
Old Rectory

Llanfairynghornwy



GAT Project No. 2022
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Llanfairynghornwy

Report No. 746

Prepared for
Mrs Helen Christy

June 2008

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The Old Rectory, Llanfairynghornwy

Archaeological Survey (G2022)

1. Introduction

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Mrs Helen Christy to carry out a geophysical survey and accompanying topographical survey on land at The Old Rectory, Llanfairynghornwy. The aim of the two surveys was to locate and interpret the former gardens at the Rectory within an area now converted to pasture. The first part of the report provides background information and the results of the topographical survey, and Appendix I contains the results of the geophysical survey. Concluding remarks for both surveys are given in section 5 of the first part of the report. The Trust is grateful to Mr and Mrs Christy for all their help during the course of the project, and for sharing so much information concerning the house and garden and its former inhabitants.

2. Background information

The Old Rectory is located next to the parish church of St Mary's within the parish of Llanfairynghornwy at NGR SH32669090. The church in its present form dates back to the 12th century. In later medieval and early post Reformation times the church was held as a chapel under the Rectory of Llanddeusant by the Bishop of Bangor. It was only in 1872 that it stopped being held under the Rectory of Llanddeusant.

The Old Rectory is Listed (Grade II) as 'an early C19 rectory which retains unusually good and complete internal detailing' (Cadw Listed Building description).

The history of the house has not been resolved in detail, though the evidence would suggest an older 18th century house, onto which was added a new substantial block in the early 19th century. The new building appears to have partly absorbed parts of the older building.

The new block was built by James Williams (1790-1872), as recorded on a stone tablet over the porch. James Williams was Rector of Llanddeusant with the chapels of Llanfairynghornwy and Llanbabo. He became Rector in 1821 following the retirement of his father John Williams (1740-1826), who had been Rector for over 50 years (appointed 11 July 1766). John Williams lived at his family home of Treffos, Llansadwrn, and there is no record of him having lived at Llanfairynghornwy.

Approximately 60 acres of land around the church is described on the tithe map of c. 1840 as 'Glebe land' occupied by James Williams. The date this became glebe land is not known, though it might relate to a purchase of land recorded in the 18th century by John Williams from the Bulkeley and Paget estates (*pers comm.* Helen Christy – need to check in UWB and Land Tax Records). Interestingly Nicholas Carlisle, writing in 1811, says 'The Parsonage House belonging to the Rectory of Llan y Ddausaint is situate here', which means it was a rectory prior to the occupancy of James Williams. If we assume John Williams was living at Treffos, he might have had a rectory built at Llanfairynghornwy for the Vicar who would have officiated at the churches.

Tradition claims that John Williams, who had been chaplain to the aunt of George IV, got the king to ask the Bishop for the living on his son's behalf when George IV was staying on Anglesey in 1821 (Williams 1988, 172), though the Bishop was keen for the living to go to his own son. The family was an influential one, and included Thomas Williams, brother of John, who as agent for the copper mines in Amlwch came to control the nation's copper resources in the 18th century (Jenkins 1959).

James Williams married Frances Lloyd (1798-1857) in 1822. He was an active clergyman, landlord and agricultural improver (Jenkins 1959), as well as Chancellor of the cathedral at Bangor. He and his wife were instrumental in founding the lifeboat service on Anglesey (Eames 1957; 1973) and both James and his son were to act as coxswain. They were involved in Anglesey society at a county level, and thus fully aware of current taste and fashions. This was a time when improvements were being made to a number of

Anglesey houses and estates. Sir Nicholas Bayley (later Lord Uxbridge) inherited Plas Newydd c. 1783, and immediately set about improving the house and grounds. In 1799 he employed Humphrey Repton to redesign the grounds in picturesque style. Previously (1777-9) William Emes had advised on the creation of new parkland at Baron Hill, and it is suggested that Emes may also have advised Thomas Williams at Llanidan who created new parkland and gardens between 1783 and 1816. A ha-ha at Llanidan is thought to date from this period (Cadw 1998, 20-21). James would have been fully aware of the works carried out at Baron Hill, Llanidan and Plas Newydd, and it is suggested below that he created his own gardens at the rectory in a similar style.

Following the death of James Williams in 1872 the Rev Hugh Lewis Pryce was ordained Rector of Llanfairynghornwy. At this time the Rectory was divided from that of Llanddeusant. Pryce was a relative of James Williams, and a diary survives written by Daloni Pryce who was born at the rectory in 1875. Pryce died in 1895, and was succeeded by Rev. Richard Foulkes Jones, who held the two parishes of Llanfairynghornwy and Llanrhwydrys. Jones was very wealthy and a keen horticulturalist. He travelled collecting plants, and was a recognised authority on lilies. In later years he exchanged ideas and plants with the Hon. Violet Vivian, who developed the garden at Cestyll. Jones was responsible for constructing the lawn tennis court in front of the house, and other changes made by him can be seen on the 1889 and 1900 OS maps north and west of the house. Later changes to boundaries within the parkland are also visible on these and the 1924 map. (*note*: the information concerning Foulkes Jones is *pers comm.* Helen Christy).

3. The house and garden

The principal house was built 1820-23, but it is clear that an earlier building existed on the site, and although the sequence is not entirely understood it would appear that the northern wing of the principal block incorporates a part of the earlier house, as does the service wing to the north again. The later house is thought to have been designed by James Williams, though with possible Wyatt or Adam influence (*pers comm.* Helen Christy).

The first edition 1" OS map of c. 1830 clearly shows the house built by James Williams, and also has stippled the field immediately east of the house, indicating that this was also classed as a garden. The Tithe Map of c. 1840 does not show the house or gardens at all, presumably because it was glebe land and no tithes were due (it does, however, indicate the extent of the land occupied by James Williams). The main house is situated to overlook the fields to the east, and a ha-ha immediately adjacent allows the eye to see beyond and over a second ha-ha to an area of rock outcrop and trees. There is little doubt that this was a deliberate creation, and presumably designed for the new house. How many more of the features accompany this phase is not known, but the trees beyond the second ha-ha are a deliberate plantation, and the curving ditch that flows across and round these is also a deliberate feature. Earthwork remnants of a track running through the wood can be seen.

4. Survey features (fig. 7)

The principal features identified by the survey are listed below (prefixed by the letter 'S'), and where possible correlated with the features identified during the geophysical survey (prefixed by the letter 'G').

S No.	G No.	Name	Description
S1		Upper ha-ha	A deliberate creation designed to allow views east from the rectory to the trees and rocks beyond. It is approximately 1m high with an upper course of flat slabs, on which are laid one or more courses of stone.
S2		Mound	The mound lies within the north part of the present garden. It is a natural feature, though possibly partly enhanced. A path curves around the sloping side. Such mounds were typical of gardens of this period, and a similar example can be seen at Plas Cadnant, Llandegfan.
S3	G3	Tennis Courts	Former tennis court visible as an earthwork in the field below the ha-ha. These were built by Richard Foulkes Jones.

S4		Lower ha-ha	A terraced field wall with a ditch beyond that appears to be built as a ha-ha to allow uninterrupted views from the house to the trees and rocks beyond.
S5		Ridge and furrow	A series of cultivation ridges is visible within the enclosure running parallel to the field boundary on a north-west to south-east alignment.
S6		Water course	A curving water course that demarcates the enclosure with cultivation ridges from the rocky area beyond. It does not appear to follow a natural course, and may have been purposely dug as a garden feature.
S7		Trackway	A trackway follows the north side of the water course (S6) and can be seen as an earthwork.
S8		Woodland	A mixed plantation of oak, ash and other deciduous trees. Probably deliberately planted.
S9		Gateposts	A pair of ornate gateposts that open into the field from a footpath that formerly ran around the perimeter of the rectory land to Geirian.
S10		Field boundary	A low stone wall and hedge forming the north boundary to the rectory land.
S11		Field boundary	A straight boundary forming the north edge of the garden, and turning at right-angles to continue down the east side.
S13		Quarry	A stone quarry within the field
S14		Quarry	A stone quarry within the field
S15	G18	Hollow	A small but fairly deep depression within the field, perhaps marking a drain that also shows a geophysical anomaly.
S16	G1	Fence line	A former fence line still partly indicated by the remains of iron posts in the ground.
S17		Plantation	A former plantation, shown on the OS maps of 1900 and 1923, which indicate a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees. Some trees remain close to the boundary.
S18	G2	Fence	A boundary is shown here on the 1889 OS map. The geophysical survey would suggest it was iron railings as S16, which it meets at the north end.
S19	G11	Planting	The 1889 and 1900 OS maps show a plantation of deciduous trees here to screen the farm buildings from the house. By 1923 these had been reduced, and only a few on the boundary now remain. The edge of the woodland seems to respect the boundary of G11 on the geophysical survey.
S20		Stone pile	A stone dump towards the north-east corner of the field may indicate the site of a former building.
S21		Rock outcrop	An area of rock outcrop and gorse that may have been incorporated into the garden. There are excellent look-out areas from the summit. Some fruit trees lie within a declivity in the rocks on the north-west side.

5. General discussion

The survey identified a number of features which are interpreted as forming part of a garden laid out by James Williams, and influenced by the Picturesque and Romantic movements of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The garden appears to have incorporated the present fields east of the house, with views to the high rock outcrops beyond, and the 1823 house was deliberately sited to allow full advantage of this. Around the house lay oak woodland, a walled garden, and a raised mount beyond. Later changes were made by successive owners, though the main surviving infrastructure would appear to belong to the garden created by James Williams.

The geophysical survey, in addition to revealing features relating to successive phases of the garden, also revealed a series of small enclosures of varying shapes which must pre-date the creation of the garden and park. They are certainly, therefore, of 18th century date, though it is possible that some of them are considerably earlier than this.

Further documentary and archaeological work would be able to confirm and expand on the information discovered to date. However, the remains as interpreted are certainly of regional archaeological significance, and their significance is increased by the association of the Williams family, whose widespread contacts put them in touch with many of the leading families and individuals of their time.

6. Sources Consulted

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APPENDIX I: GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

1. Introduction

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was commissioned to carry out a fluxgate gradiometer survey of an area of former gardens at the Old Rectory Llanfairynghornwy (SH32749094)

2. Methodology

Fluxgate gradiometer survey provides a relatively swift and completely non-invasive method of investigating archaeological sites.

2.1 Instrumentation

The survey was carried out using a Bartington Grad601-2 dual Fluxgate Gradiometer. This uses a pair of Grad-01-100 sensors. These are high stability fluxgate gradient sensors with a 1.0m separation between the sensing elements, giving a strong response to deeper anomalies.

These instruments detect variations in the earth's magnetic field caused by the presence of iron in the soil. This is usually in the form of weakly magnetised iron oxides which tend to be concentrated in the topsoil. Features cut into the subsoil and backfilled or silted with topsoil therefore contain greater amounts of iron and can therefore be detected with the gradiometer. This is a simplified description as there are other processes and materials which can produce detectable anomalies. The most obvious is the presence of pieces of iron in the soil or immediate environs which usually produce very high readings and can mask the relatively weak readings produced by variations in the soil. Strong readings are also produced by archaeological features such as hearths or kilns because fired clay acquires a permanent thermo-remnant magnetic field upon cooling. This material can also get spread into the soil leading to a more generalised magnetic enhancement around settlement sites.

Not all surveys can produce good results as anomalies can be masked by large magnetic variations in the bedrock or soil or high levels of natural background "noise" (interference consisting of random signals produced by material within the soil). In some cases, there may be little variation between the topsoil and subsoil resulting in undetectable features. It must therefore be stressed that a lack of detectable anomalies cannot be taken to mean that there is no extant archaeology.

The Bartington Grad601 is a hand held instrument and readings can be taken automatically as the operator walks at a constant speed along a series of fixed length traverses. The sensor consists of two vertically aligned fluxgates set 1.0m apart. Their Mumetal cores are driven in and out of magnetic saturation by an alternating current passing through two opposing driver coils. As the cores come out of saturation, the external magnetic field can enter them producing an electrical pulse proportional to the field strength in a sensor coil. The high frequency of the detection cycle produces what is in effect a continuous output.

The gradiometer can detect anomalies down to a depth of approximately one metre. The magnetic variations are measured in nanoTeslas (nT). The earth's magnetic field strength is about 48,000 nT; typical archaeological features produce readings of below 15nT although burnt features and iron objects can result in changes of several hundred nT. The instrument is capable of detecting changes as low as 0.1nT.

2.2 Data Collection

The gradiometer includes an on-board data-logger. Readings in the surveys were taken along parallel traverses of one axis of a 20m x 20m grid. The traverse interval was 1.0m and readings were logged at intervals of 0.5m along each traverse giving 800 readings per grid.

2.3 Data presentation

The data is transferred from the data-logger to a computer where it is compiled and processed using ArchaeoSurveyor 2 software. The data is presented as a grey-scale plot where data values are represented by modulation of the intensity of a grey scale within a rectangular area corresponding to the data collection point within the grid. This produces a plan view of the survey and allows subtle changes in the data to be displayed. This is supplemented by an interpretation diagram showing the main features of the survey with reference numbers linking the anomalies to descriptions in the written report. It should be noted that the interpretation is based on the examination of the shape, scale and intensity of the anomaly and comparison to features found in previous surveys and excavations etc. In some cases the shape of an anomaly is sufficient to allow a definite interpretation e.g. a Roman fort. In other cases all that can be provided is the most likely interpretation. The survey will often detect several overlying phases of archaeological remains and it is not usually possible to distinguish between them. Weak and poorly defined anomalies are most susceptible to misinterpretation due to the propensity for the human brain to define shapes and patterns in random background 'noise'. An assessment of the confidence of the interpretation is given in the text.

2.4 Data Processing

The data is presented with a minimum of processing although corrections are made to compensate for instrument drift and other data collection inconsistencies. High readings caused by stray pieces of iron, fences, etc are usually modified on the grey scale plot as they have a tendency to compress the rest of the data. The data is however carefully examined before this procedure is carried out as kilns and other burnt features can produce similar readings. The data on some noisy or very complex sites can benefit from 'smoothing'. Grey-scale plots are always somewhat pixellated due to the resolution of the survey. This at times makes it difficult to see less obvious anomalies. The readings in the plots can therefore be interpolated and low pass filtered thus producing more but smaller pixels. This reduces the perceived effects of background noise thus making anomalies easier to see. Any further processing is noted in relation to the individual plot.

3. Results

The survey was carried out on 23-24th April 2008 by David Hopewell. An area of 120m x 160m was surveyed at standard resolution. Conditions were ideal for the survey. The grid was located during the topographic survey.

The results are shown as a grey-scale plot (Fig. 10) and as an interpretation diagram (Fig 11)

The survey detected a large number of magnetic anomalies resulting in a complex plot. The individual anomalies are described below along with their possible interpretation (the numbers refer to anomaly numbers on Fig. 11).

1.

Description: Linear anomaly consisting of a line of strong ferrous responses

Possible Interpretation: Former boundary with iron posts shown on OS 1889 25" Map.

2.

Description: Linear anomaly consisting of a line of strong ferrous responses

Possible Interpretation: Former boundary with iron posts shown on OS 1889 25" Map.

3.

Description: Large rectangular anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Former tennis court visible as an earthwork.

4.

Description: Diffuse linear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Probably a former boundary. The area to the south of the boundary is more noisy (i.e. contains an elevated amount of random magnetic variation) than the area to the north and on the eastern side of the survey. (Areas of increased noise are indicated by dots on the grey-scale plan). This may indicate that this area has been more intensively cultivated, perhaps by deeper ploughing or digging, thus mixing subsoil with the topsoil.

5.

Description: Diffuse linear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Probably a former boundary. This encloses an area of increased magnetic noise. This may indicate that this area has been more intensively cultivated, perhaps by deeper ploughing or digging, thus mixing subsoil with the topsoil.

6.

Description: Poorly defined rectangular area of higher readings

Possible Interpretation: Possibly a former small enclosure although not a clear anomaly.

7.

Description: Square area of increased noise bounded by a wide linear anomaly at the north.

Possible Interpretation: Small enclosure in the angle between enclosures 4 and 5.

8.

Description: A discrete, well defined sub-rectangular area of increased noise.

Possible Interpretation: The anomaly represents a change in the soil either because of deeper digging or the introduction of material into the soil. It is not possible to provide a definite interpretation. Possibilities include the presence of a former area of planting, the foundations of a small building or dumping, perhaps infilling a depression or hole.

9.

Description: A subrectangular area of increased noise

Possible Interpretation: Perhaps a small paddock, feature 36 could indicate the remains of a boundary.

10 and 11.

Description: A well-defined rectangular enclosure

Possible Interpretation: The negative anomaly (10) is best interpreted as masonry with the wider more mixed anomaly (11) perhaps indicating a spread of rubble or the remains of a bank. This presumably indicates the presence of a former enclosure or paddock conjoining the former farm to the south.

12.

Description: An area of strong positive responses

Possible Interpretation: Probably caused by iron in the building or dumped ferrous material.

13.

Description: A short curvilinear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: A boundary or possibly a track associated with the former farm.

14.

Description: A narrow somewhat meandering or uneven curvilinear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: This would appear to be a drain running to the ditch at the eastern side of the field. Its source is lost amongst the strong ferrous anomalies close to the steps from the house,

15.

Description: A narrow somewhat meandering or uneven curvilinear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Similar in character to anomaly 14 and probably another narrow drain

16.

Description: A narrow linear anomaly with associated small ferrous anomalies at various points.

Possible Interpretation: Probably another drain although with a different character to 14 and 15. The ferrous anomalies could indicate a pipe.

17.

Description: A wide linear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Probably either the foundation trench for the wall or a trench containing services.

18 and 19

Description: Concentrations of strong ferrous anomalies.

Possible Interpretation: Typical of iron objects in the soil. Possibly debris from the former fences (1 and 2).

20.

Description: Wide linear anomaly.

Possible Interpretation: This runs at the base of the break of slope and could be a former boundary.

21.

Description: A roughly linear anomaly with spurs running to the west.

Possible Interpretation: Almost certainly a series of ditches or drains. This is best interpreted as the boundaries of a series of small former fields or paddocks but could be a series of drains that are fairly close to the ground surface.

22

Description: A T-shaped anomaly

Possible Interpretation: This appears to be another fragment of a field or drainage system, apparently belonging to a different phase of activity than 21.

23.

Description: A diffuse linear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Probably the remains of a bank or field boundary running along the bottom of the slope. Apparently much disturbed by later features.

24.

Description: A curvilinear feature most clearly defined at the north and probably running to the former farmyard.

Possible Interpretation: This could be interpreted as a former boundary or a trackway. Given that it runs to the farmyard the latter would seem to be most likely.

25.

Description: A U-shaped anomaly with the open side facing down-hill

Possible Interpretation: Uncertain, but it could be an infilled quarry pit or possibly a natural subsoil/geological feature.

26.

Description: A very weak and rather diffuse curvilinear anomaly with further linear anomalies running to the south.

Possible Interpretation: The curvilinear anomaly appears to be a boundary delineating the edge of a boggy area or possibly the edge of a former pond. The parallel linear anomalies presumably indicate a series of drains.

27.

Description: A weak and diffuse curvilinear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Probably a former boundary but could be general disturbance during landscaping.

28.

Description: A weak roughly triangular anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Probably an area of erosion or disturbance adjacent to the present-day track.

29, 30 31 and 32.

Description: A series of parallel narrow linear anomalies

Possible Interpretation: Probably agricultural in origin, these are most likely to be field drains.

33.

Description: A narrow linear anomaly

Possible Interpretation: Another field drain running on a different alignment to 29-32.

34.

Description: A narrow linear anomaly.

Possible Interpretation: A drain or former ditch

35.

Description: A scatter of ferrous anomalies

Possible Interpretation: A scatter of debris suggesting an area of dumping, possibly to infill a wet area.

36.

Description: A line of ferrous anomalies

Possible Interpretation: Possibly a former boundary.

37.

Description: Two or three ferrous anomalies

Possible Interpretation: Possibly indication of the line of the boundary shown the OS 1889 25" Map.

38.

Data collection artefacts. Not archaeology.

4. Conclusions and Summary

A complex multi-phase series of anomalies were detected, and definite interpretation is in most cases difficult without further documentary evidence or excavation. Some features can however be recognised on maps (boundaries 1, 2 and 37) or, in the case of the former tennis court (3), as an extant earthwork. Elsewhere a walled enclosure (10 and 11) associated with the former farm is clearly defined. This was presumably cleared during landscaping of the rectory grounds. A series of small fields (20-23) on the slopes at the north-west along with track 24 probably belong to this earlier agricultural phase. Rectangular enclosures 4, 5, 6, and 7 are most likely to have been part of the farmyard and associated paddocks although they may have been incorporated into an early phase of the rectory gardens. The increased noise within these enclosures suggests that they were intensively cultivated, perhaps as vegetable gardens. Part of this area is shown as woodland on the 1889 OS 25" map, the areas of increased noise do not however appear to correspond to the extent of the woodland. These features were presumably levelled to produce the large lawn in front of the rectory.

A wet area in the south-east corner of the field was probably once a pond although there is no evidence to indicate if this was a natural or artificial feature. It does however appear to have been drained by 1889 as it is not shown on any editions of the OS 25" map. The area immediately to the north of the pond shows signs of having been infilled.

Only a few features can be assigned to a phase of landscaped gardens. Two narrow meandering drains (14 and 15) do not appear to be typically agricultural in origin and are probably associated with the garden landscaping. A discrete patch of increased noise (8) could indicate the presence of a former garden feature or small building. Increased levels of ferrous anomalies in front of the steps from the terrace in front of the house indicate the presence of a scatter of iron objects in the soil, presumably from garden features.

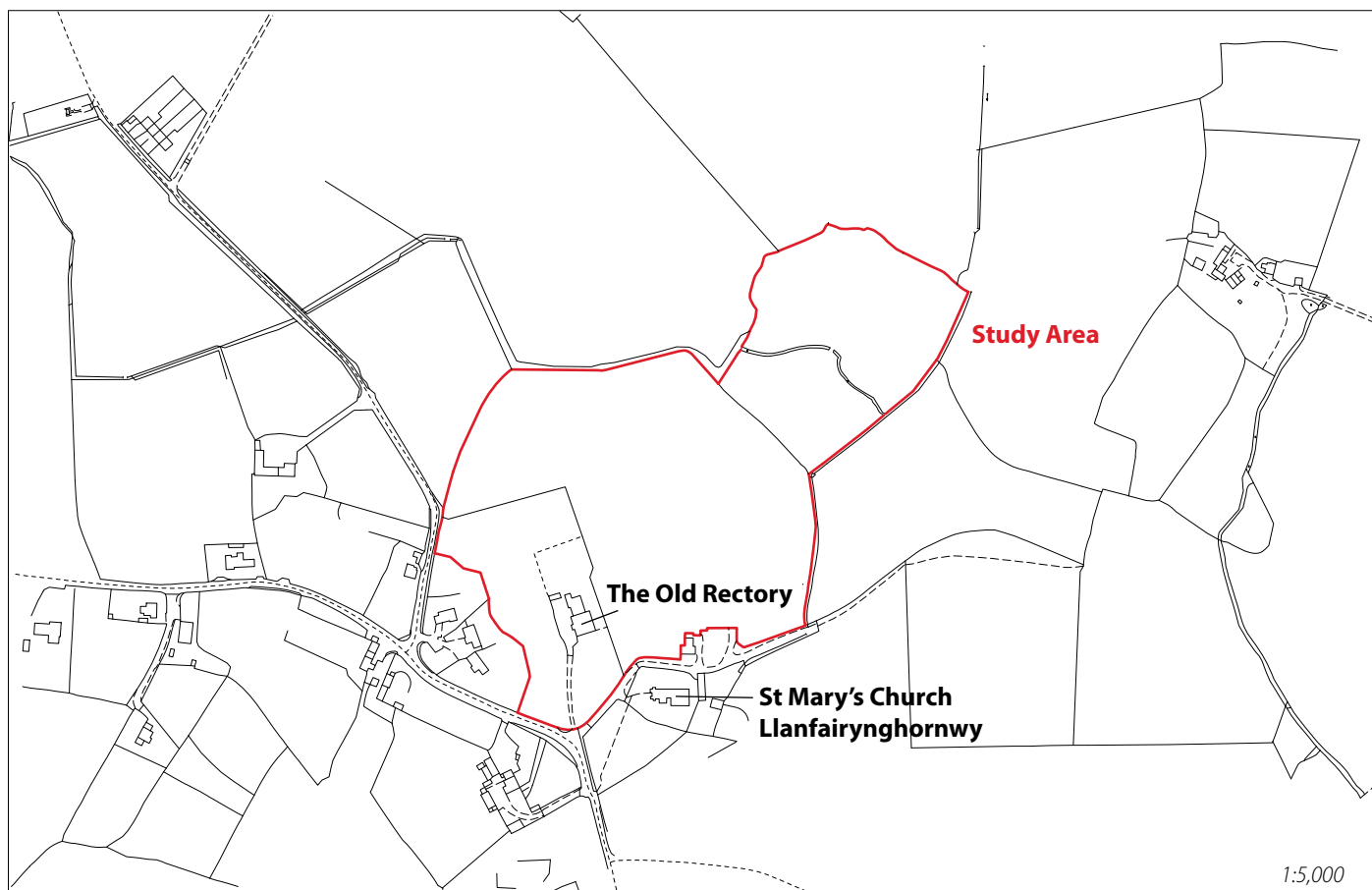
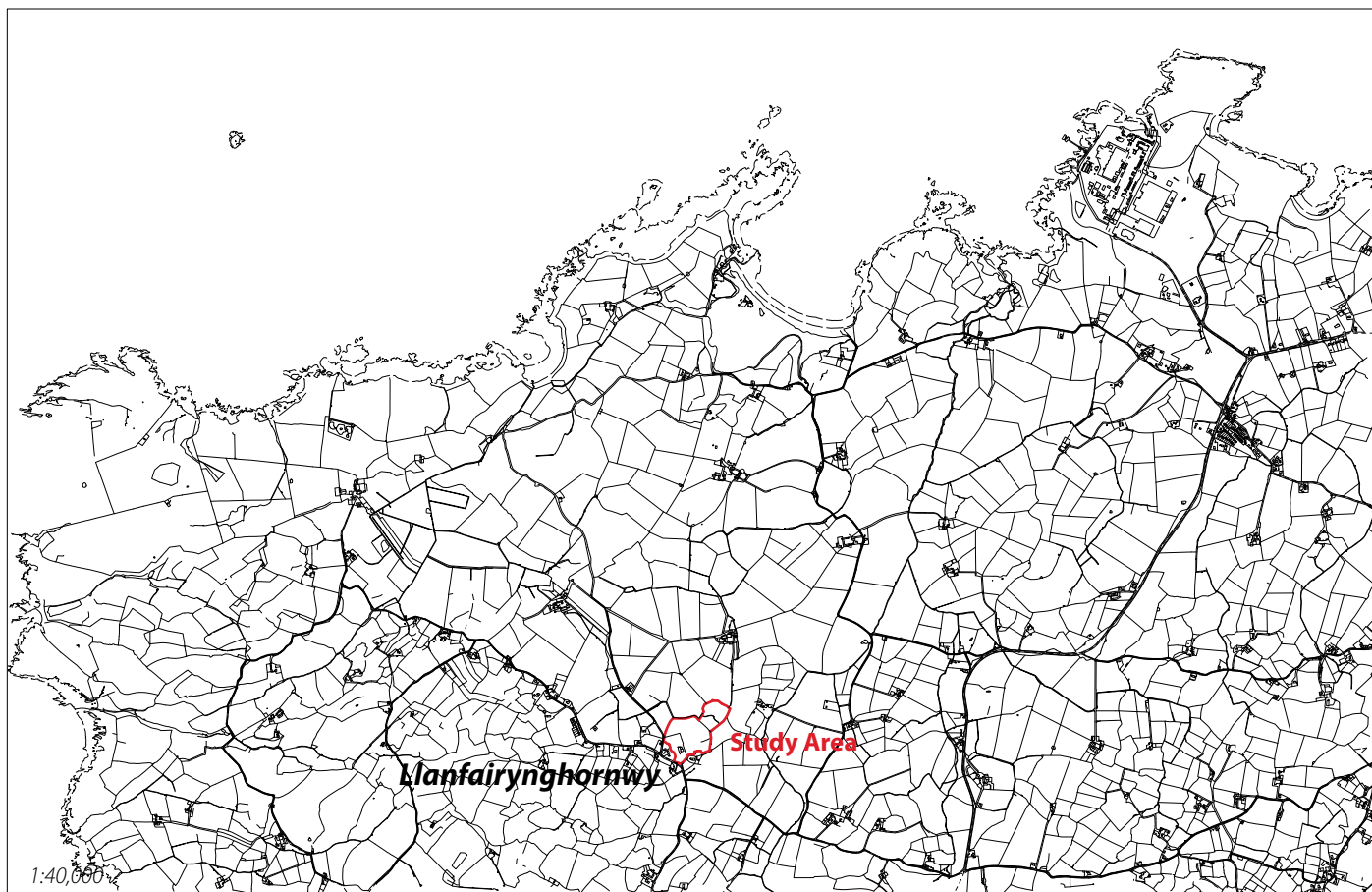


Figure 1. Location map

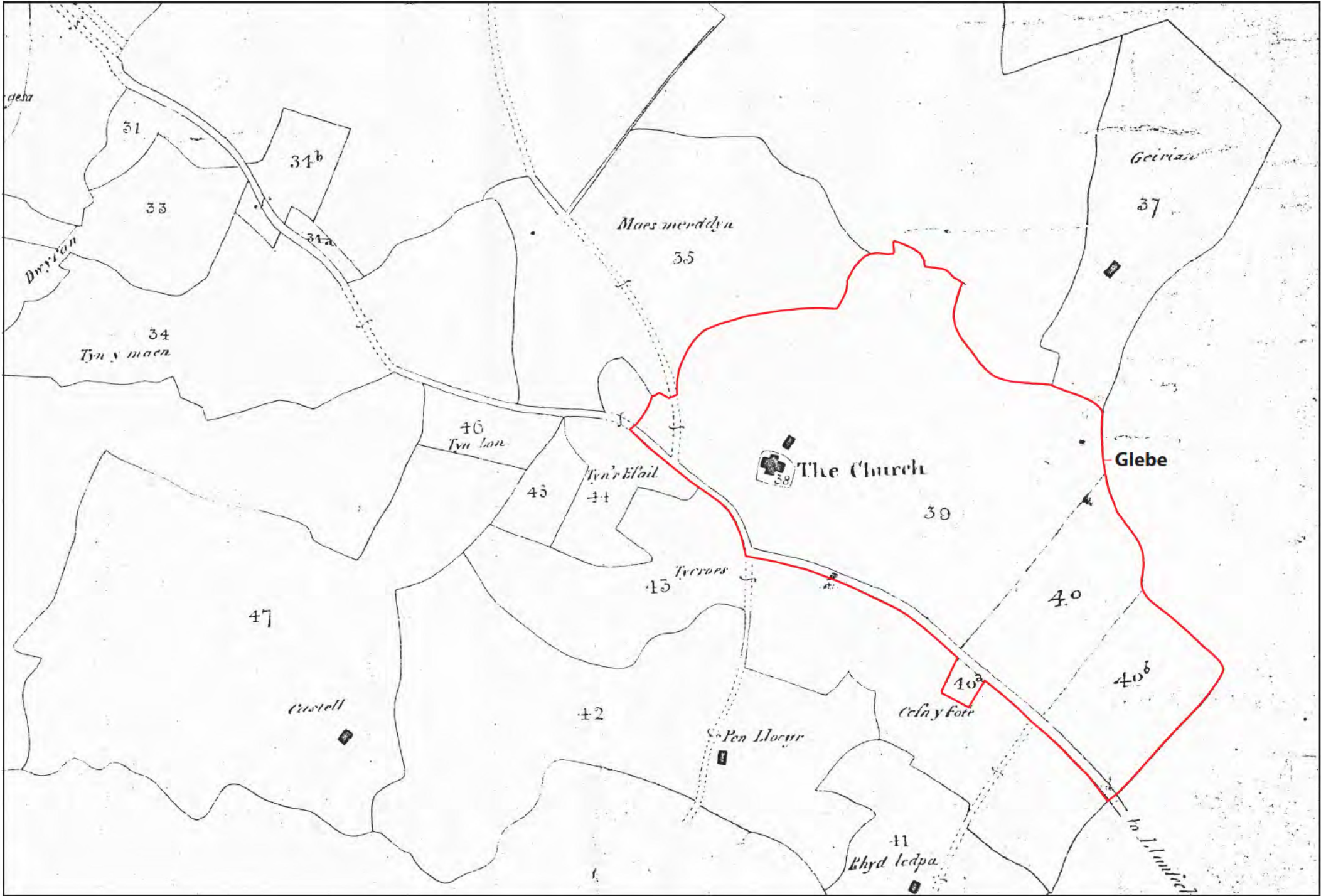


Figure 2. Tithe map



Figure 3. Copy of first edition 1" Ordnance Survey c.1838

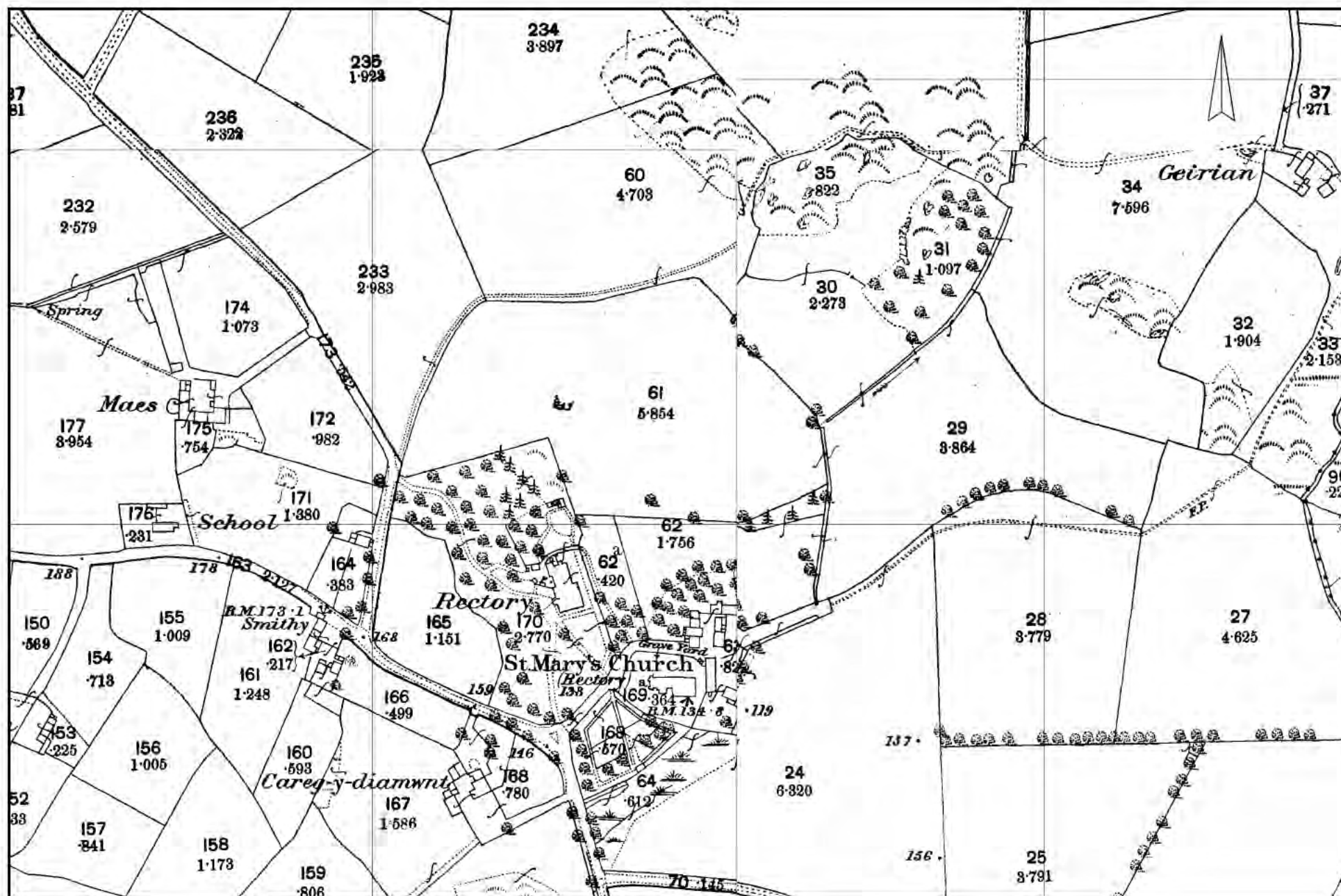


Figure 4. Ordnance survey county series. Anglesey 1889. XX.9, XXI.0 & XXI.4

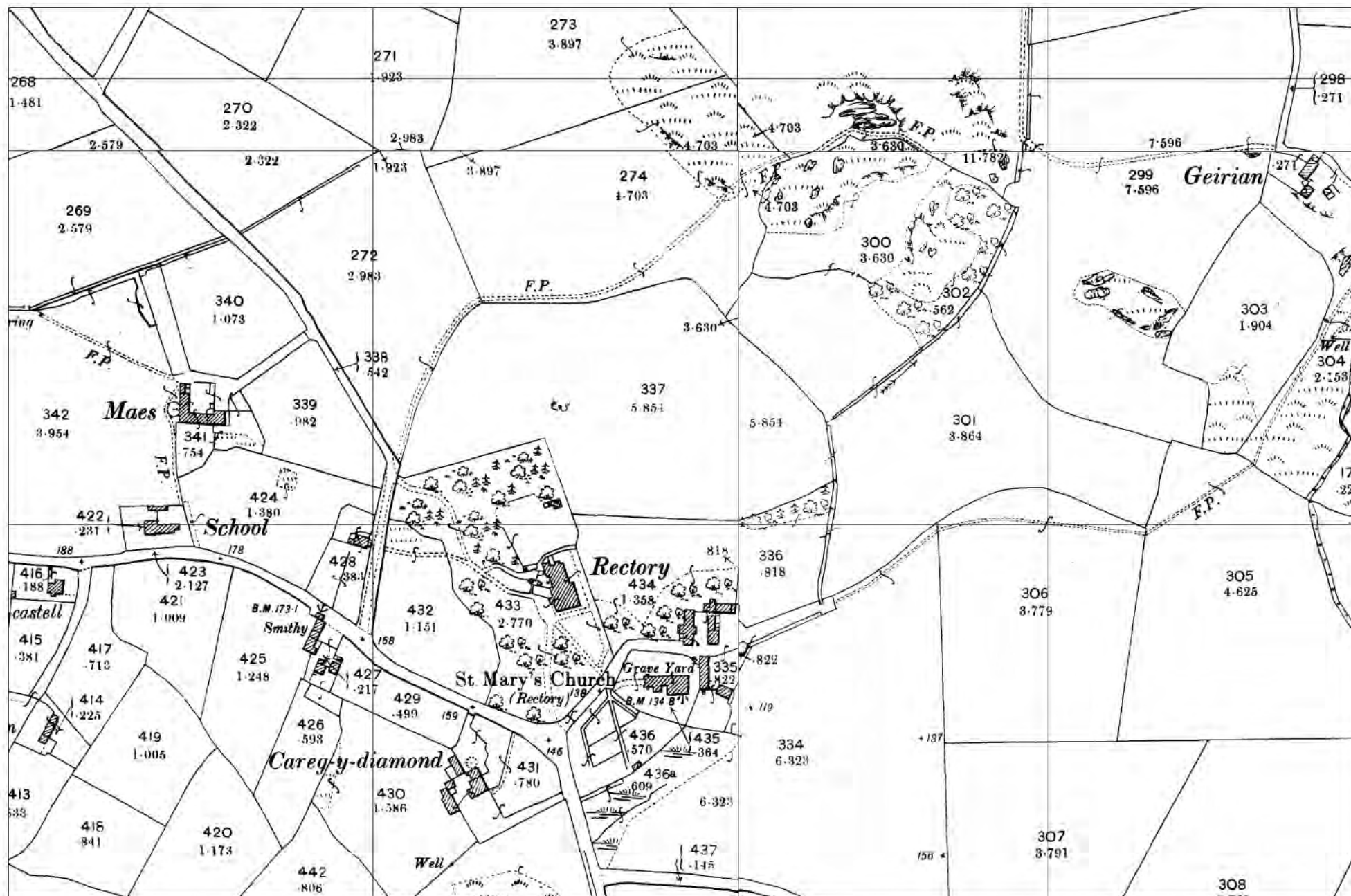


Figure 5. Ordnance survey county series. Anglesey 1900. XX.9, XXI.0 & XXI.4

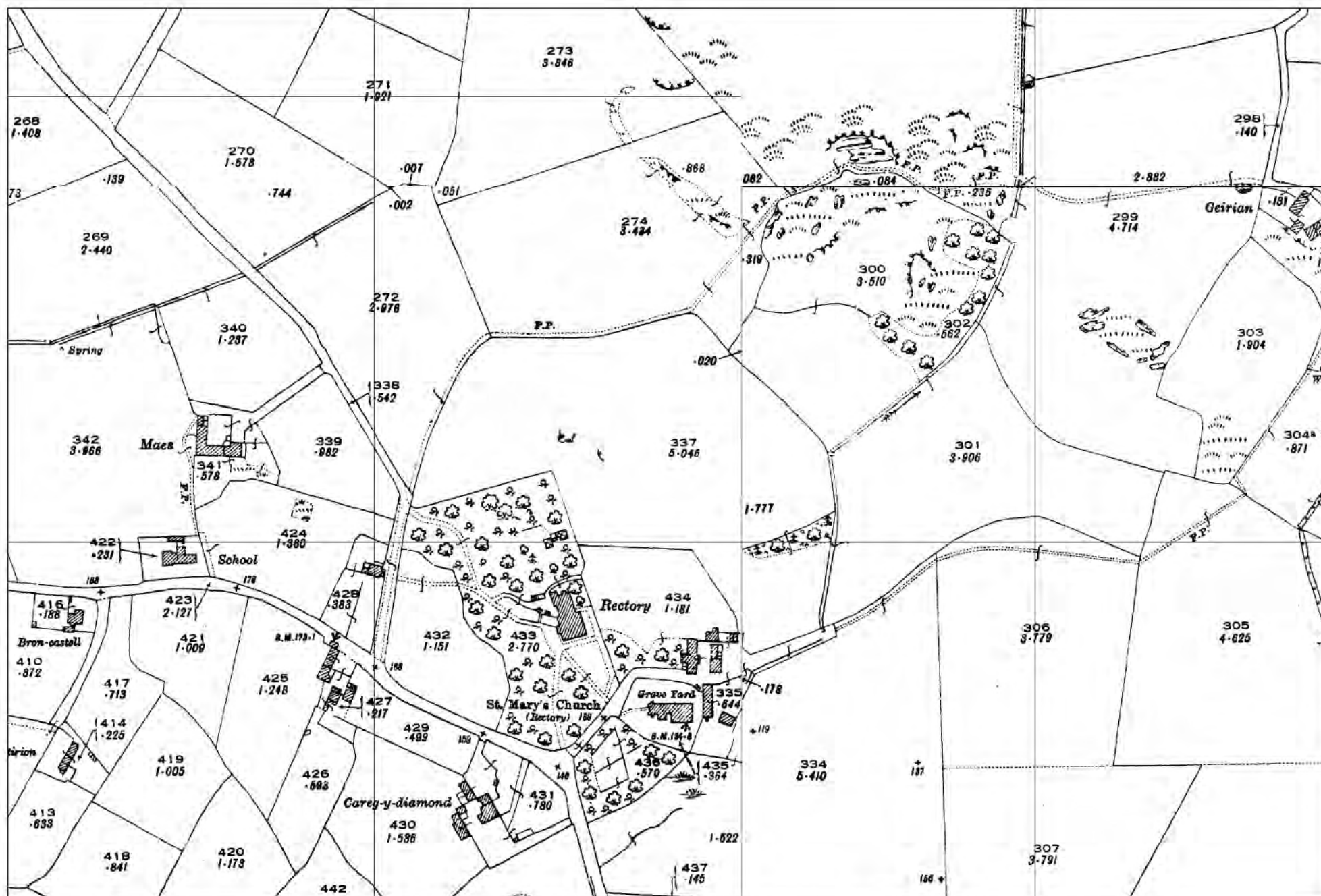


Figure 6. Ordnance survey county series. Anglesey 1924. XX.9, XXI.0 & XXI.4

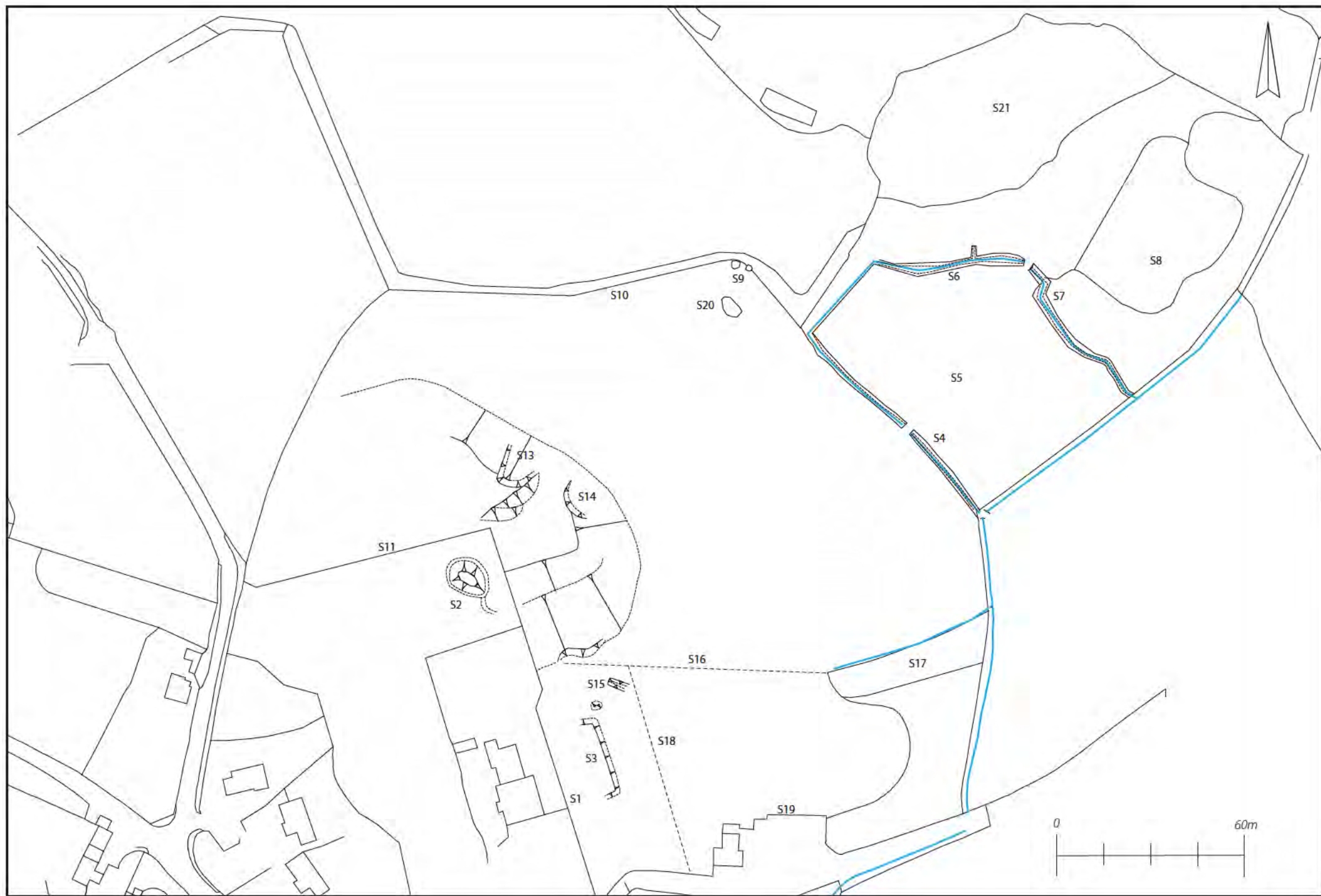


Figure 7. Location of surveyed archaeological features

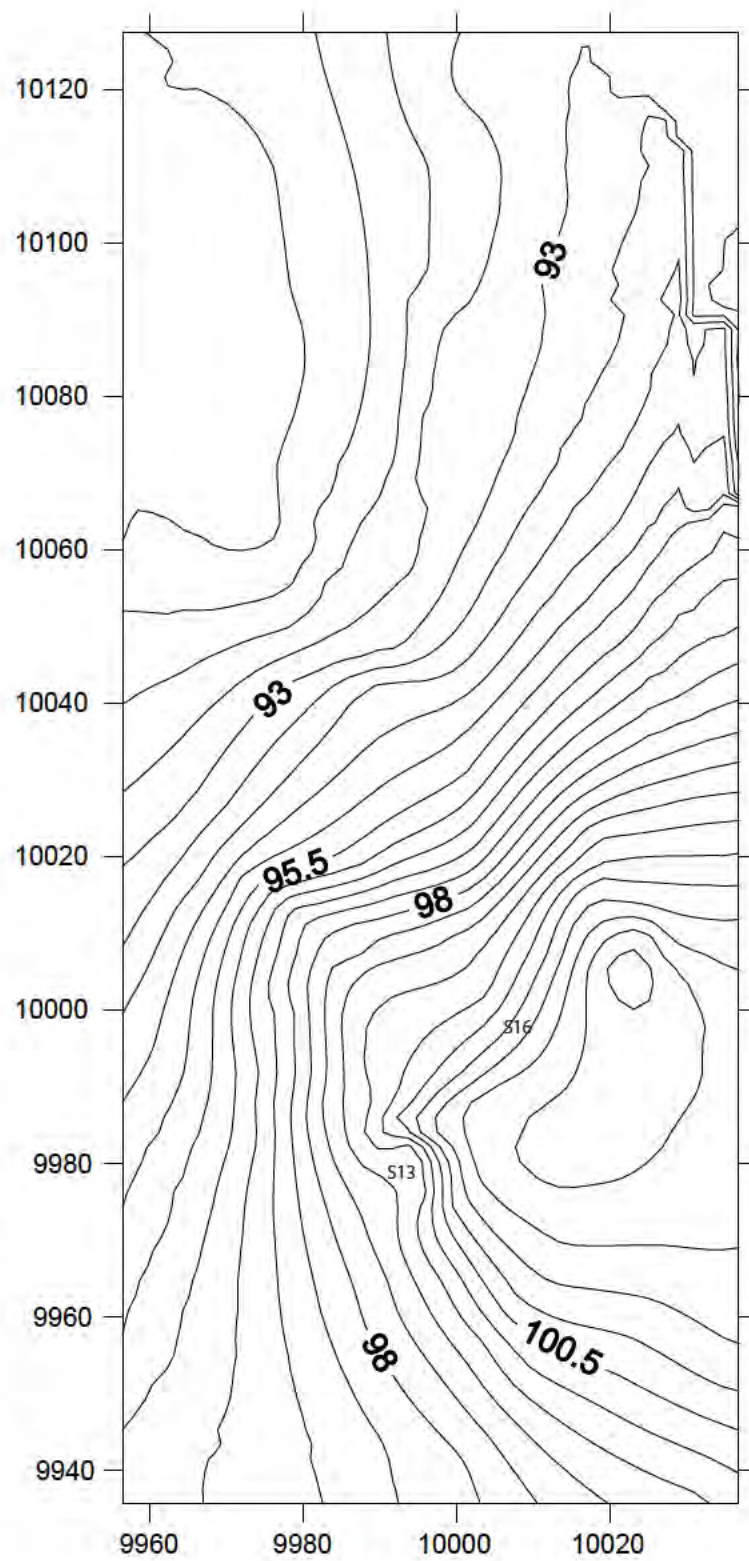


Figure 8. Contour map

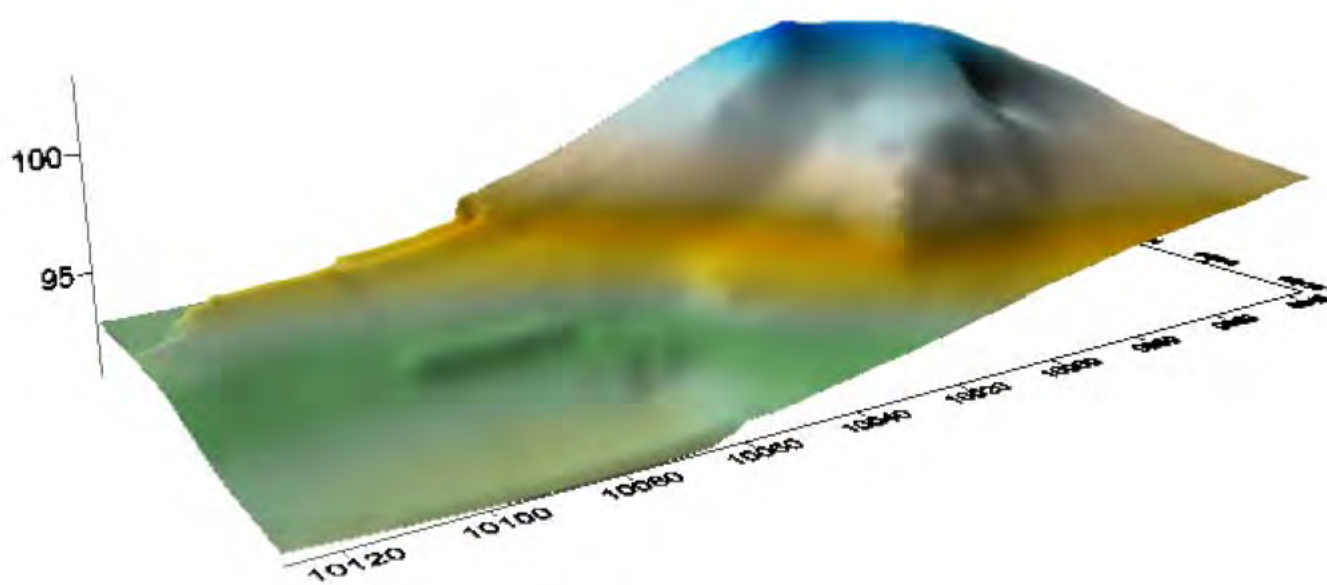


Figure 9. Terrain model of quarries (feature S13 and S16)



Plate 1. South west facing view of the old rectory, Llanfairyrhornwy



Plate 2. North east facing view of the old rectory, Llanfairyrhornwy

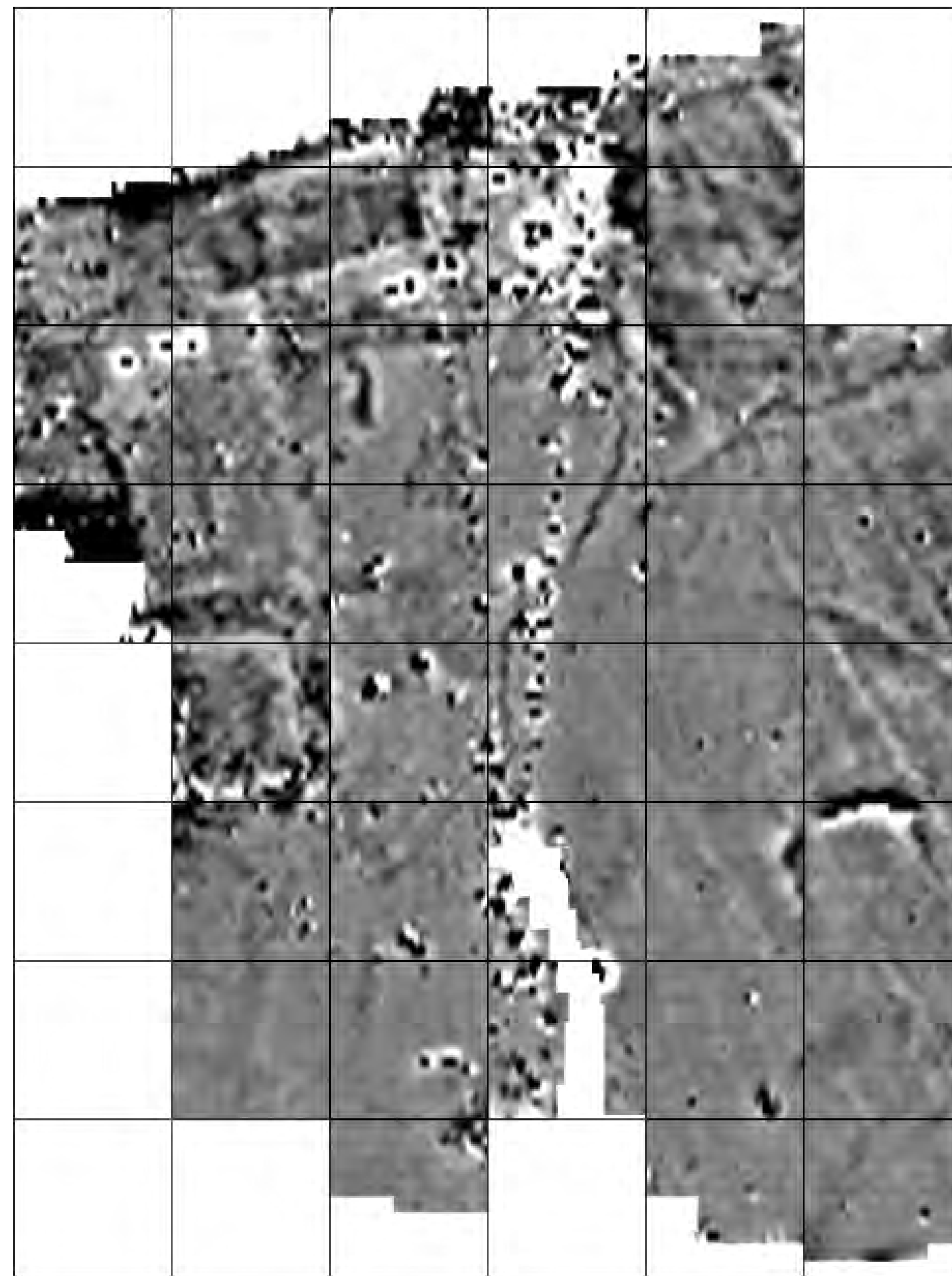
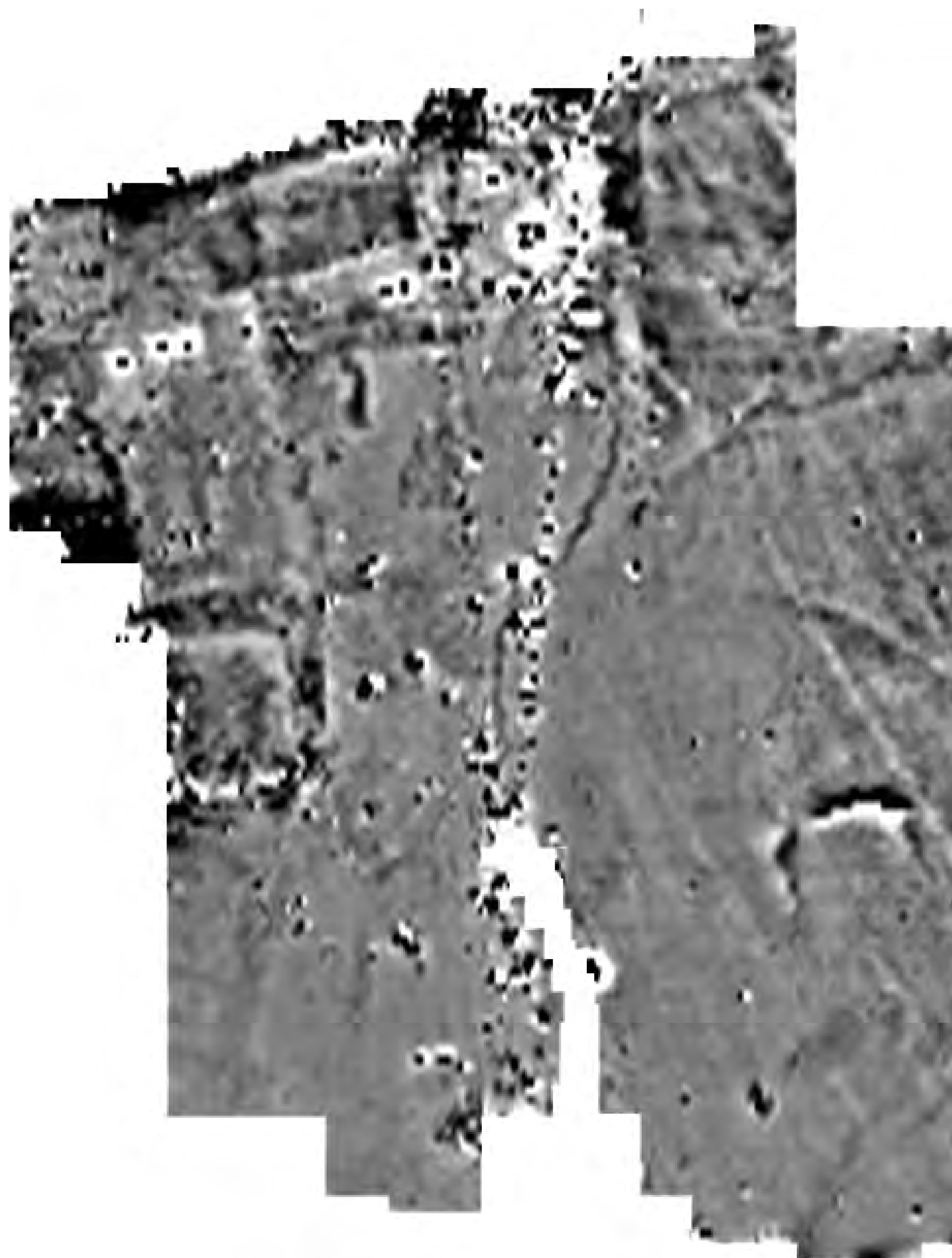


Figure 10. Grayscale plot of geophysical survey results



Figure 11. Location of geophysical features



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH
ARCHAEOLEGOL
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GWYNEDD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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