

Allt Nant y Ci Archaeological Survey



Report by: Trysor

For: Mr Eirian James of Carmarthenshire County Council's Countryside
Recreation & Access Unit, Heol Hirwaun Olau, Mynydd Mawr Woodland
Park, Tumble, Carmarthenshire SA14 6HU

November 2007



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By

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Trysor**

Trysor Project No. 2007/98

**For: Mr Eirian James of Carmarthenshire County Council's Countryside
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Cover photograph: Cwmffalde field at Allt Nant y Ci, an undisturbed meadow. September 2007

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1. Introduction

Mr Eirian James of Carmarthenshire County Council's Countryside Recreation & Access Unit, Heol Hirwaun Olau, Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park, Tumble, Carmarthenshire SA14 6HU commissioned Trysor heritage consultants to undertake an archaeological scheme of investigation in advance of the creation of a Recreation Park at Allt Nant y Ci, Saron, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire (planning application number: E/14582).

Allt Nant y Ci includes the land where the Park & Blaenau and Saron Collieries formerly stood. Both of these operated during the 20th century, in conjunction with Park Colliery to the east. The village of Saron, which is adjacent to Allt Nant y Ci, developed as a result of the growth of these collieries.

By the mid-1950s, both collieries had ceased production. Since the closure of the collieries, the sites were largely cleared during the 1960s and the land has gradually become overgrown with woodland and scrub.

2. The development

The development consists of the creation of a landscaped public recreation area, incorporating woodlands, footpaths and a fitness activity trail, including heritage interpretation.

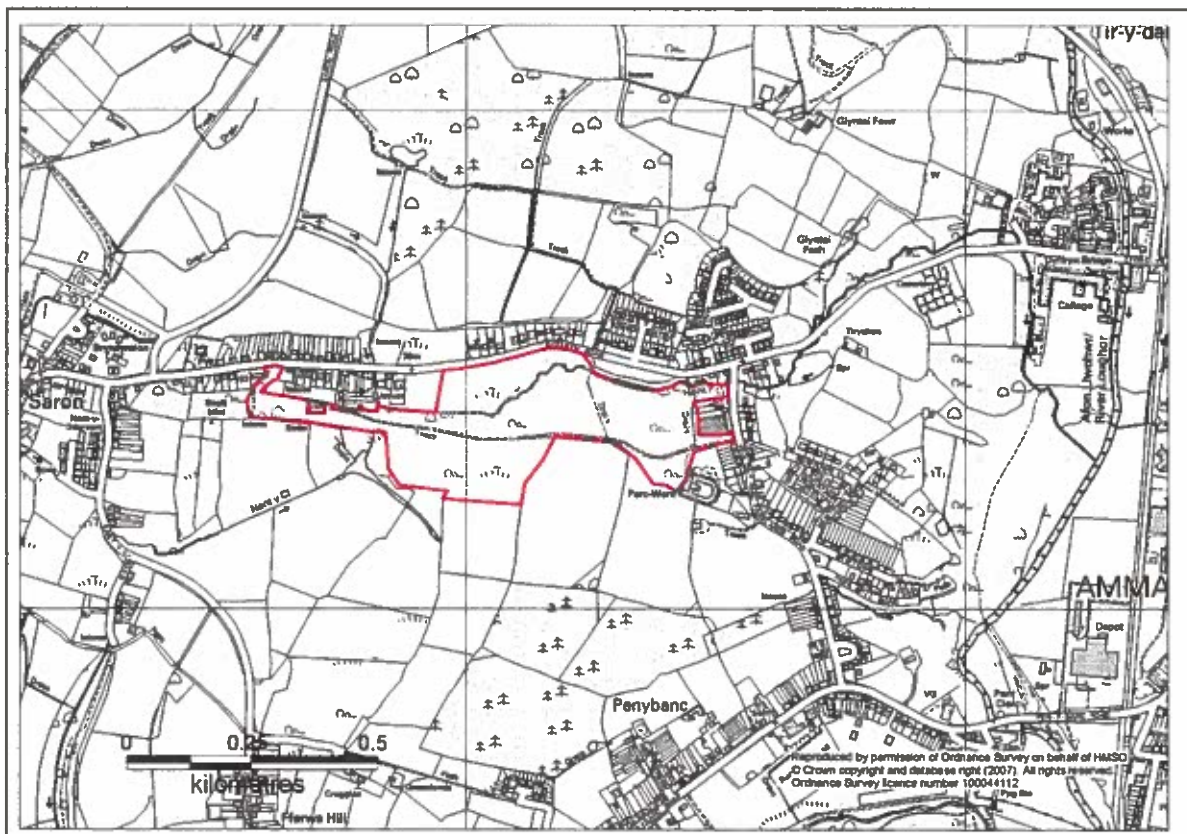


Fig 1: Location of Allt Nant y Ci (red boundary line)

3. Conditions on the consent

In granting approval for the application, the Local Planning Authority imposed ten conditions on the consent; the fifth condition specifies the actions necessary to mitigate the impact of the development on the archaeological resource.

"No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority."

The purpose of the condition is *"To protect historic environment interests whilst enabling development."*

An accompanying letter from Cambria Archaeology Heritage Management section, who act as archaeological advisors to the local planning authority, outlined that the scheme will include

- 1. The presentation of a written scheme of investigation, prepared for the applicant by a qualified archaeological contractor. This document will need to be approved by your Authority before development commences.*
- 2. This document will propose that an heritage audit should be carried out before any development takes place and that the results of this work will be considered in the final design of the development, which should protect and preserve key archaeological features.*
- 3. A report will need to be produced on the work in 2 above.*

Following the appointment of the contractor, the purpose of the Scheme of Investigation was clarified by discussion with Cambria Archaeology's Heritage Management Section.

4. Historical Overview

The archaeological survey was requested as the development will occur on the former sites of the Park & Blaina and Saron collieries. However, 19th century estate maps survive that give some insight into the land use here before the collieries were opened.

During medieval times, the survey area was close to the historic Mynydd Mawr common, a large tract of unenclosed moorland that sat between the Gwendraeth and Llwchwr valleys of Carmarthenshire. A survey of Mynydd Mawr carried out for the Duchy of Lancaster in the early 17th century (Rees, W, 1953) indicates that there was also a low level of coal mining activity being undertaken across the area, probably in the form of small and seasonally mined coal pits worked by local men. The coal would have been used as a domestic fuel and for lime burning in the locality. According to a local tradition recorded in the parish history (Roberts, G, 1939), a series of small coal pits in the area of Allt Nant y Ci had been worked over 300 years previously.

The earliest map evidence available of the area around Allt Nant y Ci itself appears to be the Ordnance Survey 1" to 1 mile map published in 1831 (see Fig.2), but surveyed in this

area c.1813. This map is not detailed enough to identify field shapes and minor landscape features, but it does show that the survey area was situated between the farmsteads of Tir Ychen, Park, Cwm Ffaldau and Nantyci. The name Cwm Ffaldau (Valley of the Sheepfolds) may be a reference to much earlier times when the area formed part of the extensive Mynydd Mawr common and was a sheltered valley where sheepfolds were found.



Fig 2: 1831 Ordnance Survey map

Each of these holdings can be seen to own land in or adjacent to the Allt Nant y Ci site on the Llandybie parish tithe map of 1842 (below, survey area boundary shown in red).

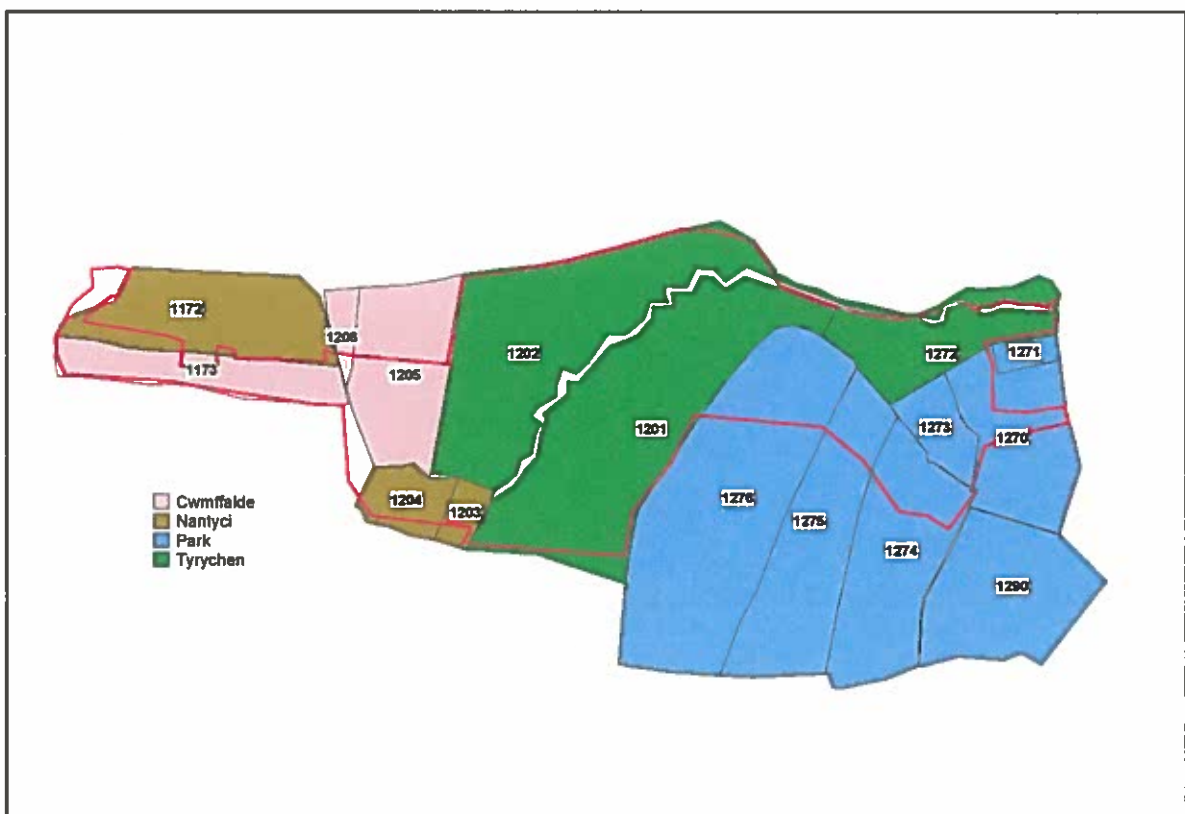


Fig. 3: Farm holdings on 1842 Llandybie parish tithe map

The tithe map records the details shown in Table 1 for the field parcels that correspond approximately with the survey area:

Table 1: Field names and holdings on parish tithe map

| Field No. | Holding | Owner | Tenant | Field Name | Land Use |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1172 | Nantyci | John Mansel | William Davies | - | Pasture |
| 1203 | Nantyci | John Mansel | William Davies | - | Pasture |
| 1204 | Nantyci | John Mansel | William Davies | - | Pasture |
| 1173 | Cwmffalde | Thomas Quarrington | Evan Bevan | Llain | Meadow |
| 1205 | Cwmffalde | Thomas Quarrington | Evan Bevan | Cwmffaldau | Pasture |
| 1206 | Cwmffalde | Thomas Quarrington | Evan Bevan | Cwmffalde | Homestead |
| 1201 | Tyrychen | Thomas Quarrington | George Robinson | Cae Cwmffaldau | Arable & Wood |
| 1202 | Tyrychen | Thomas Quarrington | George Robinson | Cae Cwmffaldau | Arable & Wood |
| 1272 | Tyrychen | Thomas Quarrington | George Robinson | Cae Crydd | Pasture |
| 1270 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Cae Coed Bach | Arable |
| 1271 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Plantation | Wood |
| 1273 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Wood | Wood |
| 1274 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Cae Crwn | Pasture |
| 1275 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Orchard | Meadow |
| 1276 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Cae Odyn | Meadow |
| 1290 | Park | William Rees | Himself | Cae Ffynnon | Arable |

The picture presented in the tithe survey is one of a rural landscape, with most of the land within the area being farmed, apart from small areas of woodland which are mostly confined to the banks of the Nantyci stream, which flows eastwards through the area. There is no indication on the map of coal mining being carried out here at this time.

Two late 19th century maps (Figs. 4 & 5), give slightly differing perspectives on the landscape. A map drawn up for the sale of Tyrychen farm in 1873 shows at least 9 small coal pits either side of the Nantyci stream (labelled here as Nant y Cwm), indicating a possible increase in mining activity in the mid-19th century. The 1:10560 Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (surveyed in 1876), however, only shows one Old Coal Pit in the same area, at the western side of Nantyci stream. Presumably these small mid-19th century coalpits had gone out of use by the time of the second survey. Otherwise both maps show a predominantly rural landscape, little changed from the tithe map nearly 50 years earlier.

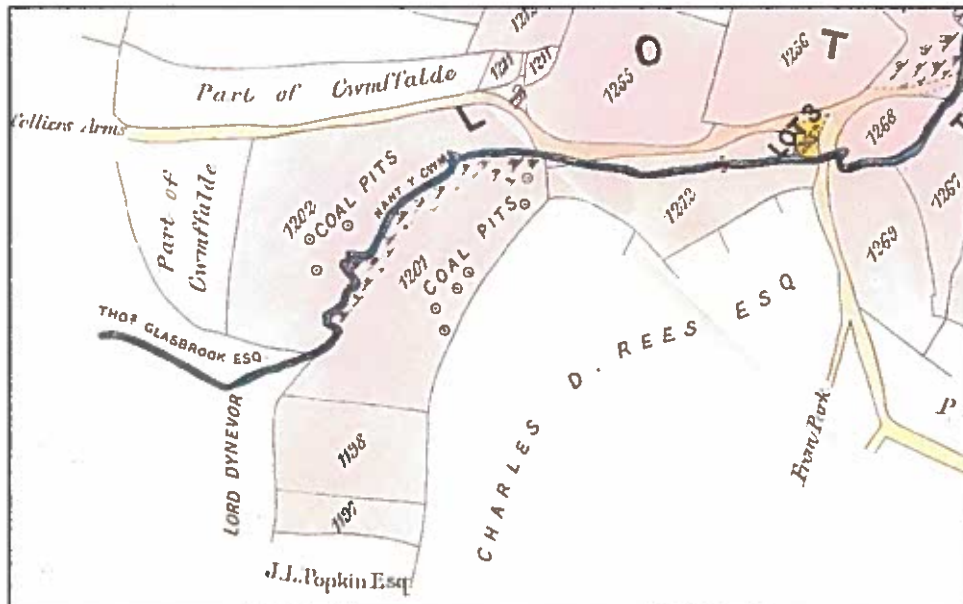


Fig.4: 1873
Sales catalogue
map

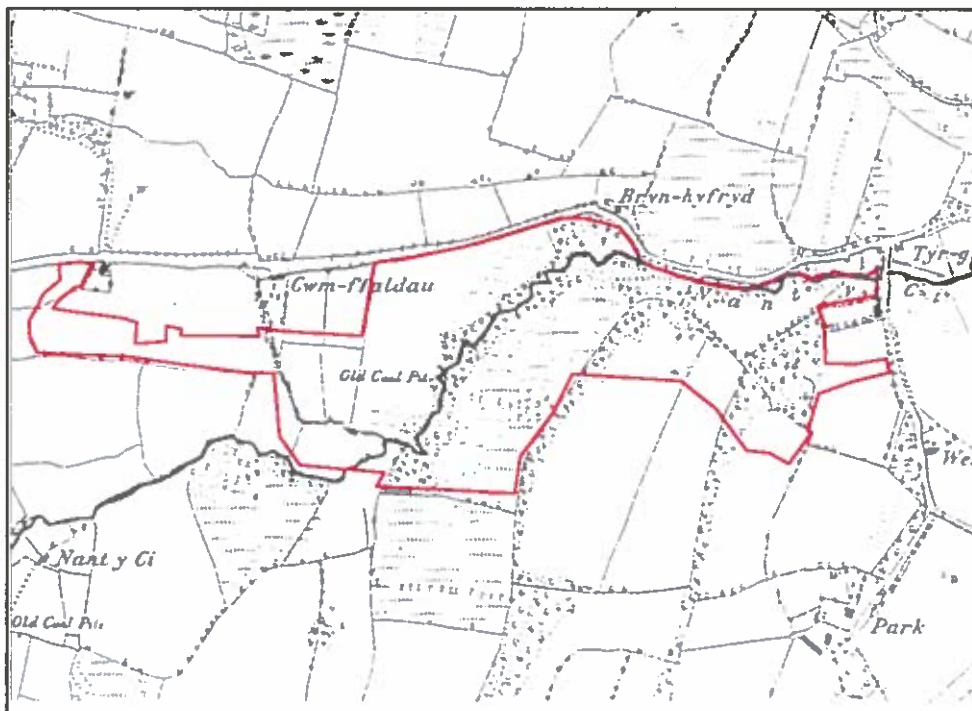


Fig.5: 1891
Ordnance Survey
map

The first major industrial development of importance to the survey area would appear to have been the appearance of Park Colliery a little over 0.5km to the southeast. This colliery was apparently founded by one Mr John Lloyd, sometime during the 1860s or early 1870s, one of several collieries opened by Lloyd in the district. It was certainly recorded by the Ordnance Survey in 1876.

Although Park Colliery was outside the survey area, by the early part of the 20th century, it was to become linked to it by a tramway, after the opening of the associated Park & Blaina Colliery.

Park & Blaina Colliery stood at the eastern end of the Allt Nant y Ci survey area. The Park & Blaina pit was closed during the Great War of 1914-1918 according to the parish history (Roberts, G, 1939).

In 1915, the Saron Colliery opened at the western end of the survey area, and the tramway link to the old Park Colliery site was maintained into the mid-20th century. By the 1950s, it appears that the screens for the Saron pit were located at the Park Colliery site, which was no longer an operational colliery.

The Ordnance Survey maps of 1907 (revised 1905), 1921 (revised 1913) and 1953 show clearly the position and extent of each of these collieries (all shown below).

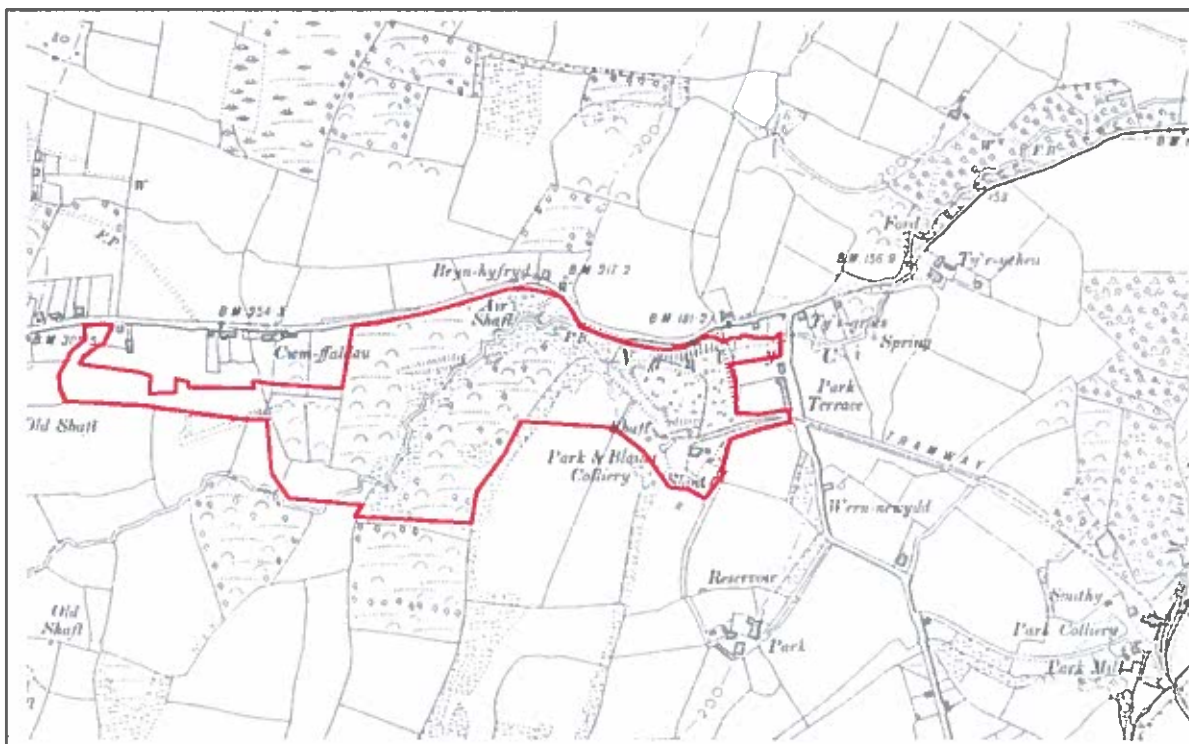


Fig. 6: 1907 Ordnance Survey map



When Saron closed in 1956, the period of active mining within the survey area seems to have come to a close. It appears that most of the features and buildings associated with the Park & Blaina and Saron collieries were removed during the late 1950s or 1960s. Nevertheless, a large amount of colliery waste was left in situ, gradually becoming overgrown with woodland and scrub, which has obscured most of the area for the past 50 years.

5. Site Survey

On September 05, 2007, Trysor undertook a detailed survey of the Allt Nant y Ci survey area to assess the evidence for the survival of any historic landscape or industrial archaeology features that may be threatened by future development. An audit of features recorded is included in Appendix 2 of this report.

Despite the presence of thick scrub and woodland across the site, access was gained to most areas, certainly to the extent that a satisfactorily detailed record has been made of the site and those features that it contains. An assessment of the substantial loss of historic features due to site clearance and probable opencast mining operations after the closure of Saron Colliery was also possible.

5.1 Surviving historic features

Few surviving historic features were encountered, but those identified are listed in Table 2 below. The most significant surviving elements of the pre-1956 landscape and colliery complex, tabulated below, are shown on Fig 9.

Table 2: Surviving historic features recorded in 2007

| No. | Site Type | Condition | Map | NGR | Description |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------|------|--------------|--|
| A | Tramway | C | None | SN6103012360 | A section of the bed of the tramway or railway that connected the Saron Colliery heapstead to the colliery screens at the old Park Colliery site, over 1km to the east. Survives as a linear earthwork, with its northern side defined by an earthwork bank. |
| B | Spoil tip & Air shaft | B | 1907 | SN6119412511 | Site of an old spoil tip created by the opening of a nearby air shaft, presumably for Park & Blaina Colliery. The tip survives in a wooded area. |
| C | Field | A | 2007 | SN6102012440 | A field that survives as a traditional hay meadow and has been left untouched by industrial development around the Saron and Park and Blaina Colliery sites. Of high environmental importance. Called Cae Cwmffaldau on the parish Tithe Map. |
| D | Coal Tip | C | None | SN6136012390 | An old coal tip associated with the former Park & Blaina Colliery in the first quarter of the 20th century. It has evidently been levelled and spread sometime after the colliery closed in 1932, most probably after nearby Saron Colliery closed in 1956. |
| E | Coal Tip | C | None | SN6100012290 | A levelled coal tip, apparently derived from the activities of the Park & Blaina Colliery during the 1920s. It has been affected by possible opencasting and associated reinstatement work carried out sometime after nearby Saron Colliery closed in 1956. |

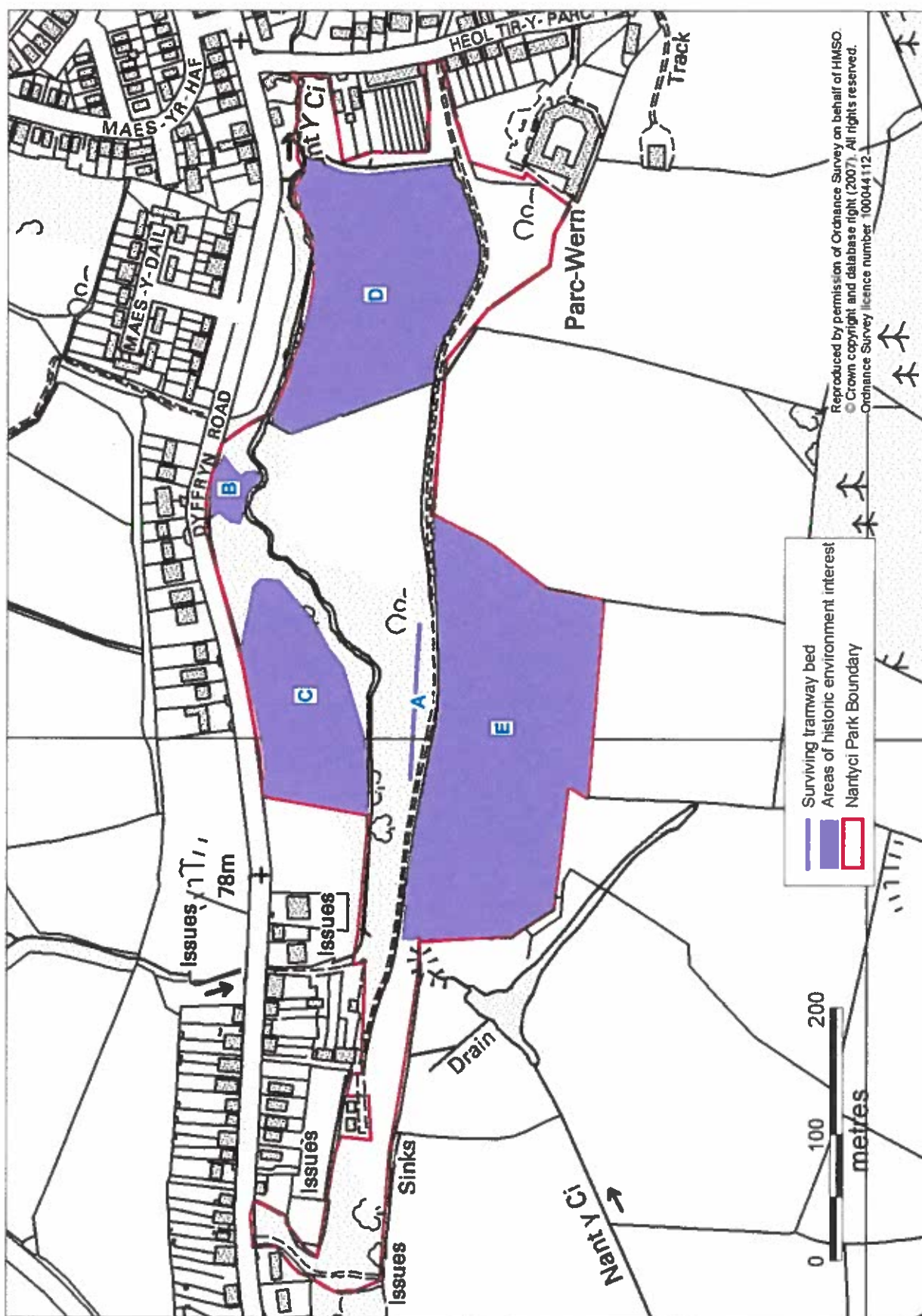


Fig.9: Surviving historic features recorded in 2007 (see Appendix 2)

6. Recommendations

It is important that any future development takes into account the character of the five features identified as sites A-E in Table 2 and Figure 9 above. These five features are not of equal historic environmental value and the following recommendations reflect this fact:

- The two areas of coal tipping (D & E) have been considerably disturbed in the past and cannot be considered to survive in anything like their original condition. This is particularly true of No. 028. Landscaping should not meet objections from an historic landscape perspective and future site interpretation could indicate their former condition and extent.
- The airshaft and spoil tip (B) on the northern side of the Nantyci brook should not be disturbed as they are intact elements in the historic landscape.
- The surviving section of the original tramway bed (A) connecting Saron Colliery to its colliery screens and the main railway line should not be disturbed by development work.
- The management of the undisturbed field (C) to the north of the Nantyci brook should reflect the fact that it has not been farmed for several decades and appears to be rich in plant and insect life. The field itself is a fragment of the pre-industrial landscape and as such should be retained.

As far as can be determined, the rest of the survey area has either been significantly damaged by opencasting or landscaping associated with events after the closure of Saron Colliery, or has been obscured by considerable quantities of colliery waste tips. The areas where colliery buildings, mineshafts and levels formerly stood within the area have been examined and there is no evidence that any such features survive, even as subsurface features.

6.1 Potential hazards

Although it would appear that all 19th and 20th century coal pits, slants and mineshafts have been sealed off or at least buried by later colliery waste, it cannot be said with any certainty that any of these may not pose a hazard should any groundworks be undertaken on the site.

Figure 11 (see Appendix 2), shows the approximate location of all disused mine workings as recorded on relevant maps from 1842 until 1953. It is advised that caution be observed when working in these locations if any groundworks is to be undertaken.

7. Summary

During the autumn of 2007, Trysor undertook an archaeological scheme of investigation in advance of the creation of a Recreation Park at **Allt Nant y Ci, Saron, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire** (planning application number: E/14582).

A walk-over field survey was undertaken of the area of the proposed Recreation Park to identify historic or archaeological features that might be affected by development work. The survey area was known to include the sites of the former Park & Blaina and Saron collieries and to overlay an earlier agricultural landscape. It was discovered that much of the area has been landscaped since the closure of the collieries during the early- to mid-20th century, and as a result very few archaeological features survive. The only surviving elements of the colliery complexes were much degraded coal tip sites, the spoil tip derived from a former airshaft, and a short section of old tramway bed. Two pre-industrial field parcels survive as a relatively undisturbed open area within the boundary of the proposed Recreation Park, and these were considered to be important for their rich flora and fauna and as elements of the historic landscape.

8. Archive

The project archive has been deposited with the National Monuments Record, Aberystwyth including a digital copy of this report and photographic records relating directly to the investigations undertaken. Photographs are in TIFF format, following the standard required by the RCAHMS.

A further copy of the report has been supplied to the Regional Historic Environment Record.

9. Sources

9.1 Map evidence

Ordnance Survey, 1891, Carmarthenshire Sheet XLVIII.NE, scale 1:10560, surveyed 1876

Ordnance Survey, 1907, Carmarthenshire Sheet XLVIII.NE, scale 1:10560, revised 1905

Ordnance Survey, 1921, Carmarthenshire Sheet XLVIII.NE, scale 1:10560, revised 1913

Ordnance Survey, 1953, SN61SW, scale 1:10560

Tithe map, 1842, Llandybie parish

Sale Catalogue of Cwmffalde and Tyrychen etc, Parish of Llandebie, Lots 2-5, 1873
(National Library of Wales)

Map of Cwm Ffaldau, Llandybie c. 1890 (National Library of Wales)

9.2 Published sources

Davies, I, 2001, *History of Coal Mining in the Amman Valley*, p.48

Rees, W, 1953, *A survey of the Duchy of Lancaster lordship in Wales 1609-1613*.

Roberts, G, 1939, *Hanes Plwyf Llandybie*

APPENDIX 1: AUDIT OF HISTORIC FEATURES

This appendix presents a gazetteer of historic features at Allt Nant y Ci which have been identified either on historic maps or during field survey. The gazetteer notes the condition of each feature and the source of information.

A series of maps extrapolating information from historic maps is included, cross-referenced to the gazetteer table, for ease of identification of features now lost. The historic features have been digitally plotted onto a modern Ordnance Survey map base to create the maps for this report.

Table 3: Discrete features shown on Ordnance Survey maps
Key to Condition field: A = Intact; B=Well preserved; C=Damaged;
D=Substantial destruction; E=Destroyed

| No. | Site Type | Condition | Map source | NGR | Description |
|-----|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--|
| 001 | Coal Pit | E | 1891 | SN6101712337 | Marked as an Old Coal Pit on 1891 OS map. Now buried or destroyed by later mining. |
| 002 | Air Shaft | U | 1907 | SN6118412510 | Air Shaft shown in 1907. Area now obscured by woodland, no trace of shaft found on surface. |
| 003 | Building | D | 1907 | SN6117512521 | An apparent building associated with a nearby airshaft on the 1907 OS map. No surface trace found, but area heavily vegetated. |
| 004 | Footbridge | E | 1907 | SN6126012468 | Site of footbridge on 1907 OS map. Bridge no longer survives. |
| 005 | Mine Shaft | E | 1907 | SN6134512316 | Mine shaft of the old Park & Blaina Colliery. Presumed infilled and now lies below modern trackway. |
| 006 | Slant | E | 1907 | SN6139612275 | Slant of the old Park & Blaina Colliery. In an area disrupted by later mining activity, now buried or lost. |
| 007 | Slant | E | 1953 | SN6065412385 | Approximate location of the slant of the old Saron Colliery. |

Fig.10: Discrete features shown on Ordnance Survey maps

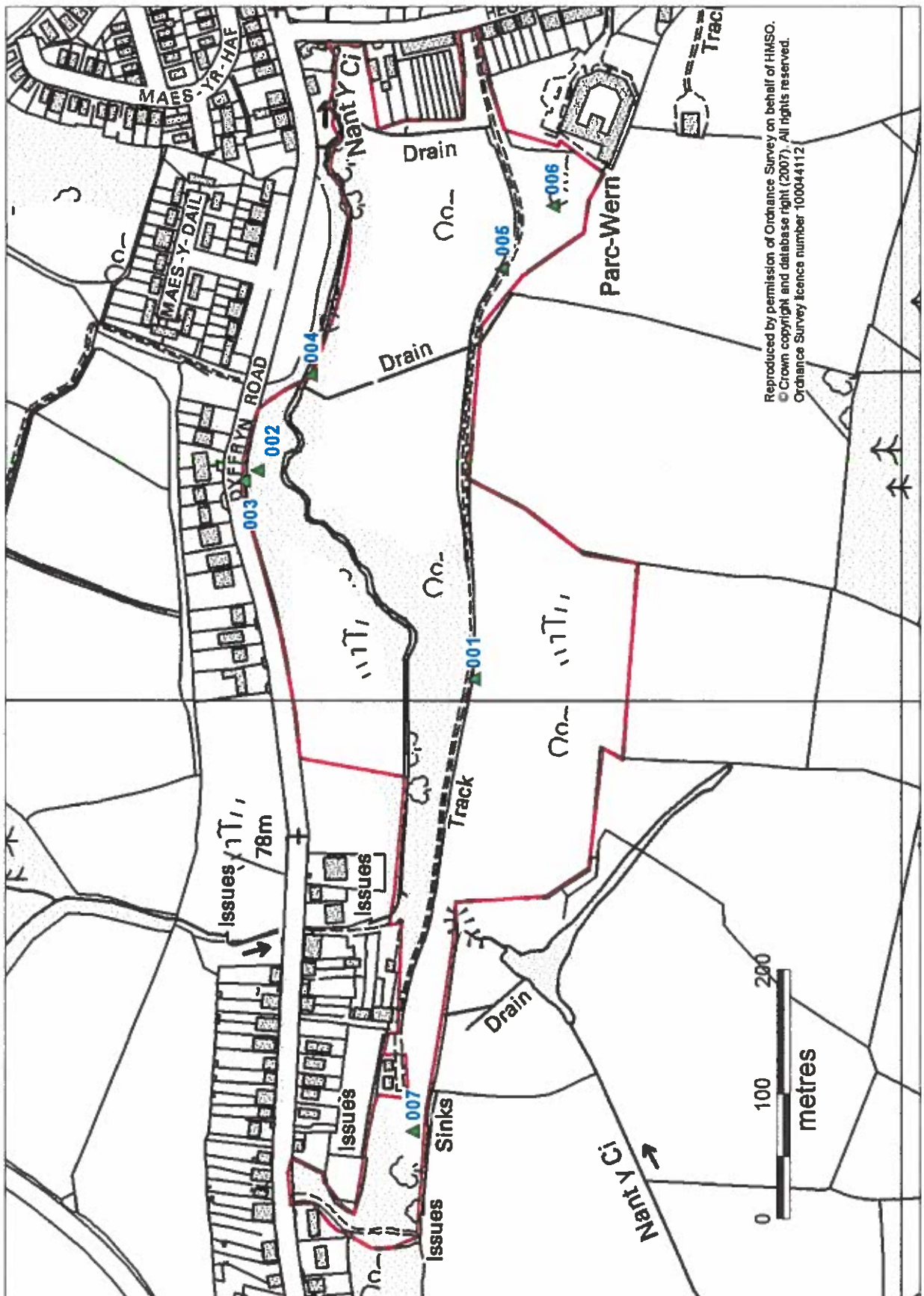


Table 4: Features shown on the 1907 Ordnance Survey Map

Key to Condition field: A = Intact; B=Well preserved; C=Damaged;

D=Substantial destruction; E=Destroyed

| No. | Site Type | Condition | Map source | NGR | Description |
|-----|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|--|
| 008 | Coal Tip | E | 1907 | SN6079112347 | A small, linear coal tip of probable early 20th century date, shown on OS maps. Lost to later mining. |
| 009 | Coal Tip | E | 1907 | SN6106412422 | Site of an old coal tip of early 20th century date. No longer visible in field and presumed to have been removed. |
| 010 | Spoil Tip | B | 1907 | SN6119012510 | A spoil tip derived from an air shaft associated with the Park & Blaina Colliery, shown on the 1907 OS map. |
| 11 | Coal Tip | U | 1907 | SN6114012431 | Site of a small coal tip presumed to be associated with early 20th century mining. Not found in 2007, area now wooded. |
| 12 | Coal Tip | D | 1907 | SN6124012460 | A small coal tip at the Park and Blaina Colliery shown on the 1907 map. Was linked to the heapstead by a tramway or trackway. |
| 13 | Coal Tip | C | 1907 | SN6140912385 | The main coal tip of the Park & Blaina Colliery in the early 1900s, connected by a tramway system to the main shaft and slant of the colliery. Buried beneath a larger tip. |
| 14 | Coal Tip | D | 1907 | SN6134012292 | A coal tip belonging to the Park & Blaina Colliery, close to the main shaft. Between 1921 and closure c.1932 it appears to have been extended as a curving, linear tip, running southwest of the shaft area. Later buried under a larger coal tip and eventually largely levelled by later 20th century activity |
| 15 | Coal Mine | E | 1907 | SN6140712290 | The site of the old Park & Blaina Colliery, including the area of the main shaft, slant and associated mine buildings. |
| 16 | Tramway ? | E | 1907 | SN6130412398 | A linear feature shown on the 1907 and later Ordnance Survey maps that appears to be a tramway bed or trackway that linked the Park & Blaina Colliery to a small coal tip to the northwest of the main shaft and slant. No rails are shown on any map however. |
| 17 | Tramway | E | 1907 | SN6141312317 | The tramway complex of the Park & Blaina Colliery as shown on the 1907 Ordnance Survey map. The tramway linked to the Park Colliery some 500m to the east. |

Fig.11: Features shown on the 1907 Ordnance Survey Map

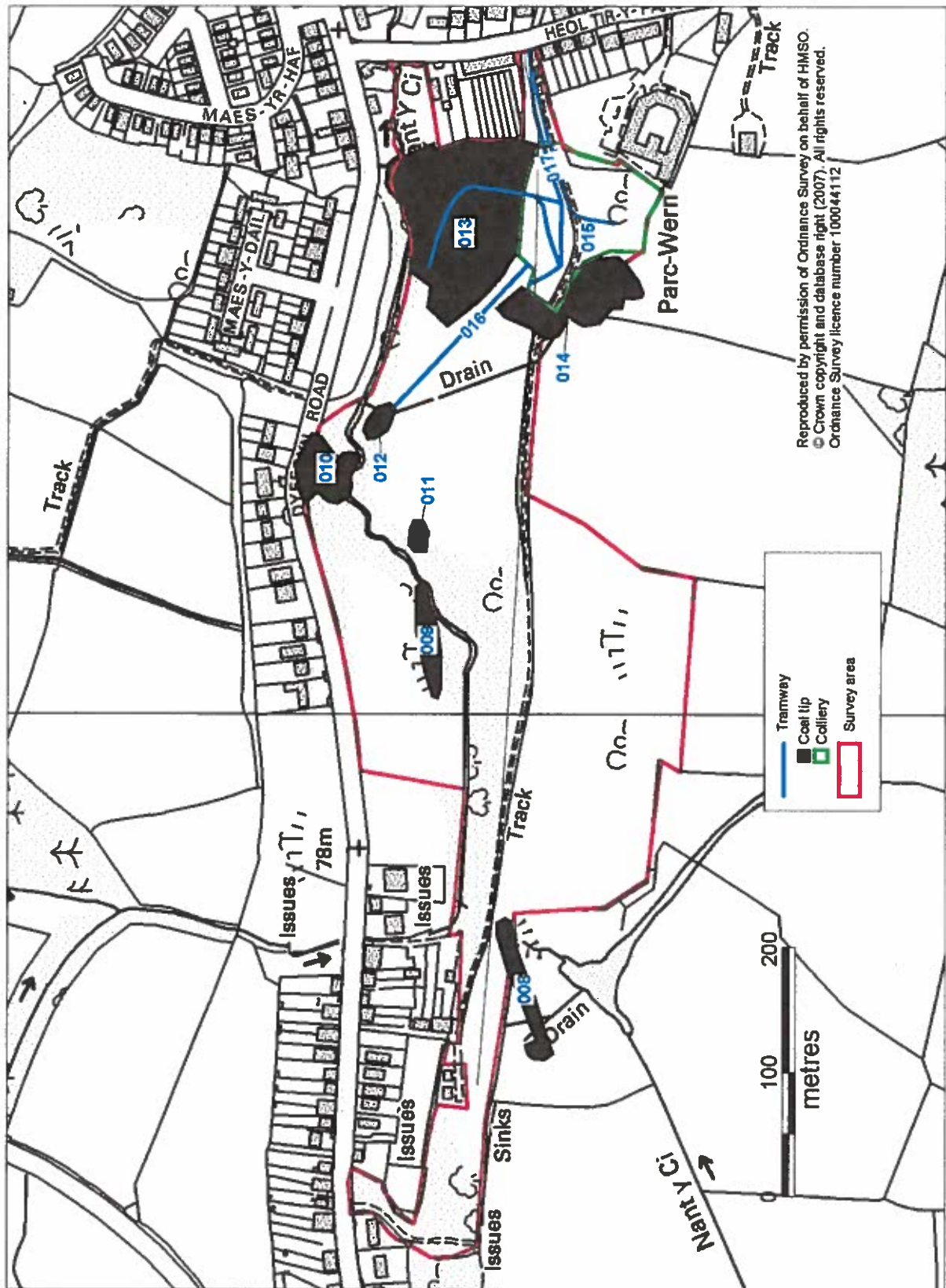


Table 5: Features shown on the 1921 Ordnance Survey Map
Key to Condition field: A = Intact; B=Well preserved; C=Damaged;
D=Substantial destruction; E=Destroyed

| No. | Site Type | Condition | Map source | NGR | Description |
|-----|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|---|
| 018 | Coal Mine | E | 1921 | SN6108012140 | The Park & Blaina Colliery complex had grown between 1907 and 1921, with a new slant opened c.300m to the southwest of the original slant and shaft. |
| 019 | Coal Tip | E | 1921 | SN6103212227 | A coal tip derived from a slant of the Park & Blaina Colliery developed to the south, shown on the 1921 OS map. It grew considerably to the west, presumably during the 1920s. The waste came from the main colliery site to the east, to which it was connected by a tramway. This area appears to have been opencasted in the 1950s or 1960s. |
| 020 | Tramway | E | 1921 | SN6134912287 | The tramway complex of the Park & Blaina Colliery as depicted on the 1921 Ordnance Survey map. It connected to the Park Colliery site some 500m to the east and a slant and engine house some 300m to the southwest of the main colliery yard. |

Fig.12: Features shown on the 1921 Ordnance Survey Map

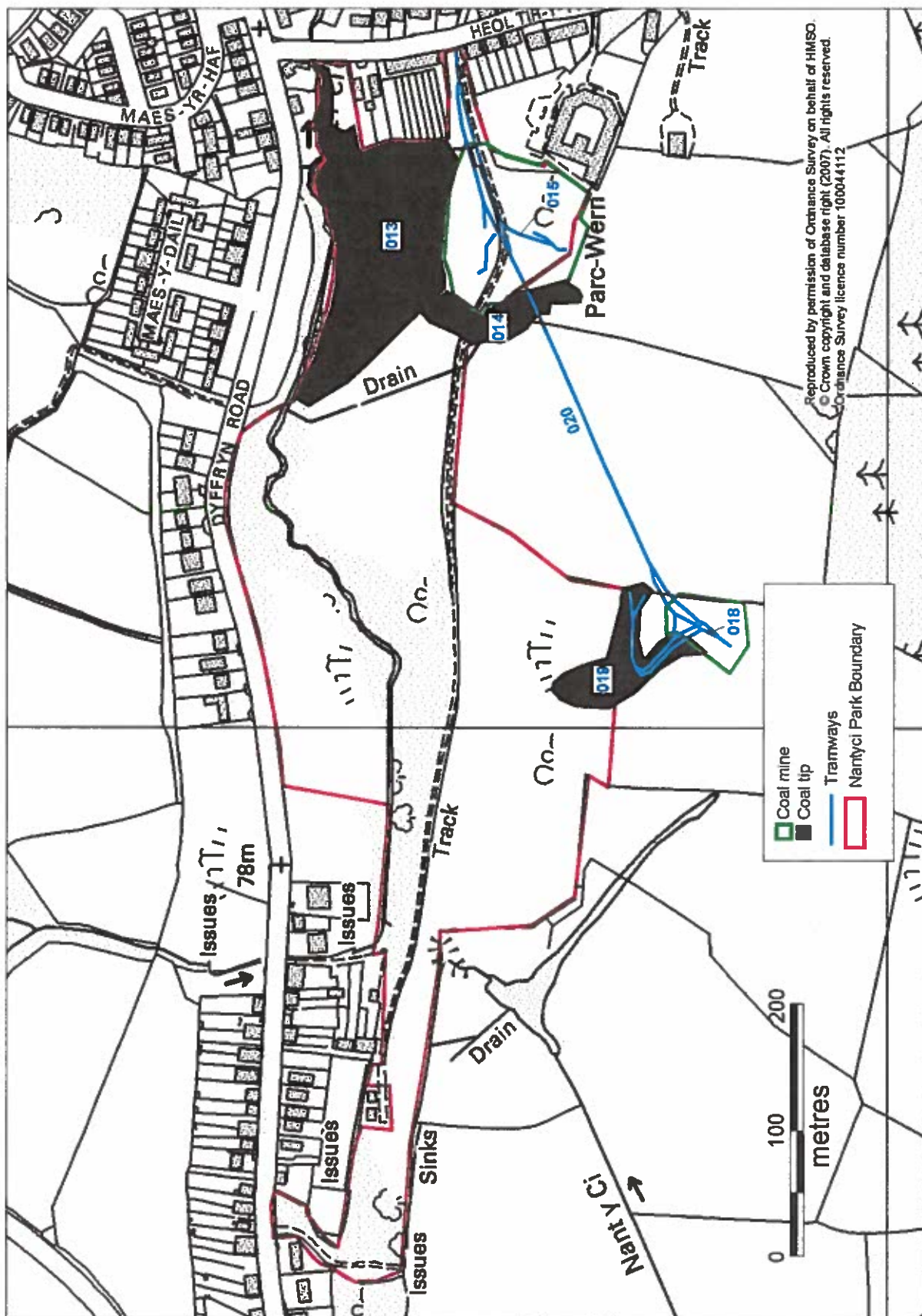


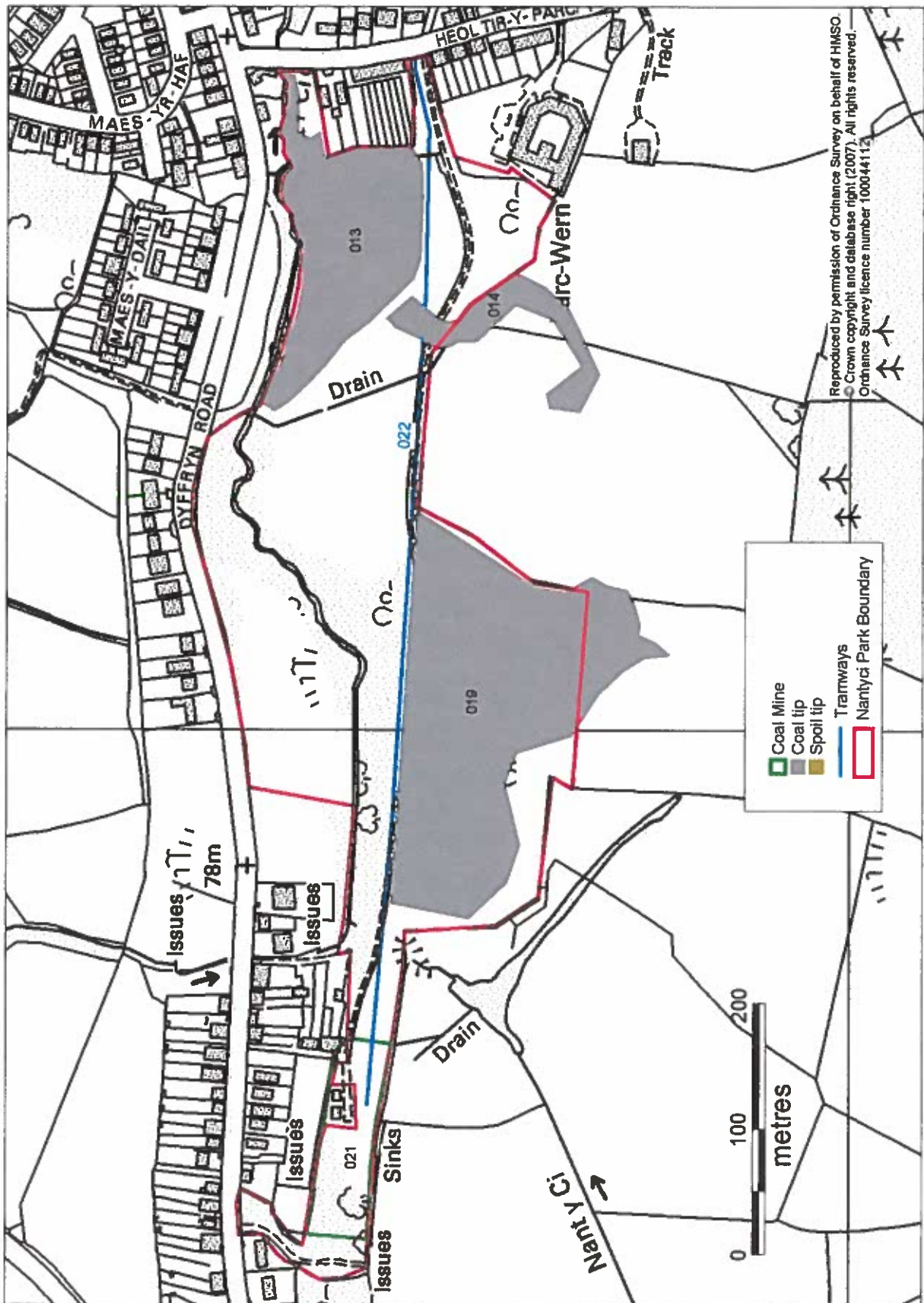
Table 6: Features shown on the 1953 Ordnance Survey Map

Key to Condition field: A = Intact; B=Well preserved; C=Damaged;

D=Substantial destruction; E=Destroyed

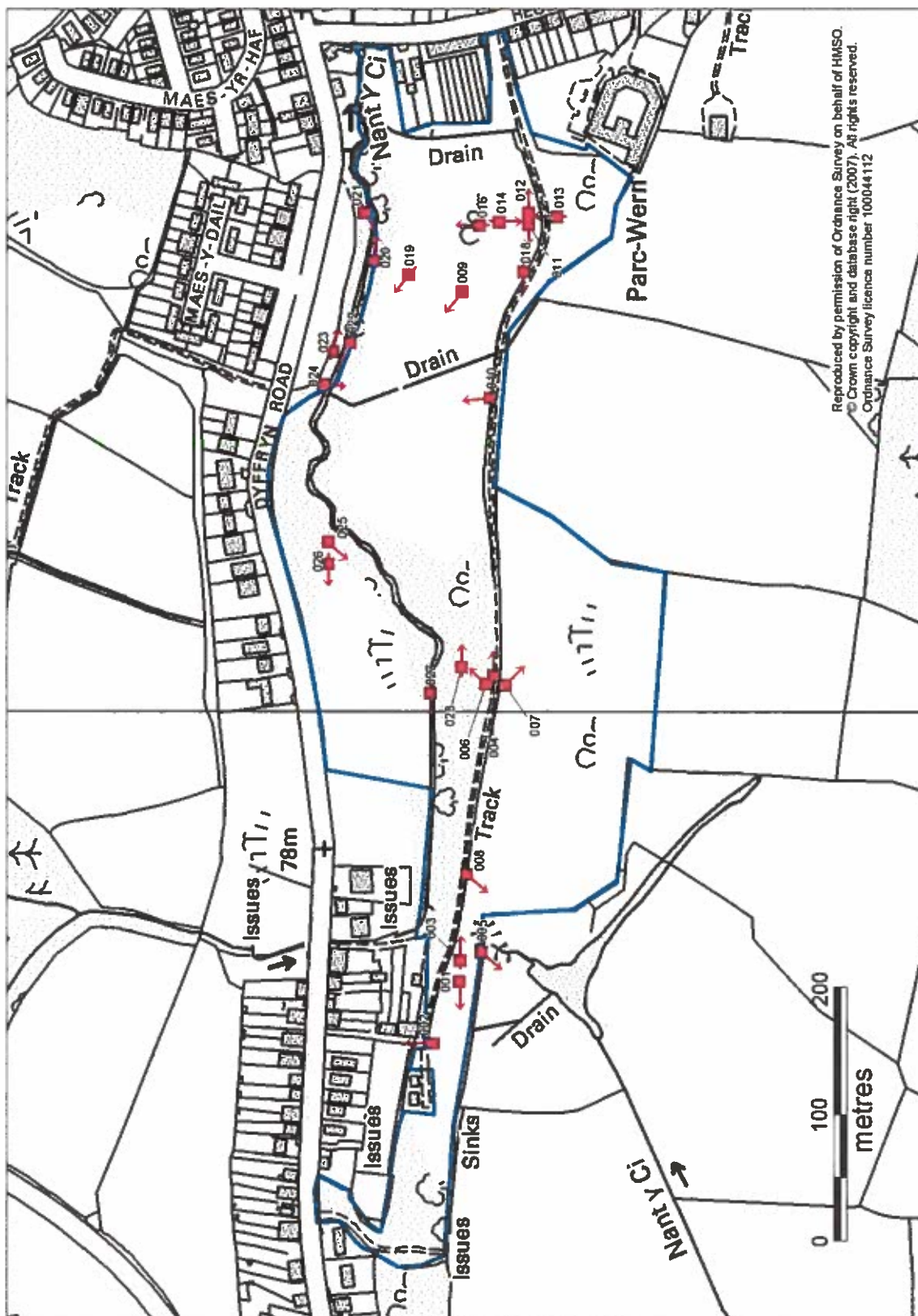
| No. | Site Type | Condition | Map source | NGR | Description |
|-----|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|--|
| 021 | Coal Mine | E | 1953 | SN6066712395 | The site of the old Saron Colliery. It closed in 1956 and the site has now been almost completely cleared. Only two small redbrick sheds stand at the northern edge of the site which may be survivals of the original colliery complex. |
| 022 | Tramway | V | 1953 | SN6104012360 | A tramway linking the Saron Colliery heapstead with the colliery screens at the old Park Colliery site over 1km to the east. |

Fig 13: Features shown on the 1953 Ordnance Survey Map



| Photo No. | Description | Date Taken | Direction |
|--------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| nantyci.017 | Detail of Glynea & Bynea brick found on coal tip 013 | 05/09/2007 | - |
| nantyci.018 | Showing iron-stained water in gully alongside coal tip 013 | 02/08/2007 | Looking east |
| nantyci.019 | Area of dense gorse at the northern edge of the main Park & Blaina Colliery tip | 05/09/2007 | Looking northwest |
| nantyci.020 | Recently excavated gully, adjacent to the Nantyci | 05/09/2007 | Looking east |
| nantyci.021 | Where the recently excavated gully joins the Nantyci | 05/09/2007 | Looking southwest |
| nantyci.022 | Along the Nantyci, modern drain line joining on the right hand side of photo | 05/09/2007 | Looking northwest |
| nantyci.023 | Earth boundary back on the northern side of Nantyci Brook | 05/09/2007 | Looking east southeast |
| nantyci.024 | Modern revetment of the south side of Nantyci | 05/09/2007 | Looking south southwest |
| nantyci.025 | Eastern edge of Cae Cwmffalde, the undisturbed field north of Nantyci brook | 05/09/2007 | Looking southwest |
| nantyci.026 | The centre of Cae Cwmffalde, the undisturbed field on the northern side of Nantyci brook | 05/09/2007 | Looking west |
| nantyci.027 | "Canalised" stream joining the Nantyci | 05/09/2007 | Looking west |
| nantyci.028 | Line of former tramway bed serving the Saron Colliery? | 05/09/2007 | Looking east |

Fig. 10: Key to Photograph Locations and Directions





nantyci.001 Site of Saron Colliery



nantyci.002 Access lane from Dyffryn Road



nantyci.005 Looking southwest towards Nantyci Brook



nantyci.006 Looking northeast towards the Mynydd Du



nantyci.003 Looking along track on south side of survey area



nantyci.004 Looking east towards the Amman Valley



nantyci.005 Looking southwest towards Nantyci Brook



nantyci.006 Looking northeast towards the Mynydd Du



nantyci.007 Looking southeast at the southern edge of the area



nantyci.008 Looking southwest at the pond into which the Nantyci brook drains



nantyci.009 Looking northwest into scrubland at centre of area



nantyci.010 Looking north into scrubland at centre of area



nantyci.011 Looking west at the edge of the main Park & Blaina coal tip 013



nantyci.012 Looking east at the edge of the main Park & Blaina coal tip 013



nantyci.013 Looking north at the main Park & Blaina coal tip 013



nantyci.014 Looking southwards to the former heapstead area of the Park & Blaina colliery



nantyci.015 Clay and coal spoil covering the heapstead area of the Park & Blaina colliery



nantyci.016 Looking north towards to the main coal tip (013) of the Park & Blaina colliery



nantyci.017 Detail of Glynea Bynea brick found on coal tip 013



**nantyci.018 Iron stained
water flowing alongside
coal tip 013**



nantyci.019 Area of dense gorse at northern edge of coal tip 013



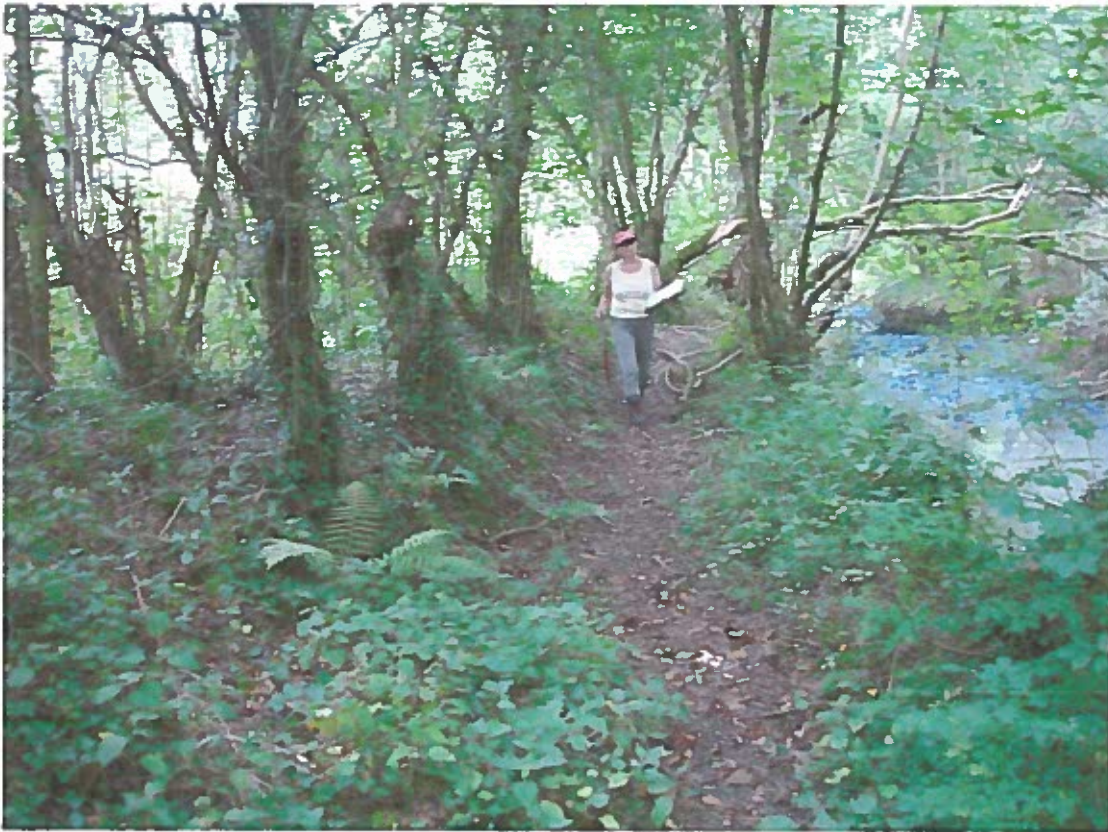
nantyci.020 A recently excavated gully adjacent to the Nantyci brook



nantyci.021
Recently excavated
gully joining the
Nantyci brook



nantyci.022 The Nantyci
brook with a modern
drainage channel cut to
the right



nantyci.023 Earth boundary back on the northern side of Nantyci brook



nantyci.024 Modern revetment along the south bank of the Nantyci brook



nantyci.025 Eastern edge of Cae Cwmffalde, the undisturbed field north of Nantyci brook



nantyci.026 Centre of Cae Cwmffalde, on the northern side of Nantyci brook



nanty-ci.027 Canalised stream joining the Nantyci brook



nanty-ci.028 Line of the former tramway bed to Saron Colliery