

Oak Archaeology Wales CIC

Ruperra Home Farm Roman Military–Funerary Complex

Discovery Summary (Public Archival Version)

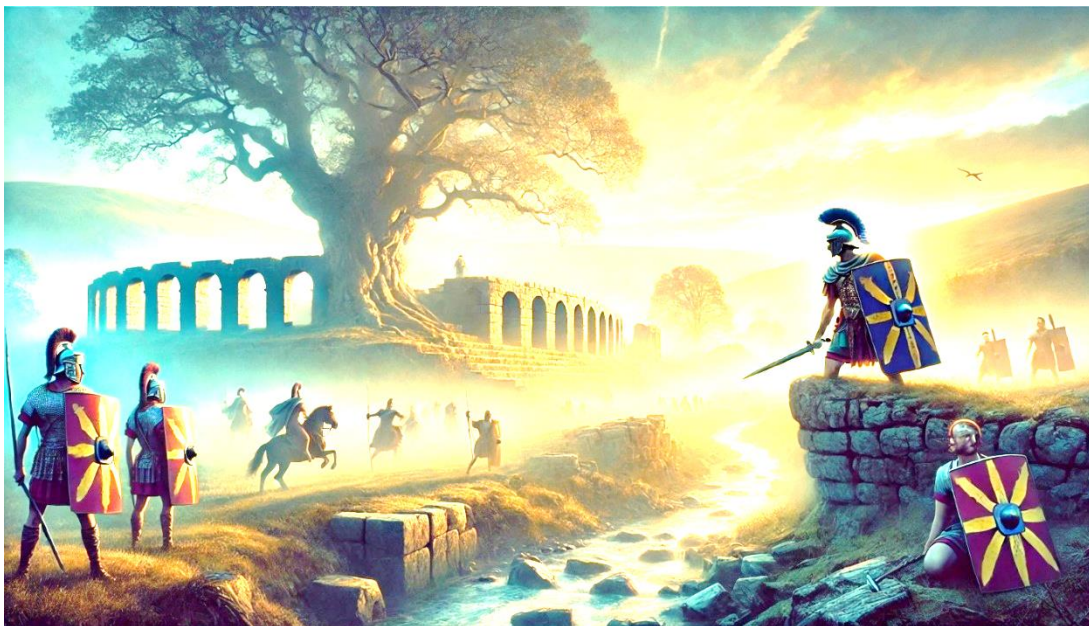
Public Summary and Visual Heritage Narrative

1. Introduction

In 2025, Oak Archaeology Wales CIC began a programme of non-intrusive survey at Ruperra Home Farm, Draethen (Caerphilly). Initial observations of unusually frequent landscape forms — raised terraces, straight embankments, and platform-like ground shapes — prompted further analysis using dowsing orientation, LiDAR modelling and Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR).

When combined, these methods revealed a coherent pattern of rectilinear structures, parallel alignments, and defined boundaries, strongly suggesting the presence of a large, planned architectural complex buried beneath the farmland.

The emerging picture is consistent with a Roman-period military–funerary landscape, potentially one of the most substantial undocumented archaeological sites in South Wales.



2. The Discovery

The early survey work revealed:

- Long straight linear features forming possible enclosure boundaries
- Terraced platforms aligned with each other
- A natural bowl-shaped hollow potentially suited to amphitheatre-like use
- A straight, corridor-like feature extending northeast
- A massive quarried extraction face on Craig Ruperra, likely the source of ancient masonry

These features did not appear natural or accidental. On LiDAR they formed a planned, orthogonal layout, highly characteristic of engineered Roman landscapes.

Parallel research identified reused Roman-style ashlar — including claw-chisel marks, drafted margins, and squared blocks — in nearby estate buildings such as Ruperra Castle, Plas Machen, and long boundary walls throughout the area.

This strengthens the interpretation that a once-monumental complex existed at Ruperra, whose stone was later quarried and reused during medieval and post-medieval construction phases.

3. Heritage Recognition & Collaborative Support

As the findings developed, national heritage bodies engaged with the project:

- **RCAHMW** requested the full research archive for consideration into the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW).
- **GGAT HER** requested the site data and associated records for permanent entry into the Historic Environment Record.
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)** invited project development with emphasis on outreach, schools engagement, and community heritage involvement.
- We are currently reaching out to **People's Collection Wales (PCW)** as advised by the NLHF to hopefully host the public narrative and digital story.
- **Cwmwl Clyd / Cosy Cloud** partnered to create bilingual (Welsh/English) wellbeing-based learning resources for children across Wales.

Through these partnerships, the Ruperra discovery has grown from a field observation into a nationally recognised community heritage initiative.

4. Why the Site Matters

If confirmed through continued geophysical survey, the Ruperra complex would represent:

- A large-scale Roman-period site outside the well-documented Caerleon fortress zone
- A remarkably intact buried landscape, largely untouched by modern development
- Evidence of Roman activity deeper into the uplands than previously recorded
- A potential combination of military, ceremonial, and civic functions within one site

The site presents a rare opportunity to study a Roman complex preserved almost entirely in earthform.

5. Continuing Work

Oak Archaeology Wales CIC continues to expand survey coverage with support from:

- Specialist geophysics teams
- Academic advisors
- Community volunteers
- Local schools and heritage groups

Future stages will include:

- Full-coverage magnetometry, resistivity, and expanded GPR
- Stone provenance analysis
- Public workshops, open days, and online learning
- Bilingual educational materials in partnership with PCW & Cwmwl Clyd

All work remains non-intrusive and committed to ethical landscape stewardship.

6. Visual Heritage Narrative

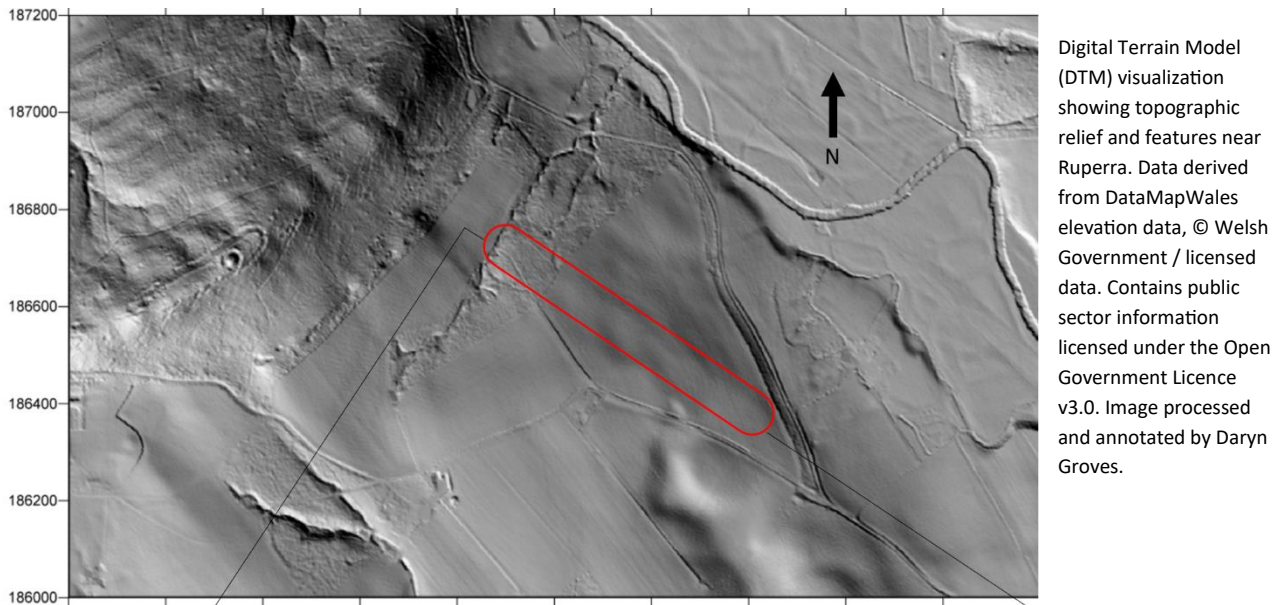


Image 1 – The Northeast Linear Feature

A long, straight raised band of ground visible on LiDAR, marking what may be the northern boundary of an engineered enclosure.

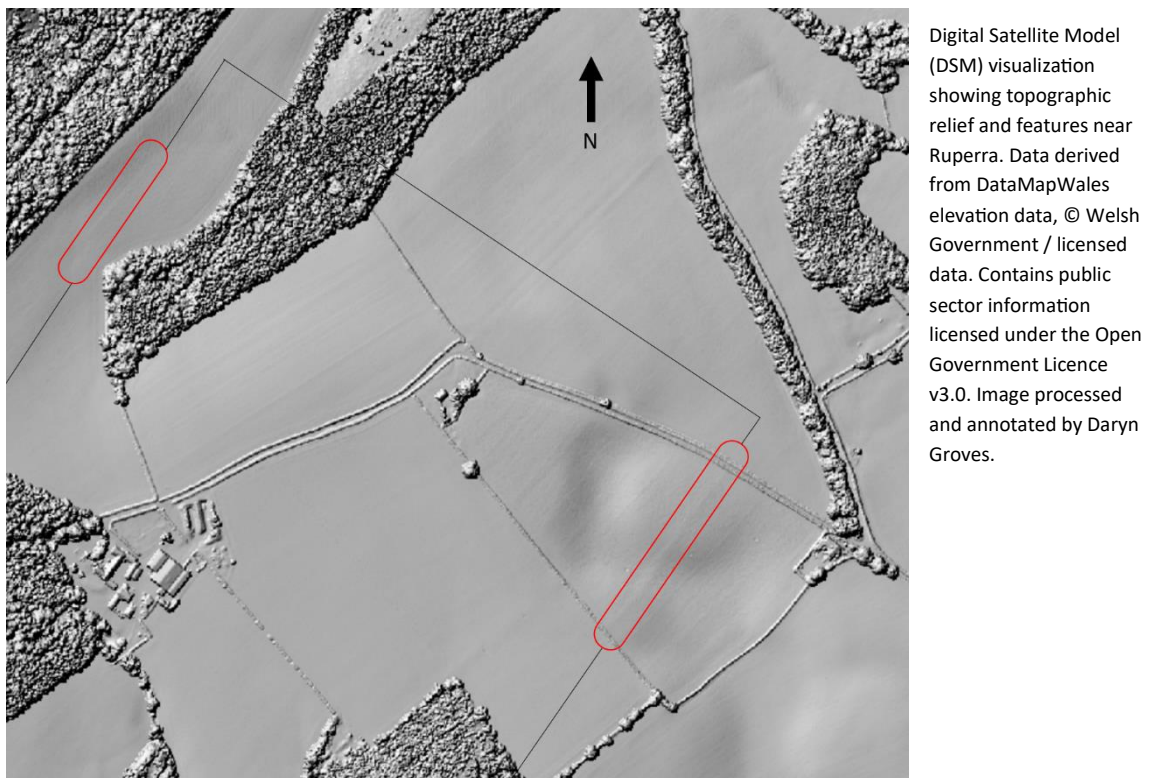
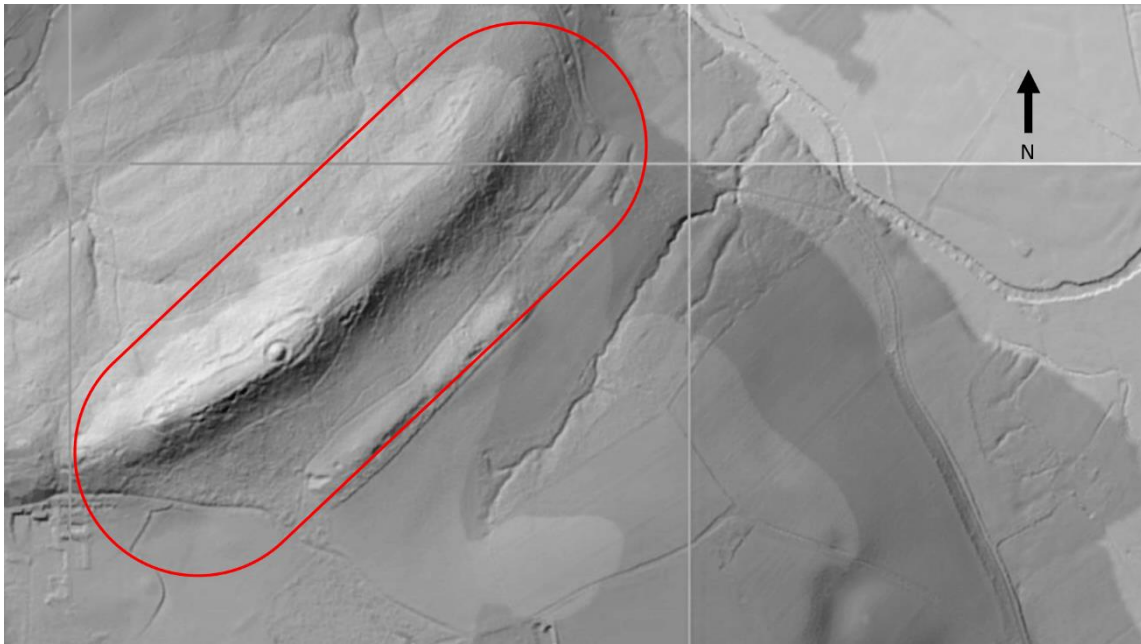


Image 2 – Northwest and Southeast Boundary Wall Alignments Two parallel linear rises are visible on the LiDAR model: • **Northwest alignment** (left) – a straight, consistent ridge marking the northern–western extent of the enclosure. • **Southeast alignment** (right) – a matching rectilinear rise forming the southern–eastern side.

Together, these features define opposing sides of a planned boundary system, reinforcing the interpretation of a large, engineered rectangular enclosure rather than natural terrain variation.



Digital Terrain Model (DTM) visualization showing topographic relief and features near Ruperra. Data derived from DataMapWales elevation data, © Welsh Government / licensed data. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. Image processed and annotated by Daryn Groves.

Image 3 – Craig Ruperra Quarry Face

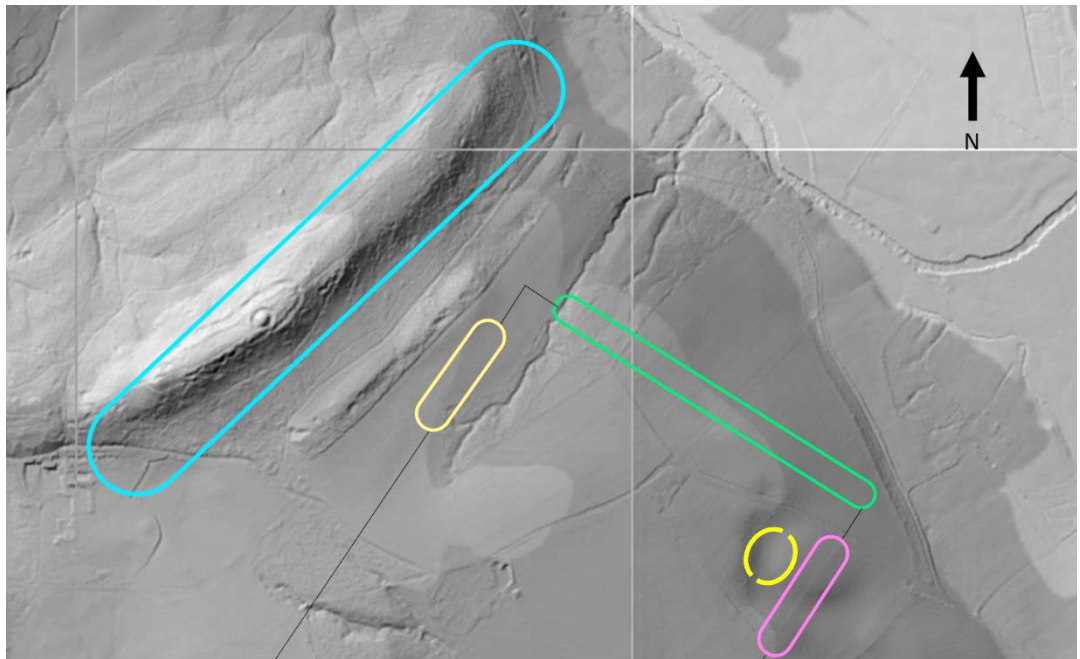
An expansive terraced rock face, likely the extraction source for ancient stone reused later at Ruperra Castle and Plas Machen.



Digital Terrain Model (DTM) visualization showing topographic relief and features near Ruperra. Data derived from DataMapWales elevation data, © Welsh Government / licensed data. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. Image processed and annotated by Daryn Groves.

Image 4 – Amphitheatre-Like Hollow

A naturally bowl-shaped depression with strong contextual alignment to Roman amphitheatre forms, positioned beside a straight road-like corridor.



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Image 5 – Combined LiDAR Anomalies

When viewed together, the linear boundaries, terraces, platforms, and hollow create a coherent picture of a planned monumental complex beneath the farmland.

7. Closing Statement

The Ruperra Home Farm landscape is a hidden chapter of Welsh history — one that is being rediscovered through careful investigation, collaboration, and public engagement.

This project continues to develop as a partnership between heritage institutions, community members, and national learning initiatives, ensuring that the story of Ruperra is accessible to all.

The site is not being excavated — it is being read.

Every shape in the land tells part of the story, waiting for the next generation to uncover its meaning.

8. Publication Note

A full historical narrative—*The Oak-Seer* by Daryn Groves—will be published separately. This public summary is provided for archival, educational, and community engagement use.

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