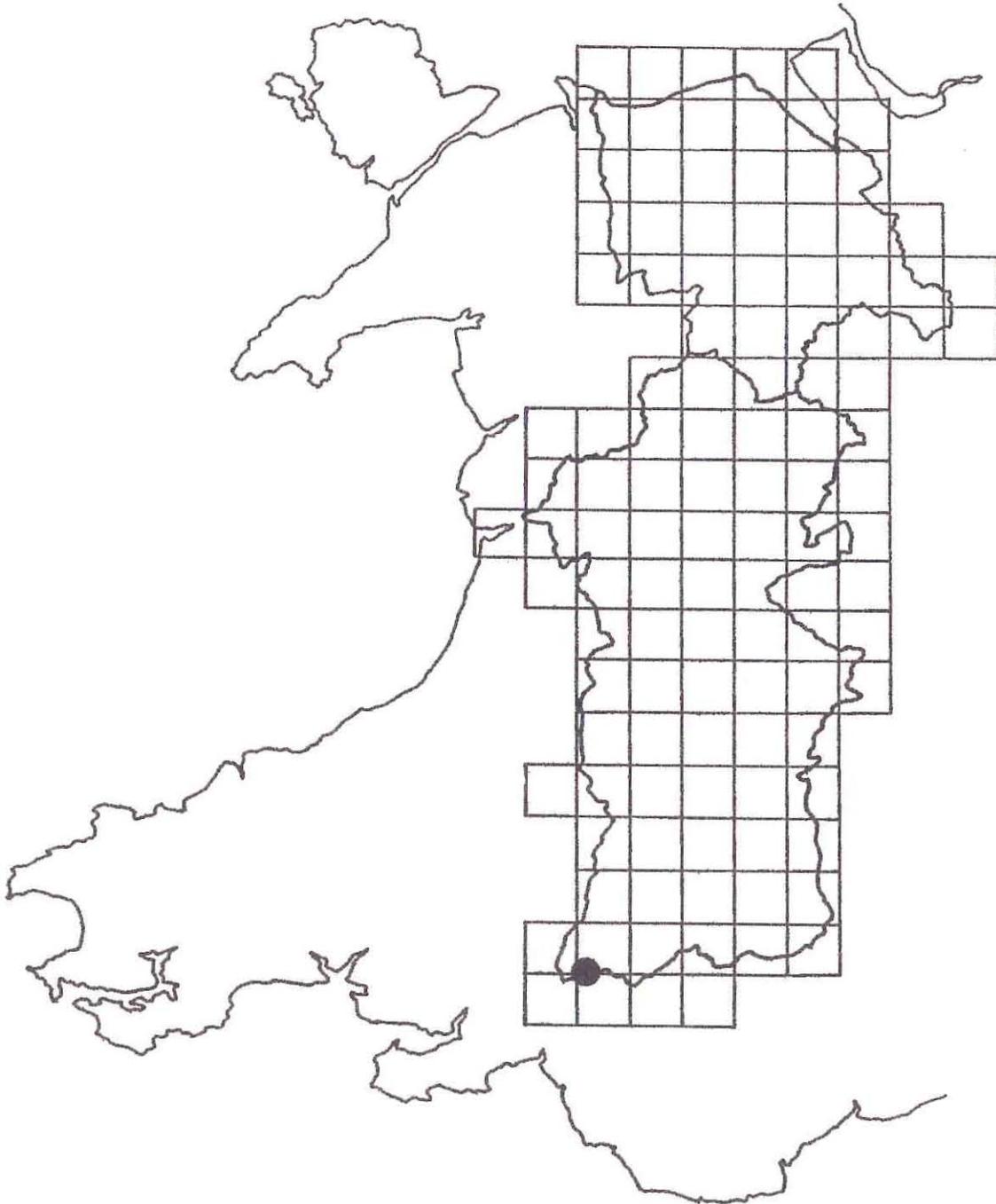


Henllan Uchaf, near Ystradgynlais, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



CPAT Report No 109

Henllan Uchaf near Ystradgynlais, Powys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

by **R Hankinson**
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Report prepared for James and McHugh Mining Ltd

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1 Introduction

1.1 In August 1994 the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was invited by James & McHugh Mining Ltd, of Welsh St Donats, South Glamorgan, to tender for an archaeological evaluation of the area of a proposed opencast coal mine at Henllan Uchaf, approximately 2km to the south-east of Ystradgynlais at the southern end of Powys.

1.2 This work had been recommended as part of the planning application by Powys County Council's archaeological advisers, the Curatorial Section of CPAT, holders of the County Sites and Monuments Record. A brief was prepared (CPAT EVB 94) which specified a programme of rapid field assessment, to be incorporated with an analysis of the archaeological information already available for the area.

1.3 In August 1994, CPAT was commissioned to carry out the work which was undertaken at the end of August and the beginning of September 1994.

2 Geographical Background

2.1 The area of the proposal (centred at SN 8000 0820 - see Fig 1) covers 7.21ha of land near the southern end of the ridge known as Mynydd y Drum. It is accessed by a track off Rhos Common Road between Ystradgynlais (Powys) and Crynant (West Glamorgan). Immediately to the east of the area is the derelict cottage of Hengaer, located on the upper slopes of the Dylais valley overlooking Seven Sisters in West Glamorgan.

2.2 At present the land is used as agricultural pasture. However, at least one third of the area has been the site of previous opencast coal working, the precise extent of which is difficult to determine on the ground.

2.3 The area is covered by a mixture of grass and rushes, with a crescent-shaped area of grassland at a higher level adjacent to the southern boundary of the area.

2.4 The solid geology of the area is encompassed within the Carboniferous Coal Measures of the South Wales coalfield. The soils derived from these underlying rocks are slowly permeable fine loamy over clayey upland soils with a peaty surface horizon of the Wilcocks 1 Soil Association (Rudeforth et al 1984).

3 Methodology

3.1 The proposal area was examined by field survey (section 4), using transect walking at 30m intervals. Archaeological features seen during this survey were photographed and/or recorded at an appropriate level.

3.2 In combination with the field survey, a desk-top study of readily available documentary and cartographic records was carried out. The application area only became part of the county

of Powys in 1985, up to this time it was within West Glamorgan and, consequently, the historic records for the locality are mostly to be found in the Glamorgan archives. The results of this study are detailed separately in section 5, below.

4 The Field Survey

4.1 Previous coal extraction within the overall area of the planning application was immediately to the north and west of the proposed opencast workings marked on Fig 2. No archaeological features were seen in this area.

4.2 The only archaeological features found within the application area were field boundaries associated with the agricultural use of the ridge. The boundaries were uniform in appearance, with earthen banks up to 1m high by 2m wide, incorporating some stone. These were frequently accompanied by ditches which would probably have fulfilled a drainage function in addition to providing the raw material for the banks.

4.3 The trackway on the eastern side of the area is a public right of way and is outside the area of proposed opencasting. Immediately to the west of the trackway, and to the south-west of Hengaer, a well is marked on the modern Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map. This could not be seen on the ground, and has probably been backfilled.

4.4 Hengaer itself lies just outside the area proposed for extraction.

5 Desk-Top Study

5.1 The desk-top study encompassed cartographic and documentary sources available at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth (NLW) and the West Glamorgan Record Office in Swansea (WGRO). The Sites and Monuments Record for Powys was also consulted, together with the National Monument Record (NMR) held by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales at Aberystwyth.

5.2 The aerial photographic collection of the NMR was also examined for archaeological features.

5.3.1 On the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) no sites were recorded within the area of the proposal. However, examination of the NMR aerial photography showed that a cropmark site (Now given the Powys SMR No PRN 15829) previously recorded in the field to the north-east of Hengaer, was, in fact, bisected by the fence and trackway which form the eastern boundary of the area. The site appeared to be an oval, bivallate enclosure with an entrance on its south-eastern side (see fig 2), it was visible on a photograph taken by the RAF in May 1948, but a later photograph, dated June 1960, showed that it had been completely destroyed by the opencast workings which had taken place in the area during the 1950s.

5.3.2 The Royal Commission's volume relating to Iron Age hill-forts in the county of Glamorgan (RCAHMMW 1976) contains a reference to the cropmark and its association with the name Hengaer (old fort). It notes that nothing was identified on the ground, which is unsurprising considering the previous opencast coal mining activity which occurred in the 1950s.

5.4 The 1948 aerial photography also showed an area of possible ridge and furrow cultivation to the north-west of Hengaer. This could not be seen on the 1960 photograph and it is most likely that it was destroyed by the opencast workings previously mentioned.

5.5 The earliest cartographic source which could cover the application area is a map of lands belonging to the Neath Abbey Estate in the parish of Cadoxton-juxta-Neath c.1601, held in the West Glamorgan Record Office (Reference in Thomas 1992). This unfortunately could not be examined because of limitations on access. However, an 18th-century survey of the same estate seems to show that it did not encompass the application area at that time.

5.6 The first cartographic source which definitely covered the area is the old series Ordnance Survey 1 inch:1 mile map (reproduced in facsimile by Margary in 1992) published in 1831. This was based on a survey undertaken in 1814 and revised in 1828. Hengaer is shown on this map, with a field boundary extending to the north-west across the proposal area.

5.7 An 1841 map of the land to the east of the proposal area is held in the National Library of Wales. This gives the owner of the proposal area as J.D. Llewellyn, but shows no detail within the area.

5.8 The Cadoxton-juxta-Neath Tithe map of 1846 reveals more detail of the field boundaries within the area; these are substantially the same as those shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 maps. Except for those parts which have been opencasted the boundaries are still extant. A copy of part of the apportionment suggests that the area was perhaps farmed in conjunction by the residents of Henllan Uchaf and Isaf.

5.9 A map within the sale catalogue for "The Miers Estate", dated 1885, gives the owner of the proposal area as J.T.D. Llewellyn esq, either the same person referred to in 1841, or a descendant. The land for sale includes Hengaer, but no part of the proposal area. The 1884 sale of the minerals estate covers the same area.

5.10 The first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 maps, surveyed in 1876-7, were published in 1891 and are the first detailed maps of the area. In addition to the field boundaries previously mentioned, they show two features of interest in or near the proposal area. The first is a well (PRN 15825), to the south-west of Hengaer, which was noted in paragraph 4.3. This was probably used by Hengaer, although it appears to have been in the adjacent land holding of Henllan Uchaf or Isaf. The second feature is a line of coal levels (PRN 15828) immediately to the west of the proposal area (specified as such on the 1919 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map). These are not datable, but the fact that their function is not specified on this map (unlike other levels

nearby) suggests that they had fallen into disuse at the time of the survey.

5.11 The remaining cartographic sources for the area are the 1919 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 maps. In addition to the two features noted above, they show an "Old Trial Level" (PRN 15826) and "Old Trial Shaft" (PRN 15827) to the north of Hengaer and the west of the trackway leading to Pen-cae'r-llan. It seems most likely that these features date to the period following the survey of the 1:10560 maps in 1876-7.

5.12 Documentary sources for the area are sparse, the only possible reference which was discovered was a deed of 1619 relating to Ynys y Fforgh (Ynys-fforch Fawr) and Tyr Traharne ap Jevan Gethin (unlocated). The Royal Commission consider that both Henllan Uchaf and Henllan Isaf date to the 18th century (RCAHMMW 1988), and it is therefore possible that the proposal area formed part of the lands of Ynys-fforch in the 17th century.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The nearby cottage called "Hengaer", mentioned in the brief, most probably derived its name from the cropmark enclosure (PRN 15829). The enclosure may have been visible on the ground when the cottage was constructed but unfortunately was lost when the area was opencasted in the 1950s.

6.2 The 1950s opencast coal extraction also removed the above ground traces of earlier coal mining activity on or near the site (PRNs 15826-8). However, there remains an inherent potential for the survival of below surface coal workings in areas not already opencasted. The large scale Ordnance Survey maps show that these potential remains are unlikely to be more recent than the mid-19th century. The earliest reference to coal workings in Cadoxton parish found in the West Glamorgan Record Office dated to the beginning of the 17th century, although this was outside the application area.

6.3 Those surface features that remain are likely to relate to the commencement of the more intensive agricultural use of the area. This cannot be dated with any accuracy, but it seems likely that it coincided with the construction of Henllan Uchaf and Henllan Isaf in the 18th century. Fieldwork does not suggest that these features are of particular significance.

7 Acknowledgements

7.1 CPAT would like to thank the West Glamorgan Record Office, Swansea for their advice on the consultation of archive material in their possession.

8 List of Sites

- PRN 15825 Well, (SN 8017 0805). Marked on Ordnance Survey maps from 1:10,560 map of 1891 (surveyed 1876-7). Not seen during field survey and very probably backfilled.
- PRN 15826 Trial Level (Coal), (SN 8019 0816). Marked as "Old Trial Level" on Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1919. Area opencasted in the 1950s and site consequently lost.
- PRN 15827 Trial Shaft (Coal), (SN 8016 0818). Marked as "Old Trial Shaft" on Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1919. Area opencasted in the 1950s and site consequently lost.
- PRN 15828 Levels (Coal), (SN 7983 0814). Total of 11 former coal levels, on north-east/south-west line, marked as "Old Coal Levels" on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1919. They are also shown on 1:10560 map of 1891 (surveyed 1876-7) but their nature is not specified, it therefore seems likely that they predated the survey of the 1891 map. Area opencasted in the 1950's and levels consequently lost.
- PRN 15829 Bivallate Cropmark Enclosure, (SN 8020 0820). Seen on RAF aerial photograph taken in 1948. The cropmark appears to represent an oval shaped bivallate enclosure, located on the crest of the ridge. There is an entrance on its south-eastern side and as the ditches approach it they seem to converge slightly. The area was opencasted in the 1950s and the site was consequently lost. It seems most likely that the name of the nearby ruined cottage, Hengaer, was derived from this site.

9 Sources

7.1 Cartographic Sources

1831 Ordnance Survey 1:63360 Old Series map (see Margary - section 7.3)

1841 Map of Pen-cae'r-llan and Gwaun-iarll (NLW - Jenkins of Resolven No 8)

1846 Cadoxton-juxta-Neath Tithe map (NLW)

1884 Sale catalogue of minerals on "The Miers Estate" (NLW - GLAM 8)

1885 Sale catalogue of "The Miers Estate" (NLW - GLAM 67)

1891 Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map Glamorgan 9 NE (NLW)

1891 Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map Brecon 43 SE (NLW)

1919 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map Glamorgan 9.3 (NLW)

7.2 Documentary Sources

Deeds to Ynys y Fforgh, 1619 - WGRO (D/D Yc 486)

Cadoxton-juxta-Neath Tithe map apportionment (copy) - NLW (D.Dan Herbert Deposit No 47)

7.3 References

George, T.N. 1970 British Regional Geology - South Wales Institute of Geological Sciences, HMSO, London.

Margary, H. 1992 The Old Series Ordnance Survey Maps of England and Wales (Volume 6) Lympne, Kent.

RCAHMW 1976 Glamorgan, Volume 1: Pre-Norman, Part 2: The Iron Age and the Roman Occupation Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, HMSO, Cardiff.

RCAHMW 1988 An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan, Volume 4: Domestic Architecture from the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution, Part 2: Farmhouses and Cottages Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, HMSO, London.

Rudelforth et al 1984 Soils and Their Use in Wales Soil Survey of England and Wales, Bulletin No 11, Harpenden.

Thomas, H.M. 1992 A Catalogue of Glamorgan Estate Maps Glamorgan Archives Publication.



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Fig 1 Location of Proposed Opencast Site at Henllan Uchaf (Scale 1:25000)

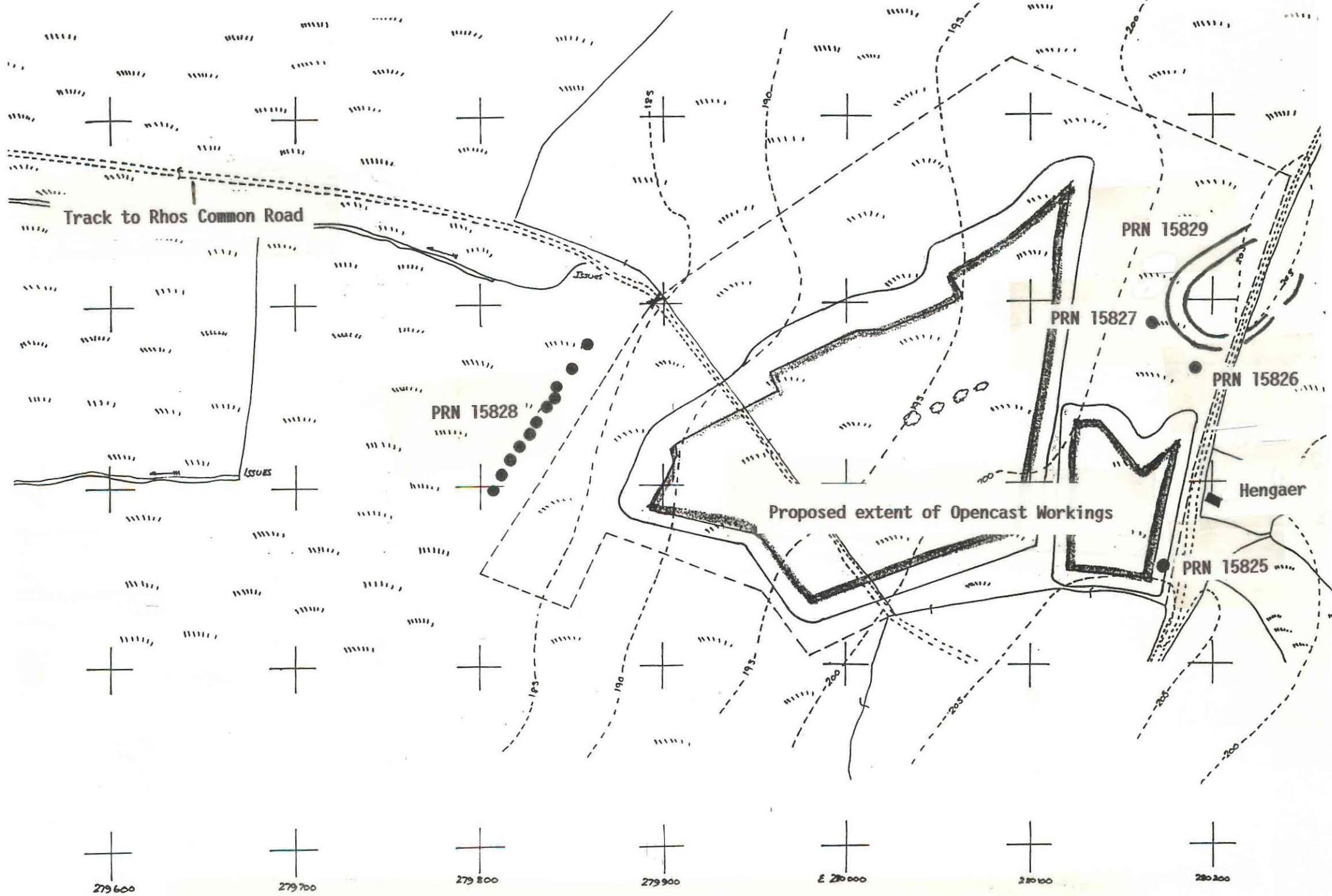


Fig 2 Site Plan Showing Locations of Archaeological Sites (Scale 1:2500)