

Archaeology Wales

1295 Battle of Maes Moydog Welshpool, Powys

Battlefield Survey



By
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Report No. 1259

Prepared for:



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



 Cadw

Archaeology Wales

1295 Battle of Maes Moydog Welshpool, Powys

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Location and scope of work	1
2	Objectives.....	2
2.1	Outline Requirements.....	2
2.2	Aims & Proposals.....	2
2.3	Geology and topography	3
2.4	Archaeological and Historical Background	3
3	Methodology	5
3.1	Lidar Analysis	5
3.2	Site Walkover.....	5
3.3	Metal Detector Survey	5
4	Lidar Analysis Results	6
4.1	Digital Terrain Model.....	6
5	Site Walkover Results	6
5.1	Conditions	6
5.2	Site Walkover (Plates 1-10)	6
6	Metal Detector Survey Results.....	6
6.1	Ground and weather conditions.....	6
6.2	Constraints.....	6
6.3	Finds.....	7
7	Fieldwork Summary.....	7
7.1	Site Walkover.....	7
7.2	Metal Detector Surveys.....	7
8	Discussion and Interpretation.....	7
8.1	Reliability of the investigation	7
8.2	Overall interpretation & Evidence for the Battle	8
8.3	Conclusions	8
8.4	Recommendations for further investigations	8
9	Acknowledgements	8
10	Bibliography and references.....	10

List of Figures

Figure 1	General location of assessment area
Figure 2	Detailed location of assessment area
Figure 3	Location of survey areas
Figure 4	Locations of finds

List of Plates

Plates 1-10	Views from site walkover at Moydog Fawr
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List of Appendices

Appendix 1	Figures
Appendix 2	Plates
Appendix 3	Finds Catalogue
Appendix 4	Archive Cover Sheet

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Crynodeb Anhechnegol

Mae'r adroddiad yma, ar gyfer Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru (CBHC), yn cyflwyno canlyniadau'r gwaith arolygu ar faes brwydr dybiedig Maes Moydog (Madog) (1295), Castell Caereinion, y Trallwng, Powys. Y mae'r gwaith yn rhan o ymchwiliad mwy eang i'w gynnwys ar gofrestr Brwydrau Hanesyddol Cymru ar gyfer Llywodraeth Cymru.

Yn ogystal a cherdded ac edrych yn fanwl ar y safle defnyddiwyd arolwg LiDAR a datgelydd metel. Yn anffodus nid oedd yna ddeunydd canol oesol yn y casgliad bychan o arteffactau a ddarganfuwyd a dim nodweddion amlwg o'r frwydr i'w gweld ar y safle.

Non-Technical Summary

This report draws upon the results gained by archaeological investigations into the site of the 1295 Battle of Maes Moydog at Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, Powys, for The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

The work forms part of a larger investigation, the objectives of which are to gather evidence that will verify and inform the location and extent of Welsh battlefields and to inform the consideration of each site for inclusion on the Welsh Government proposed Register of Historic Battlefields in Wales.

Various survey methods were undertaken for the site, including Lidar analysis, metal detector survey and a site walkover. The metal detector survey recovered only a small finds assemblage, which contained no medieval material, whilst the Lidar analysis and site walkover identified no features evidently related to the 1295 battle.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In April 2014 Archaeology Wales carried out a series of archaeological investigations around Maes Moydog, Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, Powys, NGR SJ 17038 07909 (Fig 1). The investigations included Lidar analysis, a site walkover and a metal detector survey.
- 1.1.2 The work was carried out at the request of Louise Barker of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (Henceforth – The Commission) and was funded by the Welsh Government. It formed part of a series of on-going battlefield surveys undertaken by Archaeology Wales Ltd on behalf of The Commission, the

primary objective of which is to inform the consideration of each battlefield site for inclusion on a proposed Battlefields Register for Wales.

2 Objectives

2.1 Outline Requirements

- 2.1.1 The objective of the work is to gather evidence that will help verify and inform the location, extent and archaeological character of each battlefield. The fundamental criterion is that in order for a battlefield to be protected and for change to be managed, its location and extent must be confidently identified. In addition, the battlefield must meet at least one of the following three criteria:
- 2.1.2 **Be associated with historical events or figures of national importance** (i.e military innovations, direct associations with nationally important figures or events and whether the engagement played a key role in a campaign); and/or
- 2.1.3 **Have significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential** (i.e include natural or constructed physical features at the time of the engagement, evidence from the engagement or other related buried archaeological evidence); and/or
- 2.1.4 **Have a clear landscape context that allows the events of the battle to be understood or interpreted** (i.e. the initial area of deployment and fighting, wider landscape incorporating earthworks, skirmishes, camps, burial, line of advance and retreat, and detached elements such as memorials)

2.2 Aims & Proposals

- 2.2.1 The main aim of the work was to define those areas around Maes Moydog which were likely to have been associated with the 1295 battle.
- 2.2.2 This was to be achieved by:
- Analysing Lidar data to identify likely landscape features possibly associated with the battle.
 - Assessing the local topography for areas upon which the battle could have taken place by means of a site walkover.
 - Undertaking metal detector surveys, along with fieldwalking where possible, in fields around Moydog Fawr deemed likely to have been associated with the battle (after Lidar analysis/site walkover).
- 2.2.3 The area chosen for the metal detector survey was primarily that around Moydog Fawr Farm on the raised plain between Y Golfa to the south and Y Figyn to the north (Figs 1&2). This was considered the area of highest potential, despite anecdotal evidence (the landowner, Mr Humphreys, pers. comm.) suggesting that it had been subject to unsuccessful metal detection in the recent past.

2.3 Geology and topography

- 2.3.1 The solid geological formations beneath the assessment area are mainly composed of limestone rock formations of the Silurian era (British Geological Survey 2001).
- 2.3.2 The 1295 battle site of Maes Moydog is overlain by slowly permeable, wet, acid loamy and clayey soils of low fertility.
- 2.3.3 The site around Moydog Fawr farm is located on an undulating but fairly level (200-216m above OD) plain at the bottom of a long valley running east to west. Higher ground rises immediately to the north (Y Figyn – 290m) and south (Y Golfa – 341m).
- 2.3.4 The area is characterised by large, irregularly shaped, fields all in use as grazing for livestock. The valley has scattered single farms along its length, accessed by a single track road.

2.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.4.1 A detailed description of the 1295 battle of Maes Moydog is contained in the report (2013) that resulted from the historical research undertaken by Dr Adam Chapman. The following are extracts from the 2013 research (Chapman, 2013).

“Although the defeat of Madog ap Llywelyn and his forces at Maes Moydog is well attested in chronicles and annals, the best evidence for the battle comes from a series of royal Wardrobe accounts which record Edward I’s expenditure in the winter of 1294-5. The battle took place in the Parish of Castle Caereinion, Powys, three miles to the west of Welshpool on land owned by the abbey of Ystrad Marchell (*Strata Marcella*) on 5 March 1295. This was demonstrated by John Goronwy Edwards in a pair of articles published in the *English Historical Review* (1924 & 1931), which were based on evidence drawn from a selection of extant medieval financial records. The battle marked the end of the most significant of the revolts that following the completion of the conquest of Gwynedd by Edward I. It resulted in the defeat of the rebel forces, led by Madoc ap Llywelyn, by an army local to the king under the command of the earl of Warwick.

The revolts in Wales were led by a number of local leaders. In the north, this was Madog ap Llywelyn, ‘an embittered member of a cadet segment of the Gwynedd royal family whose forebears had been rulers of Meirionydd’. English officials were killed and castles were taken, including Denbigh, Caernarfon, Ruthin, Hawarden and Morlais (Glamorgan). Madog ap Llywelyn took as his title, ‘Prince of Wales’. A combination of harsh winter weather and successful guerrilla tactics confined King Edward I to Conwy from January to March 1295. However, in the spring, following a succession of decisive victories, of which Maes Moydog was one, the revolt quickly collapsed.

The location of the battle now known as Maes Moydog had long been a matter of speculation among historians. However, through a thorough analysis of the surviving pay accounts for Warwick's army, Edwards identified the likely location as Moydog Fawr, located to the west of Welshpool in Castle Caereinion. The name 'Moydog' has been preserved in the names of several extant farms and dwellings to this day. The evidence suggests that the battle takes its name from the area in which it was fought and that it isn't a corruption of the name of the leader of the revolt. The chronicle narratives also provide clear topographical information. It is stated that the battle was fought 'in quondam planate inter duo nemora' (on a plain between two woods). While it is unwise to attempt to identify any modern woodland with those mentioned in the chronicles, a 'planites' is a permanent geographical feature. Edwards described this in relation to the three Moydog farms: '...[the farms] lie in a small valley running east and west. The two sides of the valley, on the north and south, rise abruptly from 700 feet [above mean sea level] on the bottom of the valley to 900 feet and more. At the point where the farm of Moydog Fawr stands, the floor of the valley forms a plain some 600 yards [550 metres] wide and about a mile long, sloping slightly towards the east.' Given the quality of the place name evidence and its agreement with the topographical description, this analysis is largely accepted as correct.

The analysis of the campaign accounts allow an accurate idea of the size of the English army to be formed. The pay rolls evidence suggests that the troops under the Earl of Warwick's command, and in the field at the time of the battle, consisted of 119 mounted men-at-arms, 26 constables and 2,689 foot soldiers, all drawn from Shropshire, with 13 men described as crossbowmen and archers. Far less is known about the size of Madog's forces, but it is likely that they were significantly smaller. One of the historical accounts of the battle recounts events thus: 'The Earl of Warwick, hearing that the Welsh were massed in great numbers in a certain plain between two forests, took a picked body of men-at-arms with crossbowmen and archers and, surprising them by night, surrounded them on all sides. They planted the butts of their spears in the ground, and turned the points against the charging cavalry, so as to defend themselves from their rush. But the earl placed a crossbowman between each two men-at-arms, and when the greater part of the spear armed Welsh had been brought down by the bolts of the crossbows, he charged the rest with a squadron of horse, and inflicted on them a loss greater it is believed, than any which had been experienced by them in the past wars.'

On Madog ap Llywelyn's side, the numbers of his forces, and consequently, the proportion killed is unknown. A contemporary Worcester chronicler reports that 700 of Llywelyn's men were killed and that Madog himself barely escaped with his life. Based on the evidence of the payroll accounts, Warwick's losses were small. There is a slight fall in the number

of infantry paid between 5 March to the 6 and 7 March. On 5 March, 27 constables and 2,689 men were in pay while by 7 March the figures were 26 constables and 2,597, a reduction of 1 constable and 90 infantry. It is reasonable to suggest that they were victims of the battle” (Chapman, 2013).

3 Methodology

3.1 Lidar Analysis

3.1.1 Lidar data, at a resolution of 2m, was examined. Both digital shadow and terrain models were analysed for features likely to relate to the battle.

3.2 Site Walkover

3.2.1 A site walkover, encompassing all of the purported battle site and its surroundings, was undertaken on 8th April 2014.

3.2.2 All areas were photographed using high resolution (14MP) digital photography.

3.3 Metal Detector Survey

3.3.1 A detailed metal detector survey took place on 27th May 2014. It was supervised by Chris E Smith and undertaken by volunteers from local metal detecting clubs. The areas subject to the survey are shown on figures 3 and 4.

3.3.2 All areas surveyed were divided into transects of equal width and marked with canes to ensure coverage. Each individual transect was assigned to a metal detectorist who scanned the area twice, once going up the field and again on the return.

3.3.3 All metal detectors were set to ‘All Metal’ mode so as to include responses from ferrous and non-ferrous objects.

3.3.4 When a find was located it was placed *in situ* within a finds bag, with a marker flag placed next to it. A waterproof label was placed in the bag with the depth of the find marked on it in indelible ink. Subsequently, the finds were collected by the supervising archaeologist. Each find was labelled with an individual find number and each numbered findspot was located using a Topcon GTS 725 total station.

3.3.5 The grid coordinates from each findspot were entered into an excel spreadsheet detailing all the finds, their descriptions, dates and locations. The total station survey was overlaid onto a map to show the distribution of the finds across each assessment area.

3.3.6 Finds which were clearly identifiable in the field as being of 20th or 21st century date (agricultural/machinery/litter) were not retained and do not form part of the project archive. These were removed from site and discarded away from the survey area.

3.3.7 All works were undertaken in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation.

4 Lidar Analysis Results

4.1 Digital Terrain Model

- 4.1.1 Lidar coverage of the area was not complete as a large section of the valley, including the majority of the assessment area, had not been surveyed.
- 4.1.2 In those areas covered, the survey had been produced at a resolution of 2.0m. Both digital terrain and digital shadow models were consulted. However, neither showed any features of archaeological or historical significance, either evidently related to the 1295 battle or otherwise.

5 Site Walkover Results

5.1 Conditions

- 5.1.1 The site walkover was undertaken by Chris Smith on 8th April 2014, during an overcast day and after a period of wet weather. Ground conditions were thus soft and wet underfoot. This did not hinder access to the site.

5.2 Site Walkover (Plates 1-10)

- 5.2.1 Figure 2 shows the area covered by the walkover.
- 5.2.2 No features evidently associated with the battle were noted. It was observed, however, that the ground to the east and south of Moydog Fawr farm forms a large, gently undulating, plateau. This is consistent with the 'planites' (plain) described in the chronicle narratives (see 2.4.1).

6 Metal Detector Survey Results

6.1 Ground and weather conditions

- 6.1.1 The metal detector survey was undertaken after an extended period of dry weather and after the hay in the fields had been removed.
- 6.1.2 The survey area encompassed four fields (Figs 3&4), all of which were located to the east of Moydog Fawr farm and north of the single track road.

6.2 Constraints

- 6.2.1 No constraints to access or the process of the metal detector surveys were in place.

6.2.2 The landowner confirmed that metal detectorists have previously visited the site. He did not believe that any significant finds had been recovered. A search of the Portable Antiquities Scheme online database determined that no finds have been reported from the area.

6.3 Finds

6.3.1 A large number of modern finds and items of non-archaeological material, including a significant quantity of shotgun cartridge bases, were discarded during the survey. In contrast, however, the number of recorded, i.e. pre-modern, finds was surprisingly low.

6.3.2 Twenty one finds were recorded. Unfortunately, the resulting assemblage (Appendix 3, Fig 4) contains no material that can be linked with any certainty to the battle.

6.3.3 All the material recovered appears to be 18th to early 20th century in date and most of the items are likely to represent chance losses associated with agricultural activity.

7 Fieldwork Summary

7.1 Site Walkover

7.1.1 Whilst the site walkover located no features evidently associated with the 1295 battle of Maes Moydog, it confirmed that the area fits with the historical accounts both in terms of place name evidence and local topography.

7.2 Metal Detector Surveys

7.2.1 The metal detector survey located only a very small amount of finds, none of which were evidently associated with the battle.

8 Discussion and Interpretation

8.1 Reliability of the investigation

8.1.1 The investigation was hampered by the lack of available Lidar data for the survey area. This meant that only a small part of the postulated battlefield could be examined. The evidence from this area was negative, no battlefield features having been identified. However, given the relatively short-lived nature of the battle as described in the historical narratives, it is relatively unlikely that defensive earthwork features would have been constructed in preparation for, or during, the battle. It is probable, therefore, that if future surveys extend the Lidar coverage across the area not currently surveyed, these too will produce negative evidence for the battlefield.

8.1.2 The large amount of modern material picked up by the metal detectors hindered the progress of the survey.

8.2 Overall interpretation & Evidence for the Battle

- 8.2.1 Based on the evidence of the recent fieldwork at Maes Moydog, none of the areas subject to the survey can be linked to the 1295 battle. No finds of, or around, that date were recovered by the metal detector survey and no potentially related features were identified by the site walk over or Lidar analysis.
- 8.2.2 However, the historical evidence summarised by Chapman (2013) is quite compelling and, as noted during the site walkover, the place name and topographical evidence match the historical narrative of the battle.

8.3 Conclusions

- 8.3.1 The metal detector survey, which was carried out on a relatively flat plain east of Moydog Fawr farm, produced only a small number of finds and, notably, none that were contemporary with the battle.
- 8.3.2 However, given the relative strength of the documentary evidence in support of this location, it is possible that finds from the battle, which were not immediately recovered afterwards, have either corroded away due to exposure to the acidic soil in the intervening 719 years or are located below the reach of the equipment used.
- 8.3.3 In interpreting the results of the recent survey it is important to recognise that the battle is likely to have been a very brief affair and one that did not include a large amount of combatants, because these considerations mean it is not likely to have left a large archaeological signature.
- 8.3.4 None of the work undertaken as part of the recent survey has resulted in the redefinition of the postulated area ascribed to the 1295 battle.

8.4 Recommendations for further investigations

- 8.4.1 The fields subject to the metal detector survey were chosen because they were the flattest and most open within the area postulated for the battlefield. However, there are other fields suitable for metal detector investigation in the area, most notably to the south of Moydog Fawr.
- 8.4.2 Although it is felt that the ‘planites’ referred to in the historical narrative has been located and has been the subject of this phase of fieldwork it should be noted that the battle of Maes Moydog was a comparatively small and short-lived one and the geographic location within which it could *feasibly* have taken place, the generally flat plain at the valley base, covers at least 900m x 2.5km, a total of 2250000m².

9 Acknowledgements

- 9.1.1 Thanks are due to the landowner, Mr Humphreys, and to Louise Barker of the Commission for her assistance. Special appreciation, however, is reserved for the

members of the metal detecting clubs who gave up their free time to assist with the surveys.

10 Bibliography and references

British Geological Survey. 2001, 4th Edition. Solid Geology Map, UK South Sheet.

Chapman, A. 2013. Welsh Battlefields Historical and Documentary Research – Maes Moydog 1295.

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APPENDIX I: Figures

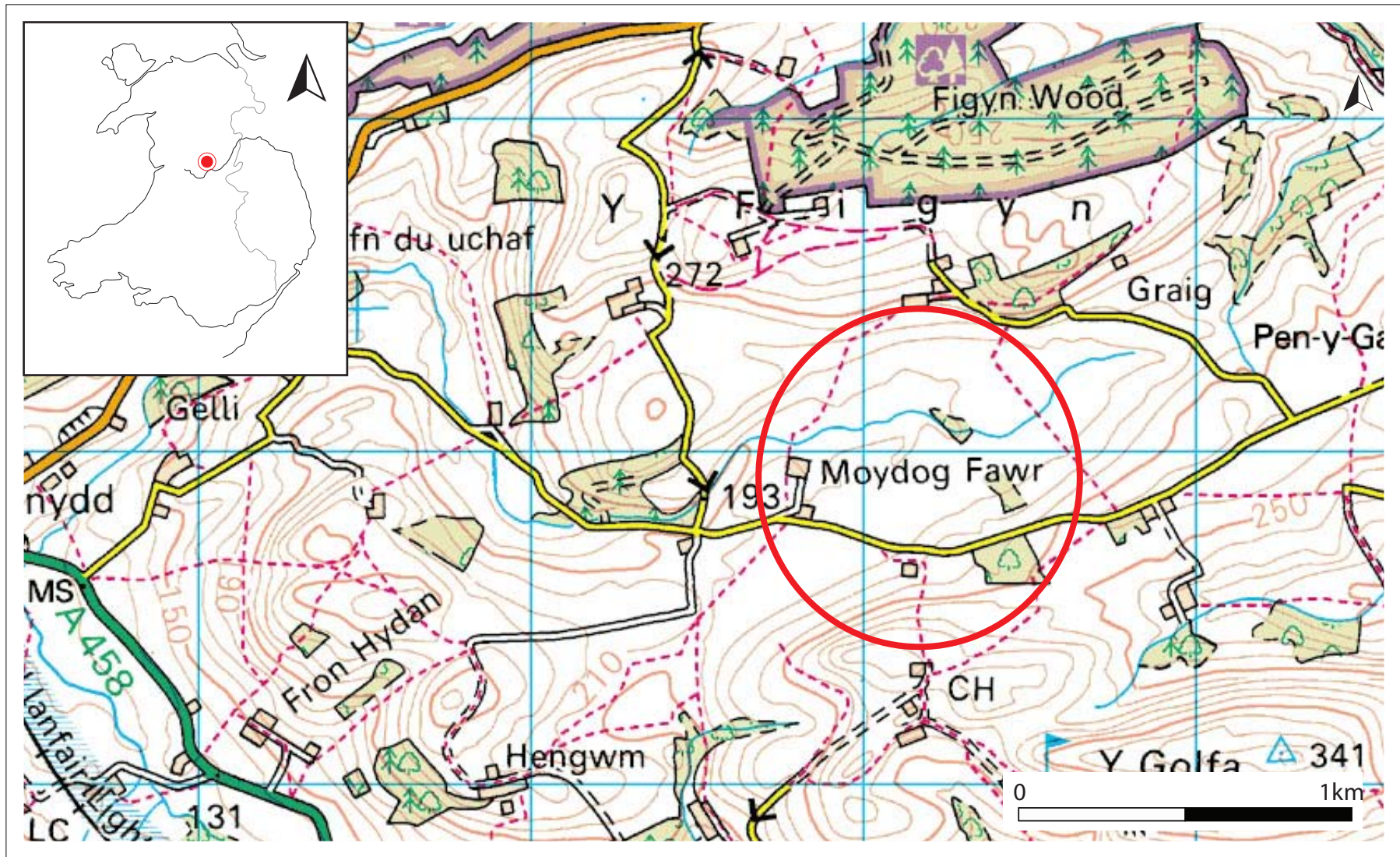


Fig 1: Map showing general location of assessment area

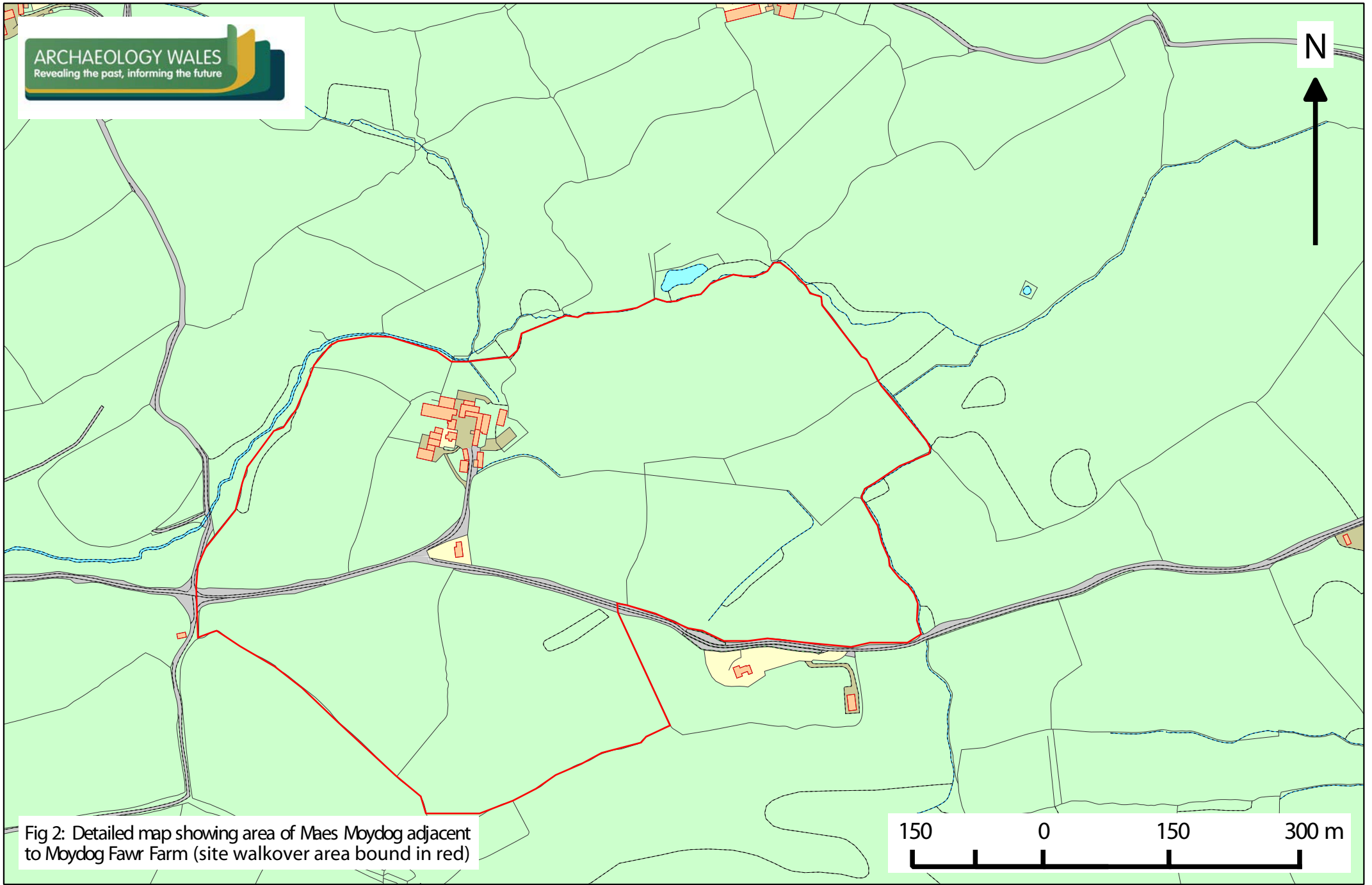
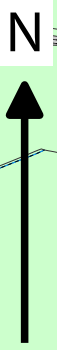


Fig 2: Detailed map showing area of Maes Moydog adjacent to Moydog Fawr Farm (site walkover area bound in red)

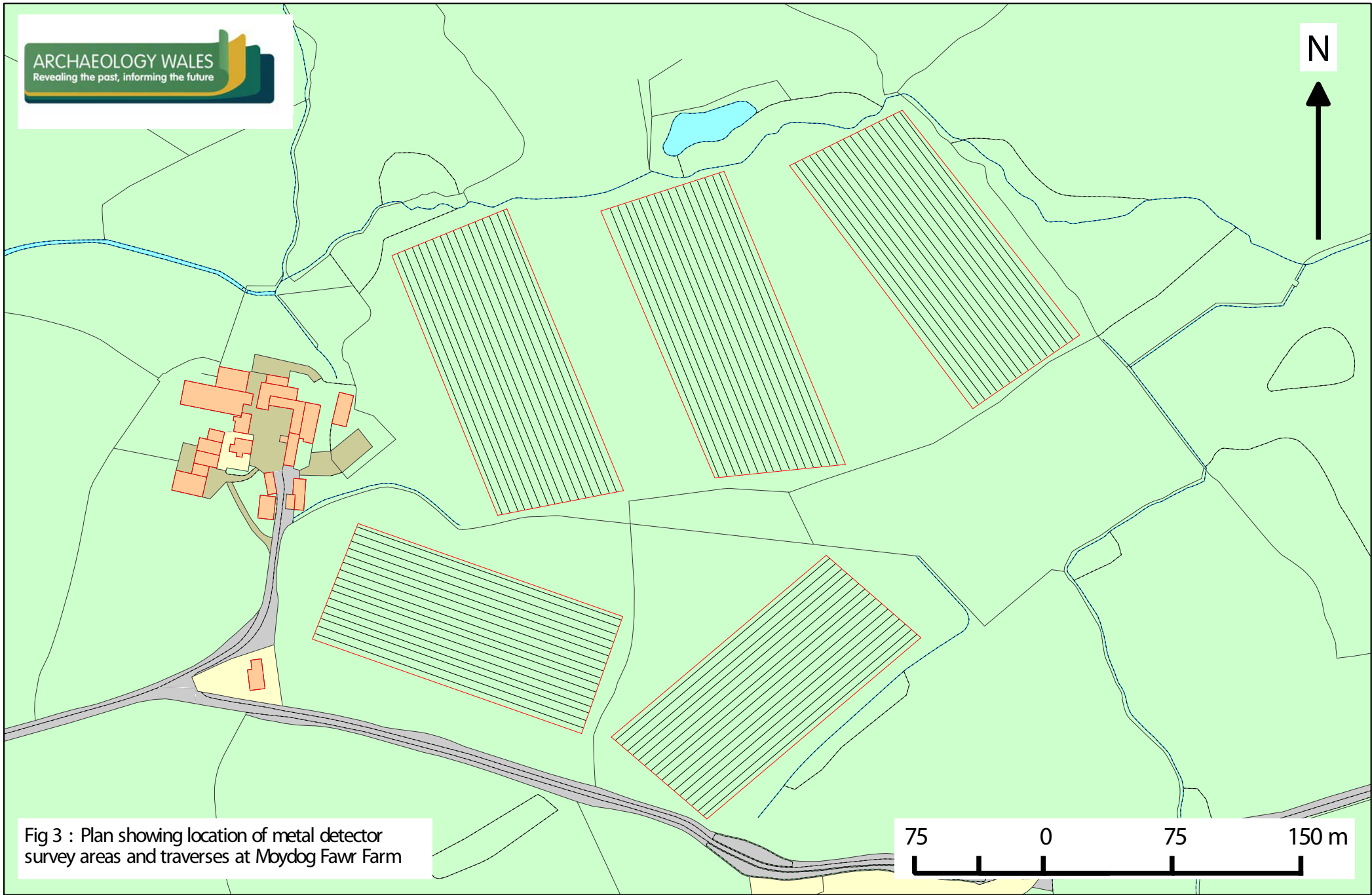


Fig 3 : Plan showing location of metal detector survey areas and traverses at Moydog Fawr Farm



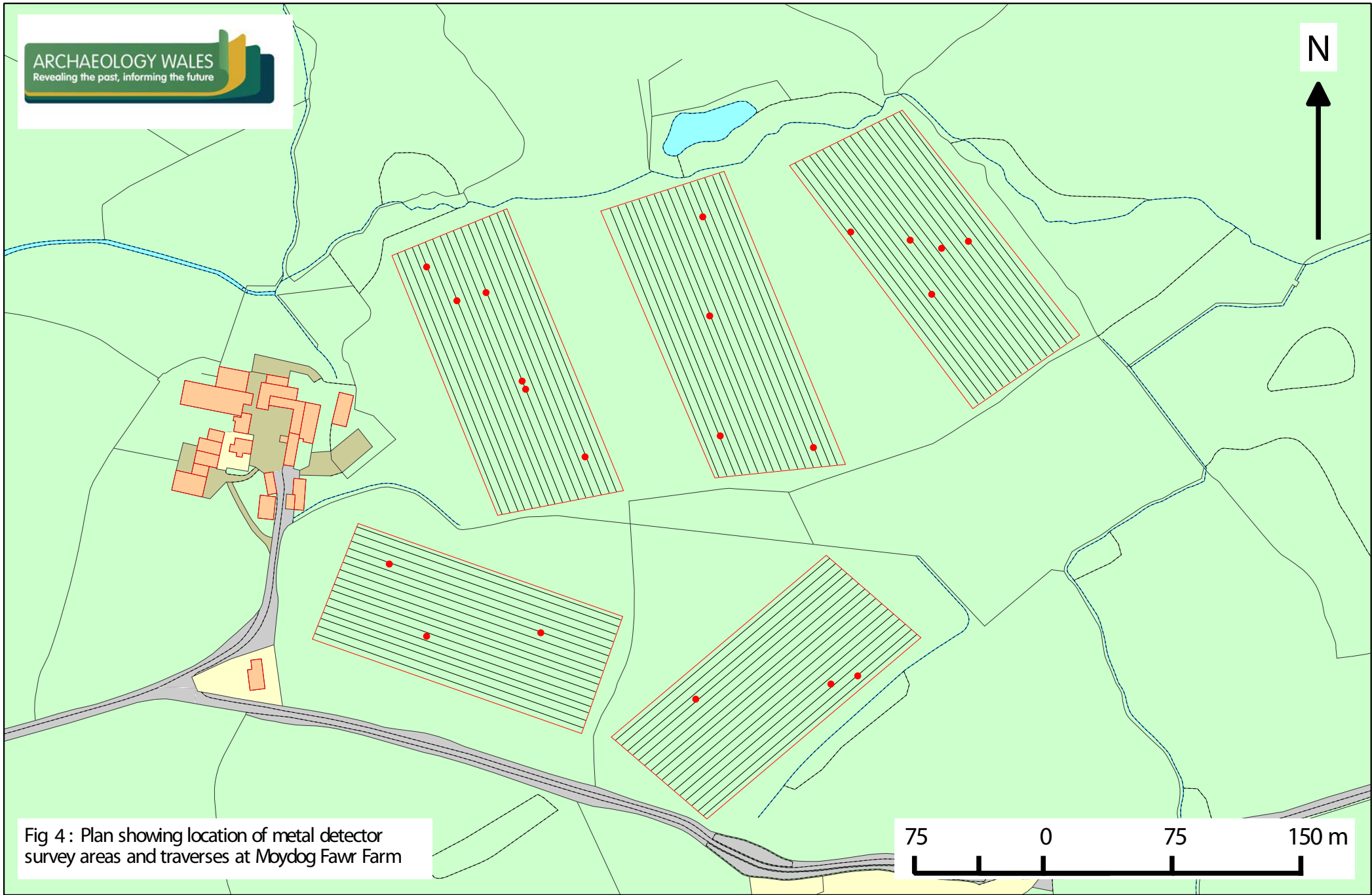
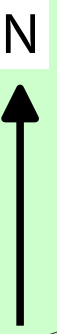


Fig 4 : Plan showing location of metal detector survey areas and traverses at Moydog Fawr Farm

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APPENDIX II: Plates



Plate 1: View from single track road south west of Moydog Fawr farm across land making up part of the flat plain at the valley bottom



Plate 2: View north east towards Moydog Fawr farm from road showing flat area of land at bottom of valley



Plate 3: View south east towards Y Golfa from single track road across flat plain adjacent to Moydog Fawr farm



Plate 4: View south west across flat plain adjacent (south west) from Moydog Fawr farm



Plate 5: View south towards Y Golfa from within flat plain at valley bottom, east of Moydog Fawr farm



Plate 6: View west from within assessment area towards bungalow adjacent to Moydog Fawr farm



Plate 7: View east across assessment area from Moydog Fawr farm



Plate 8: View east across assessment area from Moydog Fawr farm



Plate 9: View east along route of old watercourse within assessment area, east of Moydog Fawr



Plate 10: View south east from centre of assessment area, across flat plain, east of Moydog Fawr

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APPENDIX III: Finds Catalogue

Find No.	Description	Date	NGR	Depth
1	Fe Horse Buckle Frag	19th Century	316,915.07 308,044.26	0.2m
2	Pewter Button	19th/20th Century	316,920.66 308,033.72	0.2m
3	Cu Alloy Object	Post-med	316,946.21 308,035.01	0.23m
4	Pewter Button	19th Century	316,963.15 307,981.51	0.15m
5	George V Penny	1918	316,968.13 307,975.29	0.1m
6	Victoria Penny	1868	316,999.37 307,940.41	0.18m
7	Pewter Button	19th Century	317,066.25 308,068.10	0.2m
8	Cu Alloy Buckle	19th Century	317,071.95 308,021.15	0.25m
9	Fe Object	Unknown	317,070.12 307,946.70	0.21m
10	Fe Object	Unknown	317,135.07 307,942.66	0.15m
11	Pb Musket Ball	Post-med	317,166.19 308,065.26	0.25m
12	Fe Object	Unknown	317,714.56 308,048.14	0.05m
13	Fe Horseshoe Frag	Modern	317,194.22 308,046.47	0.2m
14	Pb Object	Unknown	317,221.99 308,053.13	0.15m
15	Cu Alloy Thimble?	Post-med	317,210.11 308,009.00	0.15m
16	Victoria Penny	18??	316,881.33 307,875.62	0.18m
17	Cu Alloy Object	Unknown	316,916.25 307,832.94	0.17m
18	Fe Object	Modern	316,985.17 307,854.26	0.1m
19	Fe Object - Rasp	Modern	317,074.86 307,805.76	0.12m
20	Fe Nail	Modern	317,152.94 307,811.11	0.22m
21	Fe Nail	Modern	317,174.78 307,816.01	0.15m

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APPENDIX IV: Archive Cover Sheet

ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Maes Moydog, Welshpool, Powys

Site Name:	Maes Moydog
Site Code:	WBS3/14/SUR
PRN:	-
NPRN:	403416
SAM:	-
Other Ref No:	-
NGR:	SJ 17038 07909
Site Type:	Battlefield
Project Type:	Survey
Project Manager:	Chris E Smith
Project Dates:	April 2014
Categories Present:	Modern
Location of Original Archive:	AW
Location of duplicate Archives:	-
Number of Finds Boxes:	-
Location of Finds:	-
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	AW
Restrictions to access:	None

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