

EXPLORATION TYWI!

LLYS BRYCHAN, BETHLEHEM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2009



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu
Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi
mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development: Europe Investing in
Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Menter Bro Dinefwr



YR YMDDIRIEDOLAETH GENEDLAETHOL
THE NATIONAL TRUST



ymddiriedolaeth archaeolegol
DYFED
archaeological trust

Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For: Tywi Afon Yr Oesoedd

DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2010/24
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 99390

Chwefror 2011
February 2011

EXPLORATION TYWI! LLYS BRYCHAN, BETHLEHEM ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2009

Gan / By

Jim 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

The report has been prepared for the specific use of the client. Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited can accept no responsibility for its use by any other person or persons who may read it or rely on the information it contains.



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
Epost: info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
Gwefan: 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
Website: www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

Cwmni cyfyngedig (1198990) ynghyd ag elusen gofrestredig (504616) yw'r Ymddiriedolaeth. The Trust is both a Limited Company (No. 1198990) and a Registered Charity (No. 504616)

CADEIRYDD CHAIRMAN: C R MUSSON MBE B Arch FSA MIFA. CYFARWYDDWR DIRECTOR: K MURPHY BA MIFA

EXPLORATION TYWI!

LLYS BRYCHAN, BETHLEHEM ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CONTENTS	PAGE
SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	2
Project Commission	2
Scope of the Project	3
Report Outline	3
Abbreviations	3
Illustrations	3
Acknowledgements	3
THE SITE	4
Location	4
Archaeological and Historical Background	5
METHODOLOGY	8
Geophysical Survey	8
Trial Trenching	11
RESULTS	9
Geophysical Survey	9
Trial Trenching	11
CONCLUSION	18
SOURCES	19
 FIGURES	
Figure 1: Location map of Llys Brychan	4
Figure 2: Llys Brychan as shown on the 1 st Edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1891	5
Figure 3: Copy of plan from 1961 excavations, (taken from Jarrett 1962)	7
Figure 4: Geophysical Survey plot	10
Figure 5: Geophysical Survey plot showing interpretation	10
Figure 6: Plan of Llys Brychan Farmhouse showing the overlaid information from the geophysical survey and trench locations	11
Figure 7: Section across enclosure ditch [103] in Trench 1 showing sequence of stratified deposits	12
Figure 8: Plan of Trench 1	13
Figure 9: Plan of Trench 2	15
Figure 10: Section across enclosure ditches [204] and [208] in Trench 2 showing sequence of stratified deposits	15
Figure 11: Plan of Trench 3	17

Photographs

Photo 1:	South-eastern corner of southeast wing of villa from 1961 excavations	20
Photo 2:	Western wall of southeastern wing of villa from 1962 excavations	20
Photo 3:	Surveying grid for geophysical survey, with Llys Brychan farm in background	21
Photo 4:	Trench 1 from south	21
Photo 5:	Section through ditch [103] in Trench 1, east facing section	22
Photo 6:	Metalled surface (108) in Trench 1, from west	22
Photo 7:	Trench 2 from the west	23
Photo 8:	Section through ditch [204] in trench 2, west facing section	23
Photo 9:	Section through ditch [208] in Trench 2, west facing section	24
Photo 10:	Trench 3 from east	24
Photo 11:	Pit [304] in Trench 3, north facing section	25

EXPLORATION TYWI – LLYS BRYCHAN, BETHLEHEM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

The Exploration Tywi! investigations of the Llys Brychan Roman Villa have provided exciting new evidence regarding the layout of the villa and its environs. An initial geophysical survey in the three fields to the north of Llys Brychan farm has demonstrated that the villa is probably of a winged corridor type, with wings to the northeast and southwest. The geophysical survey also demonstrated the presence of a large rectangular enclosure to the north of the villa, comprising single ditches on three sides with a double ditch to the south.

Trench 1 of the investigations confirmed the presence of the northern side of the enclosure. This comprised a V shaped ditch of around 2m width and 0.9m depth. The ditch contained two sherds of Roman black burnished ware pottery. Evidence for an outer bank and trackway beyond was revealed.

Trench 2 targeted the double ditches to the south. This revealed a V shaped outer ditch, similar to that to the north. A possible outer bank was again indicated, and Roman finds were recovered from the fills. The inner ditch was smaller and contained no finds. A metalled surface was also uncovered on the inside of the southeastern corner of the enclosure which may suggest a large stoned surface was present.

Trench 3 was located on the eastern edge of the enclosure and targeted both the ditch and a large anomaly identified on the geophysical survey. The trench revealed a large pit which would have been situated directly over the ditch. The pit contained a large amount of charcoal and a number of large stones, and it is thought that its original function would have been industrial.

The investigations have provided further significant information regarding the Llys Brychan Roman Villa. The work was undertaken with the assistance of local volunteers and their laudable determination and hard work through very poor weather.

INTRODUCTION

Project Commission

As part of the Exploration Tywi! Project Dyfed Archaeological Trust undertook a series of week-long archaeological evaluation excavations on sites of archaeological interest within the project study area. Exploration Tywi! is part of the Tywi a River Through Time Landscape Partnership Project focusing on the middle reaches of the Tywi valley between Llangadog and Dryslwyn; it is a community project set up to investigate how and why the Tywi Valley landscape has changed through time. The four main project partners are Carmarthenshire County Council, the National Trust, the Countryside Council for Wales and Menter Bro Dinefwr. The project has secured £2.4 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Rural Development Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Trust.

In July 2009 Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT), as part of its involvement with the Exploration Tywi! Project, undertook a geophysical survey in fields immediately to the west, north and east of the site of Llys Brychan Roman villa (PRN 4047 at NGR SN 70570 25446) near Bethlehem, Carmarthenshire (Figs.1 and 2). The results of the survey were interpreted as revealing the presence of part of the villa building itself and an associated sub-rectangular enclosure to the east, north and northwest of the modern farmhouse. The enclosure is defined by dark positive linear anomalies on the 'grayscale' plan (see Fig. 4 for extent and location) of the Gradiometer (Fluxgate Magnetometer) results, indicating the probable below-ground presence of ditches. Conversely, the lighter negative rectilinear anomalies representing the Roman villa indicate the probable below-ground presence of wall footings. The survey results show quite clearly the position of the villa (if the linear ditch features are extrapolated to the southwest and north) situated within the southwest corner of the enclosure (see Figs. 4 & 5). The southern side of the enclosure is represented by parallel linear anomalies indicating the probable presence there of a double ditch.

The Roman villa at Llys Brychan and its immediate surroundings are protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. Cm 195). The decision made regarding the present extent of the scheduled area was based on both the results of limited archaeological excavations undertaken in the early 1960s (Jarrett 1961 and 1962) and from observations of parchmarks visible on the ground during the very dry summer of 1976.

Following analysis of the geophysics results a decision was made by DAT to undertake an archaeological evaluation on the site as part of a wider programme of evaluations being carried out by the Exploration Tywi! project. The results of the various archaeological evaluations undertaken by the project would inform decisions regarding which of the sites might be chosen for further archaeological research and excavation as part of the project's future activities.

A greater part of the Roman enclosure identified at Llys Brychan lies outside the scheduled area so Scheduled Monument Consent from Cadw to allow archaeological excavation was not required. Three areas of potential archaeological interest highlighted by the geophysical survey were selected to be investigated by trial trenching.

The landowner at Llys Brychan Farm, Mr. Rhys Dingat Jones, generously agreed to let the evaluation take place over a five-day period in early November 2009.

Scope of the Project

The evaluation has been designed to provide information on the character, extent, date, state of preservation and significance of any surviving archaeological features and deposits within the site area. The results of the evaluation will be used to inform the scope of any future archaeological works that may be proposed for the site.

Report Outline

This report describes the location of the site along with its archaeological background before summarising the evaluation results and the conclusions based on those results.

Abbreviations

Sites recorded on the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER¹) are identified by their Primary Record Number (PRN) and located by their National Grid Reference (NGR).

Illustrations

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

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the numerous local volunteers who carried on digging despite the atrocious weather. Many thanks also to Mr Rhys Jones for his support and enthusiasm. The excavations were supervised by R Ramsey and R Jones of Dyfed Archaeological Trust. The geophysical survey was carried out and interpreted by P Poucher and P Crane of Dyfed Archaeological Trust. H Wilson of Dyfed Archaeological Trust produced the report illustrations.

¹ Held and managed by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Shire Hall, Llandeilo.

THE SITE

Location

Llys Brychan is located c.8km to the east-northeast of Llandeilo, 3km to the south of Llangadog and 1.5km to the east of Bethlehem in Carmarthenshire at NGR SN 70570 25446.

The Roman villa site is presently partially covered by the Llys Brychan farmhouse, with a number of the present farm buildings seemingly situated directly upon and aligned with the underlying Roman structures. The land to the north of the farm is presently divided into three pasture fields, with an access road to the farm along their southern boundary. The ground is relatively flat with outcrops of rock in a few places around the northern parts of the eastern two pasture fields.

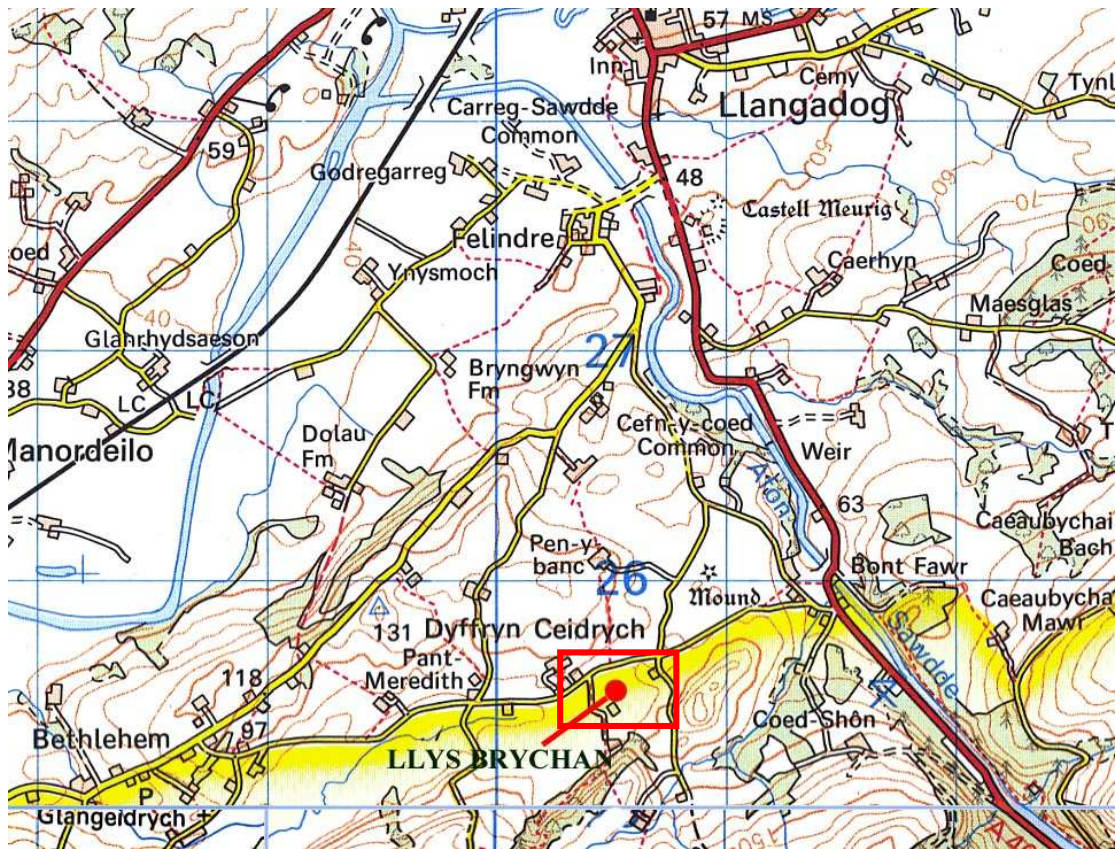


Figure 1: Location Map of Llys Brychan.

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (Ordnance Survey licence number 100023377). (Reproduced from the 1997 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale Landranger Map).

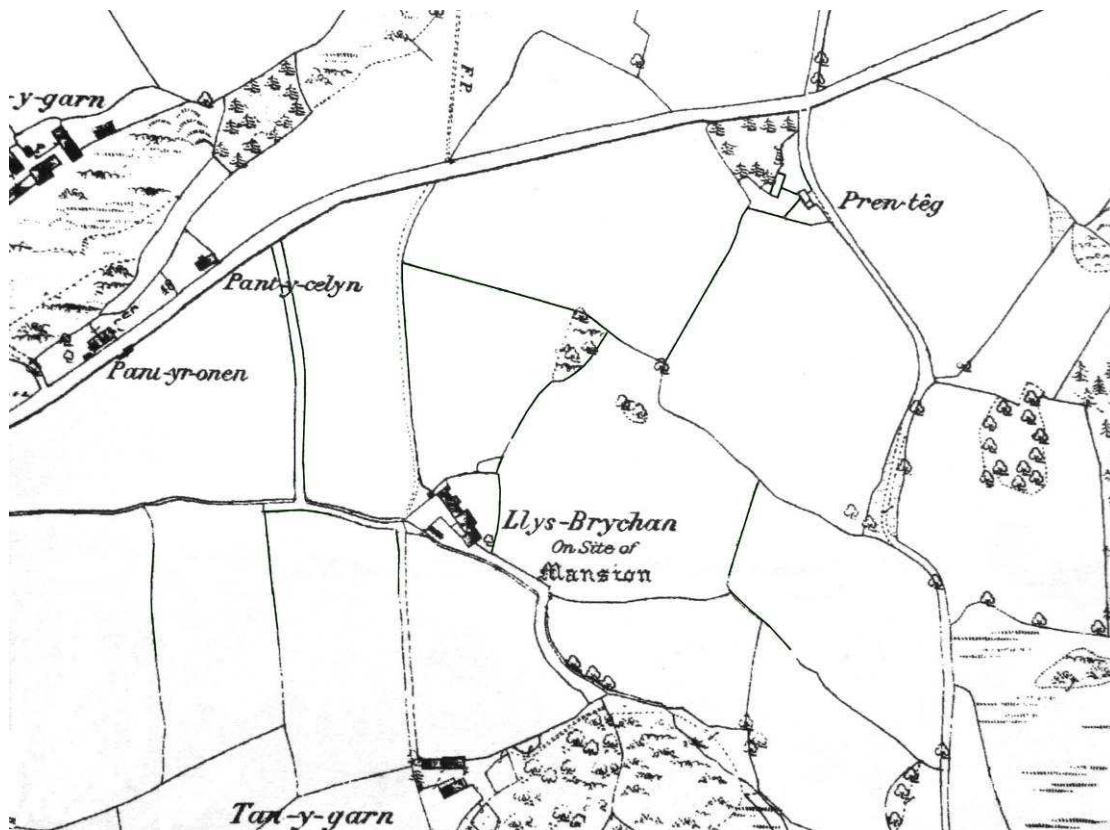


Figure 2: Llys Brychan as shown on the 1st Edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1891

Archaeological and Historical Background

The site of the villa is noted by Fenton in his 'Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire' (1811), in a section written regarding the known Roman presence through West Wales which states:

"A place near Danyralit called Llys Brychan, where nothing appears above ground but a cottage; but on digging a great deal of ancient masonry found, and a stone with a figure of a lamb on it, which appeared to have been cast in soft clay indurated by fire. Perhaps here Brychan Brycheiniog may have had a palace or some occasional residence" (Fenton 1811)

Brychan Brycheiniog is a legendary 5th century king, after which Brecknockshire is named. The suggestion would be that he would have been in power immediately after the Roman occupation of Britain ended (it is considered that the Roman occupation of Wales would have ended earlier). Thus the reference from Fenton (1811) notes the site of the building was substantial and that he considered it was possibly Roman or immediately post-Roman in date. It should be noted that Fenton associated Brychan Brycheiniog with the site due the farm name of 'Llys Brychan'. It is now considered that the name probably indicates only that the site was reoccupied in the medieval period.

On the first edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1891 the Llys Brychan farmhouse is clearly marked. The map also states 'On Site of Mansion', which relates to the site of the underlying villa site. The villa site is not defined as Roman on the map, something which is more typically done on Ordnance Survey maps with well dated sites. This also indicates the uncertainty in the date of the site at this time.

Two seasons of archaeological excavation were undertaken on the site by Professor Michael Jarrett (Department of Archaeology at Cardiff University) in 1961 and 1962 which confirmed that the site was of Roman date. It would seem that following building work at Llys Brychan farm, the walls of the underlying structure were 'rediscovered' and the archaeological excavations were implemented. Unfortunately only the results of the 1961 excavations were published, although not in any great detail and the location of the archive is uncertain (except for a few photographs and the finds). The plan from his article that was published in the Carmarthen Antiquary for the 1961 excavations is reproduced below (Figure 3; Jarrett 1962; Photos 1 & 2). A report on the pottery recovered from the site was prepared by Peter Webster in 2009, which included the following summary of the findings, which is repeated below:

"The 1961 excavations revealed an L-shaped stone building of three, or more likely, four rooms. Of these, Rooms 2-3 (Jarrett 1962, Fig.1 (Figure 3)) and what may be assumed to be a third, un-numbered room only clipped by the excavations, form a single unit and are probably part of a larger structure thought by the excavator to be residential. Confirming this is the character of Rooms 2-3, both of which had a floor of opus signinum, while Room 3 appears to have once been hypocausted. Room 1 appears to have been a later addition but also had a floor of opus signinum. The building in itself is not remarkable but, as the excavator stated, it is unusual to find such a structure so far West. If it is really part of a larger Romanised building, then it must be one of the most westerly villas in the Province, if not the Empire.

"At the time of the report on the 1961 work, Professor Jarrett was unable to offer a date for the Llys Brychan structure. The brief summary of the 1962 work (Journal of Roman Studies, 53 (1963) 125) suggests occupation throughout the third and fourth centuries on the basis of this work. The majority of the finds under discussion here are from the later work. They include painted wall plaster, tile and what may be box-tile. There was also a small quantity of pottery. None of this appears to have been securely stratified. All is recorded as having come from the upper part of the demolition layer of the structure and were presumably recovered from the area examined in 1962. Nevertheless it is a reasonably homogeneous collection and should enable us, with the benefit of over 40 years further work on Roman ceramics, to offer a clearer date for the Llys Brychan building than was possible in 1962.

"Other than (two sherds of earlier) pottery all falls within the third or fourth century A.D. We can probably be a little more precise than this. The Black-burnished bowl styles all appear to be of late third or fourth century type and the BB1 jars mainly fall within this date bracket. There are no vessels in the distinctive calcite gritted ware of South Midlands origin which is characteristic of late occupation on the South Wales coast. However, the collection is small, so arguments from absence are dangerous. Nevertheless, the collection as a whole would fit within the period from the mid/late third to the mid 4th century and it is reasonable to offer this as the date of the remarkable Llys Brychan building."

The site is now designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument CM195, the area covering the known site of the villa and an area around its northern and eastern sides.

The current owner of the site, Mr Rhys Jones has noted parch marks in the soils during hot summers (notably 1976) which have indicated the layout of underlying walls associated with the villa.

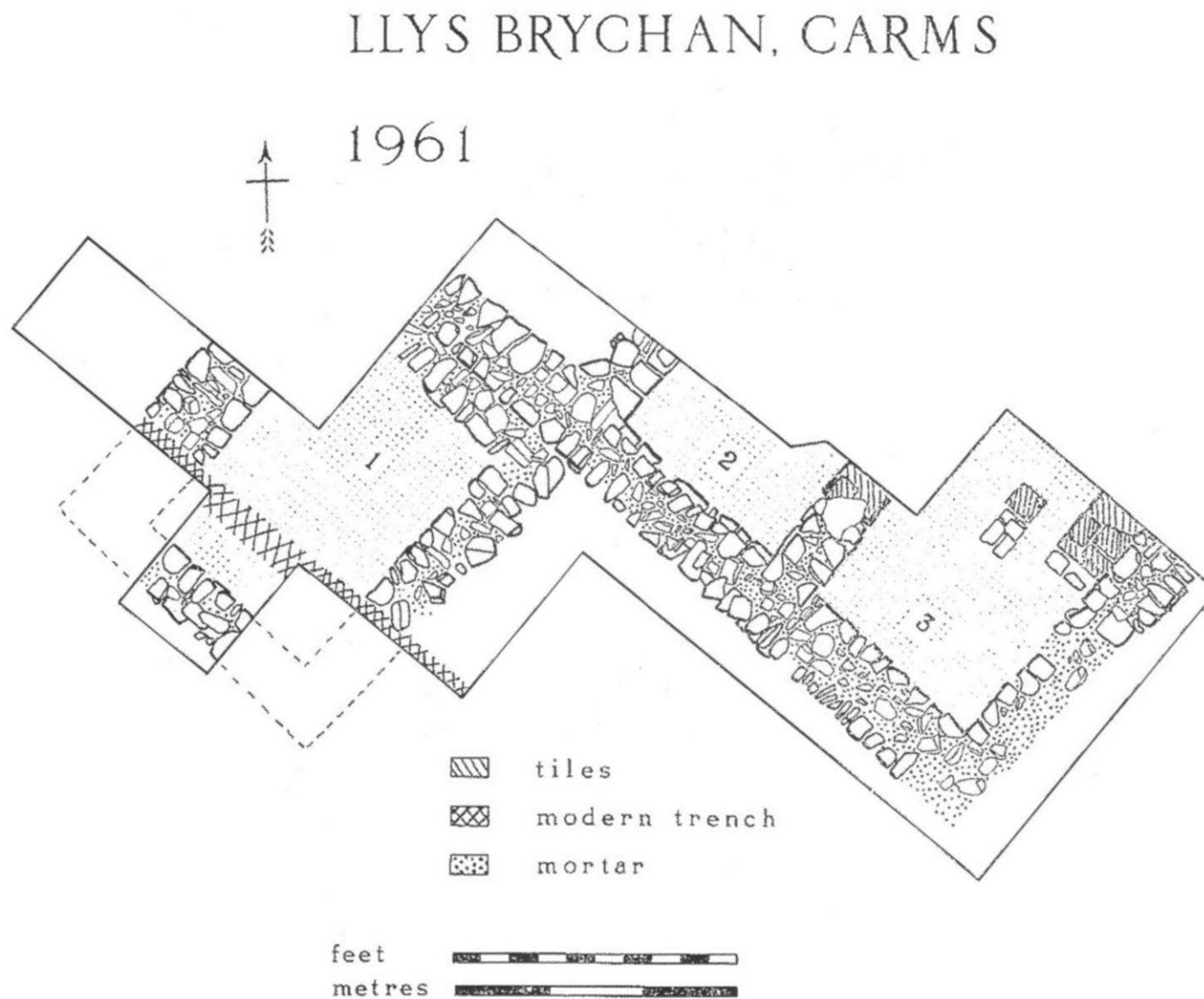


Figure 3: Copy of plan from 1961 excavations, rotated with north to the top of the page (taken from Jarrett 1962)

METHODOLOGY

Geophysical Survey

A geophysical survey of the site area was undertaken in late summer 2009 as part of the Exploration Tywi! project by Dyfed Archaeological Trust with the assistance of a number of volunteers (Photo 3). The survey was carried out within the three pasture fields to the north of the farmhouse, including an area within the scheduled area, following permission from Cadw (Figure 3 and 4).

The survey was undertaken using a fluxgate magnetometer (gradiometer). This detects variations in the earth's magnetic field. Readings were taken on traverses 1m wide and every 0.25m within a 20m x 20m grid across the survey area. Processing was performed using *ArchaeoSurveyor 2*. The data is presented with a minimum of processing, but the presence of high values caused by underground services, large ferrous objects and wire fencing tends to hide fine details and obscure archaeological features, thus the values were 'clipped' to a range from 15nT to -15nT to remove the extreme values allowing the finer details to show through. During the survey various processes such as changes to instrument set-up, instrument drift, variations in orientation amongst others cause directional effects that are inherent to magnetometers that can produce 'striping' in the processed data, thus much of the survey was 'destriped'.

Trial Trenching

A total of three trenches of varying sizes were machine excavated within the two of the pasture fields to the north of the farmstead using a 1 ton 360° tracked mini-digger with a toothless grading bucket (Figure 2). In all trenches the turf and topsoil were removed by machine down to either the top of exposed archaeological features or to the top of the natural subsoil. The trenches were positioned to investigate anomalies identified on the geophysical survey.

Where archaeological features or deposits were revealed they were cleaned by hand, photographed, drawn to scale and then either wholly excavated or test excavated to establish as far as possible their date, character, state of preservation and significance. During excavation all revealed deposits and features were photographed, recorded and allocated their own individual context number. After excavation all features were planned at 1:20 scale and, where relevant, sections were recorded to a scale of either 1:10 or 1:20.

RESULTS

Geophysical Survey (Figures 4, 5 & 6)

The survey revealed a variety of features across the area surveyed with a few very strong magnetic readings which created some confusion to the results which hid some of the finer detail. These were mostly evident along the boundaries to hedges and also around the farmhouse.

A linear series of dipolar readings are recorded, these consist of positive anomalies (darker shades) with associated negative responses (lighter shades), was revealed to the northwest of the farmhouse aligned north-northwest to south-southeast. This represents a modern service trench, probably electricity leading towards Llys Brychan farmhouse.

A number of darker shaded features with no adjoining negative responses were noted within the surveyed area, including a number of linear features, where the gradiometer readings were entirely positive in polarity. Such readings are often indicative of infilled cut features such as pits and ditches. The most obvious features included a rectangular enclosure surrounding the villa site. Parts of all four sides of the enclosure were visible, comprising a single ditch aligned north-northwest to south-southeast to the northwest; a roughly east to west aligned single ditch to the north; a further north-northwest to south-southeast ditch to the northeast; and a double ditch aligned northeast to southwest directly to the northeast of the farmhouse. A further possible ditch is seen curving to the northwest of the enclosure. A few discrete features are also noted on the plot, which may represent pits. On the eastern side of the enclosure (close to the southern end of the north-northwest to south-southeast aligned stretch) are two large pit like features seemingly located on the alignment of the ditches. A further strong geophysical survey anomaly is recorded on the northern side of the enclosure, which indicates a metal object.

Of great interest were a series of lighter linear anomalies directly to the north of the farmhouse, with the lighter readings representing negative responses as would be expected where wall lines might be present. The responses indicate the northeastern half of the Roman Villa. When looked at with the results of the 1961 excavations, it suggests that the villa was of winged corridor form. The 1961 excavations revealed the southwestern part of the villa, comprising the northwest to southeast aligned wing of at least three rooms. On the plan of 1961 (Figure 3) it is possible to see the remains of a possible fourth room in the northern corner of the excavations and this would appear to correspond with the northeast to southwest aligned 'corridor' part of the villa, which is clearly shown on the geophysical survey plots (Figures 4, 5 & 6). The geophysical survey plots also show a mirror image of this excavated wing on the northeastern side comprising at least three rooms.



Figure 4: Geophysical Survey plot

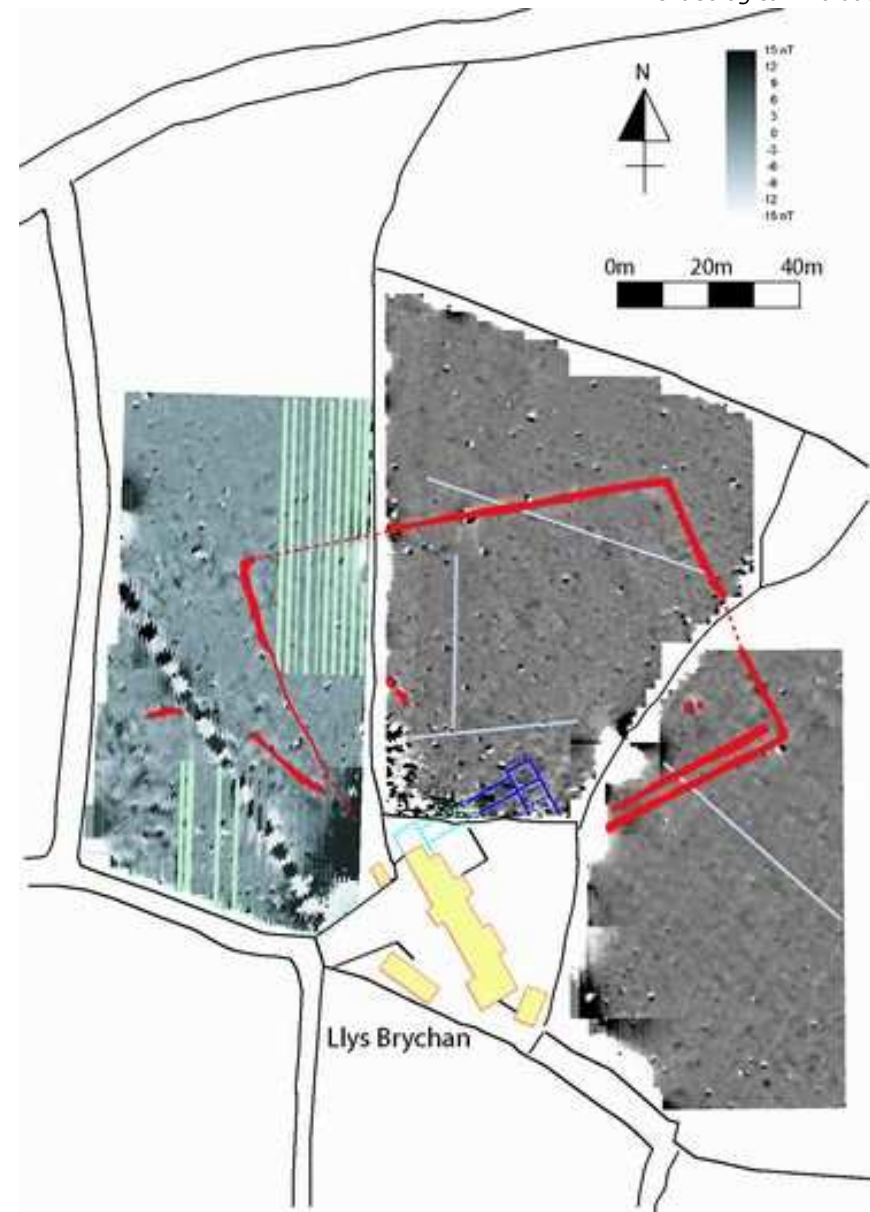


Figure 5: Geophysical Survey plot showing interpretation

Trial Trenching

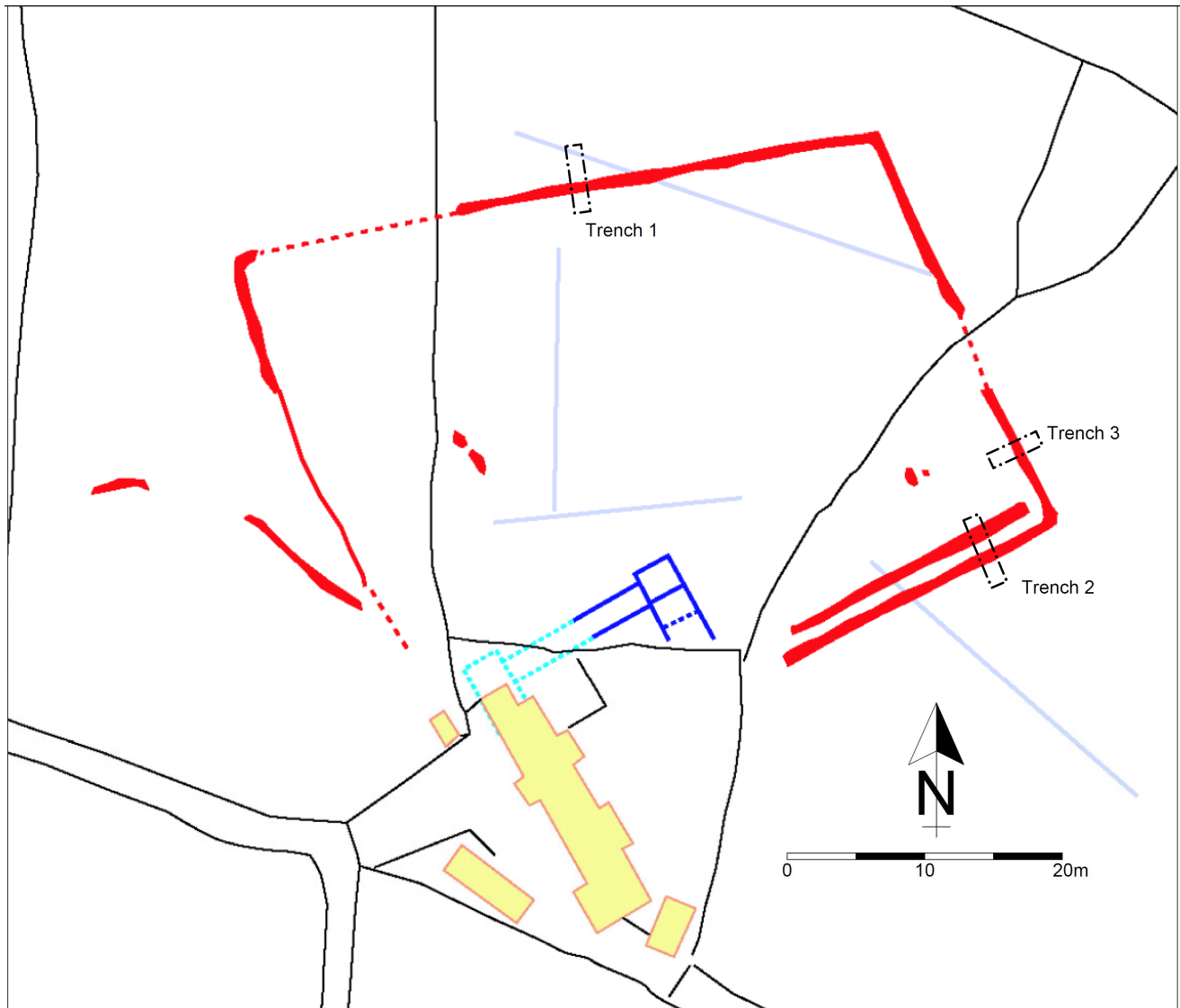


Figure 6: Plan of Llys Brychan Farmhouse showing the overlaid information from the geophysical survey and trench locations

Trench 1 (Figure 6, 7 & 8)

Trench 1 was 10m long by 1.9m wide (Photo 4), and was positioned to cross approximately halfway along the linear anomaly that represents the northern side of the villa enclosure. The location was chosen specifically to investigate the character of the linear anomaly indicating the line of the enclosure ditch and also to target the strong anomaly recorded on the geophysical survey plot.

During the machine removal of the topsoil (context 101) an approximately 1m long metal electric-fence post was unearthed lying just below the surface in the same location as the strong geophysical survey anomaly. This modern metal post was the cause of the anomaly.

The trench confirmed the presence of the northernmost enclosure ditch cut [103], some 0.5m below the present ground surface and cut into the stiff underlying

natural clays (113) (Photo 5). The feature was approximately 0.9m in depth. The ditch was 2m wide, aligned E-W, and its profile was generally 'V'-shaped and cut to an angle of around 45° with the northern, outer, side being slightly less steep. The ditch sections showed four distinct fills within the ditch (Photo 5). The way they were stratified suggests they were deposited into the ditch over a short period of time suggesting purposeful backfilling as opposed to a gradual silting up (where the layers would more likely follow the contours of the ditch cut, and contain more overlapping layers). Two sherds of Roman black burnished ware pottery were retrieved from one of the middle soil fills (105). The upper soil fill (104) contained numerous stones on the northern edge of the ditch that may represent bank material that had been thrown back in the ditch from the northern side or possibly represent the remains of a post-Roman boundary respecting the line of the former ditch. A soil sample was taken from the lowest fill of the ditch (107) for possible analysis at a later date.

Some 4m to the north of the enclosure ditch a possible 1.25m wide metalled linear path or track was revealed at a depth of 0.18m below the present ground surface at the base of the topsoil (Photo 6). This feature was aligned NE-SW and was seen to overlie a soil layer that sealed the upper fill of the Roman enclosure ditch, and thus suggesting that it is post-Roman, but, as yet, of unknown date.

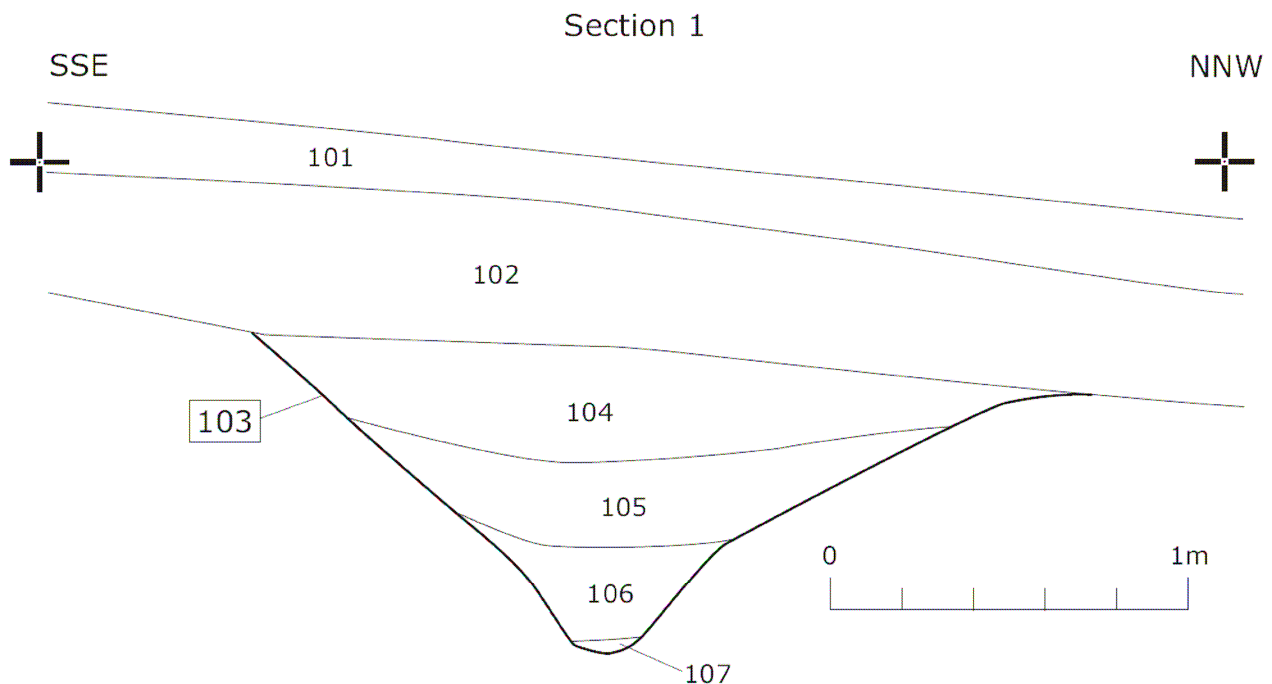


Figure 7: Section across enclosure ditch [103] in Trench 1 showing sequence of stratified deposits

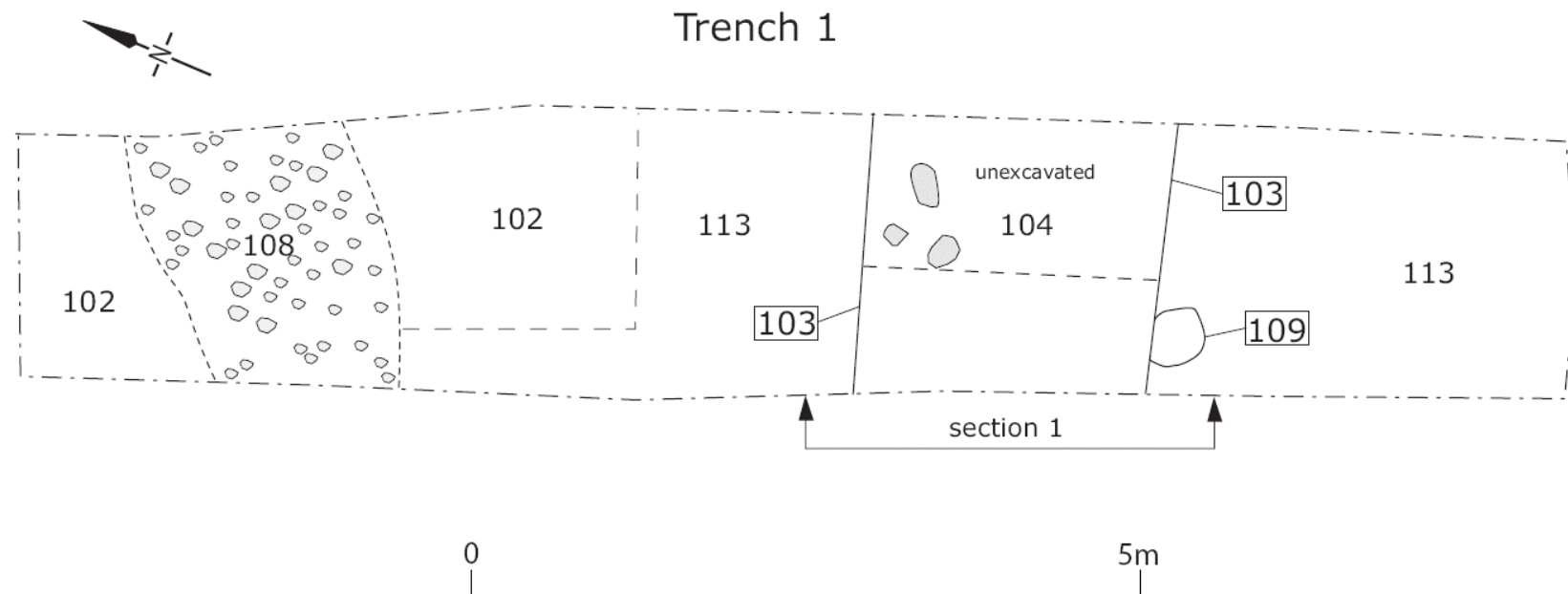


Figure 8: Plan of Trench 1

Towards the northern end of the trench, some 4m to the north of the enclosure ditch, a second spread of compacted stone was revealed (Photo 6). This layer lay at an average depth of c.0.18m below the present ground surface, was c.1.25m in width consisting of a spread of small and medium size sub-rounded stones (108). The feature appeared to be linear, projecting either side of the trench, and possibly aligned northeast to southwest. In profile this feature exhibited a definite camber, clearly suggesting it was a path or trackway. It survived in a good state of preservation. A 0.5m sondage was excavated beyond its southern edge which revealed that the surface was constructed on the surface of layer 102 and was c.0.10m in depth. No drainage channels or gully cuts were apparent on either side of the feature, as might be expected from a Roman road.

No other archaeological features were revealed within the trench, although it is possible further features survive below layer 102.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located on the southern side of the enclosure, to target the parallel double enclosure ditches (Photo 7). The presence of the two ditches were confirmed, evident at a depth of 0.3m beneath the present ground surface. The ditches were cut into the underlying natural clays. The outer (southern) ditch [204] was 1.8m wide and with a V-shaped profile (Photo 8). The sides were approximately at a 45° angle, with a maximum depth of 0.7m. The fills of the ditch appeared to indicate that it was purposefully backfilled, with no indication of gradual silting (similar to [103] in Trench 1). The lower fill (207) contained around 70% large and medium size stones. One abraded sherd of Samian pottery and two mortarium fragments were recovered from the middle soil fill (206), both types of pottery of Roman date. At the southern edge of the ditch, large angular stones were present protruding from the upper fill (205), as was the case in ditch [103] in Trench 1. This would again suggest either a former bank was present on the outside of the enclosure ditch or that a later boundary was created which followed the former enclosure ditch.

The inner ditch [208] was revealed 2.45m to the north of the outer ditch (Photo 9). It was smaller at only 1m width and 0.5m depth. The ditch was more steeply cut into the natural clays than [204] and had a 'U'-shaped profile. The ditch fills (209, 210 and 221) exhibited a similar quality to those of the outer ditch, but with far less stone content. No stones indicating a possible former bank was present in the upper fill (209).

Machine removal of the deposits immediately to the north of the inner ditch revealed a continuous layer of small stones (212) overlying the top of the natural clays and projecting beyond the edges of the excavation trench to the west, north and east. This stony layer appeared to represent a metalled surface, perhaps that of a courtyard or working platform within the southeast corner of the enclosure.

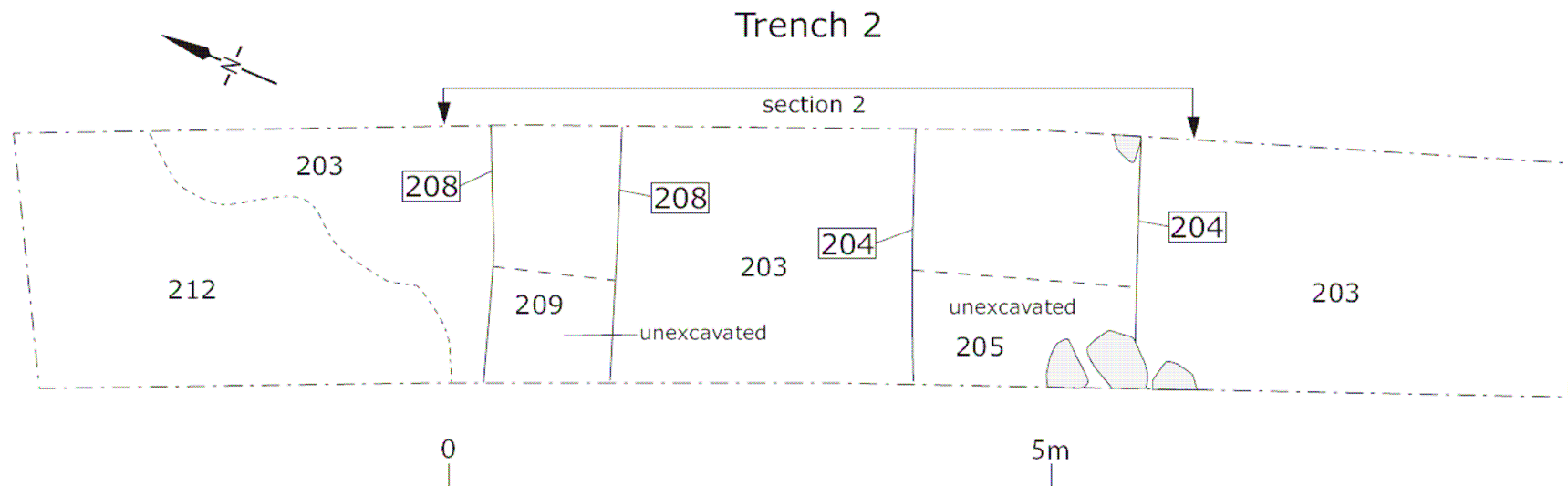


Figure 9: Plan of Trench 2

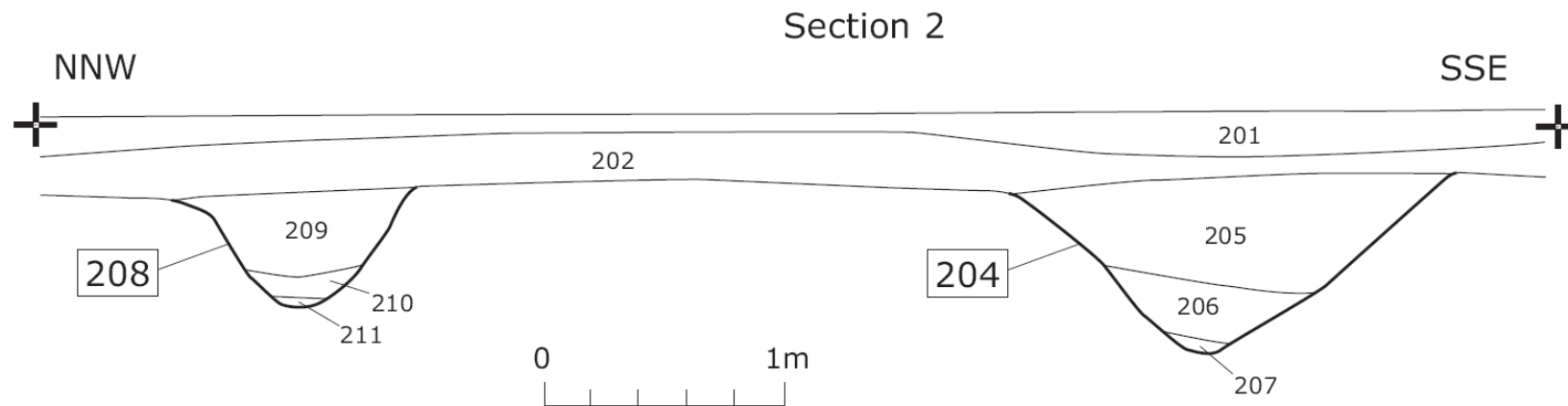


Figure 10: Section across enclosure ditches [204] and [208] in Trench 2 showing sequence of stratified deposits

Trench 3

This trench was located to examine one of two geophysical anomalies situated on the line of the eastern enclosure ditch towards its southern end, close to the southeast corner of the enclosure (Photo 10).

The topsoil (301) on this sloping part of the site averaged only 0.13m deep and overlay a stiff yellowish brown silty sandy clay natural (302). An ovoid feature [304], with its long axis aligned northeast to southwest and measuring 5.1m, was revealed cut into the natural (Photo 11). The feature's apparently shorter axis projected beyond both sides of the excavation trench. Due to poor weather and time constraints only partial excavation of this feature was possible. A 0.8m wide sondage was excavated against the northwest section of the trench which revealed what appeared to be a large pit with steeply cut sides. The feature was not bottomed, although it did begin to level out at about 0.6m depth. The pit contained a uniform fill (303), comprising 70% large, medium and small angular stones within a very dark brown, nearly black, charcoal rich friable silty sandy clay fill. Most of the stones were randomly deposited in the pit, but several appeared to be coursed and clay bonded (305) as if structurally lining the pit (Photos). The feature would appear to represent industrial activity. It was not possible to determine the relationship between the pit and underlying enclosure ditch in this area; further excavation would be required to address this question. A soil sample was collected from the fill of the pit for possible future analysis.

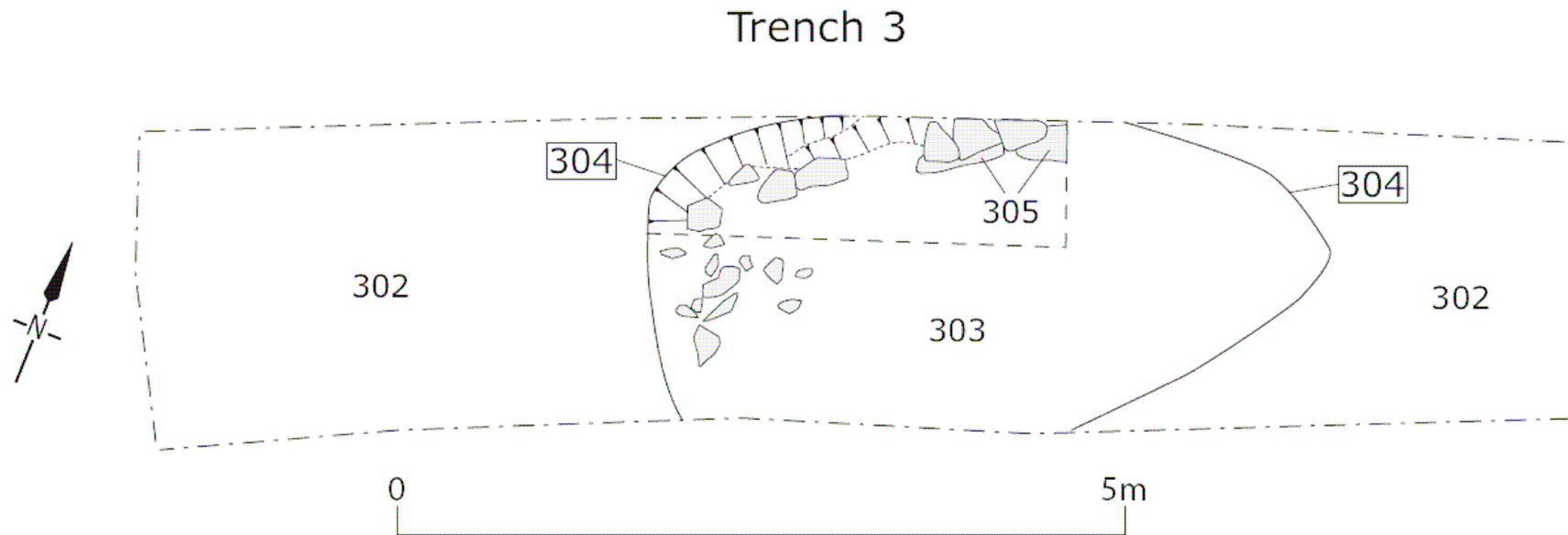


Figure 11: Plan of Trench 3

CONCLUSIONS

The Roman Villa site of Llys Brychan has been known about since at least the early part of the 19th century when Fenton mentioned the site in his Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire (Fenton 1811). At this stage a possible early medieval date was postulated for the building. By the later 19th century the site is recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey as 'mansion', again acknowledging the existence of the site, but not ascribing a Roman date to it. Following building works around 1960, the site was rediscovered and two series of archaeological investigation were undertaken by Professor Jarrett from Cardiff University. These excavations confirmed the Roman date for the building, and identified a structure of at least three rooms. Unfortunately the location of the archive for the investigations is unknown, although a small report was published in the Carmarthen Antiquary in 1962 regarding the 1961 excavations. A recent report has been prepared on the pottery assemblage collected from the site which has indicated that the villa would date from the mid/late third to the mid 4th century AD. The site is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The work undertaken as part of the Exploration Tywi! Project has enabled further research into the villa site and its environs. An initial geophysical survey in the three fields to the north of Llys Brychan farm has demonstrated that the villa would appear to be of a winged corridor type, with wings to the northeast and southwest (the southwestern wing being subject to the previous archaeological investigations). The geophysical survey also demonstrated the presence of a large rectangular enclosure to the north of the villa, comprising single ditches on all sides, other than the southern side where two parallel ditches are present.

The three trial trenches targeted the enclosure ditches, the villa site itself being protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The northern side of the enclosure comprised a V shaped ditch of around 2m width and 0.9m depth. The ditch contained two sherds of Roman black burnished ware pottery. Evidence suggests that a bank containing stone may have been present on its outer (northern) side. A trackway on the other side of the possible bank is also indicated.

A section through the southern parallel ditches was also excavated, which indicated a V shaped outer ditch, similar to that to the north. Indications of an outer (southern) bank was identified. Two sherds of Roman mortaria and a single sherd of Roman Samian ware were recovered from the ditch. The inner ditch was smaller and contained no finds. A metalised surface was uncovered on the inside of the enclosure in this area which suggested a large stoned surface was present, perhaps associated with a working area or possible courtyard.

The trench targeting the eastern side of the enclosure ditch revealed no ditch, although this is more likely due to poor weather conditions and time constraints on the excavations, as opposed to it not being present. The trench did reveal a large pit which would have been situated directly over the ditch. The pit contained a large amount of charcoal and a number of large stones. A probable industrial function is ascribed to the feature, although the exact function is unclear.

The geophysical survey has provided a clear indication of its layout and size, measuring some 35m in length and just under 5m width for the central corridor. The two wings are of around 5.5m width and are at least 15m in length. The survey and trial trench investigations have demonstrated the presence of a large rectangular enclosure of Roman date on the northern side of the Roman Villa. The investigations have also proved very successful in identifying that the enclosure may have had an outer bank, with a trackway running along its northern edge. The southeastern corner of the inside of the enclosure appears to be surfaced with stone. A large pit indicating industrial activity of uncertain date was also located on the eastern side of the enclosure.

SOURCES

Fenton, R., 1811, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire*

Jarrett, M. G., 1962, 'Excavations at Llys Brychan, Llangadog, 1961', *Carmarthen Antiquary*, **4**, 2-8.

Unpublished

Webster, P., 2009, 'Draft Roman Pottery from Llys Brychan, Llangadog', unpublished

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: South-eastern corner of southeast wing of villa from 1961 excavations
(taken from Jarrett 1962)

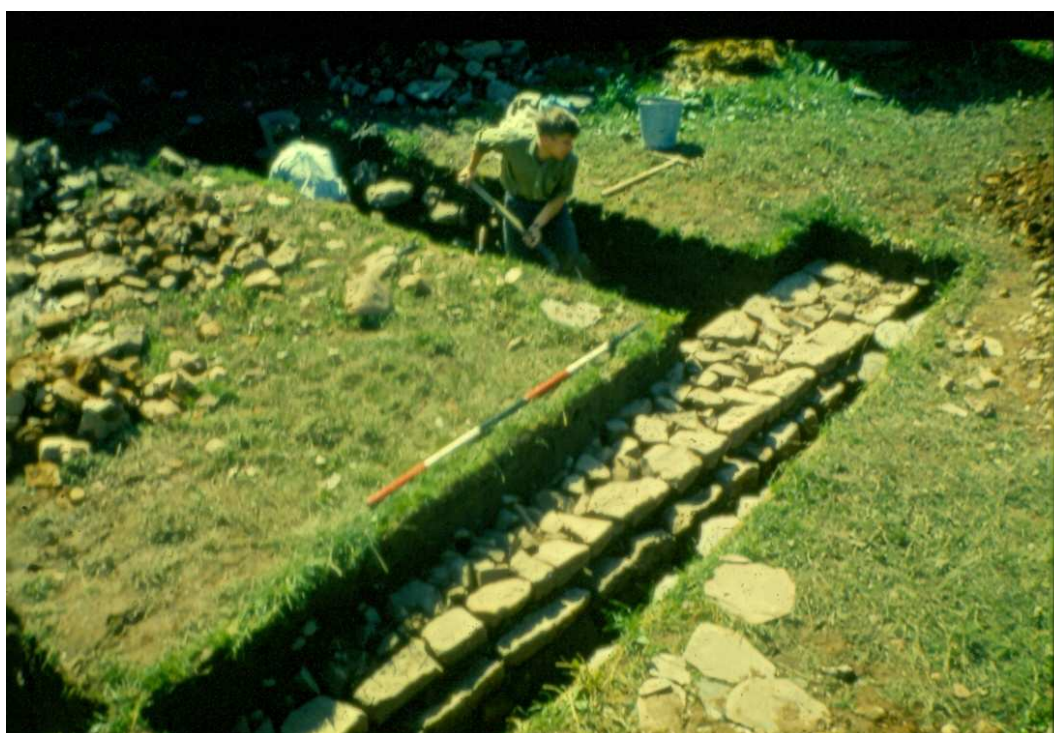


Photo 2: Western wall of southeastern wing of villa from 1962 excavations
(taken from Jarrett 1962)



Photo 3: Surveying grid for geophysical survey,
with Llys Brychan farm in background



Photo 4: Trench 1 from south

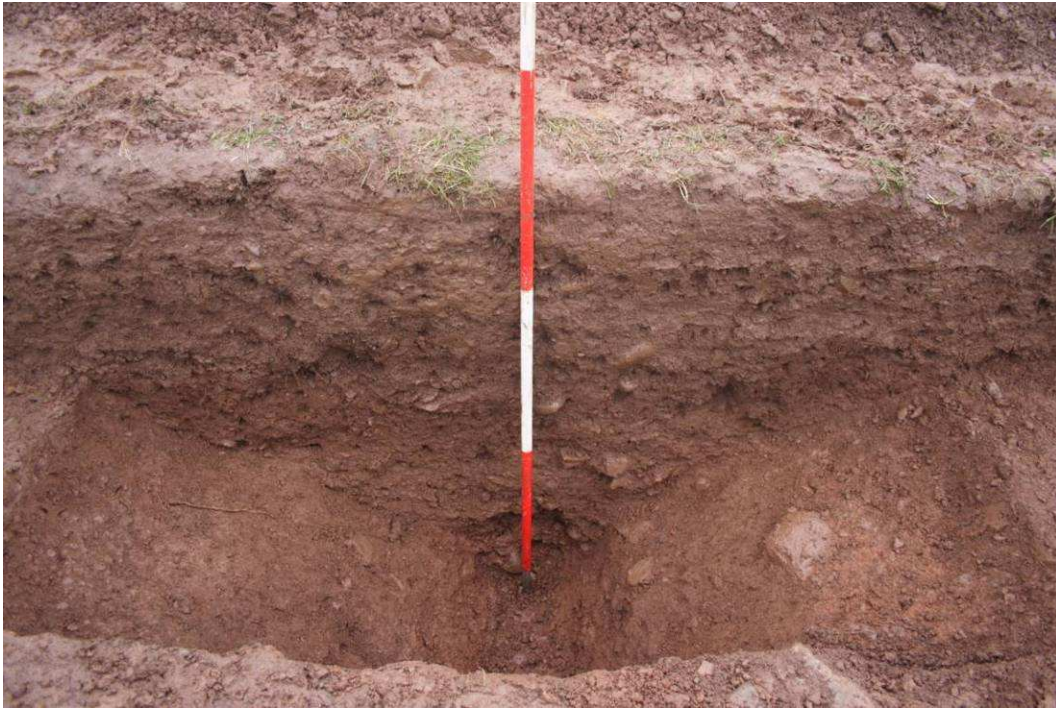


Photo 5: Section through ditch [103] in Trench 1, east facing section



Photo 6: Metalled surface (108) in Trench 1, from west



Photo 7: Trench 2 from the west



Photo 8: Section through ditch [204] in trench 2, west facing section

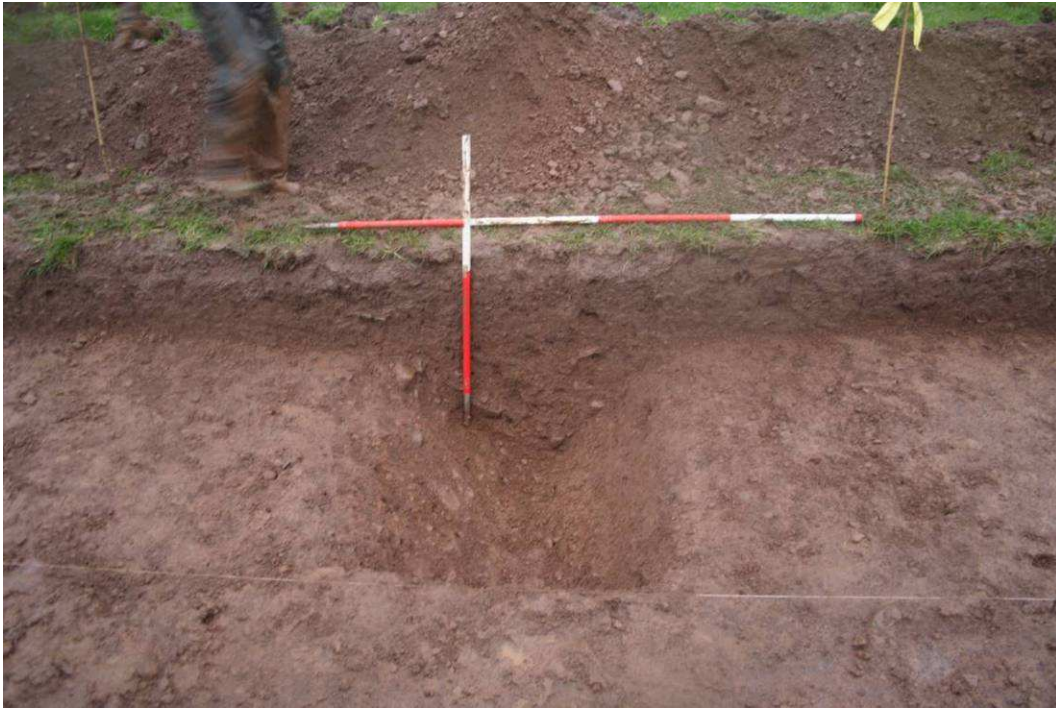


Photo 9: Section through ditch [208] in Trench 2, west facing section



Photo 10: Trench 3 from east



Photo 11: Pit [304] in Trench 3, north facing section

EXPLORATION TYWI! LLYS BRYCHAN, BETHLEHEM ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 2009

RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2010/24
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 99390

Chwefror 2011
February 2011

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

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

Llofnod / Signature  Dyddiad / Date 15/02/2011

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 15/02/2011

*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*