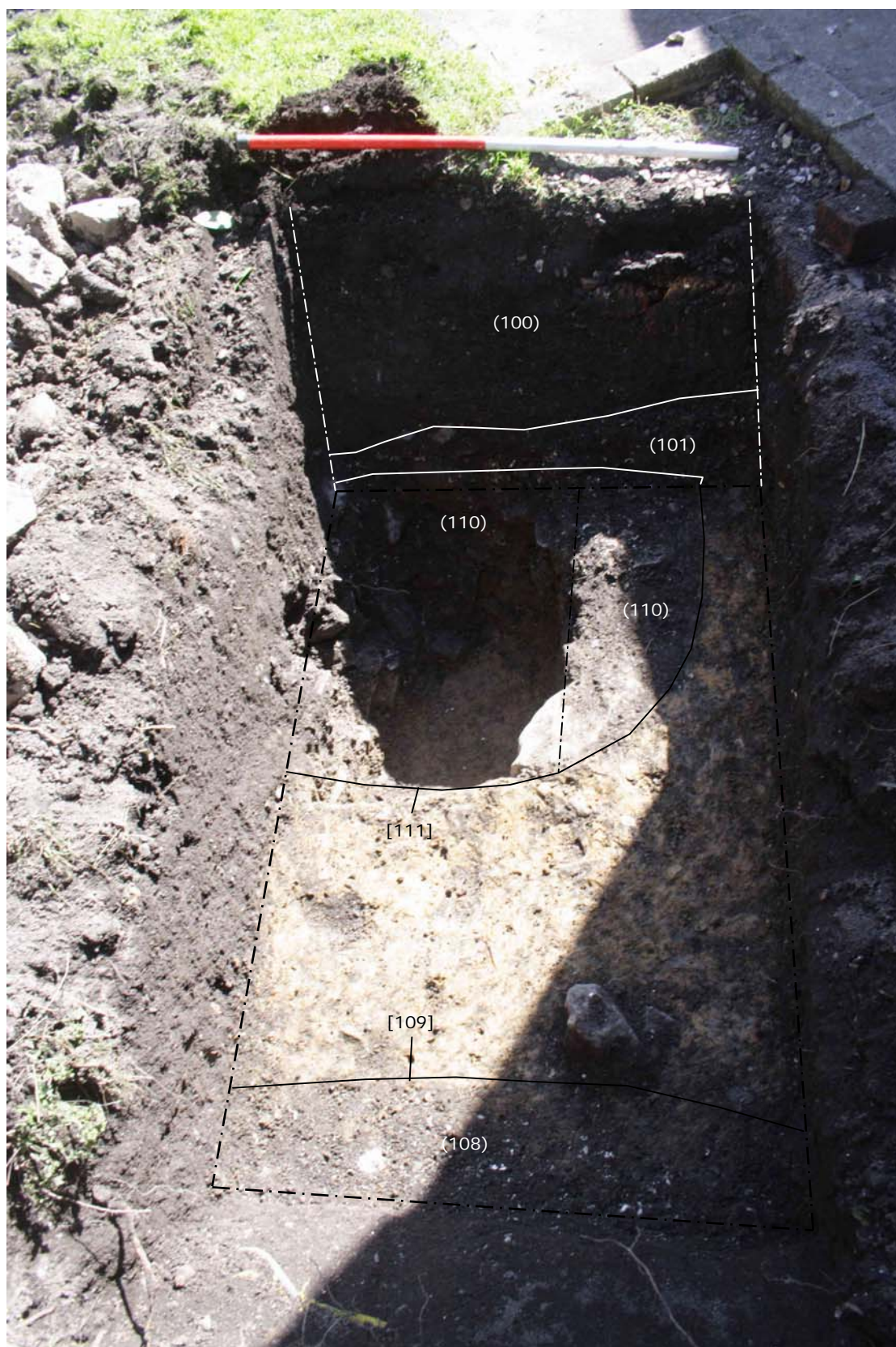
**Photo 4** Trench 2, west facing section. Excavated pit [111] is on right hand side of photograph, pit [109] is on the left hand side





**Photo 5:** Base of Trench 2, viewing south. Partially excavated pit [111] at top of photograph, pit [109] along bottom end of trench





**Photo 5B: Interpretative Plan:** Base of Trench 2, viewing south. Partially excavated pit [111] at top of photograph, pit [109] along bottom end of trench

Context List

Context No	Description
Layer 100	Topsoil: Very dark greyish brown, friable, sand silt clay
Layer 101	Subsoil: Very dark greyish brown, compact, sand silt clay with abundant broken cockleshells
Fill 102	Fill of electricity cable trench [103]: Very dark greyish brown, very loose, sand silt clay with modern debris
Cut [103]	Electricity cable trench cut. Cut continued beneath sides of trench.
Fill (104)	Fill of linear service? trench [105]: Very dark greyish brown, fairly friable clay silt sand containing lumps of redeposited natural clay and broken cockleshells
Cut [105]	Cut of linear service? trench. Unexcavated. Seems to be aligned roughly east to west. Cut continued beneath sides of trench.
Fill (106)	Fill of pit [107]: Dark greyish brown silty clay containing abundant cockleshells and occasional charcoal flecks, some angular stone. Green glazed Ham Green ware and animal bone recovered from fill.
Cut [107]	Cut of pit: Near vertical sides. Not bottomed. Cut continued beneath sides of trench.
Fill (108)	Fill of pit [109]: Dark greyish brown, plastic, silty clay containing abundant cockle shells, occasional charcoal and some angular stones.
Cut [109]	Cut of pit: Possibly sub-circular. Unexcavated. Cut continued beneath sides of trench.
Fill (110)	Fill of linear [111]: Dark greyish brown, silty clay, plastic. Frequent cockleshells, occasional charcoal, common small to large angular stones. Dyfed gravel tempered ware, animal bone and two fragments of roof slate recovered from fill.
Cut [111]	Cut of pit: Sub-circular cut with near vertical sides and concave U shaped base. Cut continued beneath sides of trench.
Fill 112	Fill of pit [111]: Mid greyish brown. Silty clay, very plastic. Contained a number of small sized and medium sized angular stones. Lowest fill of pit.

**Table 4:** Context and soil descriptions.

## 15 Castle Street, Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire: Archaeological Evaluation

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan /  
This report has been prepared by: **James Meek**

Swydd / Position: **Head of Field Services**

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: **Duncan Schlee**

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

Swydd / Position: **Project Manager**

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*