

CPAT Report No. 1574

North-east Wales Community Archaeology Programme 2016-17






Bryniau Clwyd a
Dyffryn Dyfrdwy
Clwydian Range
and Dee Valley
Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL CLWYD-POWYS

CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Cover Photo: Llys Edwin 2017 excavation viewed from the south. Photo R Knisely-Marpole



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Summary

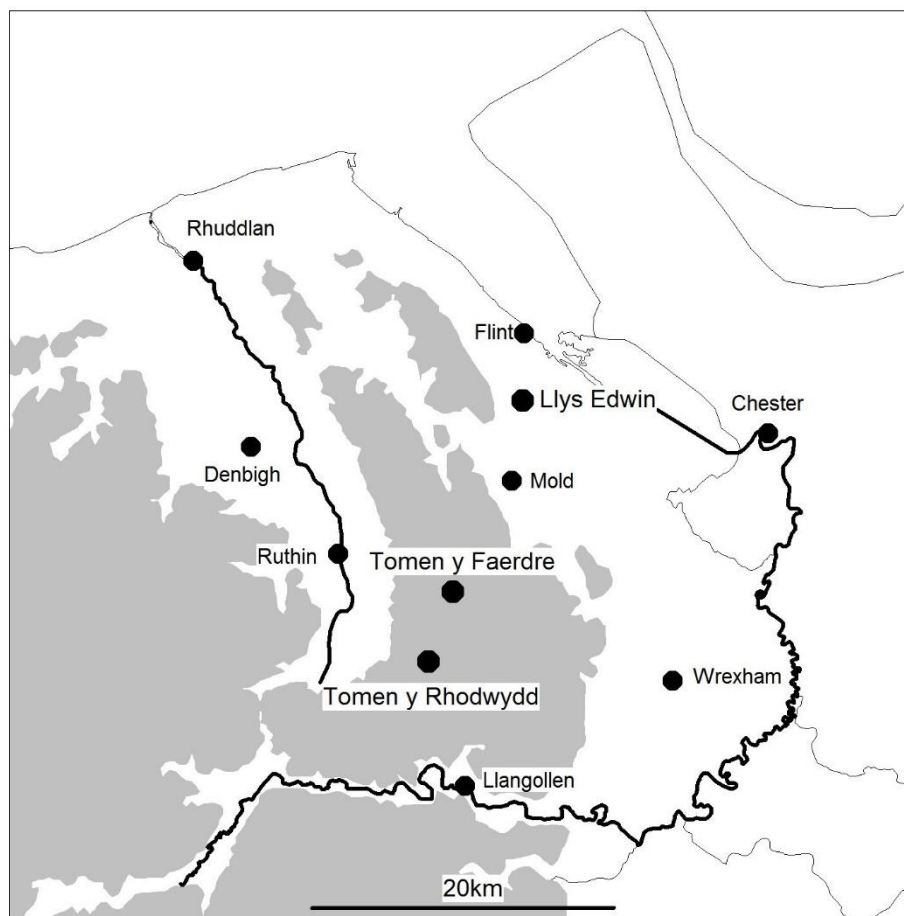
The North-east Wales Community Archaeology project, initiated in 2013-14 with grant aid from Cadw, undertakes volunteer and education-oriented, archaeology-based tasks in the former Clwyd region, ranging from conservation to archaeological fieldwork and educational events. The project has continued in 2017-18 with further community-based activities at Llys Edwin (SAM Fl 023; PRN 100289). As in the previous year, volunteer working groups also included students from, Chester University, Liverpool University and Glyndŵr University.

The focus of work in 2017-18 has been a continuation of the excavations at Llys Edwin, including an open day. The excavation provided an opportunity for local students to be trained in basic archaeological techniques, as well as relating to studies in other disciplines such as history, forensics, engineering, biodiversity and horticulture. Other participants were drawn from a wide demographic range, and the level of interest generated, with over 49 volunteers participating over a nine day period, suggests that further community-based archaeological projects will be sustainable in future years.

The excavations extended the area investigated in 2017-18, revealed further detail of the hall, which had originally been uncovered in the 1930s, allowing a better comparison to be made between the recent topographical survey and plan of Glenn's excavations. The majority of deposits investigated consisted of various spreads of excavation backfill, from which it was clear that the earlier investigations were not focused on the retrieval of artefactual evidence.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The North-east Wales Community Archaeology project was initiated in 2013-14 with grant aid from Cadw with the aim of undertaking volunteer and education-oriented, archaeology-based tasks in the former Clwyd region, ranging from conservation to fieldwork and educational events. These tasks have been identified through a process of consultation with Cadw and Denbighshire County Council which considers both conservation needs, educational opportunities and potential additional resources available for each. The programme of work during the first year concentrated on survey, conservation and outreach activities at Tomen y Rhodwydd (Castell yr Adwy) near Llandegla, Denbighshire (SAM De 018; PRN 100932), and continued in 2014-15 with further work at this site, as well as Llys Edwin, near Northop Flintshire (SAM Fl 023; PRN 100289) (Fig. 1).



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Fig. 1 The location of Llys Edwin and Tomen y Faerdre in North-east Wales

- 1.2. Following on from the success of the previous years, a further programme of community engagement was undertaken in 2017-18, involving students from, Chester University, Liverpool University and Glyndŵr University. The project focused on extending the previous season's excavations at Llys Edwin (Fl023), culminating in an Open Day encompassing the results of the excavations, site tours and period re-enactment displays.

- 1.3. In addition, a programme of vegetation clearance was also intended at Tomen y Faerdre, Llanarmon-yn-Iâl (De006), following a topographical survey undertaken in 2016-17. However, due to a combination of adverse weather conditions, seasonal timings and the unavailability of the student workforce the programme of works had to be suspended, to be continued in 2018 with additional aid from the Clwydian Range AONB Sustainability Fund. As in previous years the NEWCA programme has been supported by the regional universities, local volunteers and visitors from a number of local interest groups (see Appendix 1 for list of participants).



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Fig. 2 The location of Llys Edwin, adjacent to Glyndŵr University and Coleg Cambria, Northop

2 Llys Edwin

- 2.1. The site (SJ 2370 6933; SAM FI 023; PRN 100289) lies less than a mile to the north-west of Northop, and back from the coast by just over 3km. Rising ground to the south-west is broken only by the sharp defile of the small watercourse known as Afon Conwy while flattish ground to the north-east constitutes one of the natural shelves in the landscape above the Dee Estuary. The following text is based on research

undertaken by Bob Silvester as part of the Cadw-funded study of Llysoedd and Maerdrefi (Silvester 2015).

- 2.2. In name it is associated with an 11th-century historical figure, Eadwine (or Edwin) of Tegeingl who appears in Domesday Book (1086). The entry for *Castretone* was assumed by T. A. Glenn to be synonymous with Llys Edwin and that appears to have been accepted without question by more recent authorities (e.g. Rumble and Morgan). Ellis Davies referred to a nearby plantation as Coed Llys, and further north, about 500m to the north-east of Llys Edwin is Llŷs Farm, but it is entirely unclear how far back in time these *llys* names can be taken.



Fig. 3 Aerial view of Llys Edwin in 1987. Photo CPAT 87-MB-872

- 2.3. A succinct description was provided originally in the Royal Commission's *Inventory for Flintshire* in 1912 which described a near-square enclosure with an inner ditch and outer bank, a mound in the north-east corner of the enclosure which had a separate bank and ditch around its west and south sides. For the Royal Commission this was a small Motte and Bailey, but one that was not positioned in a strong natural location. Further earthworks lay to the west.
- 2.4. In 1931 T. A. Glenn excavated Llys Edwin on behalf of Lady Daresbury, publishing his results three years later in a privately published volume entitled *The Family of Griffith of Garn and Plasnewydd*, though it was also re-printed as a separate publication. Glenn exposed the remains of a stone hall, probably of the first half of the 13th century, but with timber predecessors. From the excavation report of three years later it can be gathered that Glenn identified at least four phases of construction, as well as activity

indicative of robbing and disturbance, and artefacts from Tudor times onwards. The excavation revealed a gate flanked by square projecting towers and facing a stone bridge abutment on the opposite side of the moat. South-east of this were a hall, kitchen and pantry, and a further square tower occupied the north angle of the moat. North-west of the yard were further rooms. Subsidiary buildings were found inside the moat on the south-east and south-west sides. These were said to include a forge and stables, the latter apparently large enough to accommodate twenty or more horses, with a 'detached tower of great strength' close to the stables.

- 2.5. All these remains were of stone. Glenn considered that the hall complex had been partially rebuilt probably in the earlier 13th century. The first stone phase replaced a half-timbered predecessor, which had in turn succeeded a timber building defined by post-holes.
- 2.6. On the south-west side of the site was a second moat (or ditch). As depicted by the Ordnance Survey this was wider and extended further to the north-west than the moated enclosure. The south-western side ran parallel to the moated enclosure. Early commentators saw these as outworks but the Ordnance Survey in 1962 were inclined to the more prosaic view that they were fishponds. The Ordnance Survey field investigator also recorded a further anomaly in that the north-eastern ditch of the enclosure continued towards the south-east, halting abruptly at the edge of the field, but suggesting more complexity to the earthworks than acknowledged by Glenn.

Earthwork Survey

- 2.7. The earthwork survey commenced in 2014-15, covering a small area on the north-western side of Llys Edwin. In 2015-16 this was extended to cover the whole of the scheduled site currently under the management of Glyndŵr University (see Fig. 15). As before, the survey afforded an opportunity for students from the nearby Glyndŵr University and Chester University to gain experience in digital surveying and the interpretation of earthwork monuments. Over a period of five days the students assisted in the production of an extensive, detailed topographical survey which included a transect profile across the monument.
- 2.8. As well as mapping the earthworks the students were encouraged to discuss the numerous management issues associated with the up-keep of a scheduled monument. This particular exercise generated a rather interesting degree of lively debate with Glyndŵr University (Biodiversity) students raising opposing conservation concerns to those of the Chester University (Archaeology) students. Both the professional CPAT staff and students benefitted from this broader view of site management. The initial result was the production of a management plan (see Fig. 14) highlighting the principal active erosion issues at Llys Edwin. Of considerable concern was the extensive nature and size of the rabbit warrens, the locations of which, ironically, appeared to favour areas of significant archaeology containing buried in situ medieval masonry and deposits rich in palaeoenvironmental and artefactual potential. Two fragments of pottery, a strap handle and a body sherd from a fine example of a 13th-century jug, and the corroded remains of an iron riding spur were recovered from the warren spoil. In addition to this there was considerable surface evidence of medieval masonry crumbling as a consequence of animal turbation.

- 2.9. The results of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 surveys of Llys Edwin have allowed the production of a composite plan combining the topographical survey with Glenn's plan of the 1931 excavations, published in 1934 (see Fig. 15). This enables a more accurate comparison of the Glenn's plan with the low-lying earthworks, possible spoil heaps and denuded tower masonry that are visible today.
- 2.10. Further topographical survey had originally been planned for 2016-17, although the vegetation was such that it was not possible to undertake the survey at the time the excavation was conducted. It is hoped that this will continue in the future, providing further training opportunities for students. The results will also inform future vegetation management plans for this part of the site, currently under the care of Coleg Cambria.

Excavation 2017

- 2.11. The 2016 excavations uncovered part of the south-east wall of the hall. In 2017 this area was extended to the south-west, partly overlapping the 2016 trench, resulting in an area measuring 10m by 7m. As before, the objectives were: to demonstrate the level of disturbance to the archaeological resource, identify key features recorded by Glenn to facilitate comparisons with the excavation plans, and to gain a better understanding of the archaeological deposition in this area. The excavation was undertaken entirely by hand over a period of 9 days, the work being conducted according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014).
- 2.12. The trench (see Figs 15-16) was located within an area described by Glenn as the south-east end of the main (great) hall; buildings interpreted as kitchens and a scullery were located to the rear, both built in timber rather than stone (Glenn 1934, 6-8). Glenn's published report does not include any photographs of this area; however his illustrations of other areas investigated show that substantial structural remains were encountered. It has been assumed that these were left in situ.
- 2.13. The excavations was undertaken with the aid of local volunteers and students from Glyndŵr, Liverpool and Chester Universities, as well as members of the Clwydian Range Archaeology Group (CRAG) (see Appendix 1 for participants). The participation of local students was particularly valuable since this drew in not only archaeology students, but also those studying history, forensics, engineering, biodiversity and horticulture.



Fig. 4 Volunteers revealing more of the wall (08) identified in 2016. Photo CPAT 4428-0027

- 2.14. The excavation initially targeted the south-west quadrant of the previous season's fieldwork, revealing known in situ medieval masonry – namely a portion of the south-east wall (08) of the hall (Fig. 4). This process enabled inexperienced volunteers to participate in re-excavating recent backfill. The excavation area was then extended west, south-west and south, taking in areas thought to be the locations of the main hall to the west, and the structure interpreted by Glenn as a kitchen to the south and south-east. Around 0.14–0.20m of topsoil was removed to reveal a spread of rubble (02), the size of stones suggesting that this material had been sorted prior to its deposition. This suggested that it was part of the 1930s excavation backfill and not demolition or collapsed masonry (see Fig. 5). This suggestion was reinforced by the wide date range of the artefacts recovered from the rubble. These included building material consisting of hand-made brick and timber nails, two types of slate roofing tile, medieval stone and ceramic roofing tile, and kitchen waste such as butchered animal bone, cockle-shell and oyster-shell.
- 2.15. Removal of the rubble revealed a continuation of the remains of the masonry wall (08) to the south. This was orientated south-west to north-east. It measured 0.60m wide, with a surviving height of two courses (0.26m) above the foundations, which were stepped outwards. A further 5.00m of the wall was subsequently exposed, generally of the same form and construction, although the upper course was missing at the southern extent. Glenn noted that the internal face of the wall of the main hall had been robbed, and there was clear evidence of a trench [11] along the north-west side. However it is unclear whether or not the cut – which truncated a light yellowy-grey clay floor (16) – was evidence of Glenn's exploratory excavation, or an earlier 'robber trench'. A corroded pair of early 20th-century iron pliers was retrieved from the upper fill (007).

- 2.16. East of the wall (08), within the area Glenn which identified as a kitchen, the excavation continued through a deposit of backfill rubble (05 and 06). Again, the stone appeared to have been sorted by size, and the underlying larger stones (150mm x 80mm x 80mm) formed an almost impenetrable deposit (Fig. 6). As in 2016, a significant quantity of fine olive window glass, together with medieval ceramic and tile and later 17th-18th-century pottery was recovered from this material, which possibly extended to some depth. Apart from a circular depression (29), no other features were recorded at this level.
- 2.17. Limited excavation of the deposit 05 continued alongside the south-eastern extent of the wall (08). This revealed a sub-circular deposit of rubble, approximately 2.00m in diameter, bonded with stiff yellow clay (26). This feature, which remained unexcavated, appeared to be tied into the lower courses of the wall. Nearby, Glenn had recorded a 'perfect circular fire-place of reddish local sandstone, with a fire-hole 4 feet 6 inches in diameter, built over the south-west corner of a handsome square floor of fine gritstone...' (Glenn 1934 6-8). The 2017 excavations did not encounter this fireplace, and it is assumed that these deposits overlie it and result from Glenn's re-instatement in 1939.



Fig. 5 General view of the 2017 excavations from the south-west. Medieval in situ clay floor (22) top left. The 1930s rubble spread (02) is evident in the foreground.

Photo CPAT 4428-0069



Fig. 6 General view of the 2017 excavations from the south-east, showing wall 08 and Glenn's earlier backfill (06). Photo CPAT 4428-0075



Fig. 7 General view of the 2017 excavations from the north-west, showing the remains of possible post-hole and timber settings (18 and 20). Photo CPAT 4428-0075

- 2.18. One of the key objectives for the 2017 excavation was to target at least one area of the site where the full extent of Glenn's backfill could be recorded and removed. This took place in the area to the north-west of wall 08, where deposit 02 was fully

removed. This revealed in situ clay floor deposits (16 and 22) and the outline of at least two stone-packed features (18 and 20) (Fig 7-8). The features, which were not excavated, are likely to be the post-hole and timber settings that were recorded and interpreted as such by Glenn.

- 2.19. Glenn also noted that there were multiple phases of clay floors within the hall, something he could only have established through test excavation. This could have been achieved by excavation of the post-holes and associated masonry settings, and examination of their sections. It is possible, therefore, that the stone-packing within the features 18 and 20 could be the result of Glenn's backfill. The number of artefacts retrieved from these areas was negligible, all evidence of later post-medieval occupation having been removed. Recorded artefacts were limited to a number of cleated iron nails, stone roofing tiles and a lead spindle whorl.
- 2.20. South-west of wall 08, the remains of two other stone-built features were recorded. These were both constructed from similar stone and lime mortar. The remains of a short stub of a wall (24), 0.50m wide, were bonded perpendicular to the south-west end of the wall 08. A single sherd of medieval pottery, of orange-glazed cream fabric, was recovered from the lime-mortar. The wall sealed a drain (27), of similar width, orientated east to west (Fig. 16).



Fig. 8 Pole cam view from the north-east of the south-east wall (08) of the postulated hall. Clay floor (022) and the remains of possible post-hole and timber settings (18 and 20) to the right. Photo R Kinsely-Marpole (RKMAS).



Fig. 9 Excavation site viewed from the south-east. Photo R Kinsely-Marpole (RKMAS)

- 2.21. At a point mid-way along the west facing side of the main wall (08), the denuded remains of another structure (23) was revealed (Fig. 9 and 16). The relationship between it and the wall was not established. This structure, 0.54m wide and surviving as a single course, pre-dated the floor deposit 16. The northern end of the wall formed the beginning of an arc suggesting it was the remains of a much larger sub-circular feature of medieval origin. The stone-filled (12) remains of another drain (13), orientated north to south, were recorded located 0.50m west of the structure. Both structures (23 and 24) and the drains (13 and 27) were not reported in Glenn's previous excavation, possibly demonstrating that he did not record, in detail plan, all of the building phases he encountered during the excavation in the 1930s.

Finds processing workshop

- 2.22. This year, laboratory facilities were kindly provided by Glyndŵr University (Northop), allowing the project to include a number of finds processing workshops. Subsequently the excavation volunteers were able to participate in finds washing and pottery identification, supervised by CPAT field staff (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Volunteers processing finds from the 2017 excavations. Photo CPAT 4428-0042

- 2.23. It was evident from the 2016 excavation that Glenn's earlier investigations were not focused on the retrieval of artefactual evidence, as the excavated material deposits still contained significant quantities of pottery, glass, metalwork and building materials. During the 2017 season an experienced local metal detectorist, Russell Bates, surveyed all excavated material for metal artefacts. As a result numerous square-sectioned iron nails (some cleated), a lead spindle whorl, a buckle, and chain fragments were recovered.
- 2.24. Of particular note were three copper-alloy artefacts: a buckle, coin and token (Fig. 11). The buckle, 2cm wide and complete with in situ fastening pin, is known as a 'spectacle' buckle and is of 14-16th-century origin. This particular size of buckle is more commonly used on a padded item of clothing referred to as a 'jack'.
- 2.25. The struck coin, with toothed border on both sides, bears the emblem of a shield of St. George's Cross with a wreath above, breaking the inner beaded circle. The words 'ENGLANDS FARDIN' surround the shield. On the reverse there is a shield bearing an Irish harp with the words 'FOR NECESSARY CHA[NGE]'. The coin immediately post-dates the English Civil War period, dating from the Commonwealth administration of c.1654.
- 2.26. The third artefact was a hammered token, known as a 'jeton'. This had the image of a sceptre and three crowns on the reverse, with an inscription which included the name of the moneyer, 'HANS [?]' and the origin of the mint, 'NUREMBERG'. It is typical of jetons produced in the Low Countries in the middle of the 16th century.



Fig 11. Metal detectorist finds recovered during the 2017 excavation; top left 'Spectacle' buckle c. 14-16th-century, Commonwealth Farthing c.1654 and bottom a 16th -century 'Jetton' token, minted in Nuremberg.

- 2.27. Over the two seasons of excavation at Llys Edwin a large quantity of fine table ware pottery has been recovered from the overlying deposits associated with the backfill of the 1939 excavations. The finds processing workshops helped to identify a significant amount of similar pottery of 16th and 17th-century origin. Together with the metal artefacts noted above, this confirms that occupation of Llys Edwin extended well beyond the mid-13th century date suggested by Glenn.

Drone Survey

- 2.28. In addition to the many other students from Glyndwr University, the School of Applied Science, Computing and Engineering (ASCE, Glyndwr University (Wrexham), supervised by Senior Lecturer in Engineering - Rob Bolam) also took the opportunity to undertake a drone survey training session at the excavation site. Initial results were promising and it is hoped to incorporate further training sessions into future NEWCA projects.



Fig. 12 Drone photograph courtesy of Rob Bolam (Glyndŵr University, Wrexham) showing the 2017 Llys Edwin excavations viewed from the south-east.

- 2.29. On completion the excavation was reinstated carefully with the aid of a small mechanical excavator. A geotextile membrane was laid across the excavated area prior to reinstatement in order to facilitate subsequent phases of investigation. The larger stones recovered from the rubble spreads were used to infill areas damaged by burrowing animals in order to inhibit further disturbance.

Open Day

- 2.30. A site Open Day was organised towards the end of the project in order to inform members of the local community and the wider public about the historical and archaeological significance of the site, as well as presenting the results of the survey and the excavation. Approximately 65 people attended the Open Day, engaging in site tours and finds processing (led by CPAT staff and volunteer excavators). Staff from Glyndŵr University were also on hand to host and supervise static displays of the original artefacts recovered from the 1930s excavation (courtesy of Flintshire Archives) and replica medieval pottery and weaponry (courtesy of Cwmwd Iâl Re-enactment).



Fig. 13 Visitors at the open day. Photo CPAT 4428-0114

3 Conclusions

- 3.1. From its inception in 2013-14 the NEWCA project has continued to develop, forging close links with local groups and educational institutions, particularly Coleg Cambria, Glyndŵr University and Chester University. Other important collaborations have been undertaken with the Clwydian Range AONB, specifically at Tomen y Rhodwydd.
- 3.2. The focus of this year's work has been a continuation of the previous season's excavation at Llys Edwin. The excavation provided an ideal opportunity for local students to be trained in basic archaeological techniques, as well as relating to studies in other disciplines such as history, forensics, engineering (drone survey), biodiversity and horticulture.
- 3.3. The excavations revealed further detail of the hall and undisturbed in situ medieval floor deposits, which had originally been uncovered in the 1930s, allowing a better comparison to be made between the recent topographical survey and plan of Glenn's excavations. The majority of deposits investigated consisted of various spreads of excavation backfill, containing significant quantities of pottery, glass, metalwork and building materials. From this it was clear that the earlier investigations were not focused on the retrieval of artefactual evidence.
- 3.4. The community outreach element of the project has enabled many people to access the site and participate in archaeological and conservation work. With the project expanding across multiple sites located at opposite ends of the North-east Wales region, participants were drawn from a wide demographic range, and the level of

interest generated – with over 49 volunteers participating over a nine day period – suggests that further community-based archaeological projects will be sustainable in future years.

4 Acknowledgements

- 4.1. The excavation was co-ordinated by Ian Grant with assistance from Ian Davies, Alex Sperr and Neil Bayliss. Report illustrations were prepared by Nigel Jones and Sophie Watson. CPAT would like to thank Will Davies, Fiona Grant and Kate Roberts (Cadw) and Sophie Fish, Flintshire Archives for her permission and assistance with the loan of the Llys Edwin 1939 archive.
- 4.2. The author would also like to thank the following for their assistance with co-ordinating the numerous students who took part in the fieldwork. From Glyndŵr University these included: Professor David Skydmore, Richard Lewis, Dennis Powell, Pip Francis, Sam Noon, Kathryn Ellis, Pete Bolton, Amy Rattenbury and Robert Bolam. From Chester University there was support from Professor Meggen Gondek, Dr Caroline Pudney and Professor Howard Williams; and particular thanks are due to student Matt Thomas for his dedicated work on the photogrammetric plans of Llys Edwin. Thanks are also due to Russell Bates for his metal detecting survey, Richard and Angela Kinsely-Marpole (RKMAS) and the core team of field volunteers from numerous local interest groups. Finally, thanks are due to the landowners and tenants: Glyndŵr University and Coleg Cambria (Llys Edwin), for their continuing support and interest in the project and permission to undertake the site work.

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Appendix 1: Summary of Community Participation 2017-18

| GROUP | Fieldwork Participants |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| CPAT | 3 |
| Clwydian Range Archaeology Group | 4 |
| Glyndwr University (Northop) | 5 |
| Glyndwr University (Wrexham) | 20 |
| Liverpool University | 3 |
| Chester University | 3 |
| General Public Volunteers | 14 |
| Open Day - General Public | 65 |

Fig. 14 The results of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 surveys of Llys Edwin, showing erosion and management issues and the location of Trench A

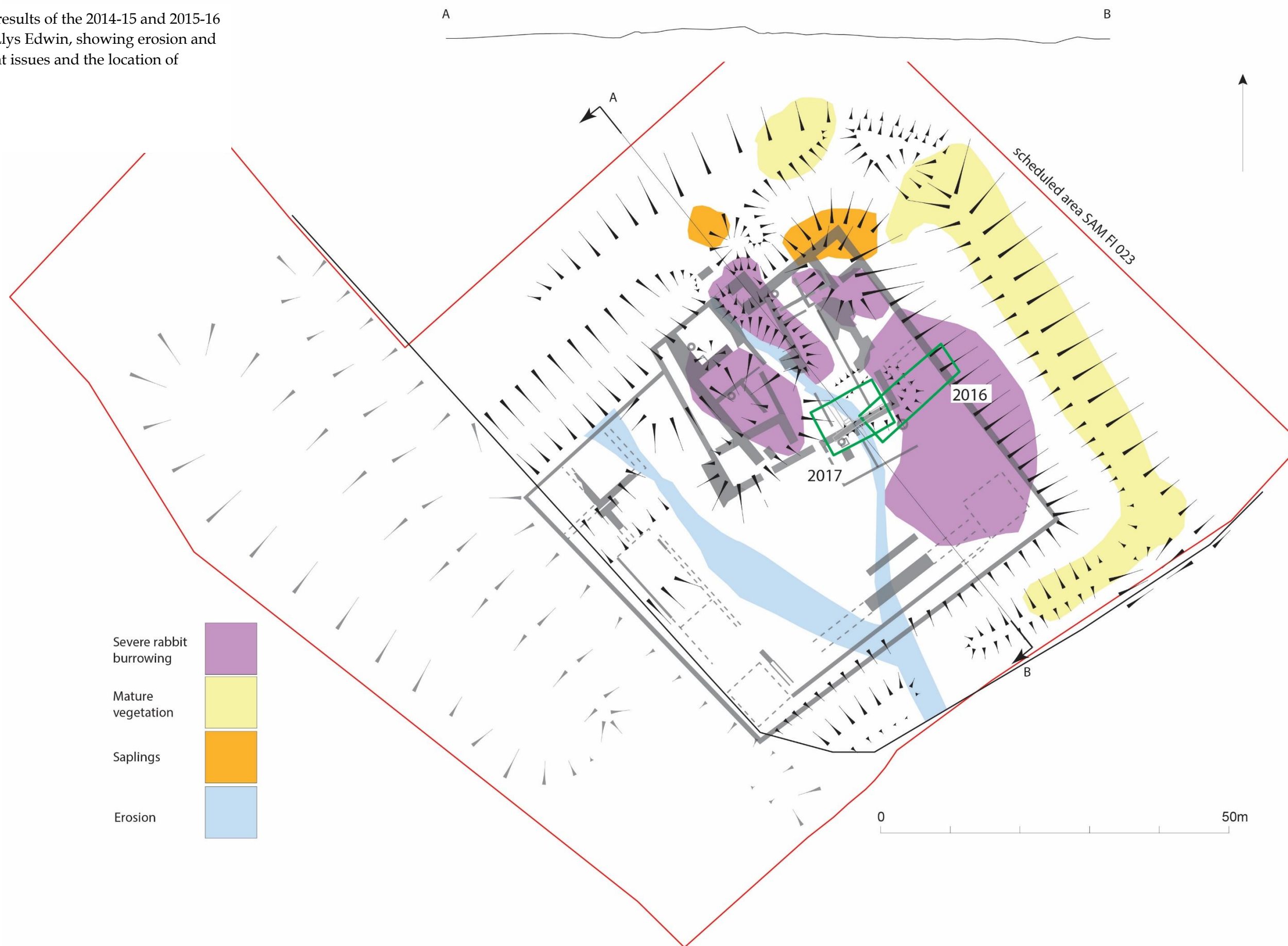
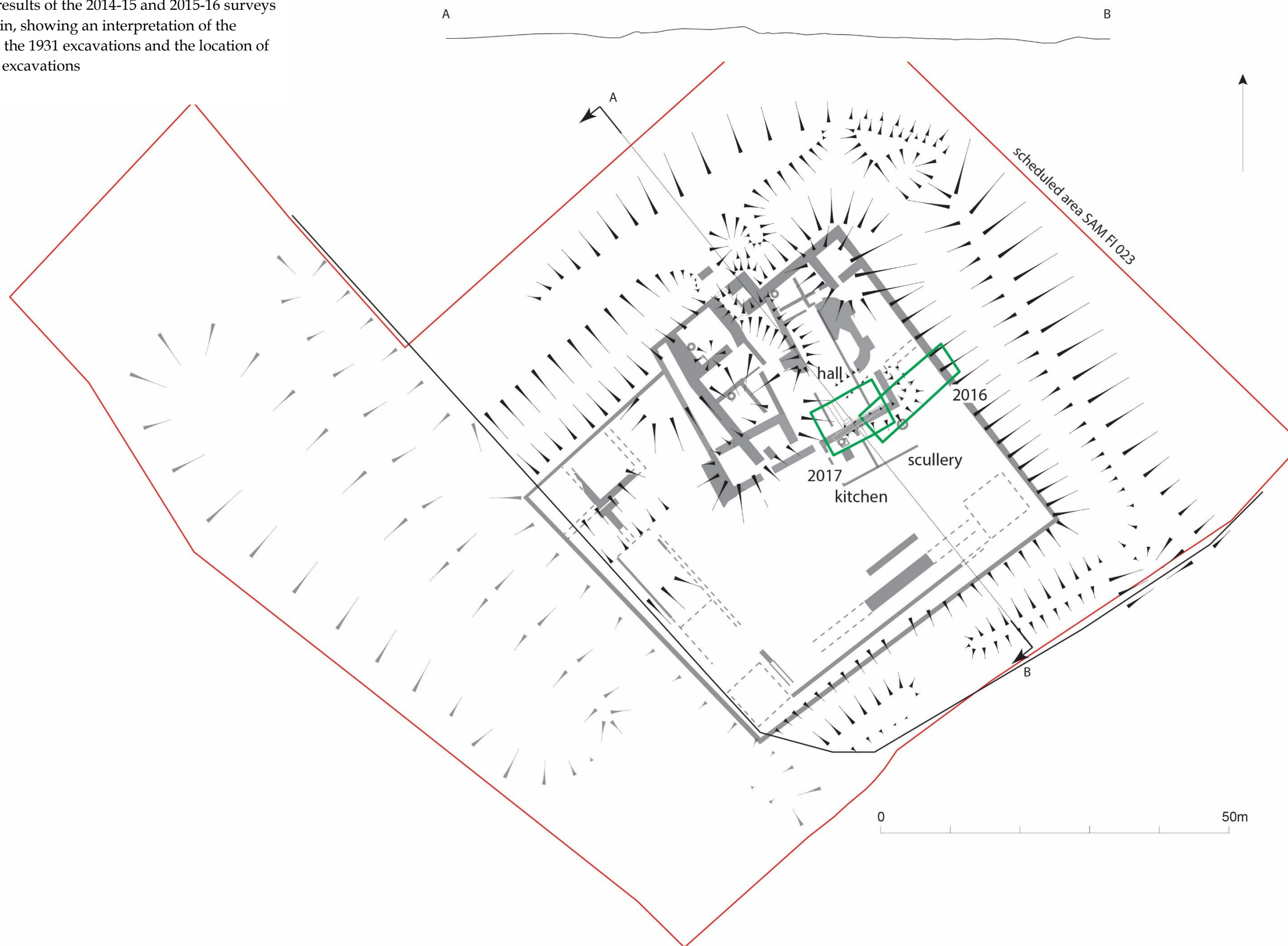


Fig. 15 The results of the 2014-15 and 2015-16 surveys of Llys Edwin, showing an interpretation of the results from the 1931 excavations and the location of the 2016 -17 excavations



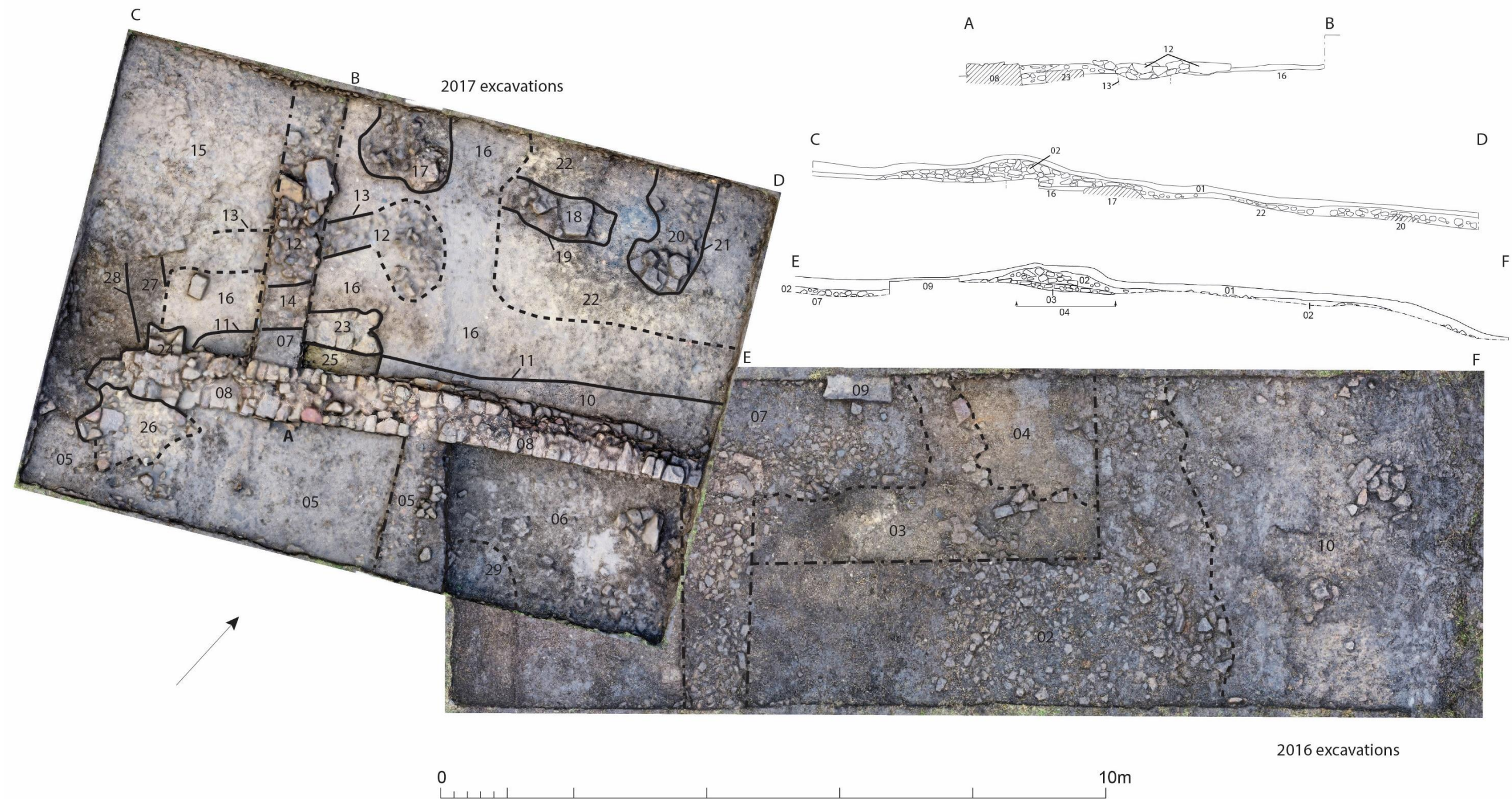


Fig. 16 Photogrammetric plan and drawn sections of the 2016-17 excavations.