

Archaeology Wales

Llysonen Road, Johnstown, Carmarthenshire

Archaeological Field Evaluation



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Report No. 1332



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Summary

Archaeology Wales were commissioned by The Environmental Design Partnership on behalf of Persimmon Homes West Wales to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Llys Onen, Johnstown, Carmarthenshire. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Archaeology Wales (Archaeology Wales 2015) and approved by Dyfed Archaeological Trust (Planning Services). The fieldwork was undertaken in February 2015.

No archaeological features, structures, or deposits were revealed during the evaluation. A single fragment of post-medieval pottery and a fragment of nineteenth century clay pipe stem were recovered from the subsoil in trench 1.

All work was undertaken in accordance with Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (ClfA 2011).

1. Introduction

Persimmon Homes West Wales has received planning consent for the construction of 117 homes and associated infrastructure on land to the north of Llysonen Road, Johnstown, Carmarthenshire. One of the conditions placed upon the planning consent called for the implementation of an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to be produced and agreed to by the archaeological advisors to Carmarthenshire County Council (Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Planning Services). The WSI was written by Archaeology Wales (henceforth – AW) and approved by Dyfed Archaeological Trust – Planning Services (henceforth DAT-PS).

AW were commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (henceforth - EDP) on behalf of Persimmon Homes West Wales to undertake the archaeological evaluation and the results of the work form the basis of the current report.

AW is an organisation registered with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA). All work conforms to the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2011) and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Artefact and Environmental Collection, Documentation Conservation and Research* (ClfA 2011).

2. Site Description: Location, Topography, Geology

The development area measures approximately 3.2 ha and is currently under pasture. It is located at the western end of the village of Johnstown and situated to the rear of the disused cattle breeding centre located at NGR 238533 219452 and at a height of 30mOD (Figure 1).

The underlying geology is known to consist of Teragraptus Beds of mudstone with superficial glaciofluvial deposits (BGS 2015).

3. Historical Background

Prehistoric activity within the locality was recognised during a recent archaeological evaluation which took place at the Limes development (Dyfed Archaeological Trust 2012). The Limes development is located immediately to the east of the current development within the adjacent field. During this previous evaluation the remains of three separate Bronze Age ring ditches were recorded along with a number of earlier underlying Neolithic settlement features (Oakley, E. 2014).

The nearby town of Carmarthen is considered to be one of the oldest existing towns in Wales and was first constructed by the Romans in the first century AD forming the Civitas capital for the local Demetae tribe of west Wales. During this period the town was known as 'Moridunum' which translates as 'sea fort'. The town witnessed a long period of habitation commencing during the first century and continuing well into the late fourth century. It is recognised during the late fourth century that most towns in Roman Britain experienced occupation decline whereas occupation within Carmarthen is observed to have continued (Rees 1992). Centres such as Carmarthen would have provided a regional distribution centre for agricultural goods produced outside the town limits, possibly within rural settings such as at the current development (Arnold & Davies 2000). Therefore the possibility of finding Roman agricultural field boundaries and associated field systems within the developments boundaries should be considered. The protracted route of the Roman road is also depicted as continuing westwards through the centre of the development (Oakley, E. 2014), thereby promoting the possibility for the chance discoveries of evidence associated with rural settlements, mansion buildings or road side buildings and burials.

Evidence for continuity into the early medieval period within the locality should be considered slight. A Byzantine coin dated 8th to 10th century (PRN 1671) was found near to the village of Pen Sarn to the south east of the development site. Any forms of settlement relating to the early medieval period within the Johnstown area is so far unrecorded.

To the south of the development area lies the recorded remains of the small medieval Hamelt of Llanllwch (PRN 11389). The settlement was recorded in 1349 as suffering heavily from the Black Death and subsequently being destroyed during the Owain Glyndwr rebellion in AD 1407.

The village of Johnstown has undergone a phase of major expansion in recent years. The settlements name is depicted on the O.S map of 1831 as St. Johns and appears to be centred on White Mill which was a woollen factory (James 1980 p54).

4 Methodology

Two evaluation trenches were mechanically excavated by a JCB equipped with a grading bucket. The trenches were excavated to the top of identified archaeological deposits or the natural soil horizon.

Trench 1 was T-shaped and measured 20m by 1.8m along its northeast/southwest length and 10m by 1.8m along its northwest/southeast length (Figure 2). The trench was designed to target a geophysical anomaly recorded during the previous geophysical survey (Archaeological Services WYAS 2014) which appeared to have the form of a building or small enclosure.

Trench 2 measured 20m by 1.8m and was orientated southeast-northwest and located at the northeastern end of the development area (Figure 2). The position of the second trench was intended to locate a geophysical anomaly which appeared again have the form of a building or possible round house structure (Archaeological Services WYAS 2014).

All areas were hand cleaned to prove the presence, or absence, of archaeological features and to determine their significance. Sample excavation was undertaken on most of the identified archaeological features. Recording was carried out using Archaeology

Wales recording systems (pro-forma context sheets etc.), using a continuous number sequence for all contexts.

Written, drawn and photographic records of an appropriate level of detail were maintained throughout the course of the project. Digital photographs were taken using cameras with resolutions of 5 mega pixels or above.

Plans and sections were drawn to a scale of 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 as required.

An archive of archaeological site records will be prepared in accordance with Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991) Appendix 3.

Copies of the report and archive index will be deposited with the National Monuments Record, RCAHMW, Aberystwyth and the Regional HER.

The fieldwork was undertaken between the 26th of February and the 27th of February 2015.

A site monitoring visit was undertaken by a representatives of DAT-PS and EDP on the 27th of February 2015, prior to any backfilling activity.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1 (Figures 2 and 3; Plates 1 – 6)

The topsoil (**100**) consisted of a loose, mid brown clayey silt with inclusions of small to medium sized sub-rounded pebbles (0.06m – 0.2m). The topsoil found within trench 1 measured between 0.15m and 0.10m in depth.

Beneath topsoil (**100**) was a subsoil deposit (**101**) that consisted of friable, orangey-brown silty clay. The inclusions within the subsoil were found to vary throughout the length of the trench. The north eastern side of the trench was found to contain a great number of small sub-angular stones whereas the south western end of the trench appeared more silty in nature and had very few inclusions. This deposit contained one piece of post medieval pottery and one clay pipe stem.

Underlying the subsoil a moderately compacted light orangey-brown silt clay natural deposit was revealed (**102**), which contained occasional inclusions of small sub-angular stones. This deposit was a natural geological layer revealed at a depth of approximately 0.30m below current ground level.

Trench 1 contained a single linear feature [**103**], a single irregular shaped cut feature [**105**], both cut into deposit **102** and a concentrated spread of medium to large stones (**107**) which overlaid **102**.

Linear feature **103** was aligned east-west and was exposed for a total of 4m in length. The feature measured 0.35m in width and 0.15m in depth. The base of the linear was flat with near vertical cut sides. The feature contained a single fill (**104**). The fill consisted of a compact mid brown clay-silt with frequent inclusions of small rounded and sub angular stones. A single copper pipe was also found at the base of the fill and would indicate that the linear is part of a modern service.

Cut feature **105** had an irregular shape in plan. The base of the feature was undulating and contained two very deep narrow voids in the base of the feature. The sides of the feature had a gradual slope with one distinct break in slope. The feature measured 0.80m in length by 0.44m in width and 0.21m in depth. A single fill was recorded (**106**)

and it consisted of a light brown silty clay which contained frequent small pieces of charcoal. Due to the irregularity of the features shape and the presence of root action within its base it is likely that this feature is a tree bole.

Stone spread **107** was observed within the central 'T' area of trench 1 and consisted of frequent, medium sized (0.06-0.2m) sub- rounded stones which appeared to have been placed within subsoil (**101**). The deposit was recorded as having a maximum depth of 0.20m maximum and is likely to have formed a hard standing within a depression within the field as part of recent farming activity.

5.2 Trench 2 (Figures 2 and 4; Plate 7)

The topsoil within trench 2 consisted of a soft greyish brown silt clay (**200**) with small (< 0.06m) sub-rounded stone inclusions. The deposit measured an average depth of 0.19m throughout the trench.

Underlying the topsoil a moderately compacted light-grey brown silt clay (**201**) was revealed which contained moderately frequent inclusions of small (<0.06m) sub-angular and sub-rounded stones. This deposit continued to a maximum depth of 0.15m and contained a fragment of clay pipe stem.

Natural deposit **202** was revealed beneath **201** at 0.33m below present ground level and was a moderate to firmly compacted, light, orangey brown silty clay, which contained occasional to frequent inclusions of small (<0.06m) sub-angular stones.

Within the north western end of trench 2 an exposed natural gravel deposit (**203**) was revealed and is likely to be a glacial till. The gravel covered an area measuring roughly 7m in length and is thought to continue either side under natural deposit **202**.

No archaeological features of significance were found in trench 2.

5.3 Finds

A single fragment of post-medieval pottery and a small fragment of clay pipe stem were recovered from the subsoil (101) in trench 1.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

During the geophysical survey (Archaeological Services WYAS 2014) a number of magnetic anomalies were highlighted leading to subsequent targeted archaeological evaluation.

Trench 1 was placed over a rectangular anomaly within the mid-western area of the site which revealed a single modern service likely from a disused modern water trough system. A number of similar anomalies can be seen depicted throughout the geophysical survey and are probably part of the same system. An area of hard standing was also discovered within the central area of trench 1 and is thought to be the remains of recent attempts by previous land owners to stabilise the wet ground conditions found within this area of the field.

Trench 2 was placed over a circular anomaly in the northern area of the development. Whilst recording trench 2 a broadly circular shaped patch of natural gravels were present within the north western end of the excavation. It is probable that the geophysical survey imaged the natural gravel deposit.

All features discovered over the course of the evaluation were either modern in date or natural in origin.

No archaeological structures, features or deposits were found during the evaluation. A single fragment of nineteenth century pottery and a small fragment of clay pipe stem were recovered from the subsoil in trench 1.

7. Bibliography

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Appendix I: Context Inventory

Context	Trench	Type	Description	Depth below ground level (m)
100	1	Deposit	Topsoil	0 – 0.15
101	1	Deposit	Subsoil	0.15 – 0.3
102	1	Deposit	Natural deposit	0.3 – not fully excavated
103	1	Cut	Cut of modern service trench	0.3 – 0.45
104	1	Deposit	Fill of 103	0.3 – 0.45
105	1	Negative feature	Root bole intrusion into 102	0.3 – 0.51
106	1	Deposit	Fill of 105	0.3 – 0.51
107	1	Deposit	Stone deposit within 101	0.1 – 0.3
200	2	Deposit	Topsoil	0 – 0.19
201	2	Deposit	Subsoil	0.19 – 0.34
202	2	Deposit	Natural deposit	0.34 – not fully excavated
203	2	Deposit	Natural gravel deposit	0.34 – not fully excavated

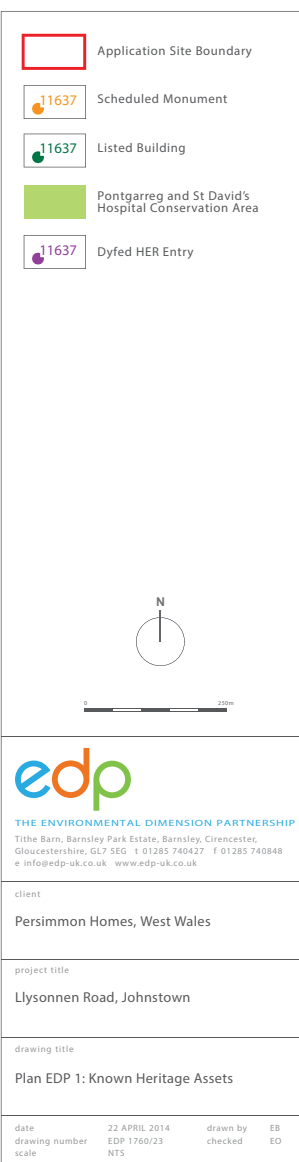
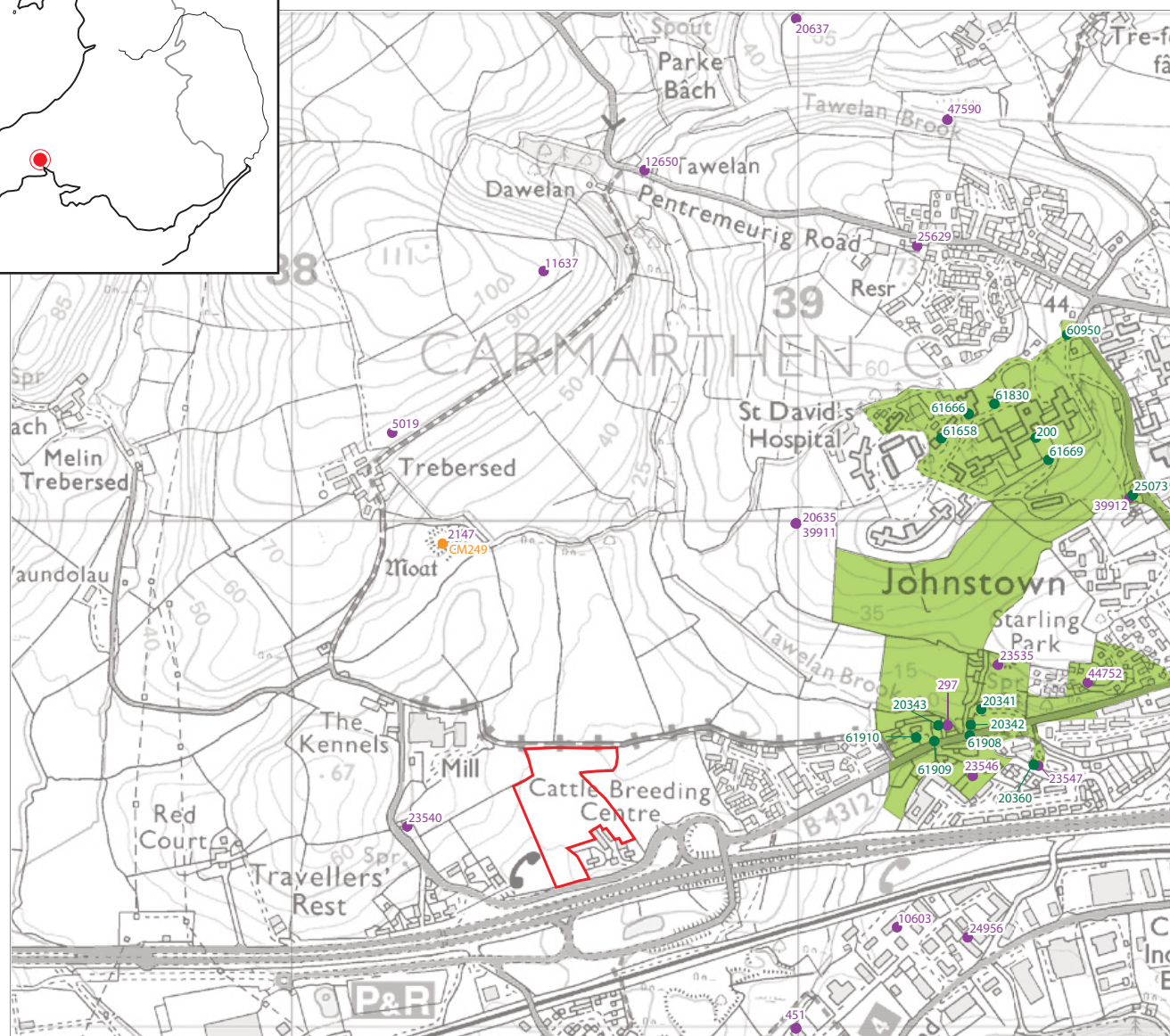


Figure 1. Site location and development area outline (red line). Original figure provided by edp.

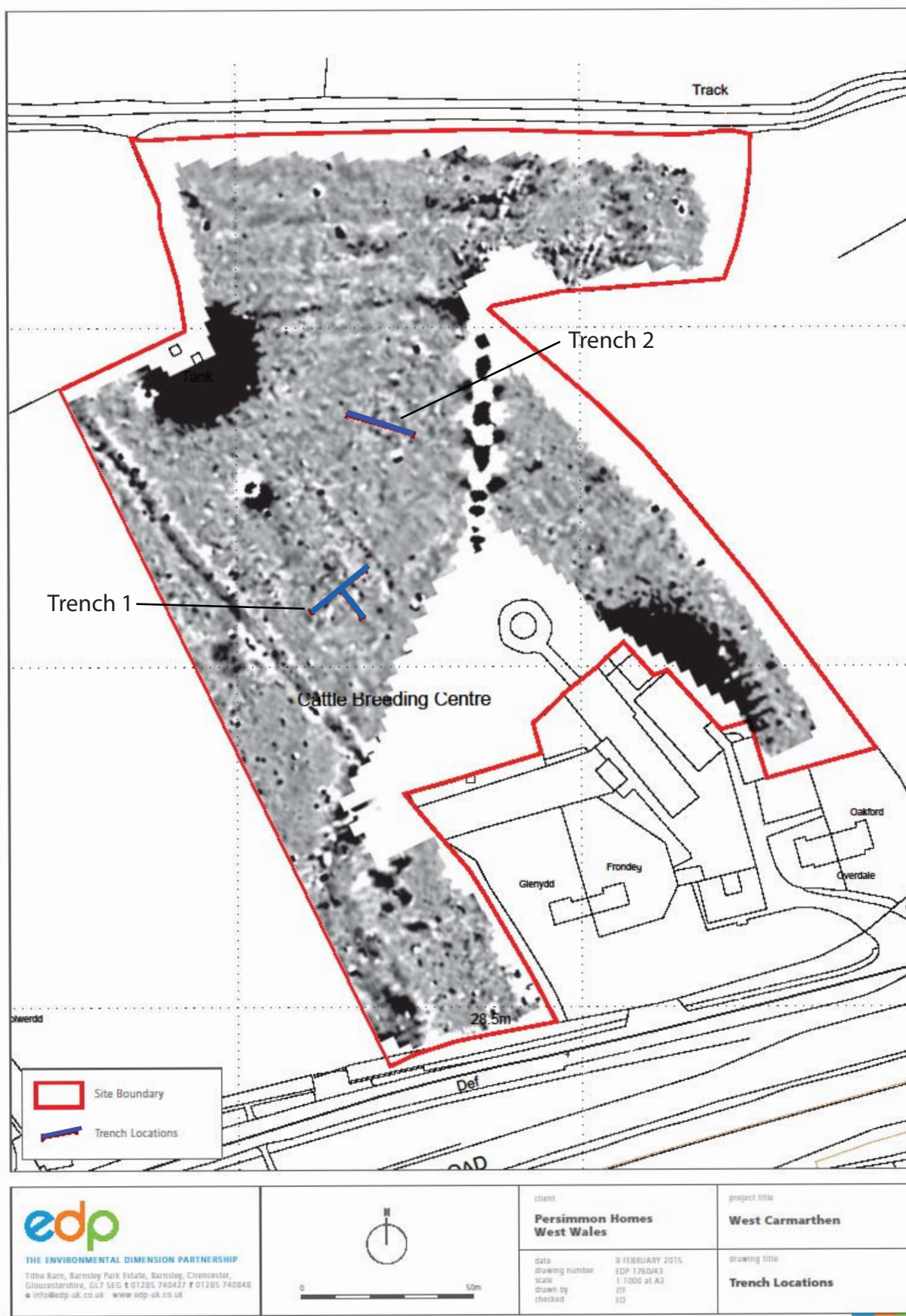
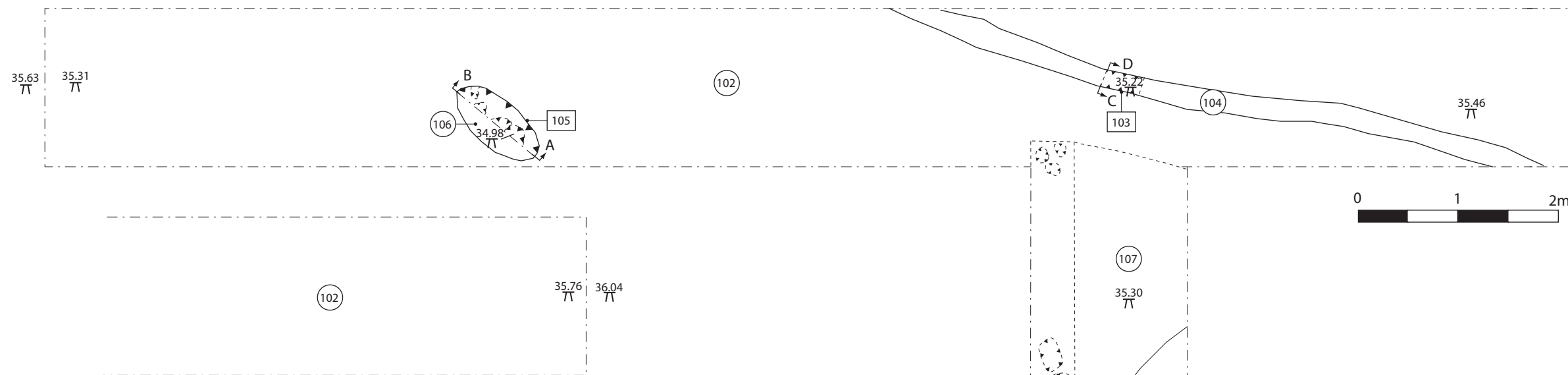


Figure 2. Location of evaluation trenches superimposed over the magnetometer survey (Archaeological Services WYAS 2014). Original figure from EDP .

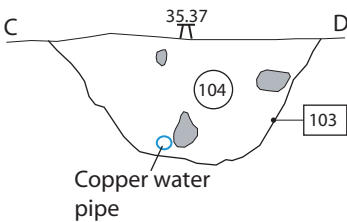
Post-excavation plan of Trench 1



North facing section through root bowl [105]

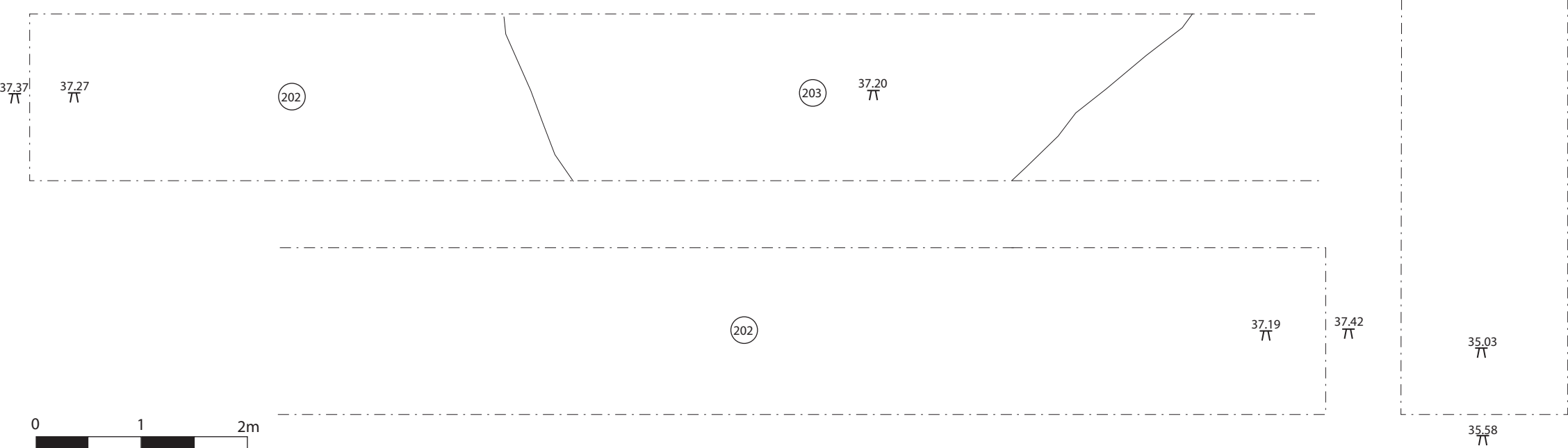


East facing section of pipe trench [103]



Key
Charcoal
Stone

Post-excavation plan of Trench 2



Job Title: Llysonen Road, Johnstown

Drawing Title: Plans & section of Trenches 1 and 2

Date: March 2015

Drawn By: ILB

Scale: Plans 1 : 50 & sections 1 : 10 @ A3

All heights are in mOD

Figure 3





Plate 1. Trench 1. View to the north-east showing natural deposit 102.

Plate 2. Trench 1. View to the south-west showing natural deposit 102.



Plate 3. Trench 1. View to the south showing stone deposit 107 and natural deposit 102.

Plate 4. Trench 1. View to the south-east showing stone deposit 107 and natural deposit 102.



Plate 5. Trench 1. Cut feature 103 containing fill 104 and modern copper water pipe.

Plate 6. Trench 1. Half section through fill (106) of tree bole (105).



Plate 7. Trench 2. View to the north-west showing natural deposit 202.

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