BRYNSIENCYN SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1203)

REPORT NO. 171

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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INTERIM REPORT

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

As part of the Menai Straits Sewage Disposal Scheme, Welsh Water proposed to construct a sewage treatment works together with an outfall and other associated structures south of Brysiencyn, Anglesey (SH 493666). The project was to include the creation of passing places on the road from Brynsiencyn to Llanidan church, the creation of an access road running from opposite the entrance to Llanidan farm to the site of the STW, soil stripping the area of the proposed STW for temporary use as a carpark and storage compound, and the construction of a pipeline from the site of the STW into the Menai Straits at SH 495664.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Curatorial Section) identified the archaeological implications of the project and prepared a brief specifying a programme of archaeological work. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section), at the request of Welsh Water, provided a project design and costs to satisfy the project brief, and was subsequently commissioned (March 1994) to carry out the work.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed works lie in an archaeologically sensitive area. Finds of flint implements, stone axes, querns, and a hoard of bronze palstaves from the fields adjacent to the foreshore indicate Prehistoric occupation in the area, and within a three kilometre radius of the STW is a high density of Prehistoric and Roman settlement and burial sites. The fields through which the pipeline was to be constructed contain the site of an alleged battle between the British and the Romans. Plas Llanidan is the site of a Medieval monastic grange, associated with the Augustinian Priory of Beddgelert. The land around Plas Llanidan was remodelled in the eighteenth century by the creation of a park, which included an avenue of trees leading towards the sea.

In the light of the above it was proposed that a watching brief involving continuous monitoring during the topsoil strip be undertaken.

3.0 RESULTS OF WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 Road widening

The scheme commenced at the beginning of March 1994 with the provision of vehicular passing places on the single track road leading to the area where work was to take place. As a part of this project it was necessary to remove temporarily the two pillars forming gate posts at the west end of the Brynsiencyn - Llanidan minor road to obtain a sufficient width. The stones of these were individually labelled before removal to aid reconstruction.

The topsoil strip for the passing places removed approximately 0.3m in depth, which was composed of a reddish brown clayey silty topsoil. No features were noticed within this layer, except for an increase in stone in one area at the south-east end of the road, although as this was not to be disturbed it was not investigated further. The stripped areas were subsequently surfaced with slate waste.

3.2 Access road and compound

Once work had been completed on the road widening, work commenced on the access road

and works compound. The access road involved a topsoil strip to a depth of between 0.3-0.4m over a width of 3.6m for a length of around 180m. The compound area was only stripped in that part proposed for the car-park. All excavation was contained within the topsoil, a reddish brown silt with some sand and clay inclusions with a higher proportion of orange clay in the wetter areas.

Two flint flakes were recovered from the topsoil after stripping, one of which may indicate human activity. See appendix 1 for a full description of these.

3.3 Geological test pits

A series of test pits were dug between the compound and the shore (see fig. 1) to establish the nature of the soils and geology. These test pits, thirteen in total, varied in depth between 1.2 and 3.2m, and measured approximately 3.0m by 0.8m. The pits revealed a gradual change in soil types.

NB All measurements below are taken from ground surface and read from the bottom of the pit upwards, with 0.0m equalling ground surface.

Test pits one to three revealed a sequence of: (i) 2.9 - 0.9m reddish brown coarse sandy clay, very stony; (ii) 0.9 - 0.5m light brown sandy clay, moderately stony; (iii) 0.5 - 0.0m dark brown sandy silt with a reddish tinge, moderately stony.

The central layer was not visible in pit four and the topsoil came straight down onto the reddish brown coarse clay, at a depth of 0.4m. Boulders were encountered at a depth of 1.6m, and the overall depth of the pit was 2.0m. Pit five was similar, but without the boulders, and with only 0.3m depth of topsoil.

Pit six showed the same depth of topsoil as five, however the subsoil was a light brown/off-white sandy clay, lying on rock at 1.8m.

Pit seven revealed a sequence of (i) 1.7m weathered stone; (ii) 0.3-1.2m reddish brown silty clay; (iii) topsoil as in pit 1.

Pit eight was only excavated to a depth of 1.2m as bedrock was encountered at 1.0m depth. Above the bedrock was the reddish brown silty clay, with 0.35m of topsoil above this.

Pit nine also had rock at its base, beginning at 1.7m, above this was a lighter orange brown sandier silty clay, with 0.35m of topsoil above it.

Pit ten reached the deepest level at a depth of 3.2m. The sequence was (i) 3.2 - 1.35m light grey or black coarse gritty sand; (ii) 1.35 - 0.35m a reddish/orange brown sandy/silty clay; (iii) 0.35 - 0.0m topsoil.

Pit eleven was excavated in the wooded area between the two fields and revealed at a depth between 1.0m and 2.2m a combination of rock, or light grey clay and rock, the water table was also reached within this depth. Above this was a light orange sandy clay, 0.2-1.0m, with a humic silt forming the surface above it.

Two more test pits were then excavated in the first field: pit twelve again had the wet clay stony layer to a depth of 2.3m, commencing at 1.0m. Above this was a stony sandy clay, with 0.3m of topsoil above it, this was slightly more clayey than usual.

Pit thirteen was excavated to a depth of 2.2m and revealed the bedrock at this level. Above it was a dark reddish sandy clay, stony, with patches of grey and orange clays. Above this in turn to a depth of 1.0m was a sandy silt, a lighter brown than the topsoil, which was above it for a depth of 0.3m.

3.4 Pipe trench excavation

Once work was completed on the geological test pits, work proceeded on the pipe trench, which was excavated from the beach in land to the wooded strip between the fields south of the compound. The trench measured c. 1m wide by 1.3 - 1.8m deep, with a number of larger squares c. 2.5m wide.

A field drain was revealed close to the location of pit 6, but no other archaeological features were noted.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Although the area contains a high density of archaeological remains, no archaeological features have been noted during this first phase of the construction of the STW and associated works.

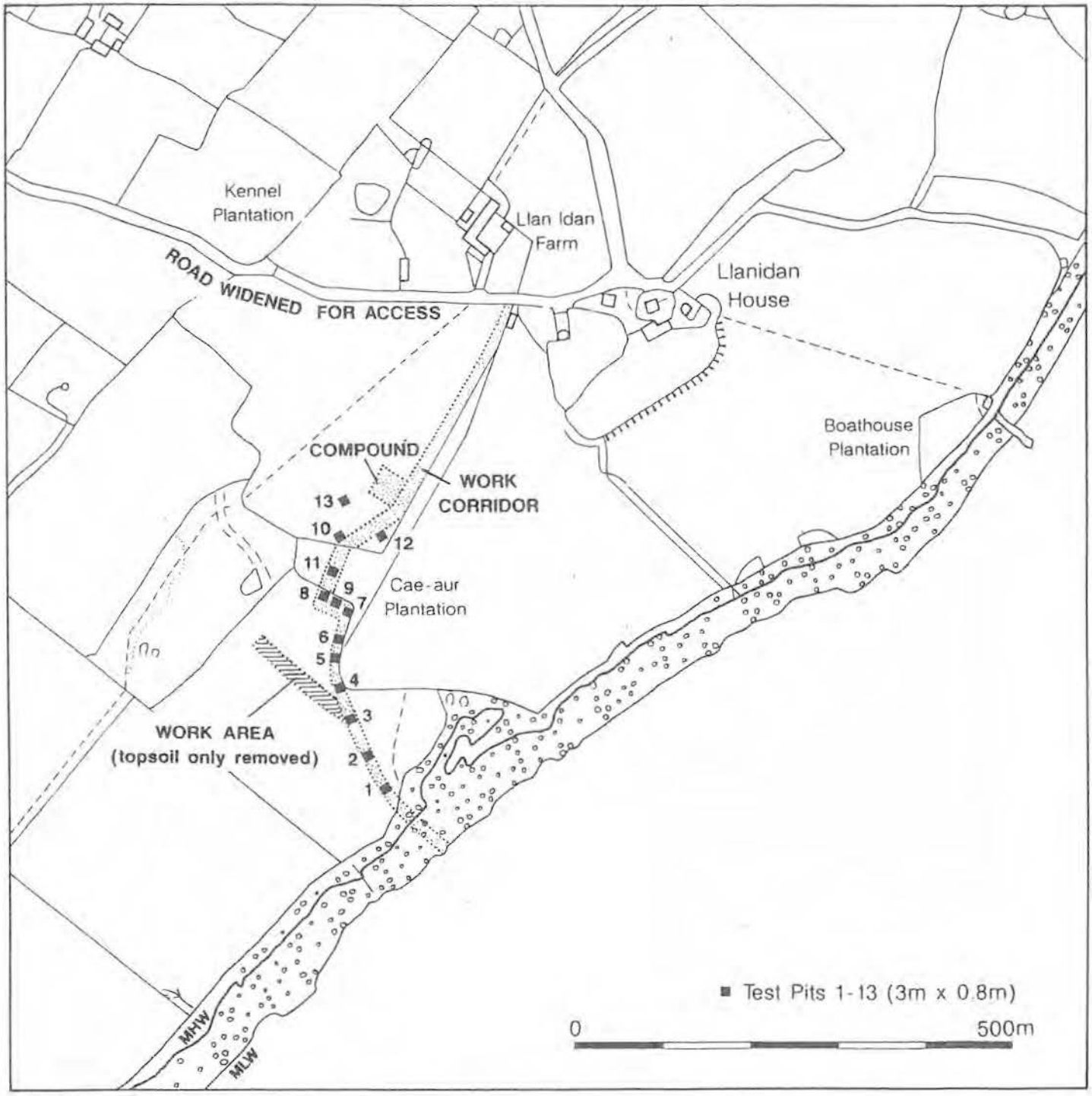

Fig. 1 Location plan.

APPENDIX I - DESCRIPTION OF FLINT FRAGMENTS

Two small fragments of flint or chert were found in the topsoil during the stripping of the access road to the STW.

1. Thin fragment of flint 8x8x2mm; off-white, altered to grey-pink by burning. It retains a small amount of cortex showing it came from the edge of a pebble which had been burnt slightly before being broken. The fragment has a core of percussion showing direct impact on the pebble (rather than flaking from a prepared platform. It is incomplete so was originally part of a larger piece, probably deliberately produced rather than accidentally, so may be the result of human activity. Heat treatment of flint pebbles has been shown to make them more workable.

2. Thin naturally fractured fragment of finely crystalline siliceous rock, probably chert or vein quartz. 22x15x2mm. Splintered and edge chipped by relatively recent accidental damage, such as plough or earth-moving machine. The original natural facets are slightly iron-stained buff-yellow. The recently broken faces are light-grey, consisting of very fine clear quartz grains or crystals in a light grey siliceous matrix.