

Heritage

Recording Services Wales



**Hen Eglwys Court Farm,
St Davids Road, Letterston,
Haverfordwest, Pembs.**

Archaeological Watching Brief



By

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**HRSWales
Report No: 121**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Hen Eglwys Court Farm,
St Davids Road, Letterston,
Haverfordwest, Pembs.

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Prepared for:
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On behalf of:

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HRSW Report No: 121

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Non Technical Summary

The following text details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Heritage Recording Services Wales (HRSW) during ground work for a series of post-holes for the erection of a new agricultural building at Hen Eglwys Court Farm, Letterston, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.

The watching brief was designed to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

No archaeological deposits, finds or features were identified during the groundworks earlier than the late 20th century.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following text details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Heritage Recording Services Wales (HRSW) during ground work for a series of post-holes for the erection of an agricultural building at Hen Eglwys Farm, St. Davids Road, Letterston, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.
- 1.2 After being contacted by Mr J M Charles of Hen Eglwys Farm to undertake the work, HRSW submitted a project specification to Cambria Archaeology, the regional Archaeological Trust in Llandeilo, detailing the schedule of works in September 2008. This specification was approved and the watching brief work was undertaken in the last week of May 2009.
- 1.3 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.

Planning Background

- 1.4 Outline planning permission was granted by Pembrokeshire County Council (*Application numbers: 08/0207/PA*) to Mr JM Charles, to erect a new agricultural building at Hen Eglwys Farm, Letterston (NGR: SM 9299 2950). A condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to this permission.

Site Location & Description (*see Figs 1, 2, & 3*)

- 1.5 The location of the proposed development lies west of the town of Letterston at a height of approx. 100m OD (NGR: SN 9465 2871). The agricultural building is to be constructed immediately west of the existing Hen Eglwys farmhouse and east of the existing farm buildings. The building is to be of iron frame construction with a series of 12 supporting uprights requiring the excavation of 12 post-holes.

Geology

- 1.6 The geology of the area is a sedimentary rock of Ordovician Llanvirm rocks of the Carboniferous period. Local geology indicates an area of gravels and clays.

Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

- 1.7 A preliminary search of the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) has revealed that

documentary and place-name evidence suggests that the proposed development lies on the possible site of an early medieval church and associated graveyard (PRN 2395). Consequently, it has been suggested by development control at Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT), being advisors to the Officers and Members of Pembrokeshire County Council, that archaeological evidence, including medieval settlement and the potential for human remains, may extend into the application area. Therefore any remains surviving as buried archaeological features will clearly be adversely affected by the proposed development.

- 1.8 According to Samuel Lewis's *Topography of Wales* of 1833, LETTERSON, LETTARDSTON, or LETTERSTON, is a parish in the hundred of DEWISLAND, county of PEMBROKE, SOUTH WALES, 10 Miles (N.) from Haverfordwest, containing 493 inhabitants. This place derived its name from the ancient family of the Lettards, to whom the parish anciently belonged, and who gave the advowson of the living, together with the chapel of Llanvair, to the preceptory of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, which had been founded at Slebech, in this county. The parish is pleasantly situated in the north-western part of the county, and is intersected by the turnpike road from Haverfordwest to Fishguard. The surrounding scenery is pleasing, and in certain places somewhat picturesque: the distant views embrace an extensive tract of finely diversified and richly cultivated country. In the vicinity are some handsome seats and pleasing villas: and within the parish is Heathfield Lodge, the property of John Hill Harris, Esq., of Priskilly Forest, and now the residence of that gentleman's brother-in-law, William. Jones, Esq. The living is a discharged rectory, with the perpetual curacy of Llanvair-Nant-y-Gove annexed, in the archdeaconry and diocese of St. David's, rated in the king's books at £12. 11. 0 1/2, and in the patronage of the King, as Prince of Wales. The church, dedicated to St. Giles is not remarkable for any striking architectural features. The rectory house has been recently rebuilt, under the provisions of Gilbert's act of parliament, by the present incumbent, and is a handsome edifice. In this parish, on a common near the road, are several tumuli, supposed to be sepulchral. The average annual expenditure for the maintenance of the poor amounts to £65.12." [From *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (S. Lewis, 1833).]

2 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 In accordance with IFA's *Standards and guidance*, the aims of an archaeological watching brief are
- 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The objective of a watching brief is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 With regards the watching brief, the ground work was undertaken by the contractor using a mechanical digger with a 0.50 meter wide grading bucket and hand shovel, when deemed necessary,

under the guidance of the qualified supervising archaeologist..

- 3.2 After each posthole was dug it was inspected for any potential archaeological features or finds. Once this had been done and no significant features were observed, the ground work continued for each subsequent posthole. Limited cleaning of each posthole was undertaken in order to ascertain the existence or non existence of any archaeological features.
- 3.3 Where features were present limited excavation was undertaken to establish the date, depth, preservation, extent, function and relationship to other features, but in this case no features or finds became evident.
- 3.4 Recording of the trenches was undertaken in three formats:
- i) *Photographic record* - Photographs were taken in digital format using a 10 mega-pixel camera recording in high resolution JPEG files.
 - ii) *Drawn record* - Site drawings, plans and sections, were produced at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 on drafting film, where deemed necessary. Finished drawings have been related to Ordnance Survey datum and published boundaries where appropriate.
 - iii) *Written record* - Written records were produced using a continuous numbering sequence for all contexts.
- 3.5 An environmental sampling and sampling and processing strategy was in place should the archaeological deposits warrant it. However, in this instance it was not felt that the deposits encountered required sampling.
- 3.6 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.

4 Results of Watching Brief (see Figs 8 and 9)

- 4.1 In the following, numbers contained within brackets (), refer to context numbers allocated to each posthole during the watching brief.
- 4.2 The area proposed for the erection of the new barn was clear of any obstruction and was centred on an open area only 100m west of Hen Eglwys Farm.
- 4.3 Each of the 12 postholes is described in sequence. Each measured approximately 1m in length x 0.50m wide and each reached on average between 0.40-0.50m in depth. For the location of each posthole please see Figure 6.

Posthole 1

- 4.4 This posthole exposed only one natural shale deposit (00)

Posthole 2

- 4.5 This posthole exposed only one natural shale deposit (00)

Posthole 3

- 4.6 The upper deposit for this posthole was of natural shale intermixed with grey/mid brown soil (00). Directly below this was a limestone rubble deposit (01) with pieces no larger than 0.20m in size. This

deposit was interpreted as a natural glacial deposit.

Posthole 4

- 4.7 The uppermost deposit for this posthole was of limestone rubble intermixed with shale. Within this deposit there was evidence of leaching in the lower levels of the deposit (00). This deposit was interpreted as a natural limestone glacial erratic.

Posthole 5

- 4.8 The upper deposit of this posthole consisted of a limestone rubble layer (00) approximately 0.10-0.20m in size reaching a depth of approximately 0.40m. Directly below this deposit was part of a modern black polythene bag covering half of the trench. Directly below this was a loose stone (01) interpreted as stone for a soakaway for a septic tank located in the garden to the north for Hen Eglwys Court farmhouse. Directly below this was a natural limestone rubble fill intermixed with a natural shale (02).

Posthole 6

- 4.9 This posthole was made up of only one natural shale deposit (00)

Posthole 7

- 4.10 This posthole was made up of only one natural shale deposit (00)

Posthole 8

- 4.11 This posthole was made up of only one natural shale deposit (00)

Posthole 9

- 4.12 This posthole was made up of only one natural shale deposit (00)

Posthole 10

- 4.13 This posthole consisted of shale across one side of the trench, tapering to a limestone rubble intermixed with soil and shale (00). This was interpreted as a natural deposit.

Posthole 11

- 4.14 The upper deposit for this posthole was a compact shale/soil (00) which reached a depth of only 0.05m. Below this was compact shale with iron stained sand (01). Below this was a limestone rubble deposit (02) intermixed with a grey/mid brown soil. All deposits were interpreted as natural shale deposits.

Posthole 12

- 4.15 The upper deposit for this posthole was a sandy/silt (00) and below this was a limestone rubble deposit (01) interpreted a natural deposit.

Summary of results

- 4.8 No features or finds were recorded in the ground work for the proposed new barn at Hen Eglwys Court Farm, Letterston. No archaeological deposits encountered were earlier than the late 20th century.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The watching brief at Hen Eglwys Court Farm, Letterston, exposed no significant archaeological deposits or finds in any of the excavated postholes. Each posthole apart from one, *Posthole 5*, exposed

natural geology in the form of natural shales and glacial limestone. *Posthole 5* exposed part of a 20th century septic tank soakaway drainage ditch.

- 5.2 With regard to the potential early medieval church and associated graveyard and early settlement of the area, personal communication with the landowner and a rapid investigation of cartographic sources seems to imply that the former church of Hen Eglwys was positioned approximately 300m west of the development area, down-slope toward the former railway line and alongside the river 'Cleddau', where a small earthwork platform is still visible.

6 Acknowledgements

Thanks to; Meurig Charles of Pembrokeshire County Council for his patience during the ground work and archaeological recording work.

7 Bibliography

Samuel Lewis 1833 Topographical Dictionary of Wales.

APPENDIX I:

Figs & Illustrations

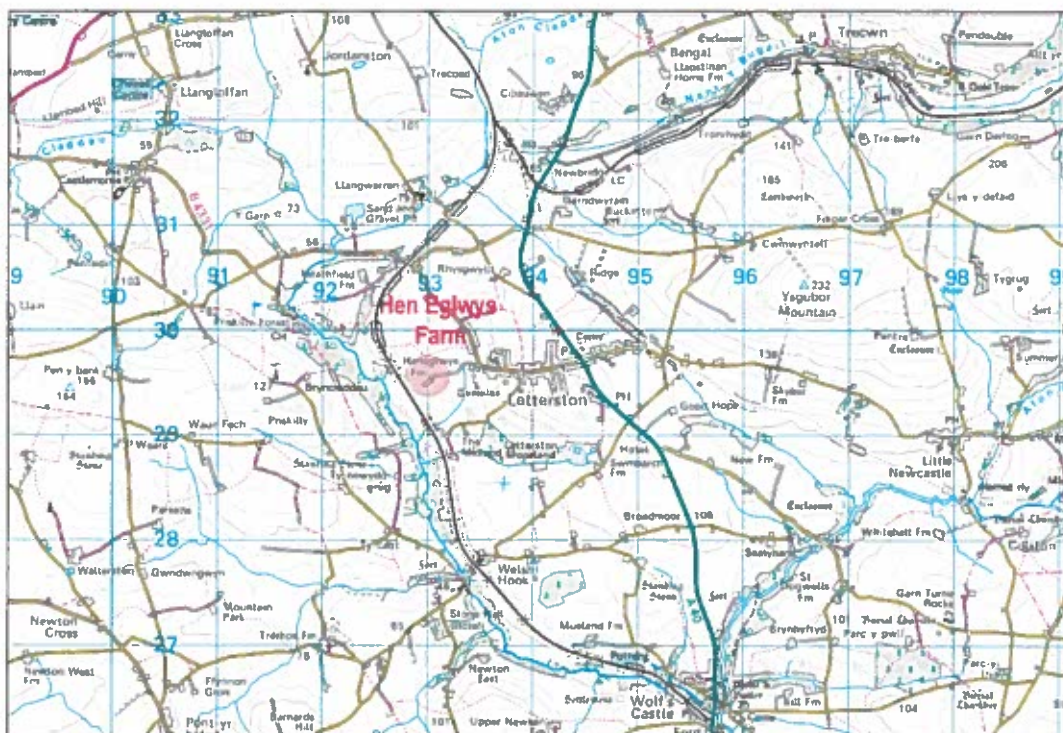


Figure 1. Location map showing location of Hen Eglwys, Letterston, Pembrokeshire. (OS 1:25000 map)

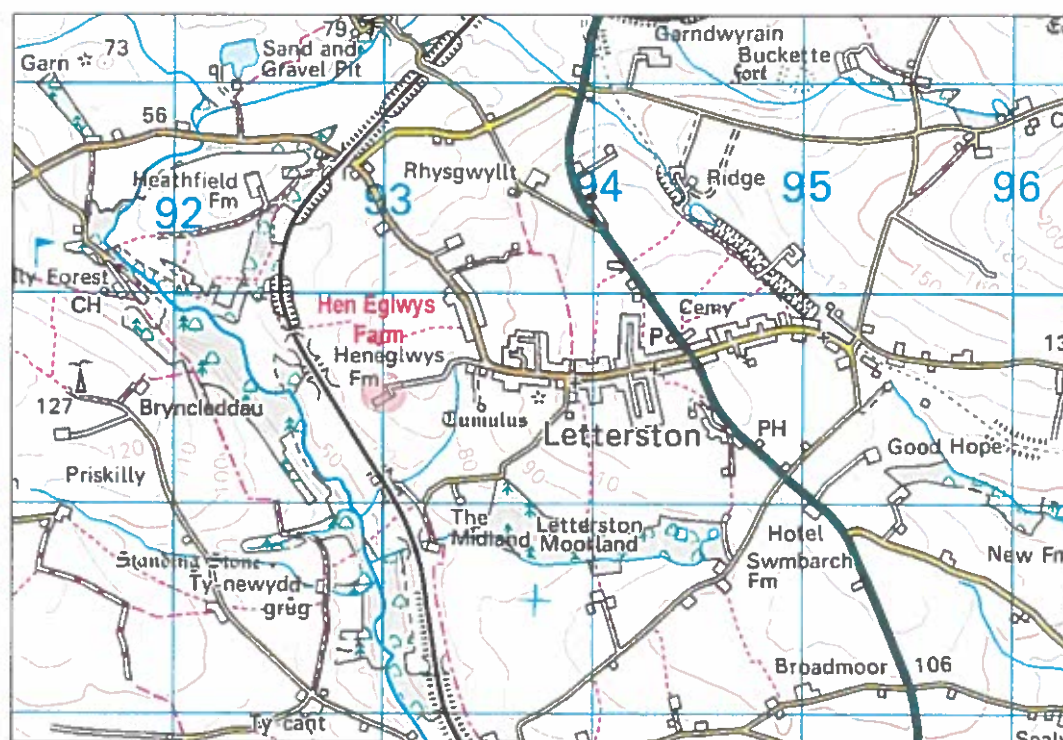


Figure 2. Enlarged view of location map showing location of Hen Eglwys, Letterston, Pems. (OS 1:25000 map)



Figure 3. Recent aerial photo showing position of Hen Eglwys Farm, Letterston, Pembs (Google Maps)



Figure 4. Enlarged view of recent aerial photo showing position of Hen Eglwys Farm, Letterston, Pembs (Google Maps)

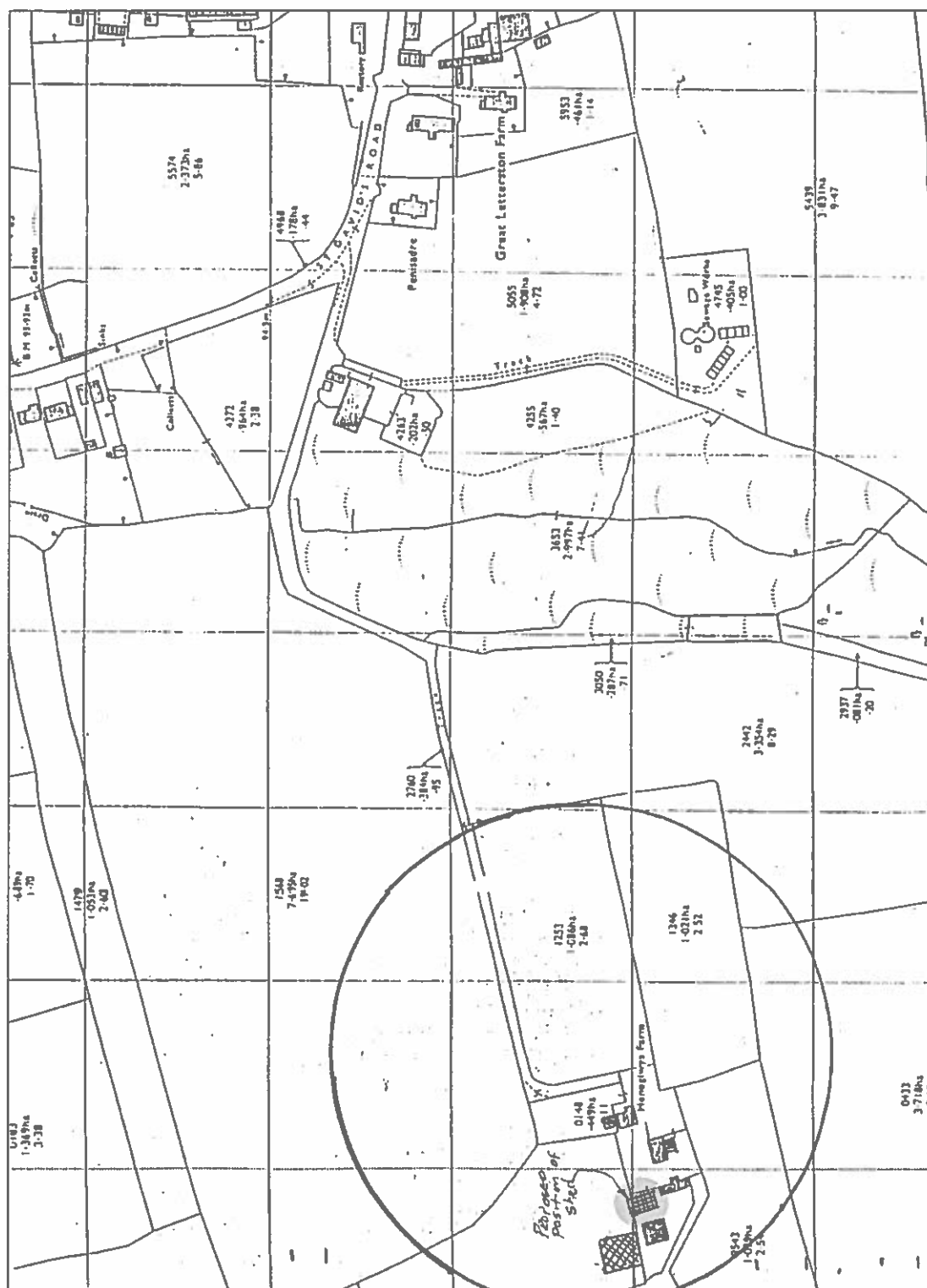
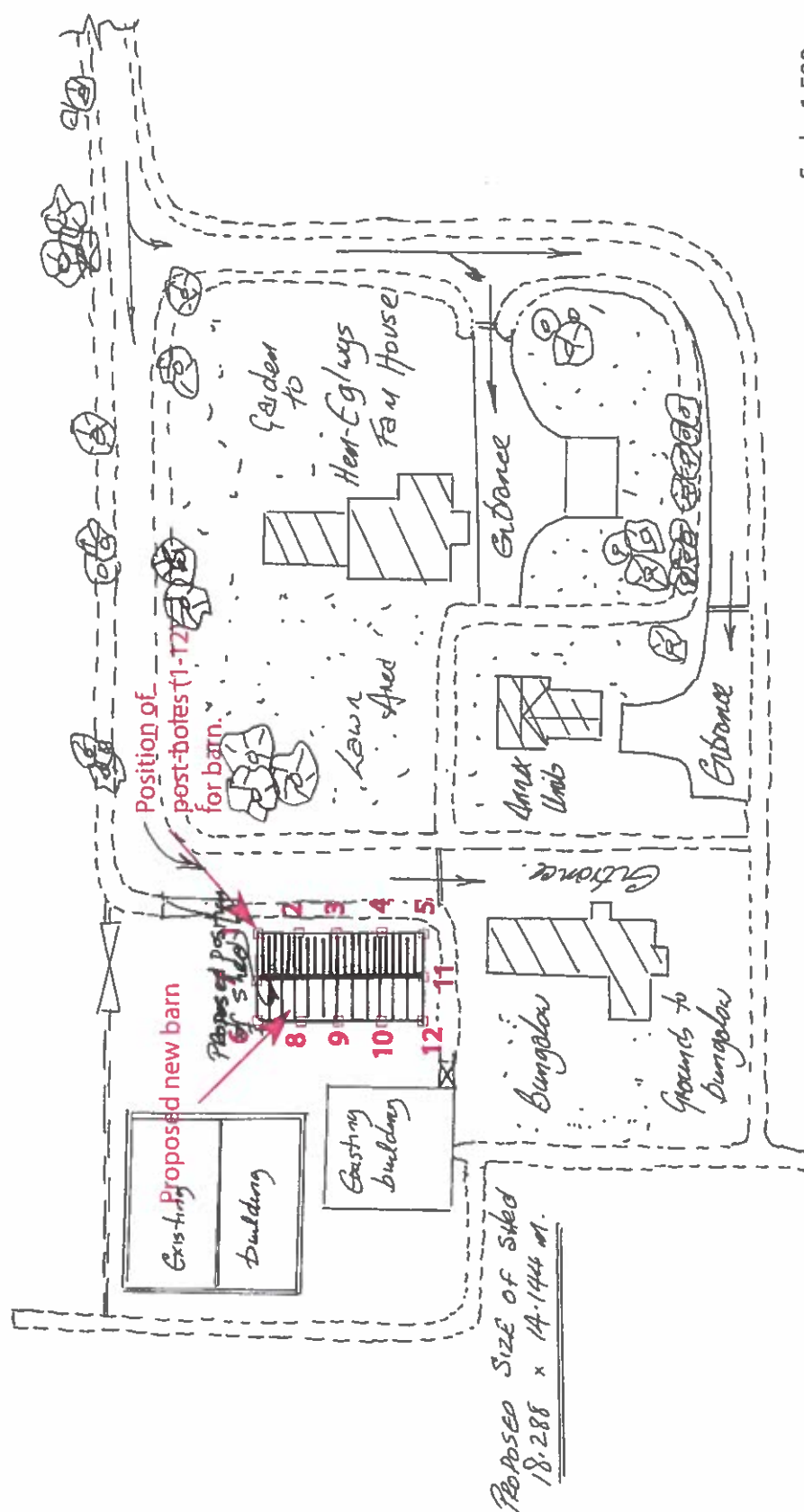


Figure 5. Site plan showing position of proposed new barn .



Scale 1:500

Figure 6. Site plan showing position of new barn with reference to position of proposed post-holes. Based on Architects ground plan.

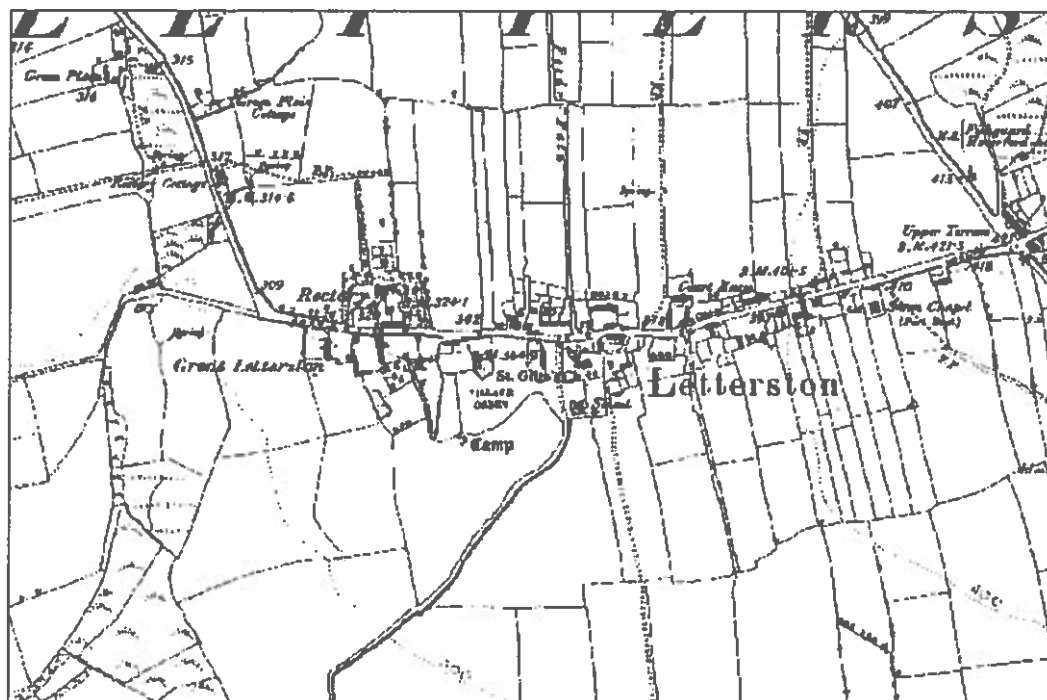


Figure 7. Part of OS 1st edition map of Letterston Town 1891.

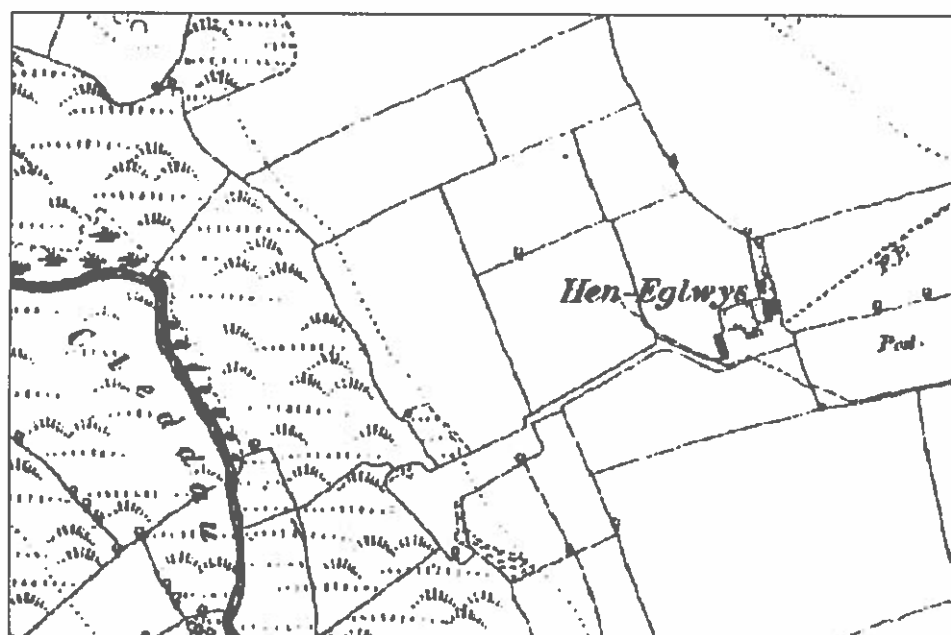
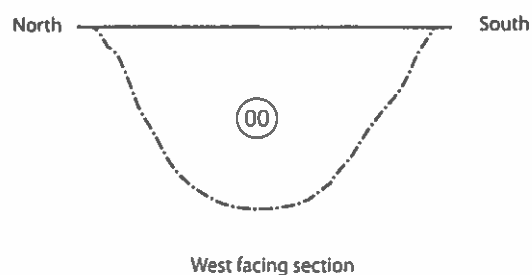
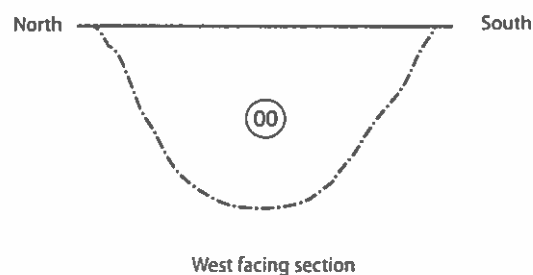


Figure 8. Enlarged view of part of OS 1st edition map of 1891 showing Hen Eglwys Farm, Letterston.

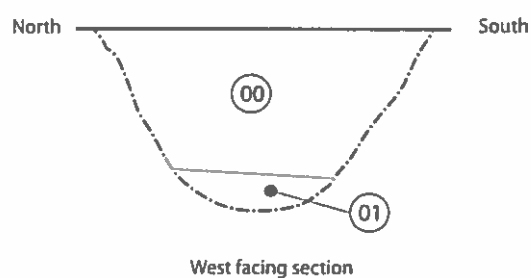
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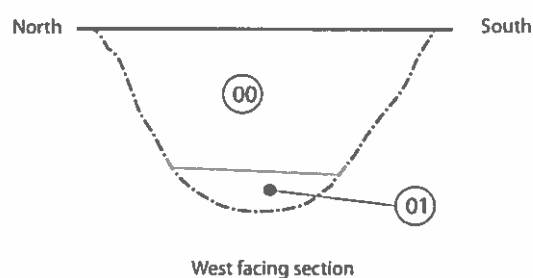
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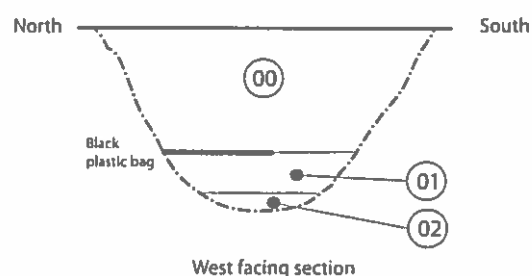
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4.



5.



6.

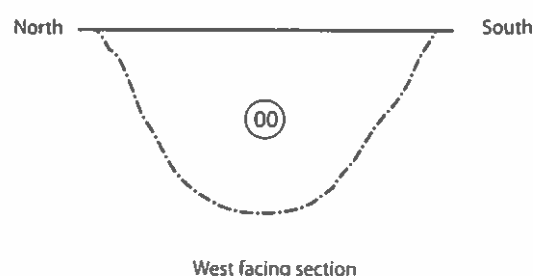
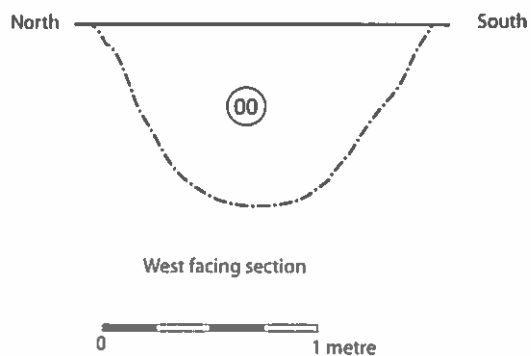
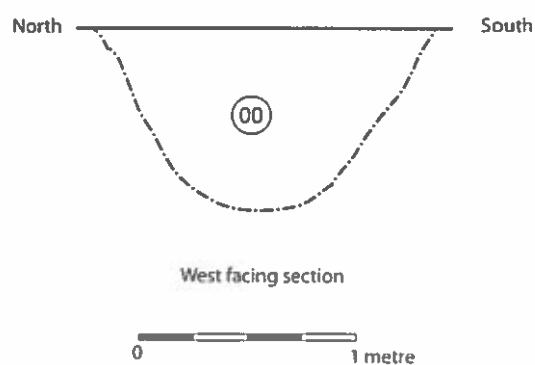


Figure 9. Sections of post-holes 1-6 at Hen Eglwys for erection of new barn. All postholes are west facing.

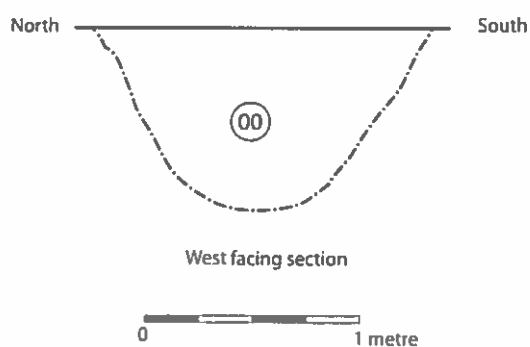
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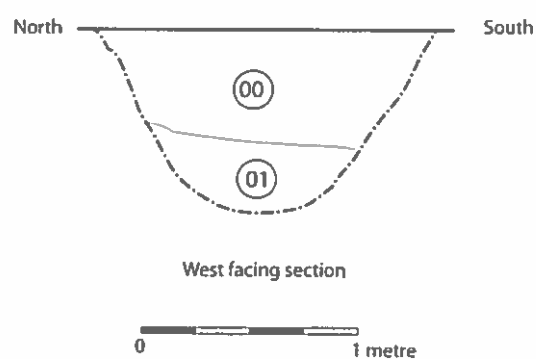
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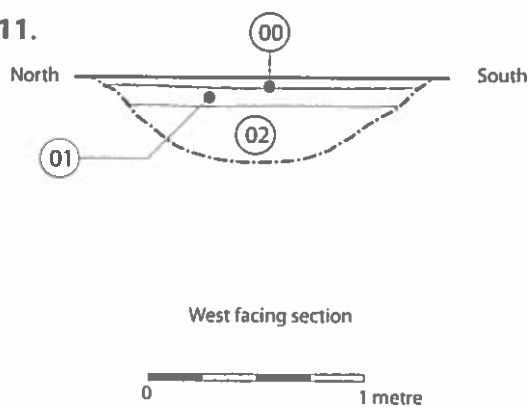
9.



10.



11.



12.

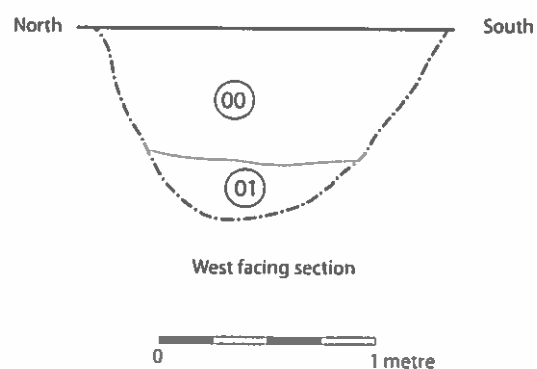


Figure 10. Sections of post-holes 7-12 at Hen Eglwys for erection of new barn. All postholes are west facing.

1.



West facing

2.



West facing

3.



West facing

4.



West facing

5.



West facing

6.



East facing

Plate 1. Post-holes 1-6

7.



West facing

8.



West facing

9.



West facing

10.



West facing

11.



East facing

12



West facing

Plate 2. Post-holes 7-12

APPENDIX III:
Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Hen Eglwys Court Farm, Letterston, Haverfordwest, Pems.

ARCHIVE DESTINATION – RCAHMW

Site Name:	Hen Eglwys Court Farm, Letterston, Haverfordwest, Pems.
Site Code:	HEF/09/WB
PRN:	
NPRN :	N/A
SAM:	N/A
Other Ref No:	HRSW Report No. 121
NGR:	SM 9299 2950
Site Type:	Potential medieval church settlement
Project Type:	Watching Brief
Project Officer:	Richard Scott Jones
Project Dates:	June 2009
Categories Present:	N/A
Location of Original Archive:	RCAHMW
Location of duplicate Archives:	DAT, Llandeilo
Number of Finds Boxes:	N/A
Location of Finds:	N/A
Museum Reference:	N/A
Copyright:	HRSW
Restrictions to access:	None

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