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CARREG YR EITHIN, NEWBOROUGH, - ASSESSMENT EXCAVATION.

GAT 1101, January 1993

Project Officer: N. Johnstone.

Project Contractor: Cadw.

Summary

This project was a site evaluation in advance of house construction in an area adjoining the site of the medieval *llys* of Rhosyr (Rowlands, 1784). Four days were spent with three people on site and one day for one person in Bangor. Eight days had been allowed for the work but after four days it was felt that the results provided an adequate record. Evidence was found for a major sand blow sealing an earlier ploughsoil of undetected but possibly medieval date. No structural or artefactual evidence was found suggesting occupation in or very near the area of evaluation. Sections of each trench were drawn and all tied in to OS map by EDM Survey.

The Excavation

Three trenches were excavated (Fig. 1). Trench 1, 10m x 1m, at the centre of the proposed house construction. Trench 2, 5m x 1m, adjoining the present road to the South East and Trench 3, 5m x 1m, adjoining the field of the *llys* (Cae Llys) to the north east. All three trenches produced the same stratigraphy with little variation in depth (Fig. 2).

1) The modern topsoil, of a stone-free sandy loam contained pottery of late 19th-Early 20thC. date, none earlier or later. This accords with reports that the field has not been ploughed in living memory.

2) A thick layer of stone-free sand, 0.3-0.5m in depth, deepest at the SE where it may have drifted against a road side bank or headland. This was artefact free and interpreted as a natural sand blow.

3) A dark humic loam, sandy but with a considerable fraction of silt and clay with numerous scattered rock fragments (of the local schist bedrock) c. 0.3-0.4m in depth. The surface of the layer was abrupt and relatively cohesive compared to the sand above. In all three trenches its surface was uneven with broad, shallow linear ridges, or furrows. In trench 1 and 3 these were oriented SE-NW i.e. up/down slope and in trench 2 SW-NE i.e. across slope. These ridges, best seen in trench 3 (fig.2), are interpreted as the furrows of a ploughed field (there was no turf line) sealed and protected by the blown sand. This buried ploughsoil was undated, although on its surface were some very rotted bone fragments, one sheep/goat tooth and within it one undiagnostic, hand made, coarse gritted, unglazed potsherd, 1 piece of burned clay and one flint flake with minor retouch.

4) Below this buried ploughsoil was a similar less humic horizon, representing the lower part of the natural soil profile which graded gradually into the rotting underlying bedrock.

General Interpretation

A tithe map of Newborough of 1842 shows this area as 3 narrow quillet strips, still surviving remnants of the medieval open field system (Fig 3). The excavated evidence is almost devoid of dating material but the fact that no middening pottery survived in the buried ploughsoil suggests that it is earlier than post-medieval. The most likely interpretation is that the buried soil represents a medieval ploughsoil with the orientation of the furrows matching the layout of the quillets. This cultivation horizon was probably buried by the recorded major sand blow of AD 1330 (Carr. 1982). It is suggested that the depth of sand did not prevent re establishment of the former land allotment pattern but that the lack of topsoil did prevent arable farming until the late 19th Century.

References

- Carr, A.D., 1982. Medieval Anglesey, Llangefni. 262.
Rowlands, Rev. H., 1784. *Antiquitates Parochiales*, Unpublished MS. Reprinted. Arch. Camb.

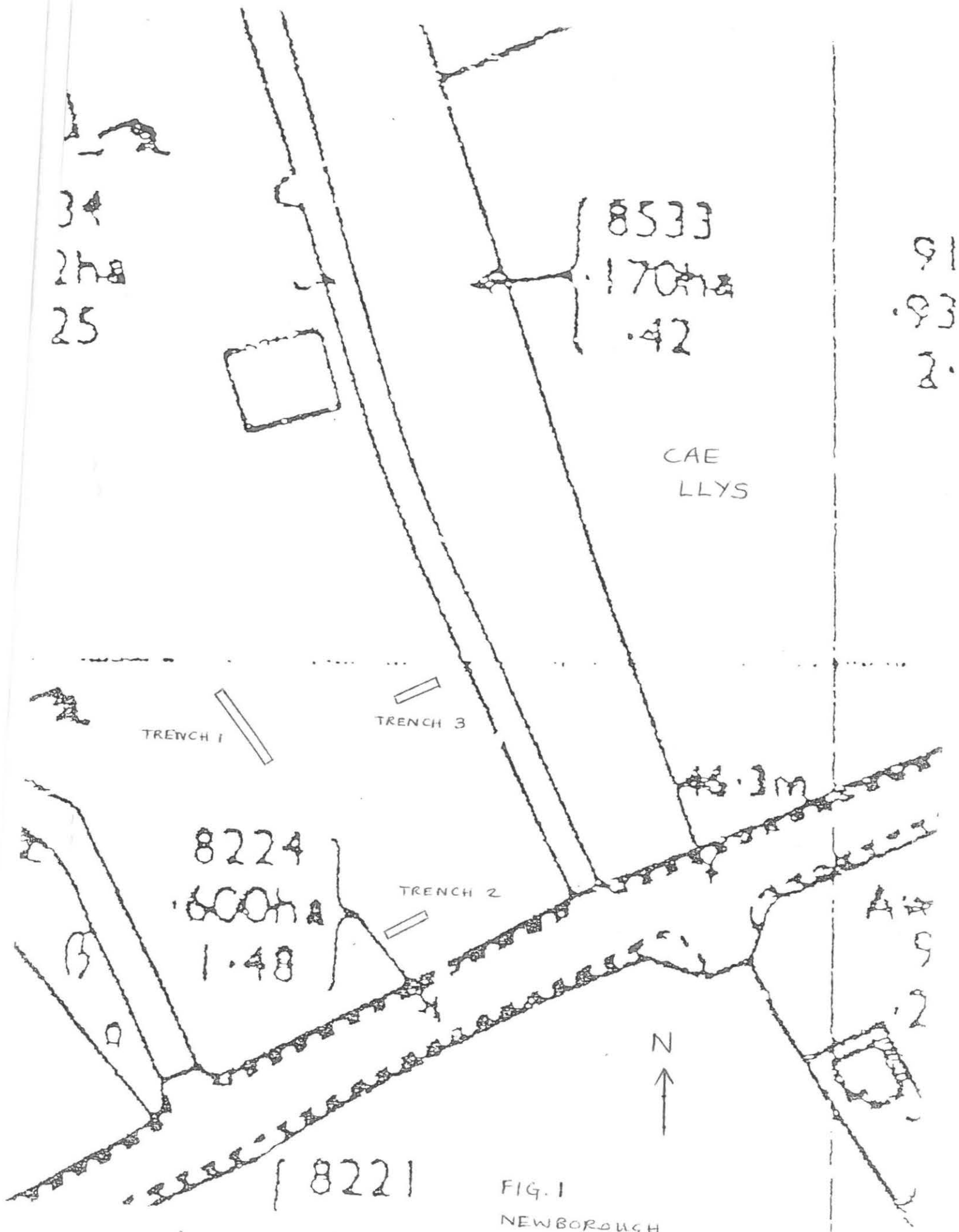


FIG. 1

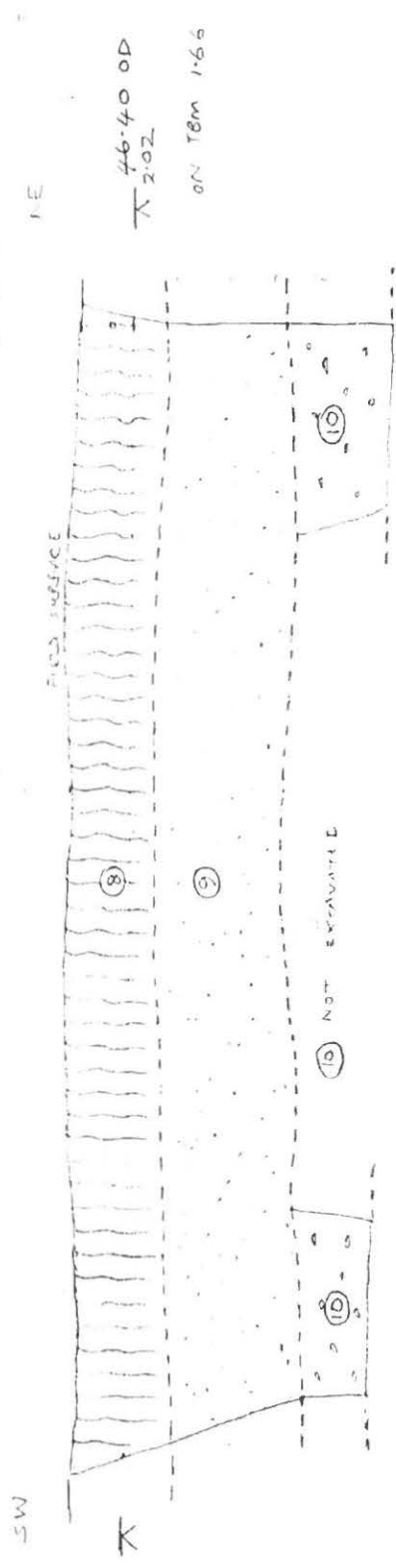
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JAN 1993

SCALE APPROX 1:500

TRENCH 2 SECTION SCALE 1:20 DRG 3



TRENCH 3 SECTION SCALE 1:20 DRG 4

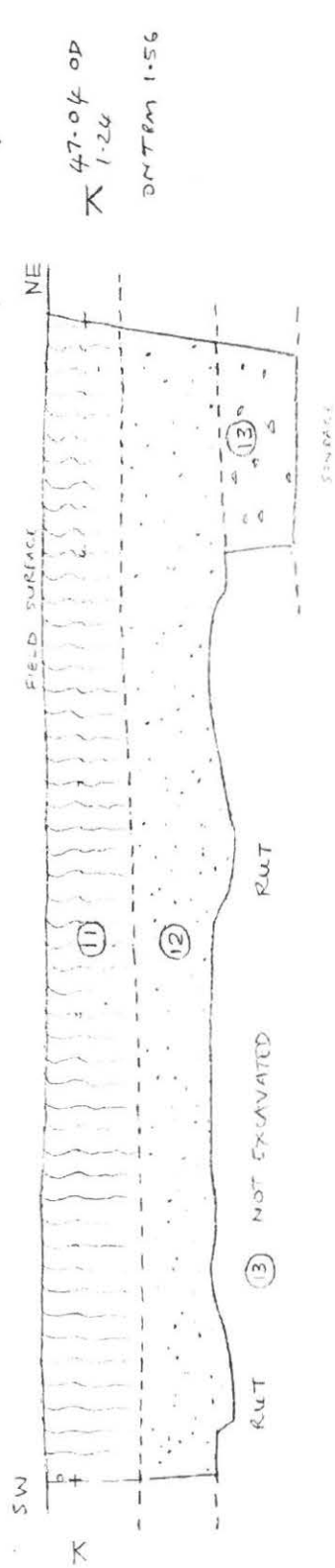


FIG. 2
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JAN 1993

SCALE APPROX 1:33

