

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

*Ty-brith, Caersws, Powys*

EVALUATION REPORT

October 1991

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## **Introduction**

The archaeological evaluation work described below was commissioned by the Executors in the Estate of Miss E M L Reese. It was carried out in accordance with a Scheduled Monument Consent Application submitted by the Executors, dated 13 March 1991, and approved by Cadw on 10 September 1991 (ref CAM1/2/0918/8). The area concerned is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, having been considered to form part of the Romano-British civil settlement known to be attached to the Roman fort at Caersws (Scheduled Ancient Monument No Mg1).

## **Previous archaeological work on the site**

Small-scale trial work was undertaken by CPAT on behalf of Cadw in November 1988 in part of the northern area of the same plot (Fig 1, trenches 1-3). This earlier work identified the following evidence of Romano-British activity:

### *Site 1*

Removal of c 60cm of topsoil revealed a layer of clay containing Roman pottery, beneath which was an area of cobbling.

### *Site 2*

Beneath c 55cm of topsoil a layer of clay was revealed, cut by two features, possibly a posthole and a stakehole.

### *Site 3*

Removal of c 45cm of topsoil uncovered a layer of clay containing Roman pottery, which was cut by two narrow gullies and a pit.

## **Archaeological Evaluation**

The fieldwork and excavation element of the present evaluation work was carried out between 16-22 October 1991. Four trenches were excavated in accordance with the Scheduled Monument Consent Application, in order to determine the presence features of archaeological significance (Fig 1). Topsoil was removed from each trench by machine, the areas being subsequent cleaned by hand to the surface of archaeological deposits. Following examination of the site by Dr S Rees, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, selected features were excavated to determine their nature and likely dating.

Features of archaeological significance revealed by the evaluation work can be summarised as follows (see Fig 2):

### *Trench A (15.2 x 1.5m)*

Removal of up to c 60cm of topsoil by machine revealed a gritty, grey-brown layer (41) above a layer of pinky-brown silty clay (57). The main features identified were two graves, of probable Romano-British date, which appeared to have been cut through layer 41. The earlier (55) was aligned N-S, and measured over 1.5m in length and 0.64m wide. Excavation revealed the outline of a wooden coffin with iron nails at the southern end. A 'silhouette' of an inhumation burial was visible on the base of the grave, with the remains of a pair of hobnail boots surviving at the southern end. This grave had been cut by an E-W grave (46) 2.04m long and 1.04m wide. This also contained the outline of a wooden coffin, measuring 1.8 x 0.52m, with iron nails at either end. In this instance there was no surviving evidence of the burial itself. The only other features identified were a modern

posthole (44), a possible post-base (42), and an area of burning (60), the latter two of which are not shown on the accompanying plan.

#### *Trench B (30.0 x 1.5m)*

Up to c 30cm of topsoil was removed by machine onto the surface of the archaeological deposits. Cleaning by hand revealed several features of potential archaeological significance. A stone spread (25) at the southern end of the trench, c 2.8m wide, appears to be the remains of either a road surface or a yard deposit. To the north of this a general spread of grey-brown gritty silt (26) had been cut by two of features: a gully (38) running roughly E-W, 65cm wide and 24cm deep, and a posthole (28) with packing stones to the south c 65cm in diameter. A shallow scoop (34) and three charcoal spreads (30, 32 and 36) also appeared in the top of layer 26.

#### *Trench C (25.0 x 1.5m)*

Up to 35cm of topsoil was removed by machine onto the surface of the archaeological deposits. This revealed a series of features, all apparently of Romano-British date. At the eastern end was a curving ditch (3) c 80cm wide and up to 50cm deep, and an apparently linear gully (5) running roughly N-S, the relationship between them being uncertain. Further to the west were two ditches of uncertain relationship, one running N-S (10) c 120cm wide and 32cm deep, and the other E-W (12) c 170cm wide and over 40cm deep. Both ditches may have been cut through a gritty silt layer (16). To the east of ditch 10 were two possible shallow postholes (8 and 49).

#### *Trench D (17.0 x 1.5m)*

The top 33cm of dark brown topsoil was removed by machine, together with 20cm of brown silty loam. Cleaning at the base of machining revealed only four features cut into the natural clay. At the eastern end of the trench was a possible posthole (19) c 28cm in diameter, and a small stakehole (21). At the western end was an oval feature c 120cm long, 50cm wide and 42cm deep, aligned roughly east-west (51). In the light of features revealed in trench A, it is possible that this was an infant burial. Adjacent to this was a small posthole c 16cm in diameter (53).

### **Conclusions**

The evaluation work carried out in 1988 and 1991 suggests that the site is thinly stratified, but that evidence of Roman-British activity is scattered throughout the plot. Observations elsewhere in Caersws suggest that these remains lie at or towards eastern limits of the civilian settlement attached to the Roman fort.

Interpretation of the results is inevitably restricted by the limited scale of the evaluation work. However, it seems likely that the postholes, stakeholes, and drainage ditches represent Romano-British timber buildings and other structures of a kind which might be expected in a settlement of this kind, which are probably associated with stone trackways or yard areas. The presence of two certain and one possible inhumation graves is particularly significant, and there is the possibility that these form part of a more extensive cemetery area, previously unsuspected, lying towards the boundary of the settlement.

**N W Jones  
October 1991**

## **Excavation Archive and Post-excavation work**

The excavation archive currently comprises the following reports, records and materials.

### **A Reports**

- 1 Evaluation Report
- 2 Short interim report

### **B Site Data**

- 1 Context Records 1-60
- 2 Level III Context Printout

### **C Drawings**

- 1 A1 size site drawings, plans 1-5
- 2 Level III A1 archive plan, plan 6
- 3 Level III A4 archive plans, plans 7-8

### **D Photographic archive**

- 1 Catalogue of 35mm negatives
- 2 Catalogue of 35mm colour transparencies
- 3 Colour transparencies
- 4 Black and white negatives and contact prints
- 5 Black and white archive record cards

### **E Finds Data**

Initial processing has been carried out on the following types and quantities of material been recovered from the evaluation work.

- 1 Pottery: 29 sherds of Roman pottery coarse and fine wares.
- 2 Metalwork: 266 iron fragments unconserved (including 106 hobnails)
- 3 Glass: 6 fragments
- 4 Slag : 7 fragments
- 5 Flint: 1 fragment

## **Recommendations for further post-excavation work**

A short summary report of the evaluation work has been prepared for submission to *Archaeology in Wales*. A more detailed report on the results should be published in due course. It will probably be most appropriate if the results are integrated with other recent work undertaken by CPAT in Caersws. Provision should also be made for the deposition of the finds and archive with appropriate bodies. In addition to the preparation of a report giving a fuller description, interpretation and illustration of the results of excavation, further work will also need to be carried out on the finds, as follows:

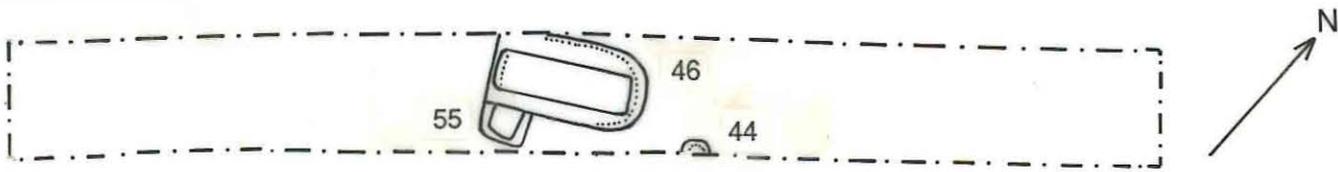
### *Pottery, glass, slag, flint*

Cataloguing and illustration where appropriate, probably requiring some specialist assistance.

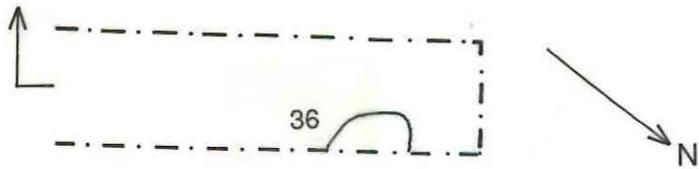
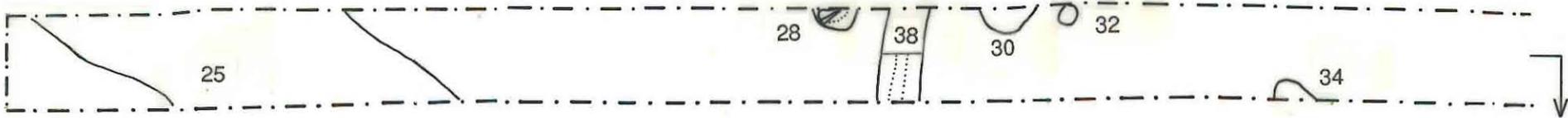
### *Metalwork*

X-rays and conservation of selected material; cataloguing and specialist study where appropriate.

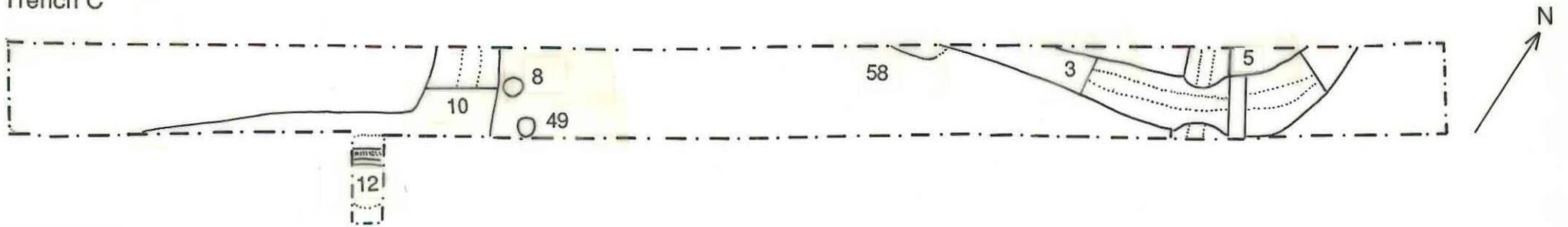
Trench A



Trench B



Trench C



Trench D

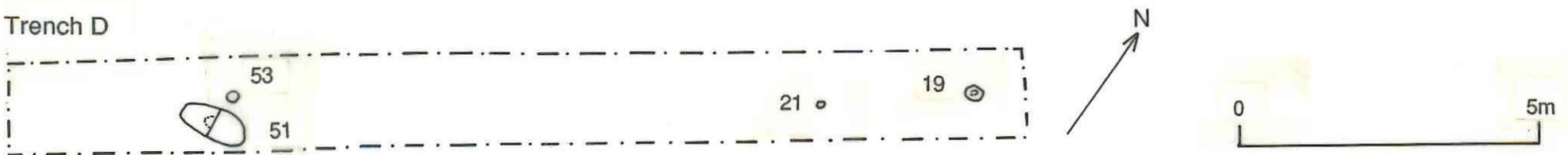


Fig 2: archaeological features

# CAERSWS

*'Tybrith', Main Street*

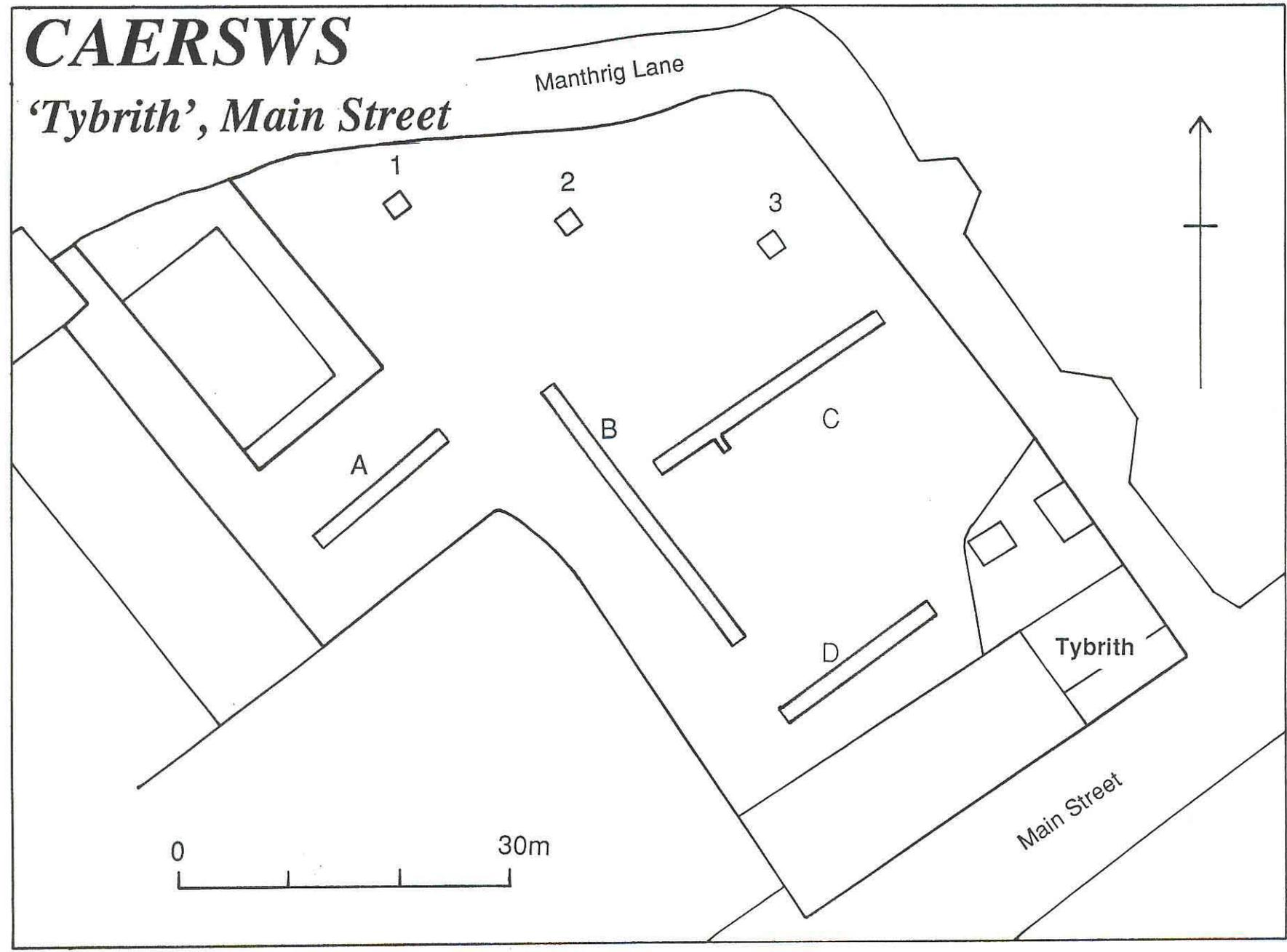


Fig 1: location of excavation trenches