

MLFC20



# LAND AT MAESOFFA, LLANDYSILIO, FOUR CROSSES, POWYS

## TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP)  
on behalf of Powys County Council

June 2020





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#### PROJECT INFO:

HA Project Code **MLFC20** / NGR **SJ 26872 19009** / Parish **Llandysilio** / Local Authority **Powys County Council** / Archive Repository **Powys County Council**

#### PROJECT TEAM:

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Headland Archaeology on a parcel of land at Maesoffa, Four Crosses, Llandysilio, Powys (NGR SJ 26872 19009). Works were undertaken on behalf of The Environmental Development Partnership Ltd (EDP), for Powys County Council, to inform on future development potential.

The works took place between 4th and 7th May 2020 and involved the excavation of 6 trial trenches across the land in order to determine the archaeological potential of the site. No archaeology features were identified, with the evaluation revealing that the land had been subject to heavy disturbance in the past, likely relating to the construction of the adjacent A483 bypass.

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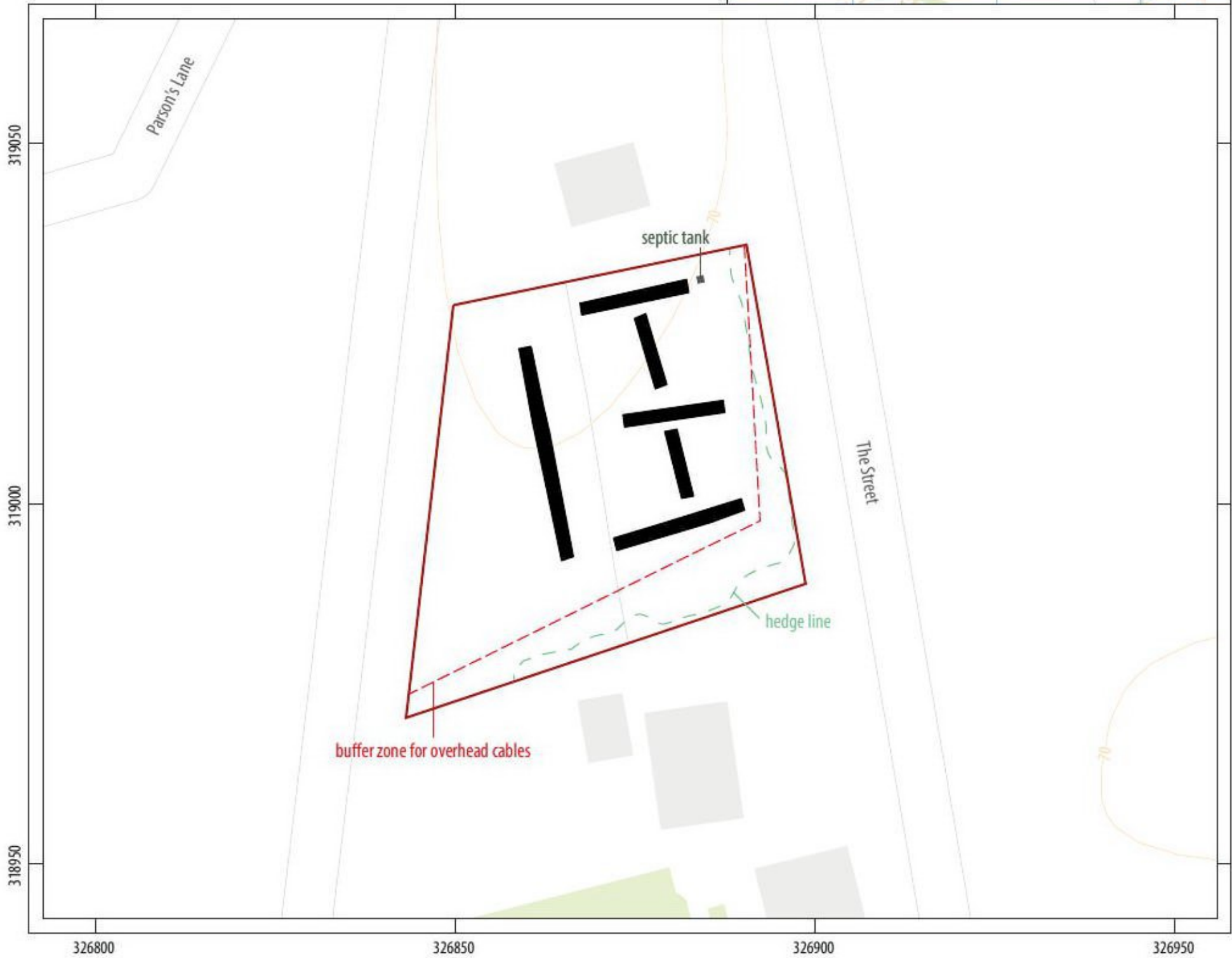
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Land at Maesoffa  
 Llandysilio  
 Four Crosses  
 Powys



0 200km  
 1:12,500,000 @ A4



0 20m  
 1:1,000 @ A4

development boundary  
 trench location



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ILLUS 1 Site location



# LAND AT MAESOFFA, LLANDYSILIO, FOUR CROSSES, POWYS

## TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP), acting as agents for Powys County Council, to undertake an archaeological evaluation at land at Maesoffa, Llandysilio, Four Crosses, Powys (NGR: SJ 26872 19009). Works were carried out to inform on the potential of the site for future development (pre-application).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the works was prepared by EDP (EDP 2020), with a supplementary Project Design produced by Headland Archaeology (Hatherley 2020) providing details of the methodology to be employed.

#### 1.1 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site is located on a parcel of land off The Street, Llandysilio, Four Crosses, Powys (NGR SJ 26872 19009) (Illus 1). It sits between The Street to the east, the A483 Four Crosses bypass to the west and two residential properties to the North and South.

The land is roughly square, measuring around 0.3 hectares (ha). The site is bordered by hedgerows and wooden fencing.

Obstructions present on the land include a disused septic tank, a horse paddock, an overhead electricity line along the southern border and an electricity sub-station in the south-east corner. These obstructions resulted in the slight shortening of Trenches 03, 05 and 07. The horse paddock divides the site into two halves via a farm stock fence running north-south along the centre.

The bedrock geology of the site comprises Siltstone and Mudstone, overlain by superficial deposits of glaciofluvial Devensian sand and gravel. This was deposited 2 million years ago through glacial action

(NERC 2020). The soils recorded in the area consists of freely draining, slightly acidic Loamy soils (Soilscape 6) (Cranfield University 2020).

#### 1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological and historical background of the site was outlined within the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by EDP (EDP 2020). Its content is summarised below.

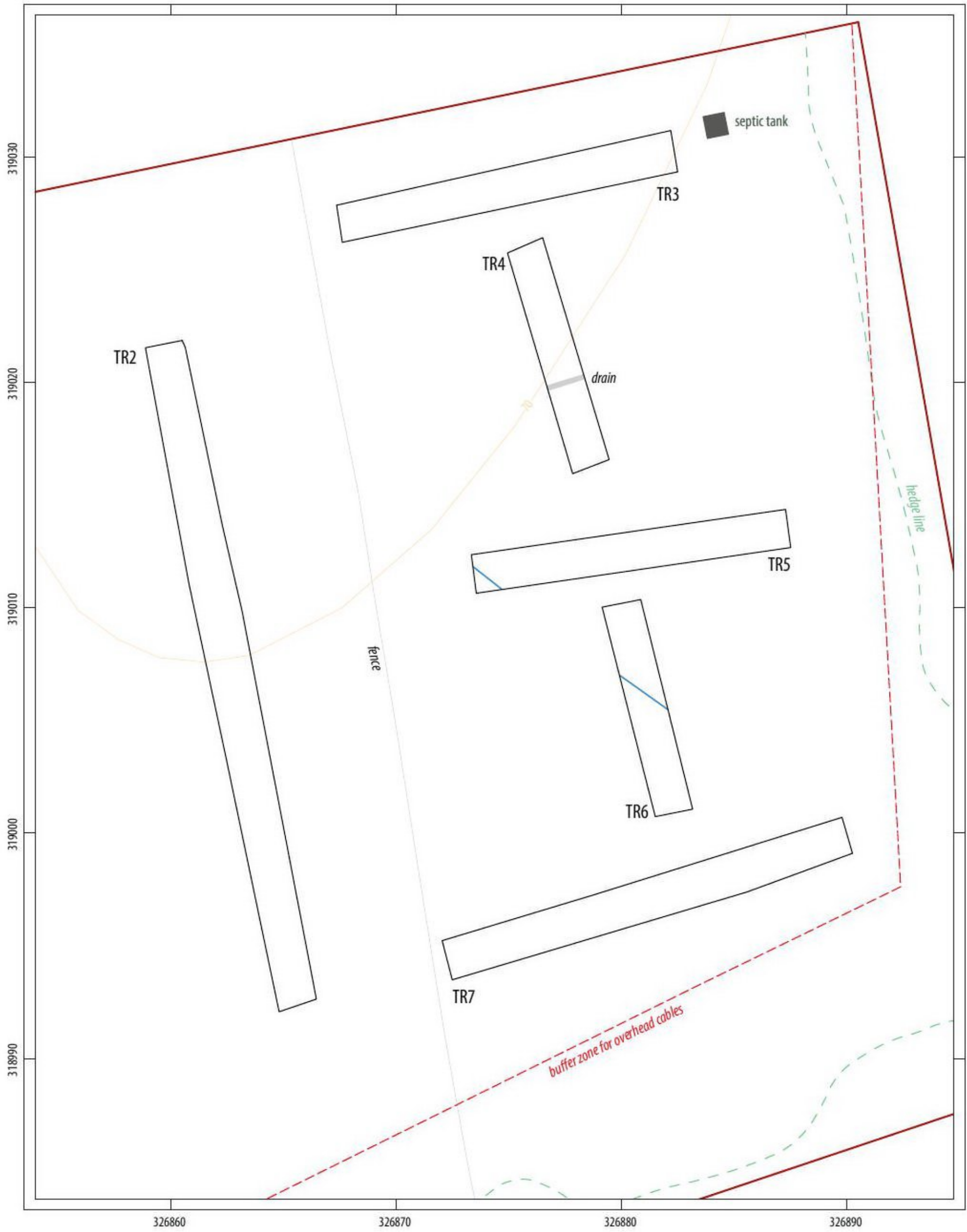
##### *Prehistoric and Roman period archaeology*

The proposed development area is located within the extent of a wide-spread linear Bronze Age round barrow cemetery identified via aerial survey in the 1960s/70s.

This cemetery extends mainly to the east and south-east of the site, along an east-west axis. The site is putatively located at the western end of the cemetery. The earliest barrows date from the Neolithic but the barrow building continues throughout the Bronze Age with later smaller barrows dated to the Iron Age. The continued use of this cemetery suggests a significance to the local people, and it is being speculated that the positioning of Offa's Dyke at the western edge of the cemetery may have been an attempt to separate the local people from these significant ancestral grounds.

Archaeological evidence has indicated that the cemetery was the focus of a later series of Iron Age pit alignments and Roman field systems. There is evidence for Roman burials associated with the cemetery, as well as possible later post-Roman, early medieval burials as well.

Several excavations have been carried out across the cemetery. These include an archaeological excavation carried out in 2004–2006 by Cotswold Archaeology, around 240m south-east of the



- development boundary
- trench location
- water pipe

ILLUS 2 Trench layout



site, revealing prehistoric monuments including identifying pits and graves between monuments. Excavations were also carried out during the creating of the A483 bypass which revealed an early Bronze Age ring ditch as well as Iron Age pit alignments, boundary ditches and enclosures. The closest known archaeological features to the site consisted of a ring ditch, located approximately 50m south-west of the site and a series of field boundary ditches of a possible Roman date, located around 15m to the south-west.

### *Early medieval and medieval archaeology*

Offa's Dyke, presumed to be an 8th century defensive bank and ditch, is believed to run parallel with the eastern boundary of the site, somewhere to the east of The Street. This once formed a boundary between Wales and the Saxon kingdom of Mercia.

### *Post-medieval and modern archaeology*

Historic mapping suggests that during the post-medieval period the land within the site was utilised for agriculture. 19th century maps illustrate that the site was part of a larger agricultural field, whilst two small farm buildings, associated with the adjacent Maesoffa farm complex, appear on maps in the 20th century. These were located to the north of the site.

The farm buildings were removed during the construction of the A483 bypass and the land was consequently utilised by the construction team during the building of the road. Consultation with the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) established that the ground surface was raised to accommodate this operation.

## 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The WSI specified several aims of the investigation:

- › determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits beyond reasonable doubt;
- › identify their location, nature, date and preservation;
- › assess their significance; and
- › assess the likely impact of the proposed development.

Additionally, the WSI outlined that the evaluation would:

- › record the nature of the main stratigraphic units encountered in terms of their physical composition (stone, sand, gravel, organic materials etc.) and their archaeological formation (primary deposits, secondary deposits etc.);
- › assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of artefactual evidence (including pottery, brick, tile, stone, glass, metal, bone, small finds, industrial residues etc.), its condition and potential, given the nature of the deposits encountered;

- › assess the overall presence and survival of the main kinds of ecofactual and environmental evidence (including animal bone, human bone, plant remains, pollen, charcoal, molluscs, soils etc.), its condition and potential, given the nature of the deposits encountered;
- › establish the depth of significant archaeological remains below the existing ground level, as well as confirming their AOD heights; and
- › make the results available for the wider archaeological community.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 SITE WORKS

All archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the WSI and Project Design.

All trenches were located using a dGPS system. The original trench plan was modified to avoid the obstructions outlined in 1.1. Trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a mechanical JCB excavator with a 1.70m wide toothless ditching bucket. Excavation was carried out in 0.20m spits until the first significant archaeological horizon, or natural geology, was reached. Spoil was placed a safe distance from the edge of each trench and divided on either side into topsoil and subsoil/ made ground.

Trenches were cleaned by hand to allow for identification of any archaeological features, though no features were present on the site. Representative sections of each trench were cleaned by hand, with the stratigraphy recorded and the sections located using a dGPS.

### 2.2 RECORDING

All recording followed standard archaeological guidelines as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014). The recorded contexts were assigned unique numbers and recording was undertaken on Headland Archaeology pro forma trench and context record sheets. A high resolution digital photographic record was compiled, with Raw files, of all trenches, with a graduated metric scale clearly visible. Locations of trenches and sample sections were digitally surveyed. Digital planning was undertaken using a Trimble dGPS system.

### 2.3 REPORTING AND ARCHIVES

This report was produced following standards outlined by the CIfA (CIfA 2014b) and follows the methods outlined within the written Scheme of Investigation.





**ILLUS 3** East facing section of Trench 2, showing modern levelling layers

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 EXCAVATION

#### *General site stratigraphy*

The earliest deposits encountered represent the underlying geology. This generally comprised mid yellow-brown sands and gravels. The density of gravel within the natural increased slightly towards the south of the site.

All trenches contained modern made ground/ hardstanding surfaces overlaying the natural geology. This consisted of light grey gravel hard standing, present in all trenches, occasionally accompanied by modern tarmac or additional gravel and rubble layers.

Subsoil was only present at the eastern end of Trench 07, towards the southwest corner of site.

All modern deposits were overlain by a mid-greyish brown sandy-silt topsoil, which was consistent in character across the site. A large amount of modern cultural material was observed in the topsoil, including plastic bags, crisp packets, scrap metal and rope.

No archaeological remains were encountered.

Results are presented by trench below, with a summary of all recorded contexts and trench registers provided as Appendix 1.

Evaluation trenches were numbered 01–07. Trench 01 was a contingency trench and was not excavated due to a lack of archaeological evidence across the site.

#### Trench 02

Trench 02 was the westernmost trench excavated during the evaluation and was the longest, measuring 30m long by 1.7m wide.

This trench was aligned north–south and reached a depth of 0.90m in the north to 0.70m in the south, containing numerous layers of made ground and hard standing.

The stratigraphy of this trench was different at the northern and southern ends, with more modern layers of made ground in the north than the south.

At the northern end of the trench, the topsoil (0.20–0.25m deep) overlaid a thin (0.04–0.05m) dark grey tarmac layer (0206), which extended for 2.5m southwards before tapering off. This in turn was above gravel layer (0201), a very compact, light grey gravel/ hardstanding stratum measuring 0.15–0.20m deep, with occasional fragments of fabric lining beneath it. Beneath this was another Tarmac layer, (0207) which was around 0.05m deep sitting above another thin gravel layer (0207) (0.05m deep). This sat above modern cement block and rubble layer (0205) (0.10–0.28m deep), which contained large amounts of refuse, including fragments of wire, rope and plastic. Another modern levelling layer (0204) lay beneath this layer containing dark brown/black sandy silt intermixed with modern rubble and refuse (0.18–0.25m deep). Natural geology sat beneath (0204) (Illus 3). Layers (0206), (0205), and (0207) all thinned out towards the centre of trench (around 15m from the northern end), before disappearing completely.

The south of the trench contained only 4 strata above the natural geology. Topsoil (0.25m deep), sat directly above gravel layer (0201) (0.5–0.20m deep), which was above tarmac layer (0203). This sat above gravel made ground layer (0204) (0.18m–0.25m) which, in turn, sat upon natural sands and gravels.

#### Trench 03

The stratigraphy of trenches 03–05 demonstrated the same pattern of disturbed topsoil, over gravel hardcore, overlaying natural deposits.

Trench 03 was positioned adjacent to the northern border of the site, aligned east-west. The trench measured 15m long x 1.70m wide, reaching a depth of 0.70–0.90m. This trench was shortened at its western end to avoid a paddock fence, and at its east to avoid a disused septic tank in the north-east corner of the site.

This trench demonstrated topsoil (0.15–0.20m deep) overlaying a layer of modern light grey gravel hardcore/ hardstanding, with a fabric lining base, measuring 0.20–0.26m deep. Natural geology was directly beneath the fabric lining.

#### Trench 04

Trench 04 was positioned south of Trench 03, aligned north–south, measuring 0.10m long x 1.70m wide.





**ILLUS 4** South facing section at eastern end of Trench 7

This trench demonstrated the same stratigraphy as Trench 03 and 05, with gravel hard standing (0401) (0.25–0.30m deep) situated between topsoil and natural geology. Topsoil ranged from 0.25–0.28m deep.

#### Trench 05

Trench 05 was positioned south of Trench 04, aligned east–west, measuring 14.00m long x 1.70m wide. This trench was shortened by 6.00m at the western end, due to the presence of a horse paddock fence and an allotment garden.

This trench demonstrated the same stratigraphy as Trench 03 and 04, with gravel hard standing (0501) (0.35–0.40m deep) situated between topsoil and natural geology. Topsoil ranged from 0.30–0.35m deep.

#### Trench 06

This trench was very similar to trenches 03–05, containing the same topsoil and hardstanding. However, this trench also contained a thin layer of tarmac between natural and the gravel.

Both the topsoil and gravel layers in trench 06 measured 0.25–0.30m deep.

The black tarmac stratum was relatively consistent at 0.15m thick, representing a dense, compact surface.

#### Trench 07

Trench 07 was aligned east–west and measured 19.50m long x 1.70m wide. This trench was very similar to trenches 03–05 with the same layers of topsoil gravel and natural geology, though no tarmac was present. However, this modern material petered out towards the eastern end of the trench, coinciding with natural sloping up to the east.

Subsoil (0701) also appeared where the modern stratum thinned out and was present for the easternmost 4m of the trench, reaching a depth of 0.15m. This was the only instance of subsoil on site (Illus 4).

### 3.2 FINDS

No archaeological finds were recorded during the evaluation.

### 3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL

No ecofacts were identified across the evaluation area.

## 4 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features were revealed during the trial trench evaluation. This could be due to a simple lack of archaeological activity, or as a result of truncation.

As noted within the archaeological background section above (section 1.2), the presence of a car park, and possibly a compound, relating to the construction of the A483 Four Crosses bypass is likely the cause of so much modern levelling material across the site.

It is stated in the WSI that the ground level was built up to meet the road, as opposed to reduced. However, looking at the stratigraphy of the site, it is possible that the ground was partially reduced to make the ground even for the placement of the gravel hardstanding, which may have truncated any archaeological features, if any were present. The very compact and level nature of the gravel surface also suggests that it was rolled/ compressed, which may also have affected any shallow archaeological features.

Some disturbance on the site may also relate to several farm buildings located on the site in the 20th century, relating the the adjacent Maesoffa property.

The presence of some subsoil at the eastern end of Trench 07 suggests that parts of the site, particularly the south-east corner, may remain partially undisturbed. The deeper made ground in Trench 02 suggests an increased level of disturbance towards the A483.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The geological horizon was reached between 0.50m BGL in the south-east corner of the site, to 0.95m towards the west. No archaeology was identified during the works.

The lack of archaeological features may simply indicate a lack of historical activity across this particular area of land. However, it is also likely related to modern disturbance across the site, resulting



from the 20th century land use by the Maesoffa farm buildings and modern use during the construction of the A483 bypass.

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## 6 REFERENCES

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## 7 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 SITE REGISTERS

#### Appendix 1.1 Trench register

TR2	ORIENTATION	L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX D (M)
	N-S	30	1.8	0.70	0.95
CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS MIN-MAX (M)		
0200	D	Topsoil: Mid greyish Brown sandy silt	0.20-0.25		
0201	D	Light grey gravel layer/hard standing	0.50-0.20		
0202	D	Natural: mid yellowish-brown silty sand and gravels	—		
0203	D	Tarmac	0.05-0.08		
0204	D	Made ground (Dark brownish black sandy silt with occasional modern refuse	0.18-0.25		
0205	D	Rubble/cement block layer	0.25-0.28		
0206	D	Tarmac layer	0.04-0.05		
0207	D	Light grey gravel/ hard standing	0.05		

Summary: No archaeological remains

TR3	ORIENTATION	L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX D (M)
	E-W	15	1.8	0.70	0.9
CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS MIN-MAX (M)		
0300	D	Topsoil: Mid greyish Brown sandy silt	0.15-0.20		
0301	D	Light grey gravel layer/hard standing	0.20-0.26		
0302	D	Natural: mid yellowish-brown silty sand and gravels	—		

Summary: No archaeological remains

TR04	ORIENTATION	L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX D (M)
	N-S	10	1.8	0.70	0.9
CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS MIN-MAX (M)		
0300	D	Topsoil: Mid greyish Brown sandy silt	0.15-0.20		
0301	D	Light grey gravel layer/hard standing	0.20-0.26		
0302	D	Natural: mid yellowish-brown silty sand and gravels	—		

Summary: No archaeological remains

TR5	ORIENTATION	L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX D (M)
	E-W	14	1.8	0.70	0.90
CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS MIN-MAX (M)		
0500	D	Topsoil: Mid greyish Brown sandy silt	0.30-0.35		
0501	D	Light grey gravel layer/hard standing	0.35-0.40		
0502	D	Natural: mid yellowish-brown silty sand and gravels	—		

Summary: No archaeological remains. Trench reduced by 6.00m on the western end to avoid horse paddock and allotment garden. Anthracite waterpipe at western end

TR6	ORIENTATION	L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX D (M)
	N-S	10	1.8	0.50	0.80
CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS MIN-MAX (M)		
0600	D	Topsoil: Mid greyish Brown sandy silt	0.25-0.30		
0601	D	Light grey gravel layer/hard standing	0.25-0.30		
0602	D	Natural: mid yellowish-brown silty sand and gravels	—		
0603	D	Tarmac	0.15		

Summary: No archaeological remains. Depth decreases to 0.50m in the centre of the trench to avoid breaking anthracite water pipe

TR7	ORIENTATION	L (M)	W (M)	MIN. D (M)	MAX D (M)
	N-S	19.50	1.8	0.50	0.90
CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	THICKNESS MIN-MAX (M)		
0700	D	Topsoil: Mid greyish Brown sandy silt	0.25-0.28		
0701	D	Subsoil: Light-mid greyish brown silty sand	0.01-0.15		
0702	D	Natural: mid yellowish-brown silty sand and gravels	—		
0703	D	Light grey gravel layer/hard standing	0.08-0.10		
0704	D	Tarmac	0.10-0.20		

Summary: No archaeological remains

Appendix 1.2 *Photographic register*

PHOTO NO	DIRECTION	DESCRIPTION
0001	S	Site Location Shot
0002	S	TR03, representative section
0003	W	TR03, Trench shot
0004	S	TR04, representative section
0005	S	TR04, Trench shot
0006	S	TR05, representative section
0007	E	TR05, Trench shot
0008	E	TR05, Trench shot
0009	E	TR06, representative section
0010	S	TR06, Trench shot
0011	W	Working Shot
0012	W	Working Shot
0013	W	Working Shot
0014	W	Working Shot

PHOTO NO	DIRECTION	DESCRIPTION
0015	W	TR07, Trench shot
0016	N	TR07, representative section (west end)
0017	N	TR07, representative section (east end)
0018	E	TR02, representative section (west end)
0019	E	TR02, representative section (east end)
0020	N	TR02, Trench shot
0021	S	TR02, Backfilled
0022	W	TR07, Backfilled
0023	S	TR06, Backfilled
0024	W	TR05, Backfilled
0025	N	TR04, Backfilled
0026	E	TR03, Backfilled
0027	NW	General site shot
0028	W	Blue water pipes left exposed







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