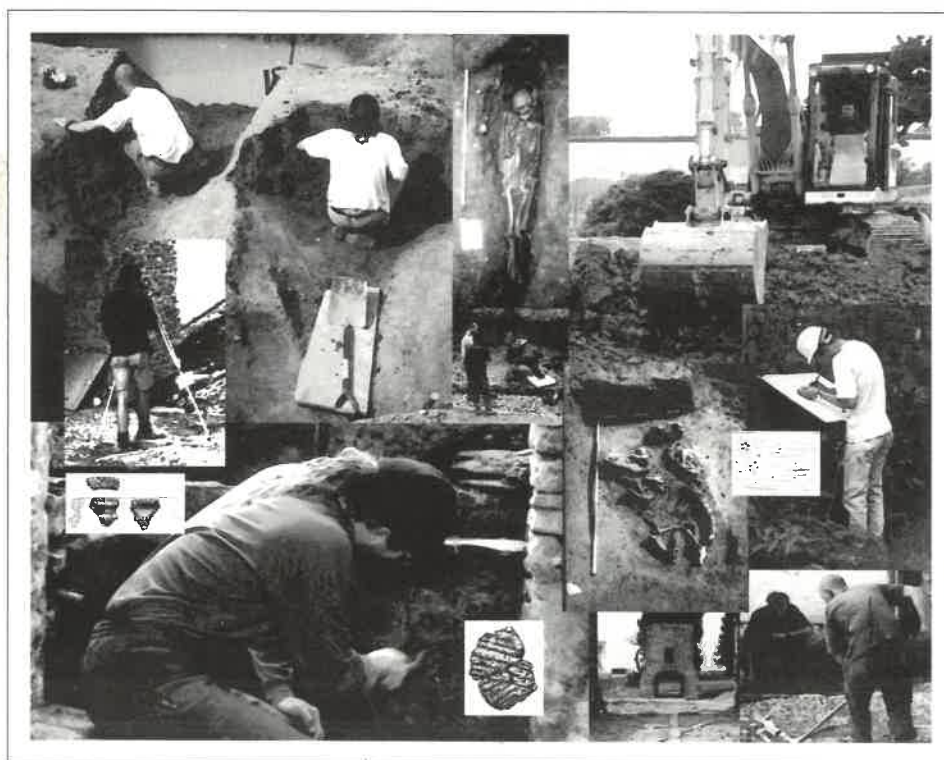


**CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS LTD.**

# Middleton Hall, Carmarthenshire



Archaeological Watching Brief



By  
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CAP Report No. 200

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**Middleton Hall,  
Carmarthenshire**

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Prepared for:  
**National Botanic Garden of Wales  
Llanarthne,  
Carmarthenshire**

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## ii) IFA Standards and Guidance

### THE INSTITUTE OF FIELD ARCHAEOLOGISTS (IFA)

#### *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*

##### **The Standard**

An archaeological watching brief will record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices. These will satisfy the stated aims of the project, and comply with the *Code of conduct*, *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology*, and other relevant by-laws of the IFA.

##### **Definition of an archaeological watching brief**

The definition of an archaeological watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

This definition and *Standard* do not cover chance observations, which should lead to an appropriate archaeological project being designed and implemented, nor do they apply to monitoring for preservation of remains *in situ*.

##### **Purpose of a watching brief**

The purpose of a watching brief is:

- ◆ to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.
- ◆ to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.

A watching brief is not intended to reduce the requirement for excavation or preservation of known or inferred deposits, and it is intended to guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

The objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

*The Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief was formally adopted as IFA approved practice at the Annual General Meeting of the Institute held on 14th October 1994.*

## Non Technical Summary

*The following report is the result of work undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. on behalf of the National Botanic Garden of Wales during the creation of a car park and planting beds to the rear of Principality House (formerly named Trawscoed) at Middleton Hall. The watching brief located the remains of a pathway, similar to pathways uncovered elsewhere within the grounds of the house, also a stone built culvert, and some construction debris from a brick building (probably associated with the barn and garage located nearby on a 1997 surveyors map).*

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Planning Background

A full planning application was submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council by the National Botanic Garden of Wales (DA/A/25993/08/11) for the establishment of a National Botanic Garden at the former Middleton Hall Estate, Carmarthenshire. Due to the possible disturbance of significant archaeological remains, a requirement was placed for an archaeological watching brief to be carried out on all initial groundworks on the site. Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. has been asked by the National Botanic Garden of Wales to act as their agents for archaeological works carried out. In accordance with this, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during landscaping works associated with the creation of a car park to the north of Principality House (formerly Trawscoed), in order to locate any features of archaeological significance.

### 1.2 Site Description

The area under development lies to the north of Principality House, running north and west towards the rear site access road to the National Botanic Gardens. The proposed works include stripping of topsoil, and a number of deeper excavations for planting beds and service trenches in and around the car park area (see fig. 2).

### 1.3 Soil and Geology

The solid geology in the Middleton Hall area comprises Devonian Old Red Sandstone of the Downton series (Raglan Marl Group), which is steeply inclined to the south. An unconformity runs south-west/north-east across the north-west area of the site. Ordovician shales of the Arenig and Llanvirn series follow a similar dip, rising from beneath the sandstone to the north-west. Sandstone outcrops in the west as does shale in the north-west. The Drift Geology comprises glacial boulder clays that overlie both the sandstone and shales.

#### 1.4 Archaeological Background

The Middleton Hall Estate is a designed landscape whose principal features date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the estate was in the hands of the Paxton family. Much of the landscape design can be attributed to Paxton's engineer, James Grier, although other landscape gardeners including William Emes (1730 – 1803) may have played a part in its development.

Previous archaeological work has been undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. throughout the grounds of the National Botanic Garden of Wales. The area currently under development and subject to the present watching brief, lies to the north of Principality House which was formerly the servants' quarters associated with Middleton Hall house. Part of this area was checked during an earlier watching brief carried out in 1997 by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. This involved scrub clearance and topsoil stripping prior to the establishment of a workman's compound. During the previous watching brief no features of archaeological significance were located, but rubble associated with outbuildings adjoining Principality House can be seen in pictures taken of the area at the time.

## 2 Methodology

Removal of spoil was undertaken by machine using a variety of ditching buckets.

The archaeological contractor monitored the progress of the machines and field walked the area for any archaeological remains and features.

The archaeological contractor then carried out limited cleaning and recording of any significant remains.

Recording of the site was in three formats:

i) *Photographic Record*

Photographs were taken in 35mm colour slide/ colour print, black and white print and digital formats.

ii) *Drawn Record*

Site drawings, where appropriate were produced at scales of 1:10, 1:20, or 1:50 on drafting film. Finished drawings are related to Ordnance Survey Datum and published boundaries where appropriate.

iii) *Written Record*

Written text was produced using a continuous numbering sequence for all contexts, and identified features tied into the OS survey grid where applicable.

All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.



### 3 Results of Watching Brief

The following numbers contained within brackets ( ) refer to context numbers allocated during the watching brief. A detailed list of all contexts is given in Appendix II of this report.

Prior to contact being made with Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd. the developers had proceeded with ground works without the presence of an archaeologist. The stage at which the archaeological contractor first viewed the site can be seen in plate 1. At this stage the topsoil (01) had been removed to a depth of up to 0.40m below present ground level (PGL) in places. Within this, nine tree planting pits had been excavated, and a planting bed at the lower (west) end of the car park. These pits had been excavated to a depth of up to 0.60m below the level of topsoil removal. What remained to be seen of these excavations revealed them to have been cut into a natural greyish yellow boulder clay (07), which lay below c. 0.10m- 0.20m depth of (06). No features of archaeological significance were visible within these excavations.

Works on the path linking the car park to the rest of the gardens (see fig. 2) had also largely been completed, and again the topsoil had been removed to a depth of c.0.30m. A service trench had been excavated prior to laying the path (see fig. 2), in which could be seen a deposit (08) of crushed Old Red Sandstone chippings (see plates 02 and 03), probably representing an original pathway. This deposit only lay at a depth of 0.35m below PGL, and consequently had probably been disturbed by scraping works already carried out. The path's nature and direction would have been more fully understood had the archaeological contractor been informed of topsoil scraping works.

Remaining works included the excavation of the main planting bed at the top (east) end of the car park, and a service trench on the south side of the car park (see fig. 2).

The main planting bed was excavated to an average depth of 0.85m, and was an irregular crescent shape in plan (see fig. 2). This bed was excavated with a toothed ditching bucket due to the rubbly nature of the overburden. The overburden (02) was dark grey and consisted of a layer in which brick, stone and concrete rubble was intermixed with food wrappers, consistent with recent development activity on the site. Beneath this, lower levels were less contaminated, but contained similar proportions of rubble (03). Within this deposit (03), at the northerly end of the planting bed, several large chunks of bricks mortared together were noted (plate 8). This context rested directly on a natural greyish yellow boulder clay (07), which was undisturbed except for occasional root activity, two cable trenches, and an earlier trench [04] containing a ceramic field drain and backfill (05), running east – west across the site (plate 06).

The service trench which ran along the south side of the car park was 0.60m wide and excavated to a depth of c. 0.80m. In this trench a culvert constructed of angular limestone, and running north - south was uncovered. The exterior

was roughly constructed (width: av. 1.10m), and had collapsed revealing a well-constructed arched interior, with a diameter of c. 0.65m. Collapsed material made it impossible to gauge the level of siltation on the base, although it still appeared to be carrying a small amount of water.

## 4 Conclusions

The nature of the remaining archaeological evidence would suggest that the eastern part of the area under observation (nearest Principality House) had been largely undisturbed prior to the construction of numerous outbuildings which were still extant when development of the Middleton Estate by N.B.G.W. first commenced. A range of buildings is visible to the north-east of Principality House on the 1:1000 map produced by A. Hunt Associates Ltd. dated January 1997. This range of buildings appears to be relatively recent, probably 20<sup>th</sup> century in origin, and belonging to the phase when Principality House was residential, after it had gone out of use as servants' quarters associated with the main house. The mortared brick rubble encountered at the northerly end of the planting bed most likely represents rubble from the demolition of this later range of buildings. This was visible on the present ground surface, and can also be seen in record shots from the 1997 watching brief carried out by CAP Ltd. The only other disturbance in this area was by two modern cable trenches, and one earlier trench carrying an east – west running field drain.

The culvert revealed in the service trench on the south side of the car park was of indeterminate date, although its construction of angular limestone with lime mortar jointing might suggest a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century date at the latest.

The dump of bottles and jars discovered by workmen whilst scraping topsoil could be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the contractors were able to pinpoint roughly where these had been found, any information about their context had been lost due to works being carried out without the presence of the archaeological contractor.

## 5 Acknowledgements

Thanks to staff of TRJ for their co-operation on site.

## 6 Bibliography

### Map Sources

*British Geological Service, 1979: Geological Survey Ten Mile Map: South Sheet. BGS.*

*Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983: Soils of England and Wales: Sheet 2 Wales. SSEW.*

*Developers' Site Plan 1: 250*

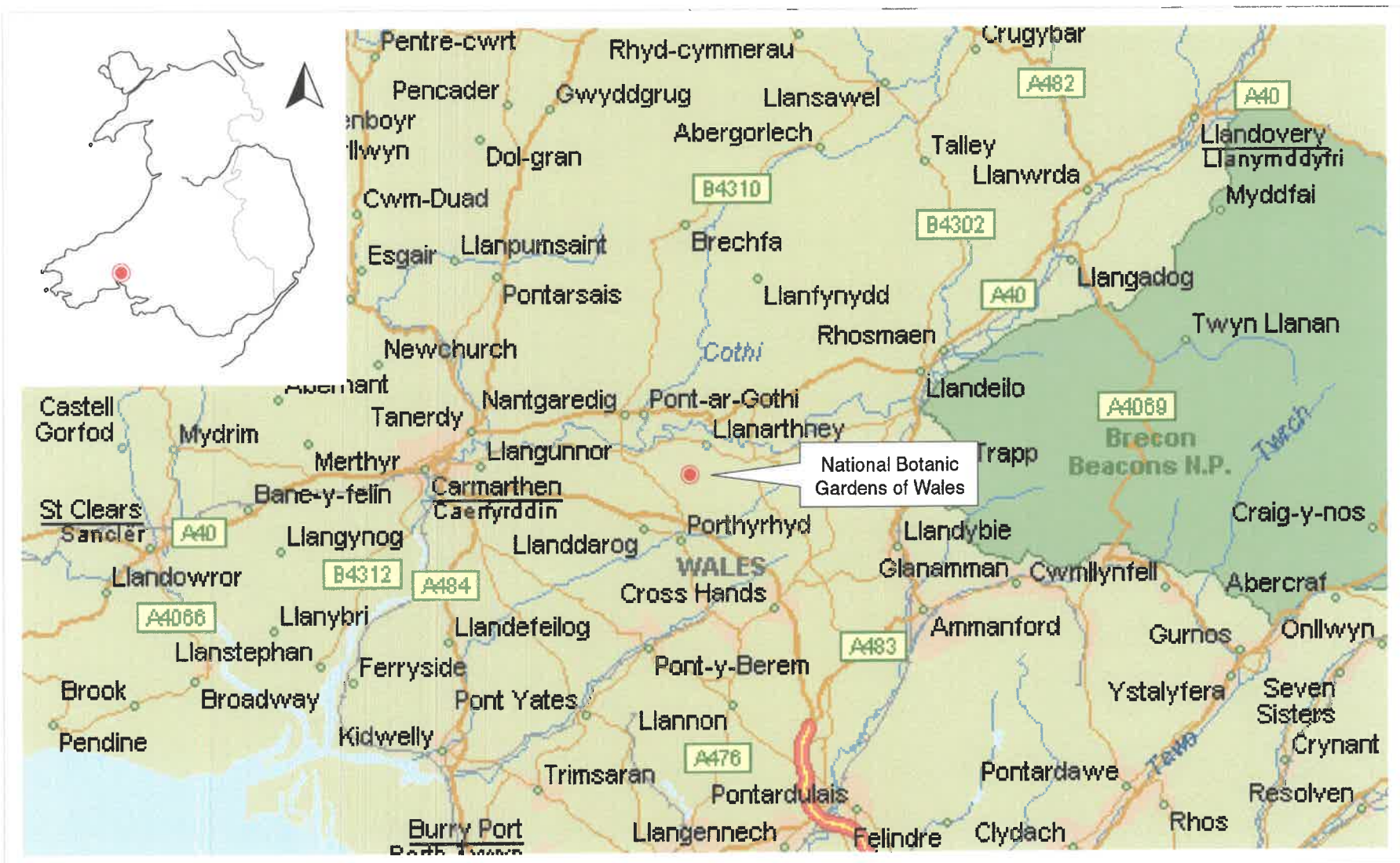
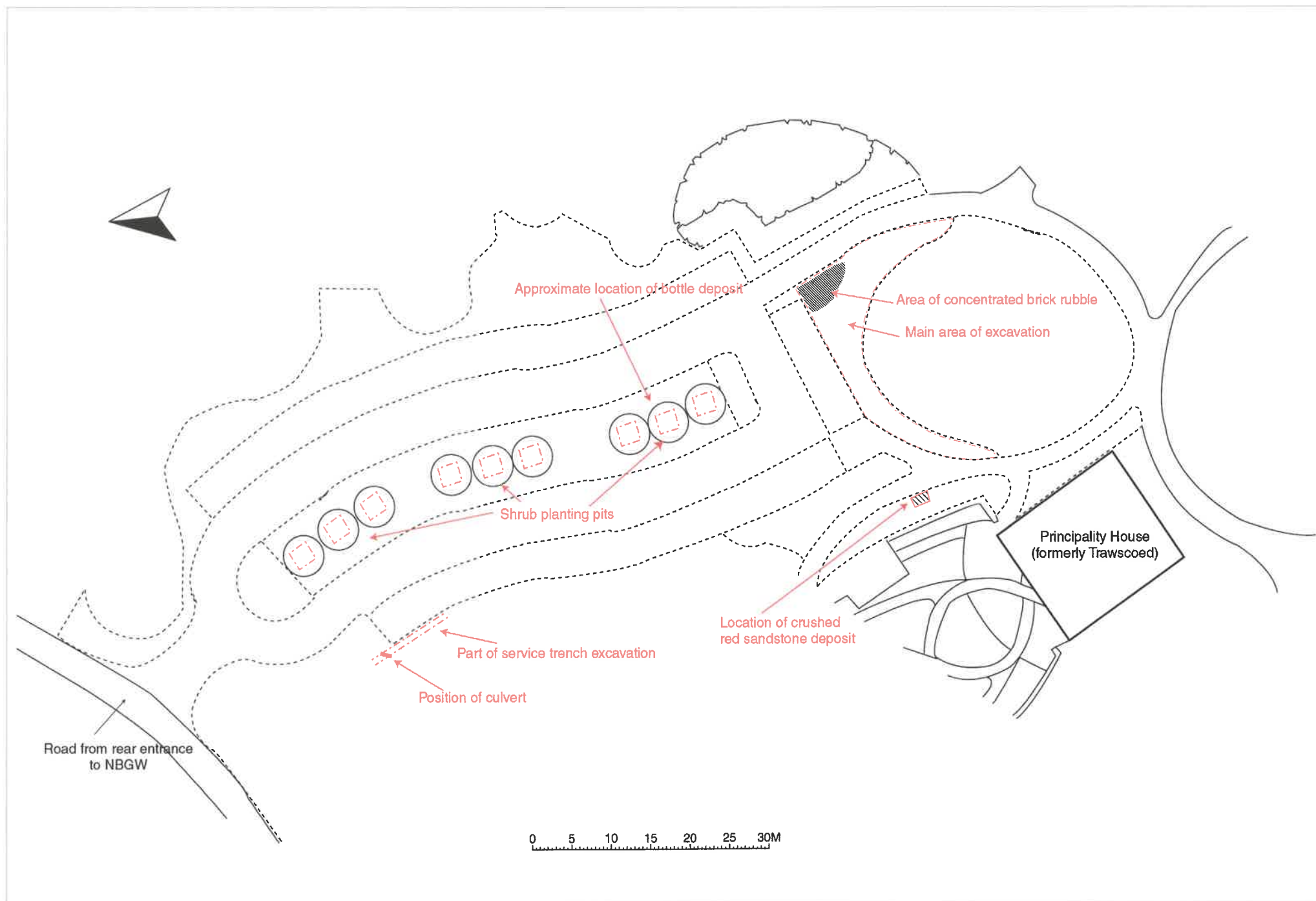


Fig 01: General Location Map



**Fig. 02:** Location of excavations and features



**Plate 01:** Extent of development at commencement of watching brief





**Plate 02:** Showing position of service trench containing evidence of crushed red sandstone pathway.



**Plate 03:** Detail of service trench containing crushed red sandstone pathway in section.  
(Scale 1m.)





**Plate 04:** North-West area of plant bed excavation (Scale: 1m., looking east)



**Plate 05:** Central area of plant bed excavation (Scale 1m., looking west)



**Plate 06:** Part of South-East facing section of plant bed excavations, showing cut for ceramic field drain, and rubble overburden. (Scale 1m.)



**Plate 07:** North-South culvert at West end of site. (Scale 1m. looking South)



**Plate 08:** Intact piece of mortared brickwork (Scale 1m. looking East)





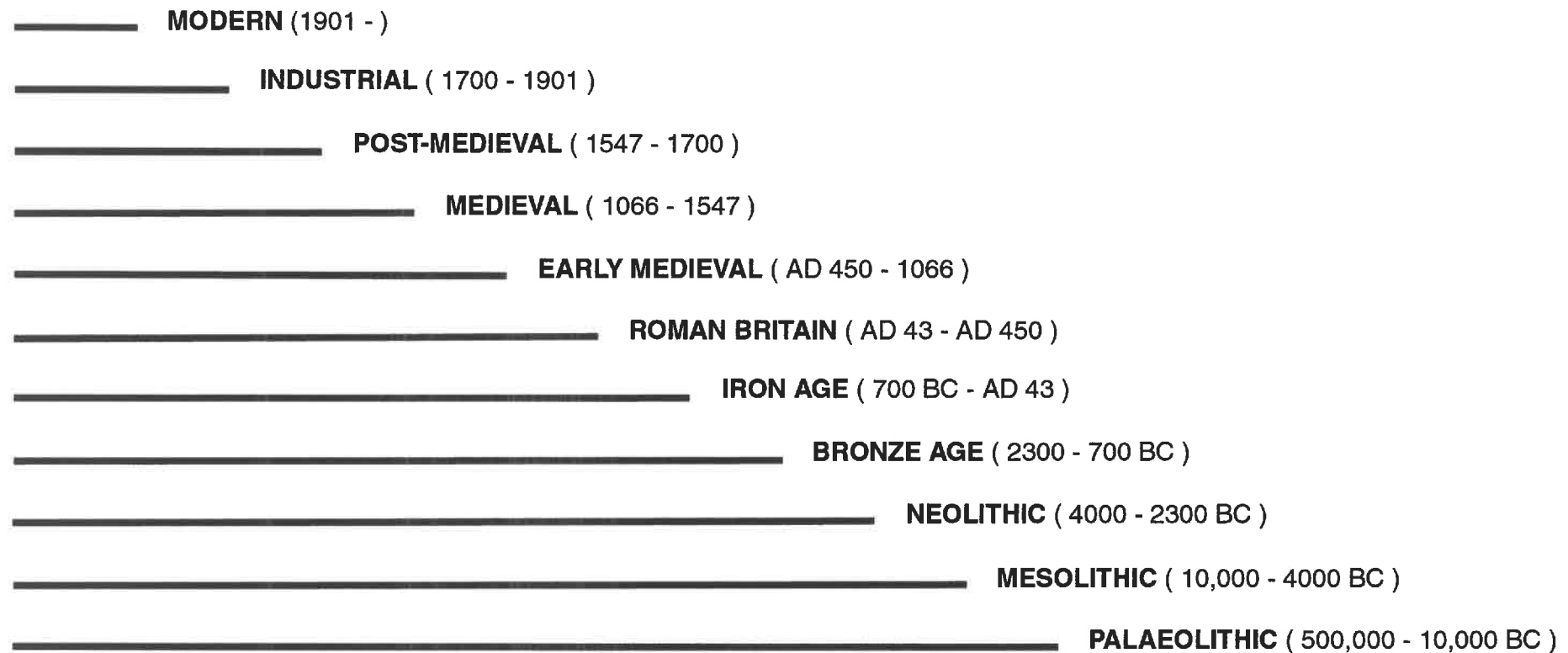
**Plate 09:** Area of current watching brief during 1997 (looking South)



**Plate 10:** Area of current watching brief during 1997, showing rubble associated with demolished outbuildings



## **APPENDIX I:** **Chronology**



Chronological Divisions as used by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA),  
in the *British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography*.



## **APPENDIX II:** **Context Register**

## **Appendix II**

### **Summary of Contexts**

<b>01</b>	Topsoil
<b>02</b>	Rubble overburden
<b>03</b>	Rubble from earlier demolition
<b>04</b>	Cut for field drain
<b>05</b>	Fill of cut 04
<b>06</b>	Mid greyish – brown silty clay
<b>07</b>	Natural greyish – yellow boulder clay
<b>08</b>	Crushed Red Sandstone chippings
<b>09</b>	Limestone culvert
<b>10</b>	Mid greyish – brown silty clay



## **APPENDIX III:** **Archive Cover Sheet**



# ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

**Middleton Hall, Carmarthenshire (MHCP/01/WB)**

## ARCHIVE DESTINATION

Site Name:	<b>Middleton Hall, Carmarthenshire</b>
Site Code:	<b>MHCP/01/WB</b>
PRN:	<b>N/A</b>
NPRN :	<b>N/A</b>
SAM:	<b>N/A</b>
Other Ref No:	<b>CAP Reports 12, 32, 38, 112, 114, 149, 167, 170, 189</b>
NGR:	<b><sup>N</sup> SS 5230 1820</b>
Site Type:	<b>Historic Garden</b>
Project Type:	<b>Archaeological Watching Brief</b>
Project Officer:	<b>Helen Milne</b>
Project Dates:	<b>November 2001</b>
Categories Present:	<b>N/A</b>
Location of Original Archive:	<b>N/A</b>
Location of duplicate Archives:	<b>N/A</b>
Number of Finds Boxes:	<b>1</b>
Location of Finds:	<b>N/A</b>
Museum Reference:	<b>Not assigned</b>
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