

Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil

Archaeological evaluation

January 2020

A report for WDL Homes Ltd
by Jon Burton BA MA PCIfA

GGAT report no. 2020/015
Project no. P2052
National Grid Reference
SS 03391 09097



The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd
Heathfield House Heathfield Swansea SA1 6EL

Contents	Page
<i>Summary</i>	2
<i>Crynodeb</i>	2
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	3
<i>Copyright notice</i>	3
<i>Abbreviations</i>	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Project background	4
1.2 Location, topography and geology	4
1.3 Specific historical and archaeological background.....	4
2. Methodology	5
3. Results	6
4. Finds	8
5. Conclusions	9
6. Bibliography	10
Appendix I. Contexts	11
Appendix II. PLATES	12

Figures

Figure 1. Location of development area (blue outline), Evaluation Trenches A, B and C (red outlines), mounds A01, B01 and C01 (purple) and location of sections (black - see Figures 2, 3 and 4).	17
Figure 2. West facing section in Trench A (mound A01).	18
Figure 3. Southeast facing section in Trench B (mound B01).	18
Figure 4. Southeast facing section in Trench C (mound C01).	18

Plates

Plate 1. Leather hoof guard found within mound C. Oblique top side.	8
Plate 2. Underside view of the hoof guard.	8
Plate 3. Mound A pre-excavation.	12
Plate 4. Trench A looking northwest. Scale 1m with 0.5m division.	12
Plate 5. Mound B prior to excavation. Looking East. Scales 1m with 0.5m division.	13
Plate 6. Trench B looking northeast. 1m scales with 0.5m division.	13
Plate 7. Oblique view of mound B section.	14
Plate 8. Mound C pre-excavation. Looking northeast. Scales 1m with 0.5m division.	14
Plate 9. Trench C. Looking northeast. Scale 1m with 0.5m division.	15
Plate 10. Northeast half of southeast facing section. Mound C. 1m and 2m scales with 0.5m divisions.	15
Plate 11. Southwest half of southeast facing section. Mound C. 1m and 2m scales with 0.5m divisions.	16

*Cover photograph: General view of site. Looking northwest. Mound C in foreground.
1m scale with 0.5m division.*

Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil: archaeological field evaluation

Summary

The WDL Homes LTD commissioned the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust to undertake an archaeological evaluation in the northwest quarter of the development at Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil (NGR SS 03391 09097), as part of pre-planning works. The fieldwork took place between the 20th and 21st January 2020.

Three trenches were targeted over three previously identified mounds which were thought to be of some archaeological potential. No significant archaeological finds or features were noted during the course of the work.

The evaluation demonstrated that the mounds either represent clearance cairns, or stockpiled stone for wall repair or construction of the extensive drystone walling that forms many of the adjacent field boundaries.

The archaeological works were carried out to the professional standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014 'Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluations'.

Crynodeb

Comisiynodd WDL Homes LTD Ymddiriedolaeth Archeolegol Morgannwg-Gwent i gynnal gwerthusiad archeolegol yn chwarter gogledd-orllewin y datblygiad yn Nhrefechan, Merthyr Tudful (NGR SS 03391 09097), fel rhan o waith cyn-gynllunio. Digwyddodd y gwaith maes rhwng yr 20fed a'r 21ain Ionawr 2020.

Targedwyd tair ffos dros dair twmpath a nodwyd yn flaenorol y credwyd eu bod o ryw faint o botensial archeolegol. Ni nodwyd unrhyw ddarganfyddiadau na nodweddion archeolegol arwyddocaol yn ystod y gwaith.

Dangosodd y gwerthusiad fod y twmpathau naill ai'n cynrychioli carneddau clirio, neu gerrig pentyrru ar gyfer atgyweirio waliau neu adeiladu'r waliau cerrig sych helaeth sy'n ffurfio llawer o ffiniau'r caeau cyfagos.

Cyflawnwyd y gwaith archeolegol yn unol â'r safonau proffesiynol a osodwyd gan y Sefydliad Siartredig Archeolegwyr 2014 'Safon ac Arweiniad ar gyfer Gwerthusiadau Maes'.

Acknowledgements

The project was managed by Johnny Crawford Bsc MA MCIfA (Assistant Project Manager). The fieldwork was completed by Johnny Crawford and Jon Burton (Project Archaeologist) of GGAT Projects. The report was prepared by Jon Burton. The illustrations were produced by Paul Jones PCIfA (Senior Illustrator).

Acknowledgement and thanks are also given to Harriet Sharp of EDP for her assistance prior to, and during the course of the project and to M J Plant Hire for undertaking the machine excavation work, and for their helpful assistance on site.

Copyright notice

The copyright of this report is held by Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd; GGAT has granted an exclusive licence to the Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) and their agents to use and reproduce the material it contains. Ordnance Survey mapping is reproduced under licence (AL100005976), unless otherwise noted. Annotations are GGAT copyright. A search of the Regional Historic Environment Record (HER) was conducted previously by EDP to inform on the known surrounding archaeological resource (Search Number 6070).

Abbreviations

CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
EXXXXXX:	Event of archaeological significance recorded in the HER i.e. E003263
GGAT:	Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust
HER:	Historic Environment Record (curated by GGAT Curatorial)
LPA:	Local Planning Authority
NMR:	National Monuments Record (curated by RCAHMW)
OD:	Ordnance Datum
PRN:	Primary Record Number (in HER, i.e. 00948s)
SM:	Scheduled Monument (prefixed by the letters GM)

1. Introduction

1.1 Project background

An Archaeological and Heritage Assessment undertaken by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) to inform planning proposals for a residential development of the site at Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil (centred on NGR SO 03391 09097) identified three mounds of uncertain origin within the north west quadrant of the proposed site (EDP report no. edp5809_r001b).

Following discussion between EDP and the archaeological advisors to the Local Authority, a recommendation was made to carry out archaeological evaluation of the three mounds in order to either prove or disprove their archaeological significance.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, Sharp 2020) for the evaluation was prepared by EDP on behalf of WDL Homes Ltd. and an accompanying archaeological evaluation specification prepared by GGAT (Crawford 2020), approved by the LPA, set out a quantifiable schedule of works for evaluation comprising two 30m long trenches to investigate the geophysical anomalies.

The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT Archaeological Services) was commissioned by the WDL Homes LTD to undertake the archaeological evaluation the results of which form the basis of the current report.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

The development comprises approximately 3.2 hectares and lies on the northwest side of modern Trefechan village, centred on SO 03391 09097. The site is bounded to the southeast and northeast by residential housing and to the southwest and northwest surrounded by fields. The development comprises of six fields (pastures) and two residential properties with associated outbuildings and roads located to the mid-west centre and to the mid-south. The three mounds are located within the north west quadrant of the development area (Figure 1).

The land within the development slopes downwards from the highest point in the north-west of the site to the lowest point at the southern boundary. The highest point is located in the north-west corner at c.316m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and the lowest point located on a mid-west point of the southern boundary at c.283m AOD.

The underlying geology of the area recorded as the Oxwich Head Limestone Formation, with no superficial deposits recorded for the site (BGS 2020). The British Geological Survey has not recorded any superficial deposits overlying Oxwich Head Limestone Formation in the area.

1.3 Specific historical and archaeological background

1.3.1 The Archaeological and Heritage assessment undertaken by EDP in advance of the development proposals identified no known archaeological or heritage assets within the proposed development area. The potential for the discovery within the development area of agricultural remains associated with the Post-medieval period was assessed to

be high. Placename and cartographic evidence suggests that the field in which the mounds are located has contained piles of stone since at least the 1840s and it was therefore thought possible that the three obvious stone mounds may have had some archaeological significance (Sharp 2019).

2. Methodology

The evaluation fieldwork took place in the northwest quarter of the development. Although the initial intention had been to machine excavate two 30m long trenches, only one trench could be excavated as planned (Trench C). The degree of slope and nature of the mounds themselves was such that it became necessary to excavate a 15m long trench over each of the northernmost mounds (Trenches A and B). Each trench was 1m wide and excavated to a maximum depth of 2m below ground level.

The trenches were excavated to the upper levels of the natural geology with a sondage being excavated in each to check and confirm the natural deposits. All three trenches were examined for any archaeological features or finds. A section was cleaned in each trench to establish the stratigraphy of the mounds and field drawings produced of those sections at a scale of 1:10. All trenches and cleaned sections were photographed. However, the bright low level winter sun and width of the trench made section photography difficult. All trenches were backfilled at the completion of recording.

A full written, drawn and photographic record was made of all archaeological contexts, in accordance with the GGAT *Manual of Excavation Recording Techniques*. Contexts were recorded using a single continuous numbering system for each trench, and are summarised in Appendix I. All significant contexts were photographed using a Sony Cybershot digital camera of 20mp resolution. Trenches were set out and archaeological features surveyed by survey grade GPS (Leica GS 07).

An archive of archaeological records relating to the fieldwork (including artefacts and ecofacts subject to the agreement of the site owners; excepting those that may be subject to the *Treasure Act* (1996) and/or *Treasure Order* (2002)) and an archive of records relating to the preparation of the reports will be prepared to the specifications in ICON's guidelines and *The National Standard and Guidance to Best Practice for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives in Wales* (National Panel for Archaeological Archives in Wales 2017).

After an appropriate period has elapsed a digital copy of the report and full archive will be deposited with the *National Monuments Record*, RCAHMS, Aberystwyth, and a digital copy of the report and archive index will be deposited with the *Regional Historic Environment Record*, curated by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, Swansea.

3. Results

The evaluation was carried out between the 20th and 21st January 2020, in dry but cold and frosty weather conditions. Three trenches (A, B and C) were excavated, with the results set out below.

Trench A (Figures 1 and 2, Plates 3 and 4).

Trench A measured 15.5m long by 1m wide and was aligned northeast-southwest. The trench base sloped downhill to the southwest, respecting the natural topography. The average depth of the trench was 0.75m, whilst the maximum depth was 2m within the sondage at the southwest end of the trench. The basal deposit, encountered at a depth of 0.1m below ground surface consisted of a mid-orange brown natural clay, with moderate to occasional sub rounded and sub angular stone (A02). Deposit A02 was overlain by a dark blackish grey silty clay topsoil (A03), with a depth of 0.1m. A02 was also found underlying the mound deposit A01. Deposit A01 consisted of a mix of angular and subangular local gritstone stone upto 0.4m wide, and smaller stones typically 0.1m wide in a matrix of dark blackish grey soil, heavily shot through with bracken roots. Where sectioned, deposit A01 measured 3.3m in width, with a maximum depth of depth of 0.63m in the centre. The stone was randomly deposited and was loosely packed, leading to localised collapse of material. There was little suggestion in the section of any features to suggest that this mound is anything other than a stockpile of stone, or a possible clearance cairn.

Trench B (Figures 1 and 3, Plates 5, 6 and 7).

Trench B measured 15m long by 1m wide and was aligned northeast southwest. The average depth of the trench was 0.8m, whilst the maximum excavated depth was 2m within the sondage at the northeast end of the trench. The basal deposit (B03) consisted of an orange brown fine sandy clay, with occasional sub-angular stone within the deposit encountered at an average depth of 0.35m below the ground. Overlaying B03 was a natural mid to light brown sandy clay with moderate sub-angular stone, (B02) with a variable but average depth of 0.2m. In the area of the mound, this was overlain by (B01), a 0.65m (maximum) thick deposit of local gritstone within a black/grey silty sandy clay soil matrix around heavily shot through with bracken and grass roots; this deposit formed the mound but the black matrix thinned out either side of the mound to form the topsoil. Where sectioned, deposit B01 measured 7m in width. The stone within B01 consisted of large stones or boulders up to 0.7m wide, and smaller rubble stone ranging from 0.05m to 0.1m diameter. The stone was randomly deposited and was loosely packed.

No finds of archaeological significance were identified. No archaeological features were identified to suggest the mound is anything other than a clearance cairn or stone stockpile.

Trench C (Figures 1 and 4, Plates 8, 9, 10 and 11).

Trench C measured 30m long by 1m wide and was aligned west northeast-east southwest and had an average depth of 1m below the ground. A sondage was excavated to a depth of 2m below the ground at the northeast end of the trench. The basal deposit (C03) consisting of mid- orange/brown sandy clay subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.2m, and not bottomed at 2m. The mound itself consisted of a 1.1m thick deposit of large boulders up to 1.5m wide and smaller gravel like stones, averaging 0.07m diameter (C01). The stones making up the mound were contained within a matrix of

Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil: archaeological field evaluation

blackish clay loam (C02) which extended on either side of the section to form a 0.2m thick topsoil. As sectioned, the width of the mound measured approximately 8.5m.

When being cleaned, the upper part of stone deposit C01 produced two finds (not retained), a leather hoof guard and a shard of white glazed pottery of late 19th to early 20th century date. Neither find was of archaeological significance in this context.

No archaeological features were identified to suggest the mound is anything other than a clearance cairn or stone stockpile

4. Finds

Two finds were noted from the upper element of deposit C01. A small shard of white glazed late 19th or early 20th century pottery, and a leather hoof guard (plates 1 and 2).



Plate 1. Leather hoof guard found within mound C. Oblique top side.



Plate 2. Underside view of the hoof guard.

The field has previously been used as pasture for animals and the presence of the hoof guard is not unusual.

5. Conclusions

The results obtained from the three trenches were fairly consistent. The mounds were formed principally by mixed sizes of stone, from blocks, boulders to smaller gravel like material. The matrix between the stones was typically a dark organic rich blackish grey silty soil. Nothing in the deposition of the stones suggested anything structural and there was no sign of working or shaping of any of the material.

The stone mounds lay mainly on the orange sandy clay natural with intrusion by bracken roots obscuring the interface between the deposits. No features such as chambers or voids were noted within the mounds and the shape of the mounds in plan was generally irregular. No deposits of charcoal or other material that might indicate a significant archaeological origin were noted. The only finds noted were found within mound C and were residual from the modern period.

Whilst the location of the mounds provided good lines of sight to the south and the head of the Taff valley, there were no obvious spatial relationships between the mounds or indeed with any other surrounding features.

It was noted that the extant drystone walls that form the field boundaries in the development area incorporate large boulders or stones in their base. These could be marker stones for setting out the boundary prior to wall construction. The extant fence line boundary to the north and north west, which forms the northern boundary of the development area, includes a series of spaced boulders, which may represent the intended line of an incomplete stone boundary. It is possible, therefore, that the mounds represent stockpiled stone for wall repair or construction, or clearance cairns.

As documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that mounds or cairns were present in the 1840s, they may date to this period or earlier. However, the evaluation has demonstrated that they are not otherwise archaeologically significant.

6. Bibliography

Crawford, J, 2020. Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil: Archaeological Evaluation Specification. **GGAT Report no.2020/001**

Sharp, H, 2019. Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil: Archaeological and Heritage Assessment. **Report Reference edp5809_r001b**; November 2019.

Sharp, H, 2020. Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Works. **Report Reference edp5809_r004**;

Legislative and CIfA guidelines:

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014. *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluations*.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 1996. *The Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (2nd Revision)*.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 2002. *Treasure (Designation) Order 2002*.

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust. 2002. *Manual of Excavation Recording Techniques*.

National Panel for Archaeological Archives in Wales. 2017. *The National Standard and Guidance to Best Practice for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives in Wales*.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014. *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluations*.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1996. *The Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (2nd Revision)*.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2002. *Treasure (Designation) Order 2002*.

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, 2002. *Manual of Excavation Recording Techniques*.

National Panel for Archaeological Archives in Wales, 2017. *The National Standard and Guidance to Best Practice for Collecting and Depositing Archaeological Archives in Wales*.

Online resources

British Geological Survey maps [Online]. Available at <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 23/01/2020

Historic Environment Record [Online]. Accessed 23/01/2020. Available at <https://walesher1974.org/her/app/php/mr.php>

Appendix I. Contexts

Table 1. Inventory of contexts

Context Number	Type	Depth m b.g.l.	Description	Period
A01	Deposit	0m-0.63m	Mound stone in a blackish grey soil matrix.	Post-medieval?modern
A02	Deposit	0.1m-2m (n.b)	Mid orange brown silty sandy clay with moderate subrounded and subangular stone.	Natural
A03	Deposit	0m-0.1m	Blackish grey topsoil	Modern
B01	Deposit	0m-0.65m	Mound stone in a blackish grey soil matrix.	Post-medieval?modern
B02	Deposit	Variable 0.1m-0.35m	Mid to light brown sandy clay and stone	Natural
B03	Deposit	Variable 0.35m-2m n.b	Orange brown fine sandy clay	Natural
C01	Deposit	0m-1.1m variable	Mound stone in a blackish grey soil matrix.	Post-medieval?modern
C02	Deposit	0m-0.2	Black clay loam with rootlets	Natural
C03	Deposit	0.2m-2m n.b	Orange brown sandy clay	Natural

D = Deposit

C = Negative feature i.e. cut

n.b. Not bottomed

b.g.l. Below ground level

Appendix II. Plates.



Plate 3. Mound A pre-excitation.



Plate 4. Trench A looking northwest. Scale 1m with 0.5m division.



Plate 5. Mound B prior to excavation. Looking East. Scales 1m with 0.5m division.



Plate 6. Trench B looking northeast. 1m scales with 0.5m division



Plate 7. Oblique view of mound B section



Plate 8. Mound C pre-excitation. Looking northeast. Scales 1m with 0.5m division.



Plate 9. Trench C. Looking northeast. Scale 1m with 0.5m division.



Plate 10. Northeast half of southeast facing section. Mound C. 1m and 2m scales with 0.5m divisions



Plate 11. Southwest half of southeast facing section. Mound C. 1m and 2m scales with 0.5m divisions.

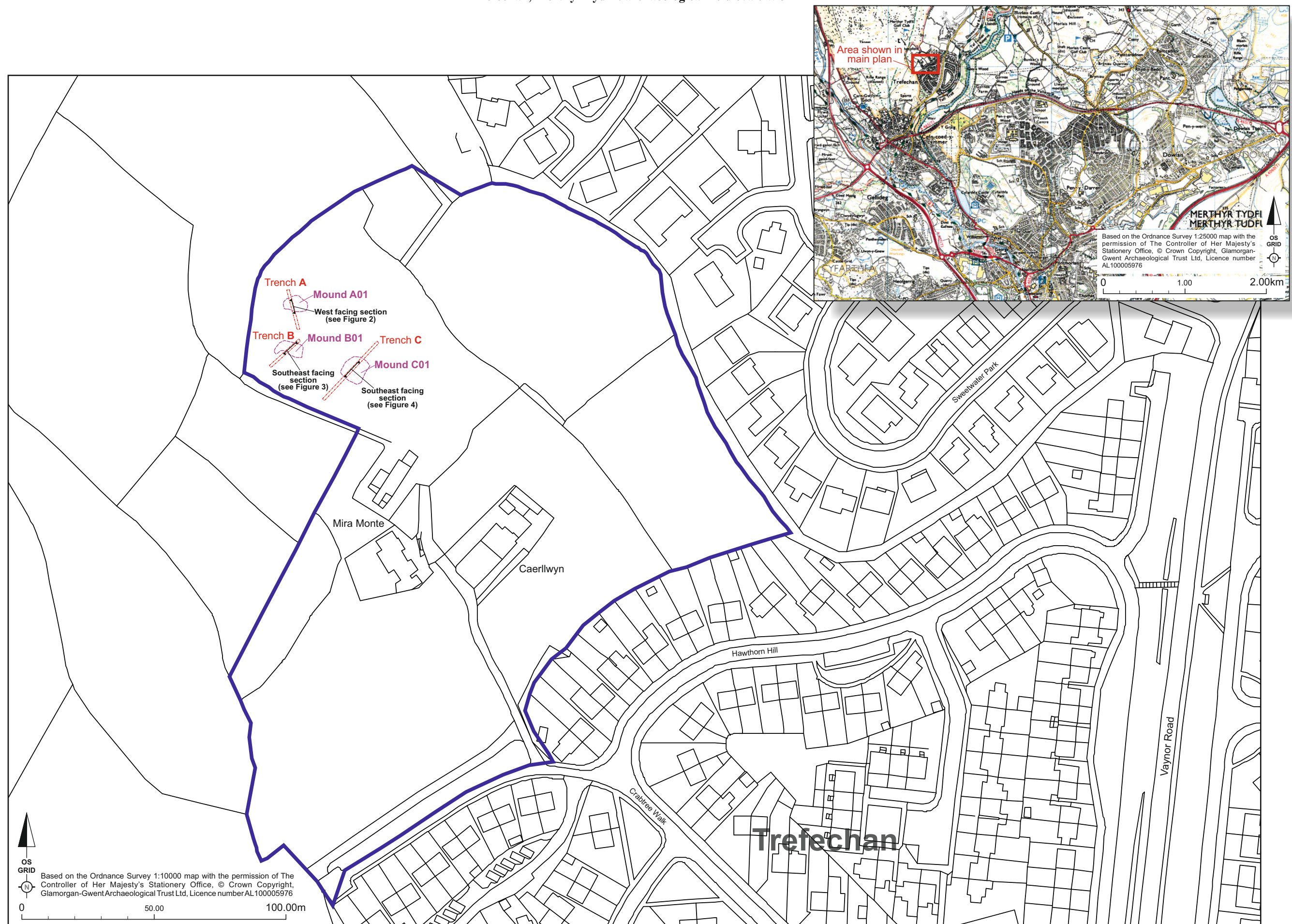


Figure 1. Location of development area (blue outline), Evaluation Trenches A, B and C (red outlines), mounds A01, B01 and C01 (purple) and location of sections (black - see Figures 2, 3 and 4).

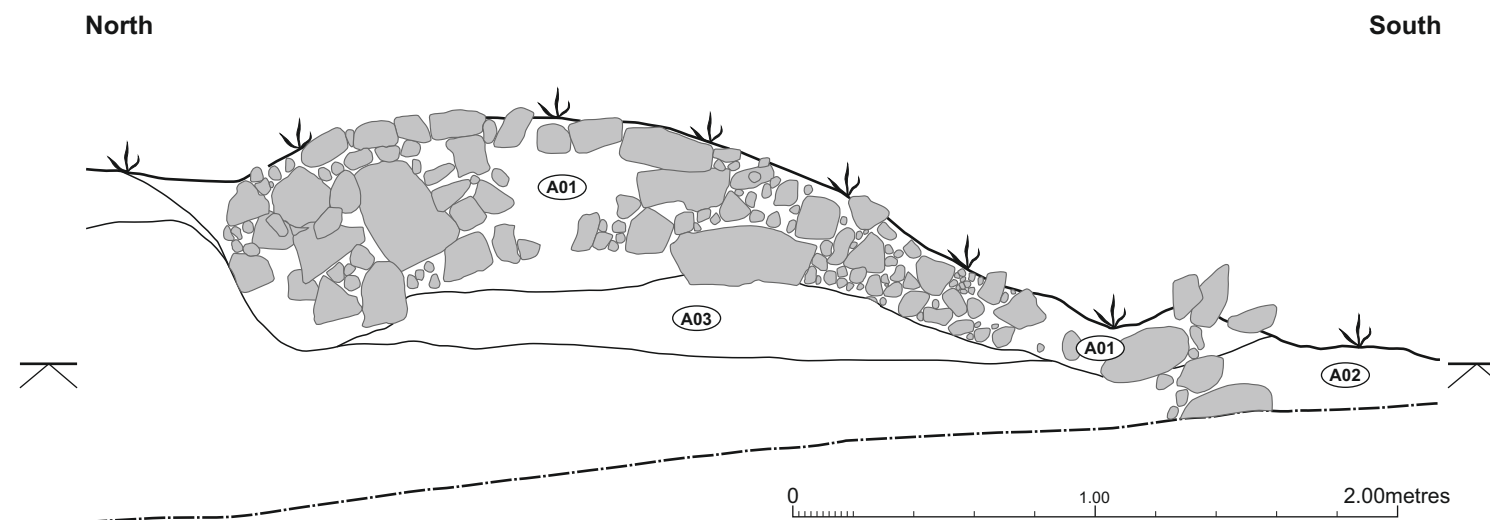


Figure 2. West facing section in Trench A (mound A01).

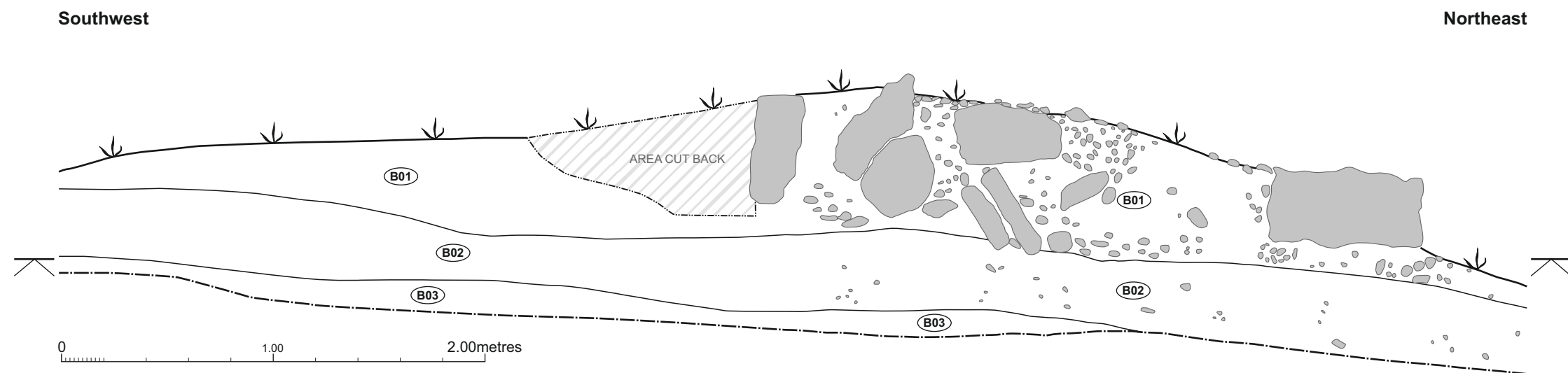


Figure 3. Southeast facing section in Trench B (mound B01).

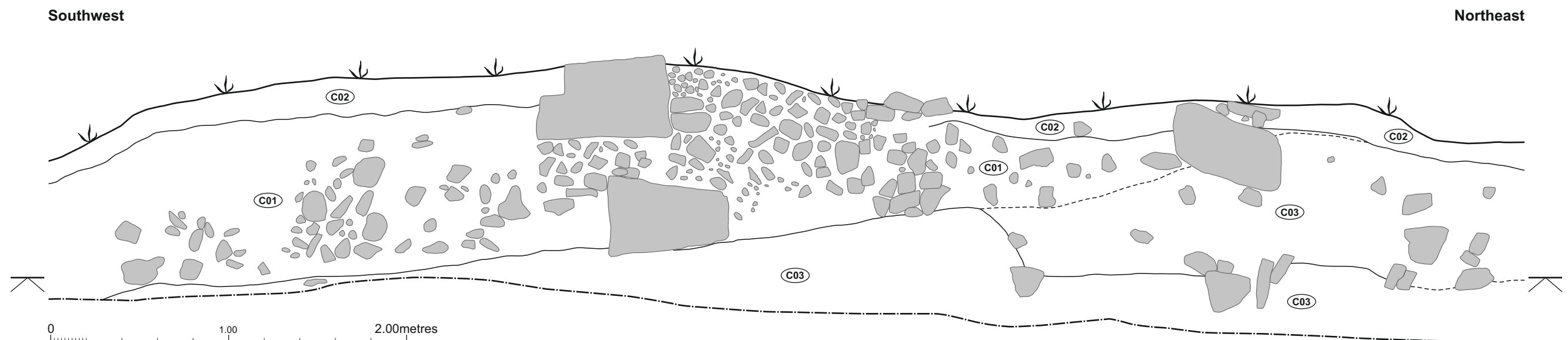


Figure 4. Southeast facing section in Trench C (mound C01).



**Glamorgan-Gwent
Archaeological Trust Ltd
(Projects Department)**



QUALITY CONTROL

Report Title: Trefechan, Merthyr Tydfil: archaeological evaluation

Report Date: January 2020

Report Number: 2020/015

Report prepared by: Jon Burton

Position: Project Archaeologist

Date: 29/01/2020

Illustrations prepared by: Paul Jones

Position: Senior Illustrator

Date: 31/01/2020

Report checked and authorised by: Johnny Crawford

Position: Assistant Project Manager

Date: 31/01/2020

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may wish to make on the content or presentation of this report.