

## Assessment and Scheduling Enhancement Maenan Abbey, Llanrwst



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

# Assessment and Scheduling Enhancement Maenan Abbey, Llanrwst

Project No. G2213

Report No. 1039

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Written by: Jane Kenney

Front cover: part of water colour sketch of The Old Abbey (Bangor 10270)

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# ASSESSMENT AND SCHEDULING ENHANCEMENT, MAENAN ABBEY, LLANRWST

## SUMMARY

*Survey and a watching brief were undertaken on a canalised stream (Nant Llechog) adjacent to Maenan Abbey, Llanrwst. This was combined with documentary research on the abbey site as a whole to provide a context for the stream and to inform scheduling recommendations.*

*Although the upstanding remains of the abbey have been demolished excavations have revealed that foundations of the monastic buildings survive. The plan revealed by these is very fragmentary and while the approximate position of the abbey church and other structures might be proposed their exact form is uncertain. Documentary evidence allows the plan and location of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house built on the site to be defined and recent evaluation trenching demonstrated that remains of this house may still survive underground. The present building, now used as a hotel, was constructed between 1849 and 1852, and there is a good selection of plans for its original construction.*

*Some of the features seen on the canalised section of Nant Llechog can be fitted into this overall history; the former bridges can be dated to the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, although other evidence shows that there was a bridge over the stream from at least the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the stream-side walls can also be roughly dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the date of the cobbles and early revetment walls are still uncertain. The weight of probability suggests a 17<sup>th</sup> century date for these rather than medieval.*

*Survey further upstream identified quarries dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century and features relating to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic water supply system.*

*Recommendations are made that the current scheduled area is expanded to include the northern edge of the stream and that a management plan be established in conjunction with the Environment Agency to prevent further erosion.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

An initial query concerning the significance of stonework within a small stream (Nant Llechog) adjacent to Maenan Abbey (SAM Cn082, PRN 1540) was made by a member of the public. This query was made in relation to erosion of the bed of the canalised stream, exacerbated by repairs to the stream-bed under a foot-bridge. Conwy County Borough Council planned to prevent further erosion in this location by removing part of the existing repair and extending and improving the repair work. This initiated a requirement for recording of the immediate stream-bed features before the work and a watching brief on the work. It also provided the impetus for an investigation of the full extent of the canalised stream and its context with a view to potential scheduling enhancement.

The site of the abbey is now partially occupied by Maenan Abbey Hotel, built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This superseded an earlier house of 17<sup>th</sup> or possibly late 16<sup>th</sup> century date. Locating the position of the earlier house and identifying other buildings related to it was to prove important to understanding the development of the site and the relationship of the features in the stream to the wider site.

### 1.1 Acknowledgements

Kate Roberts and Ian Halfpenny of Cadw for advice and support. Mr and Mrs Meyer for local information, permission to access the stream and tea. Heledd Williams for documentary research. Jess Davidson carried out the watching brief, Roland Flook and Jane Kenney undertook the survey and assessment and Andrew Davidson edited the report and contributed to the interpretation and discussion.

## **2. PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Nant Llechog is a small stream on the northern edge of the site of the Cistercian abbey of Maenan (SAM Cn082) (figure 1). The bed of the stream has been carefully laid with cobbles, and the sides of the stream have been canalised. A small weir or similar feature lies across the bed of the stream towards the western end of the canalised section. There are variations within the stonework of both the bed of the stream and within the side wall closest to the abbey which reflect its history and use.

In July 2010 Cadw received an enquiry from Mr Robert Meyer, who lives adjacent to the canalised stream, and this enquiry was passed on the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) as the stream is not currently within the scheduled area. A tree trunk had been washed down the stream in the winter of 2010 and brought down the concrete footbridge across the stream. The bridge was replaced by Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) Structures Department, who at the same time filled in a deep erosion hollow under the bridge, which represented a serious safety hazard. The hollow was filled with concreted stone, but the surface of the repair was not made flush with the existing cobbled surface resulting in erosion at the edge of the repair. The erosion caused the loss of some cobbling and was extending downstream, threatening a stone feature running diagonally across the stream bed. This feature is discussed below but is tentatively interpreted as a type of weir. The date and importance of the cobbling and related features was not known but it was suspected that they may be of a medieval date and related to the monastery.

CCBC agreed to improve the repairs using granite sets carefully laid to be flush with the surviving cobbles, so preventing further erosion problems in this area. CCBC contracted the work to MWT Civil Engineering Ltd, who produced a method statement for the works, submitted 01/08/2011, and work was programmed to start in late August.

The uncertainty about the date and importance of the features near the bridge highlighted the need to understand the whole canalised stream better and potentially for Cadw to consider extending the scheduled area to include the stream. For this a detailed survey of the stream was necessary as well as a more general assessment. This would be supported by pulling together documentary, map and published evidence on the Abbey site as a whole including the results of evaluation trenching that took place in August and September 2011 within the grounds of the Maenan Abbey Hotel.

## **3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

### **3.1 Documentary research**

To support the investigations on the ground a search was made to obtain as much information as possible in the form of published papers but also original documents, especially maps, relating to Maenan Abbey. This included the consultation of maps, documents, computer records, written records and reference works, which form part of the Historic Environment Record (HER), located at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT), Bangor. A search of the archives held by the Conwy Archives and Bangor University Archives was undertaken and some material from the National Library, Aberystwyth was consulted. Where possible copies of important drawings and plans were obtained.

Sites, buildings and find spots within the study area listed in the GAT HER and the National Monuments Record were identified. The small number of sites recorded on or near the abbey site is listed in Appendix 1 with PRN referring to the GAT HER unique Primary Record Number and NPRN referring to the National Primary Record Number.

### **3.2 Watching brief**

The initial phase of the watching brief was from 30<sup>th</sup> August to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, inclusive. During this time the area of cobbling and the possible weir below the foot-bridge were cleaned of overlying gravel to expose the full area. This was then photographed and drawn at a scale of 1:20. During this time the contractors cleared the banks of vegetation, broke up and removed part of the original repair, and dug out and levelled off the eroded hollow. This work was monitored to prevent damage to the known features and to record any others that were exposed.

The work was to continue the following week but water levels were too high, however laying the sets did commence on 9<sup>th</sup> September. This process was not monitored continually but GAT inspected the work and

liaised with the mason to ensure that no damage occurred to the *in situ* cobbles. The work was completed on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

### **3.3 Field investigations**

The field investigations had two parts; a detailed survey of the canalised stream adjacent to the abbey site, and field walk-over survey of the stream and its bank upstream from the A470 road bridge. The detailed survey, carried out between 27<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012, included detailed mapping of the stream and features within it. This was carried out using a combination of a Global Positioning System (GPS) and hand measuring. Due to the location of the site with a tall wall on one side, tree cover and buildings GPS reception was variable. Where GPS signal was lost or poor tapes were used to measure in features from points established with the GPS.

All features identified were described. A series of photographs were taken to record the whole of the southern wall of the channel, where it was not obscured with ivy. The northern wall has been largely rebuilt in recent times and was photographed obliquely to give a general impression of different parts of the wall, except where important features were located and these were photographed in detail.

To allow safe access to the stream some of the water was diverted down a by-pass channel under Flood Risk Management Consent NE2012LD024 from the Environment Agency. However the water level was too high to divert all the water and the Flood Risk Consent specified that some water had to be maintained in the main stream. It was not possible, therefore, to photograph the base of the channel in ideal conditions, with many features obscured by the reflections of the water. Some representative photographs were taken but no attempt was made to photograph all the features in the base of the channel.

The field walk over survey involved inspection of the stream bed and banks from the road bridge (SH 78998 65762 to SH 79244 65910). This was done on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2012, when the vegetation was as low as possible. The area is wooded and the ground covered in many areas with ivy and other under-storey plants. The majority of this land is the property of Mr and Mrs Meyer who gave permission for the survey. When features were located their position was determined either from the map or using a hand-held GPS. The features were described and photographed.

### **3.4 Report**

The available information was synthesised to give a summary of the archaeological and historic background. The features identified in the walk-over survey are described below separately. The different features identified in the canalised stream are described as part of that feature, although they are all individually identified with context numbers and are described separately in the archive. Conclusions on the date and character of the features are given with reference to the documentary evidence collected as well as the physical evidence. The report provides recommendations based on these results.

## **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS**

### **4.1 Topographic description**

Maenan Abbey was located in the Conwy Valley 3.5km north of Llanrwst (figure 1). It was built on a site about 600m east of the present course of the Conwy River, on the edge of the flood plain, at an altitude of c.10m OD. The location is on alluvial fan of sand and gravel deposits raising the area slightly above the flood plain. The bedrock is of Denbigh Grits Formation, comprising mudstone, siltstone and sandstone (British Geological Survey Geology of Britain Viewer <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>)

Most of the land in the immediate area is now under pasture but there is woodland to the east along the steep valley side. Much of the site of the abbey is beneath a hotel and its grounds with part under a caravan park to the west.

The stream of Nant Llechog runs down from the undulating plateau on the eastern side of the Vale of Conwy. It descends the steep escarpment in a narrow V-shaped valley and runs along the northern side of the presumed abbey precincts before crossing the flood plain and joining the Conwy. The stream has a length of only 5.5km and water flow is usually very moderate but water levels can rise quickly. The steep escarpment means that flow can be very rapid and the stream can be destructive, carrying boulders and trees and destroying bridges across it, as was witnessed recently.

The destructive force of the stream has determined the location of a mill on top of the escarpment rather than at its base where it would have risked damage from boulders. The need to tame the stream may have been a factor in its canalisation where it passes the abbey site.

#### **4.2 Archaeological and historical background**

(note: PRN = Primary Reference Number of a site listed in the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record)

The monastery that became the Abbey of Saint Mary at Aberconwy was founded in 1186, when a colony of monks from the Cistercian monastery of Strata Florida settled at Rhedynog Felen, south of Caernarfon (Gresham 1939, 123, Bezant Lowe 1912, 267). The exact date of their move to the site at Aberconwy is not known. They may have been there by 1188 when Giraldus Cambrensis passed by, although there are doubts about the accuracy of the date, as Gerald's reference to the Cistercian monastery occurs only in the second edition of his work dated 1197 (Thorpe 1978, 195), but they were certainly at Aberconwy by 1192 (Hays 1963, 5-6). The abbey may have been first endowed by Gruffydd ap Cynan, who was buried there in 1200, but Rhodri ab Owain Gwynedd may also have been a donor (Hays 1963, 6). The abbey possessions were confirmed by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in a charter detailing the boundaries of the monastic lands (Gresham 1939, 124-125). Llywelyn was also buried at the abbey (Butler 1963, 30), and his coffin was moved to Maenan, finally ending in Llanrwst church (Bezant Lowe 1912, 277). In 1254 the abbey was pillaged by the army of Henry III as they camped around Deganwy Castle, but they were defeated by the Welsh who attacked them as they tried to return weighted down with their booty (Bezant Lowe 1912, 179).

The monastery was forced to move to a new location at Maenan in 1284 to make way for Edward I's new castle and walled town at Conwy. Edward obtained the land at Maenan for the monastery, and paid £40 to the abbot in compensation for the loss of the Conwy site, 580 marks (about £386) to cover the transfer and £100 in war damages. He obtained permission for the transfer from the Pope, but had more problems persuading the bishop of St Asaph to consent to the removal of the abbey from the diocese of Bangor to his own diocese (Hays 1963, 62-63, 68-69). There is no surviving record of the building work and no masons marks survive, so whilst it would be reasonable to suggest masons brought in by Edward I were used to construct the abbey, there is no evidence to confirm this, though the king's master mason, James of St. George, was involved in the transfer of land and might have initiated the work (Butler and Evans 1980, 37, Robinson 2006, 252). The speed at which the work was undertaken also suggests a strong controlling hand, as the building works were formally inaugurated on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1284 and the monastery was dedicated on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1284 (Butler and Evans 1980, 37). The monks are thought to have moved in later in the same month (Hays 1963, 75). The abbey retained the name of Aberconwy despite its new location.

Abbots Dafydd ap Owain and Geoffrey Kyffin were praised by poets in the early sixteenth century for restoring and rebuilding the abbey but no detail survives of what this entailed (Butler and Evans 1980, 39). The last abbot was Richard ap Robert ap Rhys, also known as Richard Price, who was given a pension and made Rector of Cerrigydrudion at the Dissolution (Bezant Lowe 1912, 273, 283). The Abbey must have had a store of manuscripts but there is no record of them and Bezant Lowe speculates that they were removed by the last abbot (Bezant Lowe 1912, 279).

Though little is known about the abbey at the dissolution, there is a remarkable record of its demolition. An account of works dated 1539-40 (Owen 1917) itemises in considerable detail the costs of demolishing the abbey and moving the timber from its roof and stones from the walls by boat down the Conwy and then to Caernarfon. The timber from the roof of the abbey church was stored in the cellar of the Shire Hall in Caernarfon until it was needed and even the cost of paying a labourer to clear out the cellar in readiness is included. Specific entries indicate that much of the stone and timber from Aberconwy was intended to be used to build the Justice Hall (Owen 1917, 76, 82), but the material was probably also used in the other building and repair projects indicated in the title of the document, i.e. the King's Hall, Shire Court (presumably including the Justice Hall), the exchequer, treasury, quay, town walls and the castle itself. The careful and extensive reuse of the abbey materials explains why so little survives above ground on the site. There is a tradition that any remaining material was sold to local landowners in the Conwy valley and some of the stone detail at Gwydir supports this, in particular a pink stone from Deganwy found in both the solar tower and Meredith's hall, and the stair tower on the latter are all thought to be derived from Maenan (Butler 1963, 30; Haslam *et al* 2009, 374-80).



After ownership by the Pulestons and the Cloughs the abbey site passed to the Wynne family of Melai in 1610 by the marriage of William Wynne of Melai to Mary Tudor, the co-heiress of Sir Richard Clough. The land remained in the Wynne family, but marriage shifted ownership to the Wynnes of Bodfaen, so that it came to be owned by Thomas Wynne who was created Lord Newborough in 1776 and The Abbey, as the land and the house built on it became known, became part of the estate of the Wynnes of Glynllifon (Bezant Lowe 1912, 286-287, Butler 1963, 30-31, Butler 1987, 171).

The date of the first house on the site is uncertain but Butler refers to documentary evidence that the site was inhabited by 1599 (Butler 1963, 30) and a date tablet dated 1654 and sundial top dated 1662 (both held in Llandudno Museum), demonstrate that there was a house by the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century (Butler 1963, 30), built or extended by the Wynnes. This house is shown in some detail in a water colour sketch (Bangor 10270, figure 2) of an original painting on an oak panel found "at the present Abbey" (presumably the 19<sup>th</sup> century house). There appears to be two versions of this sketch, as that reproduced by Bezant Lowe (1912, fig 148) is not identical to that in the Bangor Archives. Neither sketch is dated but the one reproduced by Bezant Lowe has a note suggesting that the original panel was taken to Glynllifon and might still be there. Both versions are very similar so the copies are probably accurate and there is now reason to doubt that the original was a reasonable representation of the house. Butler suggests a date of about 1750 for the original painting based on the design of the garden (Butler 1987, 172).

In addition to the sketches is a plan showing the layout of the original house as it was in 1799 (Butler 1987, plate XX) (figure 3). The plan shows a western range with a shorter eastern block lying parallel and a short three-storey wing projecting from the southern end. The front of the house was to the east, facing the road. The house was built immediately adjacent to the stream, unlike the later house. Butler considers (1987, 172) that the drawings of the house indicate that the eastern block and the three-storey wing were of late seventeenth date. He suggests that the 1654 date stone could relate to the construction of the east block not the whole house, and postulates that an earlier house may have existed based on the remains of the western range of the abbey. Butler's discovery of two sherds of a late 16<sup>th</sup> century stoneware jug in a pit to the east of the present house (Butler 1963, 33) might have supported the suggestion of a house on the site before the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but specialist analysis showed that this jug was probably late 17<sup>th</sup> century in date (Butler and Evans 1980, 58).

The sketches of the old house (figure 2) show that in front of the house was a formal garden, with what is probably a dovecot. The road to Llanrwst is shown on the foreground largely obscured by trees. It is worth noting the very overgrown valley floor beyond, with very little indication of meadow land.

A book of Glynllifon estate maps dated 1788 includes one of The Abbey and its lands (MS Maps Vol 96 Page 156, figure 4). This confirms the position and shape of the house as indicated in the sketches and shows detail of a different version of the formal gardens. The land to the west and north of the house at this period was orchard and some other buildings are shown around the house and grounds, which will be discussed below. This map indicates the location of the house, but its small scale and inaccuracies mean that it is difficult to be sure how the house related to the present building. The discovery of an 1801 design for one of the bridges across the stream (XD2A/1177, figure 5) shows the corner of the old house and this plan has been used on figure 6 to locate the position of the old house more accurately than has been previously possible.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Lord Newborough must have considered modernising the building as there are plans surviving for two alternative designs for a building in classical style; one dated to 1787 (XD2A/1155 and XD2A/1160, figure 7). It is difficult to determine how the new building related to the existing house but the plans seem to indicate that the new extension was to be built onto the front (east side) of the house, requiring the demolition of the projecting wing. If this is correct the new extension would have more than doubled the size of the house. Neither of the early designs was used and a more modest proposal is shown on the 1799 plan with the addition of two rooms to the south end of the house. What was actually built seems to have been a compromise between the two, as a drawing dated to 1809 (Butler 1987, plate XX) (figure 8) shows a new wing added to the south side of the house. This is more substantial than the 1799 design and in the style of the 1787 design, but left the projecting wing and the rest of the front of the house unaltered.

The 1809 drawing also shows a building in the redesigned garden to the south-east of the house. This appears to be the same as one shown on the 1788 map (figure 4), and so pre-dates the modifications. Another design probably proposed at around this date was for a large barn and stables within 26 feet (c.8m) of the stream (XD2A/1163, figure 9). This resembles the large barn north of the stream, removed when the A470 was straightened, but this must already have been built by 1788 as it appears on the map. Unfortunately this barn does not seem to have been recorded before demolition. The design may be an early version of the barns and

stables that were constructed on the orchard north of the stream and now form the Abbey Farmhouse and Y Stiwdio. These are not shown on the 1788 map but were present in 1890, when they are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey County Series map (figure 10). The construction of a bridge around 1801 (XD2A/1177, figure 5) from behind the house to the north side of the stream also suggests that there were buildings to the north of the stream at this date. This is especially indicated because the bridge had steps adjacent to the north side for access to the stream to collect water. The water colour sketches do show two buildings in this area earlier (figure 2), which may explain foundations apparently found at Abbey Dene by the current occupant's son.

There are several designs for buildings and other structures at the Abbey in Caernarfon Record Office dating from 1787 to 1802. Some of these are signed by Robert Morris and the unsigned plans are annotated in the same handwriting. A search of the Gwynedd Archives Ragorol On Line Catalogue shows a Robert Morris writing from the Abbey on Glynllifon business in 1807 and 1808 (XD2/15126 and XD2/15136), and in 1794 a Robert Morris from Glynllifon was carrying out building work at Fort Belan, Abermenai for Lord Newborough (XD2/15057). It is suggested that Morris was the land agent or architect for the Glynllifon estates, and may have lived for a short time at The Abbey.

Certainly the next land agent lived at The Abbey. William Elias was a civil servant in Dublin before becoming land agent for Lord Newborough and moving into The Abbey. The exact date that he moved in is not known but all his children were born there and his eldest, Edward, was born in 1822 (Thomas Elias 1894 (Bangor 10270)), and William was writing letters from The Abbey by 1823 (XD2/15492 and 15569). It was William Elias who over-saw the building of the current house for Lord Newborough and seems to have lived there until his death in 1870. However despite the numerous letters that William wrote there seems to be relatively little detail on the building works. There was building work going on at the Abbey, including the construction of a greenhouse, in 1842 (XD2/9118), but the main works seem to have started in 1849. The plans were prepared by the architect Henry Kennedy of Bangor in 1848 and were signed by the contractor W Rogers in February 1849. Building work was still progressing in June 1852 (XD2/23791). A date stone of 1854 on the main entrance across the stream probably indicates the completion of the works.

The old house was completely demolished to build the new one, which was constructed to the south of the old house, with some overlap with the end of the western range and all of the recently constructed southern extension (figure 6). The new house was built in fashionably Gothic design (figure 11, plate 1) and may have been partially intended as a hunting lodge for Lord Newborough (Dr David Gwyn pers. com.), although it was also the family house for the Elias family. The cellars were designed with plenty of room for wine, ale, meat and game. There were seven bedrooms on the first floor and presumably servants' rooms above. Two of the bedrooms had dressing rooms and there was a water closet, presumably with flushing toilet, and a bathroom (figure 12).

The new house was put up for sale along with other property in 1914 (XD2/14525). Butler reports that in 1924 it was owned by Dr GHB Kenrick (Butler 1963, 31) and was converted into a hotel in the 1960s when much of the original interior detail was removed (David Hughes pers. com.).

#### ***Physical remains of the abbey and 17<sup>th</sup> century house***

Pennant (1783, 154) describes the building he saw in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as being built of material from the medieval abbey. Butler suggests (1987, 171) that upstanding parts of the monastic buildings might have been incorporated into the 17<sup>th</sup> century house, with the western range of that house reusing the northern end of the abbey west range. He suggests that some of the chimneys and all the doorways in the western range could have been monastic. However when the position of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house is compared to Butler's own proposed plan of the abbey church it appears more likely that the house was built over the abbey cloisters and the eastern part of the north range. As discussed below a north-south wall found in recent excavations might indicate the western monastic range some distance west of the house, and two parallel east-west walls might have formed the northern side of the cloisters. The latter walls cross the alignment of the north-south wall of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house (figure 6), but had been demolished down to foundation level. The post-excavation analysis has not yet been completed for this trench, but there were no surviving upstanding masonry remains in the trench belonging to the house. The excavated evidence suggests that while material from the abbey may have been used in the house it is unlikely that any upstanding buildings were incorporated.

In 1897 Thomas Elias reported to the Conway Congress of the British Archaeological Association that nothing of the monastery remained except a sandstone arch, now built into the garden wall at the back of the house, and a medieval corbel decorated with a greenman-type face built into the south gable wall near the tower. Thomas

Elias grew up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century house on the site and remembered that the sandstone arch was bricked up in a wall of the cellar (Bezant Lowe 1912, 278, Butler 1963, 31). Butler (1987, 171) suggests that this arch could have come from the western range of the monastic buildings but it is clear that it was found in the cellar, which appears to have been under the present modern dining room of the hotel. The location would probably have been within the abbey cloisters, so Bezant Lowe's suggestion that this formed part of a crypt (Bezant Lowe 1912, 278) seems unlikely. The arch might originally have come from the abbey buildings and have been reused in the 17<sup>th</sup> century cellar before being moved again to become a garden feature.

Butler (1963, 31) suggested that the cellars under the present building might have belonged to the first house, although much altered. Bezant Lowe, presumably on the authority of Thomas Elias, states that the old cellars were removed when the new house was built (Bezant Lowe 1912, 278) and this is confirmed by the architect's plans for the foundations of the house showing the design for the cellars as they are today (XD2A/1181), and to the south of the original cellars (figures 6 and 12). The appearance of the cellars is also consistent with the 19<sup>th</sup> century building (Andrew Davidson pers. com.).

As well as the date tablet (1654) and sundial top (1662) in Llandudno Museum there is also a shield in sandstone built into the 19<sup>th</sup> century coach house adjacent to the hotel. This shows the Wynne family arms (plate 2). The coach house is not shown on the architects plans for the house so must have been added later. The shield seems to have been rather crudely inserted at a fairly recent date, and it is not known when or where it was found. Bezant Lowe (1912, 294) concludes that the rood screen in Llanrwst church is not a survivor of the monastery as it has been designed specifically for a parish church.

Several small excavations have been carried out over the abbey site, which give hints of its layout, but little more. Bezant Lowe (1912, 278) recounts that about 80 years before when "digging the foundations of a greenhouse near where the present tower stands, a great number of skeletons were uncovered, buried close together; and five skeletons were discovered in digging the foundations of the present tower". It is assumed that he is referring to the tower-like structure with crenellations on the southern end of the present house (SH 78949 65687), as there is no independent tower shown on the maps. The date of the discovery could have been around 1842 as a greenhouse was then being built at the Abbey (XD2/9118), but there may have been more than one greenhouse built so this is not certain.

In 1924 GHB Kenrick, who owned the house, revealed the foundations of a north-south wall with a newel staircase and two burials under the lawn to the east of the house. He found a 14<sup>th</sup> century gold coin (a noble of Edward III) in the mortar of the newel stair, fragments of vaulting ribs and a sacring bell (RCAMW 1956, 1, Butler and Evans 1980, 39). His trench was left open for Butler to inspect in 1963.

In 1963 Lawrence Butler (1963) excavated several small trenches in advance of the development of the caravan site over the former orchard to the west of the house (figure 6). Nine trenches were dug in the orchard and two in the adjacent rose garden. Butler reports that no medieval features were found and that the surface features, slight banks and ditch, running through the area were natural. The eastern most of these scarps ran quite straight, nearly NW to SE, and might be considered to mark the monastic precincts, but Butler concludes that this was a river terrace; a conclusion supported by the absence of medieval deposits immediately to the east of it.

Having found nothing in the orchard Butler re-examined Kenrick's excavation and dug nine new trenches and a test pit to further investigate the building (figure 6). He found that the wall had continued northwards, although robbed and there was a parallel wall to the west with remains of a floor between. He re-exposed the two burials and to the south of the present house the robbed remains of an east-west wall were found. From these fragmentary remains Butler made a tentative reconstruction of the abbey buildings.

When it was proposed in 1968 to build a car park near the location of the newel stair Butler had the opportunity to carry out further investigations (Butler and Evans 1980), but open area excavations were not possible, so the resulting plan was still fragmentary (figure 6). The presence of robbed walls to the south of the house was confirmed, and a disturbed grave was also found here. The layout of these walls was not entirely clear; one wall was post-medieval in date, overlying 18<sup>th</sup> century material but another was broad and probably much earlier.

In the main excavation area numerous walls were found, mainly robbed out and most running roughly east-west or north-south (figure 6). Pottery dated the robbing to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, so presumably remaining foundations were removed to improve the garden at that time, as the drawings indicate that no upstanding building remains stood to the east of the house in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fourteen burials were found in the area

Butler interpreted as the north transept of the monastery church, including child burials. There were also burials in the choir, one of which had a stone-lined grave, and contained an adult male. Three other burials were also contained within a stone structure. In total the skeletal remains of 69 adults and 24 children were found; six of the adults were determined as female, and 26 as male, but 37 of the skeletons could not be sexed. The population was healthy, fairly tall with reasonably good teeth (Connolly 1980).

Butler uses the evidence from the excavation to suggest a plan of the abbey church (figure 6). The main stone-lined grave seems to be a burial of particular importance and was probably positioned close to the high altar with other burials around. The surviving masonry is suggestive of a church and Butler places the newel stair at the junction of the north transept and the choir. It therefore seems highly likely that the church stood in this general area but Butler's plan is very selective in the walls included and their thickness. The east end of the church is also reconstructed at an odd angle to the rest of the building. The trenches in Butler's western area, when the present building is used to locate them, do not fit well with Butler's proposed plan of the church (figure 6). These problems suggest that Butler's reconstruction may not be entirely accurate or be the full story of building in this area, which could only be obtained by area excavation.

The floor deposits found in the 1968 excavation indicated two periods of occupation and the style of the fragments of masonry discovered suggest an extended period of construction and adaptation throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Butler and Evans 1980, 52).

In 1982, in advance of the straightening of the A470, an excavation was carried out on the site of the current entrance from the road to the hotel (figure 6). This revealed an area of cobbling and the foundation trenches for two mortared stone walls (White 1987). The stone walls formed an entrance through which the cobbled road ran with two drainage gullies. The road was heavily rutted on the eastern side of the entrance suggesting the passage of a vehicle with an axle width of 1.3m. The entrance seems to have been blocked by gates, as two pairs of pits probably held gateposts. Probable flower beds cut through the cobbles inside the gate. This was presumably an entrance to the Wynne house and the cobbles must have continued as Butler (1963, fig 2) (figure 6) found cobbling in trenches to the west. This entrance is directly opposite the proposed position of the main door of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house and this presumably dates to its use. The early painting shows a straight main path leading to the front door directly from the road; unfortunately the bushes obscure the exact position and character of the entrance. The proportions of the garden seen on the ground do not initially seem to conform to the painting but it is probable that the formal garden only occupied the half of the land closest to the house, as in the 1788 plan (figure 4), and that the half of the garden is not fully visible in the painting because of the trees and possible weak perspective. The 1788 map does not specifically show the entrance or path but an in-turn on the eastern boundary may suggest the entrance. In the 1809 drawing (figure 8) and the County Series maps (figure 10) the main entrance was across a bridge over the stream to the north. In 1890 there was a path directly to the road but this was likely to have only a small gate and this was positioned much further east than the excavated remains.

In 2011 Gwynedd Archaeological Trust undertook some trenching to evaluate the area to the north and west of the hotel for the installation of a sewerage tank (project G2201). This work has not yet been entirely completed and written up but the three trenches revealed several walls and other remains (figure 6). Two of the trenches were expanded so trench 1 and 2 are essentially a single trench as are trenches 3, 4 and 5.

A stone-capped drain in trench 1/2 can clearly be identified with a drain marked on the 1848 architect's drawings (XD2A/1178, figure 12) and the drain in trench 6 is probably also the continuation of another drain on this plan.

Trench 6 was covered in cobbles, where these had not been removed by a later pit, which stopped along a line very close to the wall of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house, as indicated by the bridge plan (XD2A/1177, figure 5). Masonry remains east of the end of the cobbled surface probably represent the foundations of this wall. In trench 3/4 a sunken room with a cobbled floor was found. Its main wall ran NW to SE and perpendicular walls ran off to the east and to the west. Bezant Lowe (1912, 278) states that "At present there are, under an old building at the back of the modern house, two large underground rooms about 10 feet high; it is probable that these formed a part of the old Abbey". It is tempting to consider this sunken room as part of Bezant Lowe's rooms, but the area is shown in detail on the 1890 and 1900 OS maps and they show no building over the area of the trench that he could have seen. However the 1788 map (figure 4) shows a long NW to SE aligned building over this area, the southern end of which may have been converted into a smaller building shown on the later maps at about SH 78926 65670, but since demolished (figure 10). This may have contained the rooms Bezant Lowe refers. The position of this building at the rear of the house suggests a service building with

cellars and the structures in trench 6 were probably part of this. The 1788 map shows that this building pre-dated designs from 1801 for a brewhouse and laundry buildings (XD2A/1185 and 1186), but these designs may have been for altering and modernising this building.

All three trenches also revealed the foundations of earlier walls (figure 6). These were broad and not mortared, although the walls above foundation level might have been. Trench 1/2 had a broad wall orientated NE to SW and another thinner parallel wall c. 1.5m to the south. In trench 6 was another wall running about NE-SW though possibly slightly curving. This continued under the cobbles so its full length was not exposed. In trench 3/4 was a wall running NNW to SSE. All these walls underlay potential 17<sup>th</sup> century remains and could have belonged to the abbey. The thick wall in trench 1/2 may have been the north wall of the cloister with the parallel wall to the south supporting a wall or colonnade for the walkway inside the cloister, although they do seem to have been very close together. In this case the wall in trench 3/4 might be the eastern wall of the western range of the monastery buildings. It is possible that the wall in trench 6 was the original revetment to the stream, but it could have been part of other buildings adjacent to the stream (figure 6). These results support the contention that the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century house, while possibly reusing material from the abbey did not contain any upstanding abbey buildings.

#### 4.4 Field Walk-over Survey (Figure 9)

The field walk-over survey of the stream and its banks above the A470 road bridge identified 15 features many of which were directly related to the use or management of the stream water (figure 13). Others were related to quarrying on its banks. Several of these features were 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and the earliest can be dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century through map evidence but there was no evidence of any medieval features.

No features were found further up stream than PRN 34143 as the stream valley becomes very steep and the stream has carved its way through the bedrock.

One feature was already entered in the HER, but seems to have been misinterpreted (PRN 4616). The other features have been given new PRNs and a database has been created to allow their easy entry onto the HER.

Sites have been given a category of importance following the definitions in appendix 2. In the text the maps referred to are as follows:

1788 map: Lord Newborough's Estate map, MSS maps volume 96, National Library of Wales (Figure 4)

1890 map: Ordnance Survey 25 inch 1st edition map of 1890, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9 (Figure 10)

1900 map: Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd edition map of 1900, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9

1913 map: Ordnance Survey 25 inch 3rd edition map of 1913, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9

**PRN 4616** Fish pond

**Grid ref:** SH 7904 6579

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

Plate 3

The OS Antiquity card SH 76 NE 3.1 records the mention of a fish pond 'somewhat higher up the hill behind Maenan Abbey' in the Proceedings of the Llandudno and District Historical Society 1909, p8, but the grid reference given places it within the grounds of the Maenan Abbey Hotel. The second entry on the card corrects the grid reference and comments that the 'original masonry of the dam is obviously an early date and has been rebuilt in places more recently'. It is interpreted as a fish pond related to Maenan Abbey and is included in the HER as a medieval feature.

The dam referred to is presumably that recorded in the present project as PRN 34134, which is interpreted as a weir of essentially a single phase of building, although some repairs may have been made, and probably 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. The 1788 map shows no indication of a pond, with a building immediately on one side of the stream and a field boundary on the other, giving no obvious room for a pond in this location. By 1890, when the weir had been constructed, the OS map does show a pond and the outline of this remains consistent through to the modern digital map, probably because it has never been resurveyed. The maps show the pond filling the base of the quarry (PRN 34136) on the southern side of the stream, yet on the ground the topography suggests that this would have been impossible. The weir would not have allowed a much higher water level than at present but the ground level within the quarry is much higher. Some of this is due to piles of stone, but this seems more likely to be rubble from the quarrying than recently dumped material. Even discounting this the

ground level rises from the stream to the base of the quarry faces. It is suggested that the pond never filled the base of the quarry, except perhaps occasionally when in high flood, and that the outline on the 1890 map is an error that has been continued through to the present day. The weir would have caused the creation of a shallow pond behind it; presumably less in-filled with gravel in 1909 than today. It seems probable that the presence of a pond would have been inconvenient when the quarry was in use and that the weir and the pond post-date the use of the quarry, but no evidence has been found to prove that.

The evidence suggests that this pond was a late 19<sup>th</sup> century feature resulting from the construction of the weir, that it probably post-dated the use of the quarry, and that there is no reason to suggest that it was a monastic fish pond.

**PRN 34133** Trackway/ramp to quarry

**Grid ref:** SH 79028 65791

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

Plate 4

A linear platform measuring 7.0m by 2.8m and orientated SW-NE. This is cut into the slope to the NW and built up to the SE. The NW edge is revetted by drystone walling to a height of 1.1m and the SE edge is defined by a wall 1.1m high adjacent to the stream and 0.5m high on the track side. Both walls are of irregular stones and there are traces of mortar.

This feature seems to form a ramp from the lane down to the stream, although the SW end is now blocked by road construction material. The direction of slope shows that this was not to take water from the stream but appears to have been an access ramp, presumably to a ford across the stream and then into the quarry (PRN 34136) on the far side.

This feature is clearly shown on the OS County Series maps from the first edition (1890) onwards, but there is no trace of it or the quarry it leads to on the 1788 map.

**PRN 34134** Weir

**Grid ref:** SH 79029 65789

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

Plate 5

This is a linear stone and brick structure measuring 9.0m long, 4.5m wide and 1.7m high on the downstream side. It is located across the stream and orientated NNW-SSE. It comprises a main body of irregular stones, some of which are very large, forming a flat platform 2.7m wide across the stream, which then slopes down towards the WSW. The top of the platform is formed of various sizes and shapes of stone, often placed on end. There are some patches of concrete visible and much of the platform has been eroded away, including some very large stones that seem to have been removed, possibly purely by the power of the water in flood. There is a tunnel 0.8m high and 0.6m wide which runs under the whole structure at the southern side.

The ENE face of the structure is formed of a skin of orange bricks. This is 0.24m wide and projects 0.1m above the stone platform. The brick face is 6.5m long and so ends before reaching the southern bank, leaving an aperture 0.6m wide, now infilled with later brickwork. Immediately above this is an iron mechanism with a large two handled screw and a metal plate. This appears to be a sluice-gate. It is positioned directly above the tunnel under the stone platform and presumably the iron plate is the gate that was lowered to close this tunnel. There is a similar iron mechanism on the northern side of the structure. This still has much of its timber frame surviving but the corresponding tunnel has been destroyed in this area.

This structure is strong enough to be a dam but the stream bed on its upstream side is close to the level of the top of the brick face. The gravels must have built up in this area and the pond behind the structure might have been deeper but the bed of the stream is cut into hard rock and it seems unlikely that there was ever a much greater depth. The structure could certainly not hold back water that was much higher than at present, and therefore was designed to act as a weir not a dam. The sluices show that it did hold some water back that could be released as necessary.

This feature is clearly shown on the OS County Series maps from the first edition (1890) onwards, and is labelled as a weir, but there is no trace of it or any pond on the 1788 map. Only the 1913 map marks a sluice so it is possible that the sluices were a later addition and explain the use of concrete in parts of the structure.

**PRN 34135** Stone slab built into stream revetment wall

**Grid ref:** SH 79027 65779

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** D

Plate 6

The south bank of the stream is revetted by a vertical drystone wall, 1.8m high, in the middle of which, set vertically, is a single very large flat stone measuring 1.8m by 1.0m. The face of the stone shows signs of working and the sides have been carefully squared off. About ¼ of the way up the stone are two holes, 20mm in diameter and 530mm apart. Below these is a mortar patch roughly 500mm square with an iron stud or bolt within it. It is likely that this stone has been reused from elsewhere and built into the wall, although it might possibly have supported a feature on the wall. This wall is probably contemporary with the weir (PRN 34134).

**PRN 34136** Quarry

**Grid ref:** SH 79048 65787

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

Plate 7

The quarry lies on the south-eastern bank of the stream and has two roughly semi-circular vertical faces, up to about 11m high, in which drill holes are visible. The quarry face extends across the stream to form a waterfall. This face has clearly been quarried as drilled holes can be seen in it. There are some large pieces of stone at the base of the quarried faces, which seem to have been left from quarrying or which have since fallen from the face. There is a clear separation between the stream debris and the quarry floor, the latter being significantly higher than the current stream bed. Erosion at the edge of the stream has revealed rounded stones at a lower level, which could possibly indicate flood deposits beneath the quarry rubble but this is only visible on the stream edge and it is not possible to demonstrate that this extends into the quarry. A low straight bank defines the western end of the quarry.

The quarry in its current shape with a line indicating the western bank is shown on the 1890 map. This map also shows the weir (PRN 34134) and as discussed above it is assumed that the creation of a pond behind this weir would have been problematic for the quarry. It is therefore assumed that the quarry pre-dated the weir and had gone out of use by the time the map was surveyed. The indication from the map that the quarry was flooded also suggests this but this is difficult to demonstrate from the evidence on the ground.

It appears that quarries were not shown on the 1788 map (see PRN 34138), but the map shows a field boundary coming down to the stream at this point with no room for a quarry. The quarry therefore seems to have been in use at sometime significantly before 1890, but after 1788, which would fit well with it being a quarry for the present Maenan Abbey Hotel, built in the early 1850s.

**PRN 34137** Access track to quarry

**Grid ref:** SH 79026 65800 (C)

**Period:** Post medieval (18<sup>th</sup> century?)

**Category:** C

Plate 8

A trackway about 8m long and about 2.8m wide can be seen running SW to NE from the roadside wall, which currently blocks it, into the quarry on the north side of the stream (PRN 34138). The track is heavily overgrown with ivy, brambles and young trees but the slight scarps defining it can be seen at least in winter, when this vegetation is low. The SE side is defined by a bank up to 0.3m high, which seems to be the remains of a stone wall as some stone projects and there is the trace of a wall face towards the NE end of the track. The NW side of the track is defined by a scarp cut into the hill slope. This scarp curves into the main quarry edge at the NE end. The base of the track appears to be about 1.9m wide, although some may be covered with collapse from the wall to the south. At the NE end of the track its southern side merges into a scarp, up to 0.7m high, which curves to the south to the edge of the stream. The track therefore opens out into the quarry and seems to be an integral part of it.

The 1913 map indicates the quarry edge running to the road, which it does not, so the line on the map presumably includes this track, although the track runs on a slightly different alignment to the main quarry edge. See below for a discussion of the date of the quarry and therefore presumably the access track.

**PRN 34138** Quarry

**Grid ref:** SH 79050 65820

**Period:** Post medieval (18<sup>th</sup> century?)

**Category:** C

Plate 9

On the north bank of the stream is a small quarry. The quarries to the north and south of the stream each had their own access tracks, indicating that they were independent and possibly worked at different dates. The quarry is only about 20m long and is surrounded on the NW and NE sides by near vertical rock faces. The face is highest in the northern corner of the quarry where it is probably about 10m high. The SE side of the quarry is formed by a fairly steep scarp down to the stream edge. The SW side of the quarry is open and this is where the access track (PRN 34137) exits from it.

The floor of the quarry has mounds of stone over it but none of these seem to be the remains of buildings, with the exception of the feature described under PRN 34141. It is noticeable that large trees are present on the quarry edge but not within the quarry or its access track. However there are some rotting stumps present so it is likely that there were larger trees in these areas, and that the current age of the trees is not an indication of the age of the quarry.

Unlike the quarry to the south of the stream, which is shown on all the OS County Series maps and is indicated with rock faces, the quarry north of the stream is only shown in the 1913 map and then only in outline. It is also not indicated on the 1788 map. This could suggest a very late feature, but there is a hint in the map evidence that it is earlier than the southern quarry and was not indicated because it had long been inactive. All the County Series maps show a building in this area, and this is still shown on the digital mapping, although it is no longer upstanding. A building is also shown in the same position and of about the same size on the 1788 map. It is suggested that these are all the same building and that the remains described as PRN 34141 can be identified with this building. These are the remains of a building that was built in the base of the quarry and that seems to post-date the quarry. If the building existed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the quarry must have done also. On the 1788 map this area is within a strip of land indicating the road up the hill. This strip of land is shown as about 30m wide and running down to the stream on its southern side, so it included much more than just the narrow road. It therefore seems likely that individual features within this area were not indicated on the map, with the exception of the building.

If the building was constructed after the quarrying was complete, as seems probable, the quarry itself might pre-date 1788 by a considerable margin. In which case it could have been the source of stone for the 17<sup>th</sup> century house on the abbey site. This dating relies heavily on the existing building remains being the same as the building on the 1788 map, and cannot be taken as certain until the building is investigated.

**PRN 34139**            Water tanks

**Grid ref:** SH 79051 65816

**Period:** Modern (20<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** D

Plate 10

The water tanks are built within the quarry (PRN 34138) and constructed in concrete on a stone base. They are up to c.3m tall and appear to comprise 3 tanks. Most of the related pipes have been disconnected but some pieces are present on the base of the quarry and pipes still project from the east side of the structure. One of the local residents remembers to water supply coming from the stream in her childhood but the water tanks seem not to have been used in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The water from the stream supplied Y Stiwdio, Plas Mynach and Abbey Dene.

**PRN 34140**            Pipe trench and water pipe

**Grid ref:** SH 79055 65815 to SH 79072 65826

**Period:** Modern (20<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** D

Running SE from the eastern side of the water tanks is a narrow rock-cut trench, 0.6m wide. The trench runs a short distance from the tanks to the edge of the stream where the pipe it contained seemed to slope down into the stream valley then turn sharply uphill to lie in another rock-cut trench. The pipe still remains but has broken off and lies in the edge of the stream. The sharp bend in the pipe shows where it was bent to ascend the steep rock wall to reach the higher rock-cut trench.

This pipe and the trench it is in are clearly related to the tanks; the pipe can be seen coming out of the eastern side of the tanks into the trench. The pipe must have taken water from the stream into the tanks, but the pipe



cannot be seen coming out of the upper trench and its route is then uncertain. No collecting device from the stream could be seen unless it is related in some way to the brick building (PRN 34143) and the adjacent weir (PRN 34144).

**PRN 34141** Remains of a stone building

**Grid ref:** SH 79048 65811

**Period:** Post medieval (18<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

Plate 11

The remains of a small stone building are located on the north bank of the stream. The building is orientated NE-SW and measures about 5.5m by 5.0m externally. Its SE side forms a revetment to the stream bank and is up to 2.5m high. There is an opening in this wall that is presumably a drain. The other walls survive to no more than 1m high, but are all substantial and about 0.5m wide with the exception of the SW wall, which is narrow and may indicate an internal division. There is no clear indication of the building continuing to the SW but there is a flat platform bounded on the northern side by rubble. There seems to have been an entrance through the SW wall.

The building on the 1788 map is in the same position as that seen on the ground, as much as can be determined considering the inaccuracies of the map, and is on the same alignment. The map does suggest a longer building, so it is possible that it did continue further SW than can be easily seen today. The County Series maps also show what is certainly the building visible on the ground, as this has the almost square proportions that are shown by the surviving walls. These maps appear to indicate that the building was roofed into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**PRN 34142** Cast iron tank

**Grid ref:** SH 79066 65834

**Period:** Modern (20<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** D

Plate 12

A rectangular cast iron tank stands close to the road. The top is sealed with a concrete slab and the corners of the tank appear welded. There is 1 inch pipe running from the E corner of the tank into the ground. About 2.5m downslope to the SW is a small square iron box with a hatch, presumably a shut-off valve.

It is assumed that this is part of the water supply system, but it is not clear whether it is contemporary with or earlier than the tanks in the quarry.

**PRN 34143** Brick structure

**Grid ref:** SH 79072 65826

**Period:** Modern (20<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** D

Plate 13

A small rectangular brick building stands near the stream. It measures 3.28m by 2.53m and is 2.2m high. It has a concrete slab roof and plinth and a door in the west side. The wall is built of a double skin of unfrogged brick with a cavity between. Part of the SE wall has collapsed. Inside the floor has robust tiles and there are iron fittings for some equipment and related to these is a circular hole in the floor directly under a square hole in the roof. There is an electric cable with a junction box projecting from the floor.

The foundations of the structure can be seen on the SE side next to the stream and these seem to have incorporated reused material from elsewhere. Several stone cylinders are built into the foundations to help level the building. These are solid stone, 0.23m in diameter and nearly perfectly circular in section. They have been largely shaped by pecking but they also have some concentric grooves. A similar object was found by Mr Meyer in the garden of Y Stiwdio. These resemble small pillars and it is possible that they originate from the 17<sup>th</sup> century house on the abbey site.

The brick structure was built on a levelled platform and the rock-cut pipe trench (PRN 34140) ran into this platform but it is not clear where the pipe went. It may have the pipe continued on straight passed the NW side of the structure or have gone into the structure underground. However it seems probable that the brick building was related to the water supply system in some way.

**PRN 34144** Weir

**Grid ref:** SH 79075 65816

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century?)

**Category:** D

Plate 14

A brick-built weir crosses the stream just above a narrow rocky gorge. This is a thin structure about 0.45m wide with no supporting stone apron as seen in PRN 34134. The weir has created a shallow pool behind it. The proximity of the weir to the brick building suggests a late date but the bricks resembled those facing weir PRN 34134. There was no outlet for the water pipe visible in this area and the weir was so far below the level of the pipe that water could not have been taken from it without pumping. It therefore seems unlikely to have been related to the water supply system and should probably be seen with the lower weir as a system for moderating the some times violent flow of the stream. It is not shown on any maps but it is a hidden and slight feature so this is not unexpected.

**PRN 34145** Bridge and track

**Grid ref:** SH 79020 65777

**Period:** Post medieval (19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

Plate 15

A single arched bridge made of local stone. Many of the coping stones have been lost from the parapet but otherwise the bridge is intact. The roadway across the bridge is 3.6m wide and the parapets are 0.5m high with the coping stones.

Running over the bridge and continuing to the SE is a track, revetted with drystone as it climbs the slope up the side of the stream valley. The bridge and track appear on all the County Series maps. On the first and second edition maps the track ran through the edge of the wood of Coed Carreg Seler and back to the main road. However just before it meets the road the track passes the end of a long straight cliff edge running along a field boundary. The regularity of this feature suggests that it was a quarry rather than a natural cliff face. The track may have been to bring stone from the quarry, possibly to build the Abbey Farmhouse and related buildings without disturbing the main road. The bridge seems to have been specifically built to carry this track. The interpretation of this as a quarry track is supported by its use as shown on the third edition map. By this date the southern end of the track had been altered and it was diverted up the hill to a small quarry on the top edge of Coed Carreg Seler. The bridge and track should probably be seen as another aspect of the small scale quarrying that occurred in this area.

**PRN 34146** Former main road

**Grid ref:** SH 79018 65763

**Period:** Post medieval (18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century)

**Category:** C

The wall that defined the northern side of the former main road before its straightening in the 1980s still survives in the woods. A wall about 1m high made of unworked mortared local stone partly acts as a revetment to the hill slope. At the grid reference there is an alcove in this wall where it has been built around a tree, now surviving just as a rotted stump. A concrete slab in the new revetting wall of the stream channel may indicate where the road bridge crossed the stream, but this is not certain.

Butler considers this road from Llanrwst to Tal Y Cafn to be an 18<sup>th</sup> century development and that the medieval route followed higher ground from Llandoget to Eglwys Bach via Cefn Llech (Butler 1963, 28). By 1788 the road curved to the north-east just north of the abbey site to avoid the barn (PRN 34664) built north-west of the stream. Earlier in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the road seems to have run straight on much the same route as the present new road. The painting of the old Abbey house seems to show a straight road and the existence of remains of the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century gateway on the site of the present gate to the Maenan Abbey Hotel also indicates that the road, which is otherwise fairly straight, originally ran straight in front of the Abbey.

#### **4.5 The canalised channel (PRN 34656) (Figures 14 and 15)**

The canalised section of the stream runs for 170m from the road bridge at SH 78987 65754 to SH 78831 65726. On this section the stream is tightly constrained by walls and the base of the channel is cobbled. For most of its length it runs down from north-east to south-west but towards the western end it turns towards the north-west. Towards the western end of the channel the constraining walls are discontinued but the cobbles in the base are present to the end. The southern wall was largely over grown with ivy, which obscured most of the

upper parts of the wall and could not be removed because of its importance in providing shelter and food for birds. The northern wall was also partially overgrown with brambles and climbing plants.

Each element of the channel was recorded separately in the field notes and has been given a context number, in brackets. These numbers are shown on figures 14 and 15. Groups of features were allocated new PRNs and these are shown on figure 6.

### *Side walls and bridges*

At the eastern end immediately adjacent to the road the side walls (001) were entirely rebuilt when the road was altered. This included inserting a new cast iron sluice at the entrance of a channel (PRN 64655) that runs through the gardens of the Abbey Farmhouse group of buildings.

Running across the stream at this eastern end is a small weir or dam (050) (plate 16). This is only 0.4m high and its upper parts are constructed of concrete blocks but these are set on stones and it is possible that the concrete blocks and apron of concrete below the stones are later repairs and that the structure was originally entirely of cut stone blocks. This is likely because stone steps (042) (plate 17) are set in the northern wall of the channel at this point. There are 3 steps and a large flat slab in the base of the stream, giving access to the pool behind the weir to collect water before it was piped from higher up the stream directly to the houses.

The steps are built into a section of walling (041) built of fairly large, mainly angular blocks. There is some mortar near the steps but generally the wall seems not to have been mortared. There is nothing to indicate that this is modern walling and it could be of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date. This wall is built on a lower course of large sub-rounded boulders (040) measuring up to 1.1m long and over 0.6m high. These could be a contemporary lower course to the wall but similar stones appear below walls of different dates and characters along the stream and it is probable that they represent the remains of earlier walls, probably the original sides of the channel. Similar boulders can be seen in the opposite, southern wall (002) where they support a mortared masonry wall (003) (plate 18), about 3m high, composed of angular quarried stones generally up to 0.35m in length bonded by a hard gritty pale yellow mortar. This wall runs for c.25m, nearly straight up to a slight bend, where it is overlapped by the end of another wall (004), although the large boulders below continue on the same line, projecting slightly from the base of wall (004).

Wall (004) is of mortared masonry with a fairly neat face and very hard, gritty white mortar. This wall seems not to be bonded into (003) but to overlap it. Wall (004) continues for c.48m, to the building now used as a laundry room for the hotel. The lower stones continue along its whole length, departing further from the line of the upper wall and forming a separate lower revetment. Along much of its length this revetment has been repaired and at least refaced, confusion the relationships with the cobbles and other features. This rebuilt part of the revetment has been numbered as (007).

Wall (004) was breached at two points by entranceways now blocked. The most impressive is a gateway in what appears to be the gable end of a building (005) (plate 19). The triangular gable is built of mortared angular local quarried stone and has a cross on the peak in what appears to be sandstone. Within the gable wall is a shallow Gothic archway formed of squared blocks of local stone. The lower part of the entrance has been blocked by mortared masonry (006) on the northern side but the substantial wooden doors have been retained and these can be most clearly seen on the southern side (plate 20). These are double doors covered with iron studs and retaining the original decorative hinges and other iron work. There is a small pedestrian door within the western door panel. There is a date stone of 1854 on the peak of the gable (plate 21) and this is likely to be the date for the construction of this entrance. However the doors themselves are either good reproductions or much older doors reused from elsewhere. The form of a gable for this entrance seems rather unusual and it is possible that the whole structure, including the doors, was part of a building elsewhere and had been moved and rebuilt to form the entrance.

The vegetation prevented inspection of the relationship between the gable end and wall (004) but there is no reason to suspect that they are not contemporary. The entrance arch is built on the lower revetment to the stream, but here the revetment seems to have been rebuilt or refaced and the cobbles in the stream can be clearly seen to extend under it.

Close inspection of the arch shows that the inner sides are not perpendicular to the face but at an angle. Across the channel, not directly opposite the gateway but at this same angle, two layers of large slabs (038) project from the base of the channel wall (plate 22). The two layers are slightly offset and resemble steps. The largest slab measures 1.15m in length but is only 0.07m thick. These are at a much lower level than the bottom of the

entranceway but may have formed the base of a bridge pier. There is also a short line of stones set on edge immediately east of the slabs. These are on a slightly different alignment to the present wall and could also be related to earlier structures. Above the slabs is a fairly well-built section of wall (037) including several flat slabs or long stones up to 0.7m long and squared off building stone. Traces of mortar survive to suggest that this was originally mortared. This wall is 1.65m high but the upper part may have been rebuilt as part of the garden wall; vegetation made this difficult to inspect.

The County Series maps (figure 10) show that the bridge from the entrance ran at an angle across the stream, presumably to accommodate an easier angle for wheeled vehicles to turn in a fairly restricted space. This strongly suggests that the features on the north side of the channel were related to the bridge across. It is speculated that the wall on the north side was built when the entrance was constructed and it was originally about 1m high, with the bridge supported on top of it and running across the entrance. The slabs could indicate an earlier bridge or crossing in the same location, whether as the bottom of a flight of steps or forming the base of a bridge pier.

The other breach in wall (004) was a less conspicuous doorway (010) adjacent to the building at the western end of the wall. This was a doorway 1.15m wide and about 1.8m high with a shallow arch. It is filled in with masonry but the original wrought iron gate survives on the southern side (plate 23).

This gateway is located above the centre of a bridge pier (008), built of stone with large stones in its base. This is matched by another on the north side of the channel (032), again with large stone blocks in its base, one of which has what appears to be a surface of petrified wrinkled lava (plate 24). This pier also has a blocked entrance way (035) above it through the wall (031). The wall is a well-built mortared stone wall forming a corner next to the pier in which several steps (030) are constructed (plate 25). The lower steps are large stone slabs up to 1.1m by 0.4m in size, which form two steps resting on squared blocks. These are not built into the wall but are self-supporting. Higher up the wall are two cut slate steps, which are built into the wall. It is probable that the lower steps and the bridge piers are contemporary but that the walls and the upper steps are later additions. The steps seem to have provided access to the channel to collect water. In the base of the channel close to the steps was a square feature (075). This is a nearly square hole measuring 0.8m by 0.7m internally, which was originally of some depth, although it is now nearly full of stones and gravel and its depth cannot be determined. The hole is defined by an inner lining of stone slabs set on edge and an outer line of stone blocks, some of which have been eroded away.

The local residents believe that this hole was used for filling buckets from the stream and remember when it was sufficiently open to function. The hole could be used either from the bridge, with a bucket on a rope, or from the steps.

West of the site of the bridge is a building now used as a laundry room by the hotel. Its northern wall forms the southern side of the channel and is a well-built stone wall heavily pointed with hard white mortar (011). This is built over a foundation of large rounded boulders (015) that seem to be a continuation of the original wall as indicated by feature (002). Set within the boulder foundations under wall (011) is a drain (013) with a large stone lintel and much smaller stones forming the sides. The lintel is mortared into the building wall and it is likely that the side stones were also mortared but it is evident along the stream sides that mortar does not survive well at water level. This could have been an earlier drain but the impression is of a drain inserted when the building was constructed. It seems likely that one of the large foundation boulders was removed and the drain inserted.

There is also a small rectangular void in wall (011), which contains a ceramic drain. Below the drain hole is a yellow sandstone slab built into the cobbled base of the channel, presumably to resist erosion from the water flowing from the drain. The stone has a hole in it and is almost certainly reused from elsewhere. It is assumed that the drain and the slab are contemporary with the building wall and the cobbles have been reset around the slab rather than it being contemporary with the cobbles.

West of the building the large boulders (015) continue and on top of them is a mortared wall of irregular blocks and slabs with a significant number of rounded boulders (017). The junction with the building (011) suggests that this wall pre-dated the building which was built on fragments of its lower courses. The upper part of the wall was rebuilt against the building to provide a boundary wall. An aperture 2.8m wide (018) in this wall formed another entrance, which still contains two decorative cast iron gates (plate 26). In the centre of the stream at this point is a stone (086), 0.9m by 0.16m, set on edge aligned with the direction of flow (plate 27).

This is deeply embedded on the stream bed, projecting by about 0.1m. It seems likely that this was related to the bridge that ran across to the gateway, although it does not seem to be a foundation for a supporting pier.

The next 5m of wall has been rebuilt on a concrete pad but after this the large boulders (020) continue with the modern wall built over the top. After a very poor repair (021) the modern wall ends and the earlier wall still survives (022). This is a mortared wall with irregular stone blocks and slabs similar to the other walls that probably date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This wall is also built over the boulder foundation and to the west it extends over a well-built drystone wall (024) with angular blocky stones. Under wall (022) is entrance to a large drain (023) (plate 28), which seems to have been built at the same time as this part of the wall. A breach must have been made in the existing wall (024) and part of the wall was rebuilt to curve SE to form one side of the drain; a few stones at the base can be seen continuing the original line. A boulder, possibly taken from the boulder foundations, was moved and set into the cobbles on the eastern side of the drain mouth to deflect water away and prevent it flowing back up the drain. The drain has a large slab lintel visible, which was built as an integral part of wall (022). The drain is now blocked with concrete so it is not possible to see far inside, but the drain was 0.4m high internally so it must have been a major outflow, possibly for sewage.

The wall (024), which pre-dates the drain, continues east to the footbridge. It has possibly been repaired in places as its character subtly changes, but it is likely that this is a fairly early part of the channel wall.

Most of the wall along the northern side of the channel, with the exception of the eastern end (041) and the area near the middle bridge, has been heavily rebuilt. Although there are some large boulders along a short part of the middle section (033), as well as at the eastern end, and these probably represent the remains of earlier walls. The rebuilt walls are of varied character. Some sections (e.g. 027) have heavy pointing, while others (e.g. 037) appear unmortared, although traces of mortar indicate that they were probably originally mortared but that this has been washed out during floods. Section (028) is built on a concrete pad to prevent the under-mining of the wall seen in many places and in the western end of wall (029) some large stone slabs are used in the construction. It seems likely that these originated from the bridge close to this location. An odd shelf in the otherwise vertical walling (036) may have been caused by the lower part of a collapsed wall section being built to full width with the upper part rebuilt as a narrower garden wall. Another feature is an alcove in wall (039). The stump of a tree is present in the eastern end of this and it is possible that there was also a tree at the western end and the wall has been rebuilt to incorporate these. There is also an awkward corner at the eastern end of (039), which has had to be reinforced with concrete-filled sandbags. It is possible that this was originally another access point into the stream. Little can be seen now but in the middle of the stream here are two large stones (055) which are wedged in the base of the stream and are possibly deliberately placed. However it is hard to see how they would have worked as part of a weir or similar feature, and there are several boulders of considerable size that have obviously washed down the stream and become embedded.

The footbridge (PRN 34654) taking the public footpath across the lower part of the channel is formed of large slate slabs with wrought iron hand rails (plate 29). This has very recently been rebuilt, using the original materials, and the channel sides immediately adjacent to it are all new. Downstream of the bridge the side walls become lower but there is still evidence of revetment walls along much of the length. The southern side is well-built and probably related to the footpath that runs along the top of the revetment, but a large stone (102) seems to be part of the original walling. Stones found in the northern side during the watching brief indicate some revetment along part of this side. There is a ford across the stream and around this and down stream from it there are no clear traces of revetment, although the cobbles continue.

### ***Base of channel***

The base of the channel was covered along its full length by carefully set cobbles. There are now considerable gaps but this is due to erosion. The cobbles vary slightly in size and character in different locations along the channel. In the eastern end the cobbles are generally fairly large and rounded, while elsewhere they can be smaller and more angular. In some places there are numerous long stones used and elsewhere a number of flat slabs mixed in with other cobbles. Sometimes long stones are orientated perpendicularly to the channel, sometimes running at an angle down the channel and sometimes randomly. However all sections show a variety of sizes and shapes of stones being used and variations may not have chronological significance as the whole seems to have a unity of character. Where the side walls of the channel seem to be original, at least at the base, such as (002) and (020) the cobbles have been laid against the stones of the walls. Where the walls are relatively recent, rebuilt or repaired the cobbles can often be seen continuing under them. However this can sometimes be deceptive as cobbles can be re-laid without significantly changing their character. This is noticeable at drain (023), where the large stone set to deflect the water flow is clearly set into the ground below the level of the cobbles which are built against it. However the other dating evidence for this structure suggests

a 19<sup>th</sup> century date and it is likely that the cobbles were re-laid. A concentration of slabs, some of quite different stone to the rest of the cobbles, around the possible bridge pier base (038) suggests relaying in this area and the fact that the cobbles about the large slabs cannot necessarily be used as firm stratigraphic evidence.

Two main aspects suggest that the cobbling is all essentially contemporary; the presence of lines of slabs up the middle of the channel and the regular occurrence of timber beams. The lines of slabs are an integral part of the cobbling and are generally centrally positioned running along the line of the channel (plate 30). The only place lacking these is around the area of the middle bridge and the only place where they are not central at the ford. In the latter case this might indicate that there was a much broader cobbled area at and just downstream from the ford. The slab lines are formed of stones of differing sizes up to about 0.7m in length and almost all have their long axes perpendicular to the water flow. The slabs are laid in sections and generally, though not invariably the larger slabs are at the eastern, downstream end of each section.

The sections of slab lines are divided by slots formed in the cobbles that held timber beams. These occur down the full length of the channel at intervals of between 5m and 8.5m. The slots seem to have been created by laying cobbles against the beams, which were already in place. Although sometimes long stones were used to create the edges of these slots there was not real attempt to form a particularly neat edge. While most of the slots are straight some are bent in the middle. One of these (052) has the timber still in place and clearly visible and the timber, which is a single piece, is also bent. In this case erosion has occurred below the beam and some slumping of the cobbles might have caused the bend, but in other cases the bent slots are within intact areas of cobbling. It seems likely that not all the timber used was straight and that where the timber was bent the cobbles were laid to fit around it.

Not all the beams survive and several of those that probably do survive are obscured by sand and gravel filling the slots. However enough can be seen to give an indication of their nature. The timber beams are generally about 200mm wide and 200mm thick and most seem to have been squared off to some extent. Others seem to have been only minimally worked with the base of side twigs still projecting. In some places, particularly the southern end of (052), an aperture can be seen built into the wall to take the end of the beam (plate 31). This supports that idea that the earliest phase of walling is contemporary with the cobbling.

The function of the beams was probably to resist lateral movement of the cobbles, especially when battered by boulders during floods (David Austin pers. com.). The timbers are therefore an integral part of the cobbling. Unfortunately this device intended to strengthen the cobbling over time has created a significant weakness. All the eroded gaps in the cobbles seem to have started from a timber slot. As the timbers rot they present a weakness exploited by the water. Once erosion has started at the beam a small waterfall is created which undermines and dislodges cobbles and works its way gradually downstream. In one erosion hollow a piece of timber was found. This was of exactly the same size and shape as the *in situ* timbers and is almost certainly part of a beam and probably originated from the eroded timber slot adjacent to which it was found.

At the western end of the channel a field track fords the stream and it is possible that this area was originally designed as a ford. The feature that first attracted notice to the channel was a double line of stones (PRN 32589) (plate 32) running almost exactly east-west diagonally across the channel which here runs south-east to north-west. The stone forming the upstream line were of medium size (no longer than 0.6m and generally much less) and laid along the axis of the feature. The stones in the downstream line were up to 0.9m in length and laid perpendicular to the line of the feature (figure 16). These stones sloped downstream creating a slight change in the slope of the streambed. The upstream side of the feature was flush with the cobbling at this side. The whole feature is about 8.7m long and 1.25m wide. This feature seems to fit well with the cobbling and is probably contemporary but it would not be impossible to insert it and replace cobbles around it to produce a similar result.

The function of this feature is not obvious. It does not project above the level of the upstream cobbles so it could not have held back even a small amount of water but it must have had some influence on the flow as it steepens the gradient for a very short distance. It might also have been used to redirect the force of the flow. As it is diagonal to the channel it would have forced the flow more to the north. The channel was about 4m wide above the feature compared to less than 3.5m elsewhere. The position of the central slabs below the feature suggests that the channel may have been about 5m wide here. The diagonal stones and the widening channel may have reduced the force of the flow for a ford. For want of a better word it seems reasonable to call the diagonal stone feature a weir, although perhaps not a typical one.

At their western limit the cobbles end suddenly where there is an actively eroding edge. There is no trace of cobbling or revetted banks further down stream so it is assumed that the cobbles stopped at the field boundary that comes down to the stream edge here.

### ***By-pass channel***

Running from the eastern end of the channel near the modern bridge is a narrow channel (PRN 34655). This initially flows underground but surfaces in the gardens behind the buildings north of the stream. It runs through the gardens where it is now used as a water feature and rejoins the main stream close to the western end of the cobbling. The sides of the channel are revetted with stone and it is crossed by small slab bridges (plate 33). A local resident, Mrs Gill Meyer, remembers that the large barn that stood adjacent to the channel to the north-east contained a water wheel or turbine, using the flow of the water in the channel. The channel does not appear on the maps before 1890 and was presumably built when the nearby buildings were constructed providing water for the stables and other activities in this area.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND DATING**

All four of the bridges that crossed the canalised stream are shown on the County Series maps from 1890 onwards and the channel itself must have been much as it is today at that time, although presumably less eroded. The bridges, with the exception of the footbridge (PRN 34654<sup>1</sup>) currently carrying the footpath, were removed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No ford is shown on these maps so the present form of the ford may be of recent date. The 1788 estate map gives very little detail on the channel, although it does confirm that it ran along exactly the same line. The only bridge across the stream is that for the main road. The best evidence for the early form of the stream are the copies of the painting depicting the 17<sup>th</sup> century house (figure 2). It is assumed that the copies are accurate, although this may not be true for apparently minor details such as the stream. This is shown as slightly winding and not obviously canalised. There are no high walls along its edge but there is a bridge across at approximately the same position as the main 19<sup>th</sup> century entranceway (PRN 34651). This suggests a general sequence in which the higher boundary walls all belong to the 19<sup>th</sup> century house, but one at least of the bridges may have an earlier origin. The stone slabs (038) may have belonged to the pier of the earlier bridge.

Bridge PRN 34652 can be dated to around 1801 as a design for its construction of this date survives (XD2A/1177, figure 5). A plan of a cast iron bridge is clearly for PRN 34651 as it runs at a distinct angle. This document is undated, but the hand writing closely resembles that of Henry Kennedy, the architect for the house, and it probably dates to the period of the house building 1848 to about 1852 and was presumably installed when the gable arch was built with its date stone of 1854.

The 1801 bridge plan shows existing channel walls suggesting that the walls at the western end of the channel may at least date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It also mentions offices next the southern entrance to the bridge and these were presumably in the building adjacent to the channel. This seems to have been modified recently but the wall next to the channel (011) and the drain (013) below could be late 18<sup>th</sup> century in date. There must have been a wall with the gateway through it here in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but the present gateway probably dates from the early 1850s as prior to that the north wall of the old house formed the channel wall. There are no remains of this in the existing wall, which has no joints in this location, so the whole wall must have been rebuilt, dating all of wall (004) to the 1850s. The shifting of the main entrance to the bridge over the stream by 1809 suggests that a wall may have been built all along the southern side of the stream by that date. It is likely that the wall along the northern side of the stream was only a low revetment, and wall (041) may be the remains of that. Wall (003) is probably the remains of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century wall replaced by wall (004) built when the main bridge entrance was constructed in the early 1850s. This leaves the lower parts of the walls composed of large boulders as pre-dating the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These may have been the revetment for the stream in the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century but could have been earlier. The relationship of the cobbles to these lower boulder walls is not always clear. The cobbles can be seen to be laid against the boulders but this does not prevent them being functionally contemporary. The presence of one timber beam ending in a slot apparently built into this lower wall does suggest that the cobbles and the walls are all part of the same construction, but there is only one example well enough preserved to demonstrate this (052). There is nothing to specifically link the canalisation of the stream with the monastery and the survival of many of the timber beams despite their ends regularly drying out may argue against an early date. It seems probable that the stream banks were revetted and the cobbles laid during the life of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house.

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<sup>1</sup> See figure 6 for location of bridges with PRNs

The large drain (023) is certainly of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The foundation plan of the house shows the main drain running from the south of the house directly towards (023) and the plan notes that the drain is running to “the outfall”. The visible angle of the drain suggests that it was deliberately built to take this new main drain and that this was not a reused earlier outfall.

The quarries next to the stream to the east of the house must have been used in the supply of building materials for the house and nearby buildings. It is suggested that the quarry to the south of the stream dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was related to the building of the new house and/or the stables etc. north of the stream, but it might have been used for the early 19<sup>th</sup> century extension and improvements. The quarry north of the stream is argued to be late 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier and could have been used to build the 17<sup>th</sup> century house. If the western range of that house did form the first house on the site it may have been built largely from remains of the monastery.

The weirs were probably constructed around the same time as the 19th century house, after the southern quarry went out of use. The water supply system seems to have been in use during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before which water was collected directly from the stream with at least two collection points available for convenient access.

## **6. CONDITION AND THREATS**

The work undertaken to repair the damage near the footbridge seems to have been effective and has survived a winter with no damage, but the absence of erosion here has resulted in more force in the water as it reaches the end of the cobbles and seems to have increased erosion at an already actively eroding edge. Upstream the numerous erosion hollows will become larger every year as more cobbles are eroded away. The Environment Agency has apparently suggested reducing damage to the side walls and the risk of flooding by widening the narrower parts of the channel. They would do this by removing parts of the north wall and building a stronger revetment slightly further north. As most of the walls on this side are recently rebuilt they are of little value in themselves but their removal might reveal parts of the original walling. If areas around the sites of the bridges are disturbed more detail of the original bridge footings might be revealed, but any disturbance to the middle bridge piers and steps must be avoided.

Vegetation covers much of the side walls which obscures large areas of masonry, and has made it difficult to interpret phases and relationships, but the vegetation does not seem to present a structural threat. There is a large ash tree growing in the southern side of the channel but this seems to be quite stable. However there were several trees growing in the northern side. These have all been felled but their rotting stumps remain causing possible weaknesses in the wall.

There are no significant threats to the features above the A470, with the exception of the lower weir. This is partly damaged, presumably by water erosion, and some very large stones have already been removed. Further damage seems likely but this is a late, minor feature so remedial work may not be appropriate.

Remains of both the abbey and the 17<sup>th</sup> century house do survive under the grounds of the Maenan Abbey Hotel. These are generally protected by a thick deposit of rubble resulting from the levelling of the ground for the 19<sup>th</sup> century building, however the 2011 evaluation trenches demonstrated that some groundworks could impact on these remains. Some early remains might also survive under and around the buildings north of the stream, which might also be threatened by potential groundworks.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

The documentary research has suggested that all the upstanding remains of the abbey were removed or reused on site. Excavation has revealed that foundations of the monastic buildings do survive under much made-up ground relating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century house. The plan revealed by these is very fragmentary and while the approximate position of the abbey church and therefore other structures might be proposed its exact form is uncertain. Little above foundation level survives, so extensive medieval floors and occupation deposits might not be expected but it is clear that much of the plan is likely to be preserved and further work might reveal it.

Butler’s suggestion that there was a pre-17<sup>th</sup> century house on the site seems likely, although nothing has been found to prove this. The plan and location of the 17<sup>th</sup> century building seems fairly well-defined and the



discovery of the gateway associated with this in 1982 contributes to the understanding of its grounds. Building projects dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century are suggested in the records but precise dates for all buildings in the area are not possible. The construction of the present building can be precisely dated to 1849 to 1852 and there is a good selection of plans for its original construction. Considerable remains relating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century house still survive underground including some for buildings of which there is little documentary evidence.

The features seen on the canalised section of Nant Llechog can sometimes be fitted into this overall history. There are plans relating to two of the construction of bridges in the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, although other evidence shows that there was one bridge over the stream from at least the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the stream-side walls can also be roughly dated, but the date of the cobbles and early revetment walls are still uncertain. The weight of probability suggests a 17<sup>th</sup> century date for these rather than medieval, but this might only be proven by obtaining a dendrochronological or radiocarbon date on one of the beams within the cobbling.

The quarry to the north of the stream and the building remains within it may date from the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century but no other features along the stream to the north-east of the present road could be dated before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If the abbey had fishponds these are likely to have been located on the flood plain and are still to be discovered.

## 8. ARCHIVE

The archive consists of historic maps, plans, written notes and digital images. The archive is currently held by GAT under project code **G2213**.

## 9. REFERENCES AND OTHER SOURCES CONSULTED

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White, R. B. 1987, 'Excavations at Maenan Abbey, 1982' *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 139, 173-175

### ***Bangor University Archives, Bangor***

Bangor 10270 – 'Book of Elias Family Pedigrees, compiled by Thomas Elias in 1894. This includes a water colour sketch of The Old Abbey copied "from an old painting (oil) on wood found at the present Abbey". Date unknown but the original painting might be about 1750.

### ***Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon***

XD2A/1155 Plan and elevation of the Abbey house, by Robert Morris. *Proposed design for addition or replacement of Abbey house: 1787*

XD2A/1160 Elevation and plan of the Abbey. *Another proposed design like XD2A/1155, almost certainly by Morris and probably a similar date*

XD2A/1163 Elevation and plans of the Abbey. *Design for barn and stable, probably 1801/2*

XD2A/1175 Elevation of the Abbey, Llanrwst by Henry Kennedy, Bangor. Signed by W. Rogers, contractors; 1848 Feb

XD2A/1177 Drawing and section of Abbey Bridge for construction. *The handwriting is exactly the same as Morris's and the date may be 1801 like many of his other plans*

XD2A/1178 Plan of foundations and drains at the Abbey, Llanrwst for Lord Newborough; 1848 Feb. 7

XD2A/1181 Plan of the Abbey, Llanrwst. Signed by W. Rogers, contractor. *Architect's drawing of the ground floor; 1849 Feb. 9*

XD2A/1182 Plan of the Abbey, Llanrwst. Signed by W. Rogers, contractor. *Architect's drawing of the first floor; 1849 Feb. 9*

XD2A/1185 Elevation and plans of a laundry, brewhouse, dairy in the Abbey by Robert Morris; *dated in catalogue 1901 Nov. 6, but actually 1801*

XD2A/1186 Elevation and plans of a laundry, brewhouse, dairy in the Abbey by Robert Morris; *dated in catalogue 1901 Oct. 13, but actually 1801*

XD2/9118 Letter from William Elias 1842

XD2/14525 Sale catalogue 1914

XD2/15057 Letter from Robert Morris with reference to building work at Fort Belan, Abermenai for Lord Newborough 1794

XD2/15126 Robert Morris writing from the Abbey on Glynllifon business in 1807

XD2/15136 Robert Morris writing from the Abbey on Glynllifon business in 1808

XD2/15492 Letters from The Abbey by William Elias 1823

XD2/15569 Letters from The Abbey by William Elias 1823

XD2/23791 Letter from William Elias with reference to building work The Abbey progressing in June 1852

### ***GAT Historic Environment Record***

1890 map: Ordnance Survey 25 inch 1st edition map of 1890, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9

1900 map: Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd edition map of 1900, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9

1913 map: Ordnance Survey 25 inch 3rd edition map of 1913, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9

### ***National Library of Wales***

Survey of the Menai and Abbey Estates, in the county of Denbigh, Ardda in the county of Carnarvon, also Festiniog and Landecwin in the county of Merioneth. Property of the Right Honourable Thomas Lord Newborough, MSS maps volume 96, 1788

## APPENDIX 1: Sites previously listed on Gwynedd HER and National Monument Register

Table of sites within the study area previously listed in the Gwynedd HER

PRN	NAME	NGR	PERIOD	FORM	LONG_TEXT_
1540	Aberconwy Abbey - Site of, Maenan	SH78906565	Medieval	Building - Ruined	<p>The Cistercian Abbey of Aberconwy, established at the end of the 12th century by monks from Strata Florida was moved to Maenan from Conwy by Edward I in 1283, in order to make room for his new castle and town. In compensation, the Abbey was granted the township of Maenan with exceptional privileges. The buildings were demolished at the time of the Dissolution and the subsequent house, built from the material, is now only represented by a tablet with the date 1654.</p> <p>The site has been excavated, initially in 1924 by a former owner and, more recently, by L.A.S Butler in the 1970's and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust in 1983. The 1924 excavations had exposed a length of wall foundation which is now thought to be the east wall of the east cloister range. The east cloister wall walk has also been located and the robbed wall of the north aisle of the nave.</p> <p>The only visible remains are the foundations exposed in 1924; these consist of one wall 13.5m long terminating in a corner. Further excavations in this area in 1963 now suggest that they represent part of the east walk and the cloister walk. &lt;1&gt;</p> <p>An excavation in 1968 by LAS Butler established the position and the extent of the church. Two areas have been left open, the junction of the transept wall in the north aisle wall (where a chamfered plinth remains in situ) and the stone lined grave vault in the centre of the choir. Surveyed at 1:2500. &lt;2&gt;</p> <p>Limited excavations at Maenan Abbey in 1968 revealed the plan of the eastern part of the abbey church. &lt;3&gt;</p> <p>At the Cistercian abbey of St. Mary of Aberconway, which was in 1283 transferred by Edward I from Conway to Maenan, excavation in 1924 had exposed a length of wall foundation. This is now thought to be the east wall of the east cloister range. Excavation has also located the east cloister walk wall and the robbed wall of the nave north aisle. There was no trace of the abbey in the orchard west of the present house. &lt;4&gt;</p> <p>Description pre - excavations. &lt;5&gt;</p> <p>No remains of the abbey were found. &lt;6&gt;</p> <p>Evidence suggests that the house which preceded the present structure (built 1848-52) contained part of the western range of the abbey buildings. &lt;7&gt;</p> <p>No structural remains now visible on site. Butler suggests that the cloisters would have lain to the north of the church with the conventional buildings arranged around it. This would have placed them underneath and west of the present hotel, however this interpretation is doubted. The removal of the stone and the timber from the abbey to repair Caernarfon castle and town walls, as well as the later house building in the c17th and c19th would appear to have destroyed nearly all traces of the abbey remains. &lt;8&gt;</p>
4616	Fish pond	SH79046579	Medieval	Other Structure	<p>A fishpond is reported somewhat higher up the hill behind Maenan Abbey. &lt;1&gt;</p> <p>A stream has been dammed to form a pond at SH79046579. The original masonry of the dam was obviously of an early date, and has been rebuilt in places more recently. A probable fish pond associated with Maenan Abbey. &lt;2&gt;</p>

Table of sites within the study area previously listed in the National Monument Register

<b>NPRN</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>NGR</b>	<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>FORM</b>	<b>LONG_TEXT_</b>
16475	Maenan Abbey	SH7897365683	Medieval	Ruin	NAR SH76NE3 There are few if any visible remains of Maenan Abbey, a Cistercian foundation removed here in 1283-4 from Aberconway to make way for the new royal castle and borough (see NPRN 43768). The Abbey was dissolved in 1538 when materials were shipped to Caernarvon and a house was built over the west range, presumably the abbot's lodging. This house was replaced by the existing mansion (NPRN 407095) in 1848-52. Excavations south & south-east of the hotel in 1968 recovered something of the plan of the late thirteenth century church. Sources: RCAHMW Caernarvonshire Inventory I (1956), No. 1 Butler & Evans in Archaeologia Cambrensis 129 (1980), 37-63 John Wiles 19.03.08
86340	The Abbey or Maenan Abbey, Grounds and Gardens, Llanddoged	SH7894365694	Post Medieval	Documents	Grounds and gardens associated with house built in 1848-52 (NPRN 407095) and depicted on the 1st edition OS County series (Caernarvon. XIV.9 1875). It is not known whether this was based on or incorporated, elements of the grounds of the earlier house, or even of the Cistercian Abbey (NPRN 16475) whose remains have been excavated below the present car park. John Wiles 19.03.08
407095	Maenan Abbey Hotel	SH7894065707	Post Medieval		The present Abbey Hotel is a mid nineteenth century mansion that replaced an Elizabethan house built from the remains of the Cistercian Abbey (NPRN 16475). The house was built in 1851-4 in an austere 'Tudoresque' Gothick style with prominent gables. It stood within extensive grounds and gardens (NPRN 86340). It is said to incorporate earlier, possibly medieval cellars. Source: Butler & Evans in Archaeologia Cambrensis 129 (1980), 37-9 RCAHMW 19.03.08

## **APPENDIX 2: Definition of categories of importance**

The following categories were used to define the importance of the archaeological resource.

### *Category A - Sites of National Importance.*

Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings of grade II\* and above, as well as those that would meet the requirements for scheduling (ancient monuments) or listing (buildings) or both.

Sites that are scheduled or listed have legal protection, and it is recommended that all Category A sites remain preserved and protected *in situ*.

### *Category B - Sites of regional or county importance.*

Grade II listed buildings and sites which would not fulfil the criteria for scheduling or listing, but which are nevertheless of particular importance within the region.

Preservation *in situ* is the preferred option for Category B sites, but if damage or destruction cannot be avoided, appropriate detailed recording might be an acceptable alternative.

### *Category C - Sites of district or local importance.*

Sites which are not of sufficient importance to justify a recommendation for preservation if threatened.

Category C sites nevertheless merit adequate recording in advance of damage or destruction.

### *Category D - Minor and damaged sites.*

Sites that are of minor importance or are so badly damaged that too little remains to justify their inclusion in a higher category.

For Category D sites, rapid recording, either in advance of or during destruction, should be sufficient.

### *Category E - Sites needing further investigation.*

Sites, the importance of which is as yet undetermined and which will require further work before they can be allocated to categories A - D are temporarily placed in this category, with specific recommendations for further evaluation. By the end of the assessment there should usually be no sites remaining in this category. In this case several areas of unknown potential have been allocated to this category. These require environmental sampling which should be carried out during the pipeline works.

## Figures and plates

### Figures

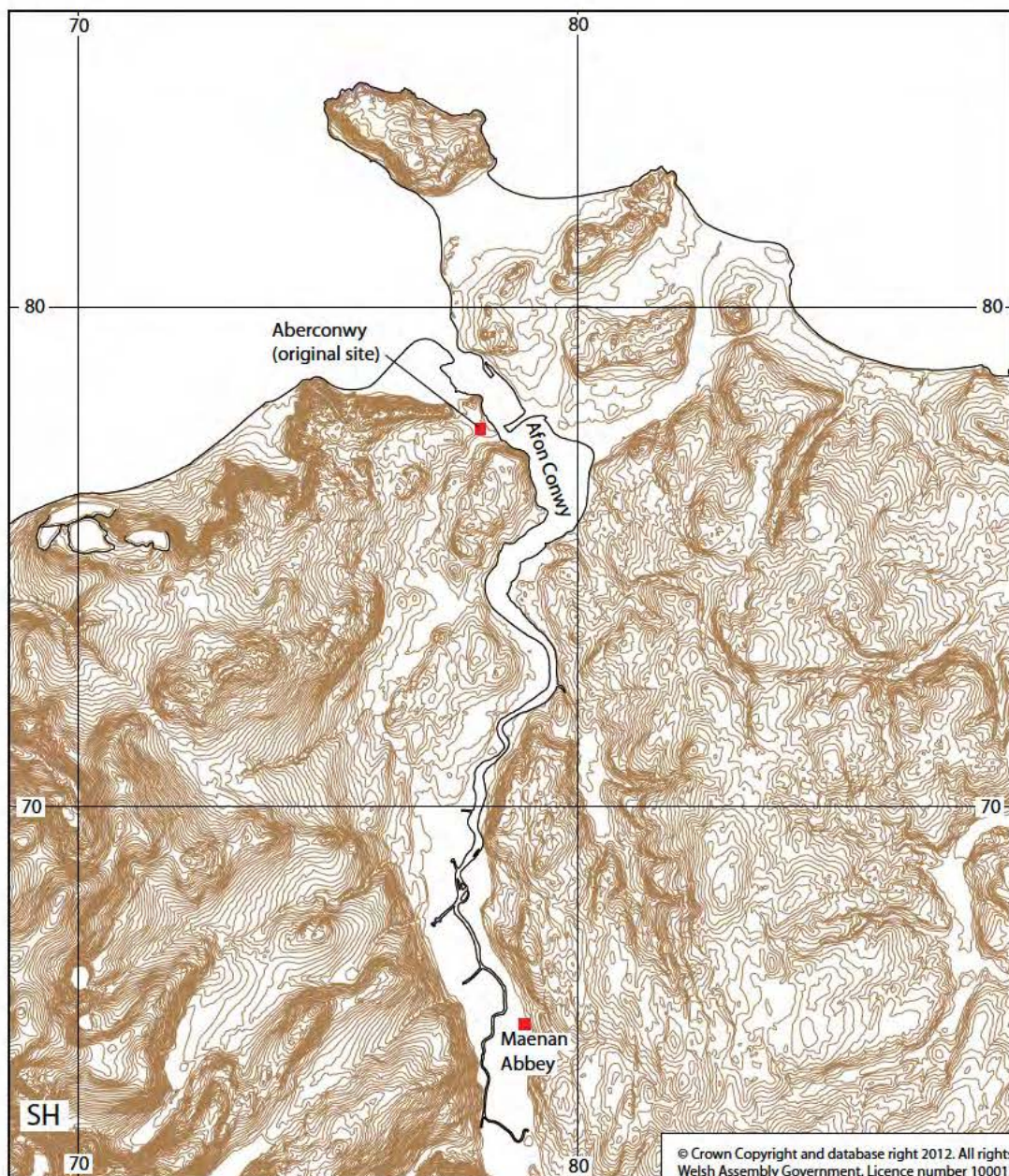
- Figure 1. Location of Maenan Abbey.
- Figure 2. Water colour sketch of The Old Abbey copied “from an old painting (oil) on wood found at the present Abbey”. Date unknown but the original painting might be about 1750. The sketch is included in a book of pedigrees by Thomas Elias 1894 (Bangor 10270).
- Figure 3. Ground plan of The Abbey house 1799, south is to the top of the plan (Glynllifon MS 105, reproduced from Butler 1987, plate XXa)
- Figure 4. 1788 estate plan of the Abbey Demesne with inset showing detail of the Abbey house and garden (MS Maps Vol 96 Page 156)
- Figure 5. Drawing and section of Abbey Bridge for construction (XD2A/1177, probably dates to c.1801)
- Figure 6. Summary of location of the houses on the abbey site and other features located by excavation and survey. The outline of the 17<sup>th</sup> century house is from the 1799 plan (Glynllifon MS 105) and is located using the c.1801 plan for the bridge (XD2A/1177). The outline of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is from the architects foundation plan (XD2A/1178) located using the modern survey of the hotel. Trench locations and information are from Butler (1963), Butler and Evans (1980), White (1987) and GAT project G2201.
- Figure 7. Alternative designs for an extension to The Abbey (XD2A/1155 and XD2A/1160). The former is dated 1787 and is signed Robert Morris. The latter is in the same handwriting and style and is clearly also by Morris and probably of a similar date.
- Figure 8. Maenan Abbey: view from the east, 1809 (Glynllifon MS 131, reproduced from Butler 1987, plate XXb)
- Figure 9. Elevation and plans of the Abbey (XD2A/1163). A design for barn and stables, in Robert Morris’s handwriting and probably dating to around 1801/2.
- Figure 10. Extract from the First Edition County Series map 1890, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9
- Figure 11. Elevation of the Abbey, Llanrwst by Henry Kennedy, Bangor, 1848 (XD2A/1175)
- Figure 12. Architects plans for the foundations of The Abbey, dated 1848 (XD2A/1178)
- Figure 13. Location of features (in red) found in the walk-over survey with modern mapping overlaid on the Third Edition County Series map 1913, Caernarvonshire sheet XIV.9
- Figure 14. Eastern end of canalised channel (PRN 34656)
- Figure 15. Western end of canalised channel (PRN 34656)
- Figure 16. Plan of ‘weir’ PRN 32589 and surrounding cobbles and stream bed features

### Plates

- Plate 1: Maenan Abbey Hotel from the NE. Used by permission of Mr R Meyer.
- Plate 2: Sandstone shield built into the 19<sup>th</sup> century coach house adjacent to the hotel and showing the Wynne family arms
- Plate 3: View of pool above weir (PRN 34134), from the west
- Plate 4: Access ramp (PRN 34133) to quarry (PRN 34136), from the NE
- Plate 5: Weir (PRN 34134), from the SW
- Plate 6: Stone slab (PRN 34135), from the NW
- Plate 7: Quarry (PRN 34136), from the NW
- Plate 8: Access track (PRN 34137) to quarry (PRN 34138), from the NE
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- Plate 10: Water tanks (PRN 34139), from the west
- Plate 11: Remains of stone building (PRN 34141), from the SE
- Plate 12: Cast iron water tank (PRN 34142), from the SE
- Plate 13: Small brick building (PRN 34143), from the SW
- Plate 14: Brick weir (PRN 34144), from the NW
- Plate 15: Bridge (PRN 34145), from the NE
- Plate 16: Weir, part of PRN 34147, from the NE
- Plate 17: Steps, part of PRN 34147, from the SE
- Plate 18: Large boulders forming wall foundation (002) and upper wall (003), from the N
- Plate 19: Entranceway, part of PRN 34651, from the north
- Plate 20: Door in gateway, part of PRN 34651, from the south
- Plate 21: Date-stone above entranceway, part of PRN 34651, from the south
- Plate 22: Slabs, possibly base of a 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge, part of PRN 34651, from the SE
- Plate 23: Doorway, part of PRN 34652, from the south
- Plate 24: Bridge pier probably dating to about 1801 (PRN 34652), from the SE
- Plate 25: Steps probably dating to about 1801 (PRN 34652), from the SE

Plate 26: Gateway, part of PRN 34653, from the N  
Plate 27: Stone in bed of stream (086), part of PRN 34653, from the N  
Plate 28: 19<sup>th</sup> century outfall (023), from the N  
Plate 29: Footbridge PRN 34654, from the SE  
Plate 30: Line of slabs (060) in central of channel, from the SW  
Plate 31: Timber beam (052) set into wall (002), from the NW  
Plate 32: Stone 'weir', PRN 32589, from the E  
Plate 33: Channel in gardens (PRN 34655), from the NE





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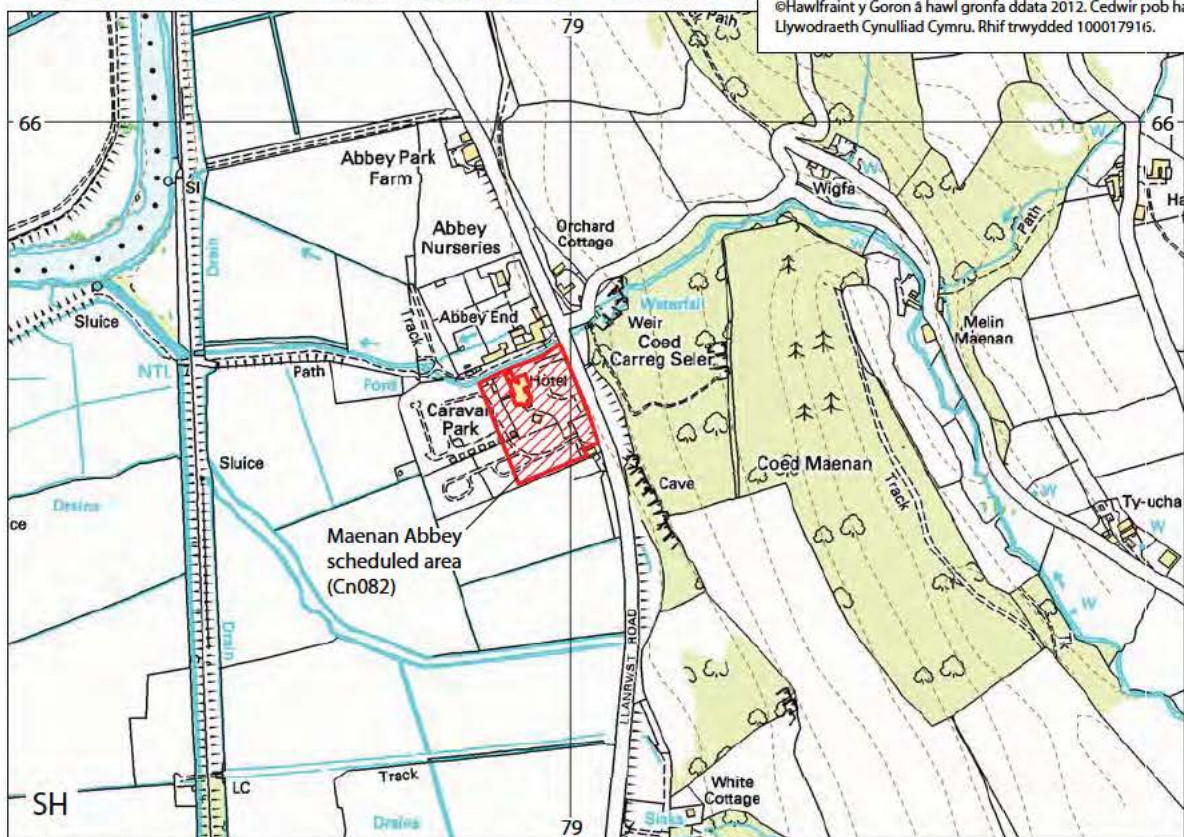


Figure 1. Location of Maenan Abbey



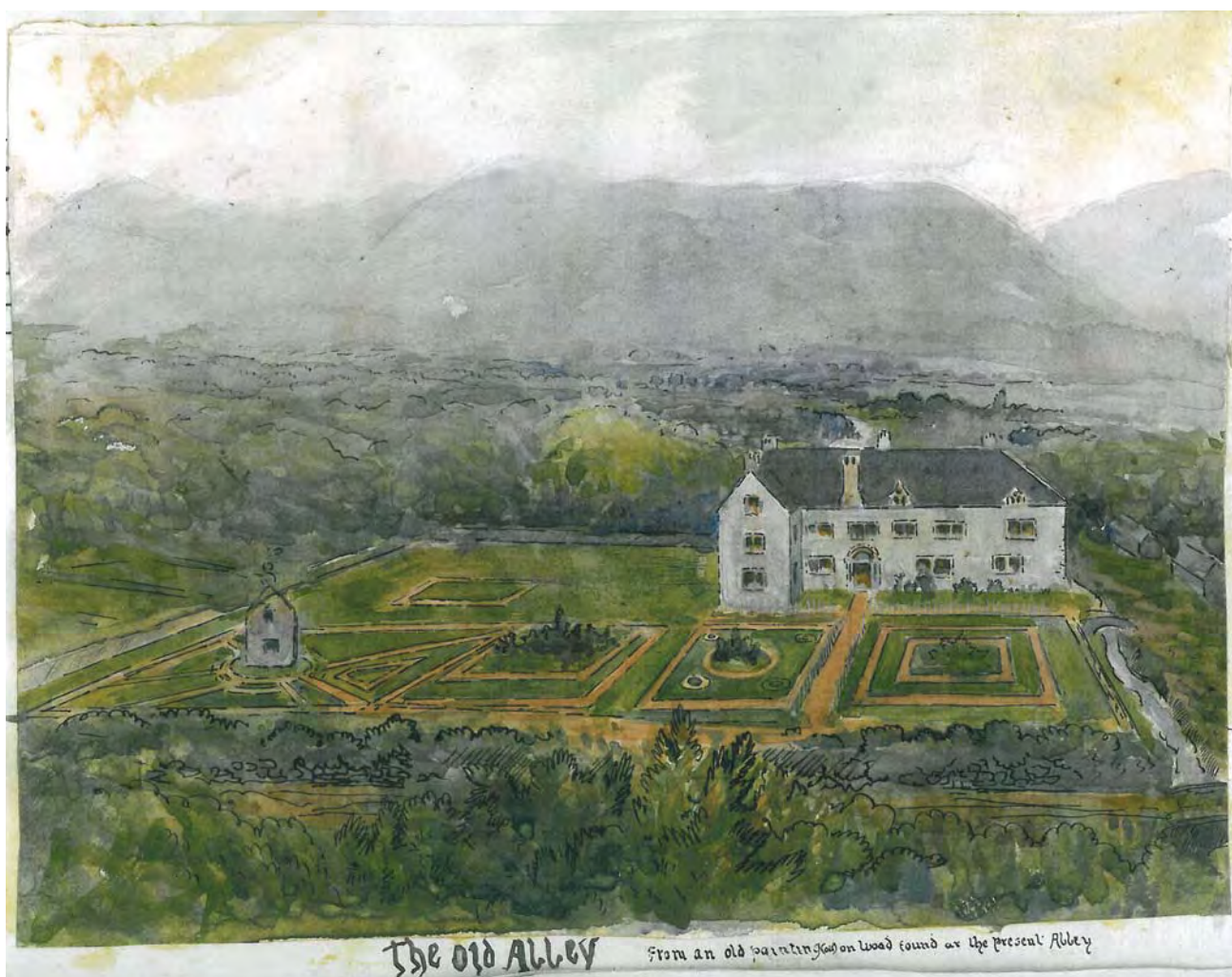
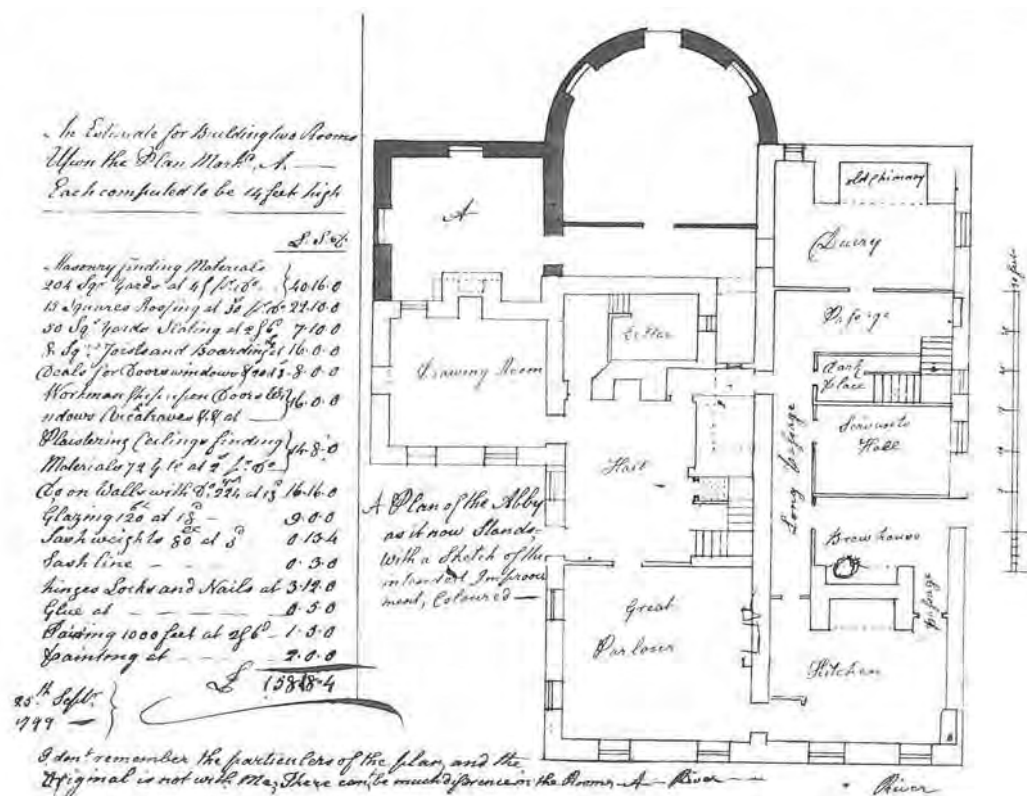


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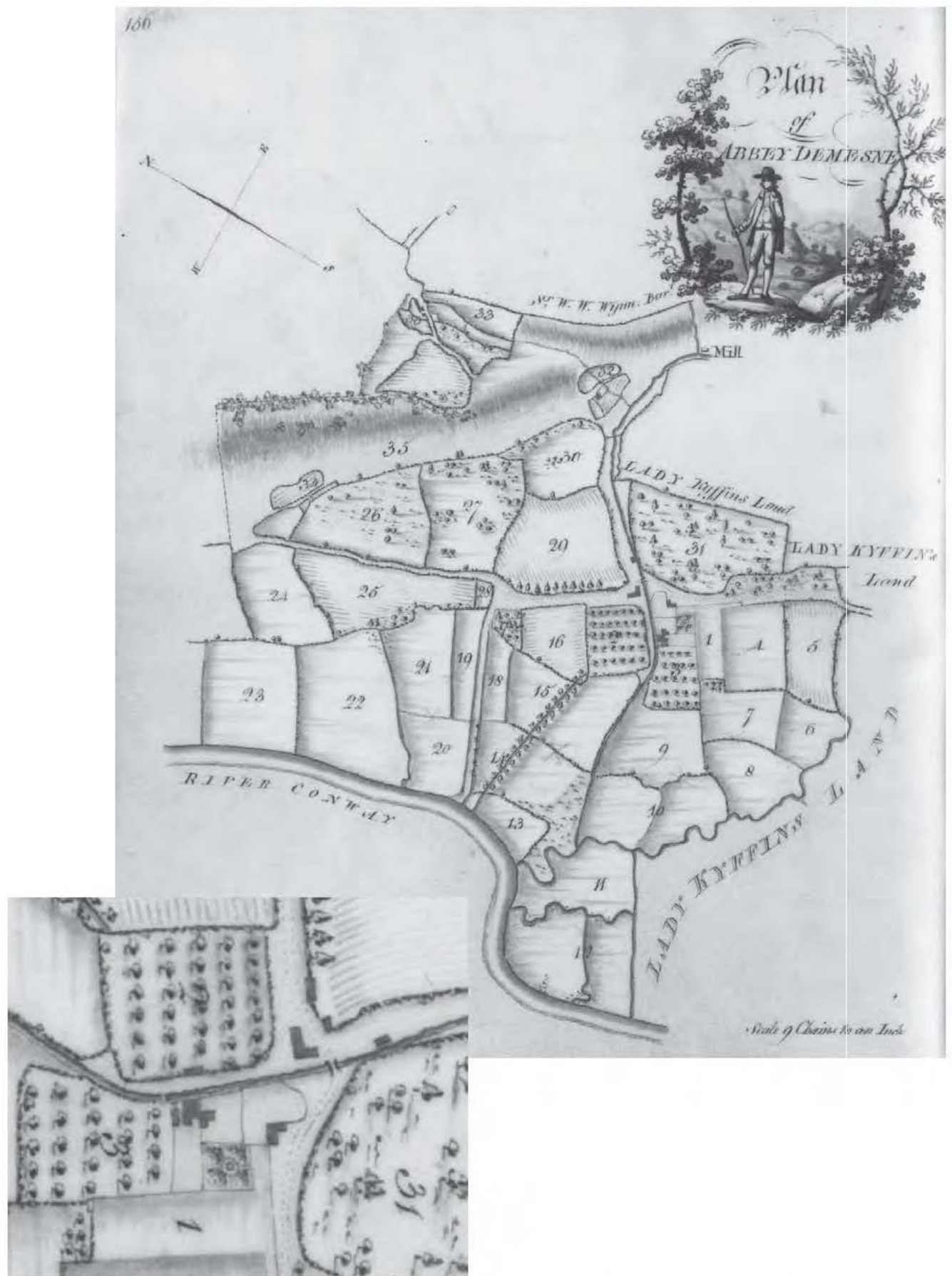


Figure 4. 1788 estate plan of the Abbey Demesne with inset showing detail of the Abbey house and garden (rotated so north is to the top) (MS Maps Vol 96 Page 156)



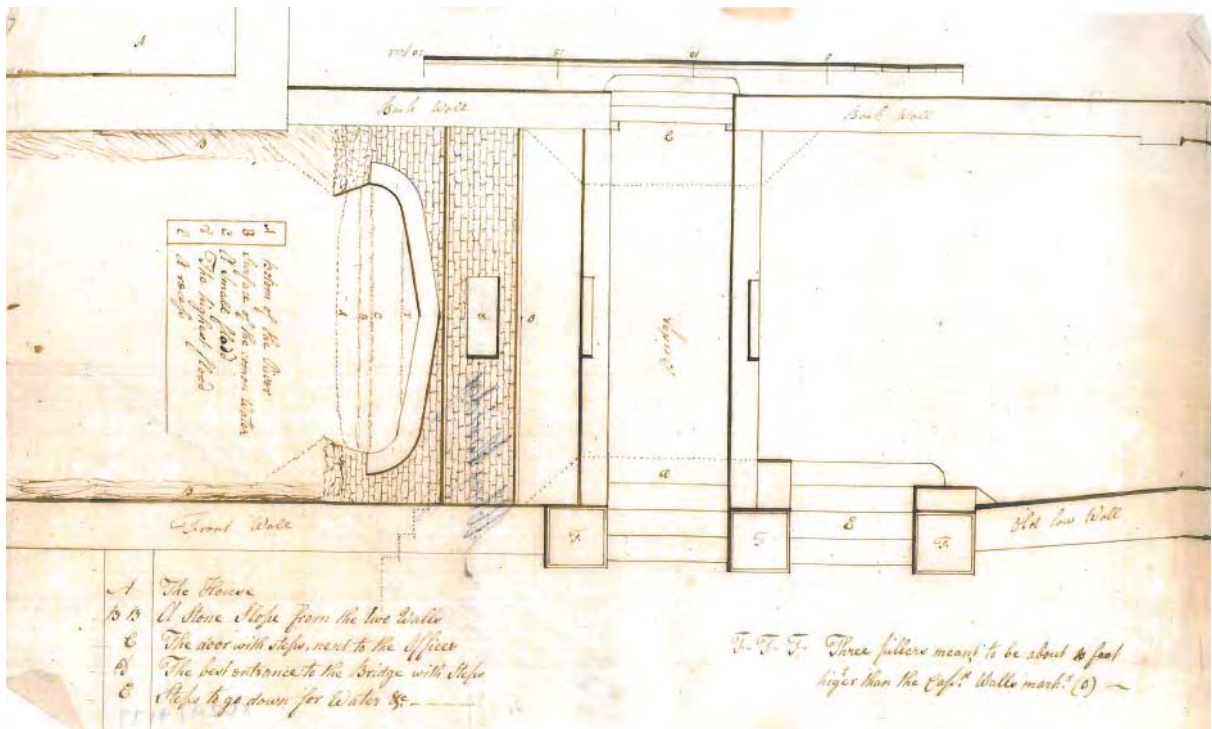


Figure 5. Drawing and section of Abbey Bridge for construction (XD2A/1177, probably dates to c.1801)



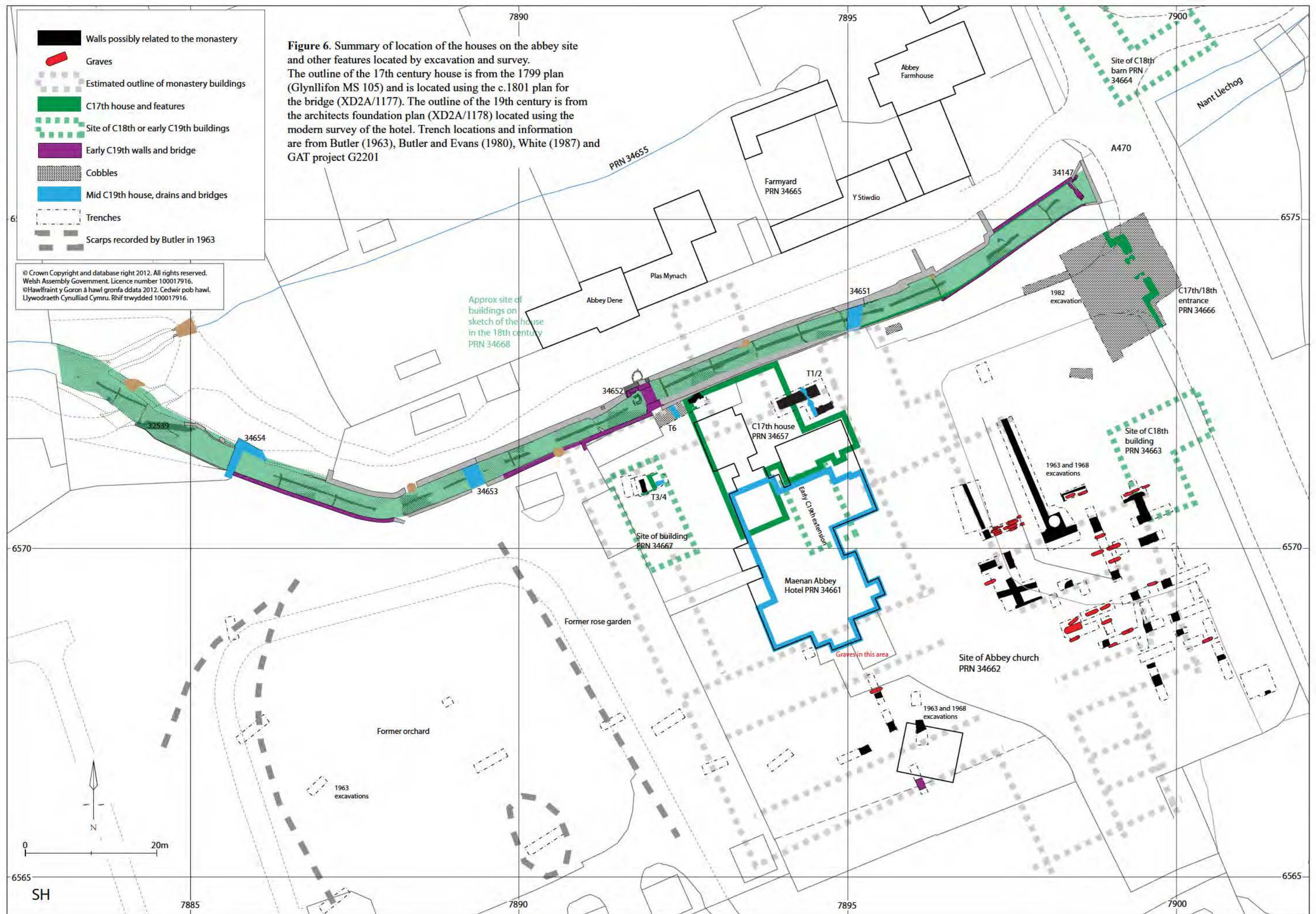


Figure 6



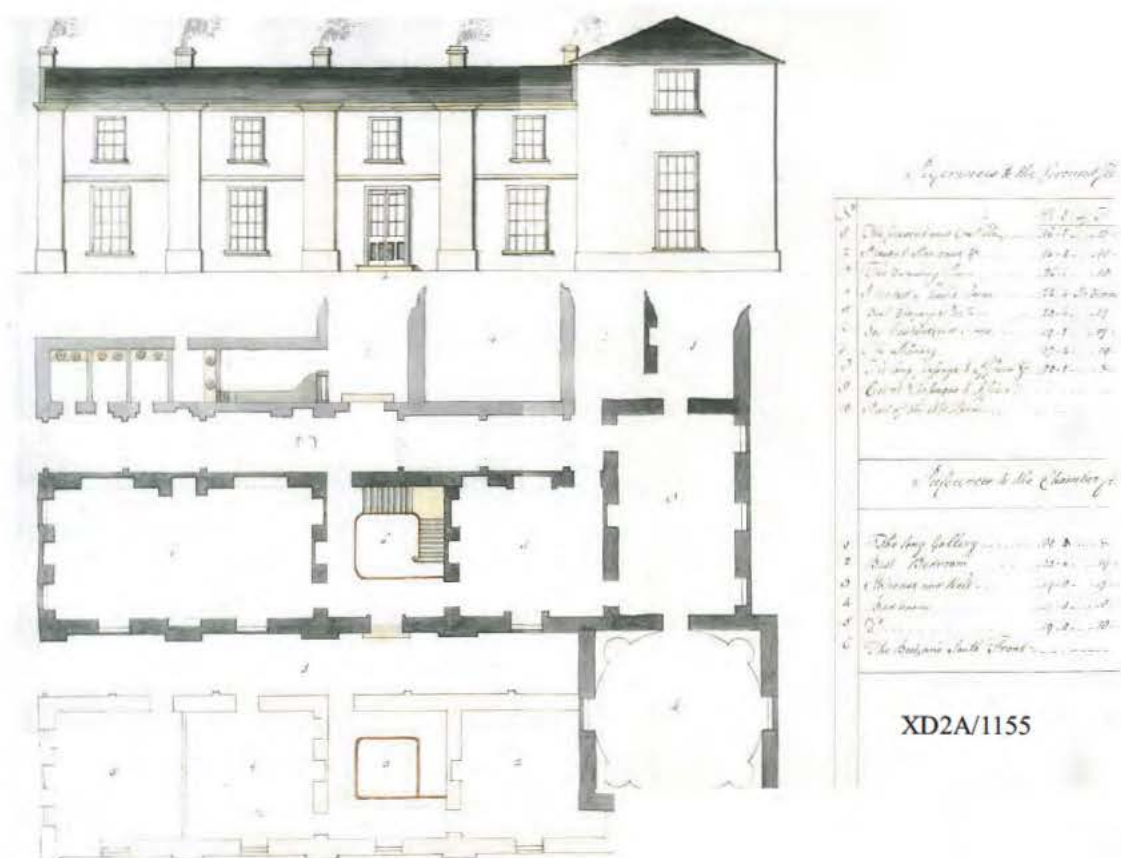


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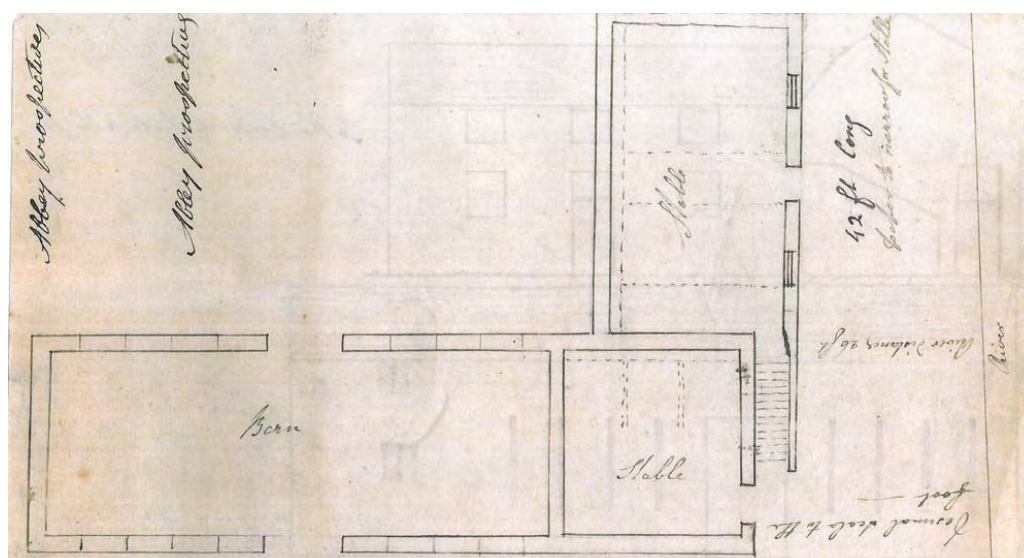
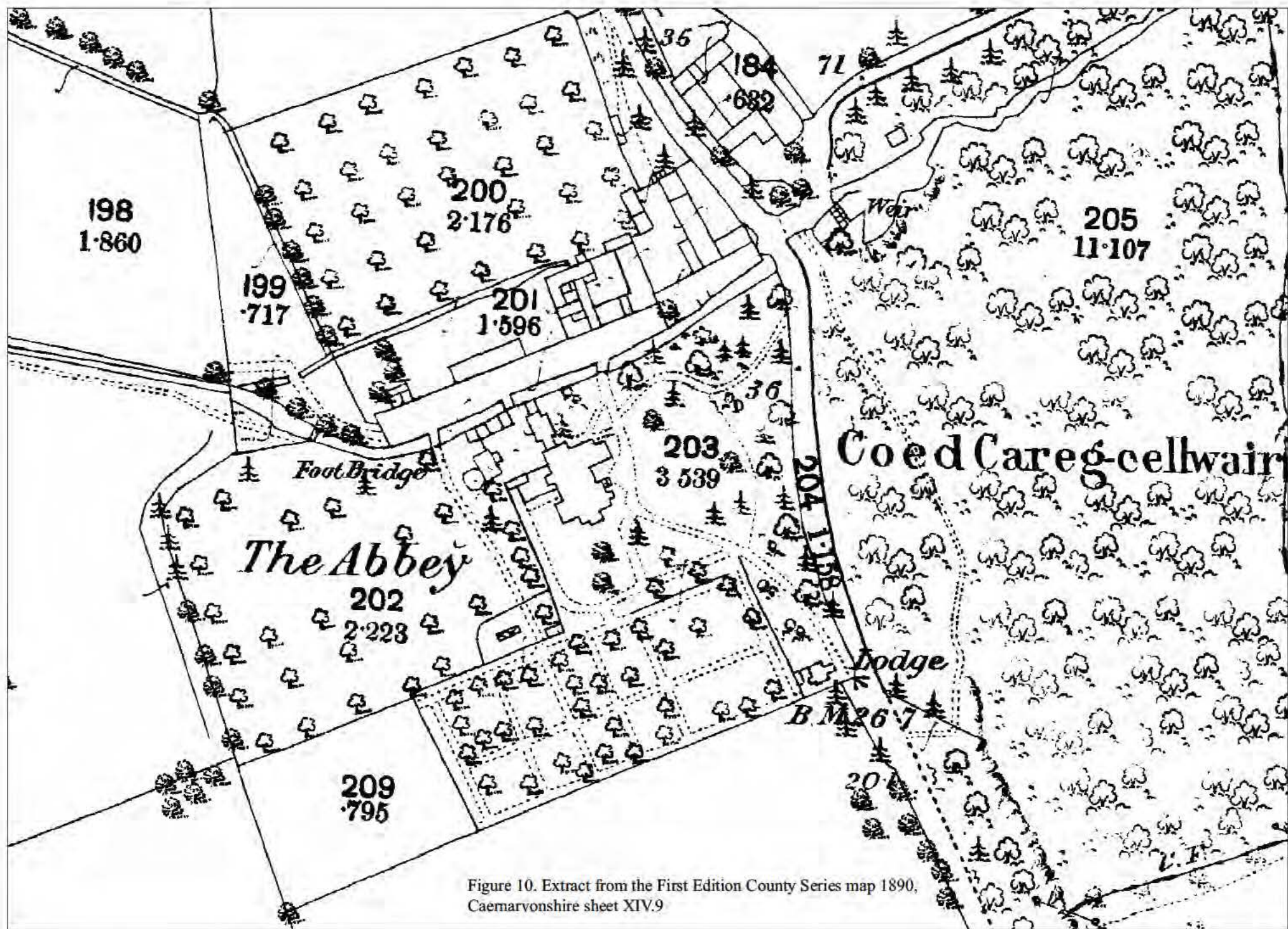


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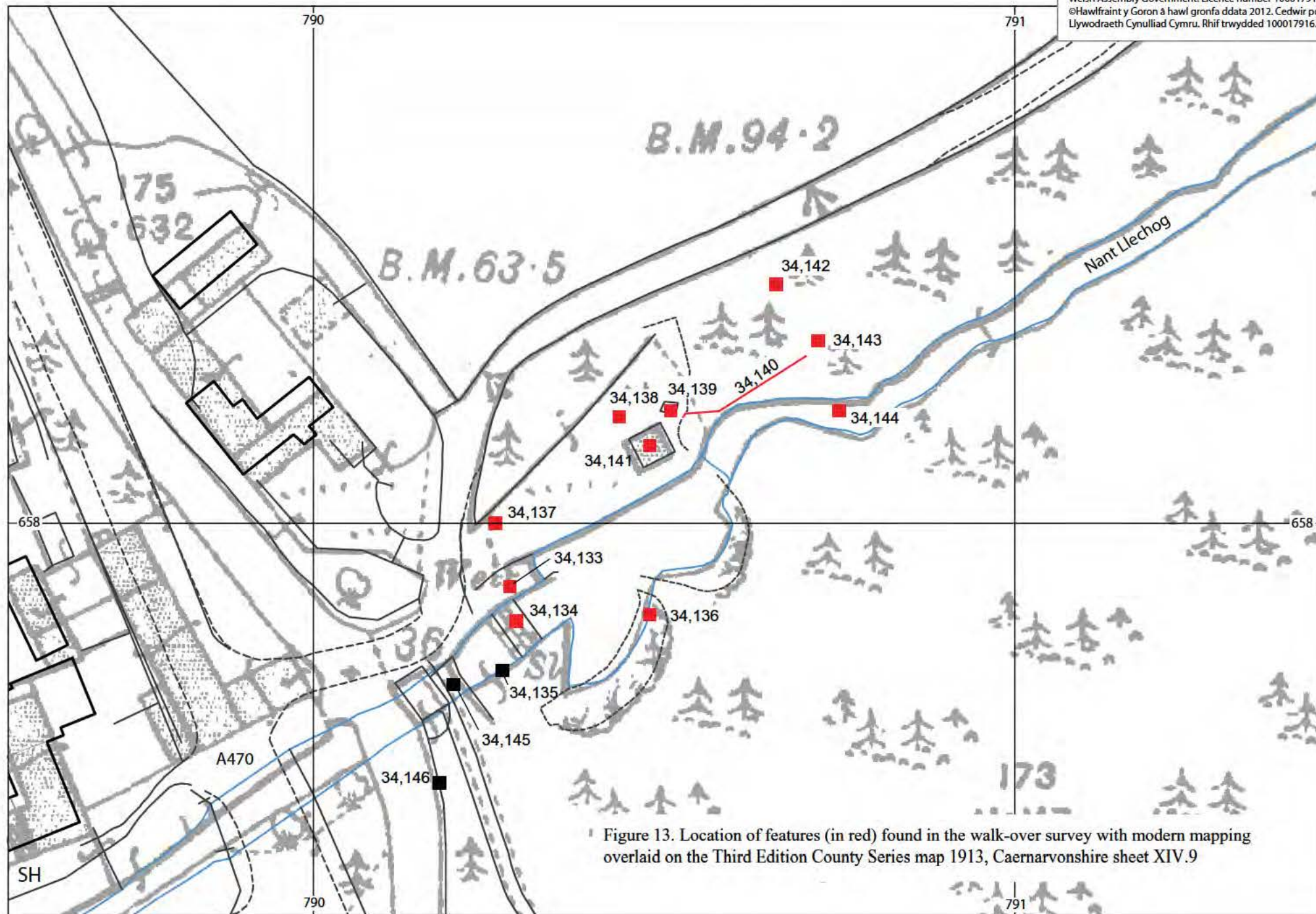


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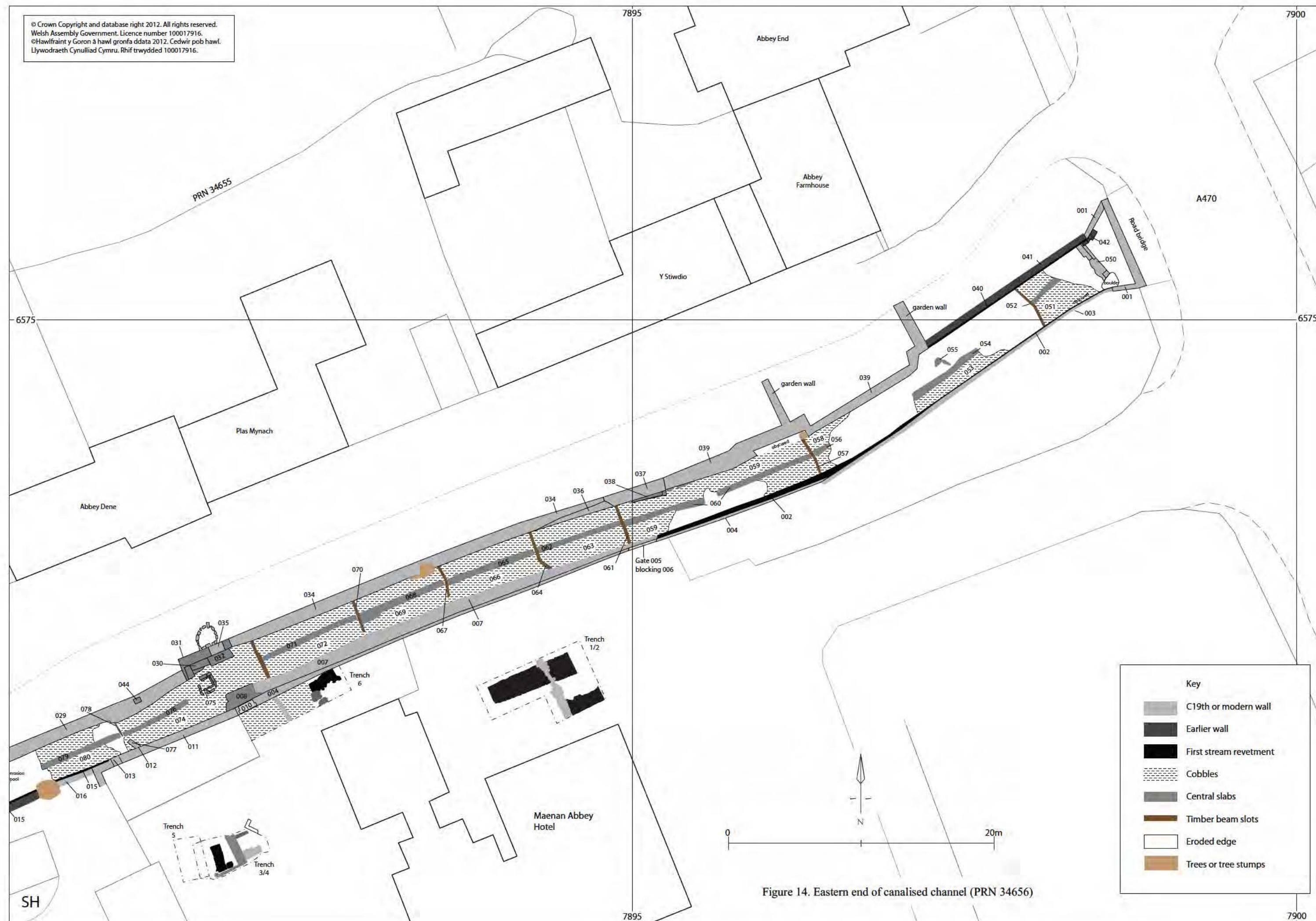
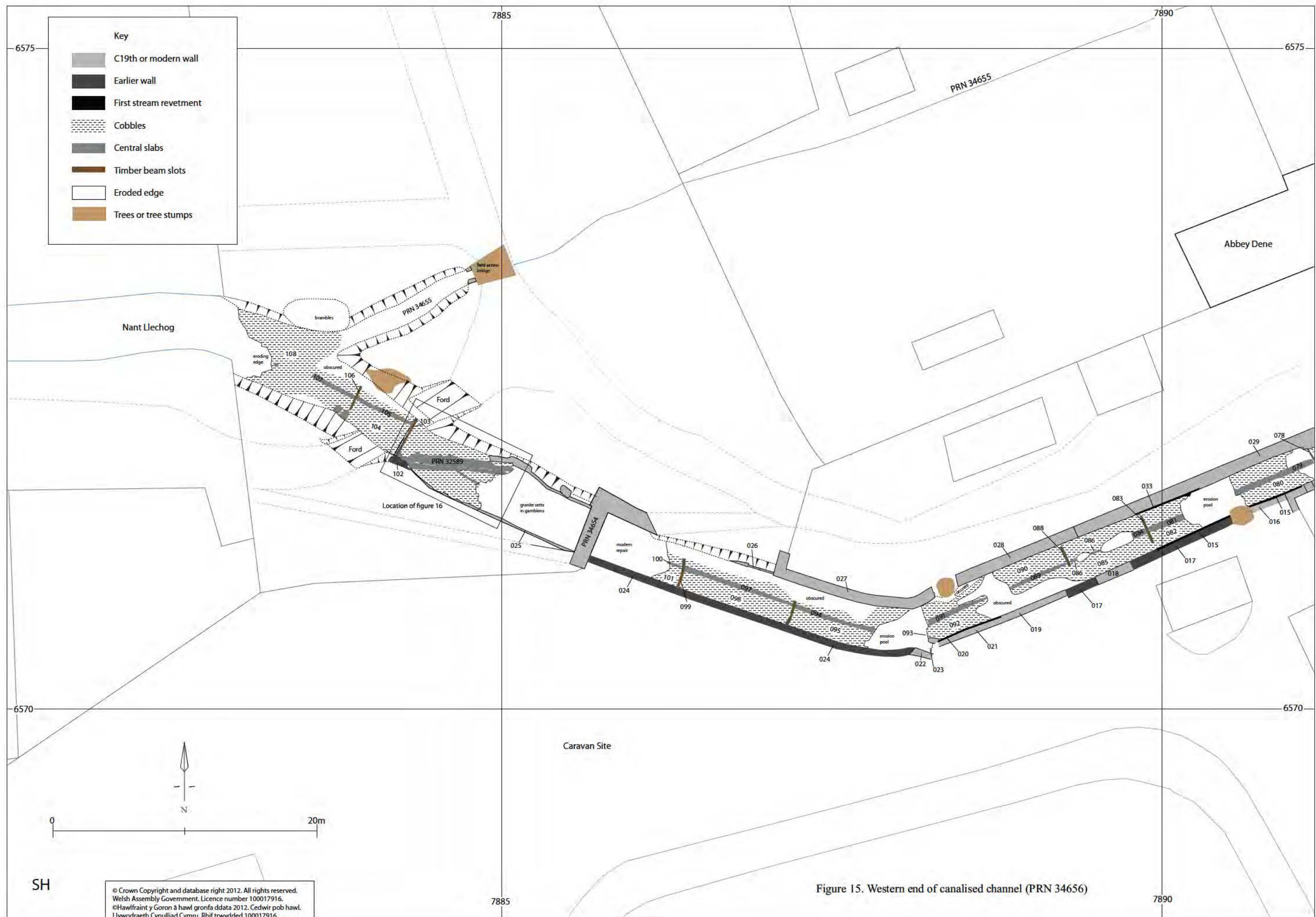


Figure 14. Eastern end of canalised channel (PRN 34656)





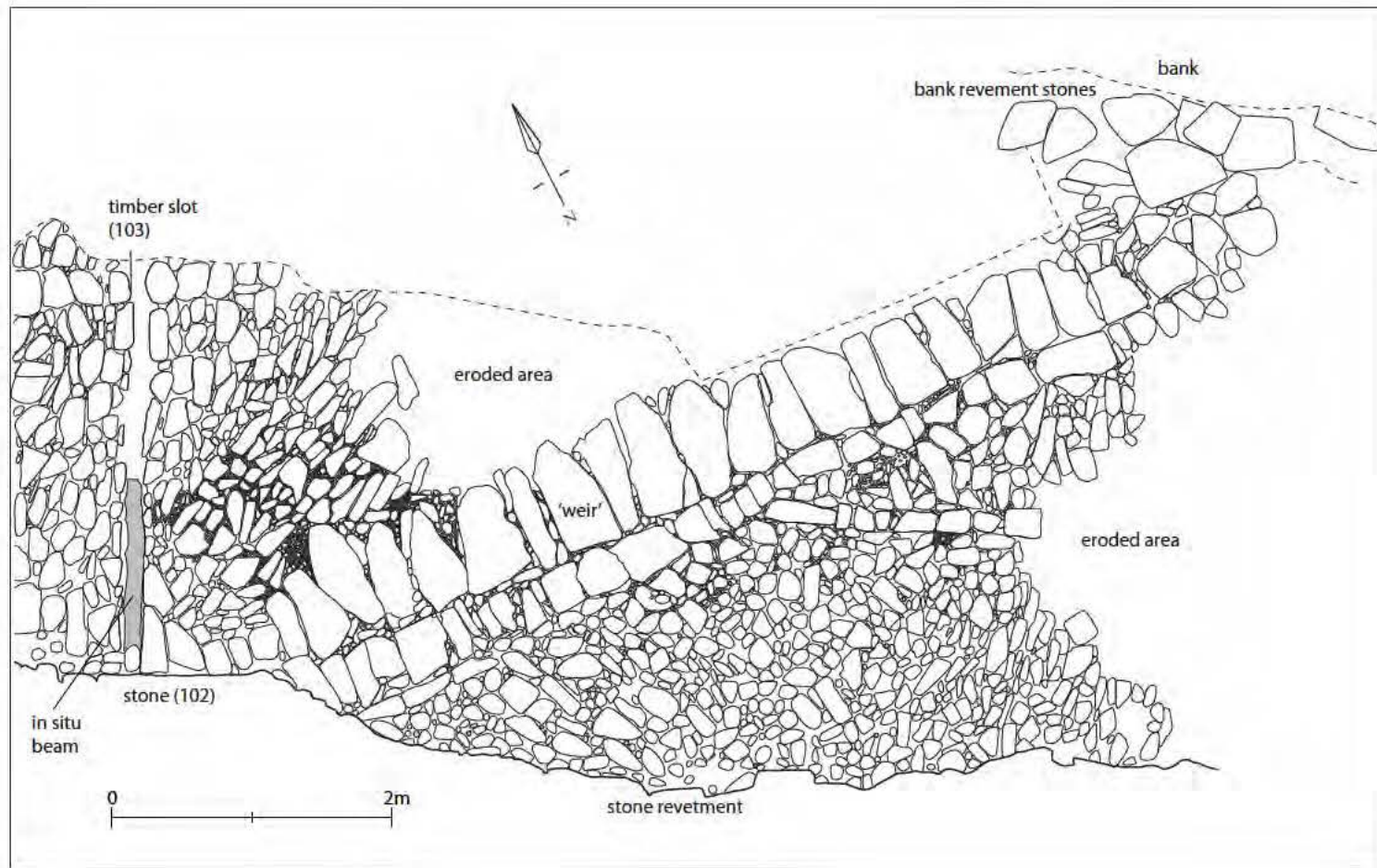


Figure 16. Plan of 'weir' PRN 32589 and surrounding cobbles and stream bed features.  
Located on figure 15





Plate 1: Maenan Abbey Hotel from the NE.  
Used by permission of Mr R Meyer.



Plate 2: Sandstone shield built into the 19th century coach house adjacent to the hotel and showing the Wynne family arms



Plate 3: View of pool (PRN 4616) above weir (PRN 34134),  
from the west



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Plate 33: Channel in gardens (PRN 34655), from the NE



Gwynedd Archaeological Trust  
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