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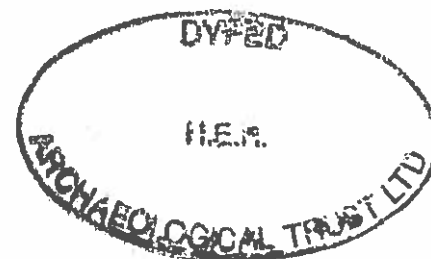
Croes-goch County Primary School, Pembrokeshire

Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, Evaluation
and Watching Brief



By
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Report No. 583



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Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, Evaluation and Watching Brief

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Non Technical Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment, intrusive field evaluation and watching brief undertaken on the site of a proposed extension to Croes-goch County Primary School in Croes-goch, Pembrokeshire. The site is located close to a known early Christian burial ground, and as such was considered to hold significant archaeological potential. The evaluation revealed a single substantial post-hole packed with large stones and containing some charcoal. This is tentatively suggested as the remains of a structure possibly associated with the burial ground. No further archaeology was revealed during the watching brief.

1. Introduction

1.1 Location and Scope of Work

The proposed development is on the grounds of Croes-goch Primary School in Croes-goch, Pembrokeshire, NGR: SM 82708 30361 (see figs. 1 and 2). The proposed development comprises an extension to the current school buildings, together with the construction of a new access road and landscaping of the grounds surrounding the buildings. The development proposal has been submitted by Richard Lawrence of Pembrokeshire County Council, Highways and Construction (PCC-HC).

The site is located adjacent to a known early Christian burial ground, where graves dated to AD 360 to AD 600 have been recorded (Ludlow 2003). Place name evidence points to the presence of a battle site in the vicinity of the village, and there are a number of scheduled ancient monuments in the wider landscape (RCAHMW NPRN 405248). The site was, therefore, considered to have considerable archaeological potential. As a result, Charles Hill of the Curatorial Section of Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT-HM) recommended that a brief desk-based assessment, intrusive field evaluation and watching brief be carried out to determine the nature of any archaeological remains within the proposed construction area. This follows the requirements set out in Planning Policy WALES, March 2002, section 6.5 and Welsh Office circular 60/96.

The purpose of the brief desk-based assessment, intrusive field evaluation and watching brief was to determine the archaeological potential of the site through the assessment of existing secondary documentary sources, the excavation of strategically positioned evaluation trenches and the archaeological monitoring of geotechnical trial pits. The aim of the works was to elucidate the presence or absence of archaeological remains, their character, distribution, extent, condition and relative significance.

The work was undertaken by Dr Amelia Pannett (Project Manager) and Hywel Keen (Site Supervisor).

1.2 Geology and Topography

The site is located on a gentle north-west facing slope overlooking the coast at around 100m OD. It sits within an area of Ordovician shale bedrock.

2. Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies approximately 75m to the north of Parc-y-fynwent (cemetery field: see figs. 4 and 5), the location of three recorded long-cist burials, one of which has been dated to AD 370 to 600, the late Roman/early post-Roman period (Ludlow 2003). One of the cists was

revealed during development work in the 1960s, with the remaining two uncovered during groundworks for a housing development in 2000. Only one of the cists discovered in 2000 was disturbed during the development, the second preserved *in situ*. The disturbed cist had the lintel stone removed during machining, which exposed an extended inhumation, represented by the skull and some bone fragments; no long bones survived (*ibid*). This inhumation was removed by the contractors for curation by Pembrokeshire Museums Service, and the cist subsequently recorded by Dyfed Archaeological Trust (*ibid*). Examination of the burial indicated it to be a male in his 50s.

The cists were Christian in character, orientated in an E-W direction, and represent the earliest dated Christian burials in this part of Wales (Ludlow 2003). The St Davids peninsula, on which the site is located contains one of the densest concentrations of early Christian long-cist cemeteries in west Wales, together with a number of early Christian latin-inscribed cross stones such as the one recorded at neighbouring Mesur-y-dorth (see below).

Historical sources suggest that the village of Croes-goch provided the focus for religious activities throughout the medieval period. Medieval sources contain references to a chapel having been constructed in the village in the post-conquest period (Ludlow 2003), although its exact location is not known. The possibility that the graveyard provided the focus for this chapel has been raised (*ibid*), and it can perhaps be hypothesised that the recorded chapel had its origins in an earlier building contemporary with the graves. There is no evidence to suggest the original extent of the graveyard, however an antiquarian source describes the site as 'covered with graves marked out by stone coffins' (*ibid*) suggesting that it was an extensive site. There is also reference to a stone coffin containing a sword (*ibid*; and see figs. 2 and 3). No evidence of an enclosure surrounding the graveyard has been observed, either in modern field boundaries or in aerial photographs (*ibid*), however this may also have been obscured by development and changes in field layouts.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the brief desk-based assessment and field evaluation were:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area, with particular emphasis on identifying whether further burials or other contemporary features existed.
- To provide sufficient information to allow mitigation against any adverse effects the proposed development may have on the buried archaeological resource.
- to undertake an assessment of the regional context within which the archaeological evidence rests and to highlight any relevant research issues within a national and regional research framework.

4. Documentary Research

4.1 Secondary Sources

The National Monuments Record and Pembrokeshire Sites and Monuments Record list three Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's) and 31 Listed Buildings within a 2km radius of Croes-goch. The listed buildings are all post-medieval in date and include agricultural structures and features, dwellings, garden features, schools and churches.

Two of the SAM's are prehistoric in date: White House chambered tomb, a probable mortuary monument of Neolithic date (Cummings and Whittle 2004, 159) is located 2km to the south

of the site; Bickney Beacon round barrow, a Bronze Age burial mound is located 1.5km to the north of the site. This latter monument was excavated in the 19th century and was found to contain a large stone-lined cist containing traces of a possible inhumation and a 'holed axe hammer' (RCAHMW). There are numerous other sites of Neolithic and Bronze Age date in this part of the county, including several well-preserved chambered tombs such as Carreg Samson and the settlement site of Clegyr Boia (Cummings and Whittle 2004, 2), attesting to the significance of this part of the Pembrokeshire landscape in the early prehistoric period.

The third SAM is a cross-incised stone of early medieval date and is currently located 1km to the north-east of the proposed development site at Mesur-y-dorth. The stone has been built into a wall beside the road for at least the last 70 years. It has a Latin outline ring cross inscribed upon it and is thought to date to the 7th to 9th century AD. There is no evidence to suggest the original location of this stone.

4.2 Map Regression

The Tithe Map of 1840 (fig. 3) shows the site as undeveloped arable land and the village of Croes-goch little more than a few isolated houses. By 1888 the 1st Edition OS map (fig. 4) shows the village to have grown, with the focus around the cross-roads, but not extending into the field covered by the present site. Three fields are shown as 'Parc-y-fynwent', two of which were shown as a single field on the Tithe map. The map shows the location of the 'stone coffin and sword' revealed in 1800. The 2nd edition OS map of 1908 (fig. 5) shows little change to the village or site, and it is not until the 1960s that the school is built on the site. It is in the 1970s that development on Parc-y-fynwent accelerates.

5. Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

Following consultation with Charles Hill of DAT-HM only two evaluation trenches were excavated instead of the three originally proposed. These were located to ensure both areas of main construction disturbance were covered.

5.1 Archaeological Excavation

The evaluation trenches were excavated over 2 days in August in generally dry and sunny conditions (see fig 2).

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located on the western side of the school, in the footprint of the proposed building extension. It was orientated NE/SW, was 20m long and 1.8m wide (see fig. 2 and plate 1). The trench was excavated down to the natural surface by machine under archaeological supervision. The natural surface was subsequently cleaned by hand.

The trench varied in depth from 0.42m at the southern end to 0.38m at the northern end. Underlying the turf a deposit of brown topsoil was identified, measuring a consistent depth of 0.1m along the length of the trench. Beneath this topsoil a layer of reddish clay silt subsoil up to 0.26m deep overlay the yellow clay and shattered shale natural. The subsoil contained fragments of blue glaze pottery, chunks of brick and small inclusions of coal.

At the northern end of the trench a roughly oval posthole, [001], was revealed (see fig. 6 and plates 1, 2 and 3). This measured 0.74m long by 0.6m wide and 0.25m deep, with vertical sides and a flat base. The posthole contained five packing stones, four large rounded pieces of

quartz and lava stone and a small angular quartz stone. Three of the stones had charcoal on their surfaces, and traces of charcoal were found in the fill of the pit, mostly concentrated in the areas in contact with the packing stones. There was no evidence for *in situ* burning however. The pit fill comprised a fairly compact mid-brown clay silt with some small pieces of charcoal and fragments of weathered shale. Bioturbation had affected the upper fill of the pit, and small chunks of coal were recovered, evidently derived from the overlying subsoil. No finds were recovered from the posthole. A bulk sample of the fill of the posthole (max 11 litres) was taken, together with samples of charcoal from around the packing stones. This material will be retained for analysis during any future phase of work.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located approximately 25m to the north-west of trench 1 (see fig 2 and plate 4) and positioned over the location of the proposed new access road. It was orientated NE/SW, was 20m long and 1.8m wide. It was notably shallower than trench 1, with evidence of disturbance of the natural. The trench was a consistent 0.25m deep along its length, with the turf overlying a mixed deposit of topsoil, subsoil and redeposited natural shattered shale. The deposit also contained chunks of brick. The trench cut through the school's football pitch, and the inclusion of shale in the topsoil suggests that it had been landscaped at some point in the past to ensure good drainage. No features were identified in the trench.

5.2 Watching Brief

The watching brief was carried out on six geotechnical trial pits being dug by Quantum GB across the site (see fig. 2). The excavation of all of the trial pits was done under archaeological supervision. The weather conditions during the excavation of the pits were extremely poor, with constant heavy rain hampering the works.

5.2.1 Trial Pit 1

Trial pit 1 was located close to the SW end of evaluation trench 1. It measured 3m in length by 0.6m wide and was excavated in a NE-SW direction to a maximum depth of 1m. As in the evaluation trench, the turf and topsoil overlay a deposit of subsoil 0.2m deep, mixed with brick, pottery and stone with occasional charcoal fragments. No archaeological features were revealed.

5.2.2 Trial Pit 2

Trial pit 2 was located mid-way along and 2m to the east of evaluation trench 1. It measured 3m in length and 0.6m wide, and was excavated in a NE-SW direction to a maximum depth of 0.78m (see plate 5). The deposits were identical to those in trial pit 1 and no archaeology was revealed.

5.2.3 Trial Pit 3

Trial pit 3 was located between evaluation trenches 1 and 2, 8m to the east of them. It measured 3m in length by 0.6m wide, and was excavated in a NE-SW direction to a maximum depth of 1.2m (see plate 6). Underlying the turf and topsoil a layer of redeposited subsoil with frequent stone and brick inclusions was identified. This was up to 0.2m deep and was similar to that identified in evaluation trench 2. The redeposited subsoil overlay a layer of subsoil with frequent stone inclusions. No archaeological features were revealed.

5.2.4 Trial Pit 4

Trial pit 4 was located at the NE end of evaluation trench 2. It measured 3m in length by 0.6m wide, and was excavated in a E-W direction to a maximum depth of 1.77m (see plate 7). Underlying the turf and topsoil a layer of redeposited subsoil with frequent stone inclusions and some brick was identified. This measured 0.3m deep and overlay a subsoil layer which contained frequent stones. The deposits were similar to those identified in evaluation trench 2 and trial pit 3. No archaeological features were revealed.

5.2.5 Trial Pit 5

Trial pit 5 was located to the west of the evaluation trenches, close to the edge of the current car park. It measured 3m in length by 0.6m wide, and was excavated in a NE-SW direction to a maximum depth of 1m (see plate 8). Below the turf and topsoil a mixed deposit of redeposited clay silt (mix of topsoil and subsoil), brick and other building debris was identified. This was up to 0.4m deep and overlay a subsoil containing occasional stones. No archaeological features were revealed.

5.2.6 Trial Pit 6

Trial pit 6 was located on an area of grass to the east of the school buildings. It measured 2.4m in length and 0.6m wide and was excavated in an E-W direction to a maximum depth of 1.42m (see plate 9). Below the turf and topsoil a deposit of subsoil 0.2m deep containing occasional stones was identified. No archaeological features were revealed.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The documentary research revealed the potential of the proposed development site to yield archaeological remains of possible early medieval date, given its location in relation to a known early Christian burial ground. The excavation of the evaluation trenches was aimed at confirming the presence or absence of further burials and investigating the possibility of associated contemporary features prior to the construction of the proposed school extension. No graves were identified; however the identification of a single posthole has raised the possibility of structures on the site. No further evidence for structure was identified in the geotechnical trial pits; however the pits were relatively small and excavated in particularly poor weather conditions.

The identification of an archaeological feature in close proximity to a site of recognised archaeological significance is important. The size of the posthole and substantial nature of the packing stones suggest that it would have supported a reasonably large post which is likely to have served a structural function. While only one posthole was revealed in the evaluation trench, this is unlikely to be an isolated feature, and may form part of a building. The identification of charcoal on the stones themselves and a lack of evidence for *in situ* burning suggests that they initially fulfilled a different function before being used to support a post. No evidence for a post survived, nor a postpipe to indicate that it rotted *in situ*. That, combined with the way the stones were arranged in the pit, as if they had fallen towards the centre, may demonstrate that the post was deliberately removed. The stones tentatively indicate at least two phases of activity on the site, with the postulated post removal perhaps indicative of a phase of destruction. While no diagnostic material or finds were identified in the pit fill, the recovery of charcoal should enable C14 dating to be undertaken to determine the period of use of the posthole.

The identification and dating of an early Christian cist grave, together with two undated but probably contemporary long-cists, in the field immediately to the SE of the proposed development site constituted an extremely significant find. The early post-Roman/early medieval period is under-researched in this part of Wales, despite the presence of a major early Christian religious centre at St Davids and the concentration of early Christian burial sites in the local area. Evidence would indicate that Croes-goch was a site of religious note, with the burials and the possible presence of a chapel (see above) in the village, together with a carved stone displaying an early Christian symbol presumed to originate from the local area. While no evidence of a chapel has been identified, the association of such a building with the graves, or the development of a chapel on a pre-existing burial ground can be postulated. While a single undated posthole does not make an early medieval chapel, the find is an indication that a structure of some form once occupied the site. Further investigation of the site in advance of any construction is vital, to reveal the form of any surviving structure/s and to determine their spatial and chronological relationship with the dated burials.

The 'Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales: Early Medieval period' (Edwards *et al* 2005) highlights the need for thorough investigation of all newly discovered and potential early medieval sites. The framework notes the relative paucity of the evidence for this period, particularly in reference to the emergence and development of Christianity and Christian sites, recommending that the 'confirmation of potential early medieval sites through fieldwork...and the application of dating techniques' as a research priority (*ibid* 36).

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Charles Hill of DAT-HM for his advice and consultation during the works and after, to Chris from Karwyn Plant Hire for his excellent excavation and backfilling of the trenches and to Hywel for his assistance on site. Thanks also to Jane Evans and the staff of Croes-goch Primary School for their interest and understanding during the works.

8. Bibliography

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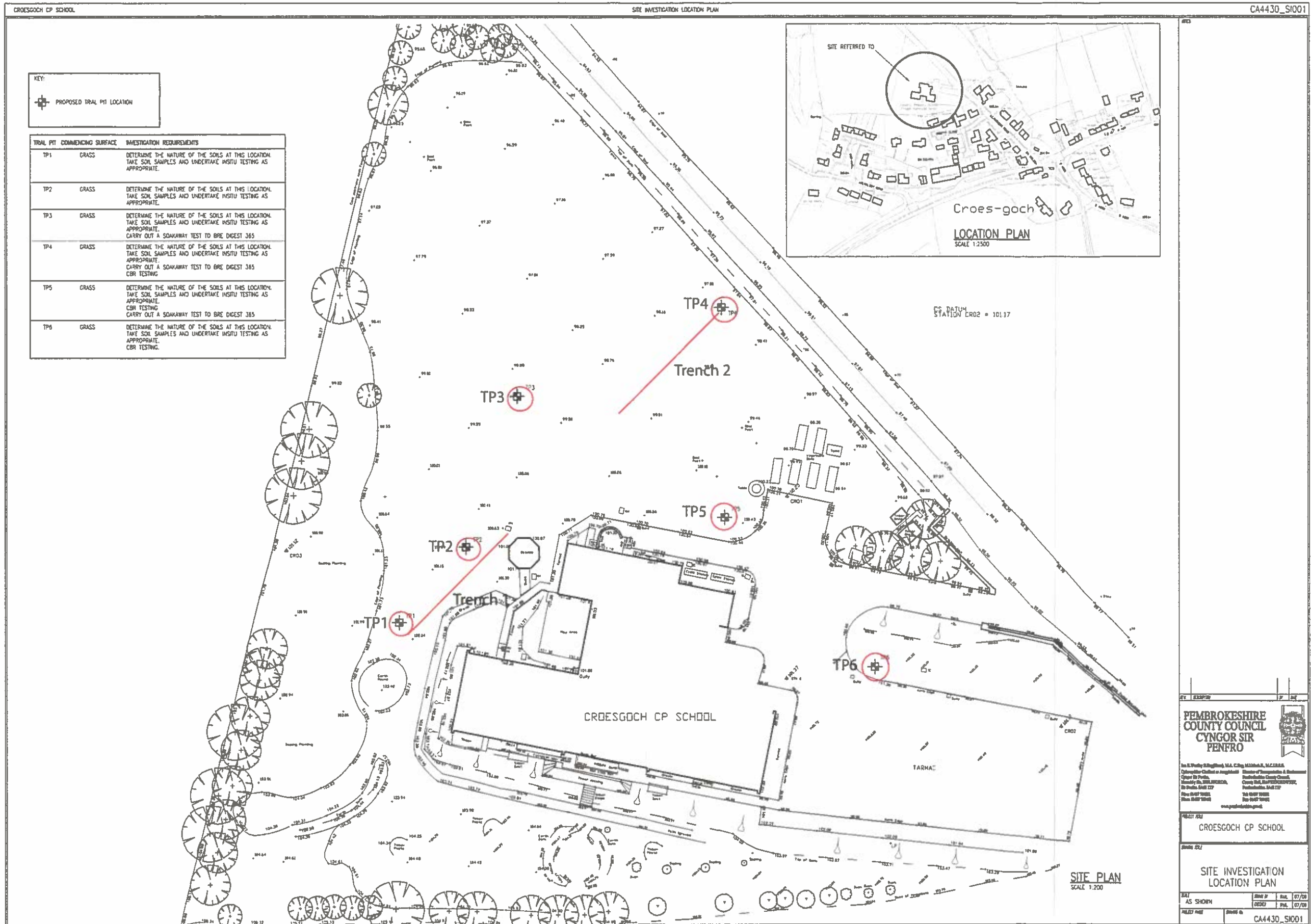
Edwards, N, Lane, A, Bapty, I And Redknapp, M. 2005. Early Medieval Wales: a framework for archaeological research. *Archaeology in Wales*, 45. 33-46.

Ludlow, N. 2003 *A Burial from the Cist Cemetery at Croesgoch, Pembrokeshire*. Cambria Archaeology, unpublished client report No. 2003/56.

Secondary sources consulted:

RCAHMW online NMRW (Coflein)
1840s Tithe Map – Llanrhian Parish
1888 OS 1st Edition Map
1908 OS 2nd Edition Map





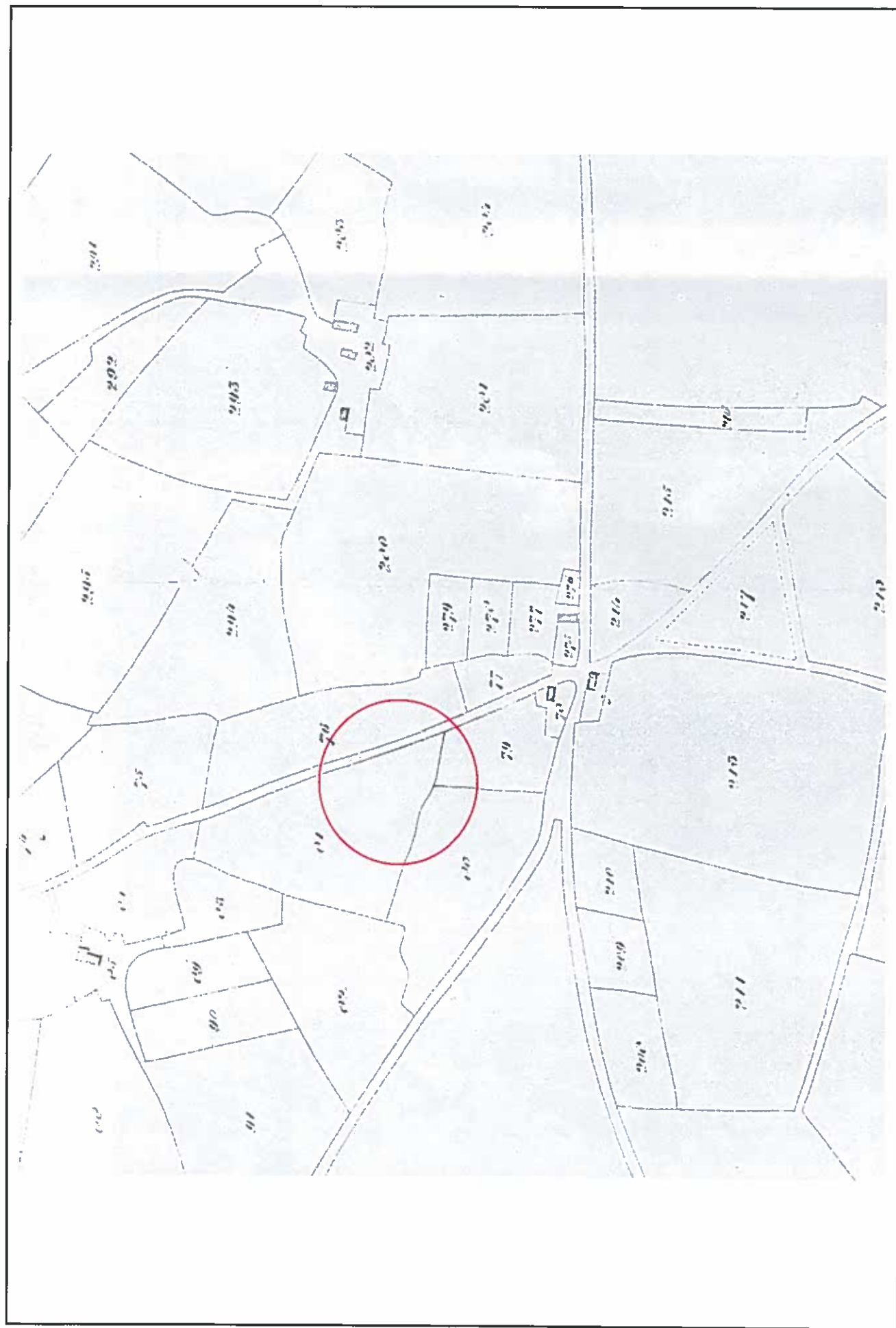


Fig. 3. 1840s Tithe Map showing location of site

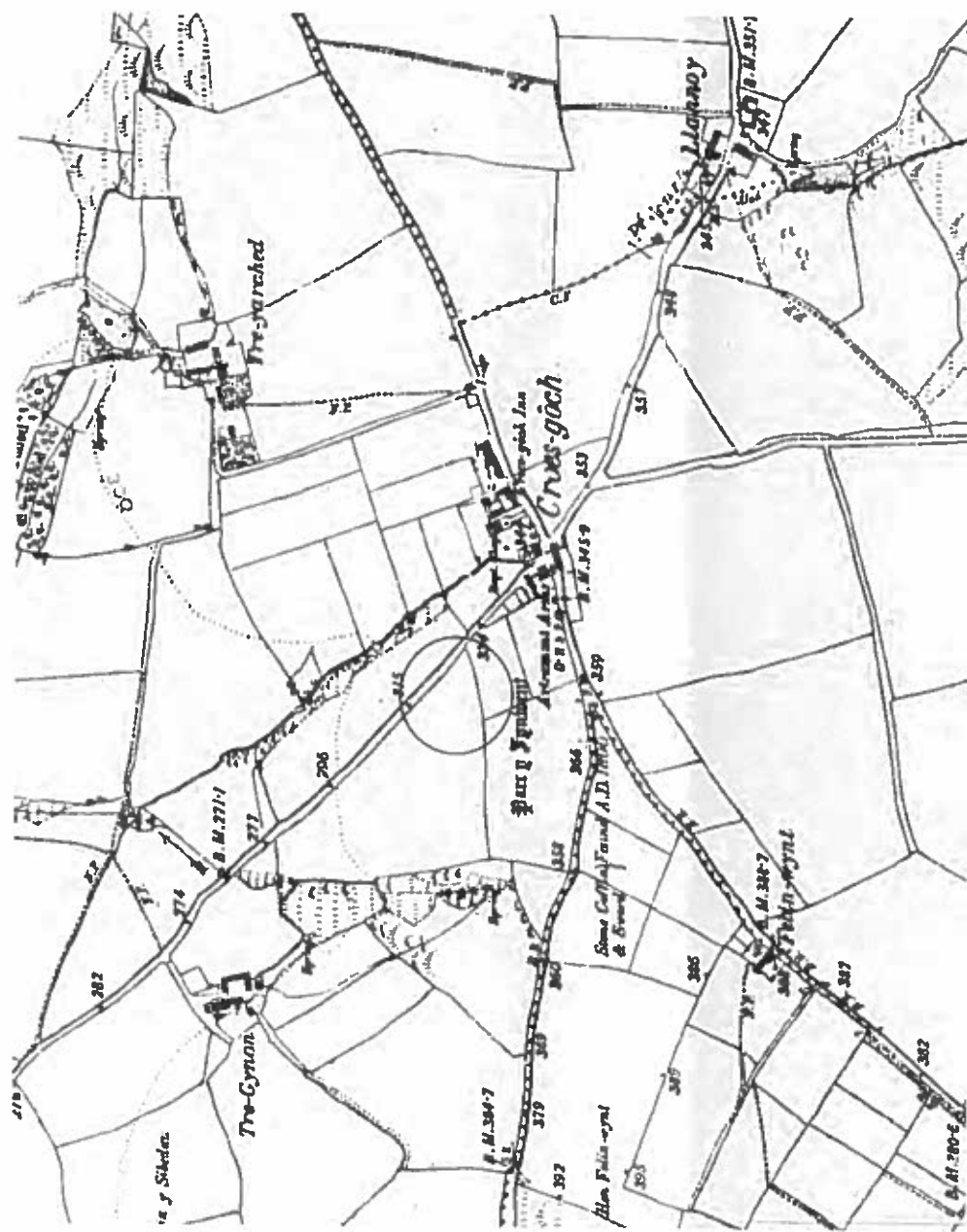


Fig. 4. 1888 1st Edition OS Map showing location of site

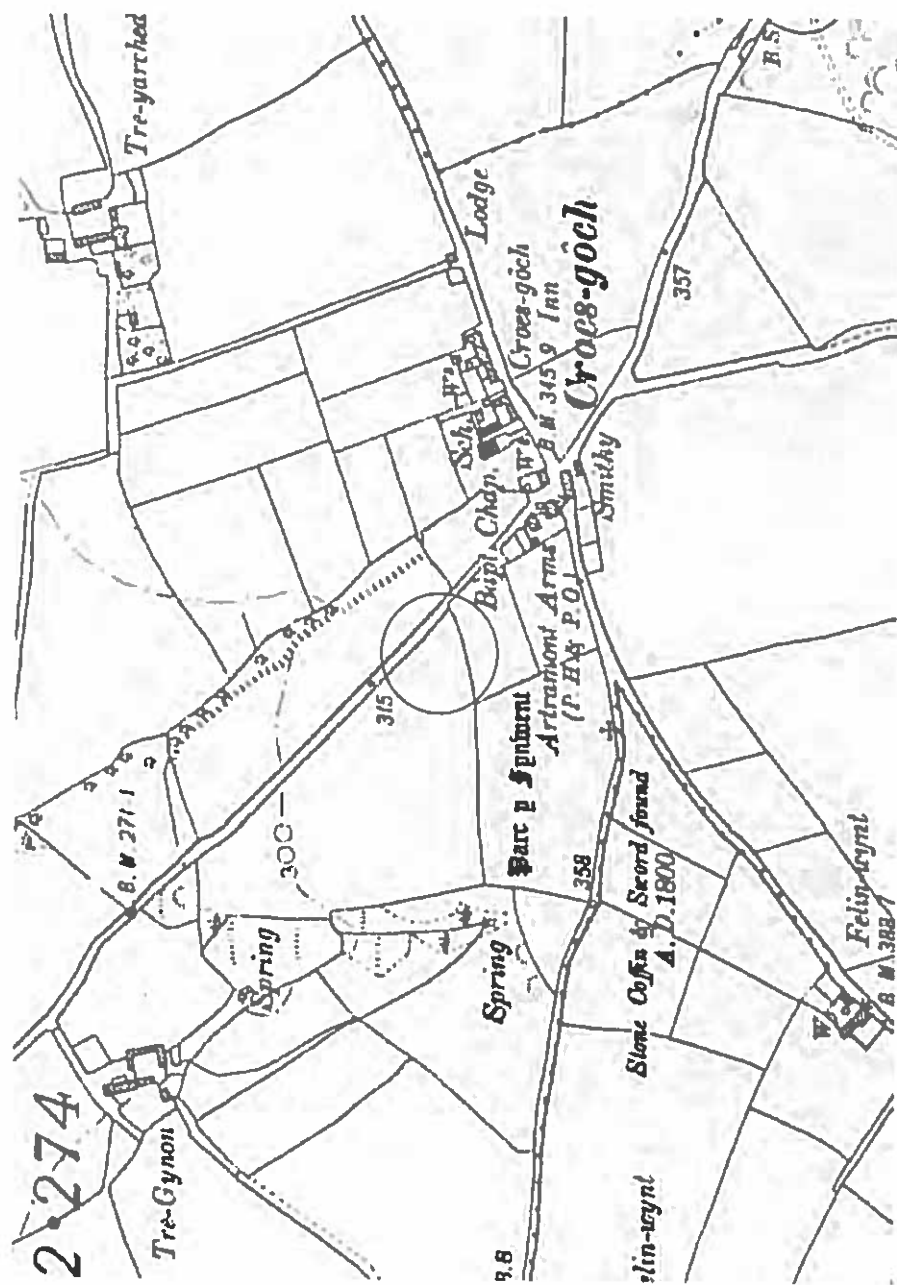


Fig. 5. 1908 2nd Edition OS Map showing location of site

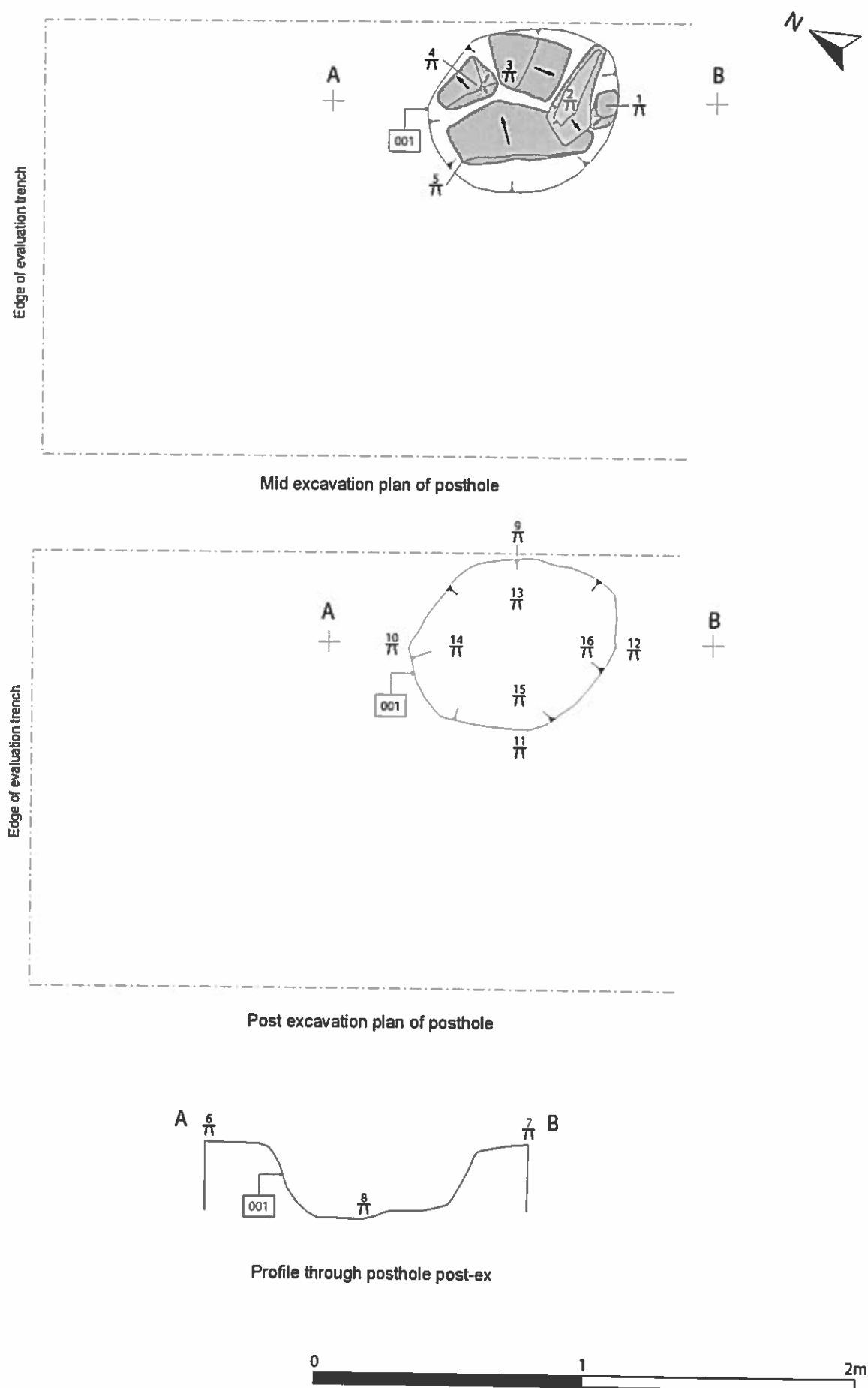


Fig. 6 Pre-ex and post-ex plans of the posthole and profile through the posthole post-ex



Plate 1.
Evaluation Trench 1
showing posthole
(bottom left)
looking south-east

Scale = 2m



Plate 2.
Posthole with
packing *in situ*

Scale = 1m



Plate 3.
Posthole with
packing removed

Scale = 1m

Plate 4.
Evaluation Trench 2
looking south-east

Scale = 2m





Plate 5 .
TP2 post-ex

Scale = 1m



Plate 6.
TP3 post-ex
Scale = 2m



Plate 7.
TP4 post-ex

Scale = 2m



Plate 8.
TP5 post-ex
Scale = 1m

Plate 9.
TP6 post-ex
Scale = 2m



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LEVELS RECORD

Site Name: Croes-Goch Primary School

Site Code: CCP/09/EVA

TBM ht: 102.17m

1 = 98.99m
2 = 99.14m
3 = 99.19m
4 = 99.19m
5 = 98.97m
6 = 99.20m
7 = 99.20m
8 = 98.79m
9 = 99.15m
10= 99.14m
11= 99.11m
12= 99.12m
13= 98.90m
14= 98.89m
15= 98.91m
16= 98.91m

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Site Name: Croes-goch County Primary School, Croes-goch

Site code: CCP/09/EVAL

PRN: -

NPRN: -

SAM: -

Other Ref No.: CAP Report No. 583

NGR: SM 82708 30361

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Project Type: Archaeological DBA, Evaluation and Watching Brief

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Project Dates: August 2009-09-08

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