

Marches Archaeology

Land off Gypsy Castle Lane Hay on Wye Powys

**A report on a
archaeological watching brief**



April 2002

7258/19543

Marches Archaeology Series 234

This report is produced by

Marches Archaeology

**Marches House
6 High Street
Clun
Shropshire
SY7 8JB**

Tel:- 01588 640976

Fax:- 01588 640796

e-mail:- marches@archaeology.kc3.co.uk

For:-

Virgin Western Limited
3 Manor Park
Mackenzie Way
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL51 9TX

Marches Archaeology is the trading name of Marches Archaeology Limited (Registered in England and Wales: 4095678). The directors are Nic Appleton-Fox and Richard Stone, who have worked in close association since 1991. All principal members of staff are members of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and abide by its code of practice and other regulations. *Marches Archaeology* provides a full range of archaeological services to a client base of architects, local authorities, national bodies and private individuals. Our standard services include; excavation, watching briefs, building survey, building analysis, planning advice, landscape survey, photographic recording and historical research. Specialist consultants are available to provide environmental, geophysical and finds advice and analysis.

VAT Reg. No. 656 0767 15

**Land off Gypsy Castle Lane
Hay on Wye
Powys**

NGR: SO 22104190

**A report on an
archaeological watching brief**

Report by

Jo Wainwright *MA AIFA*

Contents

Summary

- 1 Introduction
 - 2 Archaeological and historical background
 - 3 Scope and aims of the project
 - 4 Methodology
 - 5 Results of the watching brief
 - 6 The pottery *by Stephanie Rátkai*
 - 7 Discussion
 - 8 Conclusions
 - 9 Sources consulted
 - 10 The archive
- Appendix 1 Architect's plan of main development site

April 2002

Marches Archaeology Series 234

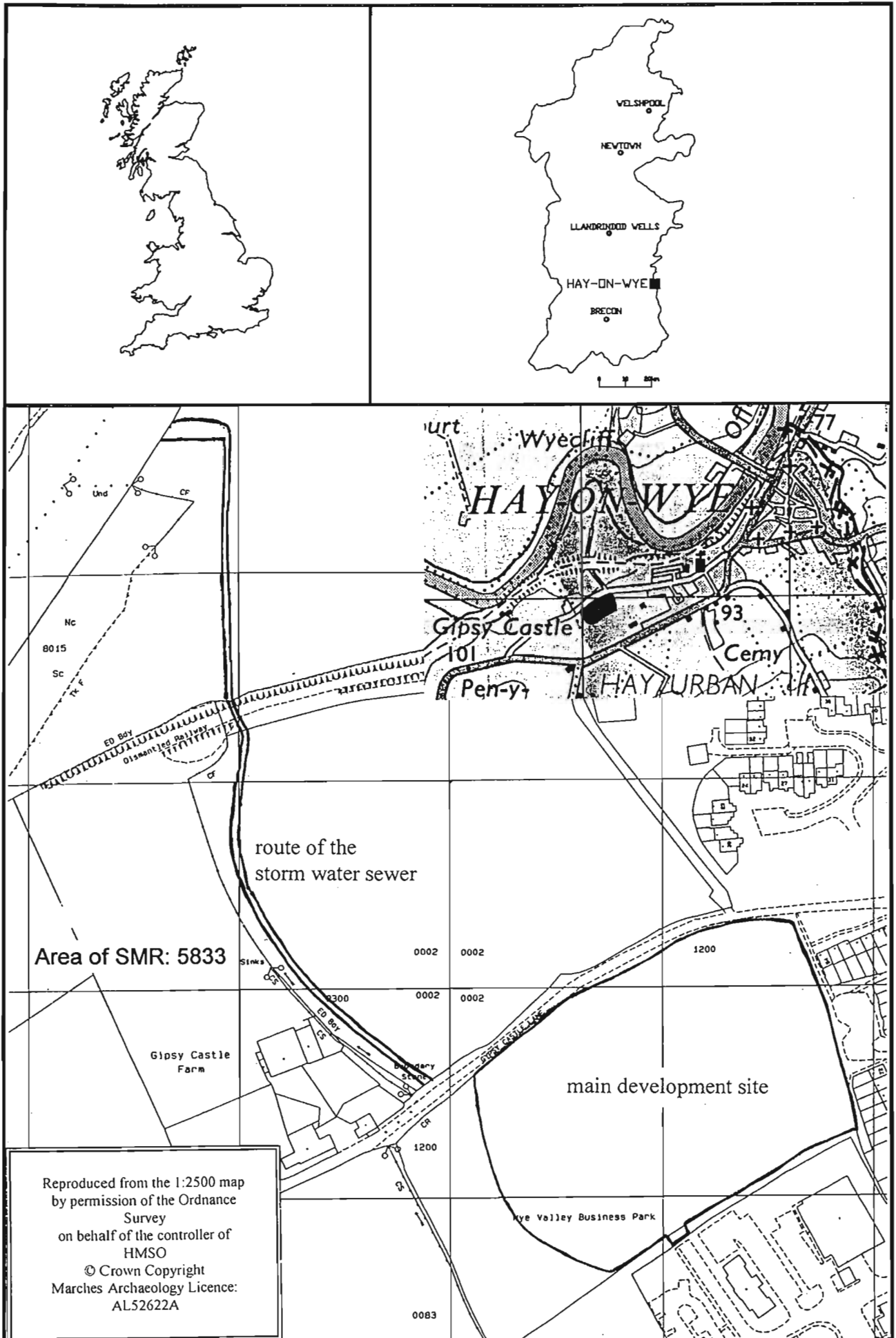


Fig. 1 Location of the Site

**Land off Gypsy Castle Lane
Hay on Wye
Powys**

**A report on an
archaeological watching brief**

Summary

A watching brief carried out on land off Gypsy Castle Lane produced evidence for a boundary ditch which could be associated with the probable Iron Age hillfort registered on the Clwyd Powys Sites and Monuments Record (SMR: 5833). However, no other features or deposits which could be linked with this complex were seen. It is possible that 19th and 20th century levelling and infilling, to the north of the ditch, has destroyed any features or deposits if they existed in this area. A concentration of pottery uncovered further to the south is probably the result of a more intensive manuring of this area of the site during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

1 Introduction

A planning application was submitted to the local planning authority for permission to erect dwellings on land off Gypsy Castle Lane, Hay on Wye (ref. P15712). The site is situated in the most northerly corner of the Brecon Beacons National Park at NGR: SO 22104190 (Fig. 1). The underlying geology is of Devonian Raglan Marls overlain by glacial and alluvial deposits (Cotswold Geotech, 2000).

The site is close to a site registered on the Clwyd Powys Sites and Monuments Record (ref: SMR: 5833) as a site of archaeological interest (Fig. 1). The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor advised that in order that the archaeological resource was adequately protected an archaeological watching brief was to be carried out during ground works associated with the proposed development.

The Local Planning Authority's Archaeology Advisor produced a 'Brief for an archaeological watching brief'. Mr. M. Irwin of Virgin Western Ltd. commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services detailed in the Brief.

The main development site covers approximately 1.6 hectares, was under pasture before development and consists of a fairly flat area of land about 95 metres O.D. which slopes gently down towards the west (Fig. 1). The site is bounded to the north by Gypsy Castle Lane, to the east by a housing development and to the south by a business park. The area to the west is under pasture and about 20 metres further west there is a field boundary along which a north to south stream runs.

The storm water sewer runs northwards from the north western edge of the main development area for about 370 metres to the river Wye (Fig. 1). The route crosses Gypsy Castle Lane into a grass field then follows the western boundary of this field northwards where it crosses the

disused Hay to Brecon railway line. It continues northwards crossing a grass field to the river and outflow. The route is generally level except for about the last 100 metres which slopes steeply down to the River Wye.

2 Archaeological and historical background

There have been several prehistoric flint find spots in the vicinity of the main development site. About 400 metres to the north west, across the river Wye, struck flint flakes have been uncovered (SMR: 4279, 70793 and 70795). These have been tentatively dated to the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age. A socketed spearhead dating from the Bronze Age was found in the Wye close to the site before 1933 so it seems likely that there was occupation in the area in the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age period though it is possible that it was confined to the northern bank of the Wye.

About 150 metres to the north-east of the main site, cropmarks known as Gypsy Castle Enclosure, have been recognised from 1965 Cambridge University Aerial Photographs (SMR: 5833). These are thought to represent an Iron Age hillfort with enclosures, an area of pitting and a possible round house. Although the eastern part of this complex is obscured and some of the cropmarks could be interpreted as geological features, on balance it appears that these cropmarks represent settlement in the Iron Age. It is highly likely, given its close proximity to Gypsy Castle Enclosure, that some form of occupation was occurring on the site during this period.

There is a paucity of finds and sites dating from the periods after the Iron Age and before the medieval period in the vicinity of the site but it is unlikely that the area was unoccupied during all of this time. The earliest documentary reference for the area dates from 1121 and refers to a castle at Hay (Silvester and Dorling, 1993). It is probable that the castle that this refers to was situated where a small mound is visible today, to the east of Login Brook and approximately 500 metres north-east of the development site (SMR: 439, SAM 77). The church of St Mary, which is situated next to the mound, was also first recorded in the twelfth century (SMR: 16794). The place-name Hay (on Wye) is derived from the Norman French *La Haie* which means enclosure or forest clearing.

The Norman parish of Hay was created in about 1130 from part of the Welsh parish of Llanigon and it is thought that settlement, presumably around the castle and the church was already taking place by then (Appleton-Fox, 1999). In c.1200 a stone castle was built 300 metres to the east and is traditionally thought to have been constructed by Maude de St Valerie. The castle has had a turbulent history. In 1216 it was burnt by King John, then rebuilt in 1233 by Henry III, then burnt by Prince Edward in 1263 and later suffered further damage under Owain Glyndwr (SMR: 440).

The town was in existence by the early thirteenth century and the settlement was now centred on the stone castle and the market place adjacent to it. In 1232 the townsfolk were granted the right to construct town walls but these were probably not built till after 1237 (Silvester and Dorling, 1993). The town continued to grow throughout the thirteenth century and by 1298 it had 183 burgages.

However, in common with many other border towns the latter part of the middle ages was a period of decline and Leland records the town as being in decay in the 1530s. The town walls were gradually dismantled from the eighteenth century onwards and the church collapsed in the eighteenth century with only the fifteenth century tower surviving.

An estate map of the Tredegar Estates of Charles Morgan Esq. which was published in 1801, though surveyed in 1781, is the earliest surviving plan showing any part of the site (Fig. 2). The route of the storm water sewer runs through field 6 which is Flydes Meadow, field 7 which is Heol y Feyltea and field 4, Little Heol. Field 6 was presumably under pasture and field 7 appears to be under pasture with woodland around the north and east edges of the field. Field 4 is shown with lines across it, perhaps this indicates it was cultivated though cultivation would be impossible along the river bank in this field as the slope is too steep.

The Tithe Plan of 1847 shows the whole site (Fig. 3). The main development site is shown as one block of land, which is how it appears today. The route of the storm water sewer runs through one field, though the field division shown on the earlier estate map is clearly visible, as is the position of the woodland that was shown on this earlier map. The newly built Hay to Brecon tramway appears to utilise the area that was shown as woodland on the estate map.

There is no change in the land divisions in the area of the main development site shown on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Plan of 1887 (Fig. 4). However the Hay to Brecon railway has, to some extent, altered the field boundaries in the north of the site where the storm water sewer is situated. The route of the disused tramway has apparently reverted back to woodland in the west, which was how it appeared on the 1801 estate map. There is a building shown on in the top north eastern corner of the area of the main development site, this is presumably a shed of some sort.

The 1st Edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey Plan of 1891 is not illustrated as it shows the same as the 25 inch Ordnance Survey Plan of 1887. By the time of the 1927 6 inch Ordnance Survey Plan the shed has gone but otherwise there are no further changes to the study area (Fig. 5).

3 Scope and aims of the project

The scope of the project was defined in the Brief as:

- ◆ observation of all topsoil stripping, other earthmoving and trench excavation until natural subsoil was reached
- ◆ the recording of the sequence of soil deposits present and all archaeological deposits and features
- ◆ all artefacts were collected, identified and catalogued
- ◆ if significant archaeology had been identified the archaeologist on site would have informed the County Archaeological Officer and Project Engineer immediately in order that appropriate action may have been taken to minimise the damage to such deposits and to record them appropriately.

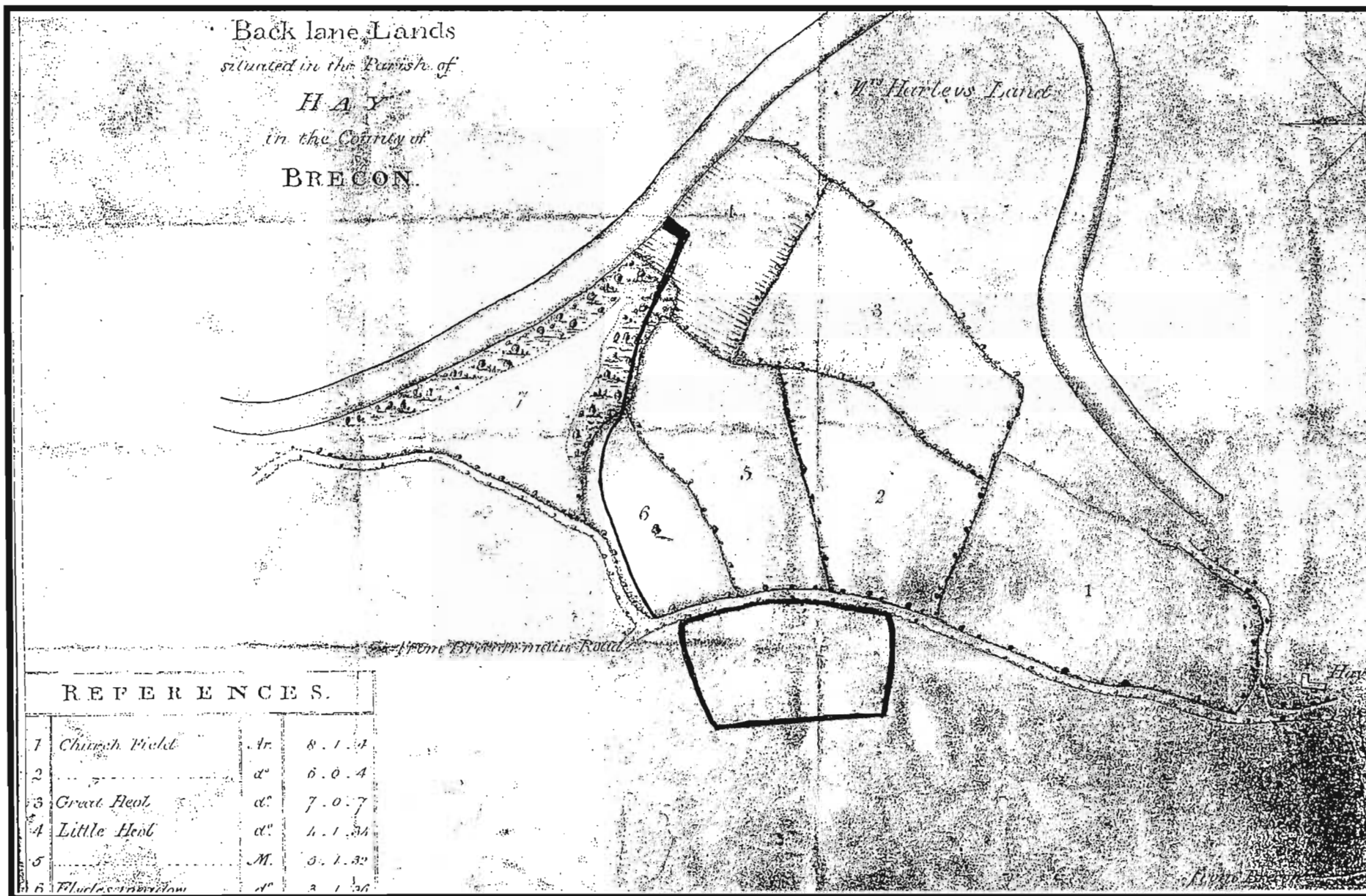


Fig. 2 Detail from the 1801 Tredegar Estates Map of Charles Morgan

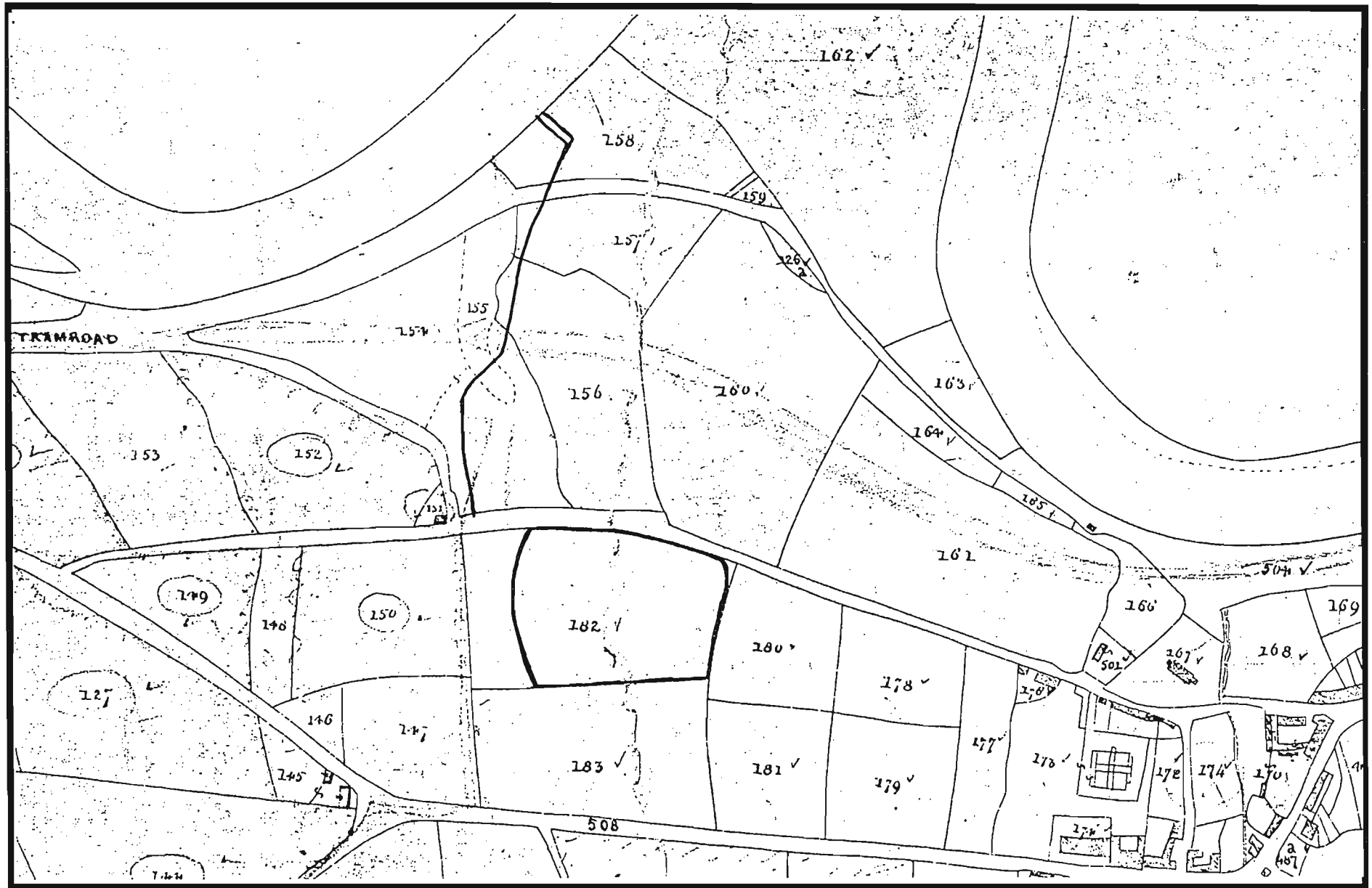


Fig. 3 Detail from the 1847 Tithe Plan

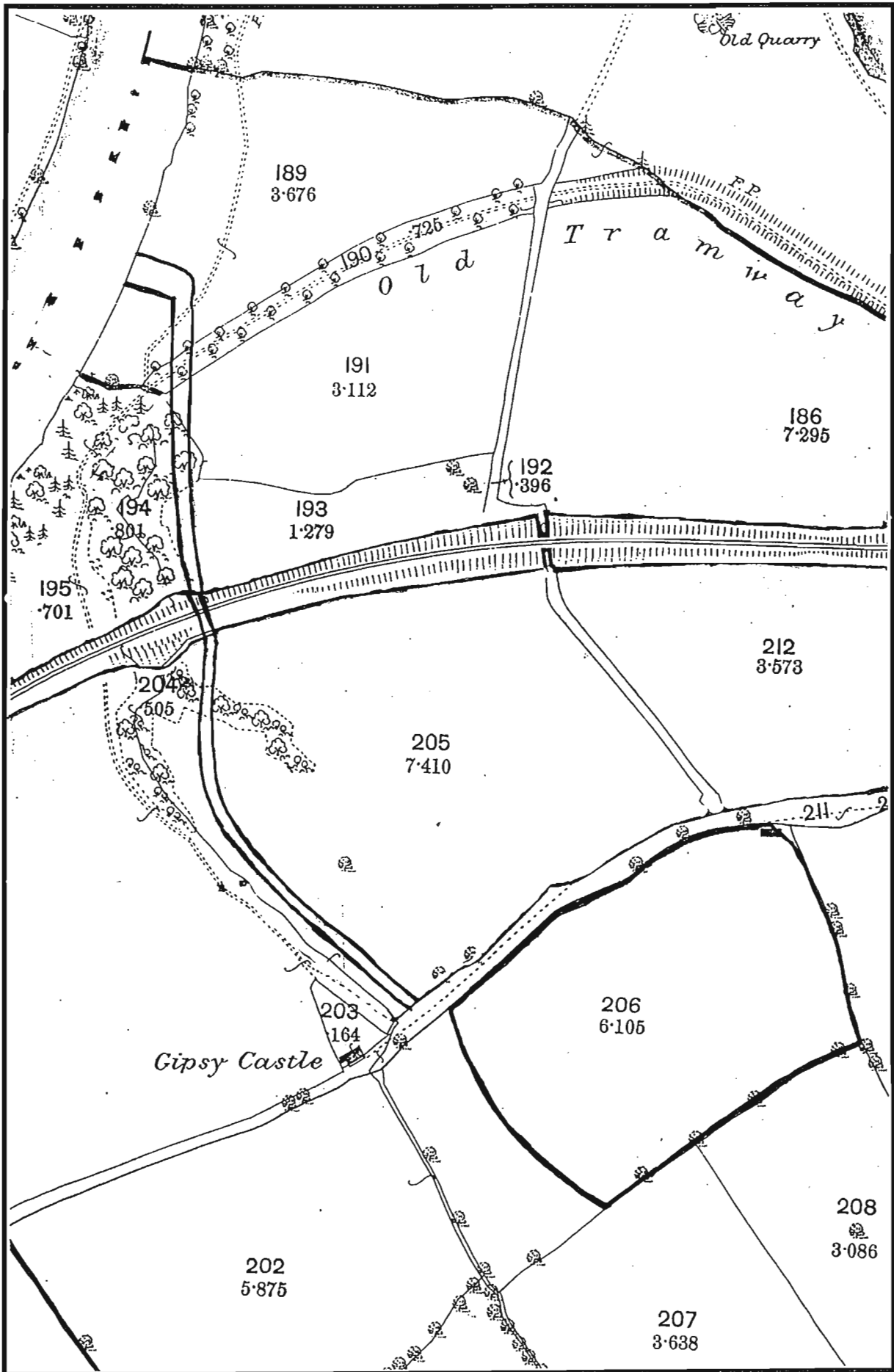


Fig. 4 Detail from the 1887 25 inch Ordnance Survey Plan

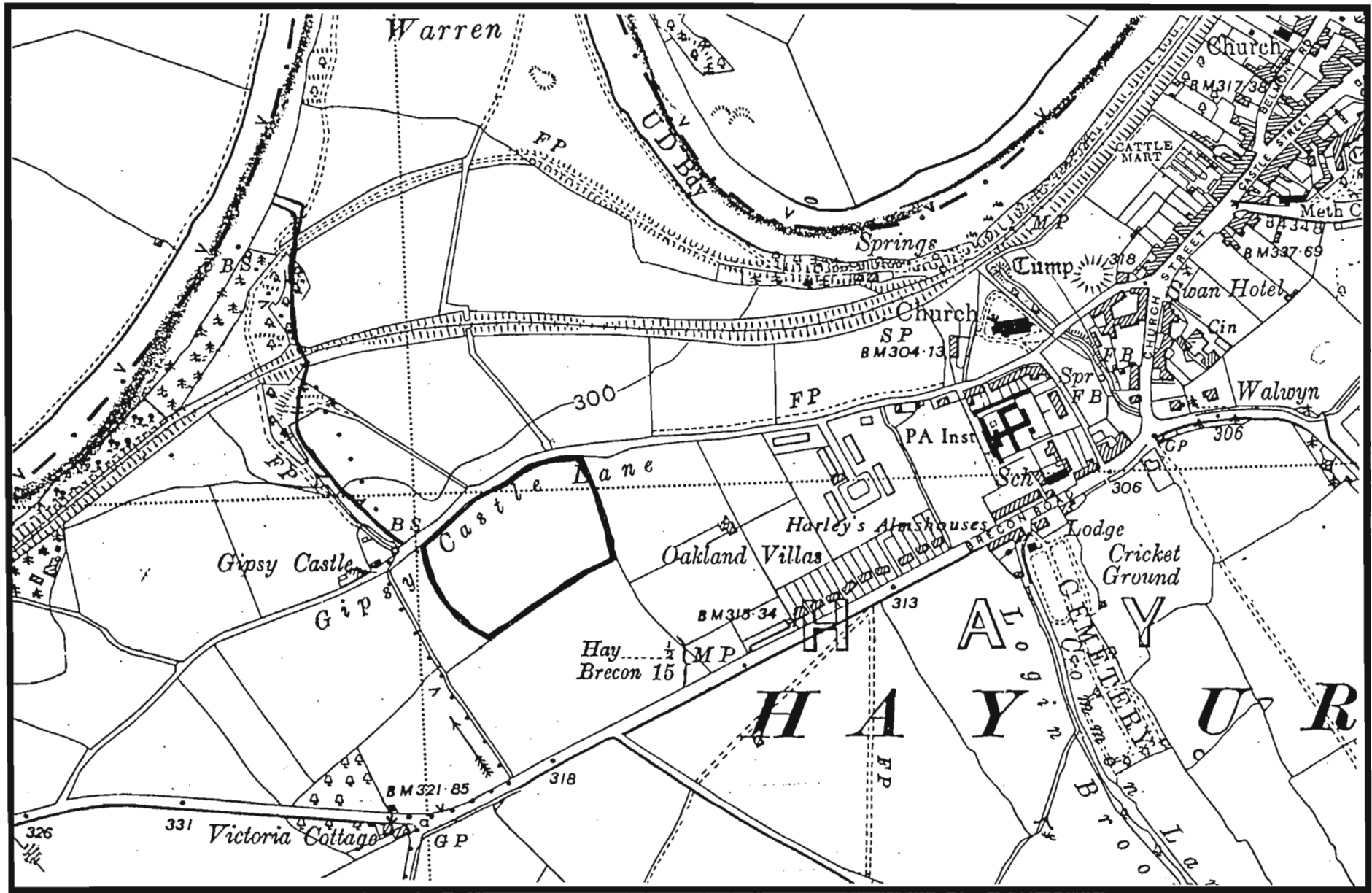


Fig. 5 Detail from the 1927 6 inch Ordnance Survey Plan (200%)

The aims of an archaeological watching brief are defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as:

‘to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works’.

and:

‘to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard’.

4 Methodology

Documentary research

Primary and secondary sources were consulted in order to inform the fieldwork phase. Initially a site visit was made and the Clwyd Powys Sites and Monuments Record was consulted. The following sources were also considered:

Ordnance Survey maps; Tithe maps; Estate maps and other historical maps;
Previous published and unpublished archaeological reports and archive work;
Air photographs; Geological maps; Borehole and other engineering data.

Fieldwork

Observations of all ground breaking activity were made in the initial stages of this development. However, little of archaeological significance was encountered in the early stages of the development and it was decided between Chris Martin of Clywd-Powys Archaeological Trust and Richard Stone of Marches Archaeology that the watching brief was to be scaled down. It was proposed that an archaeologist would visit the site intermittently, on days when excavation was taking place, or to see areas after excavation. The paucity of finds and archaeological features seen during this intermittent watching brief led the Local Authority’s Archaeological Advisor to recommend that the watching brief cease altogether in the later stages of the development.

An archaeologist was on site from December 2000 to March 2002. Ground breaking activity on the main development site consisted of the stripping of the topsoil, excavation of foundation trenches, access roads and service trenches (Fig. 6 and Appendix 1). No excavations on the main site were seen below about 3.00 metres.

The excavation of the storm water sewer to the north of the site was subject to a constant watching brief (Fig. 7). The storm water sewer was a maximum 4.50 metres wide and a maximum 4 metres deep. An easement strip was excavated down to a maximum of 300mm along part of the route of the sewer.

The recording system includes written, drawn and photographic data. The primary written record was by means of site notes, accompanied by sketches. Context numbers were

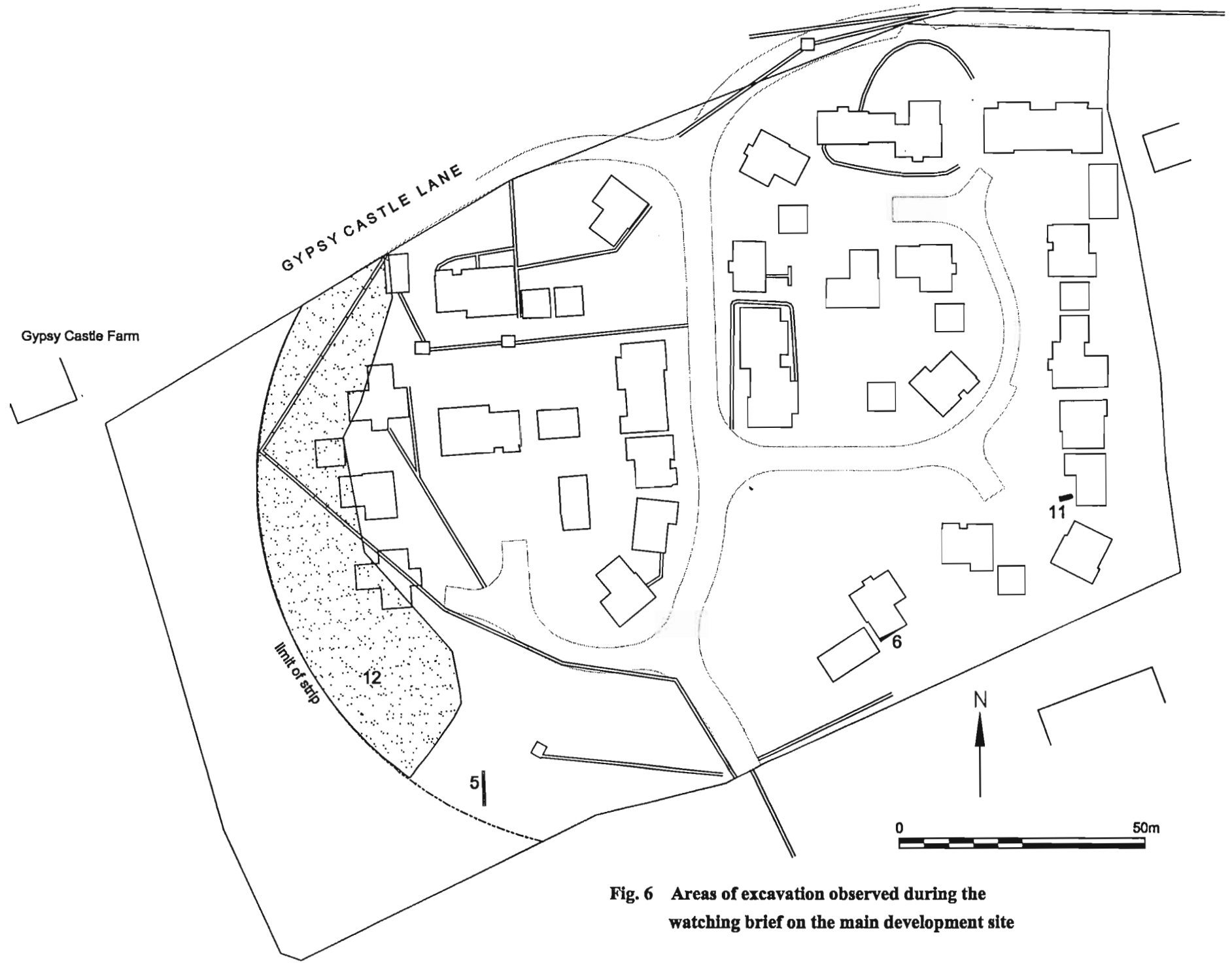


Fig. 6 Areas of excavation observed during the watching brief on the main development site

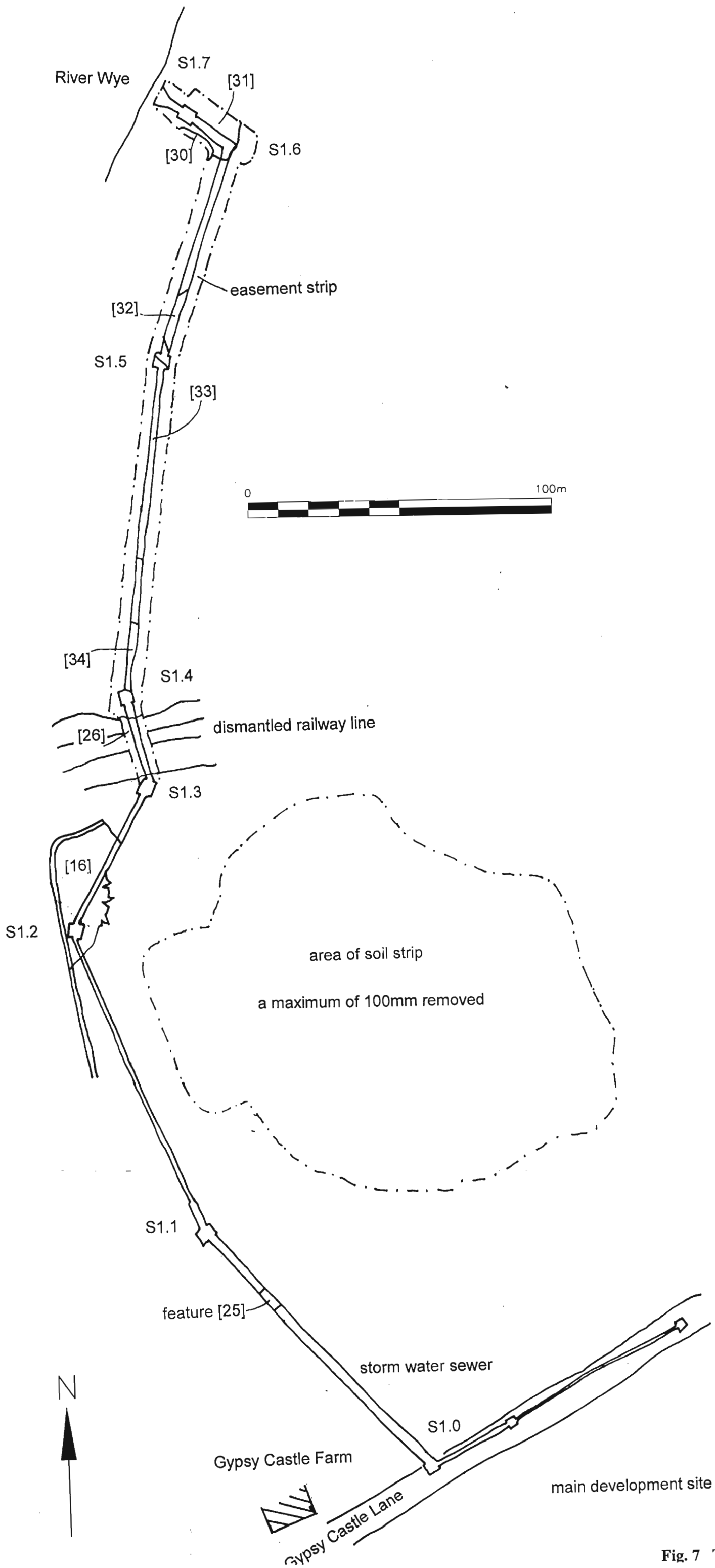


Fig. 7 The storm water sewer excavations

allocated and context record sheets completed as appropriate. A running matrix was maintained. Plans, sections and other appropriate drawings of significant data were made. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film.

Office work

On completion of fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. The artefactual data was processed, catalogued and cross-referenced.

5 Results of the watching brief

The main development site (Fig. 6)

The main development site was stripped down all over by a maximum 400mm. The general soil profile over the site consisted of a topsoil [1]. This was a friable mid reddish brown silty clay with a maximum thickness of about 200mm. Underlying [1] was a subsoil [2] which was a friable to firm mid red brown loam with occasional rounded pebbles and occasional charcoal. This layer was a maximum 250mm thick. Below this were the natural alluvial and glacial deposits of rounded cobbles and pebbles in a sandy clay matrix [3]. In places the natural was a cleaner marl with occasional rounded cobbles and pebbles. In the west of the site the subsoil was given a different number [12] so that the finds could be kept separate. This layer had the same profile as [2]. One flint waste flake, which probably dates from the prehistoric period, was recovered from an unstratified deposit.

Three features, all of a post-medieval date, were excavated in the main development area. Cutting the subsoil [2], in the south west of the site, was a shallow ditch or drainage channel [5] aligned north to south. This was a minimum 3.00 metres in length, 950mm wide and 200mm deep. The fill of this feature was a mid reddish brown silty clay with very frequent sub-rounded pebbles [4]. Pottery from the 17th century was recovered from this fill.

In the south of the site, parallel to the hedgerow and seen in the excavations of the footings for house 18, was part of a boundary ditch [6]. This was about 1.00 metre deep and was cut into the natural [3]. The primary fill of [6] was a firm dirty brown or brownish pink clay silt with occasional small stones [9]. This is interpreted as a silting up of the ditch. Above [9] was a moderately firm light grey loam [8]. The upper fill was a soft light beige brown gritty silty sand with occasional clay [7].

In the east of the site, to the west of house 21, a linear feature [11] was excavated which cut [2]. This was aligned east to west, was at least 2.60 metres long and had a rounded end at the east. The western part of this feature was not observed and it was not fully excavated. The fill of cut [11] was a firm to hard marl with frequent rounded pebbles [10].

The storm water sewer (Fig. 7)

The soil profile along the storm water sewer excavation did not differ from the profile excavated in the main development area. Different context numbers along the length of the

excavation were allocated for the natural [15, 29 and 31], the subsoil [14 and 28], and the topsoil [13 and 27]. The natural deposits excavated were glacial and alluvial deposits. The subsoils and topsoils varied in thickness though these deposits tended to become thicker towards the river.

One feature of archaeological significance was excavated, a ditch [25] (Fig. 8). This cut into the natural [15] and was seen in both sections of the trench. Ditch [25] was about 5.80 metres wide and had a maximum depth of 0.90 metres and had a number of fills. The primary fill [24], a soft grey brownish silty sand with occasional water borne cobbles, represents a silting up of the base of the ditch. Overlying this was a thin lens of firm pinky brown clay silt with no inclusions [23]. Fill [23] only appeared in the east section. A fill [22], which was very similar to the primary fill of the ditch, was above [23]. Overlying [22] was a lens of firm pinky brown silty clay with occasional sand [21]. These four fills [24, 23, 22 and 21] are probably associated with a primary silting up of the feature over a number of years.

A thicker fill of clean, very soft greyish brown silty sand [20] overlay [21]. What could be either where a stake or a wooden board had been placed was visible within [20] in the east section. This gap within [20] was filled with a mixture of [20] and the deposit above [19]. Fill [19] was a softish mid pinky brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks. A mid grey brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal and lenses of pea grit [18] overlay [19]. A firm mid pinky brown silty clay [17] with lenses of cleaner clay and occasional stone flecks was above [18] and formed the upper fill of feature [25]. Sealing ditch [25] was the subsoil [14] and overlying this the topsoil [13].

Above the subsoil [14], in the vicinity of S1.2, was a layer of household and industrial waste [16] which filled in a hollow or pond. This is reputed to be Hay-on-Wye's 'town' dump. This deposit was a maximum 2.00 metres thick and the pottery uncovered dated from the 19th and 20th centuries. Local knowledge suggests the dump was in use until the 1920s.

Where the line of the storm water sewer crossed the dismantled railway line a 1.70 metre thick layer of clinker, ash, topsoil and subsoil [26] was excavated. The ground here was higher than the surrounding land and was presumably made up to lay the railway line onto in the 19th century.

In the field to the north of the dismantled railway two dumps of 20th century material [33 and 34] overlay the natural [29]. Both dumps were a about 2.00 metres thick and the farmer said that they were filling hollows or depressions within the field.

Further south of dump [33] was a layer or dump of dark grey black sandy silt with frequent concrete [32]. It is probable that this is the line of the old tramway and according to the farmer the line here was filled in and levelled sometime after 1945.

Between S1.6 and S1.7 and overlying the natural [29] was a 2.00-3.00 metre thick layer of orange tan silt with patches of blue grey clay [31]. This was interpreted as an alluvial deposit. A 500mm thick dump of sub-angular pebbles, clinker, charcoal and brick fragments [30] was also excavated in this area. This was presumably a dump of debris associated with the tramway to the north.

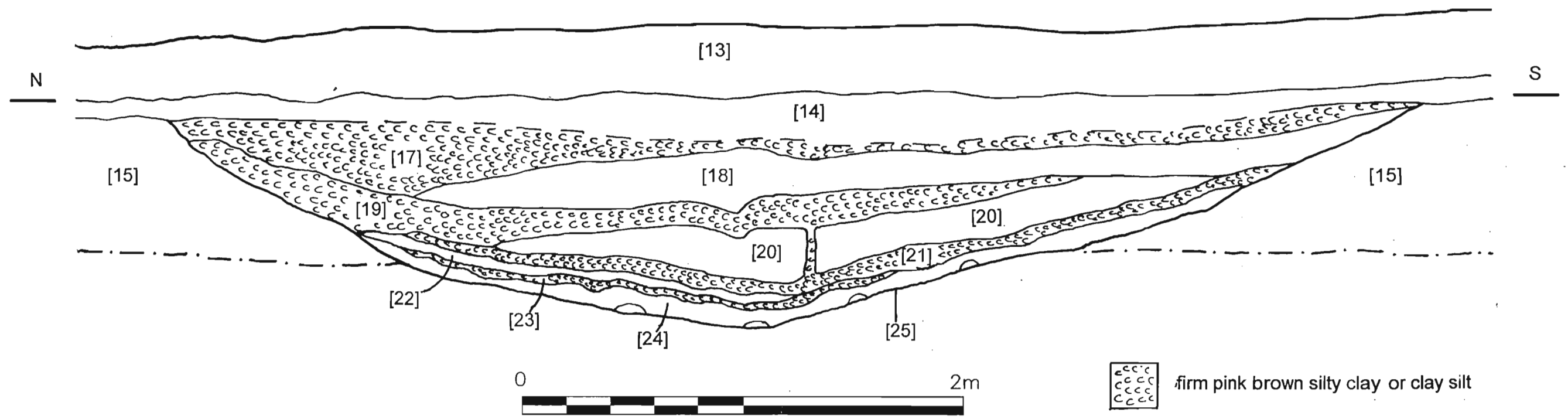


Fig. 8 Section of ditch [25]

6 The pottery by Stephanie Rátkai

Fabric	Context number						Date
	u/s	1	2	4	12	27	
blackware					1		18th c
coarseware/blackware				1			17th c
coarseware			1		1		18th c
creamware		1	1		1		later 18th c
fine sandy red ware			1		4		late medieval
late fine red ware	1	1	1		13	1	16th-17th c
malvernian ware					1		14th-16th c
manganese mottled ware			1			1	late 17th-mid 18th c
medieval cooking pot			1				12th-14th c?
modern glazed ware		3	3				later 19th c
modern yellow ware			1				early 19th c
post-medieval buff ware			1				later 17th-18th c
sandy pale orange ware	1						?medieval
slipware	1					1	18th c?
slipware?		1					late 17th-mid 18th c

Comment

The pottery was made up of small, very abraded, mainly undiagnostic sherds. The group is typical of manuring scatters. The majority of the pottery appeared to be post-medieval with very few exceptions. Those sherds which appear to be medieval are unlike fabrics found in Hereford and are presumably fairly local. Some contact via the River Wye with Hereford is indicated by the Malvernian sherd.

The dominant post-medieval pottery was in a fine, clean, powdery red fabric without obvious inclusions. Such a fabric was dominant in field-walking material found in Presteigne (personal inspection by author) and constitutes part of a general regional tradition which although widespread (eg fabric A7d in Hereford) has been impossible to source accurately (McCarthy and Brooks, 1988, p 471).

References

McCarthy, M. R. and Brooks, C. M. *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900-1600*, 1988

7 Discussion

The one feature of archaeological importance excavated during the watching brief could be a boundary ditch [25]. Although the fills produced no dating evidence it is possible that this feature could date from the Iron Age, though it could date from a later period. The ditch was filled with alternating deposits of soft dark brown silty sands then a fill of firm pink brown silty clays or clay silts. Presumably these fills formed as a result of the silting up process.

The presence of a stakehole or space for a partition within one of the fills of the ditch suggest that there was possibly a fence line within the ditch. This would have provided a much more secure enclosure for keeping stock inside and predators outside. No signs of a re-cut to the ditch was visible but it is possible that some of the silt was cleaned out from time to time.

The subsoil [2] in the main development site produced pottery from the medieval period to the 19th century. It is probable that this pottery came on to the site in 'night soil' which was used for manuring purposes. The area of subsoil which was given a separate number [12] contained greater quantities of pottery than [2]. Perhaps manuring was being carried out more extensively in this area.

There were some areas within the storm water sewer excavations that had been filled in or disturbed by 19th and 20th century dumping or levelling. It is likely that these areas were previously disturbed by the construction of the tramway and railway line and since the building of these two lines, much infilling and levelling of the fields close by has taken place.

8 Conclusions

The ditch could represent an Iron Age enclosure boundary associated with the remains of a probable Iron Age hillfort and enclosures that is registered on the Clwyd-Powys Sites and Monuments Record (SMR: 5833). However, no other features or deposits which could have been associated with this hillfort were seen. It could be that earlier levelling and infilling, to the north of the ditch, has destroyed any features or deposits if they existed in this area.

No features or deposits were excavated on the main development site that could be associated with the Iron Age hillfort and enclosures. The three features excavated are all post-medieval in date. The concentration of pottery within the subsoil probably resulted from more intensive manuring in that area during the medieval and post-medieval periods.

9 Sources consulted

Sites and Monuments Record of the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust
Powys County Archives, Llandrindod Wells

Plans consulted

1801 Tredegar Estates Map of Charles Morgan

1847 Tithe Plan of Hay

1887 25 inch Ordnance Survey Plan Breck XV11.16

1891 1st Edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey Plan Breck XV11. N. E.

1927 6 inch Ordnance Survey Plan Breck XV11. N. E

1929 25 inch Ordnance Survey Plan Breck XV11.16

Published Sources

Appleton-Fox, N, *TAVRA Centre, Gypsy Castle Lane, Hay on Wye, Powys, Report on an evaluation excavation*, Marches Archaeology Series 071, 1999

Silvester, R. J, and Dorling, P. J, *Historic Settlements in the Brecon Beacons National Park*, CPAT Report No 44, 1993

Unpublished sources

Cotswold Geotech, *Report on a site investigation on Land at Gypsy Lane, Hay on Wye*, 2000

10 The archive

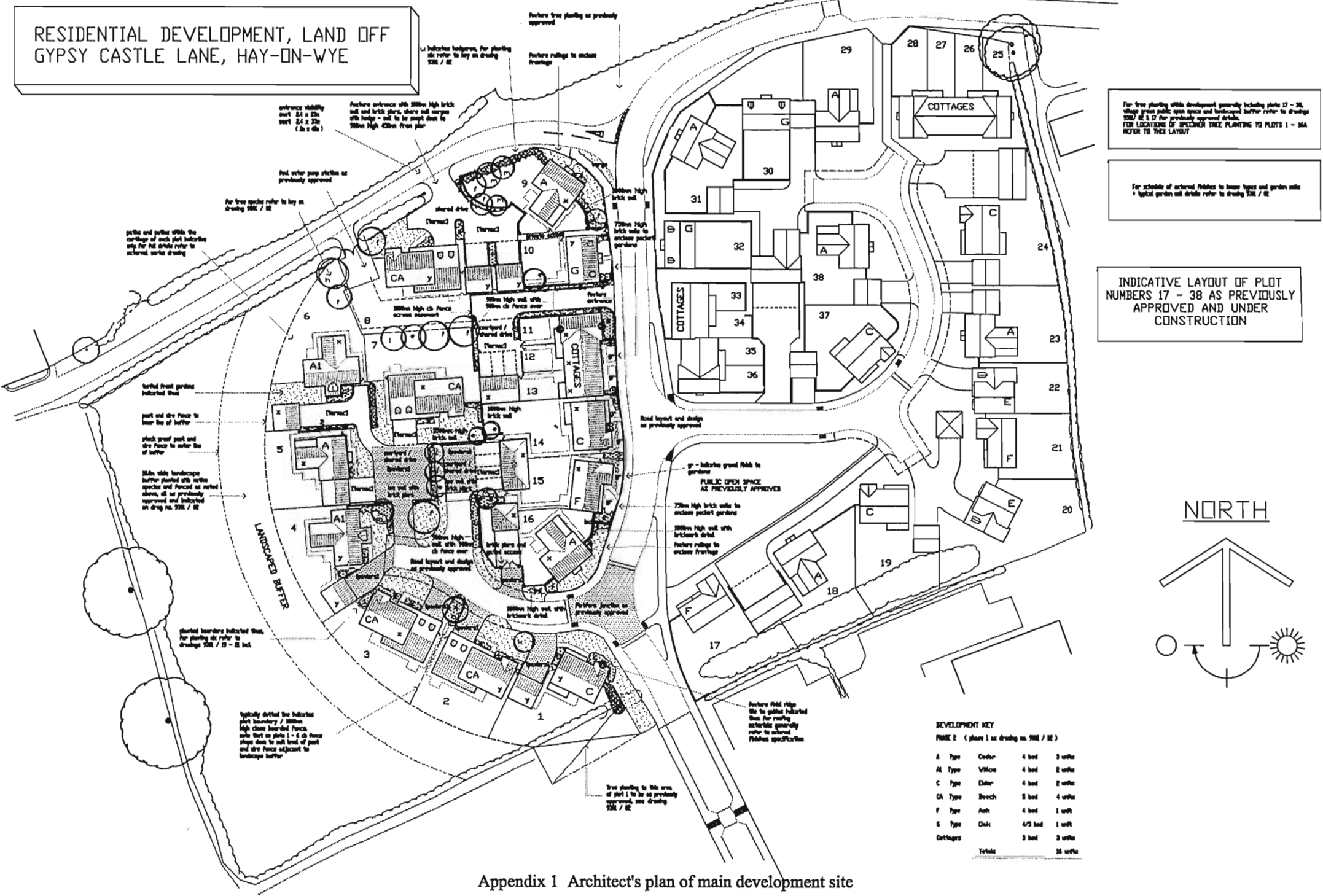
The archive is currently stored in the offices of Marches Archaeology awaiting deposition at the appropriate repository.

The archive consists of:

- 1 context index
- 34 context sheets
- 6 finds recording sheets
- 1 box of finds
- 1 drawing index
- 2 sheets of field drawings
- 2 sheets of inked drawings
- 1 Auto cad drawing on disc
- 1 photographic index
- 13 sheets of black and white negatives
- 10 sheets of colour transparencies

The site code is GCLH00A.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND OFF GYPSY CASTLE LANE, HAY-ON-WYE



For tree planting within development generally including plots 17 - 38, please refer to the schedule of trees and landscaping in drawing 3002 of 1/10 for previously approved details. FOR LOCATIONS OF SPECIFIC TREE PLANTING TO PLOTS 1 - 16A REFER TO THIS LAYOUT

For schedule of external finishes to house types and garden walls + typical garden wall details refer to drawing 3001 / 02

INDICATIVE LAYOUT OF PLOT NUMBERS 17 - 38 AS PREVIOUSLY APPROVED AND UNDER CONSTRUCTION

DEVELOPMENT KEY
PHASE 2 (phase 1 as drawing no. 3001 / 02)

A	Type	Cedar	4 bed	3 units
A1	Type	Willow	4 bed	2 units
C	Type	Elm	4 bed	2 units
CA	Type	Beech	3 bed	4 units
F	Type	Ash	4 bed	1 unit
E	Type	Dak	4/3 bed	1 unit
Cottages			3 bed	3 units
		Totals		16 units

Appendix 1 Architect's plan of main development site