

ACCESS TRACK TO SEWAGE WORKS,
CWM BOWYDD, BLAENAU FFESTINIOG

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1414)

Report No. 236

Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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prepared for Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water proposed to build a track (between SH70254519 and SH70104499) some 300m long and 3.5m wide to provide access to a storm water overflow tank serving the nearby Cwm Bowydd sewage works.

An initial archaeological assessment identified two sites of archaeological value in the vicinity of the proposed works and recommendations were made for a watching brief during construction.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Contracts Section) submitted a project design and costings for carrying out the watching brief. These were accepted and the Contracts Section was engaged to carry out the work.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The initial archaeological assessment identified two sites of interest:

1. A drystone built round house of Iron Age or Romano-British date lying in a walled enclosure and c. 45m from the closest part of the proposed track.
2. A possible long hut of the medieval period lying adjacent to the field wall at the western side of the field containing the storm water overflow tank and c. 50m from the closest part of the proposed track.

The presence of these features and the small and irregular nature of much of the present day field system suggests that the area has been used for agriculture and settlement since at least the Iron Age period and that close to these settlement features there may well be other associated remains.

Recommendations were therefore made for a watching brief during construction to allow any such remains to be identified and recorded.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

It was hoped that the area affected could be observed in one visit in its entirety after stripping of the topsoil and before removal of subsoil. However, the clay nature of the subsoil and the likelihood of waterlogging before laying of the road bedding meant that the construction was carried out in a number of short stretches, each being stripped of topsoil, excavated and filled with hardcore.

Two visits were made to the site: on Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd October. About 60m of the northern part of the track had already been excavated and backfilled at the time of the first visit. The remainder of the stripped trackway was walked, the sections observed and the field itself walked to look for any features which might be relevant.

4.0 RESULTS OF WATCHING BRIEF

The route of the track followed a medium slope through poor rock pasture with areas of bracken and reeds. It was clear that on such a slope any settlement features should be

recognisable as artificially made, terraced platforms.

Observation of the excavated area showed only undisturbed natural subsoil apart from one feature. This was a line of boulders comprising the foundations of a former field wall marked on former OS maps up to the edition of 1978.

The possible long hut at the west side of the field was recorded by description and sketch plan since it lay within the immediate area and might be affected by any future works and might have some bearing on interpretation of the area as a whole. It is a rectangular feature c. 8m by 8m but possibly some 3m longer. Its position is marked by a slight deviation in the line of the field wall and at which point the wall contains some orthostats (upright slabs) whereas the rest was of smaller laid stone. In addition a line of stonework runs perpendicularly from the field wall, and this probably comprises the south end wall of the structure. The details and full outline of the feature could not be clearly traced because a mass of clearance stones have been pushed from the field to form a linear dump all along the western field edge and much of the stone lies over the possible long hut.

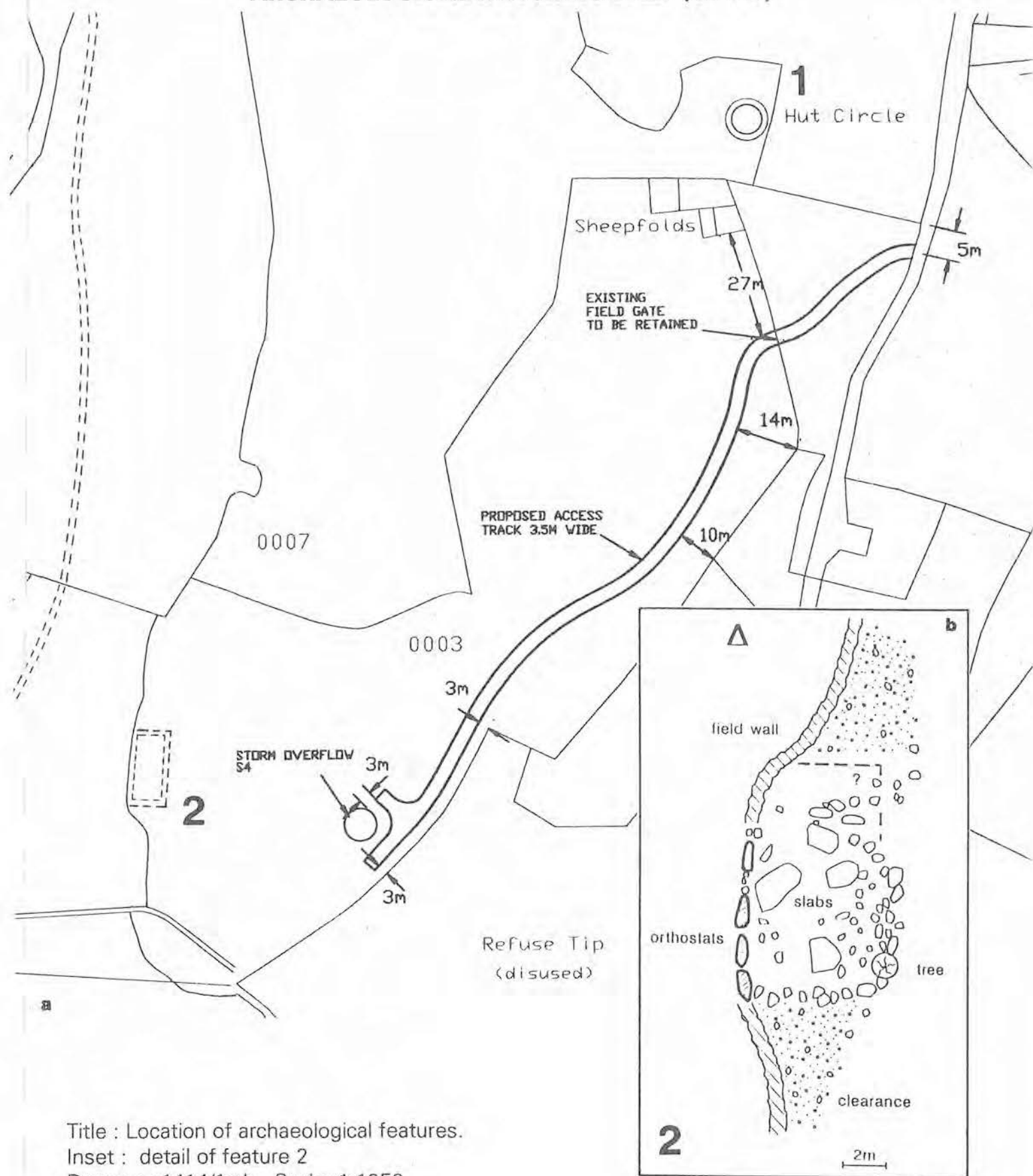
5. SUMMARY

The observations made suggest that the small sub-oval field across which the track runs may well owe its origins to the occupants of the possible medieval long hut at its west side. However, the excavations showed that the field was more recently substantially cleared of boulders and smaller stones and that these were dumped at the west side of the field, obscuring the remains of the hut.

The watching brief also made it evident that when the storm water overflow tank was constructed the field was much affected. The work must have involved access along much the same route that the track now takes. It also involved the excavation of a massive pit for the tank with consequent spreading of spoil and of the digging of at least two pipe trenches with access-holes. As a consequence, much of the route of the present access track had a very shallow, truncated soil profile and modern rubbish was seen impacted into the subsoil surface.

However there may well be preserved early (medieval?) horizons at the west side of the field. This is at the foot of the slope and layers and features may have been buried by soil accumulation and stone dumping. This may be relevant to any future construction works in the area.

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Title : Location of archaeological features.

Inset : detail of feature 2

Dwg no : 1414/1a,b Scale :1:1250



**YMDDIRIEDOLAETH
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GWYNEDD
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST**



**DŴR CYMRU
WELSH WATER**

YMDDIRIEDOLAETH ARCHAEOLEGOL *GWYNEDD* ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Craig Beuno - Ffordd y Garth - Bangor - Gwynedd - LL57 2RT. Phone (01248) 352535 : Ffacs/Fax (01248) 370925